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APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TOWARDS A MODEL OF
THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE AT THE HILLSIDE
O'MALLEY CHURCH

by

David Shin

Adviser: Larry Lichtenwalter

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TOWARDS A MODEL OF
THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE AT THE HILLSIDE O'MALLEY CHURCH

Name of researcher: David Shin

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Larry Lichtenwalter, PhD

Date completed: December 2020

Problem

Based on feedback from members of the Hillside O'Malley Church through personal conversations, theological polarization threatened to paralyze the local church and keep it from fulfilling its mission of ministering to its members and reaching out to the community with the gospel message. The theological polarization stemmed from divergences on the presuppositional, macro-hermeneutical level that are revealed visibly in how members interpret the biblical text.

Method

The methodology that was employed was to derive biblical principles from an exegesis of the book of *Acts* specifically related to theological reason, which included an

understanding of how presuppositions worked in the minds of individuals described in the book of *Acts*. The principles were applied towards a dialogical model at the Hillside O'Malley Church. The literature review examined seminal and contemporary Christian thinkers concerning theological reason; the dialogical model was informed but not determined by the literature review as the foundational principles were intended to come from Scripture. The participants in the dialogical model were members of the Hillside O'Malley Church and engaged in a preparation process prior to dialogue through intellectual and heart preparation, which was an application of principles derived from an exegesis of the book of *Acts*. The participants engaged in a series of three dialogues, which were applications of the principles derived from the book of *Acts*. The dialogues were preceded by an initial interview and followed by a final interview. The interviews were examined qualitatively to see whether the dialogue had lowered negative interpersonal feelings in the minds of the participants stemming from theological polarization and whether the participants sensed possible shifts on a presuppositional level as a result of the dialogue.

Results

Eight participants took part in the implementation process. All of the participants expressed that the dialogue implementation had slightly improved the relational dynamics between the participants; however, after the dialogue, half of the participants still expressed anxiety about the potential issues stemming from theological polarization as they looked towards the future. Seven out of the eight participants conveyed that they perceived that there was no change in the ideological frameworks of the participants as a result of the dialogue. Those participants sensed that everyone was set in their theological

positions, which indicated that there was no notable change in the participant's presuppositions as a result of the dialogue implementation.

Conclusion

Although there was minimal change in the relational dynamics between the participants, the dialogue implementation did not cause ideological shifts that affected theological polarization. The theological reflection of the book of *Acts* revealed that individual human volition surrender to Scripture and the Holy Spirit's illumination, and that conversion is the determiner of whether there are changes at a presuppositional level. Although methodology can potentially provide the environment for the Holy Spirit to work and the opportunity for engagement with Scripture, there is no human formula or method that can change the mind of others.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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O'MALLEY CHURCH

A Professional Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Contemporaneous Divine Revelation	Special revelation given during a similar period of time (i.e., Peter’s vision in Acts 10 would be contemporaneous revelation to those living in New Testament times)
Divine historic Revelation	Special revelation given in a different time period of the distant past (i.e., the Old Testament would have been to the apostles of the New Testament divine historic revelation)
Epistemology	The study of the understanding of what it means to know
Hermeneutics	The study of the principles of biblical interpretation
Historical Reason	The mind subject to past experiences that form one’s presuppositional framework
IRB	Institutional Review Board—a federally mandated entity that reviews and regulates all research involving human subjects
Macro-exegesis	The phenomenological implications of the biblical text related to ontology and epistemology
Meso-exegesis	The doctrinal implications that come from the micro and macro-exegesis
Micro-exegesis	The historical and grammatical study of individual textual selections of Scripture
Ontology	The study of nature of being and reality
Theological reason	The epistemology of spiritual knowledge
Theo-ontological	The being and nature of God

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Ministry Context

The Hillside O'Malley Seventh-day Adventist Church is in Anchorage, Alaska, in the south part of town, next to the headquarters of the Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. I had been pastoring the church for almost four years at the time of the implementation of the project. The population of the city of Anchorage is roughly 400,000 people in the metropolitan area with a broad range of ethnicities: Sudanese, Samoans, Alaskan Natives, East Asians, and others. The Alaskan culture of independence and candidness is readily apparent, and the cycle of light and darkness has an undeniable effect on the psyche of the community.

The membership on the books is 500, with roughly 170 attending on an average Sabbath, including children. The church has some diversity; however, the congregation is mostly comprised of Caucasian professionals that have migrated from different regions of the Lower 48 states. There has been a slight shift in the congregation demographics due to the recent focus of the church on prison ministry that has brought in ex-inmate converts from various backgrounds into the congregation.

Statement of the Problem

The members of the Hillside O'Malley Church come to Anchorage from different regions of the lower 48 states. In a 2016 sample congregational survey of 80 participants,

only 6% of the participants in the survey were from Alaska, and over one-third had lived in Alaska for less than ten years. The following is a breakdown of the survey according to participant origins: California—17%; Pacific N.W.—17%; Midwest—24%; Eastern U.S.—15%; Southern U.S.—6%; Foreign—17%. These demographics exhibit a correspondingly wide range of theological diversity, with each member carrying with them a distinctive theological nuance from their region of origin. There exists an underlying tension in dialogues in various venues such as Sabbath School classes, small group Bible studies, prayer meetings, and private conversations. One of the main points of disagreements was the relationship between faith and reason (science) that played out in controversies related to whether the creation account in Genesis should be taken literally. The disagreements stemmed from differences on the macro-hermeneutical and presuppositional levels that become apparent in the differences in how the biblical text is interpreted. Some fear the loss of Adventist identity, while others fear the loss of community. With no intervention, the fear has been that the theological polarization would ultimately paralyze the church into not fulfilling its mission of saving souls and ministering to the community.

Statement of Task

The task of the project was to develop and implement a strategy derived from biblical principles; in this case, principles discovered in the book of *Acts* that could be applied towards developing a model of theological dialogue at the Hillside O'Malley Seventh-day Adventist Church. The implementation has been evaluated qualitatively to determine the strategy's effectiveness in reducing negative feelings stemming from theological polarization and whether the participants sensed there was a shift in the

participants' views on the presuppositional level that impacted theological polarization.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Justifications

The theological reflection was delimited to the book of *Acts*, and the exegesis was delimited to references that were related to theological reason, the epistemology of spiritual knowledge, where the disciples were either seeking understanding or endeavoring to assist others in understanding. The literature review was delimited to theological reason in select seminal Christian writers and a sample literature review of Adventist theological reason in conflict on a controversial contemporary issue.

The justification for delimiting the theological reflection and literature review to theological reason was that the root issue of theological polarization in the local church context involved a conflict of ideas on the presuppositional level (i.e., faith vs. reason), the subject of which was theological in nature. Since the task of the project was to develop a dialogical model from biblical principles of theological reason as found in the book of *Acts*, the literature review did not review dialogue methods from secular or evangelical sources. The task of the project was to build a dialogical model from scratch from Scripture, meaning, from the biblical principles discovered from exegesis, as the starting point to methodology. Therefore, the literature review was delimited to theological reason in Christian writings that would reveal core issues that would inform but not determine the dialogical model.

The justification for delimiting the theological reflection to the book of *Acts* was that the guidelines of the Doctorate of Ministry Project would not have allowed a thorough canonical exegesis of the entire Bible on the topic of theological reason. The decision to select the book of *Acts* was that the book described the ideal unified and

missional church that a local church context could envision becoming, especially one that was dealing with theological polarization and disunity that threatened mission.

Since the task of the project was to develop the implementation from solely biblical principles synthesized from exegetical data, the chapter of theological reflection is the longest chapter of this paper. The book of *Acts*, being a relatively larger book of the New Testament, and the necessity of doing thorough exegesis for the principles that could be used towards a dialogical model, warranted the theological reflection chapter being the longest and exceeding the limits of the recommended guidelines for project chapters in this particular case. This exception was supported by my advisor, Larry Lichtenwalter.

The implementation was limited to the members of the Hillside O'Malley Church, 18 years of age or older, that consented to participate in the implementation process (see Appendix A). The limitations of the paper's findings are qualitative in nature, dealing only with a comparative analysis of the participants' perceptions before and after the implementation process.

Description of the Project Process

The strategy has been based on principles derived from the book of *Acts* that was used towards developing a dialogical model for the implementation process. The theological reflection focused on an exegetical study of theological reason in the book of *Acts*, in which principles that could be applied were synthesized towards a dialogical model. The literature review focused on theological reason from Augustine (395/1968) to Plantinga (2000, 2015), Canale's deconstruction (1987), and a review of Adventist theological reason at work on the issue of women's ordination; the literature review would inform but not determine the dialogical model.

The implementation of the research was evaluated qualitatively based on initial and final interviews with the participants. The interviews assessed whether the dialogue had lowered unfavorable feelings related to theological polarization and whether the participants indicated presuppositional shifts as a result of the implementation. The research consisted of participation in the following activities: (a) preparation: which involved personal and small group prayer and review of the principles from the book of *Acts* as presented in seminars, sermons, and summarized in a handout; (b) participation in an initial in-depth interview with researcher; (c) engage in a series of 3 theological dialogues with other participants, (d) participation in an end-of-project in-depth interview with the researcher. Table 1 gives a timeline of the research development and implementation.

Summary and Anticipated Results

In this chapter, I have provided a brief description of the ministry context as a local church context, described the statement of the problem as theological polarization that imperils mission, described the task as developing a dialogical model from biblical principles derived from an exegetical study of the book of *Acts*, described the limits of the research as well as its justification, and described the project process.

I anticipated certain results prior to this project process. I anticipated a deeper understanding of theological reason and principles within the book of *Acts* as a result of the theological reflection that could be applied towards a dialogical model; and also learn by practice the methodology of micro-hermeneutical, meso-hermeneutical, and macro-phenomenological exegesis in the theological reflection. I anticipated a deeper understanding of issues involved in theological reason in the literature review that would

Table 1

Timeline of Research Implementation

Week	Research Activity
1–52	Literature review of theological reason
53–90	Theological reflection of the book of <i>Acts</i>
91–156	Began small group prayer time on Sundays Presented 20-part (once-a-week) seminar on Holy Spirit and <i>Acts</i> Began a personal once-a-week fast Presented 10-part sermon series from the book of <i>Acts</i>
169	Preparation of lockable cabinets Participants signed informed consent forms
169–173	Pre-dialogue interview
174–179	Dialogue #1 Dialogue #2 Dialogue #3
181–190	Qualitative interview with project participants after dialogue exercises
208	Qualitative analysis of research feedback taken from interviews
215–235	Completed Chapters 5 and 6

provide insight but not determine the dialogical model. I anticipated that the church members and participants would be spiritually enriched by the organized prayer sessions, particularly the Sunday morning prayer sessions for members and participants and small group prayer in the dialogue that was offered to participants. I anticipated that the members and participants would be spiritually enriched by the sermons and seminars of the theological reflection of the book of *Acts*. I anticipated that the participants would potentially have diminished negative feelings stemming from the theological reflection as a result of the implementation of the dialogue. And finally, I anticipated that participants could potentially have their presupposition surrendered through the influence of the Holy Spirit as they engaged Scripture in the dialogue implementation.

Having completed this chapter as an introduction to this project, I now turn to the

theological reflection of the book of *Acts* that will provide principles towards a dialogical model for implementation.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REASON IN THE BOOK OF ACTS:

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

The emphasis of this chapter will be a theological reflection on the nature of theological reason in the book of *Acts*. The principles derived from the theological reflection will be applied towards the implementation process and a model of theological dialogue.

The methodology undertaken in the theological reflection is a combination of micro-hermeneutical, meso-hermeneutical, and macro-phenomenological exegesis. Micro-hermeneutical exegesis involves the “examination of individual texts and periscopes” (Peckham, 2016, p. 213). Meso-hermeneutical exegesis involves the “individual doctrines” (p. 213) that are formed by exegesis. Macro-phenomenological exegesis deals with the “ontological and epistemological parameters” (p. 213) that are shaped by micro-hermeneutical exegesis.

The process of producing this chapter involved the following steps: identifying issues and engaging in “ongoing scholarly conversation by way of careful literature review of theological perspectives” (Peckham, 2016, p. 246); an “inductive reading” of *Acts* “isolating any text that deals with the specific issue” (p. 248); the intentional “suspending” of presuppositions, “self-examination” and “willingness to follow . . . data

wherever it leads” (Peckham, 2016, p. 249); the information is then “extracted . . . analyzed and grouped in an ongoing spiral” (p. 250); the propositional principles are then derived from data; and finally, there is a forming of “tentative implications” (p. 255) for ontology and epistemology. The data is then used towards a tentative model of theological dialogue.

The micro-hermeneutical approach will be adopting Canale’s (2005) framework, assuming that the author of *Acts* was functioning on the basis of a “presuppositional structure” from the existing biblical text; therefore, the micro-hermeneutical exegesis will not involve a “hypothetical reconstruction of the cultural milieu” (p. 149) that is done by exegetes today. The micro-hermeneutical approach will also incorporate Peckham’s (2016) methodology of “seeking the meaning that is preserved in the text as received and situation within the wider narrative context” rather than creating a “dichotomy between what the text meant and what it means” (p. 216).

Thematic Context of Acts

The book of *Acts* begins with Jesus giving a promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, NKJV), and the Holy Spirit emerges as one of the central themes in the book. Craig Keener (2012), in his monumental exegetical commentary on the book of *Acts*, states, “any treatment that minimizes either the Spirit or the Diaspora mission misses the central point of the work” (p. 520). The Spirit is referred to 59 times in the book of *Acts*, and these “constitute nearly a quarter of NT references to the Spirit, no other NT book has even half as many” (p. 520). The book of *Acts* has been called “the Gospel of the Holy Spirit” (p. 520).

In *Acts*, Jesus stated that the Holy Spirit would empower the disciples to be

witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). The work of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of the “diaspora mission” (Keener, 2012, p. 520). The Spirit is essential for giving power to the church in the mission of “cross-cultural evangelism” (p. 521). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the mission is one primary theme in the context of the book of *Acts*.

Selected Passages for Exegesis

The focus of this section is theological reason; the criteria for the selection of the passages in the book of *Acts* has been limited to texts in which the disciples are seeking understanding or endeavoring to help others understand. The “description” section of each passage will mainly consist of the micro-exegesis, and the “analysis” section of each passage will mainly consist of the macro-phenomenological implications of the passage as it relates to ontology and epistemology in the context of theological reason, though there may be some overlap between the sections of micro and macro-exegesis, since they, by nature, impinge on each other. The paragraph before each “description” section will give the rationale for why the passage was selected and how it met the selection criteria. The meso-hermeneutical implications will be described in the synthesis section of this chapter.

Acts 1:4–8

This passage deals with the disciples seeking to understand the timing of Christ’s kingdom; however, the question reveals underlying presuppositions in the minds of the disciples.

Description

The first question the disciples ask Jesus in the book of *Acts*, “Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), reveals nationalistic and ethnocentric assumptions. Keener (2012) comments that “the question presupposed a theology of Israel’s restoration” and that “the disciples by now understand that Jesus is the Messiah but have not yet understood the implications for the present meaning for the kingdom” (pp. 683–684). “The disciples, left to themselves, would have remained fixated on Israel.” (Dybdahl, 2010, p. 1420). The disciples’ question in Acts 1 reveals that certain cultural beliefs persisted in their minds, even after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Analysis

The existence of cultural presuppositions in the minds of the disciples gives epistemological clues as to the nature of theological reason. Luke’s gospel reveals some of the cultural 1st century presuppositions when the Pharisees posed a similar question to the disciples when they asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus responded by stating that the kingdom of God was not a physical entity, but the “kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20–22), implying the spiritual nature of the kingdom. The Jews assumed that Israel’s national sovereignty would be restored, and “that salvation was a matter of nationality” (Nichol, 1980, p. 5:729). Later in *Acts* the Jewish Christians came to the surprise realization that “God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (Acts 11:19); the assumption that salvation was only limited to Jews gives evidence of cultural assumptions. This epiphany came well after Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The conversion of the disciples and outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not

present itself in a supernatural transplanting of cultural presuppositions. The commonly held cultural views from being a first-century Jew continued to persist in the minds of the disciples.

Acts 1:12–23

This passage reveals the upper room experience of the disciples and the environment into which the Holy Spirit was poured out. Given that the Holy Spirit brings illumination (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:10–11), a closer look at the environment prior to the Holy Spirit’s outpouring described by Luke provides relevant data for the study of theological reason.

Description

The instructions of Jesus were to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. The disciples obeyed and remained in Jerusalem, receiving the Holy Spirit 10 days later. “Jesus gave them an instruction: they obeyed it promptly, exactly, and without argument” (Green, 2004, p. 43). Obedience emerges as a precondition for receiving the Holy Spirit in Luke’s writings. Later in *Acts*, Luke indicates that the Holy Spirit was given to “those who obey him” (Acts 5:32).

The disciples in the upper room are “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). The relationship between prayer and the reception of the Holy Spirit emerges in other places in the book of *Acts* (i.e., 4:23–31; 8:15; 9:17), and in Luke’s gospel, where Jesus states that the Holy Spirit will be given to “those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13). “Prayer was the gateway to spiritual power” (Green, 2004, p. 271).

The disciples are described as praying with “one accord” *ὁμοθυμαδόν* with “one mind by common consent unanimously” (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 267). The term “one

accord” is a recurring theme in the book of *Acts*, describing the believer’s community prior to and after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14, 2:1; 2:46; 4:24; 4:32; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25).

The process of choosing a replacement for Judas reveals theological reflection took place in the upper room. Historical divine revelation (Ps 69:25; 109:8) was cited for interpreting the fall of Judas and the justification for the selection of another apostle.

The passage reveals that in choosing the 12th disciple, the disciples had a high view of Scripture as the authentic word of God. Peter indicates that the “Holy Spirit” spoke through David (Acts 1:16). There was an understanding that the words of David, in Psalms 69:25; 109:8, was God speaking through the human instrumentality. “There is no mistaking the reverence they gave these oracles of God, the direction they derived from them and the confidence they placed in them” (Green, 2004, p. 273).

The criterion for being the 12th disciple was to have been present from the baptism of John the Baptist until the ascension of Jesus to heaven (Acts 1:22). The implication was that to be one of “us,” the historical experience with Jesus was essential.

Analysis

The text demonstrates the use of scripture as the interpretive key for making decisions and understanding contemporary events. The disciples used divine historical revelation as the presuppositional framework for interpreting the nature of Judas’ death (Ps 69:25) in a prophetic context and for the administrative praxis (Ps 109:8) for choosing his replacement. The divine historical revelation was understood as God’s word and therefore assumed to be authoritative for theology and administrative guidance. The

disciples demonstrated the fusion of theological reflection and administrative praxis from the data of divine historical revelation.

The criteria, as mentioned above for the 12th disciple, had to be a particular experience with Jesus (Acts 1:22). The text demonstrates the value of shared basic spiritual experiences as being essential qualifications for leadership. However, the shared basic experiences were not only limited to the 12 disciples, but arguably to many, if not most, of those gathered in the upper room, as Luke mentions “women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and ... His brothers” (Acts 1:14) as also being in the upper room. The specific experiences with Jesus (baptism, death, resurrection, ascension) were considered essential qualifications and presuppositional knowledge through shared experiences to “become a witness” (Acts 1:21).

