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Article

Living the Way: An Ethical Approach towards Cross-Cultural Reading in Our Local and Global Contexts

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Abstract: The early Church had an incredible encounter with the resurrected Christ. Being living witnesses, Christ's followers spread the Gospel in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. This piece argued that the Bible contains methodologies used by the Apostles who laid down their lives for the sake of the message of the Cross. Furthermore, it has been contested in this study that the emphasis today has shifted to personal theological agendas of reading the Bible for intellectual preferences. As a result of Christianity's current emphasis on dogmatic beliefs, various unbiblical approaches to reading the Bible have emerged that ignore the ethical reading of the Bible. This study has reinvestigated the reasons to apply this approach in our modern era to live the Bible rather than any other approach. And one among them is the Enlightenment era which distorted the relationship between ethics and theology (Perry 46). Apart from the above, this study also revealed that many Bible believers have twisted biblical truths because they focus on their convictions. As a result, many strategies fail to provide sound biblical teachings to understand any particular event in the light of the original message of the Bible to reflect upon our situation today. Therefore, in light of the above, on the one hand, the approach of the early Church Fathers is used to reimagine contemporary challenges from this perspective. On the other hand, even though thousands of books have been written on various methodologies to study the Bible, the core concern to critique these current approaches is not personal or denominational, religion-based but rather 'invitational and servational' to live with these biblical beliefs to reorient an ethical approach towards cross-cultural reading in our local and global contexts addressing the problems (injustice and marginalization) and responding to the contemporary challenges.

Keywords: Bible; early Church; ethical; post-colonial/Christendom; injustice; marginalization; cross-cultural

1. Introduction

Why should we read the Bible focusing ethical concerns in mind? There are varieties of versions available these days that promote studying the Bible through different lenses. On the one hand, scriptures are offered to study with keeping other religions in mind. Further, on the other hand, the post-colonial / Christendom eras have developed devastating changes in this phenomenon. These two different reading approaches have given a completely different shift to Christianity, but nearly the same purpose, however, these practices do not measure up to the early Church.

One of the prolific theologians of the nineteenth century and a great figure of the Mercersburg Theology movement emphasized the importance of the Word of God declaring that "[T]he contents of the scriptures itself as apprehended and settled by the church against heresies past and always new appearing; not an independent source of revelation, but the one fountain of the written word, only rolling itself forward in the stream of church consciousness (Schaff 116). The Bible is prophetic in nature that raises the voice against injustice and marginalization (see, further, Tu 2011). Though people in the global context believe that the post-Christendom aspect is of utmost importance to read the Bible (see, for example, Beck, Sweet 2020), along with this some believe the modernism (Rzepa

2021), or post-colonial perspective is the top issue that is immediate to address while reading the Bible with postcolonial perception to decolonize the so-called missionaries' mission (See, for example, Sugirtharajah 2012). Although these issues are vital to address however, keeping these challenges in mind, does it mean we should remove our eyes from the original message of the Bible that is prophetic in nature and raise the voice against marginalization? Or should we approach our context above the Bible to develop our doctrines? Or should we remove the ethical approach out of our sight approaching the Bible with critical eyes to respond to the biblical skeptics alone? These three questions are important enough to trace our findings in light of these challenges. Therefore, this study claims that we cannot overlook the post-Christendom/Colonial and skeptics' concern while studying the Bible proposing an ethical approach in any context.

Why ethics is important is a concern of this study to reveal that rather than asking 'how' to deal with today's issues? We need to switch our perceptions from 'how' to 'why' dealing with today's issues. 'Why' is of utmost importance to respond to the problems in our society. It deals with the methodologies of the Bible. This piece further reveals that to overcome such challenges most modern readers have developed a number of techniques for interpreting the Bible. They are using a variety of tools to provide answers to the world about the Bible's authenticity. Some are more interested in textual criticism, which examines variations and manuscripts of biblical texts to determine the original reading of the Bible (see, for example, Crowe 2019). Nonetheless, the argument is that these approaches raise a number of concerns, including which method is accurate in determining which should be focused and which should not be. Though, from the perspective of modern readers, these approaches are quite relevant in terms of proving the authenticity of the Bible, as this world regards the Bible as an ancient book with no relevance to today's issues. Unfortunately, many seminaries teach students to critically examine the Bible to gain a better understanding of it, while the early Church Fathers were very consistent in reading the Bible to develop insights from the Bible. For them, the entire Bible was a complete book that required no suspicion. Thus (sadly) the procedure for carrying out this exercise has lost its meaning as a result of a variety of approaches. In other words, the most important aspect that is disregarded during these practices is, reading the Bible thoroughly and delving into the text for ethical concerns for the well-being of this broken world. The lessons and stories in the Bible are still relevant resolving the moral concerns today (Weiss 6). This ethical dilemma has an influence on today's worldwide concerns about religion and social justice (Autero 363).

