

Personal or Impersonal? An Analysis of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger's Perspectives on the Personhood of the Demonic

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Declaration

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Abstract

Is the demonic personal or impersonal? The question is rarely treated in depth. This thesis initially delves into the demonological offerings of a pair of twentieth century theologians, Karl Barth and Merrill Unger, in order to discern their particular positions upon the subject.

Personhood itself is a divisive issue between the two theologians. Barth's perspective on personhood is not intrinsically linked to the physical nature. Persons are who they are because of their relationship with the divine. In reference to the demonic, Unger briefly assesses personhood by inseparably correlating it with ontological reality. Their disagreement continues into the definition of "demon." Barth prefers to see the demonic as uncreated yet derived from God as a byproduct of His creative decree, and Unger opts for a famous classical construction that they are created beings who rebelled against their Maker.

Yet, Barth and Unger are both found to not only adhere to personal language concerning the demonic but also to posit demons as personal beings. According to Barth and Unger, demons are real, personal, and malevolent. This unusual unity, even with their distinct theological backgrounds, can only be properly understood as the result of their mutual profession to reflect the biblical material.

Considering the dated nature of Barth and Unger's writings, recent biblical scholarship is examined in order to determine whether or not their attestation of a demonic personhood is borne out by current studies. While a few exceptions are noted, the majority of scholars indicate that the biblical material portrays personal intermediary players besides God and humanity, with the category of "demon" becoming progressively prevalent as one chronologically journeys through the divine revelation. Spurning a Bultmann-inspired demythologization, Barth and Unger simply attempt to reflect the biblical material.

But how does Barth and Unger's idea of demonic personhood hold up in light of the multicultural context? As the globe hurriedly shrinks during our technologically connected age, the boundaries between cultures have fallen, resulting in numerous contexts which contain two or more cultures sharing the same space. How can Christianity navigate such turbulent times, except by emphasizing the centrality of the God's Word! It coheres God's people, while convicting and transforming every contacted culture. In the multicultural context, specifically through the Western and African worldviews, Barth and Unger's personhood of the demonic speaks admonition and affirmation to the Christian masses. Unhealthy superstition is challenged,

and dismissive skepticism is chastised. Caution is upheld, and the openness of the African worldview is vindicated. Thus, in light of the multicultural context, a biblical personhood of the demonic realm is plausible, and as a revelation-centric position, it surpasses current ethnocentric expressions of the topic.

As we turned toward constructing some conclusions, Barth and Unger's strengths and weaknesses were assessed. Karl Barth claims that conveying the biblical testimony is his first concern, but on the subject of the demonic, he entertains a confusing philosophy which unpredictably maintains personhood. Merrill Unger paints with broad brush strokes, failing to discuss or respond to the progressive way in which the demonic is unveiled throughout the biblical text. One of the strengths of Barth's demonological presentation, which includes demonic personhood, is that he highlights the activity of the demonic before the ontology of the demonic. Though interacting with scholars and theologians, Unger's clear emphasis and strength is on recapitulating the biblical text, linking nearly every point to numerous texts.

Finally, if we accept the reality of a personal demonic, our response to the demonic should reflect it. Theologically, it should spur us onward toward a truly personal view of redemption. Practically, it means that we should critically analyze and carefully consider the constructive works of counselors, pastors, and deliverance practitioners that we may cautiously adapt our ecclesiological practices to reflect biblical realities.

Opsomming

Is die demoniese persoonlik of onpersoonlik? Die vraag word selde in diepte behandel. Hierdie tesis beskou aanvanklik die demonologiese aanbiedinge van twee twintigste-eeuse teoloë, Karl Barth en Merrill Unger, om hulle spesifieke standpunte oor die onderwerp te onderskei.

Persoonskap self is 'n verdelende kwessie tussen die twee teoloë. Barth se perspektief op persoonskap is nie intrinsiek aan hulle fisiese aard gekoppel nie. Persone is wie hulle is weens hul verhouding met die goddelike. Met verwysing na die demoniese evalueer Unger kortliks persoonskap deur dit onlosmaaklik met die ontologiese werklikheid te korreleer. Hul meningsverskil strek tot in hul definisie van die "demon". Barth verkies om die demoniese as ongeskape, tog afgelei van God as 'n byproduk van Sy skeppingsverordening te sien, en Unger verkies 'n bekende klassieke voorstel dat hulle geskape wesens is wat in opstand gekom het teen hulle Maker.

Tog word daar gevind dat Barth en Unger beide nie persoonlike taal betreffende die demoniese aanhang nie, maar demone ook as persoonlike wesens poneer. Volgens Barth en Unger is demone werklik, persoonlik en kwaadwillig. Hierdie ongewone eensgesindheid, selfs met hul verskillende teologiese agtergronde, kan slegs behoorlik verstaan word as die gevolg van hul gedeelde aanspraak dat hulle die Bybelse stof weerspieël.

Die verouderde aard van Barth en Unger se geskrifte in ag geneem, word onlangse Bybelwetenskap ondersoek om te bepaal of hulle bevestiging van 'n demoniese persoonskap deur huidige studies beaam word. Hoewel 'n paar uitsonderings waargeneem word, dui die meerderheid geleerdes daarop dat die Bybelse stof persoonlike tussengangers buiten God en die mensdom uitbeeld, met die kategorie van die "demon" wat toenemend voorkom soos wat 'n mens chronologies deur die goddelike openbaring reis. In veragting van 'n Bultmann-geïnspireerde ontmitologisering probeer Barth en Unger eenvoudig die Bybelse stof weerspieël.

Maar hoe hou Barth en Unger se idee van demoniese persoonskap stand in die lig van die multikulturele konteks? Soos die wêreld haastig krimp tydens ons tegnologies-verbinde tydperk, het die grense tussen kulture verval, wat gelei het tot verskeie kontekste waarin twee of meer kulture dieselfde ruimte deel. Hoe kan die Christendom sulke onstuimige tye navigeer, behalwe deur die sentraliteit van Gods Woord te benadruk! Dit verenig God se volk, onderwyl dit elke kultuur waarmee ons in verbinding tree oortuig en transformeer. In die multikulturele konteks,

veral deur die Westerse en Afrika se wêreldbeelde, spreek Barth en Unger se persoonlikheid van die demoniese van vermaning en bekragtiging aan die Christenmassas. Ongesonde bygeloof word uitgedaag, en afwysende skeptisisme word gekasty. Omsigtigheid word gehandhaaf, en die oopheid van Afrika se wêreldbeskouing word geregverdig. Dus, in die lig van die multikulturele konteks, is 'n Bybelse persoonskap van 'n persoonlike demoniese realm geloofwaardig, en as openbaringsgesentreerde standpunt oortref dit huidige etnosentriese uitdrukkings van die onderwerp.

Soos wat ons 'n paar gevolgtrekkings begin maak het, is Barth en Unger se sterk- en swakpunte geassesseer. Karl Barth beweer dat die oordra van die Bybelse getuienis sy eerste belang is, maar betreffende die onderwerp van die demoniese koester hy 'n verwarrende filosofie wat onvoorspelbaar persoonskap handhaaf. Merrill Unger verf met breë kwashale, en versuim om die progressiewe wyse waarop die demoniese dwarsdeur die Bybelse teks ontsluit word te bespreek of daarop te reageer. Een van die sterk punte van Barth se demonologiese voorstelling, wat demoniese persoonskap insluit, is dat hy die aktiwiteit van die demoniese bó die ontologie beklemtoon. Hoewel hy in gesprek is met geleerdes en teoloë, lê Unger se duidelike klem en krag in sy samevatting van die Bybelse teks, met die koppeling van byna elke punt aan talle tekste.

Laastens, as ons die werklikheid van 'n persoonlike demoniese aanvaar, moet ons reaksie daarop dit weerspieël. Teologies moet dit ons aanspoor om verder in die rigting van 'n waarlik persoonlike siening van verlossing. Prakties beteken dit dat ons die konstruktiewe werke van verlossingspraktisyns, pastore, en raadgevers krities moet ontleed en versigtig moet oorweeg sodat ons versigtig ons ekklesiologiese praktyke kan aanpas om Bybelse werklikhede te weerspieël.

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“...in this place ought those men to be refuted who babble of devils as nothing else than evil emotion or perturbations which come upon us from our flesh... But it was worth-while to touch upon this point, also, lest any persons, entangled in that error, while thinking themselves without an enemy, become more slack and heedless about resisting.”

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1, XIV, 19.

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7 (NASB)

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1. Demonic Personhood in the Theologies of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger

1.1 Introduction

Why demonology? Why study something that dredges the darkness and exposes its filth? While the topic lay fallow for centuries in the universities, it has been resurrected since the middle of the twentieth century. Seized by academics, pastors, and ordinary church-goers, demonological studies have shaken off the supposedly enlightened taboos of the past and returned to the theological discourse of our time. Even with notable theologians like Walter Wink and Daniel Migliore spearheading this new generation of studies, numerous issues in the realm of demonology have remained insufficiently addressed.

Across Christianity, one often overlooked or assumed element arises. When we discuss demonology, are we discussing a “what” or a “who?” Should our demonological studies be conceptually crafted upon an impersonal demonic power or upon a realm of individual, personal demons? That particular question will be explored in the writings of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger.

Dismissive perspectives are aplenty with respect to this question. One of the most telling arenas for this attitude is the “powers.” Theologies concerning the “powers” have become a significant field since demonology’s twentieth century resurrection. Led by Hendrikus Berkhof and others, these studies often attempt to reshape the historic angel imagery which is connected to Paul’s theology. Berkhof says, “One can even doubt whether Paul conceived of the Powers as personal beings. In any case this aspect is so secondary that it makes little difference whether he did or not. He may be using personifications.”¹ Personhood is exiled as an unfitting subject for extended scrutiny. Walter Wink exhibits this as well when he says regarding personhood, “As long as these Powers were thought of personalistically... reduced to the categories of individualism... belief in the demonic had no political consequences. But once we recognize that these spiritual forces are the interiority of earthly institutions or structures or systems, then the social dimension of the gospel becomes immediately evident.”² Especially in *Engaging the*

¹ Berkhof, Hendrikus. *Christ and the Powers*, Page 24.

² Wink, Walter. *Engaging the Powers*, Pages 77-78.

Powers, he consistently treats angels and demons as myth, avoiding a detailed look into the possibility of personhood.³

Another common response to the question of personhood is one of “openness.” For instance, this vagueness surfaces in Daniel Migliore’s writing on the “powers.” He remarks, “Traditionally, these powers have been understood as supernatural beings like angels and demons, but they can also be viewed as powerful forces and structures of our common human life – nations, institutions, systems of law and order, forms of culture.”⁴ With this short statement, Migliore opens this subject to multiple “views” with no obvious desire to investigate and resolve the ambiguity, though he prefers impersonality.⁵

This introductory chapter will analyze the issue of demonic personhood in the theologies of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger. In order to assess the topic properly, research methodologies will be clarified, and terminological parameters will be set. Flowing out of these definitions, a survey of each author’s particular view of the personhood of the demonic will be provided. Afterward, distinctions and similarities will be detailed in order that their positions may be fully understood.

I maintain that demonology must be a topic of critical, well-researched analysis. If the demonic realm is indeed impersonal, we can clearly observe that theologians like Walter Wink seriously and accurately consider the subject, though some might relegate it to a mere ingredient in liturgical practice.⁶ Perhaps then our current academic treatment of the subject is appropriate, but if the demonic realm is better interpreted as personal with a disposition of malevolence, a lack of concentrated reflection would be unwise.

What this thesis is not is almost as crucial as what it is. Whenever a conversation nears the topic of evil, familiar controversies reassert themselves. The origin of evil’s existence has been a gigantic topic throughout the history of theological thought, and the reality of the demonic in general has surfaced as a controversial debate as well. For the purpose of this study, these controversies will be kept to the periphery and skirted altogether whenever possible. Thus, neither evil’s origins nor the reality of the demonic are our central theme.

³ Wink, Walter. *Engaging the Powers*, Pages 65-85. For more on myth and demythologization, see section 2.6.

⁴ Migliore, Daniel. *The Power of God and the gods of Power*, Page 5.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Schleiermacher, Friedrich, *The Christian Faith*, Pages 169-170.

Before we delve into the topic at hand, the personhood of the demonic, another point of clarity is necessary. While the reality of the demonic is not a primary theme or issue of discussion, this thesis will display an underlying and occasionally overt bias toward the reality of the demonic. Because theological preconceptions are inevitable, stating them up front is a beneficial point. The perspective of this thesis is that the writers of the Old and New Testaments were speaking carefully not superstitiously concerning the reality of the demonic. Evil is indeed real, and it wields a powerful influence, a weighty rule over the created realm.⁷ The demonic, a “sinister matter,” is “in its own way very real.”⁸ With this as a starting point, the question then follows, “Is this demonic power impersonal or personal?”