The passage demonstrates the juxtaposition of specific experiences with Jesus and the communal experience of being in “one accord.” The disciples had a common historical experience with Jesus, and afterward, had the experience of being of “one accord” in the upper room. The experiences with Jesus (historical presuppositional knowledge) provided the context for ecclesiological unity; the ecclesiological unity provided the context for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The upper room experience reveals the value of theological reflection within a community of faith who share similar basic presuppositions (experiences). The community elements and theological reflection of the upper room experience continued after Pentecost: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

The text implies the human volitional elements of prayer and obedience as a

prerequisite for Holy Spirit illumination of theological reason. The text implies cooperation between the disciples and the Holy Spirit, a relationship between the human and the divine.

Acts 2:1–13; Luke 1:14, 39–45

The Holy Spirit brings empowerment for missions (Acts 1:18) and spiritual illumination (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:10–12); thus, it is necessary to examine the verses that describe the event of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring. The first reference to the term “filled with the Holy Spirit” is in the book of *Luke*, the sequel book to *Acts*; thus further insights can be gained by cross-referencing Luke’s usage of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” in both of his books.

Description

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was an event and a continuation of the experience of filling. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a punctuated event on the day of Pentecost, yet the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out in the book of *Acts* (4:31; 8:14–16; 9:17; 10:44–48; 11:15–17; 13:52; 15:8; 19:6). Furthermore, Luke’s gospel refers to asking for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13) as being in the Greek present tense, which indicates an activity or condition that is currently taking place without an indication of its termination (Heiser & Setterholm, 2013). Jesus indicates that the believers were to “keep on asking” for the Holy Spirit, an implication of continuation. Paul also indicates that believers should “be filled with Spirit” (Eph 5:18). The verb “filled” is in the present tense again. Paul’s statement that believers should “continue to be filled” and Jesus’ indication that believers should continue to “keep on asking” for the Holy Spirit points towards a continual experience with the Spirit. The indwelling of the

Holy Spirit was described as an event on the day of Pentecost and the daily continuation of being filled with the Spirit.

Luke describes the relationship with the Holy Spirit with the term “filled” *πίμπλημι*, “to fill up” (Liddell, 1996, p. 640). The term “filled” is a recurring term in the book of *Acts*, in reference to the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:8; 4:31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9; 13:52). Jesus stated to the disciples that the Holy Spirit “dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:26). The “will be with you” is in the future tense Greek, which indicates an activity or condition that will occur at a time after the present (Heiser & Setterholm, 2013). Jesus indicates that the Holy Spirit will go from *with* relationship to the future filling relationship that took place on the day of Pentecost.

The term “filled” (*πίμπλημι*) occurs early in the gospel of *Luke*, where John the Baptist is described as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:14) in *utero*, and Elizabeth, as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41), while she was pregnant. “The Holy Spirit’s work is highlighted from the beginning to the end of Luke’s writings” (Dybdahl, 2010, p. 1329). Luke indicates that, as Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit,” she was given divine illumination that Mary was pregnant with “the Lord” (Luke 1:39–45). Elizabeth states that there was the verification of the Holy Spirit’s illumination when the “baby leaped” within her (Luke 1:44). In this case, the illuminating knowledge of Jesus’ incarnation came from the Holy Spirit that was within Elizabeth.

Analysis

The work of the Holy Spirit was collective, selective, and particular. The Holy Spirit’s outpouring was collective in the sense that it came upon the entire community of believers in the upper room. Luke describes that “they were all filled with the Holy

Spirit” (Acts 2:4). However, they were the only individuals in all of Jerusalem that received the Holy Spirit; in this sense the Holy Spirit was selective; thus, implying a conditional human element for the Spirit’s reception. The Holy Spirit appears particular in that it not only selects who will receive illumination, but also, the specific content of the revelation, as in the case of Elizabeth.

The Holy Spirit is described as working through corporate outpourings as on the day of Pentecost and the indwelling of His presence daily in the life of the believer. The description of the Holy Spirit in *Acts* contradicts the Platonic view of reality and the discontinuity between heaven and earth. Rather God is presented as engaging humanity in the flow of history (past, present, and future).

The Holy Spirit’s filling of a person has epistemological implications. It could be argued that Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy provided the framework for believing in the incarnation of Jesus. This account points towards conversion (supernatural new birth) as being a pre-condition for Holy Spirit illumination.

Acts 2:14–39

In this passage, the crowd is seeking an understanding of the miraculous event that took place on the day of Pentecost. They ask an epistemological question, “Whatever could this mean?” (Acts 2:12). How Peter responds gives clues as to the nature of theological reason.

Description

Peter uses historical divine revelation (Joel 2:38–32), as the presupposition for understanding the present phenomena of speaking in tongues, as evidence of the Holy Spirit being poured out. Peter proceeds to use scripture (Ps 16:8–11; Ps 110:1) as the

framework for understanding that Jesus is resurrected and in heaven and that it was Jesus who poured out the Spirit (Acts 2:33).

Peter indicated a conditional element to the Spirit's reception when he said to them, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). In this case, the Jews needed to repent and be baptized before they could receive the Holy Spirit. The phrase "you will receive" is in the Greek tense of the middle voice, which implies that the reception of the Spirit was conditional upon the person's actions (Heiser & Setterholm, 2013). The Jews' action of repentance and baptism affects the action of receiving the Spirit. Yet, the ability to repent is indicated as a gift from God in a later sermon by Peter (Acts 5:31).

Analysis

Peter's use of scripture alludes to another part of the Spirit's work, namely, that He will "teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said unto you" (John 14:26). The word for remember *ἀναμνησκω* is to "cause to recall and to think about again" (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 346). The Spirit's work is not only the type of spiritual illumination that was given to Elizabeth in Luke, but also, it involves reminding and thus prompting reflection on the relevant divine historical revelation that will serve as the presuppositional framework for understanding, as demonstrated in Peter's sermon.

The passage reveals a reciprocal relationship between the divine and the human prior to the Spirit's reception. The Holy Spirit convicts (Acts 2:37). God offers the gift of repentance (Acts 5:32). It is man's part to respond, accepting the gift of repentance and being baptized (Acts 2:38). The person is then filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

This is a similar pattern the disciples experienced prior to Pentecost; they were baptized with the Baptism of repentance by John the Baptist as alluded to in the upper room selection of Matthias (Acts 1:22), and then, they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Peter's sermon implies that the Holy Spirit is universally provided, but it is conditional on the individual's willingness to be baptized and repent (Acts 5:32).

The contents of Peter's sermon reveal that being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost also brought spiritual illumination. He demonstrates a theological understanding of the phenomena that he is experiencing, when he quotes Joel 2:28–32. The experience of Peter on the day of Pentecost to empower him to witness and to receive spiritual illumination. White (1911) confirms the spiritual illumination received at Pentecost when she stated, "Pentecost brought them the heavenly illumination. The truths they could not understand while Christ was with them were now unfolded. With a faith and assurance that they had never before known, they accepted the teachings of the Sacred Word" (p. 45).

Acts 3:11–26

The basis for the selection of this passage is that Peter endeavors to help the people understand the significance of the miracle of the healing of the lame man.

Description

In seeking to help the people understand the source of power for the miracle, Peter evokes "those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets" (Acts 3:18), and further citation of 2 Samuel 7:12 and Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19, as the hermeneutical framework for understanding Jesus as resurrected Lord. Peter states that

the healing of the lame man was a demonstration of the power of the resurrected Christ (Acts 3:16). Peter's words also reveal a high view of historic revelation when indicates that the words of the prophets were the words of God (Acts 3:18, 21).

Analysis

Peter establishes the pattern of the use of Scripture as the interpretive key for understanding contemporary phenomena. The first instance was in the upper room meeting with the disciples (Acts 1:18–20). The second time was during his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–35). The explanation of the healing of the lame man was the third use of this methodological approach. This pattern points towards the approach as the ideal praxis of interpretation.

Acts 7:1–60

Stephen's discourse is the longest sermon of the book of Acts and his vision of Jesus provides epistemological implications pertaining to theological reason that warrants further reflection.

Description

The stoning of Stephen marks the end of the 70-week prophecy and the termination of the Jews as being agents of God's missional vision (Paroschi, 1998, p. 358). The structure of Stephen's sermon is in the format of a "covenant lawsuit" and his sermon ends with a verdict of condemnation (Shea, 1986, p. 81). Stephen is the "last prophet" (p. 82) to the Jews in the context of the 70-week prophecy's phrase to seal up the "vision and prophecy" (Dan 9:24).

During his sermon, Stephen uses Moses' reference (Deut 18:15, 18) as the presupposition to understand Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 7:37), which is the same citation used by Peter in Acts 3:22. In Acts 7:51, Stephen's verdict condemns the Jew's resistance to the Holy Spirit in their rejection of the Messiah. The Jew's fate was sealed when they "stopped their ears" (Acts 7:57) and stoned Stephen.

Before his execution, Stephen experiences Holy Spirit illumination. Luke states that Stephen "full of the Holy Spirit" saw "Jesus standing at the right hand of the throne of God" (Acts 7:55–56). "When the Holy Spirit came upon Stephen, he was given a vision of heaven. By definition Stephen became a prophet at this point in time" (Shea, 1986 p. 81). Luke infers the relationship between being "full of the Holy Spirit" and being able to see Jesus in heaven.

Analysis

In line with the pattern established by Peter's discourses, Stephen demonstrates the usage of divine historic revelation, the Old Testament, as the presupposition for understanding contemporaneous revelation (Jesus). Stephen's usage of the same passage (Deut 18:15, 18) that Peter used in an earlier discourse, (Acts 3:22), further establishes the hermeneutical methodology used by early Christians as he endeavors to help others to gain understanding.

The passage demonstrates the relationship between volitional response and illumination. On one hand, the Pharisees resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51), and they were not able to understand, as demonstrated by their rejection of Jesus (Acts 7:52). On the other, Stephen is "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:55); therefore, he sees Jesus "standing at the right hand of the throne of God" (Acts 7:56). Stephen saw; the Pharisees

did not. The passage reveals that the exercise of human free will in rejection or acceptance of the Spirit has epistemological implications of spiritual blindness or spiritual illumination, respectively.

The inferred relationship between Stephen's being "full of the Holy Spirit" and the ability to see the vision of Jesus in heaven (Acts 7:55–56), reveals the link between spirituality and epistemology. The human relationship with the Spirit precedes the revelation of the Spirit (epistemology).

Acts 9:1–22

The basis for the selection of this passage is that Paul seeks the meaning of the divine revelation of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus when he said, "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). Paul's conversion is arguably the most dramatic reframing of presuppositions in the book of *Acts*. Paul's conversion to Christianity meant the rejection of ideas that had guided his life to this point. The data of the Old Testament was the same; he now saw scripture in a new light.

Description

Immediately after Paul's conversion, he preaches by "proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:22). In Greek, the word for *proving* is *συμβιβάζων*, which means "to show for certain" (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 339). The word *συμβιβάζων* implies that Paul was giving reasons for Jesus being the Christ after his conversion. The vision on the road to Damascus and the three days of blindness in isolation (Acts 9:9), and his subsequent conversion, evidenced by his baptism (Acts 9:18) was an intellectual reframing as much as it was a spiritual rebirth. Paul reveals clues as to the nature of his reversal when he reflects on his former mindset in the epistle to the Philippians by stating "concerning the

law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ” (Phil 3:5–6).

Paul had an epistemological change in that he viewed spiritual reality prior to and after his conversion differently. Keener (2013) comments that “Paul’s view of Christ must have demanded a radical rethinking of his approach to the law, eschatology, and everything else” (p. 1610). White (1911) states that Paul “emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life” (p. 119). This was a process of self-examination, where the apostle Paul went through an intentional process of ridding himself of the faulty presuppositions that had skewed his understanding of Jesus, in light of the Old Testament.

God reveals to Ananias that Paul is praying and to go and lay his hands on him so that his vision would be restored (Acts 9:12). When Ananias comes to Paul, he states that Jesus has told him to lay his hands on Paul that he might receive his “sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” The passage reveals the relationship between prayer and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Paul’s theological reflection in isolation was broken by the visit of Ananias (Acts 9:17), which connected Paul to the body of believers in Damascus. Later, Paul would connect with the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26), where Paul indicates he remained with Peter for fifteen days (Gal 1:18). Paul’s experience occurred in solitude and then continued with the community of believers. White (1911) corroborates the implications of the passage:

Thus, Jesus gave sanction to the authority of His organized church and placed Saul in connection with His appointed agencies on earth. Christ had now a church

as His representative on earth, and to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life. Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world. (p. 122)

Analysis

Paul's conversion reveals a process of theological deconstruction and construction on the presuppositional level. Paul experiences a theophany on the road to Damascus that causes a reevaluation of his presuppositions. He then empties his mind of those ideas that were at dissonance with the vision of Jesus. Then installs scripture as the hermeneutical presupposition that confirms the revelation of Christ. White (1911) gives further details as to the nature of how the process of Paul's theological reversal unfolded:

In that hour of heavenly illumination, Saul's mind acted with remarkable rapidity. The prophetic records of Holy Writ were opened to his understanding. He saw that the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, had been foretold by the prophets and proved Him to be the promised Messiah. Stephen's sermon at the time of his martyrdom was brought forcibly to Saul's mind, and he realized that the martyr had indeed beheld "the glory of God" when he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:55, 56. The priests had pronounced these words blasphemy, but Saul now knew them to be truth. (p. 115)

The "heavenly illumination" caused a new understanding of scripture and contemporary revelation (Stephen's illumination) that confirmed Jesus as the Messiah. The process of Paul's theological reversal was the "emptying" of cultural and Pharisaical presuppositions with the installation of the divine historical revelation as the new presuppositional framework. The paradigm shift in Paul's mind then further informed his theophany experience, as evidenced by his continued reflection and the recounting of vision of Jesus to the Jews (Acts 22:3–21) and prior to Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:12–

18). The encounter with Jesus Christ led to a change in Paul's mind on the presuppositional level.

Paul was a Pharisee; he had been trained in the rabbinical schools and knew Old Testament prophecies (Phil 3:5). First-century Jewish tradition and culture had replaced the Old Testament prophecies as the presuppositional framework for understanding, which was demonstrated by his actions of persecuting Christians for the high priest (Acts 9:1–2). The Old Testament prophecies were in Paul's mind prior to his conversion (White, 1911), but the data was not being used as a hermeneutical lens for understanding the Messiah. The theophany of Jesus on the road to Damascus became the catalyst for the data already in the mind of Paul to be moved from memorized data status to a hermeneutical key status. Thus, could Paul be described by Luke immediately after this as “proving that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:22). The issue was not acquiring more factual information; the issue was how the information already in the mind of Paul was to be utilized as the hermeneutical lens that would cause a paradigm shift.

The praying of Paul (Acts 9:12) prior to being filled with Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17) follows the pattern of the praying disciples prior the reception of Holy Spirit in the upper room (Acts 2) and the prayer of the disciples prior to the reception of the Holy Spirit in *Acts* Chapter 4. Prayer for the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit are portrayed by Luke as correlated experiences, and an implied nuanced causation or a conditional relationship. The pattern emerging in *Acts* is prayer preceding the receiving of the Holy Spirit, which precedes spiritual illumination. Prayer, as related to the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, thus, also has epistemological implications. Prayer and spiritual understanding are presented as being interrelated.

The experience of Paul was a theological reversal occurring in isolation and in connection with the community of believer's points towards the uniformity of the Holy Spirit's illumination and thereby, a check and balance for human subjectivity bias. Paul's private theophany and his theological reflection, apart from the brethren in Jerusalem, in his three years in Arabia (Gal 1:17–18) was later likely cross-referenced with Peter during the fifteen days he remained with him (Gal 1:18). This is a reasonable inference given that a few verses earlier Paul describes the gospel he received came not "from man, nor was I taught it; but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11), then Paul proceeds to reveal the time that he spent with Peter. By implication, the revelation of Jesus to Paul in private, as well as his theological reflection in isolation, was found to be in harmony with the revelation and theological experience of the community of faith. Paul contributed to, and enhanced, the body's theological understanding as evidenced by his later New Testament contribution; thus, emerges an interdependence between corporate congruence and individual contribution.

Acts 10–11:18

Peter seeks an understanding of the meaning of his vision (Acts 10:17). Since the limits of the research are an examination of the disciples seeking understanding or endeavoring to assist others in understanding, examining the description of how God worked with Peter's theological framework as he sought understanding would be relevant and appropriate.

Description

Acts 10 begins with Cornelius being described as a person who "prayed to God always" and "prayed" prior to the vision of an angel (Acts 10:2, 3, 30); and also, Peter

praying prior to the vision of the unclean animals (Acts 10:9, 10). In both cases, prayer precedes divine revelation.

The vision of Peter in Acts 10 demonstrates God using divine revelation to challenge cultural presuppositions within Peter and with other Jewish Christian believers. This is evidenced by Peter's statement of awareness of the meaning of the vision to Cornelius, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Peter, being a Jew, had Jewish cultural presuppositions about Gentiles. The Jewish Christians revealed similar presuppositions when they confronted Peter's association with Gentiles when they stated: "you went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them" (Acts 11:3). Peter and the other believers were converted spirit-filled Christians, yet the presence of unbiblical cultural presuppositions continues to linger in Luke's narrative.

Peter's methodology for helping the other Jewish Christians to understand was to recount the vision, historic divine revelation (Acts 11:4–10), and to recount the divine manifestation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16–17). Peter and the Jewish Christians then used them as the hermeneutical framework for its soteriological implications for the Gentiles when they stated, "God has also granted the Gentiles repentance unto life" (Acts 10:27–28).

Analysis

The text reveals God working historically with Peter and the other believers to remove cultural presuppositions. The narrative of *Acts* demonstrates that the Jewish cultural presuppositions, such as circumcision and association with Gentiles (Acts 11:3), did not supernaturally vanish with the reception of the Holy Spirit as depicted in prior

passages, such as the upper room experiences in Acts 2 or the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 4. This is evidenced by Peter, who is described by Luke as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:8); however, he is described as having lingering cultural presuppositions in Acts Chapter 10. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not a single supernatural act of downloading of heaven’s right presuppositions and replacement of wrong cultural presuppositions. This passage points towards the historicity of reason, meaning that cultural presumptions linger from the past and continue on in the minds of even Spirit-filled believers if there is not an intentional “emptying” of faulty presuppositions such as the type that Paul engaged in. The apostle Peter was not immune to faulty cultural presuppositions, though being a notable apostle. Acts Chapters 10 and 11 reveal God working historically through divine revelation for transformation on the presuppositional level.

The confrontation between Peter and Paul described in Galatians reveals the possibility of differences in the degree of lingering cultural presuppositions (Gal 2:11–15). Peter succumbed to the social pressures, and did not eat with the Gentiles (Gal 2:12), which caused Paul to rebuke Peter openly (Gal 2:14). Even though it could be argued that Peter and Paul had both emptied their cultural presuppositions equally, except Peter had succumbed at the level of praxis due to social pressures, it could also be argued that Paul had emptied his cultural presuppositions to the point of developing a conviction that would be revealed in a public rebuke of the theological incoherence of Peter’s behavior (Gal 2:14). Paul’s systematic deconstruction of Jewish cultural presuppositions uniquely positioned him to be the champion, defender, and advocate of the Gentiles, as demonstrated in this passage in Galatians.

Peter had previously used historical divine revelation of the prophets as the presuppositional framework for understanding; however, in this passage, Peter demonstrates the usage of contemporary divine revelation as a presuppositional framework. Peter's usage of the vision as a hermeneutical lens along with the conformational evidence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit implies the authoritative nature of recent revelation.