In light of these findings, the paper is constructed to see the role of the Bible in the glocal (local and global) context. In other words, the overall focus of this paper is to reimagine the Bible in any local context and its implications in the wider context for injustice and marginalization. And in this whole prospect, an ethical approach will be proposed to challenge the approaches within such contexts prioritizing the message of the text to become a living reality rather than any other approach. Therefore, the first and foremost intention of writing this paper is based on 'created being and ethical being'. The created being is concerned with knowing the revealed knowledge and ethics is concerned with being the living reality of the revealed knowledge.

2. The Bible in the Post-Colonial Era: Different Studies in Local and Global Contexts

Before delving deep into the relationship of ethical concern there are various scholars in this school of thought who raise various doubts about the Bible's authenticity. In the Asian context, the oldest among them is R.S Sugirtharajah(2012), who raised several challenges to read the Bible in the post-colonial era, affirming that the comparative approach to reading the Bible was judgmental, aggressive, and contested(143). Sugirtharajah advised his biblical readers to change their perspectives to resolve the religious challenges considering it a contested and ambiguous book. Thus, he affirms that the whole shift needs to change, prioritizing the post-colonial era, rather than the message of the Bible—which is irrelevant and does not respond to the realities of Asia. Like, Sugirtharajah the earlier among him is Edward Said, a cultural critic who wrote enough on Western imperialism. Sugritharajah approached Said to proceed with his argument for reading the Bible from the post-colonial eyes. Said introduced two readings, 'Contrapuntal Reading' and 'Late Style'. His emphasis

on the first method of reading style was based on discovering the hidden meaning of the text merging the biblical text with other texts. In other words, Said proposed that biblical readers need to enhance their understanding by assimilating the two texts at the same time to discover what is absent in one text to find it in the other. The approach to developing this reading style is to increase the harmonious tones among different religions connecting these stories to fill the gaps (143). For example, for him merging the narrative of Jesus' birth, and Buddha's is important to fill the gaps in the undiscovered areas of texts (142-147). In this way, both religions' texts gain from one another without losing their vitality. Sugritharajah approached this reading style to critique the traditional approaches of biblical theologians who confine the text to their own privileges and truth. So according to him, the truths are not confined to scripture alone, rather the truth reveals through "myths and metaphors"(149).

In the Late style, Said claimed that this style gets changed when a person becomes old and as per this reading style, the same happened with Paul and John. The literature of Paul in Romans 13 is different from John in the book of Revelation. In contrast to John, Paul's literature shifted from rebellious to calm in another example of lateness (156). While John's emphasis, unlike in the Gospel of John, shifted from love to vengeance in the book of Revelation. The harmonious synthesis that could be seen in the fourth Gospel, according to Sugritharajah has lost her sense in the book of Revelation (158-159). Thus, this variety of contrasts in this 'Late Style' from the contrapuntal style leaves a lot of gaps in this narrative (160). In conclusion, Suritharajah's approach to reading the Bible with postcolonial eyes for gaining fresh insights encourages readers to approach the text for their contextual needs, without prioritizing this text above (172). The intention is not here to condemn other scriptures but rather to critique the misappropriate way of dealing with other religious beliefs, scripturally and in Church traditions. Timothy George affirms that Paul in Athens did not refute the religious beliefs, rather he identified those beliefs finding Christ in those beliefs that were lacking in the frameworks. Although the emphasis of these scholars has provided a new shift to realign the differences towards a harmonious approach with other religions, on the one hand. On the other hand, however, in resolving the contextual realities the traditional approaches have hindered ethical concerns mis-approaching them to some extent dealing with the theological portions by separating them from living reality. In other words, the truths are tried to find on the basis of intellectual preferences rather than faith-based living experiences. While it is noteworthy to consider the Bible is not the literary works of human authors rather it is the "faith-experience of individuals and communities of believers"(Nerapampil 301). Thus, in this way, God in the Bible approached one individual towards a broader community for the well-being of this world (311). Thus, modernity, postcolonial, and textual criticisms have turned the shifts limiting to think, what should be done? Rather than how should be done? However, to change our eyes from the text of the Bible merely focusing on the need of the people is not at all the right approach. As this postcolonial mentality leads us to focus on the needs alone, rather than ethically approach the text for the well-being of the community. This limits our perception of our well-being, while the ethical shift is concerned with whole beings rather than any individual. One example of this unethical practice could be seen in the Enlightenment era when a breach between ethics and theology happened. This age led to another era of modernity based on the freedom of choice neglecting tradition, consequently giving birth to non-theological ethics that people thought fit to accept (Perry 47).