It should also be mentioned that Barth and Unger’s perspective on the personhood of the demonic should not be considered the academic norm. While the two authors take divergent paths to a similar conclusion, their advocacy for the personal agency of the demonic world adds important vigor to the rarely entertained debate surrounding the personhood of the demonic. As such, this thesis wishes to explore their particular perspectives in assisting this discussion. Let us cautiously attempt to mine an orderly response to the question of personhood from the demonology of Barth and Unger.

1.2 Personal Background

The topic of this thesis is “Impersonal or Personal? An Analysis of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger’s Perspectives on the Personhood of the Demonic.” I arrived at this thesis due to my experiences since the beginning of 2011. I was hired as a media representative for a worldwide Christian radio program headquartered at a large Evangelical church.⁹ Equipped with a modest theological background, I was often tasked to receive phone calls from dedicated listeners who asked biblical and theological questions stemming from their circumstances. In this context, I would often seek to assist them as best as possible over the telephone. Occasionally this led to conversations where I counseled Christians under apparent demonic

⁷ Ephesians 2:2, 6:11-12; Revelation 12:7-9. Chapter 2 addresses the particular relationship of these passages to biblical scholarship.

⁸ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 519.

⁹ Throughout this thesis, the terms “Evangelical” and “Evangelicalism” will consistently refer to “The movement in modern Christianity, transcending denominational and confessional boundaries, that emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency.” Thus, this thesis is choosing to use the terms in accordance with their contemporary theological meaning in the global church. Pierard, R. V. and W. A. Elwell. “Evangelicalism” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Pages 405-409.

attack. These attacks sometimes involved the visual appearance or the audible voice of a supposed demon wishing to harass and intimidate. In addition to these counseling instances, a number of coworkers and myself all experienced unusual events firsthand.

I also specifically raise the topic of multiculturalism in my third chapter due to my past as well. As a resident of Chicago for six years, I attended and became a member of a church community which contained an eclectic gathering of cultural backgrounds. In this church context, it was easy to discern that cultural background guided one's view of the demonic. Some members spoke openly about the demonic while others generally preferred to ignore the topic. These differences usually manifested along cultural lines. Hence, my theological aim in this thesis is not to serve myself but the church, with all its diversity in view. "Dogmatics is not a 'free' science, but is bound to the Church, inside which only it has place and meaning."¹⁰

1.3 Research Methodology

In order to approach the question concerning the personal or impersonal nature of the demonic, this thesis raises the theological contributions of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger, focusing on Barth's *Church Dogmatics: Volume III, 3* and Unger's *Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces Behind the Present World Unrest*.¹¹ These works have been selected as they offer Barth and Unger's most comprehensive assessments of demonology. Other works by these particular authors will be occasionally introduced if they are relevant to the theme at hand. Structured as a literature review, both authors' demonologies are analyzed, while engaging related works by other contributors.

These two conversation partners are selected with a particular intent. Academia rarely reaches conclusions which posit the possibility that demons are real, personal beings. This thesis finds that these two scholars hold this particular view and determines that their positions merit further reflection. With academic training, Unger epitomizes the Evangelical yearning for radical biblicism. Barth bears a few similarities having "articulated a theological identity formed out of biblical and dogmatic habits of thought with rigorous consistency and with a

¹⁰ McConnachie, John. *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today*, Pages 40-41.

¹¹ As this thesis is composed in English, Geoffrey Bromiley and R. J. Ehrlich's English translation from the original German will be relied upon for the purpose of this study. Also, Unger's work will henceforth be referred to as *Biblical Demonology* for brevity's sake.

certain exclusivism.”¹² But inevitably, it is impossible “to fit Barth... into any known scheme of theology, orthodox or liberal.”¹³ The interaction and input of these two voices is a dynamic and unique avenue by which we can instigate this demonological project.

Furthermore, the research included in this study will not strive to address Satanology itself, though it will be considered in passing as it is definitively related to demonology. Due to the selected texts and the stated goal, we are not explicitly concerned with the identification and possible personhood of Satan. The broader category of the demonic is our target.¹⁴

1.4 Hermeneutical Principles

When investigations toward truth and conclusion occur, hermeneutical standards and practices are pushed to the forefront. To be clear, principles of interpretation are integral to the systematic endeavor, but, in this context, we cannot descend too deeply, lest we blither about “how” and never “do.” A detailed investigation on the Barthian and Ungerian hermeneutics involved in this project would entail an entire thesis. Our task lies in their theology, in their demonology, confined to the debate of demonic personhood. As we proceed, hermeneutics will serve the theological process as this thesis seeks God’s truth through “the true meaning of the biblical text” and aims to systematically express it.¹⁵

By setting our goal in the systematics field, we automatically have to extend the project beyond the context of one particular verse, pericope, book, or authorial collection. Biblical theology must serve the systematic endeavor. Although each book is specifically written by a particular human author in time and space, this systematic study must also concurrently treat the sixty-six books of the Scriptures as divine revelation and discourse, as numerous biblical authors testify.¹⁶ Thus, clarity of biblical interpretation is primarily found via two avenues, the

¹² Webster, John. “Introducing Barth” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, Page 5. His mention of Barth’s consistency is likely an overstatement, as we will see throughout this thesis.

¹³ McConnachie, John. *The Significance of Karl Barth*, Page 242.

¹⁴ As Satanology and demonology are inseparably linked, the question then follows, “What is their relationship?” In this thesis, Satanology is subjugated to the broader demonological category. Since we are talking about personhood in general, addressing the personhood of Satan alone would fail to adequately answer our thesis question concerning the demonic. If Satan were to be declared personal, we may or may not declare that a personal demonic realm exists, but if we reach a decision concerning the demonic as a whole, then Satanology would be consequently affected. Therefore, Satanology will function in a supplementary manner throughout this thesis.

¹⁵ Klein, William. “Evangelical Hermeneutics” in *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Page 325.

¹⁶ Isaiah 6:8-13, Jeremiah 1:4, Amos 1:1-3, Haggai 1:1-3, Zechariah 1:1-3, Malachi 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21. This is obviously not a comprehensive list considering the very phrase “says the

immediate context of the book in question and the broader context of God's whole counsel. Scripture interprets itself far better than any other.

Though many scholars respectfully appreciate the Scriptures and simultaneously maintain that it is not completely faultless, this thesis advocates a different avenue. Due to the divine direction behind the biblical text, optimism should be placed upon the Scriptures with pessimism resting upon the reader. When the two are reversed, even with a respectful attitude, the seat of judgment rests upon the sinful and corrupt rather than the Spirit-guided witnesses. We should be wary of ourselves and our reading, not the Word and its intended meaning. Who are we to contend that we can comprehensively grasp and detail the unity of divine thought in human terms? A disposition of humility is a theologian's highest virtue. However, this perspective understandably raises objections which cannot be exhaustively repudiated without a separate work of significant length.¹⁷

That being said, God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures through the styles and words of men.¹⁸ The books of the Bible contain numerous forms of literature, and depending on the methodology and material utilized, the intention should be read through the lens of that particular style of writing. For instance, a detailing of King Manasseh's life should not be casually read as moral prescription for the modern Christian.¹⁹ Instead, the author's descriptive work on Manasseh should be understood as a contribution to an overarching theological purpose throughout the larger work. In turn, the theological intention of that larger work supports the redemptive (essentially Christological) theme of the canon.

As the Scriptures are divinely wrought by the hands of men, our attitude of humility then leads us to subjugate ourselves to them; the Word of God has authority. But where exactly does this authority lie, in God, in the individual authors, in the original autographs, or in the text's reproclamation in a contemporary event? To some degree, we must respond in the affirmative to

Lord" is used in 25 times in the NASB translation of Malachi alone. The utilization of many of these texts to reach these theological conclusions is not uncommon. (E.g., Henry, C. F. H. "Bible, Inspiration of" and "Revelation, Special" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Pages 159-193, 1021-1023.)

¹⁷ Apparent contradictions are often raised in an attempt to lower our qualitative expectations regarding the Scriptures, but may I suggest that our reading and framing of so-called contradictions creates confrontations, especially when we are open to accept intrabiblical conflict.

¹⁸ Upon a survey of the incarnation of Christ, we need not be excessively pessimistic regarding the divine and human nature of Scriptures. If the perfect God can become thoroughly man, one with humanity yet one with the Holy Trinity; the composition of a book that is one with human words yet one with the eternal Word appears to be a simple task in comparison.

¹⁹ 2 Kings 21:1-18.

each. God's *exousia* ultimately resides in Himself, as the Creator of the finite, but God frequently bestows authority upon others. Angelic and prophetic messengers were repeatedly deputized for the exertion of God's will and word on earth.²⁰ This act is the result of the volition of God alone; "...the person ... must have been deputized to do so; he can't just undertake to do so."²¹ Deputized by God and then superintended by the Spirit, the authors bore God's authoritative message and poured it into the autographs, which then retain the authority of God Himself.

Furthermore, if we consider the authority of God, does not God's authority rest over all His creation, regardless of whether they know God or acknowledge God? In the same way, the authority of the divine words stands, regardless of our level of reflection upon them.²² So authority also rests in the words themselves. But they come to bear and exert authority in our lives not in their silence but in their audible and examined recapitulation. Therefore, God's biblical witness is an authoritative work on every level.

Through the Scriptures, God speaks. As theologians, we, of all persons, must carefully avoid the arrogance that supposes we know better than the Omniscient. When God utters but a word, we must listen, and we must be slow to respond for fear that we might "darken [God's] counsel with words without knowledge."²³ Meaning, value, and purpose flow from the Spring, the Source of all truth, God. God's revelation, as found in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, stand as the ultimate authority. All other contributions must be crafted and directed by this singular reality.

Stemming from this reality, Scriptures are granted preeminence as the first voice, for the Bible is our reliable source for direction, meaning, and hermeneutical clarity. By this assertion, this thesis does not ignore that we apprehend the biblical material in our context with our culture as a guide and our mind as a compass. The "hermeneutical inquiry" is inherently marked by

²⁰ Isaiah 6 is a dramatic instance of such deputation.

²¹ Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, Page 43. I prefer to broaden his thought on deputation from the biblically-recorded deputized to the authors of the texts themselves. The authority of the contents hinges first upon the proper deputation of the authors who penned the container.

²² On an ethical level, if the Scriptures say that adultery is wrong, it is still wrong for those who are not aware of the command. The validity of the command is not contingent upon God's thorough communication of it. God is under no obligation to dispense a particular truth to absolutely everyone. Thus the impetus for knowledge and truth is upon us and our acquisition of it, and the Spirit assists us in this.

²³ Job 38:2. This verse "makes clear the limits of Job's understanding..." Balentine, Samuel E. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Job*, Page 642.

“particularity, contingency, and temporality.”²⁴ We are not “innocent readers without presuppositions... Our presuppositions about these texts mediate our experience of them. And our presuppositions about these texts have been formed by historical, social, and cultural processes.”²⁵

Other contexts are not devoid of truth.²⁶ As a result of God’s creative goodness, cultures, inherently not synonymous with the biblical information, can and do possess true family values and other truths, just as a godless mathematician can possess veracious conclusions. One could propose an equality of input and authority, balancing revelation, context, and reason for theological formation, but if revelation is not primary, this thesis suggests that it is always subjugated. While our context does inform our interpretative method, the authoritarian river primarily flows from revelation.

If we attempt to raise the authoritarian value of our context, innumerable sources with their competing claims of “truth” risk destroying our Christian identity and force us to assume arbitrary lines for when and where Scripture, context, and reason may or may not speak. As many academic theologians continue to elevate the truth claims of the polyphony of cultures and contexts, religious pluralism has become an intellectual norm, forging a “Christianity” for which no apostle would have perished.

Hermeneutics not only controls the identity of Christianity but also the identity of a Christian.

*The failure to focus on identity has created enormous problems. The gospel in our time is an unimportant item in peoples’ lives... Christ is not an accessory to our identity, as if one were choosing an option for a car. He takes over identity so that everything else becomes an accessory, which is precisely what “Jesus is Lord” means.*²⁷

If we abandon the primacy and centrality of the Scriptures - the words of Christ, His prophets, and His apostles, we, including the academy and the church, will descend to a Christianity none of them knew, empowered by a hermeneutical method fueling our perilous voyage.

²⁴ Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, Page 63.

²⁵ Smit, Dirk J. “Reading the Bible and the (Un)official Interpretive Culture” in *Neotestamentica*. 28:2, Page 309.

²⁶ The issue of multiculturalism is central to this thesis, as it is an emerging contextual reality. A more complete discussion of multiculturalism’s impact on hermeneutics will be provided in the corresponding chapter.

²⁷ Snodgrass, Klyne R. “An Introduction to a Hermeneutics of Identity” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 168, Jan-Mar 2011, Page 8.