Divine revelation, in this case, was challenging Peter and fellow Jewish Christians on the epistemological level of cultural presuppositions. The Jewish hermeneutical framework needed to be reevaluated. The assumptions that were out of harmony with contemporary were to be discarded.

The story of Peter and Cornelius demonstrates the relationship between prayer and spiritual illumination. In Paul's conversion story (Acts 9:1-22), there was an inferred relationship between spiritual illumination and prayer and the reception of the Holy Spirit. However, there is a direct link between the prayers of Cornelius and Peter and the divine revelations that followed. The book of *Acts*, to this point, presents prayer as essential to illumination.

The text demonstrates Peter's approach to theological dialogue was to cite divine revelation as authoritative, even when there was a perceived incongruence between Jewish culture and revelation. The implied parameters of the theological dialogue that Peter engaged were that culture was to be subject to divine revelation, even contemporary divine revelation. Peter's epistemological framework assumed the primacy of divine revelation over culture.

Acts 13:13–52—Paul at Antioch

Paul and Barnabas are reasoning in the synagogue endeavoring to help others to understand Jesus as the Messiah. The methodology of Paul's reasoning to convince Jews and Gentiles is a relevant subject for further discussion.

Description

In this passage, Paul uses historical divine revelation as the presupposition for understanding Jesus (Acts 13:16–41). Paul uses the same reference from the Old Testament that Peter used in his sermon after Pentecost (Acts 2:27). Paul follows the same methodological approach as Peter in the citation of divine historical revelation and in its use as the hermeneutical framework for understanding.

Seeing the Gentiles' receptivity of the gospel (Acts 13:44–52), Paul cites historical divine revelation (Isa 42:6; 49:6), as the authoritative guide for missiological praxis to them. This is evident in Paul's statement "behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). The Gentiles heard the citation of Scripture and "were glad and glorified the word of the Lord." Paul, in this passage, demonstrates the usage of divine historical revelation to a Gentile audience without the rich historical theological knowledge that a Jew would have. However, the usage of divine historical revelation without justification to a Gentile audience confirms the relevancy of the Old Testament even outside of the Jewish context.

Analysis

Paul's usage of divine historical revelation in a Gentile context points towards the transcendence of the Scriptures (in this specific case, the Old Testament) in its relevancy beyond the Jewish context. Paul's statement the "Lord has commanded us" (Acts 13:47) implies that although divine revelation was historically Jewish in nature, it also applies to

Gentiles. Paul's usage of divine historical revelation (Acts 13:33–35) reveals that the universal relevancy of Scripture is not impinged by its historicity and Jewish ethnic associations.

Paul follows the same methodology as Peter and Stephen in the citation of divine historical revelation and in its use as the hermeneutical framework for understanding Jesus as the Messiah. The notable transition of ministry from Jews to Gentiles in *Acts* did not result in a change in principles of methodology. In Acts 13, Paul follows the same hermeneutical methodology to a Gentile audience, and even cites the same passage from Peter's first sermon in Acts 2, that was given to a Jewish audience. This shows the epistemological reality that drawing attention to a biblical hermeneutical framework is applicable to human beings, in general, regardless of culture. Paul's usage of historical revelation, in this way, reveals his assumptions regarding the relevancy of this approach; the hermeneutical framework did not change when the audience changed or became more diverse.

Acts 15:1–24—Jerusalem Council

This passage was selected on the basis that church leaders in the book of *Acts* were seeking understanding as to how the law of Moses should be applied to Gentile converts. The theological dialogue that took place in Acts 15 reveals important clues regarding the nature of theological reason.

Description

The conflict arose because certain Jewish Christians, formerly from the “sect of the Pharisees”, stated that Gentile Christians needed to be “circumcised” and “keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). Paul and Barnabas opposed them (Acts 15:2), thus, creating

the context for the Jerusalem council that is discussed in the rest of the chapter. Luke's account indicates, by implication of the statement that the Christians were of Pharisaical roots, that there were lingering presuppositions in the minds of those imposing circumcision on Gentile converts. On an epistemological level, the conflict in Acts 15 arose because of Jewish presuppositions that were not reevaluated and expunged as in the case of Paul's experience, after his conversion. Hence, the conflict would center first between Paul, though formerly a Pharisee (Phil 3:5), who had expunged unbiblical cultural presuppositions, and those also from the "sect of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5), who, as evidenced from Luke's description, had not expunged cultural presuppositions, even though they had accepted Christ.

In the Jerusalem council, after "much dispute" (Acts 15:7), the disciples gave contemporary examples of the Holy Spirit's outpouring and miracles in and among the Gentiles. Peter begins by telling his historic experiential reflection of divine revelation of the Holy Spirit falling upon the Gentiles (Acts 15:7–8). Paul and Barnabas give a historic experiential reflection of the manifestations of God among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). These manifestations are interpreted as having soteriological implications, when they concluded, after their reflections, that "[they] believe[d] that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [they] shall be saved in the same manner as they" (Acts 15:11).

After the recollection of Peter, Paul and Barnabas concerning contemporary manifestations of the Spirit among the Gentiles, James proceeds to give divine historic revelation (Acts 15:15–17), as coming into "agreement" with the phenomena of Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit and supernatural manifestations upon the Gentiles (Acts 15:15–

17). The verdict by James came immediately after: “therefore, I judge that we should not trouble those who are turning to God” (Acts 15:19).

James views the “words of the prophets” (Acts 15:15) as a reflection of the mind of God, as he cites Amos: “known to God from eternity are all His works” (Acts 15:18). This implies the foreknowledge of God is revealed to his prophets. In the subsequent letter to the Gentiles, the apostles interpreted the process and its conclusion by stating, “for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28); by implication, the confirmation of historic divine revelation, as “the words of the prophets agree” (Acts 15:15,) was interpreted by the apostles as confirmation by the Holy Spirit.

Analysis

The text reveals the historicity of theological reason, which was demonstrated in the cultural presuppositions that persisted in the minds of those Jewish Christians formerly from the “sect of the Pharisees” (Acts 15:5). Although these individuals had accepted Christ, their cultural presuppositions remained and persisted even after the Jerusalem council, as evidenced in Acts 21:20–21, to be discussed in greater detail later. The passage reveals that the conversion of the Jewish Christians did not entail an automatic revision of cultural presuppositions. The experiences of the individual’s past were still part of their hermeneutical framework after conversion, as their belief that salvation to the Gentiles necessitated circumcision (Acts 15:5) showed. The cultural presuppositions are addressed and deconstructed in Acts 15 by reflecting on current divine phenomena and divine historic revelation. However, those that did not allow for

divine revelation to reevaluate their presuppositional framework continued to create discord within the church (Acts 21:20–21).

The passage demonstrates the precedence of historic divine revelation as the litmus test for authenticating current phenomena. The experiences of Paul and Peter, including the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, had to be validated by the Scriptures (Amos 9:11,12), and then, the verdict was given by James (Acts 15:19–20). The implication of the authenticating nature of historical divine revelation is found in the statement by James, where he indicated, “and with this, the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written.” The Greek word *συνφωνέω* that has been translated agreement can also imply “a type of joint decision” (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 367). Thus, the contemporary divine revelation had to be in congruence with historic divine revelation; in other words, contemporary divine revelation did not make historical divine revelation irrelevant, but rather contemporary divine revelation was examined for agreement with historical divine revelation. The nuances of the Greek indicate that contemporary divine revelation was not less authoritative, or vice versa, but seem to imply equal validity. However, the role of historic divine revelation was to serve as the congruence tester.

The passage demonstrates the central role of divine historical revelation in theological dialogue. The words of Scripture had the final say, prior to the final verdict, and, were believed to be the revelation of the mind of God. When the contemporary divine phenomena were found to be congruent with historic divine revelation, the matter was settled, as evidenced in Luke’s account that “this pleased the apostles and the elders, with the whole church” (Acts 15:22) to send a letter with the decision, while before they had been in much “much dispute” (Acts 15:22). Human reasoning, culture, and personal

feelings about circumcision were subject to the Scriptures; the assumptions of those who participated in the Jerusalem council was that the words of the prophets yesterday were the words of God today.

The Holy Spirit is revealed as working through the group in theological reflection. Neither Paul's nor Peter's contribution, though notable, were considered to be the final deciding factor in the discussion. Paul and Peter's experiences contributed to an enhancement of the overall theological understanding of the body but did not replace or override the body's consensus on Scripture.

Acts 17:1–4

The rationale for the passage selection is that it describes the method of how Paul endeavors to help others understand by reasoning from Scripture and the reception of this methodology by a Gentile audience.

Description

Paul is described as reasoning “from the Scripture, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead” (Acts 17:2). The Greek for “demonstrating” is *παρατιθέμενος* which indicates “to show to be true, to present evidence of truth, to prove” (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 672). This seems to be a concise form of Luke's description of Paul's previous discourses (Acts 16:16–35). Paul's methodology of “showing to be true,” from the Old Testament, the death and resurrection of Jesus, again, the pattern emergence of using divine historic revelation as the authoritative hermeneutical framework for understanding Christ.

Referencing the Old Testament was not limited to Jews alone; it was also to be for Gentiles, and it proved effective. The response to Paul's teachings was that a “great

multitude of devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women” were converted (Acts 17:4). This is the second time in Paul’s ministry, where the presupposition of divine historical revelation is used in a Gentile context (the prior one, being Acts 13:44–52).

Analysis

This passage demonstrates Paul using Scripture as the starting point (“reasoned with them from Scripture,” Acts 17:2). The phrase “from Scripture” implies that the Scriptures were the presuppositional (the ideas prior to a) framework for understanding. The phrase also implies the primacy of Scripture as being the data for interpretation.

Paul’s usage of historic divine revelation as the presuppositional framework was effective with Jews and, in this case, even more effective with Gentiles. This, again, as in the previous Gentile context, described earlier, points towards the universal nature of Scripture as the hermeneutical standard for understanding regardless of ethnicity or cultural background. The Old Testament Scriptures were not considered to be culturally conditioned for the Jewish mind alone by Paul, and therefore not irrelevant to the Gentile mind.

Acts 17:10–14—Bereans

Luke describes Paul and Silas as seeking to assist the Bereans in their understanding of Christ, thus meeting the criteria for selection and discussion.

Description

The book of *Acts* portrays the Bereans as evaluating the preaching of Paul and Silas by historic divine revelation (Acts 17:11); they are described as having “searched the Scripture daily to find out whether these things were so.” Luke depicts this as being

“more fair-minded” than those in Thessalonica. The Greek word translated “fair-minded,” *εὐγενέστεροι* can also be translated “to be noble-minded” (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 331).

The behavior of the Bereans in evaluating the veracity of Paul’s teachings by historic divine revelation was considered more ideal behavior than the implied non-evaluation of Paul’s teachings by divine historic revelation by those in Thessalonica.

Analysis

Luke’s account of the Bereans reveals that the historical divine revelation of Scripture was to be the litmus test for verifying the authenticity of contemporary revelation. This was the approved and ideal method as described by Luke and implied the ideal method in the mind of Paul. The new revelation was to be authenticated by historical revelation.

Luke’s description of the results of the verification process of the Bereans was such that “many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men” (Acts 17:12). The result was belief that crossed cultural boundaries (Jew and Gentile) and cross-gender boundaries (men and women). This points toward the universal nature of divine historical revelation that functioned as the presuppositional framework for human beings, regardless of culture or gender, and allowed presuppositional transition in their own lives.

Acts 17:16–34

Luke describes the Athenians as seeking meaning when they asked Paul, “may we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean” (Act 17:19–20).

Paul proceeded to follow a different methodology that had been established, henceforth, in the book of *Acts* in the attempt to help the Athenians to understand.

Description

In dialogue with the Athenians, Paul diverges from the pattern of citing historic divine revelation. Although he does, at times, paraphrase biblical concepts, there is no quotation of Scripture, nor is there a description in Luke of prophets or Scriptures being referenced. “Paul uses citations from their own, ancient poets (Epimenides, Aratus, Cleanthes) to underline the point that God as Creator is the Source of all human life” (Dybdahl, 2010, p. 1448). Paul switched methodologies, rather than using divine historic revelation (the Old Testament) as the hermeneutical framework for understanding Jesus; Paul took a philosophical approach of citing the Athenian’s ancient poets as the starting point for helping them to understand Jesus.

In the narrative, Luke describes that Paul went from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18:1), where he states, in his letter to the Corinthians, that he used a particularly different approach (1 Cor 2:1–3); Paul states that he did not come with “persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” The word “demonstrate”, *ἐνδειξις*, is “proof, evidence, verification, indication” (Louw & Nida, 1996, p. 340). This seems to be an implied reference to contrasting his approach in Corinth from the location that he had just come from, Athens. White (1911) corroborates this implied reference in the following statement:

In preaching the gospel in Corinth, the apostle followed a course different from that which had marked his labors at Athens. While in the latter place, he had sought to adapt his style to the character of his audience; he had met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. As he thought of the time

thus spent, and realized that his teaching in Athens had been productive of but little fruit, he decided to follow another plan of labor in Corinth in his efforts to arrest the attention of the careless and the indifferent. He determined to avoid elaborate arguments and discussions, and ‘not to know anything’ among the Corinthians “save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” He would preach to them ‘not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’ (p. 244)

Paul had “sought to adapt his style” to meet the philosophical minds on Mars hills, but he realized, in reflection, that his approach was not “productive of but little fruit” (White, 1911, p. 244). The pattern in Paul’s ministry, to this point, had been the citation of historic divine revelation, as the starting point, and hermeneutical framework in understanding Jesus, which resulted in Jews, Gentiles, men, and women being saved (Acts 17:12). However, in Athens, there was a clear unprecedented divergence from the pattern that had been established by Peter, Stephen, and Paul. The change in hermeneutical methodology, and then, the implied self-correction, after reflection back to the established pattern in Corinth has epistemological as well as missiological implications.

Analysis

The missiological implications of Paul’s divergence and self-correction back to the established pattern in the book of *Acts* point towards the effectiveness of the citation of historic divine revelation, even if the recipients do not consider the data to be authoritative. Paul sought to use the ancient poets known to the Athenians, with the likely assumption that these citations would be considered an authoritative starting point for the hearers. However, the missiological implications are that, it is the Spirit’s work to “demonstrate” (1 Cor 2:1–3); the word for demonstrate, *ἐνδειξις*, indicates that proof and evidence is known in the minds of the hearers by the Holy Spirit, as the historic divine

revelation is being cited by the human vessel. The implied human's role is to cite and present the historic divine revelation, and the Spirit's role is to demonstrate the proof to the individual.

The contextual data implies that Paul went back to the established pattern of citing divine historical revelation as the hermeneutical framework, and thus, he "reasoned" and "persuaded" (Acts 18:4; 19:8–9, 26; 24:25), as he had "reasoned with them from the Scriptures explaining and demonstrating" prior to Athens, in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2). The textual evidence reveals Paul as reasoning from the Scriptures in Thessalonica and Berea, which is followed by a brief change in methodology in Athens, which is followed by self-correction back to the previous pattern in his subsequent presentations.

The epistemological implications of Paul's divergence and self-correction point towards the essential role of divine historical revelation and the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing and converting souls for Christ. The skeptical audience of Mars Hill did not warrant the elimination of the elements of this divine tandem (the Word and the Spirit). The epistemological implications reveal that spiritual knowing and seeing must begin with God (the Word and the Spirit); it is the prerequisite for understanding and conversion no matter the audience, even the most secular and philosophical enclaves like Mars Hill.

Acts 21:15–25

The passage gives evidence of lingering presuppositions in the minds of the Jewish Christians even after the decision at the Jerusalem council of Acts 15. The

selected verses give clues as to the nature of theological reason that warrants closer examination.

Description

Paul's reception in Jerusalem was met with James, the brother of Jesus, exhorting Paul to appease Jewish Christians, by demonstrating his orthodoxy by going through a ceremonial ritual. The text reveals that there were Jews who had converted to Christianity but still held on to the ceremonial laws and rituals of Moses; this is evidenced by James' statement "you see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law" (Acts 18:21). Lingering presuppositions in the minds of James and Jewish Christians in general, lead him to suggest Paul practice a ceremonial ritual to reassure Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

James' statement "that you yourself walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning Gentiles who believe . . . they should observe no such thing" (Acts 21:24, 25), it seems to imply that Jewish Christians are to keep the ceremonial rituals, but Gentile Christians are to be exempt. The nuances of the statement by James point towards a slight reinterpretation of the Acts 15 decision, and appear in contradiction to Paul's contemporary epistles, which specifically pointed references to the ceremonial laws in Colossians 2. White (1911) corroborates the notion that the advice of James was inconsistent with the Acts 15 decision:

The brethren hoped that Paul, by following the course suggested, might give a decisive contradiction to the false reports concerning him. They assured him that the decision of the former council concerning the Gentile converts and the ceremonial law, still held good. But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision. The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice. (p. 404)

There were two aspects of Paul's ministry that appear to be in tension: Paul's evangelistic pragmatism versus his theological convictions. 1 Cor 9:20 exemplifies Paul's evangelistic pragmatism: "to the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law". Paul demonstrated this pragmatism when he cut off his hair in fulfilling a vow (Acts 18:18) and circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3). This was against the backdrop of Paul's theological convictions, where Paul considered the ceremonial law as "bondage" (Gal 2:4), and stated, "that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:15). White (1911) corroborates Paul's tendency for evangelistic pragmatism:

Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. He felt that if by any reasonable concession he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked. When we think of Paul's great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness toward the weak in the faith, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men so far as he could without sacrificing principle—when we think of all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to deviate from the firm, decided course that he had hitherto followed. But instead of accomplishing the desired object, his efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened his predicted sufferings, and resulted in separating him from his brethren, depriving the church of one of its strongest pillars, and bringing sorrow to Christian hearts in every land. (White, 1911, p. 405)

White's (1911) implication is that Paul's evangelistic pragmatism went too far, in this case, and thereby, resulted ultimately in missiological loss; ironically, the opposite of Paul's motivation came to fruition. Navigating the tension between evangelistic pragmatism and theological convictions appears to be a difficult undertaking, even for a Spirit-filled apostle.

Analysis

The selected verses point toward historical reason, past experiences that frames one's presuppositional knowledge, which is evidenced by the cultural presuppositions that continue to linger in the minds of Jewish Christians. Furthermore, there is evidence in the text that alludes to cultural presuppositions lingering on in James, the brother of Jesus, which would explain his recommendation of Paul's appeasement. Leadership and laity, in Acts, were not immune to the ideas of culture that came into the hermeneutical frameworks, through past experience. The description of James' counsel, even after the Acts 15 council and decision points toward the difficulty of removing latent presuppositions in even spirit-filled leadership.

This account demonstrates how cultural presupposition can cause us to reinterpret divine revelation. The decision of the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 was "good to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 15:28) and settled based on historic divine revelation (Acts 15:16, 17), in the citation of Amos by James. However, in Acts 22, Luke describes James, though being the one who pronounced the verdict, now appears soft-peddling the scope of the decision as applying solely to Gentiles, but not to Jews (Acts 21:24, 25). The epistemological impact of cultural presuppositions was revisionism, at best, and reinterpretation, at worst.

This particular account, along with White's (1911) insights, demonstrates that evangelistic pragmatism can go too far in the other direction, against the tension with one's theological convictions. Paul's pragmatism, in this case, led to his demise, and resulted in great cost to the church. The implications of evangelistic pragmatism should be evaluated from the ground of theological reflection, rather than evaluated against one's projections of the hypothetical results of evangelistic pragmatism.