Before proceeding further, the later section will observe the approaches of the early Church Fathers who interpreted the scriptures by digging deep into the text.

3. Strategies of the Early Church Fathers to Interpret the Scriptures

The problem with today's exegetes is that they are only familiar with their favorite parts of the Bible and do not seek the entire message of the Bible. Nevertheless, John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno (2005) argue that the early Church Fathers' conviction of thorough reading of the scripture made it possible to mature in their biblical understanding to develop the sequential interpretation of the whole Bible (O'Keefe, Reno 31). Unlike, the Fathers, today's readers invest a lot in finding the historical Jesus (see, for example, Byung Mu Ahn 1993), which always leaves them unclear in finding the full length of Christology in the Bible, however, for the Fathers, Jesus Christ was the hypothesis.

In this way, such a hypothesis opens up for the reader "to read the text as teaching an economy that is well sequenced rather than disordered." (O'Keefe, Reno 41). It is noteworthy to remember that, on the one hand, the disciples of Jesus Christ were keen to remember the words of Christ. As a result, every word that came out of Christ's mouth was an absolute truth for the disciples' missionary journey.¹ On the other hand, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they proclaimed and performed the godly works. Schaff(2019) affirms this truth in such a way "Christ is the personal Word of God, the eternal Logos, who became flesh and dwelt upon earth as the true Shekinah, in the veiled glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. He spoke; and all the words of his mouth were, and still are, spirit and life. The human heart craves not a learned, letter-writing, literary Christ, but a wonder-working, cross-bearing, atoning Redeemer, risen, enthroned in heaven, and ruling the world; furnishing, at the same time, to men and angels an unending theme for meditation, discourse, and praise" (N.pag.). The early Church Fathers took the same approach as the disciples, devoting their lives to delving deeper into the Word of God to draw insightful thoughts from the Bible. They saw the Bible as a unified whole with no contradictions, which led them to interpret the exact teachings of the Bible. St. Anthony, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and others are examples of early Church Fathers who dedicated their lives to interpreting. Furthermore, on the one hand, they were confident in their method of exegesis, on the other hand, the Fathers were not dogmatics in terms of developing doctrines to distort the meaning of scriptures—to serve their own interests—rather, they faithfully drew the Bible's message out of the Bible (O'Keefe, Reno 43) to live with it.

O'Keefe and Reno further define the approach of the early Church Fathers to textual analysis into three categories: intensive, typological, and allegorical. They claim that the intensive reading of the Bible does not develop by delving into some abstracts of scriptures; rather, the entire concept of developing this strategy was based on an overall reading of it. They went through each verse, looking for the smallest details in the text (46). It is important to note that going through every single detail of an ancient manuscript was not the easiest strategy, but because the Fathers had the formula of engaging with the entire body of the Bible, this is the reason the Patristic exegesis remained successful despite the difficulties of ancient texts. In other words, the success of this analysis was not based on using strong concordances or textual criticism to accurately figure out the meaning of the specific word(s) or passage(s) rather the whole understanding was developed by remembering the whole Bible in this framework (the intention is not to contradict with the usage of concordance, rather the emphasis is the total reading of the scripture to understand the specific word(s) in the light of the entire Bible). As a result, the typological approach was built on a thorough reading of the entire Bible. In this approach, the type of Christ prefigured in the Old Testament demonstrates the works of Him in the biblical characters. The character of Moses in this perspective can be seen as the type of Christ. As Moses delivered the people of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt in a similar way Jesus Christ delivered them out of the bondage of sin and death. Furthermore, as Joshua led the people of Israel to the promised land, Christ led us to heaven (70). Moreover, the Fathers linked the biblical events in such a way that the suffering and trials of many saints demonstrate the type of Christ in the present world. It is important to understand here the Fathers' role of exegeting the books, characters, and any text(s) was entirely attached to looking at it and relating to the present world.