This thesis also recognizes the role that meaning (and the search for it) plays in a theologian's hermeneutic. But meaning should not be equated with value or worth.²⁸ Too often, such attitudes of theological self-service which scream "It suits my needs" or "It is meaningful to me" continues to foster the "the age of cafeteria religion" which we currently navigate.²⁹ Remember! A bottle means something to a drunk, and a woman means something to a rapist. What we value should not be immediately correlated with proper meaning. We must avoid turning theology into anthropology by the glorification of our conscious feelings and subjectivity. Instead, T. F. Torrance comments regarding a Barthian perspective of revelation that "God actively reveals Himself... revelation is and ever remains a pure act..."³⁰ We are revelation receivers, prone to obfuscations. The problem is us, not revelation.³¹

Therefore, meaning, value, and identity must ultimately be rooted in revelation, even if we struggle to ascertain it through our numerous biases and perspectives. When approaching the topic of meaning, this thesis will cautiously evaluate its value through a revelatory filter. Without this lens, we would easily slip into contextually demanded values without any directing revelatory agency to correct wrongs. Indeed, ethics and hermeneutics are related in a "complicated" manner, and as Christians in the historical tradition of the apostles, we ultimately obey God before people.³² Thankfully, we are accompanied by the illuminative work of the Holy Spirit throughout the difficult hermeneutical journey abounding in pitfalls.

Finally, as we are addressing what may be deemed an abstract concept, it may be asked if we can even use literal language regarding the demonic. For instance, whenever we discuss God, we are automatically limited by analogous and metaphorical language. This complicates every discussion regarding the personhood of the God. Only in the humiliation and condescension of God in Christ do we glimpse the personhood of God unveiled. Brümmer comments:

²⁸ "It meets my needs" should also not be confused with value. In this age of theological consumerism, one's "needs" is often the driving force behind why someone adheres to a perspective, a theology, or even a religion. But who made us the judge of our needs? When was a particular person, family, or culture ordained as the arbiter of what we require and where we should find meaning? Lest we reject God from the conversation, can we not first listen to what He teaches as our needs, to where He directs us to find meaning, and to what He calls right?

²⁹ Dalferth, Ingolf U. "I DETERMINE WHAT GOD IS!" Theology in the Age of "Cafeteria Religion" in *Theology Today*, Vol. 57, Num. 1, Page 6.

³⁰ Torrance, T.F. *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, Page 42.

³¹ For this reason, hermeneutics are necessarily a community process. Grasping our frailty and subtle self-service, we must submit ourselves before the Spirit-commissioned community of faith for guidance, perspective, and rebuke. No theology should be divorced from the church.

³² Smit, Dirk J. "Ethics and Interpretation: New Voices from the USA" in *Scriptura*, 33, Page 19.

*...since God is not like other people, the personal terms used to talk about God cannot have the same meaning that they have with reference to other people and our relations with them. Our language about God is therefore metaphorical in the sense that not all the implications that this language has with reference to other people can be carried over to our talk about God.*³³

But the demonic is not God; they should hardly be uttered at the same time. As they are not divine and infinite but rather created and finite, they are not bound to metaphorical language. Like other finite subjects, the Scriptures speak about who they actually are and what they actually do. With this in mind, we can approach demonology in the biblical text in a similar manner to anthropology. The Scriptures do not claim to exhaustively detail the nature and activity of humanity or demons, but the text offers us what God decided as sufficient. This thesis is not primarily concerned with dominant metaphor identifiers but with the rational and comprehensible identification of what demons are – personal or impersonal. We are more focused upon reality rather than language, though the two are inseparably linked.

1.5 Terminology

Pursuing terms in the realm of demonology has its perils. The idea of “demon” is perceived differently by many people, depending on culture, age, and faith. What makes someone a “person” is perhaps even more debated. Should we use definitions of personhood that are commonly applied to humanity (or even God)? By endeavoring to search for definitions, this thesis is conceptually arguing that revelatory definitions are inherently tied to humankind’s perception and perspective. In other words, a person constructs the definition of personhood and the demonic with one’s self as a lens, though continually pursuing revelatory adherence.

In this chapter, the particular terms will be presented in light of each author’s particular position toward them. Then using that information, we can assess whether their ideas concerning the “demonic” and “personhood” carry a particular perspective.

1.5.1 “Personhood”

Even apart from demonology, forming a proper understanding of personhood is a difficult proposition. What defines a person? Obviously, one’s cultural context dictates and

³³ Brümmer, Vincent. “Spirituality and the Hermeneutics of Faith” in *HTS Theological Studies*, 66(1), Article #891.

directs one's perspective. For the sake of this evaluation, determining Barth and Unger's definitions from their works is analytically prioritized. Then we can effectively assess whether their treatment of demonology leads us to believe whether they are propagating a demonology bearing an impersonal nature or a personal ontology.³⁴

Can someone or something that does not have a body be called a person?³⁵ Within the anthropological arena, the question is heavily debated, often framed within the philosophical "Mind and Body problem."³⁶ Some like Guus Labooy assume "an intimate union between mind and body" which leads to "a concept of person to which... both corporeal and mental predicates can be prescribed."³⁷ Furthermore, he argues that God "created humans as persons, as a bi-unity of body and soul. For our created reality, personhood is primary, and God will raise the person, rather than the body or soul."³⁸ Adopting an idea of personhood which results from both the physical and psychical would certainly direct one away from accepting a personhood of the demonic.³⁹ In the context of our death and eventual resurrection, others like Anthony Flew prefer the more Platonic approach which ties humankind's personhood primarily to the incorporeal substance of the soul.⁴⁰

Though conversation exists regarding whether or not certain demons can take physical forms,⁴¹ the vast majority of biblical references to the demonic appear to be non-corporeal and pneumatological, but it is unfair to paint the demonic as unsubstantial from such descriptions.⁴² But Barth himself indicates that the non-physical can be personal with his treatment of God the Holy Spirit. He consistently refers to the Holy Spirit as a "Whom" or "He" rather than

³⁴ The word "ontology" is being used loosely here; perhaps demons have an undetectable physical being of some sort? No strict ontological correlation is implied between humans and demons.

³⁵ One could also question whether or not the demons have bodies of some sort. Reckoning that demons are fallen angels, Aquinas says regarding angels, "The incorporeal substances are midway between God and corporeal things, and the point midway between extremes appears extreme with respect to either; the tepid, compared with the hot, seems cold. Hence the angels might be called material and bodily as compared with God, without implying that they are so intrinsically." Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 9, Question 50, Article 1, Page 7.

³⁶ Labooy, Guus. *Freedom and Dispositions*, Page 21.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, Page 235.

³⁹ Ibid, Pages 278-279. Though God's personhood, except in the Son, might then be in question as well.

⁴⁰ Flew, Anthony. *Body, Mind, and Death*, Pages 5-9.

⁴¹ During the temptation of Christ in wilderness, has Satan taken a physical form for the conversation? Also, Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:15 give rise to the possibility of so-called "goat demons." Historically speaking, Jewish superstition maintained that demons could manifest in three forms - animals, humans, and angels. Ferguson, Everett. *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, Page 88.

⁴² Especially among New Testament writers, the ideas of "evil spirit" and "demon" are synonymous. Luke (8:2) actually employs both terms in one verse to refer to the same phenomena.

employing a more generic “it,” and at one point Barth discusses the Trinity saying, “God is God the Spirit as He is God the Father and God the Son.”⁴³ This is no small admission for Barth, because this sweeping statement does in some way equate the personal nature of each.⁴⁴ To equate the God-man Jesus with the Holy Spirit in that way greatly elucidates his perspective on the Holy Spirit’s personal ontology.

Anthropological personhood in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* is a different matter. While not directly commenting on humanity’s personhood and the composition of personhood, true humanity is controversially located in one’s attitude toward God and His attitude toward us.⁴⁵ Determining humanity’s nature through scientific and autonomous resources is an incomplete errand. According to Barth, these methods only describe the “phenomena of man” and neglect to discover the “real man.”⁴⁶ Humankind’s ontology and personal nature are derived from a relationship with God, from whom all life and existence emanate. He is the ultimate Person. Thus, as we attempt to address the personhood of the demonic in Barth’s writings, the relationship of the divine to the demonic takes center stage.

Merrill Unger, a twentieth century American Evangelical theologian, analyzes the topic of demonology as a subject demanding reflection and study. Intentionally committing to demonological study, details are specifically provided concerning demonology. An entire chapter of his book *Biblical Demonology* postulates the reality and identity of demons.⁴⁷

In Unger’s chapter regarding demonic identity and reality, the issue of personhood is scarcely raised, save for one short section.

Men in the church and out of it, blatantly assert that there is no personal devil, that the devil is only evil personified, and that whatever devil there is, is in man himself, and there is enough of that variety to answer all theological requirements. It is also confidently declared that no longer can a respectable scholar be found anywhere who believes in a personal devil or demons. Thus this

⁴³ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, Pages 532-533.

⁴⁴ “Barth was motivated by his reaction to the limitations of the modernized psychological understanding of *person*. Barth challenged the tritheistic idea of the Trinity as three distinct, personal centers of consciousness and will that stand apart from each other. He emphasized that the one God simultaneously exists in three self-differentiated ‘repetitions’ or ways of being: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Grenz, Stanley J., David Gurentzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling. “Modes of Being” in *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Page 80. The complexities of Barth’s Trinitarian studies are obviously not able to be entertained at this time.

⁴⁵ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 2, Page 121. While this position harmonizes well with his Christo-centric theology, it does raise peculiar questions regarding whether non-Christians are somewhat less “real” or less “human.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, Page 122.

⁴⁷ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 35ff.

*aggressive skepticism and militant attacks demand an apologetic approach to the problem. For it is obvious that if demons be imaginary and non-existent, then the whole subject belongs to the realm of fairy-tale and folklore, and not to the sphere of Christian theology.*⁴⁸

With this pericope as Unger's impetus, he then constructs an argument for the existence of demons from Scripture, physical nature, human nature, and human experience. In this simplistic manner, the personhood and reality of demons is amalgamated.

The fusion of the two concepts is important to Unger. As we can observe above, in Unger's ontology, no biblical demons truly exist unless they are personal beings. Personhood as a point of critique is bypassed, and his pro-belief, anti-skepticism theological construction takes shape. He does momentarily reference the topic of personhood again in other chapters, but those will be addressed at length later.

Therefore, we can conclude that with no clear reference to the personhood of the demonic, Barth's concept concerning personhood in general is not tied to the presence of flesh. Instead, humanity's realness, who he is and his personhood, is directly tied to a relationship with the divine. Unger approaches the issue of personhood treating it as synonymous with the ontological reality of the demonic. If we may paint with a broad brush, if there are no personal demons, no demons exist in Unger's theology.

1.5.2 "Demon"

When formulating the meaning of the term "demon," one's temptation is to simply describe the opposite of an angel. After writing about angels for over forty pages, Barth immediately ushers in a discussion concerning their opponents with an urgent clarification.

*We are forced to do this because a primitive and fatal association has always brought together these two spheres of angels and demons from the days of the Fathers to those of Neo-Protestantism. We shall not bring them into the same close relationship as formerly.*⁴⁹

In this manner, his aside into the realm of the demonic is inaugurated.⁵⁰ Demons are not to be considered similar to angels in "origin or nature."⁵¹ God and His angels have virtually nothing in

⁴⁸ Ibid, Pages 35-36.

⁴⁹ Ibid, III, 3, Page 519.

⁵⁰ Ibid. In fact, Barth would disagree with this thesis' very composition. He strongly advocates that demons are basically hoping to be the subject of "systematic attention."

⁵¹ Ibid, Pages 520-521.

common with the demonic. Barth elaborates by adding that “God is the Lord of the demonic sphere, and it derives from Him, just as in a wholly different way He is Lord of the angelic sphere and it too derives from Him.”⁵² From this adamant theological posturing, we can deduce that his angelology will not assist us in discerning his position regarding the personhood of the demonic.

Originating from his consternation with earlier (patristic and medieval) writings on the demonic, Barth’s use of the term “demon” diverges from the traditional usage in a number of critical ways. As we already observed, demons are disassociated with the angelic realm. But Barth adventures further. He asserts their existence but says that they are neither divine nor creature.⁵³ They are the necessary result of God’s affirmation. This is a direct result of his theology of “nothingness.”⁵⁴ Before we can truly address Barth’s position toward the personhood of the demonic, we must understand this key literary context which shapes his demonological writings.

After Barth’s extensive discussion concerning the nature of God’s Lordship over the created realm, he identifies something which is out of place. He calls this an “alien factor.”⁵⁵ While he still places it under God’s providential vision, he elaborates saying, “This opposition and resistance, this stubborn element and alien factor, may be provisionally defined as nothingness.”⁵⁶ As this term is not self-explanatory, “nothingness” is fleshed out. It is not merely negation or absence.⁵⁷ It is “utterly distinct from both Creator and creation, the adversary with which no compromise is possible, the negative which is more than the mere complement of an antithetical positive...”⁵⁸ While God is indeed Lord over it as well, “nothingness is that from which God separates Himself and in face of which He asserts Himself and exerts His positive

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, Page 523.

⁵⁴ Nothingness is the result of Barth’s Christo-centricism. “...the theology of Barth is avowedly Christo-centric. For Barth, at least, that does not mean that the topics of theology are limited to a study of the person and work of Christ but rather that all theology finds its focal center in Christ and that all knowledge of God is obtainable only through Christ.” Kantzer, Kenneth. “The Christology of Karl Barth” in *The Bulletin of Evangelical Theological Society*, Page 25. However, “Logocentricism” is probably the preferable description of Barth’s theological thrust. Ward, Graham. *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology*, Page 13ff.