Acts 22:1–21; Acts 26:12–23

The justification for the selection of these two passages is Luke describes Paul as seeking to convince Jews and then before Felix and Agrippa by telling and retelling of theophany experience on the road to Damascus.

Description

In both accounts of his testimony, Paul implies his prior presuppositional framework, when he stated that he was “taught according to the strictness of our father’s law” (Acts 22:3), and “that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee” (Acts 26:5). Then he proceeds to recount the theophany on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:9–11; 26:12–18). By implication, the vision of Jesus challenged Paul’s Pharisaical presuppositions and the training that he had received prior.

Paul, in his two testimonial accounts, references contemporary divine revelation and historical divine revelation. In the second recorded retelling of his conversion, Paul proceeds to reference divine historic revelation as the presupposition for understanding Christ, when he said that “which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23). However, in his first recorded telling of his testimony, Paul uses only contemporary divine revelation: the vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:9–22) and the vision in Jerusalem, where he was instructed by Jesus to flee persecution (Acts 22:17–21).

Analysis

Paul’s continued reflection on the theophany implies the historical nature of reason. Paul’s two recorded times of retelling his testimonial points toward his continued

reflection on the theophany of his experience on the road to Damascus. This continued reflection reveals a deeper understanding of the theophany experience. The textual evidence supports the notion of growth of Paul's level of self-understanding; he now identified himself as an apostle "to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21; Acts 26:17). Paul's understanding had matured. His implied continued reflection on the theophany experience points towards a continual revisiting of the data of revelation in a cycle of clarified knowledge and growth.

In the selected passages, Paul demonstrates the use of historical divine revelation (the Old Testament) and contemporaneous divine revelation (his vision of Jesus) as the presupposition for understanding Christ. However, the recent theophany experience was Paul's main presuppositional framework that was expressed in his testimony; although historical divine revelation was mentioned by Paul, the emphasis is on the recent contemporaneous revelation of Jesus, on the road to Damascus. Paul's usage of contemporaneous divine revelation reveals its authoritative nature. The recent nature of the theophany did not diminish its role, nor functional value, as the hermeneutical framework, not only for his personal reflection, but also, for his proselytizing dialogues.

Paul's testimonial account reveals how contemporaneous experiential divine revelation by implication caused him to re-evaluate and expunge cultural presuppositions. Paul's statement "I am indeed a Jew" (Acts 22:3), prior to telling his theophany experience to the Jewish audience, was an implicit reference to the reality that Paul had, at one point, similar, if not identical, presuppositions as his audience. He describes how these presuppositions had led him to "persecute . . . to the death" (Acts 22:4); he transitions to his vision of Jesus by saying, "now it happened as I journeyed and came

near Damascus” (Acts 22:6). In other words, the trajectory of Paul’s thought processes and actions, in terms of trajectory, went through a dramatic about-face, as a result of the theophany. The testimony of Paul reveals how divine revelation can cause a theological and missiological reversal, through self-criticism, on the presuppositional level of epistemology. Paul’s experience reveals his reevaluation on the presuppositional level, in light of divine revelation, was the starting point for theological and missiological deconstruction and construction.

Acts 28:17–30

In the final recorded dialogue in *Acts*, Paul is seeking to help the Jews understand that Jesus is Messiah.

Description

Luke’s last chapter of *Acts* ends with the continued methodological pattern that had been established prior (except for Athens), where Paul uses divine historical revelation as the presupposition for understanding Jesus; Paul is described as “persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the Prophets” (Acts 28:23). The citation of Moses, by the apostles, exists throughout the Luke’s account (Acts 3:22; 7:17, 20, 22, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 40, 44; 15:21; 26:22; 28:23). The apostle’s reference to the prophets appears also throughout the book (Acts 3:18, 21, 24, 25; 7:42, 52; 10:43; 11:27; 13:27, 40; 15:14; 24:14; 26:22, 27; 28:23). Paul references both, the “law and ... the prophets” (Acts 24:14), and “Moses and the prophets” (Acts 26:22; 28:23). Luke uses this same expression in his gospel account, where he describes Jesus, in the context of endeavoring to help the disciples understand, after the resurrection, in the upper room, as stating “that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the

Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). Prior to this occasion, on the walk to Emmaus, Luke describes Jesus “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). The textual evidence points toward a hermeneutical precedence being established by Jesus (in Luke’s gospel) that is perpetuated by the apostles throughout the book of *Acts* (Luke’s sequel), ending with Paul’s example of “persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the Prophets” (Acts 28:23).

In the selected passage, Paul demonstrates a high view of Scripture when he states, “the Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet” (Acts 28:24). Luke’s first instance of the Holy Spirit, speaking through the prophet in this book, is in the first chapter of Acts, when Peter stated that the Holy Spirit spoke through David (Acts 1:16). It is notable that Luke would end his book with the same notion: this time by Paul affirming that the Holy Spirit was speaking through the prophet (Acts 28:24). Arguably, the most notable apostle of the early part of Acts, Peter, and the most notable apostle of the latter part of Acts, Paul, both express a high view of Scripture, by stating the notion that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets, serving as bookends for the entire narrative.

After some of the Jews “disbelieved” (Acts 28:24), Paul points out the reason for their disbelief, when he quotes from Isa 6:9–10: “their eyes they have closed” (Acts 28:27). Paul’s citation of Isaiah implies that the reason for the Jew’s disbelief was motivated by the hypocrisy of their search.

Analysis

Luke's description of Paul, using "Moses and the Prophets" as the hermeneutical framework for understanding Christ, reveals the *tota Scriptura* principle. *Tota Scriptura* being the notion that all Scripture is inspired, and thus, authoritative, as explicitly described to Paul's protégé Timothy (2 Tim 3:16). Luke's description of Paul using Moses and the Prophets can be cross-referenced with Luke's earlier gospel description of Jesus' explanation to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, where Jesus gives an exhaustive Bible study using "Moses and all the prophets" (Luke 24:27). It is evident that Jesus applied the *tota Scriptura* principle by Luke's emphasis: "all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). It can also be reasonably inferred into the dialogue that Paul had with the Jews in the last chapter of *Acts*, that the reference to Moses and the prophets was also an application of the *tota Scriptura* principle. Luke describes Paul as using "both the Law of Moses and the Prophets", which is similar terminology, used in reference to Jesus, on the walk to Emmaus. The dialogue is described as continuing from "morning to evening" (Acts 28:23), which also implies an exhaustive study, similar to the one Jesus used on the walk to Emmaus. Luke's account points toward the notion that the data for the New Testament hermeneutical framework was to be all of the Old Testament, a *tota Scriptura* approach.

In the selected verses, Paul demonstrates the usage of historic divine revelation, as the presuppositional framework for understanding contemporaneous divine revelation, in this case, Jesus Christ. A new revelation is not revelation until it is understood within the presuppositional framework of prior revelation (Canale, 2005). The methodology of Jesus (Luke 24), the methodology of Peter, in his first sermon (Acts 2), and the narrative of

Acts, ending with the description of Paul's methodology, (Acts 28) reveals the standardization of the practice of the usage of historic divine revelation, as the hermeneutical framework for understanding Jesus Christ (new contemporaneous revelation). The book of *Acts* reveals the sola Scriptura principle, as the hermeneutical framework for understanding new revelation.

This final account, in Luke's narrative, demonstrates the relationship between human volition and epistemology. The Jews made a decision: "their eyes they have closed . . . lest they should understand" (Acts 27:27). The text describes that the Jew's volitional decision to close their eyes had epistemological implications they could not understand. Ironically, the Jews, who had the most access to the data of the Old Testament, were blind to the identity of Jesus; not because of a lack of data, but because of a decision that was made prior, which impinged their ability to understand.

Synthesis of Data on Theological Reason

Having done the macro and micro exegesis on the selected passages, in the book of *Acts*, I will now proceed to synthesize the information, constructing a tentative, "minimal model from the data" (Peckham, 2016, p. 253) on theological reason. I will proceed to reveal what the data points toward, as to the nature of theological reason and the resulting factors that the nature of theological reason necessitates.

The data derived from the book of *Acts* points toward theological reason as being historical and fallen. Historical, meaning that reason is subject to past life experiences, such as culture and education, that form an assumed, presuppositional framework, that determines how one interprets reality. Fallen, meaning that reason has been corrupted and affected by sin, thereby necessitating divine assistance.

Given that reason is historical and fallen, the data from the book of *Acts* revealed that theological reason requires certain prerequisites, such as conversion and regeneration prior to advanced illumination. The data points toward the fact that repentance, obedience, and prayer are necessary prior to the indwelling Spirit, which brings spiritual illumination. The disciples, who gathered in the upper room, had an essential experience with Jesus, obeyed the command of Jesus to stay in Jerusalem, and a collective prayer experience, in the upper room, prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Prayer, repentance, and obedience reveal the conditional volitional elements of the human agent prior to the reception of the Spirit.

The fallenness of theological reason necessitated a filling of the Holy Spirit, within an individual. The data from the book of *Acts* revealed that the filling with the Holy Spirit brought spiritual illumination and insight; however, it did not make one infallible, nor immune, from latent cultural presuppositions.

The historical nature of reason necessitated: (a) the Holy Spirit working with past divine historic revelation as presuppositional knowledge for understanding contemporaneous revelation; (b) using contemporaneous divine revelation for challenging latent cultural presuppositions that existed from one's past experiences; and (c) the authenticating of contemporaneous revelation by divine historical revelation. The relevance of divine revelation as presuppositional knowledge had universal application; it applied to Jews and Gentiles alike.

The fallen and historical nature of reason necessitated intentional self-criticism on the presuppositional level, considering divine revelation. The intentional emptying of cultural presuppositions that conflict with revelation and the deconstruction of theological

frameworks that do not harmonize with Scripture is implied within the book of *Acts*. The continued refining and reevaluation of presuppositional frameworks of the new theological construction is also implied in Paul's theological reversal and subsequent ministry. The extent of one's advancement in presuppositional refinement was predicated on giving primacy to data of divine revelation (a high value of Scripture), intentional scrutiny on the presuppositional level, and the individual's volitional surrender to the real-world implications of the data.

The fallen and historical nature of reason necessitated theological reflection in both, isolation and in community. Theological reflection in isolation, on the data of revelation in isolation, provided personal conviction. Connection with the community of believers provided confirmation. Though there has been conversion and the indwelling Spirit, in the life of the individual, this did not make the individual independent nor unaccountable to the church body. The book of *Acts* demonstrates the necessity of theological dialogue, within the community of believers, by reflecting on the data of divine historical revelation.

Systematizing the Data on Theological Reason

Having synthesized the data on theological reason, I will now proceed to give tentative, "minimal theo-ontological implications" (Peckham, 2016, p. 255) of the data, meaning, in this case: If theological reason is historical and fallen, how does God (the Holy Spirit) relate to it?

The data of *Acts* reveals the Holy Spirit working within the limits of historical reason. The Holy Spirit did not remove faulty cultural presuppositions when a person was converted and continued to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works,

historically, to bring awareness to faulty cultural presuppositions, through revelation and conviction. The Holy Spirit's workings on the presuppositional level are described as a historical process that references past and contemporary revelation to bring attention to latent erroneous presuppositions.

The Holy Spirit's work with historic and fallen reason is described as using the data of divine historical revelation from Scripture, as well as, contemporary revelation, as the source for presuppositional knowledge. The data of Scripture, being cognitive, implies that the Holy Spirit was working through cognitive theological reflection, rather than an experience that was devoid of cognitive reflection. The Holy Spirit's illumination did not replace Scripture as the hermeneutical framework; the Holy Spirit established Scripture as the hermeneutical framework.

The Holy Spirit is revealed as working conditionally and particularly. Conditionally, meaning that conversion, obedience, prayer, and repentance were prerequisites, implicitly or explicitly, in *Acts* for the Holy Spirit's filling. The Holy Spirit's filling was universally available and conditional. This meant that the Holy Spirit determined the content and the nature of the special revelation and illumination was given to a believer, as in the case of Elizabeth's illumination and Peter's vision.

The Holy Spirit is seen working through a theological reflection in individual isolation and in interaction with members in the community. The Holy Spirit worked through isolation, as in the case of Paul, and afterward, connected him with the body. The Jerusalem council is an example of the Holy Spirit working through an issue, through the theological reflection in the community. The Holy Spirit's work is demonstrated as both, individual and corporate, with interdependence between the two. The corporate

understanding provided the theological horizon by which the individual experience was evaluated for congruence. The individual experience contributed to an enhancement of the overall theological understanding of the body, but never, overriding the body.

Implications Towards a Dialogical Methodology

Having completed the exegesis of *Acts* related to theological reason, synthesized the findings, and provided a tentative theo-ontological model from the data derived from the book of *Acts*, I will now proceed to give brief implications towards a methodology of dialogue, limited to dialogue within the local church body, which will be further developed in Chapter 4.

The data derived from the book of *Acts* points towards a basic experiential prerequisite, prior to dialogue; in this case, an experience with Jesus that resulted in conversion. The disciples that gathered in the upper room had an experience with Jesus prior, therefore having similar presuppositional foundations.

The data also points toward the necessity of filling of the Holy Spirit, prior to dialogue. The filling of the Holy Spirit brought with it, not only empowerment for missions, but also epistemological illumination. With the conversion of the disciples as the foundation, the conditions for the filling were obedience and prayer.

Theological reflection of the book of *Acts* points towards the necessity of those engaged in dialogue to individually affirm the primacy of historic divine revelation (*sola Scriptura, tota Scriptura*), as well as, contemporary divine revelation (i.e., the writings of Ellen White) as the hermeneutical framework for understanding. If there was no agreement on the primacy of Scripture over culture, as the hermeneutical framework, then, the dialogue proved without fruit, in the book of *Acts*.

The data derived from the book of *Acts* also points towards the value of personal theological reflection and group theological reflection being a part of the dialogical process. The contributions of the individual were personal, dynamic, and fallible, while, at the same time, when proved congruent, they enhanced the theological horizon of the body of believers. The theological horizon of the body also impinged the individual's theological reflection. Personal theological reflection was not dictated or ruled over by the community of believers, but neither was the subjective personal theological reflection to override the body.

The data points towards the reality that for theological dialogue to be successful, there must be a willingness to acknowledge, assess, and, potentially, abandon presuppositions that conflict with Scripture. Scripture was at the center of dialogue, and as the body engaged it faithfully by refining and rejecting cultural presuppositions that were out of harmony with Scripture, unity was the by-product. The *telos* of dialogue in the book of *Acts* was not unity; unity was a potential result, but not the ultimate goal of dialogue. The *telos* of dialogue was individual and corporate congruence with Scripture, thereby, with the mind of God, and ultimately, mission.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to derive the principles related to theological reason from the data derived from a macro-phenomenological and micro-hermeneutical exegesis of the book of *Acts*; then, to give brief implications in a synthesis of the principles (meso-hermeneutical) derived towards a methodology of theological dialogue.

Concerning epistemology, the data of the book of *Acts* revealed theological reason, as historical and fallen, which necessitated certain factors such as: conversion,

being filled with the Holy Spirit, the usage of divine revelation as the hermeneutical framework for understanding, self-criticism on the presuppositional level in light of divine revelation, and theological reflection in isolation and with community.

Regarding the theo-ontological implications, the Holy Spirit is described as working within the limits of historical reason, utilizing contemporary and historic divine revelation as the source for hermeneutical knowledge, working conditionally and particularly, working individually and corporately through the church.

Concerning the implications towards a methodology of theological dialogue, the data points towards certain applicable principles such as: a basic experiential prerequisite of conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit prior to dialogue, an affirmation of the primacy of Scripture as the hermeneutical framework over cultural presuppositions, and theological reflection in isolation and community.

Having examined, synthesized, and applied the implications of the data from the book of *Acts* towards a methodology, I now turn to the literature review.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL REASON IN CHRISTIAN WRITINGS:

A LITERATURE REVIEW

Having completed a reflection of theological reason in the book of *Acts*, I now turn to a review of relevant Christian literature related to theological reason. The first section will describe theological reason in seminal Christian thinkers, specifically related to the relationship between faith and reason. The second section will review the recent contemporary work of Alvin Plantinga (2015) on theological reason. The third section will describe Fernando Canale's (2006a) argument for the deconstruction and reconstruction of theological reason. The fourth section will examine Adventist theological reason as portrayed in three different perspectives of the Jerusalem council dialogue in *Acts* 15. Given that the methodology of this project is to build a dialogical model from a biblical understanding of theological reason, the implications from this literature review will provide a historical and contemporary perspective of ontological and epistemological paradigms that will inform, but not determine, the dialogical model that will be formed in the implementation chapter.

Seminal Christian Writers on Theological Reason

Augustine's (395/1968) epistemological framework incorporated faith and reason working together: faith, as the starting point, and reason, as the corroborating entity. Augustine quoted from the Septuagint Isaiah 7:9, "Unless you believe, you shall not

understand” (Craig, 2008, p. 30). Faith and reason were a gift from God (Augustine, 426/1948). Augustine (400/2002) assumed platonic Greek ontology, where reason resided in the soul (Augustine, 426/1948). From the starting point of faith, reason was able to penetrate the historical layer to the inner spiritual truth of ultimate reality (Augustine, 397/1997).

Similar to Augustine, Aquinas (1485/1981) argued that faith and reason work together to arrive at truth. Aquinas implied that God illuminates faith so that “the light of faith makes us see what we believe” (p. IIaIIae.1.4.3). Aquinas used Aristotelian ontology for his hermeneutical framework (Congar, 1996), contending that reason is a gift from God to the soul (Aquinas, 1485/1981). Reason can know beyond what we can arrive at, through the five senses, piercing through the visible to the invisible realm.

With the Enlightenment’s emphasis on certainty, John Locke (1690/1924) applied the empiricist approach to faith, arguing for absolute certainty, which was grounded in Aristotle’s epistemological emphasis on sensory knowledge (Osler, 1970). Locke’s (1690/1924) approach melded faith and reason together, arguing that “revelation is reason enlarged” (p. 360); therefore, faith could not contradict reason. Spiritual belief must be determined by reason alone, and it must be held to the same standard of certainty as mathematics.

As cited by Livingston (1971), Dodwell (1741/2016) reacted to the Enlightenment’s emphasis on reason. He argues that reason was not the means that we come to faith, and that knowledge does not come through the mind but the heart, by the Spirit. In contrast to the seminal thinkers cited above, Dodwell justifies his case from biblical texts, rather than philosophy. Dodwell states, “Faith is the evidence of things not

seen” (Dodwell, 1741/2016, p. 89), which is a quote from Heb 11:1; “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (p. 90), which is a quote from John 20:20; “neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned” (p. 120), which is a quote from 1 Cor 2:14. Dodwell argues that the experience of the Christian is that of one “who never asked himself one single question about it” (p. 34); and further stated that Paul was converted “not by the force of dilatory inferences and conclusions, but by an irresistible light from heaven, that flashed conviction in a moment” (p. 68).

During the Enlightenment, the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1781/1934) argued that spiritual truth could not be understood by reason, thus making understanding spiritual truth impossible to understand, on the cognitive level. Schleiermacher (1830/1960) adopts Kantian epistemology, grounding the Christian experience in feelings (Mackintosh, 1969). Schleiermacher (1830/1960) argues that spiritual truth is not to be understood cognitively, but rather through the feeling of absolute dependence outside of reason. In summary, for Schleiermacher, the ground of faith was not reason, but in the non-cognitive feeling in the soul.