The allegorical part of this strategy was to discern the text's spiritual depth (93). In other words, since the Fathers were aware of the entire reading of the Bible, it was not difficult for them to discover the original meaning of a specific area of the Bible. As a result, they emphasized sequential reading of the Bible, which was only possible to draw out the secrets of those texts that were written in a

¹ The early Church who witnessed Christ through the words, Jesus spoke during His earthly ministry were the real treasures to them. In other words, this New Testament provided them with a framework to approach the world. And they proclaimed these truths by the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than any personal experiences, prioritizing the post-colonial era above the Bible, neither the pluralistic context nor any mystical, scientific, and biological proofs. For a thorough study of these readings, see further, Hick, John and Knitter, Paul F. (Eds.). *Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (1987). John Parrat (2012). *The Other Jesus: Christology in Asian Perspective*. Sugirtharajah, R. S. (2012). *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*. Carpenter, John S. (2017). *Be Not Afraid to Follow the Footprints from Heaven*. (2018). *He is Alive: Science Finds Jesus. and so on*.

literal sense (codes and figures) for the purpose to discover the original meaning of any text. This approach would be developed in the later section keeping these three models to draw insights out of the Bible reflecting our presenting realities. The next section would bring the methodology of the Early Church Fathers perfecting their ability to interpret the text.

A. The Methodology of Patristic Exegesis

As discussed above, the Church Fathers developed the practice of thoroughly reading the scriptures to get insights. However, certain principles must be followed in order to comprehend the deeper meanings of the scripture. Through prayer, fasting, and self-control, the Fathers perfected their ability to interpret the text (129). Like O' Keefe and Reno, Charles Kannengiesser(2004) also affirms that faithful reading of Scripture opens up the mind of readers to know the divine mysteries (207). Since O' Keefe and Reno are aware of the current struggle of modern readers, they argue that proving the authenticity of the Bible should be avoided. Finally, personal discipline necessitates viewing the entire Bible as a unified truth. This is precisely the image of Fathers, who, unlike today's modern readers, ponder the text of the Bible in order to gain spiritual maturity, leaving their own plans to interpret the scriptures. They saw the Bible as a unified body with no contradictions, which led them to interpret the Bible's exact teachings. Thus, we understand that to gain a better understanding of the Bible a thorough reading of it is of utmost importance, on the one hand, and personal discipline is required, on the other hand. Lastly, the entire focus of this study is "to think and through" the whole scripture (O'Keefe and Reno 166).

Unfortunately, thousands of commentaries and books are written on this subject, and many readers have lost the charm of reading the text merely focusing much on finding the historical information of any passage or event. Others are concerned with mere sharing the stories of the Bible. In this regard, John Goldingay highlights that there is a great danger in reducing the text to a mere story. Goldingay further argues that theology does not reduce to a mere story; it is a fundamental truth that resists temptation. It is important to see Jesus Christ at this point who used the text to resist temptation (Matthew 4), so how much do we need to meditate on the text to draw insights from it following, if Jesus Christ used the text to resist the temptation? Furthermore, during Christ's earthly ministry, Jesus used scripture to demonstrate His agenda to the Jewish people (Luke 4:18-19).

To show the importance of the New Testament, Schaff (1960) insightfully declares that "[I]n the little volume, which we call the New Testament, a book altogether unique in spiritual power and influence over the mind and heart of man, and of more interest and value than all the ancient and modern classics combined. If ever God spoke and still speaks to man, it is in this book... Although these books were called forth apparently by special and accidental occasions and were primarily addressed to particular circles of readers and adapted to peculiar circumstances, yet as they present the external and unchangeable truth in living forms, they suit all circumstances and conditions. Tracts for the times, they are tracts for all times; intended for Jews and Greeks of the first century, they have the same interest for [Asians] Englishmen and Americans of the nineteenth century. They are to this day not only the sole reliable and pure fountain of primitive Christianity but also the infallible rule of Christian faith and practice... Theological systems come and go, and draw from that treasury their larger or smaller additions to the stock of our knowledge of the truth; but they can never equal that infallible word of God, which abideth forever" (572-573).