⁵⁵ Barth, Karl. *Christian Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 289.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, Page 349.

⁵⁸ Ibid, Page 302.

will.”⁵⁹ With this philosophy underpinning his view of evil, Barth’s conclusion concerning demons is straightforward: “They themselves are always nothingness.”⁶⁰

As his book title conveys, Unger primarily seeks the definition of “demon” from a biblical directive. Concerning their origins, the traditional theology is advocated. Satan revolted against God and spread rebellion amongst the angels.⁶¹ Demons are created beings that were once in God’s service and presence. He cautiously advocates for this view as overwhelming biblical clarity on the matter does not exist, politely disagreeing with those who speculate about a pre-Adam creation or an ante-diluvian reproductive origin of the demons.⁶²

After a loose sketch concerning their origin, Unger offers a three-fold understanding of the nature of a demon, which assists us in discerning exactly how he defines the term. A demon’s nature is spiritual, intellectual, and moral.⁶³ To evidence their incorporeal nature, passages from the gospels are utilized which use demon (*daimon*) synonymously with spirit (*pneuma*). After citing five references, he concludes “Demons and evil spirits are therefore one and the same thing.”⁶⁴ Building on his citations of the gospel narratives, Ephesians is drawn into his argument for the spiritual nature of the demons, believing that these “powers” and “spiritual forces” are to be interpreted as demons.⁶⁵

A demon is also a being of expansive intellect. This intelligence takes many forms. Prominently, they possess cosmic knowledge, recognizing Jesus, knowing His Sonship, obeying Him, and corrupting doctrine.⁶⁶ Unger is quick to illuminate this argument. Even though they are intellectually capable and understand their own doom, their knowledge is in no way salvific.

⁵⁹ Ibid, Page 351.

⁶⁰ Ibid, Page 523. By attributing the demonic’s origin and nature to nothingness, Barth is refusing to challenge the pure identity and creative quality of God. The utilization of nothingness as a philosophical prop further illuminates the character of God. The Lord’s creation is not tarnished. This is further clarified by a 1957 chapel message. Barth said, “Bad, ugly, and evil, and dangerous things exist. The world is full of them. But what is bad was certainly not created by God. It is the nature of what is bad, ugly, and evil not to have been willed or created by God. It may be known because it has nothing whatever to do with Jesus Christ and his grace. It is alien to the structure and meaning of the Father’s house. It can come forth only from our corrupt hearts and understandings. It can derive only from the devil, who is not a second creator. Being rejected and denied by God, and set on his left hand, it is something that we can reject, avoid, fear, and flee. The fact that there are bad things – many, many bad things – does not alter the truth that God’s creation is good. Neither we nor the devil can alter this.” Erler, Rolf Joachim, Reiner Marquard, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds. *A Karl Barth Reader*, Pages 90-91.

⁶¹ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Pages 15-16.

⁶² It is likely that Unger understands Adam as a literal historical figure.

⁶³ Ibid, Pages 62-68.

⁶⁴ Ibid, Page 63.

⁶⁵ This subject is debated heavily; what or who are these powers? See section 2.5.3 for more information.

⁶⁶ Ibid, Page 66.

“They have a distinct realization that Jesus is Lord of the spirit-world, but their confession does not involve a saving trust, or a willing submission.”⁶⁷ Demonic knowledge is vast but inherently steeped in rebellion.⁶⁸

This leads us to Unger’s last category concerning his description of the demons – their moral nature. He writes concerning their consistently depraved nature, highlighting their perpetual desire to disseminate spiritual maladies and physical afflictions.⁶⁹ By formulating and spreading pernicious teachings, men are lead “not only to unmoral, but to immoral conduct.”⁷⁰ In addition to the moral degradation they perpetuate and accelerate, their ability to enter a being or “demonize” someone often causes psychological problems and bodily injury.⁷¹

In sum, Barth crafts the term “demon” as something which is independent of the created order yet under God’s rule as a hostile and substantial nothingness. Unger’s position argues that a demon is a created being, a fallen angel, in permanent, irreconcilable rebellion against God. From a rigid reflection upon the texts of Scripture, Unger, as he perceives the text, discerns that demons are inherently immaterial, intelligent, and immoral.

1.6 Karl Barth’s Perspective on the Personhood of the Demonic in *Church Dogmatics*

Karl Barth, a preeminent Christian theologian of the twentieth century, serves as a unique and insightful contributor to the field of demonology. Barth’s proportional brevity in relation to the length of his *Church Dogmatics* does not necessarily translate to a lack of importance placed upon the subject. It is not a cursory treatment of the topic, and his perspective stands out due to the particular path by which he accesses the often ignored topic.

Before we begin our analysis, we should proceed further than merely mentioning Barth’s succinctness concerning this topic. As we pursue this topic further, we must concede that Barth disagrees with the very nature of this study. Delving into demonology is a dangerous matter, and

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ This is in keeping with Aquinas when he said, “... we must firmly maintain, in keeping with Catholic faith, that the will of good angels is established in goodness and the will of the devils fixed in evil.” Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologiae*, Volume 9, Question 64, Article 2, Page 289.

⁶⁹ Ibid, Page 67.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ While the traditional term “possession” is still commonly used in many Christian circles, “demonize” or “demonization” will be utilized throughout this thesis, in an effort to avoid any confusion regarding demonic “ownership.”

Barth even mentions the negative effects it had on Martin Luther. As we begin, we should recount a portion of Barth's warning.

*Why must our glance be brief? Because we have to do at this point with a sinister matter about which the Christian and the theologian must know but in which he must not linger or become too deeply engrossed, devoting too much attention to it in an exposition like our own.*⁷²

One of the few to address Barth's demonology, G. C. Berkouwer clarifies Barth's statement, saying, "[Demonology] could again receive the appearance of great power only if we were to give much attention to it and treat it as a matter still deserving of respect."⁷³

Though Barth is emphatically warning us against reviewing demonology in excess, have we gone too far in the other direction? From Barth's perspective, the doctrine concerning demons is something necessary. Have we left demonological studies as an ignored topic graced with little to no reflection whatsoever? Let us revisit the topic today, reflecting on the issue of personhood.

1.6.1 Personhood in Barth's Demonology

Since Barth understands personhood through the lens of one's relationship to God and since he describes demons as something hostile and independent of creation though under God's dominion, is he predominantly implying that demons are personal or impersonal?

As we previously established according to Barth's theology, we cannot point to the angelic beings. He vehemently argues that angels are a different category, unrelated to demons ontologically. They only relate in that they oppose one another. Angels are God's ambassadors, never independent of God's work and presence.⁷⁴ Due to this strict relationship, angels "have no profile or character, no mind or will of their own."⁷⁵ Yet, angels are "creatures" not "emanations."⁷⁶ This information cannot be distilled into a theological form to which we can relate demons. In Barth's theology, his writings concerning angels only serve to distinguish how the identity and personhood of an individual is formed. One's relationship to God is the defining point for assessment.

⁷² Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 519.

⁷³ Berkouwer, G. C. *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, Page 376.

⁷⁴ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 479.

⁷⁵ Ibid, Page 480. To those who would deny the existence of angels, Barth polarizes the issue saying, "To deny the angels is to deny God Himself." (Page 486)

⁷⁶ Ibid, Page 480.

What exactly is the demonic realm's relationship to God? First, "God is the Lord of the demonic sphere."⁷⁷ It is perhaps an uncomfortable notion, but Barth does not turn back from his Augustinian/Calvinistic fervor for God's sovereignty. All is under His domain. Barth builds on God's supremacy by insisting that the demonic "derives from Him" as well.⁷⁸ Of course, this derivation is completely distinct from creation.

Second, though demons are derived from God, they are not His creation.

*God has not created them, and therefore they are not creaturely. They are only as God affirms Himself and the creature and thus pronounces a necessary No. They exist in virtue of the fact that His turning to involves a turning from, His election a rejection, His grace a judgment.*⁷⁹

Essentially, they are a byproduct of the creative process. They find their ultimate derivation from God in His ultimate No, but they do not receive the care that He bestows upon His creaturely realm. They are always rejected, always evil, as they have no access to God's eternal Yes of love and redemption.⁸⁰ Demons can "only exist in the attempt to rage against God and to spoil His creation."⁸¹

Third, because of their existential rebellion, Barth paints a demonic sphere that is always opposed by God and His angels. Even though it still submits to His will, it "does not cease to be the demonic sphere and therefore a sphere of contradiction and opposition which as such can only be overthrown and hasten to destruction."⁸² His judgment is ever upon them.

If that is the demonic's relationship to God, what is their relationship to nothingness, as Barth has consistently linked the two topics? After arguing that demons are derived from God, he reminds us that demons are derived from nothingness.⁸³ Nothingness is basically equated with God's creative No. Nothingness is derived from God; thus demons can be said to both be derived from nothingness and God. But Barth goes further, saying, "They are nothingness in its

⁷⁷ Ibid, Page 520.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid, Page 523.

⁸⁰ Perhaps this is an advantageous place to return to an earlier question: if we rejected Barth's doctrine of an uncreated demonic, to whom do the demons bear more resemblance - God, angels, or humanity? By far, we must conclude that fallen humanity, rebellious to the core and antinomian by nature, remains the demons' closest relative. We are linked by rebellion. While humankind's relationship with the divine is always metaphorical except in the person of Jesus Christ, perhaps demons should be considered as finite creatures that are relatable and comprehensible?

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, Page 521.

⁸³ Ibid, Page 523.

dynamic, to the extent that it has form and power and movement and activity.”⁸⁴ In itself, nothingness is amorphous, powerless, without direction or aim. Demons are nothingness enabled, and they are the “exponents” of the kingdom of falsehood.⁸⁵

In fact, because of their relationship to nothingness and their inherently rebellious nature, demons are more independent and “free” than angels. Briefly evoking a comparison that he disparages, Barth mentions the loyal conduct of the angels in that they never act contrary to the direct command and pleasure of God, and writes,

*He would be a lying spirit, a demon, a being which deceives both itself and others in respect of its heavenly character, if he were to try to profit from his nature and position, deriving any personal benefit, cutting an individual figure, playing an independent role, pursuing his own ends and achieving his own results. A true and orderly angel does not do this.*⁸⁶

The implication of this statement is that demons actually have personal, selfish, individualistic ends, while angels only behave in accordance with the Lord’s purposes.

Barth’s position, as conveyed in *Church Dogmatics*, assumes and indicates a personal demonic ontology. These uncreated beings are directly derived from nothingness, which is directly derived from God. Underlying his personal demonology, Barth’s receptive attitude toward the text, even in the midst of his overriding philosophy of nothingness, guides his outcome. Having criticized Rudolph Bultmann for arbitrarily selecting what to demythologize from the biblical witness, Barth parts ways with traditional demonology where the biblical material is sparse and advocates a strong philosophy of nothingness.⁸⁷

This somewhat surprising conclusion seems to mirror Berkhof’s interactions with Barth. Barth apparently had once accused Berkhof of “mythologizing” the topic of the powers. Berkhof notes that Barth must not be “bothered” by that anymore, saying, “[Barth] is now combating the modern spirit whose rational-scientific world view has no eye left for the power of the Powers.”⁸⁸

To conclude that Barth, a central theological figure in Protestant thought, implied the reality of personal demons is a controversial conclusion, but if we look to other assessments of the topic, we find similar hypotheses. Vernon Mallow, who composed a riveting analysis of the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid, Page 527.

⁸⁶ Ibid, Page 481.

⁸⁷ Barth, Karl. “Barth on Bultmann and Demythologizing” in *Modern Theology: Karl Barth*, Pages 86-87.

⁸⁸ Berkhof, Hendrikus. *Christ and the Powers*, Page 10.

demonic theme in Edwin Lewis, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich's theologies, unfortunately does not tackle the Barthian issue of demonic personhood directly, but he summarily submits that "Barth does not hesitate to state that there is a real devil with his legion of demons."⁸⁹ Also, Paul Jones, an associate professor at the University of Virginia who specializes in Barthian theology, allows for the possibility that Barth aligns himself with a personhood of the demonic. He says, "...if the devil is ever a 'person' for [Barth], it's a macabre distortion of what personhood truly is -- as conceived in light of God's being..."⁹⁰ But he would prefer to lean toward the idea that the "talk of demonic personhood" may be a "domestication of evil -- a way of downsizing just how threatening that which opposes God truly is..."⁹¹ While Jones' conclusion is intriguing, it is flawed to an extent, considering that it does not account for Barth's attribution of the theologically heavy word "being" to the demonic realm, on top of other personal indicators.⁹² However, from Jones' assessment, this thesis' conclusion which argues that Barth expressed a demonic personhood is not unfounded or academically implausible. Instead, a careful digestion of Barth's demonology outlines a demonic that is personal in being.⁹³ This conclusion will be further supported as we continue.