Barth (1938) would also apply Kantian epistemology (McCormack, 2004), arguing that we cannot know God through human reason, because God is wholly other, except through the revelation of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not a cognitive revelation from God. The Jesus of history was not the Jesus of faith, and the resurrection was a spiritual reality, rather than an actual historical event (Barth, 1933/1968). In summary, for Barth, the ground of faith was not reason but the non-cognitive revelation of Jesus Christ.

As cited by Johnson (1974), Bultmann would apply Kantian epistemology to hermeneutics. Bultmann contends that the Bible must be demythologized, which places

science as the judge of Scripture (1941/1984). The process of demythologization expunges any portions of Scripture that conflict with science and proceeds to interpret the text existentially. For Bultmann, the ground of faith was not in reason, but in the non-cognitive existential experience.

The philosopher Martin Heidegger (1962/1971) would deconstruct Platonic, Aristotelian, and Kantian reality, by grounding it in temporality. Pannenberg (2007) adopted Heidegger's (1962/1971) theological framework, where he adopts an immanent panentheistic view of God, as being one, ontologically, with history. Pannenberg (2007) affirms the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus on the grounds of a panentheistic expression of God's process of becoming in history. In contrast to Bultmann (1984) and Barth (1933/1968, 1938), Pannenberg (1970) would argue that detaching the Jesus of faith from the Jesus of history would lead to a mythologized Jesus; and that exempting Christianity from reason would lead to subjectivism and the destruction of Christianity (pp. 27, 28).

Alvin Plantinga

Plantinga is esteemed as "without doubt one of the world's leading philosophers of religion" (Holder, 2013, p. 353). Plantinga has been described by one Princeton philosopher as "arguably the most brilliant philosopher of religion in half a century or more" (Graham, 2016, p. 53). Plantinga has also done "seminal work in epistemology" (McCall, 2013, p. 117) that has revolutionized religious epistemology (Stackhouse, 2001). Plantinga's impact on epistemology "cannot be overstated" (Scacewater, 2015, p. 97).

Plantinga addresses epistemology in “terms of how humans form beliefs and come to knowledge” (Beach, 2015, p. 261). God is the “source of being and knowledge”. (Matteo, 1988, p. 262). Certain beliefs do not “need to be based on any other arguments in order to qualify as rational” (Macdonald, 2014, p. 37).

According to Plantinga (2015), belief in God is a basic belief and therefore needs no evidential support. Plantinga (1983) has gone so far as to state that since belief in God is properly basic, then the dialogue can shift to “exploring and developing the implications of Christian theism” (p. 307), rather than continually fighting to establish the fundamental question of God’s existence.

Plantinga’s (2015) contention that belief in God is properly basic is described as a powerful move, owing its roots to Calvin and Aquinas (Graham, 2016). Plantinga (2015) cites Calvin’s belief in human nature to instinctively form beliefs about God. The implication is that basic beliefs, then, would have to be the result of divine self-testimony (King, 2013). Plantinga (2015) follows the logic to contend that the Holy Spirit has a role in faith.

In Plantinga’s (2000) book *Warranted Christian Belief*, which is “without question one of the central texts of the Reformed epistemological movement” (Baker, 2005, p. 77), he asserts that the Holy Spirit is the “source of belief, a cognitive process that produces in us belief in the main lines of the Christian story” (p. 206). Hence, the term *sensus divinitatis*, which means “warranted knowledge of God need not (necessarily) dependent on standard proofs” (Taber, 2014, p. 72). Plantinga (2000) further expounds on *sensus divinitatis* as “a disposition or set of dispositions to form theistic beliefs in various circumstances or stimuli that trigger the working sense of

divinity” (Plantinga, 2000, p. 173). Therefore, Plantinga argues that “according to the model, the central truths of the gospel are self-authenticating” (pp. 260–261) and need no evidence. “The bottom line is that the question of whether belief in God is warranted is at root not epistemological, but rather metaphysical or theological” (Moreland & Craig, 2003, p. 164).

Plantinga (2011) further develops the system by explaining that our minds will comprehend certain beliefs as self-evident, if our mental faculties are “suffering from no dysfunction” (p. 173). Plantinga (2000) explicitly states “it really is the unbeliever who displays epistemic malfunction failing to believe in God is a result of some kind of dysfunction of the *sensus divinitatis*” (p. 214). “Here Plantinga drops a bomb into mainstream epistemology by proposing . . . that one’s cognitive faculties are functioning properly only if they are functioning as God designed them to” (Craig, 2008, p. 42).

Plantinga (2015) contends that

due to sin, the knowledge of God provided by *sensus divinitatis*, prior to faith and regeneration, is both narrowed in scope and partially suppressed. The faculty itself may be diseased and thus partly or wholly disabled . . . failing to believe in God is a result of some kind of dysfunction of the *sensus divinitatis*. (p. 36)

Not only is humanity unable to perceive these basic beliefs, but humanity “doesn’t even know it has a problem” (Plantinga, 2000, p. 214). He contends that through the Holy Spirit, the “ravages of sin (including the cognitive damage) are repaired” so that we are able to “come to grasp . . . the great things of the gospel” (Plantinga, 2015, p. 54). Plantinga (2015) goes further by stating that “these beliefs don’t come just by way of the normal operation of our natural faculties; they are a supernatural gift” (p. 56).

Using the evolutionary paradigm against itself, Plantinga (2011) argues that, even from an evolutionary standpoint, the probability that cognitive faculties are properly

functioning is questionable. He argues that there is a 50/50 chance that our mental faculties are not properly functioning from an evolutionary standpoint. Therefore, even the beliefs from these mental faculties are suspect. Naturalists counter natural selection produces a rational functioning mind. Needless to say, Plantinga's argument has found traction in the academic community as being plausible (DePoe, 2014). These and other contributions by Plantinga have made Christianity an intellectually viable option in the current academic landscape (Stackhouse, 2001).

Fernando Canale

In his seminal work, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, Canale (1987) reveals that all of philosophy is a "series of footnotes to Plato" (p. 88); and that Christian theology has used Greek philosophy for its first principles (Canale, 2005). The first principles are related to a timeless understanding of reality, which involves a discontinuity between heaven and earth and the absence of historical time in heaven (meaning no past, present, and future flow). A timeless God can only interact with timeless entities, such as the soul.

According to Canale (2005), Augustine and Aquinas adopted the first principles from Greek philosophy rather than Scripture for macro-hermeneutical presuppositions of timelessness. Canale refers to this as the "Classical" model which incorporates all Catholics and conservative Protestants. Theological reason, which is part of the timeless soul, can understand timeless truth that is encased within the husk of history.

In his second model, "Modernism," Canale (2005) describes the Kantian revolution as not a deconstruction of Platonic timeless metaphysics or ontology, but rather the relocation of reason, from the timeless soul, to the historical realm. The

Kantian relocation of reason results in the elimination of a cognitive revelation of timeless truth. Schleiermacher, Barth, and Bultmann, as cited earlier, are examples of theologians building their systematic theologies on the Kant's paradigm.

In his third model, "Postmodernism," Canale (2005) describes Martin Heidegger's (1962/1971) deconstruction of Plato's two world timeless theory. Reality and reason are historical. Canale (2005) cites Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, who, building on his teacher's work, contends that historical reason gained its presuppositional framework from past experiences.

Canale (2006a) uses postmodernism to deconstruct modernism and classical thought. He argues that the Protestant Reformation did not go far enough in deconstructing Catholicism's ontology, which was built on Greek philosophy. Canale contends that deconstructing classical and modern cosmology means a rejection of timelessness. However, he does not use postmodernism to deconstruct biblical cosmology. Rather, he argues that postmodernism's deconstruction creates space for a biblical understanding of temporal reality and theological reason (Canale, 2005).

Canale (2005) indicates that a plain reading of Scripture makes it obvious that a platonic timeless reality is not adopted by the Bible writers. The Bible, according to Canale, assumes a historical eternal God, engaging temporal man historically. He defines God as being on a "higher level of infinite temporality" that "allows him to act within the lesser level of created temporality" (p. 254). The human and divine temporality share the "common, each in their own way, the past-present-future flow of reality" (p. 254).

Canale (2005) agrees with postmodernism in that reason is historical. However, he parts with postmodernity in contending that historical reason must be grounded in the

“primacy of divine revelation” (Canale, 2005, pp. 260–261), which keeps it from relativism. Canale describes historical reason as being partial and fallible in understanding. Therefore, it necessitates a never-ending cyclical process of revision and refinement of presuppositional knowledge through reflection on Scripture.

Canale (2006b) argues that Adventist methodology must first flow out of biblical ontology. Adventism must start from “scratch,” implying that it cannot uncritically adopt methodology from Protestantism, and must construct methodology from the ontological and epistemological ground up. Canale (2010) argues that secular, evangelical, and Catholic ministerial praxis is based on “non-biblical philosophical ideas” (p. 134) on the macro-hermeneutical level of the first principles. Uncritically adopting methodology can lead to unconsciously assuming unbiblical macro hermeneutical principles. Canale contends that the task of theology is to build from first biblical macro hermeneutical principles towards methodology, rather than assuming ministerial practices that, at their core, conflict with Scripture, on the ontological level.

Theological Reason in Adventism

I have chosen to limit the literature review in this section to a selection of Adventist literature related to the current debate on women’s ordination. The justifications for this limitation are: (a) the women’s ordination issue is, at the time of the writing of this paper, a theologically polarizing issue in the Adventist church; (b) thought leaders on both sides examined the book of *Acts* for principles of theological dialogue; (c) the differences reveal that theological reason, even with similar ontological beliefs about human nature, can arrive at divergent conclusions, though interpreting the same text of Scripture.

First, I will describe three different interpretations of Acts 15 as applied to the women's ordination issue. Then I will compare and contrast the three perspectives and give the implications towards theological reason.

Description of Three Interpretations of Acts 15

Thomas Lemon, vice president of the General Conference, in a publicly disseminated theological reflection, argues that the Acts 15 decision was not based on Scripture but the Holy Spirit's leading. "There was little argument to be had from the Scripture itself . . . only the Holy Spirit is described as prompting the decision" (Lemon, 2017, p. 17). He contends that there would have been Old Testament textual evidence to support the Pharisee's position on circumcision. They would have won the decision had it been based on Scripture. The decision could have been ruled in favor of the Gentiles, which did not have biblical support. Lemon interprets the Jerusalem council dialogue and decision as a Holy Spirit consensus decision, which was a "both-and" decision. There were no "winners and losers" (p. 19). Since the decision was not based on Scripture, the Holy Spirit's decision allowed for personal contextualization and freedom. According to Lemon, Paul's statement, that it's not inherently wrong to meat offered to idols (1 Cor 8:4), gives evidence of regional flexibility of the Jerusalem council decision. Similarly, Lemon argues that women's ordination should be a Holy Spirit decision rather than a theological decision, which allows for local contextualization as the Holy Spirit leads.

Alden Thompson (2017), professor of biblical studies at Walla Walla University, in an article in *Adventist Today*, argues that cultural and missiological context determines the binding nature of biblical principles. Thompson describes the Acts 15 council as a prayerful dialogue where the Holy Spirit influenced the church leaders to move

circumcision from a requirement to optional status because it was culturally expedient for the growth of the Gentile church. Thompson (2017) contends that Paul applied the option of circumcision to Timothy (Acts 16:1–3) for Jewish cultural and missiological reasons. On the other hand, Paul disregarded the Jerusalem council’s mandate when he indicated that there was nothing inherently wrong with eating food offered to idols (1 Cor 8:4) for cultural and missiological reasons pertaining to Gentiles. Thompson concludes that the practice women’s ordination should be a core element of Adventist life; however, because of missiological and cultural dynamics, it should be optional at this time.

Davidson and Ratsara are on opposite sides of the ordination of women debate: Davidson (2013) is for the ordination of women pastors, and Ratsara (2013) is against. However, the two are in agreement on certain biblical principles that apply to theological dialogue, especially polarizing issues as women’s ordination. Davidson and Ratsara (2013) gave seven principles for theological dialogue that were derived from *Luke* and *Acts*: “(1) accept the foundational authority of Scripture; (2) employ a solid biblical hermeneutic; (3) maintain a Christ-centered focus; (4) foster a spirit of unity of mind/purpose/impulse; (5) engage in frequent seasons of earnest prayer and fasting; (6) seek for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to correctly understand Scriptural truth; and (7) maintain an evangelistic motivation and passion for lost souls” (p. 38).

Regarding Acts 15, Davidson and Ratsara (2013) argue that the theological dialogue and decision of the Jerusalem council were grounded in Scripture. They contend that the decision was based on exegesis of Amos 9:11–12, and that the prohibitions listed for the Gentiles were identical to the ones outlined “in the same order” (p. 14) in Leviticus 17–18. Davidson and Ratsara categorically reject the interpretation that “the

New Testament church, and by implication, the church today, has authority to determine the best path to unity by rejecting some Old Testament instructions and adding new ones as it sees fit under the sanctified guidance of the Spirit” (Davidson & Rastara, 2013, p. 13). They argue that “the ultimate deciding factor, in the end, was the authoritative testimony of Scripture” (p. 13). Concerning Paul’s later actions, Davidson and Ratsara argue that Paul did not change his “basic position” on Jerusalem counsel, but understood the intent of the Old Testament for those cases where Gentiles ate food offered to idols “without knowledge” (p. 17).

Comparison and Contrast

All three positions have certain similarities. On the macro level, they all assume Adventist core beliefs and Adventist ontology in terms of human nature. Regarding Acts 15, all three positions concur that the Holy Spirit and prayer were essential for the theological dialogue, and they all agree that Acts 15 has principles that are applicable for theologically polarizing issues within Adventism.

In terms of differences, the three positions diverge in terms of which entity has the primacy in the theological dialogue of Acts 15. Davidson and Ratsara (2013) ground the theological dialogue of Acts 15 in biblical exegesis. Thompson (2017) grounds the dialogue in missiological and cultural context as being the determining factor. Lemon (2017) grounds the dialogue in Holy Spirit conviction. One position holds to the primacy of Scripture in theological dialogue, while one position leans towards missiological/cultural relativism, and the other position leans towards subjectivism.

The theological differences within Adventism reveal that believing the same Adventist ontology does not ensure the same conclusions from the text of Scripture, in

this case, the interpretation of Acts 15. The contrasting viewpoints reveal that theological reason involves more than beliefs about human ontology; it also involves the subject (the interpreter)-object (Scripture) relationship, which determines the “content of knowledge” (Canale, 2005, pp. 74–75). Even Adventist theological reason will arrive at divergent conclusions if there are differences regarding which entity holds primacy.

Summary

From Augustine (1968) to Plantinga (2000, 2015), each theologian dealt with theological reason uniquely when it came to the relationship between faith and reason. Augustine (395/1968) and Aquinas (1485/1981), assuming Greek ontology, harmonized faith and reason as working together with illuminated faith as the starting point. Locke (1924) and Dodwell (2016) were on opposite sides of the faith and reason debate, with Locke (1924) emphasizing reason and Dodwell (2016) emphasizing faith. Schleiermacher (1960), Bultmann (1984), and Barth (1938) adopted Kantian epistemology and grounded faith outside of cognitive revelation. Pannenberg (2007) adopted Heidegger’s (1962/1971) historical view of reason, and argued that faith must be grounded in God’s panentheistic revelation of history. Plantinga (2000, 2015), building on Aquinas’ (1485/1981) and Aristotelian ontology, argued that reason was corrupted by sin and needed Holy Spirit assistance for functional repair and basic beliefs, as the existence of God.

Canale (1987) revealed that Catholic and Protestant understanding of theological reason is grounded on unbiblical Greek ontology, and argued that post modernism’s deconstruction had made room for a biblical ontology. Canale contends that the biblical understanding of theological reason is historical in nature which is grounded in the data

of Scripture (*Sola Scriptura*). All methodological practices must flow out of biblical ontology and epistemology.

The divergent interpretations of Acts 15, related to the women's ordination debate within Adventism, reveals that ontological congruence on human nature does not guarantee consensus. The entity that holds primacy (i.e., Scripture, personal conviction, or cultural context) determines the conclusion in the process of interpretation.

Several implications derived from the literature review could be useful considerations towards a dialogical model: (a) that one's ontological and epistemological assumptions frame the faith and reason debate; (b) though Plantinga (2000, 2015) assumed Aristotelian ontology, his argument of the corruption of reason and the need of the Holy Spirit could apply to a biblical ontological framework and corresponding methodology; (c) Canale's (2006b) contribution gives justification for starting from "scratch" from the Bible, beginning with ontology and epistemology, towards methodology, rather than adopting religious and secular praxis that have unbiblical philosophical assumptions; (d) if there are differences on the *sola Scriptura* principle, Adventists, involved in theological dialogue, will have conflicting interpretations of the biblical text.

The next chapter focuses on the implementation and methodology of the findings above.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION: APPLYING PRINCIPLES TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT

In light of the theological principles from the book of *Acts* in a theological reflection and the literature pertaining to theological reason, what follows is the application of these principles towards a dialogical model and implementation process.

I will begin with a brief description of the ministry context in which the implementation takes place; then, I will describe the research methodology. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the highlights of the chapter.

Profile of the Ministry Context

Chapter 1 provides a more detailed description of the ministry context of the Hillside O'Malley Church. However, to recap briefly, the Hillside O'Malley Church is in Anchorage, AK, next to the conference office, having one of the largest tithes and church memberships in the Alaska Conference. In a survey of the membership demographics in terms of geographic origin, the members are evenly divided in terms of regions from the Lower 48, thus, carrying the peculiar theological nuances from their particular regions. As a result of the members holding on to their particular theological presuppositions, the congregation has become polarized. The polarization has manifested itself in Sabbath School classes, personal conversations, email correspondence, and dialogue with the church elders. Though there were no open hostilities at the time of this project, the

polarization imperils the mission of the church.

The nature of my relationship with the participants is: they are parishioners in the church where I'm pastor. As described during the IRB approval process, I took my role into account to ensure that bias or inappropriate influence was diminished in the implementation process.

Having provided a brief description of the ministry context above, I now turn to the method of research used.

Research Methodology: Purpose, Methods, and Timeframes of Research

The purpose of the research was to build a model of theological dialogue based on principles derived from a theological reflection of the book of *Acts*. The effectiveness of the dialogical model was determined qualitatively in the following two areas: (a) whether the implementation lowered negative feelings stemming from theological polarization in the project participants; (b) whether the participants sensed that any presuppositions related to the polarization had shifted as a result of the implementation.

Description of Participants

All participants involved in the mission-based dialogue met all the following criteria:

1. All the participants were over 18 years of age.
2. All the participants were members of Hillside O'Malley Church.
3. All the participants were not forced or coerced in any way.
4. All the participants were able to provide informed consent.