In light of the Schaff statement, it does not mean to minimize the importance of the Old Testament, but rather both are equally important. It is worth noting that, like Christ, David used the same strategy to resist temptation "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). So, the text is the subject matter and its understanding in the framework of the entire Bible rather than any event or story. The text is the way to get insights and further imagine them in our contexts (Autero 328-29) for cross-cultural reading for the ethical concern. It is lamentable that people have approached the context above the text for the fulfillment of their desires rather than understanding the text (see, for example, Bohache 2018).

In light of the above discussion, one could ask this question, does a single passage have any importance, or what if someone just has a single page of the Bible rather than the entire? As in some countries where people are not allowed to have a Bible the lives of the people get changed by having

a single page of it. The important point here is to recognize that every single word that came out of the mouth of God has the power to transform the heart of anyone. In this regard, Brother Andrew wrote in his book "And God Changed His Mind" that in one Eastern European city a member of one underground church met a pastor and told him that he found hope after reading a single page of scriptures from the book of Jeremiah. The pastor was amazed by the young man's excitement and replied, how can the book of Jeremiah give you hope—this book is depressing. The young man replied, "Pastor, it says on that page that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. If the word of the Lord could come to Jeremiah, it can come to me, too!" (Andrew, Williams 146). The whole point of demonstrating this truth does not mean the Patristic exegesis of developing the doctrines by looking at the whole Bible was wrong. Neither this means that only specific portions of the Bible are enough to read, but rather the point of understanding is, that one page of the Bible is enough for the personal encounter to witness Christ for the ethical concern. Thus, the Bible and traditions affirm two rules that are of utmost importance to consider, the first is Christian action and the second is moral behavior as these are two witnesses to demonstrate the Lordship of Christ (Liederbach, Bible 25). Moral behavior is necessary for the well-being of this world and Christian action is to demonstrate his authority.

4. Scriptures and Cross-Cultural Reading in the Local Context

There are many challenges in the context wherein the Bible is considered corrupted content in local contexts (see, for example, Malik 1993). Unfortunately, in many contexts, the spirit of apologetics has captured the minds of many people negating the whole text of the Bible to become a living witness. As a result, going through different procedures of comparative theology many approaches are developed to defend the truth of the Bible. In other words, people admire reading their favorite parts rather than approaching them through a different lens. Regrettably, instead of improving the context, these tactics have taken a different shift to condemn one another in this phenomenon. Though it does not mean that Christians do not need to defend themselves, the Creeds are the demonstration of such a process. However, the danger is that this defense could take a different shift, and it could become the cause of jealousy, fighting, and hatred if the objective is based on, 'winning the argument'. Here Samuel Ajayi Crowther an African in the nineteenth century is worthy of mention. He was a Yoruba sold slave, where Portuguese traders raided his land slaughtering many people. He has been released by the English people who had taken him to the free land a place called Sierra Leone. He accepted Christianity there he was baptized by Rev. John Raban an English missionary. He translated the Bible into many African languages, especially the Yoruba language, and compiled a language dictionary (Walls 155-164). Andrew F. Walls (2005) mentions his missionary work, affirming that Crowther developed a strategy to engage Muslim and Christian dialogues without conflict. He further asserts that after observing his own work, Crowther said that "After many years of experience, I have found that the Bible, the sword of the Spirit, must fight its own battle, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (162). This affirmation can be found in pursuing 'who to how' for finding this truth in the Bible (Liederbach, Bible 142).

As a result, the principle of the indigenous church that was essentially African has passed to the whole church of Africa that later became the portion of the vast whole church of Christ. In a similar way, one of the pioneers of constructive theologians that appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century in the colony of Sierra Leone, Harry Sawyerr. Two issues arose in the context of Africa. On the one hand, with Western language and its dominant culture with its Christian faith. On the other hand, in the tiny colony of Sierra the old religions of Africa in which he had spent his early life. He observed that the current literature has no relevance to the current situation. However, during this period, Sawyerr was not particularly afraid of the implicit colonialism that had taken birth by reading Western stuff there, rather he was concerned about the Western culture that ignored the diversity of Africa. In this case, Sawyerr refused to embrace Western theology by looking at the diversity of Africa and worked as a theologian in the colony. Sawyerr was strongly attached to the same classical approach of doing theology for dismantling any academic irrelevancy to Africa (Walls 165-173).