1.7 Merrill Unger's Perspective on the Personhood of the Demonic in *Biblical Demonology*

Merrill Unger, an Evangelical theologian with doctorate degrees from both Dallas Theological Seminary and Johns Hopkins University, has composed a number of works on the subject of demonology.⁹⁴ As evidenced by his three demonological works, he places a fair deal of importance in incorporating demonology's presence into the twentieth century's systematic and practical theologies. Unger states,

Biblically considered, it looms large on the sacred page, and especially in the New Testament [it is] accorded remarkable prominence. It forms, together with

⁸⁹ Mallow, Vernon R. *The Demonic: A Selected Theological Study: An Examination into the Theology of Edwin Lewis, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich*, Page 83.

⁹⁰ Jones, David. Personal correspondence, July 25, 2012.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 481.

⁹³ Throughout the research process, substantial disagreement with this conclusion was unable to be located, likely because the topic of demonic personhood is not a common study. Mallow fails to look into the issue in any depth, and Jones briefly addresses the issue because I directly inquired.

⁹⁴ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*. Unger, Merrill. *Demons in the World Today: A Study of Occultism in the Light of God's Word*. Unger, Merrill. *What Demons Can Do to Saints*. Our focus rests upon *Biblical Demonology*, per section 1.3. As Unger both studied and taught at Dallas Theological Seminary, his background is rooted in the dispensational heritage of C. I. Scofield and John Darby.

*angelology and Satanology, an indispensable branch of systematic theology, dealing with the realm of evil supernaturalism.*⁹⁵

“Evil supernaturalism” is the fulcrum for Unger’s analysis of the demonic.

1.7.1 Personhood in Unger’s Demonology

Enlightening the worldwide phenomenon of supernatural evil and its related practices is Unger’s ultimate goal. His systematic engagement with biblical demonology serves to undergird the reality of demonization, Satanism, divination, necromancy, and other forms of dark ritualism. The issues of government, heresy, and eschatology are also informed by his studies. Though “demonological phenomenon have been found to be almost universally prevalent,” Unger does admit that the innumerable supernatural practices present a problem of abounding confusion and complexity, but as such, we should have a “discriminating grasp” concerning biblical demonology, being careful to allow for faulty research and inaccurate conclusions.⁹⁶

Unger is eager to preclude argumentation against the very nature of addressing the demonic. As they appropriately apply to the issue of personhood in *Biblical Demonology*, let us briefly review his short apologies. He addresses four “problems” - the silence of revelation, the accuracy of interpretation, the prevalence of superstition, and the preponderance of doubt.⁹⁷

In response to the supposed silence of revelation, Unger argues that the problem is falsely portrayed. While some phases of demonology lack biblical content, the overall topic is robustly represented throughout Scripture. In other words, we cannot approach concrete biblical conclusions concerning the origins of the demonic and a few other subtopics, but “this is no barrier to a comprehensive presentation of the subject (of demonology).”⁹⁸

A more substantial problem in Unger’s perspective is the accuracy of interpretation. Though neglect has somewhat stalled and destabilized the topic’s analysis, the main culprit is extreme interpretations, rooted in “ultra-rationalism” and “extravagant superstition.”⁹⁹ He advises that further research is essential, as demonology’s “treatment in the average systematic theology is exceedingly sketchy, if it is given any space at all.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid, Pages 2-8.

⁹⁸ Ibid, Page 2.

⁹⁹ Ibid, Page 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Accepting Scripture as the revealed truth, the prevalence of superstition, with its endless rituals and chthonic imagery, is also a pressing problem. Unger argues that too many people “have lived and died in the clutches of appalling fear and absurd superstition, under thralldom of evil supernaturalism.”¹⁰¹ Such distortion has not been limited to the educationally deprived; it is also replete among the leaders of society, with Talmudic writers being some of the worst offenders.¹⁰² These overwhelming excesses which are weaved throughout the fabric of humanity add further frustration to the Christian systematic endeavor.¹⁰³

Finally, Unger opines an obvious problem concerning a theology of demons. A preponderance of doubt exists regarding the demonic. Most difficulties originate from the unnatural nature of evil supernaturalism. No independent test or naturalistic observation can construct a comprehensive scientific conclusion. “Knowledge of the supernatural can only come through supernatural revelation, since it is above and beyond natural law.”¹⁰⁴ The problem is only further conflated by the Spiritless attitude in which most skeptics approach the subject.¹⁰⁵

Flowing out of these problems, when Unger develops his brief discussion regarding the personhood of the demonic, his perspective integrates these four issues. The answer to each concern is plainly a well-researched biblical demonology, which he tries to deliver in an intellectual yet approachable manner.¹⁰⁶ Thus, we will look at his argumentation.

As we previously mentioned, in Unger’s theology, demonic reality and demonic personhood are equated. No “demon” exists apart from their conception as sinful, immaterial, personal beings. When Unger begins his section on the nature of demons, he comments,

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, Pages 32-34.

¹⁰³ Ibid, Page 29. “Without the chart of revealed truth to guide, it would be an impossible and hopeless task to try to steer a straight course through the intricacies and complexities of heathen thought and practice. With such amazing complication of detail, and often with such refined and subtle intermixture of truth and error, the student of religion proceeding on mere naturalistic hypotheses, without the infallible guide of revelation, is like a vessel without chart, rudder, or compass, tempest-tossed on a reef-strewn sea.”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, Page 7.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:14. In this text, Paul divides the Corinthians into two groups. “The spiritual person has achieved a level of spiritual maturity, but the merely psychic person is still in an infantile phase of development, unable to know the gifts (things) of God’s spirit because such ethereal matters can be discerned only spiritually.” While to firmly posit that skeptical endeavors are “infantile” in the demonological field would be overly harsh, to admit that spiritual perceptivity is a methodological necessity in this realm would not be ridiculous. Without the Holy Spirit, how can we expect to comprehend the truth into which He guides us? Horsley, Richard A. *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians*, Page 61.

¹⁰⁶ Unger’s book *Biblical Demonology* is derived from his Th.D. dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary. Ibid, Page vii.

But it must not be supposed that because spirits are immaterial, they are any less personal. Demons, as well as all other created spiritual beings, possess personality, and are everywhere represented as intelligent and voluntary agents (Mark 5:10; Luke 4:34).¹⁰⁷

Within his ontological conversation concerning the immaterial nature of the demonic, he slips in this terse statement where demons are bluntly portrayed as personal beings. In his later work *Demons in the World Today*, he elaborates on his occasional references to demonic personhood in *Biblical Demonology*. In three short paragraphs, he explains that demons have “all the elements of personality such as will, feelings, and intellect.”¹⁰⁸ As referenced in *Biblical Demonology*, this thought is built upon the Synoptic thought of Mark and Luke.

The Gerasene demoniac narrative is one of the iconic New Testament passages concerning the demonic. In *Biblical Demonology*, it is cited at least seventeen times. Unger references Mark 5:10 in particular, “And Legion asked Jesus many times not to send them out of the area.”¹⁰⁹ Presumably, he selects this as a proof text in this instance as Legion is a persistent negotiator. Furthermore, Legion and the rest of the demons he represents are not mere mental aberrations as they somehow transferred into and demonstrably affected the nearby herd of pigs.¹¹⁰

Much like Mark, Luke 5:34 records the words of a demon who apparently knew Jesus of Nazareth as the “Holy One of God.” This unusual display of superior knowledge is quoted, not as the testimony of a lunatic, but as the spirit world’s admission of Jesus’ special nature. Unger accepts these passages as written with no qualification. He does not suppose or entertain that the author fabricated or falsely interpreted the situation. His biblicism voids the questions.

Unger avoids all attempts at demythologization; instead, he wishes to convey the biblical material as received. Demons are real, personal beings irreparably bent upon destruction and rebellion, though subservient to the command of God.¹¹¹ The Bible is not silent concerning their being, and it consistently distinguishes them as independent agents. While religions and cultures

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, Page 65.

¹⁰⁸ Unger, Merrill. *Demons in the World Today*, Page 23.

¹⁰⁹ Author’s translation.

¹¹⁰ Mark 5:11-13.

¹¹¹ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 74. “Although granted a large sphere of activity, and exercising a powerful and malignant ministry, demons, like their leader Satan, are nevertheless strictly under divine control and have a definite part in the divine plan. The span of their evil machinations is strictly determined, the sphere of their wicked operations is definitely set, and their doom is inexorably sealed. There is no unhealthy dualism in Biblical demonology.” See pages 67-68 for more on their “depravity and complete moral turpitude...”

offer superstitious accounts and descriptions, the Scriptures avoid fantastical and outlandish superstitions.¹¹² Doubt about their being and personality remains only for those who do not properly discern the content and consistency of the biblical accounts of the demonic.

1.8 Similarities and Distinctions

When we compare Karl Barth and Merrill Unger's contributions to demonological studies, the distinctions are many. An entire chapter might begin to catalogue their methodological and contextual differences. But concerning the personhood of the demonic, a couple points move to the forefront.

The major distinction is the means by which personhood is conferred. Is it indirectly derived from God, or is it a direct creative work of God? Barth posits three statements which lead us to conclude that he favors indirect derivation. He confirms that the demonic finds its source in God. "God is the Lord of the demonic sphere, and it derives from Him..."¹¹³ This statement is later broadened with an affirmation that demons "derive from [nothingness]. They themselves are always nothingness."¹¹⁴ Finally, *Church Dogmatics* also mentions that demons are not God's creation.¹¹⁵

The strongest relationship mentioned is the tie of the demonic to nothingness. Demons are not only derived from nothingness, but they actually are nothingness, in personal form. Nothingness itself is derived from God but not like His creatures which exude and bear His affirmation and presence. Therefore, Barth directs us toward an understanding of the demonic (including its personhood) which is indirectly derived from God.

In contrast, Unger's theology maintains that Satan and his angels were a direct creation of God before they rebelled.¹¹⁶ Possessing a conceptual conflation of ontological reality and personhood, Unger views the demonic as having its original root in the divine, though it has been

¹¹² His assessment of superstition is found in pages 3-6. With their ridiculous stories, Unger essentially designates the elaborate demon management systems of ancient and modern times as superstition. Yes, the biblical tone is different, but Unger does not seem to sense the utter insensibility of the biblical tone as well. People perceive the biblical narratives as ridiculous too! If Jesus were to exorcize the demonized in the streets of a Western city today, it would be seen as bizarre to most. Thus, his label of "superstition" merely describes the diverse demonological perceptions and practices that have propagated throughout the world, in contrast to the significantly distinct biblical portrait.

¹¹³ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Page 523.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 16.

ostracized and exorcised from God's acceptance. Demons (as fallen angels) are the result of a direct creative work of God, though their eventual rebellious state is not condoned.

The demon's relationship to God is dramatically different. Unger's "demon" is a carefully crafted creature of God who has deviated toward destruction. Barth's "demon" is the thoroughly corrupt byproduct of God's good creative activity. These "demons'" personhoods differ accordingly. One has received a good personhood from God and warped it by following Satan's folly. The other has come into being as an uncreated person forged out of evil, derived from God but not rooted in Him.

While other points could be compiled, the central similarity is their agreement on the personal ontology of demons, flowing from a receptive attitude toward biblical revelation. Unger is upfront about his biblical adherence. He reads the text, reasons that demons are portrayed as intelligent individual spirits, and concludes that they are such.¹¹⁷ In response to those who suggest that spirits are literary personifications of physical afflictions, Unger retorts, "This ingenious, but false, theory is completely incompatible with the simple and direct attribution of personality to the demons (as much as to men, angels, or God), and, if carried out in principle, must subvert the truth and integrity of the Holy Scripture itself."¹¹⁸ But he does not address those who would perceive the demonic as a significant reality yet impersonal.

Barth is more subtle, but he too primarily accepts the reality and personhood of demons because of the biblical material. Though Barth is deeply affected and directed by philosophical currents, D. F. Ford comments, "The criterion by which Barth wants to be judged is that of fidelity to the Bible."¹¹⁹ Concerning the demonic, he interacts with revelation, especially in his footnotes.¹²⁰ After one lengthier discourse on how the truth of God unmasks the practices of the demonic, Barth offers, "This, then, is what Holy Scripture has to tell us concerning demons. It certainly does not say that they do not exist or have no power or do not constitute a threat. It is quite evident that their existence and nature are very definitely taken into account..."¹²¹ As we already postulated, their nature is indeed personal in his demonology. Where does this

¹¹⁷ This reasoned conclusion is reached amongst the influences of Unger's theological heritage in the Evangelical community. He is not a hermeneutical island; he quotes other scholars frequently.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, Page 91. Unger then specifically references Mark 5 as one passage that loses coherence if such a theory is applied.

¹¹⁹ Ford, D. F. "Conclusion: Assessing Barth" in *Karl Barth – Studies of His Theological Methods*, Page 199.

¹²⁰ His limited rationalism which George Hunsinger describes as "reason within the limits of revelation alone" appears to not be so limited concerning the demonic. Hunsinger, George. *How to Read Karl Barth*, Page 49.