Recruitment of Project Participants

The recruitment of the project participants was from the membership of the Hillside O'Malley Church and from diverse theological positions (as publicly stated in various church forums such as Sabbath School). I, as the researcher, asked via personal conversation if the member would like to volunteer to participate in the project. After the individual gave a verbal agreement, I sent the following email:

Thank you for your openness to participate in the studies as part of my (David Shin's) DMin project. The study revolves around the theme of applying the principles from the book of *Acts* towards a dialogical model. The study will require: that you have been present for the multipart sermon series on the book of *Acts* given during the main worship service (weekly seminars on the same topic will be provided for those that are unable to make the worship times); commit to personal prayer in preparation for the dialogue (prayer times have been available for those desirous of more support in prayer in groups); participate in an initial interview prior to the dialogue implementation; participate in a series of three dialogues over the course of one month specifically related to the mission of the church as defined in the book of *Acts*; then participate in a post-interview with myself (David Shin). All personal information will be kept confidential. Volunteer participants must meet the following criteria: must be 18 or over at the time of volunteering for this study; a member of the Hillside O'Malley Church; willing and able to prepare for the dialogue by attending for three months the seminars/sermons mentioned above as well as commit to spending time in personal prayer; willing and able to participate in dialogue activity; willing and able to participate in initial and post-interviews after the implementation. Volunteer participants will not be compensated for their time and travel to the Hillside O'Malley Church for participation in the project. Members that choose not to participate in this study will not incur any change in their relationship with the Hillside O'Malley Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Protection of Participants

If I, at any point during the process of implementation, became aware of a participant's inability to give informed consent, I was prepared to take the following necessary steps:

1. Discuss the matter individually with the project participant.
2. Discuss the matter in broad terms, to protect the identity of the participant

involved, with my Doctor of Ministry advisor.

3. Agree on a plan of action that may include changing the level of engagement in the project or ceasing participation in the project.

4. Should the participation of the volunteer be ceased or modified, this would be reflected in the findings, so that the reader can draw an informed conclusion based on the research. The participant's confidentiality would be maintained in the findings.

At all times, ethical guidelines and requirements from the IRB were maintained throughout the implementation process. I anticipated no physical nor psychological harm resulting from the methodology. However, there was a remote possibility of social and/or spiritual harm that could arise from the theological dialogue. If I became aware of any social or spiritual harm during any point of the dialogue, I was prepared to give spiritual counseling and support to the participant. I was also prepared to provide the contact information of a professional counselor as a resource should they experience any social or spiritual harm in the process. Furthermore, I was ready to offer the individual the option of modifying or ceasing participation.

Confidentiality

1. The interview materials were kept in locked filing cabinets.
2. I was the only one that had access to the cabinets.
3. All personal identifiers would be coded if any data was shared.
4. All consent forms were stored in the cabinets.
5. All notes from interviews were kept in locked filing cabinets.
6. Once the data was coded, all links of identification were destroyed.

Having provided a brief description of the ministry context, and described the

process of how the participants were recruited and protected, I now turn to the development of the implementation strategy.

Development of Implementation Strategy

The methodological approach of this project was to apply principles derived from an exegesis of the book of *Acts* towards a dialogical model. As summarized in Chapter 2, the theological reflection of the book of *Acts* points towards the following principles: (a) a basic experiential prerequisite before dialogue, an encounter with Jesus that results in conversion; (b) the necessity being filled with the Holy Spirit prior to dialogue, which is associated with prayer and repentance; (c) the necessity of those engaged in dialogue to individually affirm the primacy of historic divine revelation (*sola Scriptura, tota Scriptura*) as well as contemporary divine revelation (i.e., Ellen White) as the hermeneutical framework for understanding; (d) individual and group theological reflection is essential to the dialogical process; (e) for theological dialogue to be successful there must a willingness to acknowledge, assess, and potentially abandon presuppositions that conflict with Scripture.

I have organized the principles derived from the theological reflection of the book of *Acts*, as stated above, into three different segments for the implementation process: Preparation, Proclamation, and Mission-Based Dialogue. Preparation emphasized prayer and conversion before dialogue. Proclamation involved the preaching and teaching of principles derived from the theological reflection of the book of *Acts*. The Mission-based dialogue involved a series of three dialogues centered on the book of *Acts*.

Principles of Dialogue Preparation

In this section, I describe the principles that guided the preparation process for the participants. The principles and references below were also given to the participants in a handout (see Appendix B) in the weeks before the scheduled dialogues.

Commit to Spending Time in Prayer for the Holy Spirit

Before any internal dialogue, the disciples waited and prayed for the Holy Spirit in the upper room (Acts 1:14). Furthermore, the early church continued in prayer for the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:42–47). The “days of preparation” consisted of “days of deep heart-searching” (White, 1911, p. 37). Prayer for the Holy Spirit is essential to preparation for dialogue.

Ask to Be Converted and Receive the Holy Spirit

In the book of *Acts*, Peter states that conversion is a prerequisite to receiving the Holy Spirit: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, KJV). Conversion is also an important prerequisite for spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 2:14, NKJV). A converted heart is foundational to the preparation process.

Ask for Illumination by the Spirit

The book of *Acts* indicates that the Holy Spirit gave illumination through direct revelation and guidance for the apostles (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12, 27; 13:2, 4, 10, 23; 16:6, 21:11). “Under the Spirit's teaching, they received the final qualification and went forth to their lifework. No longer were they ignorant and uncultured” (White, 1911,

p. 45). Jesus indicated that the Holy Spirit would be the divine teacher (John 14:26) and be the guide into all truth (John 16:13). Therefore, asking for Holy Spirit's illumination is critical to the preparation for theological dialogue.

Ask Daily for the Holy Spirit

The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), yet the early church continued the upper room experience by a continuation of daily prayer (Acts 2:42–47). Paul states the need for daily renewal of the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16) by the Spirit (Eph. 3:16). Ellen White (1911) further supports the biblical principle by stating “for the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God” (p. 50). Therefore, the daily asking for the Holy Spirit is essential before dialogue.

Be Willing to Allow the Spirit to Empty Us of Presuppositions

Recognize that conversion does not mean the absence of faulty presuppositions. The book of *Acts* reveals that old presuppositions are often cherished, unconscious, and difficult to remove even for converted and Spirit-filled Christians (Acts 21:23–25). After Paul's conversion, he spent three years in Arabia (Gal 5:17) where he “emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life” (White, 1911, p. 119). The awareness of faulty presuppositions and the willingness to expunge the unbiblical presuppositions are an important part of the process of preparation.

Ask for the Spirit to Shape Our Persona in Dialogue

The Holy Spirit impacted the persona of the apostles in the book of *Acts* as “the peace of Christ shone from their faces . . . their very features bore evidence to the

surrender they had made” (White, 1911, p. 46), and the hearers “realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, NKJV). The way that we dialogue is as important as the topic on which we converse.

Principles of Proclamation to the Church Body

In my preaching and teaching seminars on the themes within the book of *Acts*, I demonstrated the primacy of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. As revealed in the theological reflection, the disciples were operating with the presupposition that the Old Testament was a reliable and authoritative witness. Therefore, I made Scriptures the center of all my discourses.

The apostles in the book of *Acts* showed the authoritative nature of contemporary divine revelation. Therefore, where appropriate, I referenced the Spirit of Prophecy in my biblical preaching and teaching.

In my discourses, I gave theological reflections from Scripture and the writings of Ellen White on the nature of presuppositional knowledge. As revealed in the theological reflection of the book of *Acts*, presuppositional knowledge played a key role in the dialogues and challenges in the book of *Acts*. The Holy Spirit provided the opportunity for presuppositional change through engagement with contemporary and historic divine revelation.

I allowed opportunity for people to make decisions by coming forward in altar calls to themselves to surrender to God (be converted) and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As exemplified in the life of Paul, conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit involved the willingness to surrender one’s presuppositional framework.

Principles of Mission-Based Dialogue

The justification for limiting the theological dialogue to the mission of the church, as described in the book of *Acts*, was a pastoral decision that was in the best interest of local church dynamics. Before the project implementation, there had been polarizing dialogues that had created tensions in the church. Therefore, it was in the best interest of the local church to have the dialogue be on a non-polarizing topic. Given the relationship between theological identity and mission, some implicit differences would emerge and be discussed. Though the subject of the dialogue would be on a non-polarizing topic, the engagement with the text of Scripture would give the opportunity for cultural presuppositional knowledge to be challenged, revised, and revoked.

An important principle, derived from an exegesis of the book of *Acts*, was to ensure that the data of focus for the dialogue was derived from the text of Scripture and the supplemental selections from the writings of Ellen White. Thus, the study material of the dialogue gave divine revelation the primacy above all other sources.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Paul spent time reflecting on Scripture in isolation and then in connection with the church. Paul's contribution enhanced the corporate understanding, while the church provided the theological horizon for congruence. Therefore, it was important for dialogue implementation to provide time for individual and group theological reflection.

As revealed in the theological reflection of the book of *Acts*, prayer was an important prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit and spiritual illumination. The early believers would pray together frequently (*Acts* 2:42), and the upper room was an experience of group prayer (*Acts* 1:14). Therefore, it was essential to provide time for

small group prayer during the theological dialogue.

Model of Applying Principles to Local Context

In this section, I describe the practical application of principles, derived from a theological reflection of the book of *Acts*, at the Hillside O'Malley Church from the fall of 2017 until the fall of 2019.

Prayer Preparation

The requirements for the participants were to spend time in prayer for the Holy Spirit in preparation for the dialogue. I initiated a Sunday morning prayer time that was made available to the church at large, as well as the project participants. The prayer time was an hour and a half in length and consisted of the singing of hymns, intercessory prayer, and asking the Holy Spirit. The prayer session began one year before the dialogue implementation and continues to be a part of the church programming at the time of the writing of this paper. I also spent time in fasting and prayer once a week, as the researcher in this project, for my transformation and preparation.

Proclamation and Teaching

I presented a 10-part series of sermons for the entire congregation from the book of *Acts*, where I taught practical applications of the theological reflections described in chapter 2. I appealed for members to surrender their lives to Jesus and to express their desire to receive the Holy Spirit by coming forward in altar calls or by raising their hands. I also presented a seminar every Wednesday for three months expounding on the book of Acts principles. The seminar provided a different format that gave an opportunity for questions and further dialogue on the information being presented. The goals of the

sermons and seminars were to provide theological data before dialogue, demonstrate the primacy of Scripture, and give opportunities for participants to respond to the messages.

The themes taught in the seminars and sermons were: the relationship between the Holy Spirit and spiritual illumination, how conversion precedes spiritual illumination, the importance of a daily filling with the Holy Spirit, unity being essential to the reception of the Holy Spirit, surrendering to the Holy Spirit, the personal transformation that comes through the Holy Spirit, praying for the Spirit, conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit, and the nature of presuppositions. The topics were derived from a theological reflection of the book of *Acts* but put in understandable terms for the laity.

Dialogue

Before the dialogue, I gave each of the volunteer participants a document (see Appendix B), which reviewed the principles from the seminars and sermons. We met for a series of three dialogues that were 90-minute sessions. The first and second dialogue took place a week apart from each other, while the third dialogue was two weeks apart from the second dialogue. The meetings were held at the Hillside O'Malley Church in a room that ensured privacy. At least one week before each dialogue the passages of Scripture to be discussed were given to the participants, which gave the opportunity for personal theological reflection. Small group prayer and personal sharing time were incorporated into each of the three dialogues. The format of the dialogue consisted of prayer, theological dialogue, and personal sharing time. The engagement with Scripture provided an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to reach the participants on the presuppositional level.

The first dialogue focused on *Acts* Chapters 1 and 2, and the participants were

also to read *Acts of the Apostles* (White, 1911) Chapters 3, 4, and 5. The participants were given the references (see Appendix D) at least two weeks before the first dialogue, which gave the opportunity for personal theological reflection. The topics discussed were the mission of the early church (Acts 1:8), the Holy Spirit's role in fulfilling the mission (Acts 1:8), the importance of prayer (Acts 1:14), and the experience of the early church community (Acts 2:42–47). At the end of the dialogue, the participants were encouraged to imagine what the Hillside O'Malley church could be if God's vision was fulfilled (see Appendix C).

The second dialogue focused on a theological reflection of Acts 15; the participants were to also read from Chapter 19 of *Acts of the Apostles* (White, 1911). The participants were given the references (see Appendix F) a week before the second dialogue, which gave the opportunity for personal theological reflection. The dialogue centered on these three themes: the relationship of identity and mission, the differences between core and peripheral teachings, and the relationship between doctrines and identity. There was further discussion on the application of these themes to the local and global Adventist contexts.

The third dialogue focused again on Acts Chapters 1 and 2 and *Acts of the Apostles* (White, 1911) Chapters 4 and 5, with a specific emphasis on the Holy Spirit. The participants were given the references and questions (see Appendix H) two weeks before the third dialogue for their personal theological reflection. The themes for theological reflection and dialogue were: prayer as a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is given for the fulfillment of the mission of the church, the relationship between unity and the Holy Spirit, the need for a daily filling of the Holy Spirit, and the

tension between human volition and God's sovereignty in regards to the reception of the Spirit. These themes were discussed as described in the book of *Acts* and also as applied to the context of the Hillside O'Malley Church.

Chronological Timeline of Implementation

Table 1 gives a timeline of the research development and implementation.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the implementation methodology. The chapter began with a description of the ministry context and the issue of theological polarization. Then I described the process outlining the purpose and methodology. The purpose of the implementation was to evaluate the effectiveness of applying principles derived from the book of *Acts* towards a dialogical model. I also gave a description of the participants, the recruiting method, and the protection of the participants. I gave a summary of the principles derived from the theological reflection, and how the principles would be applied to the local church. I ended by referring back to Table 1 for a timeline of the implementation narrative.

The implementation would be accessed qualitatively to gauge whether mission-based dialogue had lowered feelings of polarization and whether the participants sensed that any presuppositions causing polarization had shifted among the participants. The study was not to gauge whether visible or tangible results of unity were actualized in the church.

Having given an overview of the implementation methodology in this chapter, I now turn to the implementation summary and research results.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY AND RESEARCH

RESULTS

Having provided the theological principles from the book of *Acts* in chapter 2, and having reviewed the seminal, relevant and recent literature in chapter 3, and having outlined the implementation process in chapter 4, I now turn to a summary of the implementation and results.

Summary of the Implementation of the Research

The implementation of the research was to apply principles from the book of *Acts* towards a dialogical model. Its effectiveness was to be evaluated qualitatively in two areas: (a) whether the participants felt that it lowered negative feelings stemming from theological polarization, (b) whether they sensed that any presuppositions related to polarization had shifted as a result of the dialogue. The participation in the research consisted of the following activities: (a) preparation: spending time praying for conversion and the Holy Spirit, and reviewing the preparation principles outlined in the handout (See Appendix B) ; (b) participation in an initial in-depth interview with researcher; (c) engage in a series of three small-group dialogues with other participants (d) participation in an end-of-project in-depth interview.

The research was conducted, as was outlined in Table 1. The eight participants were members of the Hillside O'Malley Church and met the criteria for the research

process. All eight participants were part of a church-related dialogue on a theologically polarizing issue. The dialogue was not part of this project implementation. However, it provided a baseline polarizing context for the initial interview, which could be compared to the final interview after the project dialogue. The timetable of the implementation process was followed without deviation. The research implementation process was followed as approved by IRB, as outlined in Chapter 4.

Research Results

In this section, the research results will compare and contrast the answers to the initial and final interviews (see Table 2 for the interview questions). The interviews were conducted at the Hillside O'Malley in a secure room that ensured privacy. I interviewed each participant while sitting adjacent to them. The interview was in a conversational rather than an interrogatory approach to ensure that the participants would feel comfortable to share openly their perspectives. There was a total of sixteen interviews that took place (8 initial interviews and 8 final interviews).

Question 1

The initial interview question varied slightly from the final interview question. The initial interview question was: "Please describe your experience of prayer in preparation for an event"; while the final interview question was: "Please describe your experience of prayer during the dialogue that has taken place."

In response to the initial interview question, there was a strong degree of convergence on the following themes: the importance of prayer, the belief that prayer made a difference, and that prayer brought internal changes to the person praying. While

Table 2

Interview Questions

Initial In-depth Interview

1. Please describe your experience of prayer in preparation for events.
 2. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of prayer to this upcoming dialogue process.
 3. Please describe your understanding of the church's mission, as depicted in the book of *Acts*.
 4. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of dialogue being centered around the mission of the church.
 5. Please describe your understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in unity, as described in the book of *Acts*.
 6. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of the Holy Spirit in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research.
 7. Please describe your perspective on the theological diversity in the Hillside O'Malley Church.
 8. Please describe your feelings about the theological diversity at the Hillside O'Malley Church.
 9. Please share your experience of any prior dialogue that comes to mind that you had with an individual or group with differing theological positions.
 10. Please share the benefits that you anticipate in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research.
 11. Please share the drawbacks that you anticipate in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research.
-

Final In-depth Interview

1. Please describe your experience of prayer during the dialogue that has taken place.
 2. Please share the benefits (if at all) of prayer that you experienced during the dialogue process that has taken place.
 3. Please describe any further insights into the church's mission that has taken place as a result of the dialogue.
 4. Please share the benefits (if at all) of the dialogue being centered around the mission of the church that you experienced.
 5. Please describe any further insights into the Holy Spirit's role in unity as a result of the dialogue that has taken place.
 6. Please share the benefits (if at all) from the Holy Spirit that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place.
 7. Please describe your perspective of theological diversity in the Hillside O'Malley church after the dialogue has taken place.
 8. Please describe your feelings about the theological diversity at the Hillside O'Malley church after the dialogue that has taken place.
 9. Please share your perspective of how the dialogue that has taken place is similar or different from prior dialogues that you've had with an individual or groups with differing theological positions.
 10. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place over the period of the research.
 11. Please share the drawbacks (if at all) that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place over the period of the research.
-

all eight of the participants believe that prayer made a difference in preparation for events, six of the participants believed that prayer had the potential to change the person praying and change external circumstances. Two participants believed that prayer primarily changed the person praying and not the situation. One of the two participants believed that prayer was more of an attitude of self-awareness, rather than a conversation with God.

In response to the final in-depth interview, there was consensus among the participants that the small group prayer time during the dialogue had impacted them positively. Six participants mentioned that they had spent personal private time in prayer before and during the dialogue. Two participants did not mention spending personal time in prayer outside of the incorporated times during the implementation.

In reflection, everyone involved in the study believed in prayer. However, there was a difference in the viewpoints of the potential impact of prayer. While the majority of the participants believed that prayer had the potential for changing outcomes, there was a minority that believed that the primary change was in the person praying. The same minority did not mention they had spent time in private prayer before and during the dialogue. There appeared to be some correlation between the belief that prayer could make an impact on external outcomes and spending time in private prayer.

Question 2

There were minor differences between the initial and final interview questions. During the initial interview the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of prayer to this upcoming dialogue process”; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following

question: “Please share the benefits (if at all) of prayer that you experienced during the dialogue process that has taken place.”

During the initial interview, all of the participants believed that prayer was going to make a positive impact on the dialogue. Six out of the eight participants mentioned that prayer would bring unity and revival. Two of the participants stated that the benefits would be primarily on the person praying, such as having the right attitude and a calming effect.

During the final interview, everyone expressed that the small group prayer time was beneficial. There was strong convergence among the participants that praying had a calming effect on them during the dialogue. There was also strong convergence of that prayer had an interpersonal positive effect, such as a greater sense of unity, better relational dynamics, and a warmer tone on the dialogue.

In reflection, the expectations of the participants in regard to prayer were actualized. The participants stated that they experienced internal as well as relational benefits as a result of the small group prayer time. However, the scope of prayer time blessings was limited to the personal or interpersonal realm. There was no mention of the prayer time affecting theological polarization.