Therefore, observing the aforementioned approaches, the simple answer to respond to our brothers and sisters is that (which most believers are unable to understand) the Bible does not want to defend its position by developing doctrines of comparative theology. Neither does it pertain to Orthodoxy, but rather it needs Orthopraxy, so that the teachings of the Bible should be alive in any local context today, and they could reflect them through their lives.

In this process any local Church needs to revise its approach, on the one hand, to become the doer of the Word of God, rather than merely Biblicist. On the other hand, in this praxis, the cross-cultural reading towards ethical approach would not remain on translating the Bible merely into different languages (though translating the scriptures is an important step), but rather it further developed to indigenize the teachings of the Bible by looking into the text as a 'mirror' and then 'reflect it in our context'. It is important to mention here Kwame Bediako (2011) who rightly emphasizes the role of scriptures declaring that "the scriptures may also be viewed as a context, so that persons of varied cultural backgrounds can enter and participate in them, bringing their own cultural worlds of meaning with them"(116).

The cross-cultural reading towards ethical concern is of utmost importance to reimagine the stories of the Bible considering them the story of our own today. Thus, on the one hand, becoming a doer of the Word of God demands memorizing the scriptures. And this memorization would only be fruitful if we relate the text to our own context. Furthermore, the power of oral theology does not fall under this category. As previously stated, it is critical to 'memorize' the scriptures in order to reflect on our context. Moreover, 'oral theology' in any context, where one meditates on God's Word through singing, cannot be ignored. The lyric text enhances our understanding even to the greater extent to ponder upon the Word of God, day and night. And Asian context is richly blessed in this regard, whereon the great contribution of Imam-ud-Din Shahbaz, a Punjabi poet who composed Punjabi Psalms is one of the greater achievements in Asian context.

Still, the power of 'contextual reading and memorizing will not be given top priority in this phenomenon, the proclamation part of the Bible is of utmost importance. The Bible is replete with examples of the power of proclamation in bringing healing and victory. The wall of Jericho was brought down by blowing trumpets, singing, and shouting God's word, and the prophetic words of Jonah brought healing to Nineveh, and they professed their sins.

Thus, the whole procedure of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis cannot be limited to contextual reading, memorizing, and singing, but rather proclaiming the Word of God for dynamic change in the context, facing the contextual realities to change the hearts of our brothers and sisters in any context. This could be initiated by bringing any challenge to this context, for instance improving the economic situation of our local in light of Luke 12: 35; Acts 2:42-45, 6, etc. Lastly, fasting, prayer, and self-control are important in the whole Praxis meditating on the Word of God perfecting our abilities to interpret the text.

A. Invitational and Servational: An Ethical Approach Towards Cross-Cultural Reading in the Glocal Context

In the light of the foregoing, now, the church in any context withholding the promises of the written Word of God able to overcome any situation in any context. In this case, the scriptural truths embodied in the lives of the believers would be demonstrated through them. In this situation, the Bible is such an important truth for any believer that affirms the Lord's presence despite different contexts. Philip Jenkins also offers this praxis to overcome the present crises arguing, that studying the Bible communally rather than individually (Jenkins 182) is of utmost importance. Along with this, the Bible should not be read to underestimate other religions as reading with such a mentality makes a battlefield to discriminate against other religions, as it has been done in history (Pushparajan 338, 352) to condemn other religions rather it is invitational and servational. Invitational in a sense as it provides new insights and servational to serve the whole beings. The question in this aspect is important to address, why did the disciples of Christ approach the Word of Christ to overcome the present challenges? Why should the contemporary world reimagine the Bible in the present context? The response is simple and straightforward because it depicts the story of God, who chose one nation

to dwell on the earth. Moreover, it tells the teachings of prophets whom God sent to address the world's problems.