¹²¹ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Pages 528-529.

ultimately originate? It courses from the Scriptures, though dressed and shaped by philosophical inflows.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have laid out a considerable base of literature review by which an analysis of the personhood of the demonic can occur. Within the commonly bypassed question regarding whether we should view demons as impersonal or personal, this thesis specifically designated two particular conversation partners, Karl Barth and Merrill Unger. After selecting these two primary interlocutors, terminology was defined through their particular paradigms, emphasizing their understandings of “demon” and “personhood.” Barth defines “personhood” through one’s relationship to the divine and a “demon” as something real which is both hostile toward and independent of God’s created realm. In contrast, Unger correlates his concept of personhood to the issue of reality, and a “demon” is a fallen incorporeal being of profound intelligence and unfathomable wickedness.

We then turned to the personhood of the demonic itself. Though disagreeing on major background issues concerning the origin and nature of the demonic, both authors ultimately affirmed the personhood of the demonic. Though not a primary subject of their systematic endeavors, Barth and Unger nearly treated the subject of personhood as an assumed element. We concluded that their greatest similarity lie in their receptive attitude toward the biblical material which played a fundamental role in their overall demonological contribution.

Therefore, as we carefully move forward following the close of this introductory chapter, a pressing question arises from Barth and Unger’s agreement on the personhood of the demonic. Since biblical studies played such a central role in forming their conclusions, how does recent biblical scholarship relate and engage with their writings? Is there any substantial support for their position?

2. An Evaluation of Barth and Unger's Perspectives on the Personhood of the Demonic in Light of Contemporary Influential Biblical Studies on Demonology

2.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we sought to define “personhood” and “demon” through a literature survey of Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* and Merrill Unger’s *Biblical Demonology*. After exploring their definitions, we assessed their positions regarding the personhood of the demonic, as to whether they preferred an impersonal or personal perspective. Subsequently, both Barth and Unger were found to advocate for the reality of demons as personal agents, due to their reading of the biblical material.

Since their demonologies rely heavily upon biblical studies, what does contemporary influential biblical scholarship have to contribute to this analysis of Barth and Unger’s view of demonic personhood? Does this scholarship lead us to conclude that the biblical material advocates the existence of personal demonic beings? What role does the popular hermeneutic of demythologization play? Due to this standing wealth of interrogatives, we must venture to seek answers which will further our analysis of Barth and Unger’s personhood of the demonic.

Therefore, we will first address the stated primary authority of Barth and Unger’s position. We will briefly introduce the revelatory material they utilize in order to construct their personhood of the demonic. Following this, tracing the issue of demonic personhood in contemporary influential biblical scholarship becomes our primary concern. After discerning the overall attitude toward the issue of demonic personhood, Barth and Unger’s primary texts will then be reassessed, along with interaction with the topic of demythologization. Finally, we will offer support and criticism for Barth and Unger from that recent scholarship, while also allowing Barth and Unger’s works to defend their hypotheses.

2.2 The Scope of Interaction

In order to achieve our stated ends, we must narrow the scope of the biblical scholarship which we will pair as interlocutors with Barth and Unger. The first criterion we will utilize is “contemporary.” This thesis will primarily engage recent biblical and theological works, penned subsequently to the publication of *Church Dogmatics* and *Biblical Demonology*. Also, another criterion is that the commentaries, articles, and books quoted must be of considerable influence

in contemporary studies, widely read or academically published. But it should not be misconstrued that this chapter is a complete compilation of every contribution to the demonological field that could possibly relate to this thesis. Rather, these articles, dictionary offerings, and critical commentary materials are selected as representative of the greater whole within the academic realm.

Finally, while demonological/spiritism studies exists in numerous religious and sociological contexts, the scholarship assessed in this chapter will be Christian and biblical, intentionally including more than a single strand of Christian thought. By choosing Christian biblical scholarship for the analysis of Barth and Unger's demonological ontology, this thesis is not asserting that other religious contributions are unworthy of study. Thus, let us first glean but a few of the central texts from Barth and Unger's demonologies as we begin to delve into contemporary biblical scholarship's contribution on the matter of demonic personhood.

2.3 Central Biblical Texts in Barth's Personhood of the Demonic

As we engage biblical scholarship with Karl Barth's demonology, it is crucial that we grasp the biblical material which undergirds his theology. This is a daunting task due to the path by which he arrives at his perspective. Barth does not simply state a theological position and then proof text his point with a list of biblical references (as an Evangelical, Merrill Unger is much more affiliated with this style of theological composition). While Barth states that his demonology is staunchly rooted in Scripture, the reality is that his argumentation is logically tied to the biblical text, not directly linked.¹²²

Why does Barth write about demons? He declares their reality but also their drastic dissimilarity from the angels, saying, "The two spheres do not belong together either by origin or nature."¹²³ But then he mentions that the demonic horde and the angelic host do intersect concerning their activity! This operation-oriented opposition leads us to Barth's direct citing of biblical information. After trying to dismiss the pandemonium of problems surrounding the usage of "angel" to describe Satan's servants in Matthew 25:41, Revelation 12:7, and 2 Corinthians 12:7; he still seeks to disassociate the two parties yet admits,

In the few biblical passages in which angels and demons are seen together at all (as in the "war in heaven" of Rev. 12:7f. or the brief encounter at the temptation

¹²² Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 529.

¹²³ Ibid, Pages 519-520.

*in Mk. 1:12), they are always understood to be in radical conflict. This radical conflict ought to have been regarded as a radical and essential determination on both sides. The devil and demons ought never to have been seen or understood otherwise than in this essential conflict.*¹²⁴

Ergo, it is clear, methodologically speaking, that the Bible speaks powerfully into his theological formation.¹²⁵

As we previously established, Barth thinks that demons are indirectly derived from God, almost as an eddy formed by a passing ship. Demons are a consequence of God's creative work, and "they are nothingness in its dynamic, to the extent that it has form and power and movement and activity."¹²⁶ What texts shall we examine to correlate such statements? Barth's next sentence says, "This is how Holy Scripture understands this alien element."¹²⁷ But we are left on our own to discern exactly how he arrived at such a "biblical" conclusion. It may be better said, "This is how Barth understands this alien element in Holy Scripture."

We can conclude that having a robust understanding of demonic personhood does clarify and support his biblical conclusions concerning angelic and demonic activity. But he does not overtly support his argument from a biblical passage that personhood is derived from one's relationship to the Creator and that demons are uncreated offspring, derived from God. However, in general, his brief treatments of biblical texts concerning demonology distinguish the implication that he accepts the texts' basic ontological implications. Demons exist but should not be associated with angels, except in the context of conflict.

2.4 Central Biblical Texts in Unger's Personhood of the Demonic

Merrill Unger's *Biblical Demonology*, as evidenced by the title, is littered with scriptural references in order to support his theses.¹²⁸ His strict biblically-founded style is briefly expounded in his defense of the reality of the demonic. He argues,

The evidence of revelation is put first, not because it is expected more effectively to impress the skeptic (he seems unimpressed by any Scriptural declaration), but

¹²⁴ Ibid, Page 520.

¹²⁵ Barth additionally cites Romans 8:38 and John 8:44 during his treatment of the demonic (Pages 520, 531). Genesis 6:1-14, Jude 6, and 2 Peter 2:4 are only mentioned in order that he might dismiss them as "uncertain and obscure." Ibid, Page 530.

¹²⁶ Ibid, Page 523.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ His Scripture index spans pages 245-250. He cites over two thirds of the sixty-six canonical books throughout his composition.

*because intrinsically it is the most important witness. Demons do exist, first and foremost, for God in His Word says they exist.*¹²⁹

This priority continues to permeate his argumentation. He later comments, “When Luke writes that ‘Satan entered into Judas’ (Luke 22:3), he most certainly implies that the dynamic of his crime and suicide was Satan or demonic agency. The burden of proof, therefore, rests upon the skeptics...” Scripture speaks, and he demands others to elucidate otherwise.

In Unger’s most direct statement concerning the personhood of the demonic, he loosely corroborates his conclusion with a pair of biblical references. Obviously, no particular text in the revelatory witness amounts to a systematic demonology. The behavioral descriptions of narratives serve as his verification. He says, “Demons... possess personality, and are everywhere represented as intelligent and voluntary agents (Mark 5:10, Luke 4:34).”¹³⁰

Throughout his demonology, the Synoptic testimony is centrally featured, though well supported through Old Testament literature and epistolary theology. But what does recent influential biblical scholarship have to offer to the issue of the personhood of the demonic?

2.5 Contemporary Influential Biblical Scholarship and the Personhood of the Demonic

The personhood of the demonic is not treated as an important theme in biblical scholarship.¹³¹ Perhaps certain interpretive, demythologization exercises are thought to best suit the demonological field, but too often, the topic remains an assumed element, either with demythologization or literalism previously accepted. Thankfully, biblical scholarship does offer information which shapes and aids the subject. Thus, we will begin by assessing the development of the idea of “demons” and then navigate Old and New Testament scholarship through the lens of demonic personhood. Lastly, we will engage a number of prominent scholar’s commentaries on the specific texts referenced by Barth and Unger in support of their demonologies.

¹²⁹ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 36.

¹³⁰ Ibid, Page 64.

¹³¹ It could be argued that via the discussion concerning Satan, which has been set outside the limits of this particular study, demonological personhood is frequently discussed, but it is the opinion of this thesis that demons and their personhood remain underdeveloped. But even after an examination of Breytenbach and Day’s article on Satan, the identity of Satan (or “the *satan*” depending on the textual construction of the passage they are examining) is questioned. Personhood is less of an issue, especially since Day links the meaning of the Satan with ancient Akkadian terms which denote “a human legal opponent” or “a deity acting as an accuser in a legal context.” Breytenbach, C. and P. L. Day. “Satan” in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Page 727.

While it is a topic of importance, this thesis cannot address at length the hermeneutical disparity which exists in demonological studies resulting from diverse paradigm affiliations. We recognize that some authors, believing in the reality of a personal demonic realm, prefer to harmonize the varying contributions to demonological thought by the numerous biblical genres and texts. In such cases, a canonical and cohesive demonology is sought. In other cases, authors prefer to cite the subject's diversity with the biblical testimony as evidence of mythical inclusion, advocating that numerous cultural manifestations of demonology are present in the canon rather than one divine cosmological thought. Essentially, some prefer to highlight biblical unity, and some prefer to emphasize biblical diversity.

2.5.1 The Development of Demonic Personhood

Since the conception of the word “demon” (from the Greek *daimon*, *daimonion*), personhood was implied.¹³² In classical Greek thought, the imagery conveyed by “demon” conjured up thoughts of full-fledged deities, capricious demigods, or souls of the deceased “who now invisibly watch over human affairs.”¹³³ They were an unseen reality which dwelled in chthonic lairs or heavenly abodes. More “persons” existed than empirical observation could indicate, though myths and religious annals varied in the description of their power and number. It would be an egregious error to not mention that *daimon* and *daimonion* had an impersonal cacophony of usages as well. Alongside their reference to gods and eventually “personal intermediary beings,” *daimon* could occasionally depicted stars, consciences, or simply a divine portion of the anthropological.¹³⁴

Though the framework of personhood is implied in the concept of the demonic (when referring to beings), the moral nature of those beings was often ambiguous. “The word translated ‘demon’ in the literature preceding and contemporary with Scripture is not always negative.”¹³⁵ After Homer and others maintained an essentially neutral understanding of the word, it is best understood that “the exclusively ‘negative’ charge associated with demons doubtless represents a secondary development reflecting an understanding that opposes them to

¹³² Twelftree, Graham. “Demon” in *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume 2, Page 91.

¹³³ Riley, G. C. “Demon” in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Page 235.

¹³⁴ Foerster, Werner. “*Daimon*” in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Pages 2-3.

¹³⁵ *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Page 202.

the gods.”¹³⁶ Throughout the Ancient Near East, moral qualifiers were still commonplace in order to denote that a particular demon was “evil.” Zoroastrianism was the prominent exception, and this Persian dualism became more prevalent throughout the intertestamental period.¹³⁷ Even as late as Luke’s authorship of Acts, neutral uses of “demon” were acceptable.¹³⁸ But let us specifically focus on the personhood of the demonic in each testament.¹³⁹

2.5.2 Old Testament Thought and Demonic Personhood

Before we begin to interact with the biblical scholarship concerning the Old and New Testaments, a canonical perspective is essential. While we can delve into the particular complexities of each individual author and genera in relationship to demonic personhood, the nature of revelation itself dictates that a particular level of divulged information results in a particular level of clarity. With further revelation, a topical theology is increasingly clarified. Hence, the author of Hebrews offers insight into Old Testament mysteries and ambiguities. It is no surprise that demonic personhood continues to be increasingly illuminated throughout the progressing revelations of the Old and New Testament.¹⁴⁰

The issue of demonic personhood in the Old Testament is multi-faceted. “The Hebrew of the OT, as the other Semitic languages of the ancient Near East, had no single, comprehensive term for demonic figures as did the ancient Greeks.”¹⁴¹ Due to this issue, the identification of “demons” has proved more problematic. Joanne Kuemmerlin-McLean admits that this has resulted in inconsistency and adds, “The most generally accepted understanding is of demons as ‘evil spirits’ who live in ruins and the desert and are responsible for illness and natural disasters.”¹⁴² But scholarship remains fragmented as to the exact amount of demons or demonic figures in the OT. With some having historically opted for an Old Testament demonology

¹³⁶ Hutter, Manfred. “Demons and Spirits: I. History of Religion (Ancient Near East and Antiquity)” in *Religion Past & Present*, Page 747.