Question 3

There were some variations between the initial and final interview questions. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please describe your understanding of the church’s mission as depicted in the book of *Acts*”; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question:

“Please describe any further insights into the church’s mission that has taken place as a result of the dialogue.”

In response to the initial interview question, six out of the eight participants expressed that the mission of the church in the book of *Acts* was to bring the gospel to the world; while one participant stated that it was to create an attractive community of faith, and one participant mentioned that the mission of the church in *Acts* was to figure out their identity.

In response to the final interview question, a divergence emerged on the definition of the mission of the church. Six out of the eight participants believed that the mission of the church in the book of *Acts* was to take the gospel to the world, while two participants believed that it was to build a community.

There was no shift in the participants’ beliefs church’s mission as a result of the implementation. The participants that believed that outreach was the mission of the church remained in that belief after the dialogue process. The participants that believed that the mission of the church was primarily community-building continued in that belief after the dialogue.

Question 4

There was a slight variation between the initial and final interview questions. During the initial interview the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of dialogue being centered around the mission of the church”; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the benefits (if at all) of the dialogue being centered around the mission of the church that you experienced.”

During the initial interview, all eight of the participants anticipated benefits to a mission-centered dialogue. Four of the participants believed that mission-based dialogue could bring unity. Three participants expressed that it would not resolve the underlying theological differences, and one participant expressed no opinion on the matter.

During the final interview, all of the participants stated that they experienced some benefits to dialoguing about the mission of the church. The participants shared the following benefits: emotional relief that the dialogue was on church mission rather than theological differences, hearing differing perspectives, gaining a better understanding of the theological frameworks of the other participants, and that the dialogue was constructive rather than being a debate. However, five participants mentioned that there still emerged underlying theological differences in the discussion. Four of the participants expressed that the mission of the church was linked to theological identity.

Though all the participants stated that they had experienced some benefits to mission-based dialogue, it was apparent that dialogue could not mask the underlying theological differences that implicitly emerged. Most of the participants expressed that theological differences came to the surface, even though the topic of discussion was mission.

Question 5

There were some differences between the initial and final interview questions. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please describe your understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in unity as described in the book of *Acts*; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following

question: “Please describe any further insights into the Holy Spirit’s role in unity as a result of the dialogue that has taken place.”

During the initial interview, most of the individuals believed that the Holy Spirit’s role was to bring unity to fulfill the mission of the church. Seven of the eight participants believed that the Holy Spirit’s role was to bring unity, while one participant expressed the belief that it was not to bring unity.

During the final interview, all eight of the participants stated the belief that the Holy Spirit brought unity. However, there were differences in the definition of unity. Two of the participants stated that unity was community through theological diversity, while the other participants believed that theological unity brought community, and the ability to fulfill mission.

The interviews revealed that the participants were divided regarding the nuances of the relationship between relational and theological unity. The majority felt that theological unity was the starting point for community, while a minority believed that relational unity was paramount regardless of theological differences.

Question 6

The initial and final interview questions varied slightly. During the initial interview the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of the Holy Spirit in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research”; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the benefits (if at all) from the Holy that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place.”

During the initial interview, six of the participants anticipated that the Holy Spirit

would bring interpersonal harmony to the dialogue. Seven of the eight participants mentioned that the Holy Spirit could make a positive impact on the dialogue beyond the interpersonal aspect. One participant mentioned that prayer for the Holy Spirit was a form of psychological manipulation.

During the final interview, six of the eight participants sensed the Holy Spirit working among participants during the implementation, while two of the participants expressed that they did not sense the Holy Spirit working during the dialogue.

The same participants that expected the Holy Spirit to work stated that they felt the moving of the Spirit in the implementation. There seemed to be a correlation between the anticipation of the Holy Spirit and the sensing of the Spirit's manifestations.

Question 7

There was a slight variation between the initial and final questions. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: "Please describe your perspective on the theological diversity in the Hillside O'Malley church"; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: "Please describe your perspective of theological diversity in the Hillside O'Malley church after the dialogue has taken place."

During the initial interview, all eight of the participants mentioned that there were theological differences in the church. Most of the participants felt that these theological differences were causing issues within the church and that the challenges were between liberals and conservatives.

During the final interview, seven out of the eight of the participants expressed that the theological differences did not change as a result of the interview, and further

expressed that their theological positions would not change. One participant expressed that there was a general ignorance of theological positions.

Though the focus of the dialogue was not on the explicit theological differences, the perception came to the majority of the participants that their theological positions had not changed. It became apparent to most of the participants that everyone was entrenched in their theological frameworks.

Question 8

The initial and final interview questions were in relation to the participants' feelings regarding the theological polarization in the local church. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: "Please describe your feelings about the theological diversity at the Hillside O'Malley church; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: "Please describe your feelings about the theological diversity at the Hillside O'Malley church after the dialogue that has taken place."

During the initial interview before the dialogue, seven out of the eight participants expressed having negative feelings about the theological diversity in the church. There was convergence in feelings of sadness, marginalization, frustration, anger, disillusionment, suspicion, discomfort, and concern. One participant chose not to focus on theological differences and stated that they did not have feelings on the matter.

During the final interview, all eight participants felt that the dialogue had slightly improved the interpersonal relations of the group, such as: humanizing the other participants, lowering anxiety, and easing tension in the relationships. Half of the

participants expressed concerns or anxiety stemming from the theological divisions as they look towards the future, while two of the participants voiced more optimistic hope.

In reflection, most of the individuals had negative feelings about the theological division at the local church before the dialogue. All the participants felt that the dialogue had slightly improved their interpersonal relations among the group. However, half of the participants expressed unease as they looked towards the future, which reveals that the relational gains were perceived as tenuous due to the underlying theological differences that still existed.

Question 9

There was a slight variation between the initial and final interview questions. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share your experience of any prior dialogue that comes to mind that you had with an individual or groups with differing theological positions”; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share your perspective of how the dialogue that has taken place is similar or different with prior dialogues that you’ve had with an individual or groups with differing theological positions.”

During the initial interview, seven out of the eight participants mentioned that the previous dialogues with those of differing positions had been a negative experience, such as: emotionally, spiritually, and relationally challenging. One participant mentioned that it was a distraction. There was convergence among all the participants in viewing such experiences through a negative lens.

During the final interview, all eight participants viewed this implementation as a

different experience than previous dialogues. Two of the participants had experienced more academic dialogues before this one. One participant mentioned that this dialogue had been more emotionally charged than previous encounters. Three participants mentioned that this was the first time having dialogued openly with Adventist members with differing theological positions. Two participants expressed feeling under suspicion as being unique to this dialogue. Two participants mentioned the belief that there were subversive motivations by some of the others, as being unique to this dialogue.

In summary, everyone came into the dialogue, having had a negative experience in prior theological dialogues with those of differing positions. All eight of the participants found the dynamics of the dialogue implementation different than one's experience prior. Though the topic of discussion was on a non-polarizing topic, some felt that they were under suspicion by the other participants, and others believed that there were some subversive motivations.

Question 10

A slight variation existed between the initial interview question and the final interview question. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: "Please share the benefits that you anticipate in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research"; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: "Please share the benefits (if at all) that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place over the period of the research."

During the initial interview, before the dialogue, all eight participants believed that discussing the mission of the church would have positive benefits. Five participants mentioned the benefit of the potential greater involvement in service. Two participants

mentioned the interpersonal benefits that would come by dialoguing about the mission of the church. One participant mentioned that unity could come as a result.

In response to the final interview question, everyone mentioned that the dialogue had had positive interpersonal benefits between the participants. However, all the participants also recognized that the theological differences had remained unchanged after the dialogue had taken place.

The participants entered the dialogue believing in the potential for a positive outcome in talking about the mission of the church but came away from the experience implicitly realizing that the theological differences impinged on the definition of what the mission of the church was perceived to be. The participants came away from the dialogue believing that they had benefited relationally but recognized that the dialogue had not changed their theological positions and that the rifts remained.

Question 11

The initial and final interview questions were almost identical with minor differences. During the initial interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the drawbacks that you anticipate in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research”; while during the final interview, the participants responded to the following question: “Please share the drawbacks (if at all) that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place over the period of the research.”

During the initial interview, seven of the eight participants felt that further division could be a potential fall out of the dialogue. One participant did not perceive any potential negative effects.

During the final interview, all the participants indicated that there was no major

drawback from the dialogue implementation. Three participants expressed the desire for more follow-up dialogue, while one participant mentioned that more dialogue would have increased their anxiety. Two participants mentioned that they would have preferred discussing the root theological differences rather than an implicit approach of talking about the mission of the church.

The anticipation and anxiety by the participants before the dialogue were worse than the actual event. The fear of the potential for further division did not become a reality as a result of the dialogue process.

Summary

The interviews revealed that all of the participants felt that the dialogue and implementation slightly improved the relational dynamics between the participants. However, the majority of the participants expressed that the dialogue and prayer implementation did not change the theological differences. Everyone sensed that each individual was set in their theological persuasions, and half of the participants expressed anxiety or unease in light of the polarization as they looked towards the future.

The interview revealed no change in the participants' theological understanding of prayer, the mission of the church, or the Holy Spirit when compared to their positions before the dialogue. Though the implementation was not on an explicit theological difference (such as creation/evolution), there were stark differences that emerged on the nature of prayer, the definition of the church's mission, and the nature of unity.

In this particular implementation, alignments appeared between the participants' beliefs regarding the nature of prayer, the definition of the church's mission, and the nature of biblical unity. Those who believed that prayer had the potential to impact

personal change but not external outcomes expressed that the mission of the church was to build community rather than outreach, and also indicated that the Holy Spirit brought relational unity but not theological unity. On the converse of this, those participants that believed that prayer had the potential to impact both personal change and external outcomes stated that the mission of the church was outreach through evangelism and that the nature of Holy Spirit unity was relational and theological oneness on core beliefs.

Consensus existed among all the participants on the following points after the implementation: the relational benefits of mission-based dialogue, the interpersonal benefits of prayer, the potential for the Holy Spirit to bring social unity, the sense that the theological positions of the participants had not changed and were entrenched, that the implementation had slightly improved the interpersonal dynamics of the group, and that there were no major drawbacks to the particular dialogue process.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH PROJECT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will include the following: a summary of the project, a description of the intervention of the evaluation method, an assessment of the research methods, conclusions, recommendations, and final thoughts.

Project Summary

The implementation was derived from an exegesis of the book of *Acts* related to theological reason. It was informed but not determined by a literature review of seminal and contemporary thinkers on the topic of theological reason. I organized the principles derived from the theological reflection into three segments: preparation, proclamation, and dialogue. The implementation was evaluated qualitatively based on whether the participants felt that it lowered negative feelings stemming from theological division and whether any presuppositions causing the polarization had shifted among the participants as a result of the dialogue.

Intervention Evaluation Method

I accessed the project qualitatively using initial and final interviews, which were done before and after the dialogue. With the permission and consent of the participants, I recorded the interviews, and they were transcribed by an independent transcribing agency

with the highest privacy regulation standards. I analyzed the data and proceeded to write my findings. (The transcriptions were coded; the codes, recordings, and un-coded interview were destroyed.)

Conclusions of Research Methods

I anticipated certain outcomes as I began this journey. First, I anticipated a deeper understanding of theological reason and principles within the book of *Acts* as a result of the theological reflection, and learned by practice the methodology of micro-hermeneutical, meso-hermeneutical, and macro-phenomenological exegesis. Second, I anticipated a deeper understanding of issues involved in theological reason through the literature review that would provide insight but not determine the dialogical model. Third, I anticipated that the church members and participants would be spiritually enriched by the organized prayer sessions, particularly the Sunday morning prayer sessions and small group prayer during the dialogue. Fourth, I anticipated that the members and participants would be spiritually enriched by the sermons and seminars of the principles found within the book of *Acts*. Fifth, I anticipated that the participants would potentially have diminished negative feelings stemming from the theological polarization as a result of the implementation of the dialogue. And finally, I anticipated that participants could have their presupposition surrendered through the influence of the Holy Spirit as they engaged Scripture.

Regarding the first outcome, I experienced a deeper understanding of the micro-exegetical, meso-exegetical, and macro-phenomenological data specifically related to theological reason; and I also gained practical knowledge of how to execute micro-exegetical, meso-exegetical, and macro-phenomenological exegesis as a result of the

process of writing of Chapter 2, which involved a theological reflection of the book of *Acts*. Regarding the second outcome, I was enlightened through the literature review of theological reason, specifically the review of Canale's deconstruction of theological reason where he contends that Protestantism had not deconstructed far enough to the first macro-hermeneutical principles of Platonic timelessness, which buttresses Canale's argument that methodology must be built from scratch from the Bible, rather than adopting evangelical or secular praxis, which assumes unbiblical macro-hermeneutical assumptions.

Concerning the third outcome, those members and participants that participated in the organized prayer sessions expressed spiritual enrichment and a sense of peace as a result of the prayer times. Regarding the fourth outcome, church members and participants expressed spiritual enrichment and theological knowledge through the seminars and sermons based on the theological reflections of the book of *Acts*. As to the fifth outcome, most of the participants expressed negative feelings before the dialogue implementation stemming from the theological polarization; and all the participants expressed that the dialogue implementation had slightly improved the interpersonal relations between the participants; however, half of the participants expressed anxiety for the future stemming from the unresolved theological issues. Concerning the sixth outcome, the majority of the participants expressed in the final interview their realization that everyone was fixed in their theological positions, which implied that the key presuppositions causing the theological polarization remained unchanged.

Theological Reason in the Book of *Acts*

I came to the following conclusions from the theological reflection of the book of *Acts*: conversion and reception of the Holy Spirit are a prerequisite for spiritual understanding; being a born again, Spirit-filled Christian does not make one immune to faulty lingering cultural presuppositions; faulty presuppositions are surrendered through a continual cycle of cooperation with the Holy Spirit's work and theological reflection upon Scripture; that continual prayer and daily conversion are an integral part of the process of continued spiritual illumination.

Literature Review of Theological Reason

I came to the following conclusions from the literature review of theological reason: theological reason in seminal Christian writers had unbiblical philosophical assumptions; theological reason must be deconstructed and then reconstructed beginning with biblical macro-hermeneutical principles; methodology must be derived from biblical first principles; borrowing methodology without critical thinking will bring with it unbiblical presuppositions; adherence to the *sola Scriptura* principle will influence one's interpretation of the Bible.

Development of a Research Strategy

I came to the following conclusions about the development of the research strategy: sermons and seminars have limitations in providing contextual information before dialogue because the presuppositional frameworks of the participants influence how information is interpreted and applied; opportunities for prayer time are only as effective as the individual participants' willingness to come and participate; dialogue exercises and opportunities for theological reflection are only as effective as one's

willingness to surrender to the Holy Spirit's work and Scripture; in the end, conversion has no human methodological formula.

Research Results

I came to the following conclusions about the research results: the dialogue implementation failed to change the participants on the presuppositional level that affected theological polarization; the dialogue implementation very slightly improved the interpersonal relations between the participants; the dialogue implementation did not have qualitative success in lowering negative feelings stemming from theological polarization in at least half of the participants as they looked into the future after the dialogue implementation; seven of the eight participants expressed that the theological positions had not changed and sensed that the participants remained entrenched in their views after the implementation; praying together and talking about the mission of the church will not bring unity if there are macro-hermeneutical differences.

Final Conclusion

In my estimation, no methodology alone can change an individual on a presuppositional level that can solve the theological divisions and bring ultimate biblical unity for a congregation. Although methodologies can potentially provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work and provide opportunities for the engagement with Scripture; ultimately, the outcome is dependent on the individual's volition, conversion, and the continual surrender of one's heart and mind to the Spirit's leading as revealed through the illumination and revelation of the Word of God.

Recommendations

Considering the conclusion, as stated above, here are my final recommendations:

1. For practitioners dealing with theological division to recognize that an individual's conversion is foundational to their spiritual understanding.
2. For practitioners dealing with theological division to recognize that continual surrender of the individual's presuppositions through the work of the Holy Spirit and theological reflection upon Scripture even after conversion is key to true biblical unity.
3. For practitioners dealing with theological division to recognize that prayer, the preaching of the Word, and theological reflection can provide the environment for the surrender of cherished presuppositions but cannot guarantee an outcome, because the result is determined by an individual's volition.
4. For further biblical research, whether a converted person's refusal to surrender their presuppositions to the Holy Spirit's leading and Scripture has salvific implications.
5. For practitioners dealing with theological division to recognize that no methodology alone can bring theological unity and provide the solution for theological fracture, due to the reality of conversion being foundational to spiritual understanding. However, the methodology can potentially provide a environment for the Holy Spirit to work on the presuppositional level through reflection upon Scripture.
6. For practitioners to build their methodologies from the ground up from biblical foundations rather than uncritically borrowing from evangelical and secular sources due to the assumed unbiblical inherent macro-hermeneutical principles.

7. For further research, a canonical study of theological reason using John Peckham's (2016) canonical methodical as described in his book *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method*.

8. For further research, a more comprehensive methodology of dialogue to be developed based on a canonical study of theological reason.

Final Thoughts

Though the implementation of the project was not ultimately successful in my estimation, I did experience professional and personal growth in the following areas: I grew in my understanding of the book of *Acts* specifically from the perspective of theological reason (which includes a deeper personal appreciation for God's patience with my faulty presuppositions in my spiritual journey); I grew more skilled in the exegetical process having learned and practiced micro, meso, and macro-exegesis for the theological reflection as it provides the foundation for the using the methodology for other research areas; I was personally enriched with a deeper experience as a result of the organized prayer times with church members that are still occurring at the time of the writing of this paper; the implementation process taught me to engage in problem-solving with faithfulness, though a particular outcome may not be assured; I take courage knowing that God is ultimately in control of the destiny of His beloved church.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Informed Consent Form

For all research participants in the research being conducted by David Shin
as part of the following DMin project:

Applying Biblical Principles Towards a Dialogical Model at the Hillside
O'Malley Church

I am agreeing to participate in the research activities being conducted by David Shin in association with his DMin project entitled, "Applying Biblical Principles Towards a Dialogical Model at the Hillside O'Malley Church." I understand the following:

1. The purpose of the research is to qualitatively evaluate the effectiveness of applying principles from the book of *Acts* towards a dialogical model at the Hillside O'Malley church.
2. That the DMin project referred to above involves research requiring the participation of volunteers.
3. That the duration of my involvement in the research is anticipated to take no longer than four (4) months.
4. That all the research to which I am agreeing to participate in will be conducted on the premises of the Hillside O'Malley Church.
5. That my participation in the research will be voluntary, is without any form of coercion, has no impact in any way upon my membership or standing with the Hillside O'Malley church, and will receive no financial or other compensation, is entered into of my own free will.
6. That I have the right to request that my participation in this research be modified or terminated at any moment and am only required to inform the researcher (David Shin) in writing of my decision to withdraw from the research.
7. That to participate in this research, I am aged 18 years or over from the day I first volunteered to participate in the research.

8. That my participation in the research will consist of participation in the following activities: a) preparation: personal prayer in for dialogue and review of the principles from the book of *Acts* that you will be given in a handout; b) participation in an initial in-depth interview with David Shin; c) engage in a series of 3 dialogues that will be scheduled by David Shin d) participation in an end-of-project in-depth interview with David Shin.

9. That whilst the data I provide as a result of my participation in this research may be published, my identity in this study will not be disclosed in any manner, published or verbal.