It keeps the story of Christ who came on this earth, who dwelt among us, crucified, died, rose again, and lives with us. It mentions the works of Christ in His bodily form wherein He changed the structure of the place wherever He went. The teachings of Jesus Christ had highly impacted the lives of disciples, through them the wicked thoughts of the world were displaced. Moreover, it tells the works of the Holy Spirit empowering the lives of disciples to become living witnesses to overcome the challenges, glorifying the Lord. Therefore, the need to change our reading practice to approach biblical books ethically that are entirely based on taking our context seriously to draw insights as there are historic contexts behind the text of the Bible (Perry 62).

Let's take an example of the book of Ruth facing contemporary challenges as a cross-cultural reading practice in our local and global contexts, wherein the story of Ruth reminds us of the desperate world in the face of Naomi (the mother-in-law of Ruth).

Firstly, to be well-acquaint with this book intensive reading of the Bible values the most having the missional mind. Secondly, the typological approach seeks to develop understanding to see Ruth as a type of Christ. Thirdly, allegorical understanding makes sense to get deeper into the text to draw insights into the book to overcome the present challenges. Though this book is before the coming of Christ still the role, action, and moving of God's people in the Old Testament are visible. Naomi needs help by every means and in this case, Ruth demonstrates her responsibility. Thus, in this case, being a partaker of God's mission, Ruth is a true demonstration of the Church (a reflection of Christ) that exists for others as Dietrich Bonhoeffer insightfully mentioned "the Church is the Church only when it exists for others" (Bonhoeffer 382). Ruth was not an Israelite neither did she know God yet. Despite the drastic economic conditions and her status as a foreigner in the new land of Israel, God encountered her for bringing healing (a type of Christ in the Old Testament) to the nation and the world (as she became the great-grandmother of Jesus).

Like, Naomi, the marginalized world needs the church today that does not address the problems alone, but rather demonstrates her role, moving, and action being co-healers, co-redeemers, and co-sufferers to reflect Christ. So, the whole book is a powerful demonstration of this reality to show how should any church operate in a desperate world and bring hope to the hopeless. The role of Ruth in this phenomenon is important to reveal that, the living Christ exists and encounters the contextual realities of this world wherein the church is the embodiment of Christ that responds to the challenges to show the reign of the Lord (see, further, Hakim 2022).

In a similar way, the other books should be approached by 'reimagining and participating' to overcome worldly challenges today. The book of Esther could be a powerful reality to empower women (there are many contexts wherein women are considered weak gender, see for example, Sadiq 2018) in any context and the problems of injustice could be resolved wherein the Bible depicts how He cares to liberate people from the hand of powerful oppressors. The story of Esther is a powerful reflection of demonstrating the role of a women wherein justice and liberation may only be achieved by changing our reading styles globally for ethical concern—perfecting our ability through fasting, prayer, and self-control for the well-being of our communities.

5. Conclusion

Unfortunately, there are thousands of books written defending the inerrancy of the Bible (see, for example, Geisler, Roach 2012). Aside, there are many systematic theologians who have limited the biblical doctrines for Christianity alone (see, for example, Oden 1992; Berkhoff 1996; Grudem 2009). While it is noteworthy to consider that "The style of the Bible in general a singularly adapted to men[women] of every class and grade of every culture, affording the child the simple nourishment for its religious wants, and the profoundest thinker inexhaustible matter of study... This is not simply a popular book, but a book of all nations, and for all societies, classes, and conditions of men[women]. It is more than a book, it is an institution which rules the Christian world" (Schaff 574). The prophetic nature of the Bible is vital to reorient the ethical concern of this broken world that invites every reader to nourishment and praxis (created being and ethical being). There are several other issues not

addressed in this article, such as homosexuality in the Bible, feminism, and so on, but this study suggests that if Orthodoxy becomes Orthopraxis, the other issues will become less problematic.

This piece further affirms that the need to face the global challenges (not alone from the economic perspective, but rather from any concern) depends upon the total reading of the Bible for ethical concern withholding and remembering it in every difficult situation. Apart from the above, on the one hand, the objective should not be based on becoming a Biblicist but rather to reimage our contexts for cross-cultural perspectives. On the other hand, it argues that the Bible is the ultimate truth to confront any critical situation, and thus it does not remain to head knowledge but rather empowers each of us by experiencing the power of the Bible in our daily lives.

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