¹³⁷ Ibid. See section 4.5 for more on Zoroastrianism.

¹³⁸ Pervo says that Acts 17:18 is the only instance in the New Testament where *daimonia* is “in a nonpejorative sense.” Pervo, Richard I. *Acts: A Commentary*, Page 428.

¹³⁹ As we proceed, we will interact not only with articles related to our task but also with critical commentaries. No effort was exerted to selected favorable commentaries; rather, the primary prerequisite was their academic quality, in that they engaged with other scholars, the original languages, and cognates.

¹⁴⁰ Barth also remarks about the progressive clarity of the demonic from the Old to the New Testaments. He strongly argues that this is a result of God’s continuing triumph and the “kingdom of God coming from heaven to earth.” All that opposes the Christ is “driven from the field” and exposed more clearly as it flees. Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. III, 3, Page 529.

¹⁴¹ Aune, D. E. “Demon” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Page 919.

¹⁴² Kuemmerlin-McLean, Joanne K. “Demon” in *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, Volume 2, Page 139.

trifurcated between angelic, animalistic, and human type demons; such endeavors seems ambitious when there appears to be no clear overarching OT perspective accessible for easy systemization.¹⁴³ A bifurcation does not appear helpful either.¹⁴⁴ This thesis posits that it is only by the fruition of the New Testament that we ascertain enough insight for an adequate demonology and a proper response to it. A survey of a few major demonic terms identified in the Old Testament (bringing to light any specific material regarding their personhood) is in order, but we must try to avoid ambitious systematic conclusions.

Demonic personas do present as animal-like creatures throughout the Old Testament. Spirits of the wilderness and deserted places are described as goat demons (*seirim*) and wild beasts (Isaiah 13:21, 34:14).¹⁴⁵ Apparently, cultic worship grew up around these figures (Leviticus 17:7, 2 Chronicles 11:15). Strangely enough, this imagery continues into the Apocalypse (18:2). Understood as beings, their presence is the direct result of divine judgment in Isaiah and the subject of condemnation of false worship in Leviticus, but it would be presumptuous to align such beings as personal manifestations of evil from the Old Testament text alone.

The worship of other gods is often considered demonic.¹⁴⁶ Psalms 106:37 says, “They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons (*shedhim*).”¹⁴⁷ In other instances like Deuteronomy 32:17, this concept of false worship sets up these gods as actual demons. However, like the animalistic demons of the OT, these references do little to elucidate a particular personhood attributable to demons. They are beings but vaguely so.¹⁴⁸

Perhaps the most intriguing Old Testament texts involve various spirits (*ruach*). In 1 Kings 22, Micaiah recounts a vision of a heavenly scene to Ahab and Jehoshaphat, wherein God is determining Ahab’s end. In this instance, a “deceiving spirit” agrees to trick Ahab to his appointed death through the mouths of prophets. Then God guarantees the spirit that his mission will prove successful! While bearing some resemblance to the throne room scene of Job, we are

¹⁴³ Ferguson, Everett. *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, Page 88.

¹⁴⁴ Kuemmerlin-McLean, Joanne K. “Demon” in *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, Volume 2, Page 139

¹⁴⁵ Riley, G. C. “Demon” in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Page 237.

¹⁴⁶ Eshel, Esther, and Daniel C. Harlow. “Demons and Exorcism” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, Page 531. This OT thought became increasingly pronounced through the interpretive nature of the Septuagint.

¹⁴⁷ New American Standard Bible (NASB).

¹⁴⁸ Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels: Elect and Evil*, Page 152. By no means does this section comprehensively categorize every possible reference to the demonic in the Old Testament literature. Dickason offers a number of others, but we must be careful to accept the original text without overvaluing the interpretation of the LXX translators.

at a loss to exactly determine this spirit's origin and nature, but the spirit's activity is well-defined, shaped by its verbal abilities, immoral qualifications, and locational specificity.¹⁴⁹

In another text where a spirit is commissioned by God for His purposes, Saul is troubled by an evil spirit.

*Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him. Saul's servants then said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you" ... So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.*¹⁵⁰

Confirming the absence of dualistic influence in the Tanakh, this evil spirit is again present as an aspect of God's judgment against the reign of Saul. Because of the reaction of Saul's advisors, the removal of the Spirit of God and the arrival of the evil spirit left little doubt that something was wrong, which they correctly diagnosed as an evil spirit.¹⁵¹ This spirit is then temporally affected by the audible influence of David's harp; the apotropaic music furnished relief to Saul. Personhood is not a remarkable feature of this particular incident, nor can we discern a direct link to the demonic without integrating the testimony of other canonical works.

One other instance involving a spirit is even more unusual and difficult to interpret. In Job 4:12-21, the author records Eliphaz' encounter with the supernatural (v12-16) and the message delivered by the spirit (v17-21). The encounter is especially dramatic.

*Now a word was brought to me stealthily,
And my ear received a whisper of it.
Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falls on men.
Dread came upon me, and trembling,
And made all my bones shake.
Then a spirit passed by my face;
The hair of my flesh bristled up.
It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance;
A form was before my eyes;
There was silence, then I heard a voice...*¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ By "locational specificity," it is meant that the spirit was present before God, and then it was not. The text does not convey it as a general rule, law, or force which is metaphorically omnipresent, ambiguously present, or absent. Instead, the text conveys that this deceiving spirit was locationally before God, commanded by God, and eventually brought about the fulfillment of its earthly task, considering Ahab's death at the end of the passage.

¹⁵⁰ 1 Samuel 16:14-15, 23; NASB.

¹⁵¹ The relationship of rulers and the supernatural is an unusually common theme throughout Scripture.

¹⁵² Job 4:12-16, NASB.

In his opening salvo against Job, Eliphaz recapitulates a horrific nighttime visitation as the primary content of his response. He “claims a privileged revelation that gives him special insight concerning the nature of humankind.”¹⁵³ But is this frightening exchange from God? While Eliphaz evidently considers the event to have divine origins, the context of God’s eventual rebuke of Eliphaz in Job 42:7 opens the possibility that this spirit was acting deceptively, thus explaining the terrifying circumstances.¹⁵⁴ This unique instance does not by any means define a spirit as a person, but it is peculiar that while “spirit... is never used of an apparition in the OT... here the spirit is given a semblance of form.”¹⁵⁵

Due to the demythological currents in modern theology, depersonalization of such “demon-like” figures in the OT is common practice. For instance, Adrian Hastings submits, “In particular, there is no reason internal to Genesis for thinking the serpent in the Garden of Eden (3:1-15) was a spiritual being in disguise...” and he concludes, “it was simply a snake.”¹⁵⁶ While he himself understands the text as conveying a mere snake, it would be unwise to conclude that the text itself is arguing that point, especially considering the snake’s role in the *protoevangelium*, the radical inbreaking of deception, the snake’s unusual ability to speak, and the subsequent interpretation of this text in Jewish thought.¹⁵⁷

In conclusion, the OT text does not advocate nor deny a personhood of the demonic person, but it does describe other persons. The existence of personal entities beside God and humanity is a given, but to declare a “personhood of the demonic” in the OT would be presumptuous.¹⁵⁸ The passages themselves do not demonstrate an overarching demonological theme to which we could attribute personhood, though the LXX and other writings translate and interpret one. The OT is content to display a variety of beings/spirits which manifest as powerful

¹⁵³ Balentine, Samuel E. *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Job*, Page 110.

¹⁵⁴ Note Eliphaz’ use of “breath/spirit” in verses 9 and 15 in chapter 4.

¹⁵⁵ Pope, Marvin H. *The Anchor Bible: Job*, Page 37.

¹⁵⁶ Hastings, Adrian. “Devil” in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, Page 164.

¹⁵⁷ Outside of Genesis, another instance of an animal speaking is found in Numbers 22. That conversation between Balaam and his donkey also originated with supernatural intervention.

¹⁵⁸ In the theological arena, this conclusion is not without dissenters. In an attempt to “write off” the reality of demons and intermediate beings of any kind, Labooy states, “I conclude that it runs counter to the ethical-religious intentions of the OT to fill the space between God and man with ‘intermediaries.’ Nevertheless, in the NT, these syncretistic figures acquire power over people, *in spite of* Moses and the prophets. From this perspective, we can say that the (syncretistic) demons constitute a category that is primarily relevant for the people in question in a mythical and psychological sense, but then only in *their* understanding and experience. *Therefore*, they are the ideal ‘extra’s’ in the final scene. However, none of this implies real existence. Seen in this way, the OT can then be allowed to speak the last word: In the OT perspective, which should be accepted as normative, they do not exist.” He then unreservedly demythologizes the demonic realm, with virtually no interaction with the biblical text or scholars. Labooy, Guus. *Freedom and Dispositions*, Pages 277-278.

malevolencies which sit under the authority of the one God, directed by His command and indicative of His judgment. Classifying them under one heading as “demons” is not plausible given the scholarship in this field.

2.5.3 New Testament Thought and Demonic Personhood

The New Testament witness toward the personhood of the demonic shares a strong affinity and similarity with the previous demonological thought of the Jewish Scriptures, though sharply devoid of their wealth of ritualistic superstition commonplace by the time of the NT. The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament links their demonological structures consistently, saying, “The demonology assumed by Jesus and the Synoptics is clearly that of Ancient Judaism... the Catholic epistles reflect the ancient Jewish mythological theme... all strata of the NT are in agreement in adopting the structures of ancient Jewish demonology.”¹⁵⁹ Utilizing Greek terms, “they presuppose the ideas about demons that were current in the Jewish world of their day. For them, demons stand between God and humans; they are the opponents of the former and harmful to the latter.”¹⁶⁰ This establishes that the authors of the New Testament were indeed grounded in ancient Jewish didactic currents, but does this link the testaments?

In the shadow of an OT demonology lacking a “tidy development,” the NT thought on the subject is surprisingly helpful and cohesive, offering clarity and substance in the context of demonology’s “soteriological implications.”¹⁶¹ G. F. Twelftree says concerning spiritual powers in the Bible, “While the NT picture is more developed than that of the OT, there is significant continuity between the Testaments.”¹⁶² Simply put, the witness of the Christian writers describes a demonology which preserves and expands upon the OT demonological vaguenesses without imposing harsh conflict. As the text of the NT speaks openly about the demonic, let us peruse through recent scholarship regarding each major authorial grouping and investigate their view toward the personhood of the demonic.

The Synoptics gospels speak repeatedly and clearly about the demonic. Jesus’ ministry reportedly supersedes the exorcism norms from that time. Avoiding the use of apotropaic methodologies, “Jesus simply orders the demons to leave their victims. This picture stands in

¹⁵⁹ Böcher, O. “*Daimonion*” in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Pages 272-274.

¹⁶⁰ Röhl, Wolfgang G. “Demons” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Pages 794-795.

¹⁶¹ Twelftree, G. F. “Spiritual Powers” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Pages 796-797.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, Page 796.

stark contrast to the exorcisms of the world of antiquity...¹⁶³ How often did Jesus perform such unusual exorcisms? While we cannot know for sure, it does seem to be a central feature of His ministry as “the first three gospels relate seven distinct instances of Jesus’ performance of an exorcism.”¹⁶⁴ This significant portion of biblical material grants a particularly robust offering of information concerning demons themselves. They are “thought of in thoroughly personal terms: they know secrets such as the identity of Jesus; they know their fate, give an account of themselves, and can be brought to silence (Mark 1:24, 34 par. Luke 4:34, 41; Mark 3:11; 5:7; par.; cf. Jas 2:19).”¹⁶⁵ Even the violent movement of the demonized in Mark 1/Luke 4 is directly linked to the demon.

In a sense, the exorcism narratives of the Synoptics portray demons as if they are “animating a puppet from the inside.”¹⁶⁶ Evidenced by a myriad of physical and mental maladies, the authors definitively identify demons/spirits as the source of the ills. They are the invisible cause to the visible effects. The unseen evil spiritual world directly disturbs the tangible realm. Additionally, pericopes like Mark 5’s account of Jesus’ conversation with Legion lend credence to the argument that the original authors intended demons to be understood as powerful personal beings.

Luke’s letter to Theophilus, the book of Acts, carries on many of the same traits and descriptions of the Synoptics, though exorcisms are only described with relation to *pneumata* not *daimonia*.¹⁶⁷ As a further development of the Synoptic recordings of public recognitions of Jesus by demons; the knowledge, authority, and identity of Jesus now serves the Christian leadership in the book of Acts. Not only Paul (16:18) but numerous disciples “heal and exorcise successfully in the name of Jesus (3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 30)...”¹⁶⁸ The phrase “in the name of Jesus” is also illuminated as being more than a mere exorcism formula by the sons of Sceva who received a rude response and a physical beating from a demonized man. The verbal exchange

¹⁶³ Guelich, Robert A. “Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti” in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 13, Num. 1, Page 39. Apotropaic items do not frequent the biblical page with regularity, but Acts 19:11 does detail one unusual instance where objects related to Paul were empowered and causing miraculous results.