10. That to participate in the research, I must be a member of the Hillside O'Malley Church.

11. That my participation in the research involves a risk of me experiencing social or spiritual discomfort, theological dialogue involves both the social and spiritual dimensions of human nature, and challenges are possible through participating in the research. Should I believe that I am not being benefitted through my participation in the research as I hoped, or that my spiritual growth as a result of participating in the project is more difficult and challenging for me than I had anticipated, I have the right to immediately discuss the matter with the researcher (David Shin) and either continue, modify or terminate my participation in the research immediately.

12. That should I experience social or spiritual discomfort during my participation in the research, and I may contact the researcher or the research advisor, who will offer the option counseling from a qualified Christian counselor. During this time, I will be offered the choice of continuing, modifying, or terminating my participation in the research.

13. That I may contact the Andrews University Institutional Review Board at any time should I have any concerns about the research process.

14. That my participation in the research may result in me receiving spiritual benefits that are as yet unknown and undefined, I have been told that because of the experimental nature of this study, it is possible that these spiritual benefits may not occur, and that complications and undesirable side effects, which are unknown at this time, including a worsening of my spiritual condition, may result.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher's adviser or an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint, I may have about the study I may contact Dr. Skip Bell, (Andrews University Doctor of Ministry Program Leadership Concentration Coordinator) tel: 269 471 3306, email: sjbell@andrews.edu, or at the following address: SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1560.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher (David Shin) on any matter concerning the research or my participation in the research, I may contact him at the following address: 10902 Rockridge Dr., Anchorage, AK 99516. Email: davidbshin@gmail.com. Cell: 517-755-6079

I have read the contents of this consent form and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the researcher, David Shin. My questions concerning this study have been

answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. If I have additional questions or concerns, I may contact David Shin at the following address: 10902 Rockridge Dr. Anchorage, AK 99516. Email: davidbshin@gmail.com. Cell: 517755-6079

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ Signature of Subject

_____ Date

I have reviewed the contents of this form with the person signing above. I have explained potential risks and benefits of the study.

_____ Signature of Researcher

_____ Date

APPENDIX B

HANDOUT FOR PREPARATION



PRINCIPLES OF PREPARATION FOR DIALOGUE FROM THE BOOK OF *ACTS*

1. Commit to spending time in prayer for the Holy Spirit.

Before any internal dialogue, the disciples waited and prayed for the Holy Spirit in the upper room (Acts 1:14). Furthermore, the early church continued in prayer for the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:42–47). The “days of preparation” consisted of “days of deep heart-searching” (White, 1911, p. 37). Therefore, prayer for the Holy Spirit becomes a vital part of the preparation for dialogue.

Before any theological dialogue, the disciples had the upper room experience as they waited for the Holy Spirit. Here, there was a “putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship” (White, 1911, p. 37). It consisted of “days of preparation . . . days of deep heart-searching” (p. 37). “Under the Spirit’s teaching, they received the final qualification . . . No longer were they a collection of independent units or discordant, conflicting elements” (p. 45). “They were all with one accord” (Acts 2:1, NKJV).

2. Ask to be converted so that you can receive the refreshing from the Spirit.

Peter states that conversion is a prerequisite to receiving the refreshing from the Holy Spirit: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, KJV). Conversion is an important prerequisite for spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, asking for the Holy Spirit to convert our hearts is a foundational element of the preparation process.

3. Ask for illumination by the Spirit.

As expressed in Chapter 2, the book of *Acts* alludes to the reality that it is ultimately the Spirit that gives illumination. “Under the Spirit’s teaching they received the final qualification and went forth to their lifework. No longer were they ignorant and uncultured” (White, 1911, p. 45). The book of *Acts* indicates that the Holy Spirit gave illumination through direct revelation and guidance for the apostles (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12, 27; 13:2, 4, 10, 23; 16:6, 21:11). Furthermore, Jesus indicated that the Holy Spirit would be the divine teacher (John 14:26) and be the guide into all truth (John 16:13). Therefore, asking for the Holy Spirit’s illumination is critical to the preparation for theological dialogue.

4. Ask daily for the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), yet the early church continued the upper room experience by a continuation of daily prayer (Acts 2:42-47). There was a continuation of the upper room experience, implying that there was a need for continual, daily filling by the Spirit. Paul stated the reality that there is a need for daily renewal of the inner man (2 Cor 4:16) by the Spirit (Eph 3:16). Ellen White (1911) further supports the biblical principle by stating, “for the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God (p. 50)”; therefore, the daily asking for the

Holy Spirit is critical to the preparation process.

5. Be willing to allow the Spirit to empty oneself of faulty presuppositions.

Recognize that conversion does not mean the absence of faulty presuppositions. As expounded on in the theological reflection in Chapter 2, the book of *Acts* reveals that old presuppositions are often cherished, unconscious, and difficult to remove even for converted and Spirit-filled Christians (Acts 21:23–25). After Paul’s conversion, he would spend three years in Arabia (Gal 5:17) where he “emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life” (White, 1911, p. 119). The awareness of faulty presuppositions and the willingness to expunge the unbiblical presuppositions though converted is an important part of the process of preparation.

6. Ask for the Spirit to shape our persona in dialogue.

The Holy Spirit impacted the persona of the apostles in the book of *Acts* as “the peace of Christ shone from their faces . . . their very features bore evidence to the surrender they had made” (White, 1911, p. 46), and the hearers “realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, NKJV). The way that we dialogue is as important as the topic on which we converse.

Mission-Based Dialogue

1. Commit to dialoguing in the broad context of the mission of the church of taking the gospel to the world.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in *Acts* was for cross-cultural evangelization. The nature of any theological dialogue must be framed within this context of the mission of the church, as defined in the book of *Acts*. Therefore, a commitment of dialoguing in the context of the cross-cultural evangelization of the church must exist.

2. Review and reflect on the mission of the church prior to dialogue takes place.

Prior to the theological dialogue, take time to revisit and reflect on the mission of the church by personal reflection Acts 1:7–8.

In Acts, Jesus stated that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8, NASB). The work of the Holy Spirit was for the purpose of the “diaspora mission.” The Spirit is essential for giving power to the church in the mission of “cross-cultural evangelism”, and all dialogue was in this context.

APPENDIX C

INITIAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Initial in-depth interview lead questions for all research participants
in the research being conducted by David Shin as part
of the following DMin project:

Applying Biblical Principles Towards a Dialogical Model
at the Hillside O' Malley Church

1. Please describe your experience of prayer in preparation for events.
2. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of prayer to this upcoming dialogue process.
3. Please describe your understanding of the church's mission, as depicted in the book of *Acts*.
4. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of dialogue being centered around the mission of the church.
5. Please describe your understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in unity, as described in the book of *Acts*.
6. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you anticipate of the Holy Spirit in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research.
7. Please describe your perspective on the theological diversity in the Hillside O' Malley church.
8. Please describe your feelings about the theological diversity at the Hillside O' Malley church.
9. Please share your experience of any prior dialogue that comes to mind that you had with an individual or group with differing theological positions.
10. Please share the benefits that you anticipate in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research.
11. Please share the drawbacks that you anticipate in the dialogue that will take place over the period of the research.

APPENDIX D

HANDOUT PRIOR TO FIRST DIALOGUE



Theological Reflection:

Acts Chapters 1 and 2

Key Text: Acts 1:8 (Scholars have noted that Acts 1:8 is a summary of the book of *Acts*.)

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White—Chapter 3—The Great Commission

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White—Chapter 4—Pentecost

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White—Chapter 5—The Holy Spirit

Focus Areas:

Reflect on God's vision/mission of the early church, according to Acts 1:8.

Reflect on the Holy Spirit's role in fulfilling the mission/vision and on the personal preparation for receiving the Holy Spirit.

Reflect on what the resulting early church community felt like as they began to fulfill God's vision/mission (Acts 2:42–47).

Visioning:

Coming from an Acts 1 and 2 reflection, imagine *without any limitations* of what Hillside O'Malley church would look like if God's vision and mission would be fulfilled. What would it look and feel like (in our broader community of

Anchorage and in Alaska and World Impact; in our faith community, worship service, in our Sabbath School, in our fellowship and relationships, etc.)? We are encouraging everyone to write descriptively and creatively what you see and feel ahead of time to share in our dialogue. Those that desire to share what they have written will be given an opportunity to read what they have written.

APPENDIX E

FIRST DIALOGUE FORMAT



Season of Prayer for the Holy Spirit

“For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God. Companies of Christian workers should gather to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely” (White, 1911, p. 51).

Hymn:

Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me!
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me!
Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me!
Spirit of the living God
Fall afresh on me!

Review of Themes in Acts 1&2

Acts 1:4

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.”

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Craig Keener (2012), in his monumental exegetical commentary on the book of *Acts*, states, “any treatment that minimizes either the Spirit or the Diaspora mission misses the central point of the work” (p. 520). The Spirit is referred to 59 times in the book of *Acts*, and these “constitute nearly a quarter of NT references to the Spirit, no other NT book has even half as many” (p. 520). The book of *Acts* has been called “the Gospel of the Holy Spirit” (p. 520).

Michael Green (2004), *Thirty Years That Changed the World*:

Three crucial decades in world history. That is all it took. In the years between AD 33 and 64, a new movement was born. In those thirty years, it got sufficient growth and credibility to become the largest religion the world has ever seen and to change the lives of hundreds of millions of people. It has spread into every corner of the globe and has more than two billion putative adherents. It has had an indelible impact on civilization, on culture, on education, on medicine, on freedom, and of course, on the lives of countless people worldwide. And the seedbed for all this, the time when it took decisive root, was in these three decades. It all began with a dozen men and a handful of women: and then the Spirit came. (p. 7)

A. W. Tozer (1985):

If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on, and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference. (p. 46)

Theological Reflection:

God’s mission/vision of the early church (Acts 1:8)

White (1911) in her book, *Acts of the Apostles*, writes: “One interest prevailed; one subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ’s character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom” (p. 49).

Holy Spirit’s role in fulfilling mission/personal preparation (Acts 1:8, 14)

The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. They drew nearer and nearer to God, and as they did this, they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ. Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times, they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them. These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised. (White, 1911, p. 38)

What was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? The glad tidings of a risen Saviour were carried to the uttermost parts of the inhabited world. As the disciples proclaimed the message of redeeming grace, hearts yielded to the power of this message. The church beheld converts flocking to her from all directions. Backsliders were reconverted. Sinners united with believers in seeking the pearl of great price. Some who had been the bitterest opponents of the gospel became its champions. (White, 1911, p. 48)

Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it? The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God. Companies of Christian workers should gather to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely. Especially should they pray that God will baptize His chosen ambassadors in mission fields with a rich measure of His Spirit. The presence of the Spirit with God's workers will give the proclamation of truth a power that not all the honor or glory of the world could give. (White, 1911, p. 51)

Church Community in Mission (Acts 2:42–47)

Sharing time:

Without limitations, share what Hillside O'Malley would look like if God's mission/vision would be fulfilled?

“The difference between worldly visions and God-given visions is that God-given visions are impossible to achieve without Him.” Blackaby

APPENDIX F

HANDOUT PRIOR TO SECOND DIALOGUE



Theological Reflection:

Acts 15

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White, Chapter 19 “Jew and Gentile”

Background on Acts 15

The core issue revolved around the transition of individuals from Judaism to Christianity and how the Jewish Christians applied their old theological presuppositions to the new influx of Gentile converts in asking them to be "circumcised according to the custom of Moses" for salvation (Acts 15:1, NASB) and “direct them to observe the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5, NASB).

The Jerusalem council decision to have the Gentiles refrain from eating blood, meat offered to idols, and animals that had been strangled was the result of theological dialogue and reflection using the Old Testament as its primary source. According to Roy Gane (2008), the decision that was made by the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 “refers by implication to the Old Testament, where the only biblical requirement for preventing ingestion of blood along with meat is to drain it out at the time of slaughter (Lev 17:13; Deut 12:24; 1 Sam 14:32–34)” (p. 13). Furthermore, Crosby (2005) states that the letter

stating the decision of the Jerusalem council in “Acts 15:29 follows Leviticus exactly, in precise textual order” (Lev 17:7–9) of abstaining from meat offered to idols being applicable to Gentiles. The dialogue and subsequent decision were not a new first-century teaching but rather the result of the theological application of Old Testament principles to the Gentile context.

Theological Reflection Focus Questions:

Reflect on how the early church resolved the issues that came with accomplishing mission.

What is core to Adventist identity? What is peripheral?

What is the relationship between Adventist doctrine and Adventist identity?

What is the relationship between Adventist identity and Adventist mission?

What are the greatest hindrances to the global Adventist church accomplishing God’s vision/mission?

What are the greatest hindrances to the Hillside O’Malley church accomplishing God’s vision/mission?

What are the solutions to the hindrances?

APPENDIX G

SECOND DIALOGUE FORMAT



Season of Small Group Prayer

Focus References:

Acts 15

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White, Chapter 19 “Jew and Gentile”

Background on Acts 15:

The core issue revolved around the transition of individuals from Judaism to Christianity and how the Jewish Christians applied their old theological presuppositions to the new influx of Gentile converts in asking them to be "circumcised according to the custom of Moses" for salvation (Acts 15:1, NASB) and “direct them to observe the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5, NASB).

The Jerusalem council decision to have the Gentiles refrain from sexual immorality, eating blood, meat offered to idols, and animals that had been strangled was the result of theological dialogue and reflection using the Old Testament as its primary source. According to Roy Gane (2008), the decision that was made by the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 "refers by implication to the Old Testament, where the only biblical

requirement for preventing ingestion of blood along with meat is to drain it out at the time of slaughter (Lev 17:13; Deut 12:24; 1 Sam 14:32–34)” (p. 13). Furthermore, Crosby (2005) states that the letter stating the decision of the Jerusalem council in “Acts 15:29 follows Leviticus exactly, in precise textual order” (Lev 17:7–9) of abstaining from meat offered to idols being applicable to Gentiles. The dialogue and subsequent decision were not a new first-century teaching but rather the result of the theological application of Old Testament principles to the Gentile context.

The issue in Acts 15 came as a result of the church fulfilling its mission to reach the world with the gospel—Gentiles were coming into the predominantly Jewish Christian church. The disciples led by the Holy Spirit were able to distinguish between what was essential to Christianity and what was peripheral in the context of fulfilling mission.

Small Group Discussion:

What is the relationship between Adventist identity and Adventist mission?

What teachings are central to Adventist identity? What is peripheral?

What is the relationship between Adventist doctrine and Adventist identity? What doctrines would you say are “pillars”?

What are the greatest hindrances to the global Adventist church accomplishing God’s vision/mission?

What are the greatest hindrances to the Hillside O’Malley church accomplishing God’s vision/mission?

What do you think are the solutions to the hindrances?

APPENDIX H

HANDOUT PRIOR TO FINAL DIALOGUE



Theological Reflection:

Acts Chapters 1 and 2

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White, Chapter 4 “Pentecost”

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White, Chapter 5 “The Gift of the Spirit”

Reflection focus questions:

What did “waiting” for the Holy Spirit mean for the disciples?

Are there conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit?

If so, what are they?

Is there a relationship between prayer and the Holy Spirit?

Is there a relationship between mission and the Holy Spirit?

Is there a relationship between unity and the Holy Spirit?

What is the relationship between Pentecost outpouring and a daily outpouring?

How have you experienced the Holy Spirit in your daily life?

Is there more the Hillside O’Malley church can do to receive Holy Spirit?

Or is it dependent wholly on God’s sovereignty?

Quotations for Participant Reflection

Emil Brunner (as cited in Mager, 1999), an Evangelical reformed theologian, wrote that the Holy Ghost “has always more or less been the stepchild of theology” (n.p.)

D. Martin Lloyd-Jones (1984):

If I may give my honest opinion, then there is no topic on biblical belief that has been so neglected in the past or present as the topic of the Holy Ghost. . . . I am sure that this is the cause for the weakness of the evangelical faith. (p. 72)

Ellen White (as cited in Froom, 1956), “I am convinced that the lack of the Holy Spirit is our worst problem” (p. 94).

Dwight Nelson (as cited in Haubeil, 2011):

Our church has to the point of exhaustion developed admirable forms, plans, and programs, but if we don’t finally admit to our spiritual bankruptcy [lack of the Holy Spirit], which has overtaken many of us ministers and leaders, then we will never be able to get out of our Pro-Forma-Christianity. (p. 3)

Garrie F. Williams (2007):

It seems that the Holy Spirit largely plays a minor role, if at all, in the daily lives of many Adventists and in church life. And yet this is the foundation for a joyful, attractive and fruit-bearing life in Christ. (cover)

A. W. Tozer (1985):

If the Holy Ghost were taken away from our church today, 95% of what we do would continue and no one would notice the difference. If the Holy Ghost had withdrawn from the early church, then 95% of what they were doing would have stopped and everyone would have noticed the difference. (p. 46)

APPENDIX I

FINAL DIALOGUE FORMAT



Season of Small Group Prayer

Focus References for Reflection:

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White, Chapter 4 “Pentecost”

Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White, Chapter 5 “The Gift of the Spirit”

Acts 1:4–5

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to *wait* for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the *Holy Spirit* not many days from now.’”

Small-Group Questions:

- What did “waiting” for the Holy Spirit mean for the disciples? (See Acts 2:14; See handout on Chapter 4 of *Acts of the Apostles* by EGW)
- Are there conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit? (See Acts 2:38; Acts 5:32)
If so, what are they?
- What is the relationship between collective prayer and the Holy Spirit? (See Acts 1:14)
- What is the relationship between the mission of the church and the Holy Spirit? (See Acts 1:8)
- What is the relationship between unity and the Holy Spirit? (See Acts 2:1)
- What is the relationship between the Pentecost outpouring and a daily outpouring? (See Acts 2:1–4; 2 Cor 4:16, Eph 3:16–17, 19)
- What is the relationship between God’s part/man’s part in receiving the Holy Spirit? What role does human free will play?
- Is there more the Hillside O’Malley church can do to receive Holy Spirit?

APPENDIX J

FINAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Final in-depth interview lead questions for all research participants in the research being conducted by David Shin as part of the following DMin project:

Applying Biblical Principles Towards a Dialogical Model at the Hillside O' Malley Church

1. Please describe your experience of prayer during the dialogue that has taken place.
2. Please share the benefits (if at all) of prayer that you experienced during the dialogue process that has taken place.
3. Please describe any further insights into the church' s mission that has taken place during the dialogue.
4. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you experienced of the dialogue being centered around the mission of the church.
5. Please describe any further insights into the Holy Spirit' s role in unity as a result of the dialogue that has taken place.
6. Please share the benefits (if at all) from the Holy Spirit that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place.
7. Please describe your perspective of theological diversity in the Hillside O' Malley church after the dialogue has taken place.
8. Please describe your feelings about the theological diversity at the Hillside O' Malley church after the dialogue that has taken place.
9. Please share your perspective of how the dialogue that has taken place is similar or different from prior dialogues that you' ve had with an individual or groups with differing theological positions.
10. Please share the benefits (if at all) that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place over the period of the research.
11. Please share the drawbacks (if at all) that you experienced in the dialogue that has taken place over the period of the research.

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Sept 2003–May 2015	Instructor/trainer, Michigan Conference Campus Ministries program, East Lansing, MI
May 2004–Jan 2007	Youth pastor, Village Seventh-day Adventist Church, Berrien Springs, MI
May 2003–May 2004	Associate pastor, Kalamazoo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kalamazoo, MI
June 2001–Aug 2001	Colporteur administrator/leader, Fresno, CA
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