¹⁶⁴ Emmrich, Martin. “The Lucan Account of the Beelzebul Controversy” in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 62, Page 268.

¹⁶⁵ Böcher, O. “*Daimonion*” in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Page 272.

¹⁶⁶ Riley, G. C. “Demon” in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Page 239.

¹⁶⁷ *Daimonion* is used once by the Athenians in Acts 17:18, but it appears to be a neutral use of the word.

¹⁶⁸ Böcher, O. “*Daimonion*” in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Page 273.

between the sons of Sceva and the evil spirit continues to convey a demonic realm which is knowledgeable and personal.

The Pauline corpus provides a wrinkle in the NT demonological fabric. Though replete with references to Satan, the devil, spirits, and angels; *daimonion* only shows up in 1 Corinthians 10 concerning idol worship and 1 Timothy 4 concerning deceitful doctrine. Unlike the Synoptics and Acts which record narratives, Paul lends the demonic no voice. Instead, demons are portrayed within the didactic nature of his epistles. Thus, as a subject matter, Paul's works illuminate them as the party ultimately "responsible for false teaching..." because "competing gods are demons."¹⁶⁹

Paul's theology builds a framework of cosmic powers, rulers, and authorities upon this "demon/competing god" thought. Aside from God and humanity, Paul's worldview "is also disturbingly full of other personal agents of power who work harm against us..."¹⁷⁰ Avoiding a dualistic worldview, these powers are fragile and have been disarmed by the cross.¹⁷¹ While they continue to exist under the authority and victory of Christ, their destruction is certain.¹⁷² As for why this Pauline theological thread is not more prominent in popular preaching, some suggest that "the gods of this world have blinded the Church to its own scriptures with respect to the 'principalities and powers.'"¹⁷³

With writers who are comfortable and committed to discussing demonology, it is commonplace to see these powers equated with demonic realities on a one to one basis. "Paul's mature doctrine interpreted demonic opposition to the gospel in terms of angelic Principalities, Authorities and Powers... Throne and Dominations... These personal and cosmic forces had, however, been brought under subjection by God..."¹⁷⁴ Along those lines, the Pauline "elements" (*stoicheia*) of Galatians 4 are also occasionally correlated with demonic forces. Indeed, extra-biblical writings from before Paul's time, such as the Testament of Solomon, further these

¹⁶⁹ Kollmann, Bernd. "Demons and Spirit: III. New Testament" in *Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, Page 749.

Riley, G. C. "Demon" in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Page 240.

¹⁷⁰ Neyrey, Jerome H. "Bewitched in Galatia: Paul and Cultural Anthropology" in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Page 88.

¹⁷¹ Colossians 2:15. In Wilson's summary of this brief section of the letter to Colossae, he summarizes, "The 'bond' that stood against them has been canceled, through the cross of Christ, who has triumphed over all the powers that once brought fear into their lives." Wilson, R. McL. *Colossians and Philemon*, Page 214.

¹⁷² 1 Corinthians 15:24-27.

¹⁷³ Wylie-Kellermann, Bill. "Not Vice Versa. Reading the Powers Biblically: Stringfellow, Hermeneutics, and the Principalities" in *Anglican Theological Review*, Vol. LXXXI, Num. 4, Page 668.

¹⁷⁴ Woods, Richard. "Demons" in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Pages 275-276.

arguments as they use “elements” and “demons” to refer to the same entities.¹⁷⁵ In sum, a power or element is a demonic person, so to speak.

But when we assess the biblical material itself, a more sustainable conclusion, especially considering the lack of personal indicators, might be that these powers are actually structures and forces completely controlled or merely manipulated by the personal demonic realm. Romans 8:38-39, which contains both demons and powers in the same list, directs us toward a more nuanced definition than simple equation. For instance, if we consider the relationship of the demonic to heresy, Paul did not insist that false teaching is a demon in 1 Timothy 4, but rather, he indicates that heresy originates from demonic sources and is sustained through demonic oversight. A firm conclusion would be hasty, but Paul’s theology of the powers could finger a demonic scheme rather than a demonic agent (though Ephesians 6:11-12 does require special attention). The powers are vaguely set up as “spiritual powers in the heavenlies who [stand] behind human activity and institutions.”¹⁷⁶ But further study into this matter is merited.

The book of James has one passage which references the *daimonia*. James 2:19 reads, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.” In the Anchor Commentary series, Luke Johnson links this passage to the gospel narratives in which the demons recognize and identify Christ.¹⁷⁷ It is even proposed that the text alludes to the practices recorded in Jewish literature and the corresponding items which cause demons to shudder.¹⁷⁸ But the shuddering itself is likely the result of fear.

Concerning the personhood of the demonic, this passage does appear to equate the ability of belief in a human capacity with the demonic ability to believe. Obviously, one is redemptive in nature and the other is simple admission. But the resulting fearful shuddering evidences something like personal behavior.

The Johannine writings confirm the demonological contributions of the rest of the NT. First John 4:1-4 identifies false prophets as originating from spirits, presumably evil since they are set up in contrast to the divine. The gospel of John grants insight into unusual circumstances. In chapters seven through ten, Jesus has to repeatedly defend His nature, for they accuse him of having a *daimonion*. While the other gospels select narratives which highlight His miraculous

¹⁷⁵ Arnold, Clinton E. “Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits In Galatians 4:3, 9” in *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. XXXVIII, Num. 1, Page 58.

¹⁷⁶ *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Page 801.

¹⁷⁷ Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Anchor Bible: the Letter of James*, Page 241.

¹⁷⁸ Dibelius, Martin. *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, Page 160.

repudiation of evil, Jesus in the book of John responds with doctrine and dialogue. Regardless, Jesus is rejected, as “the pneuma of Jesus is suspected of being of diabolical origin...”¹⁷⁹ Through these passages, it presumably confirms that false teachers and less reputable miracle workers were associated with demonization.

Revelation confirms earlier demonological thought, though it is translated into the imagery-driven apocalyptic genre. We observe standard biblical themes regarding the demonic, such as 9:20, in which the text “designates pagan gods as *daimonia*...”¹⁸⁰ The text says, “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk...”¹⁸¹ In context, demons are listed as having stolen worship. The exact relationship between demons and idols is not distinguished, as the “works of their hands” clearly refers to the idols of various substances.¹⁸²

Also, the ancient theme of demons haunting ruins and desolate places, recapitulated by Jesus in Matthew 12:43, resurfaces again in Revelation 18:2 regarding the ruins of Babylon. Overall, the plethora of demonic mentions in Revelation does little to develop the concept of demonic personhood, due to the wealth of vision-related anthropomorphisms and other figurative methodologies. The genre itself is not advantageous or conducive for establishing ontological realities, but constructing an argument that Revelation detracts from a personhood of the demonic is difficult.

One final theme that surfaces in the remainder of the Catholic Epistles is the disobedient angels. In keeping with Genesis 6:1-4 and the Jewish tradition concerning angelic interference in the ancient world; the imprisoned spirits of 1 Peter 3:19 “are probably fallen, malevolent angels.”¹⁸³ Combined with Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4, a case for NT continuity with the Genesis 6:1-4 text can be made. Though we can conclude that spiritual forces are the oratory audience and the recipients of divine chastisement (by some sort of divine condescension) like personal

¹⁷⁹ Böcher, O. “*Daimonion*” in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Page 273.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ NASB.

¹⁸² One could read this and conclude that demons are the result of human construction, but since it is a vague text, one could just as easily argue that demons have seized upon the opportunity created through idolatry or fostered the growth of idolatry altogether. However, the latter explanation seems to fit with conceptual picture of the demonic in Revelation.

¹⁸³ *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Page 800.

beings, the trouble which demands further study is to whether these disobedient angels should be conflated with the pernicious demons, but this issue lies outside our task.

In the NT writings, we observed a clear category of personal, spiritual beings labeled as demons. The majority of the NT contributors not only mention demons, but they describe them in personal terms. Recent biblical scholarship largely acknowledged this biblical reality.¹⁸⁴ Having surveyed biblical texts and corresponding scholarship concerning the personhood of the demonic, let us now turn to the specific texts utilized by Barth and Unger.

2.5.4 Central Texts in Barth and Unger’s Perspective on Demonic Personhood in light of Modern Influential Biblical Commentaries

Earlier, we asserted that Barth and Unger develop their theology of demons from their receptive attitude toward the biblical text. Following that assertion, we briefly included a few texts which underpin their perspective. In this section, we will examine the opinions of a few scholars on those particular verses.

In Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, Revelation 12 is cited more than once as a proof text to further his logical reasoning. Barth is undeterred in his biblical acceptance, as he cites epistles, gospels, and the apocalypse with espoused realism. In response to the demythologization project, Barth argues, “It would no doubt suit [demons] very well to be grouped with the angels... and in this exalted company to be ‘demythologised,’ to have their reality denied, to be interpreted away.”¹⁸⁵

In contrast, the text itself, in its descriptive vision-relaying manner, does little to imply personhood to the dragon/Satan and his angels, and commentators offer little as well. David Aune, in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, directs his attention to the origin of this “mythic narrative in vv 7-9...”¹⁸⁶ Jürgen Roloff’s commentary on chapter 12 advocates that “Revelation sees here in Satan the mysterious power that from the beginning of human history personified resistance against God...”¹⁸⁷ Ergo, the text regurgitates the mythical battle between good and evil, and Satan, though presented in personal terms, is not a personal being but a representation

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Woods, Richard. “Demons” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Pages 275-276. Neyrey, Jerome H. “Bewitched in Galatia: Paul and Cultural Anthropology” in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Page 88. Böcher, O. “Daimonion” in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Page 272.

¹⁸⁵ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. III, 3, Page 521.

¹⁸⁶ Aune, D. E. *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 6-16*, Page 663.

¹⁸⁷ Roloff, Jürgen. *Revelation: A Continental Commentary*, Page 148.

of rebellion in the created order. But problems with this conclusion exist in the text. Let us examine it a little more closely.

A great deal of interpretive direction is implicit in Revelation 12. Verse 5 ushers us into understanding the male child as being the person of Jesus, the victorious King and Messiah. Though debate continues as to the exact identity of the woman, verse 17 does lend itself to the idea that the woman and her offspring represent actual persons (whether corporate or individual is insignificant for this discussion). Is it not then possible that the other participants in this cosmic drama amount to personal beings as well? No theologian should argue that God is symbolic for something other than Himself in this passage. So God, the woman, and the child are clearly symbolic for persons. What grounds exist in the text itself to lend credibility to an impersonal interpretation for any of the participants? In response to Roloff and Aune, perhaps Revelation does not exemplify the figurative nature of Satan and intermediary beings throughout Scripture. Perhaps Revelation affirms cosmic realities, including God, through the veil of apocalyptic literature.

Alvin Plantinga provides a suitable excursus at this point. He remarks:

Many philosophers... have complained that it is extremely implausible, in our enlightened day and age, to suppose that there is such a thing as Satan, let alone his cohorts... Whether or not one finds the view in question plausible or implausible will of course depend on what else one believes; the theist already believes in the existence of at least one non-human person who is active in history: God. Accordingly the suggestion that there are other such persons – that human beings aren't the only sorts of persons God has created – may not seem at all implausible to him.¹⁸⁸

In other words, as theists, we have no reason to rashly dismiss the interpretation that these texts portray unseen persons. They remain plausible.

In Unger's *Biblical Demonology*, Luke 4 and Mark 5 feature prominently. In Luke 4:33-37, we observe Jesus casting out a demonic spirit. Introduced as a spirit of an unclean demon, Luke might be "establishing... his basic vocabulary for demon possession" so he can use these words interchangeably in a negative manner.¹⁸⁹ Darrell Bock paints the scene as a "personal

¹⁸⁸ Plantinga, Alvin. Quoted in Keith Ferdinando's *Triumph of Christ in an African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 373. Originally from J. Tomberlin and P. van Inwagen's (editors) *Alvin Plantinga Profiles 5*, Page 43. (Dordrecht; D. Reidel, 1985.)

¹⁸⁹ Nolland, John. *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1-9:20*, Page 206. With Luke's one neutral use of *daimonion* in Acts 17:18, Nolland's suggestion makes sense.

confrontation.”¹⁹⁰ Citing the early church father Clement and others, Bock finds that the situation paints the demon as feeling “opposed and threatened.”¹⁹¹ The remarks made by the demon reveal an emotion of “surprise and/or displeasure.”¹⁹² The demon apparently knew who Jesus was, unusually identifying Him as the “Holy One of God.” The New American Commentary deduces, “We are not told how the demon knew Jesus’ identity, but the assumption is that they possessed supernatural knowledge and thus recognized him.”¹⁹³ But the crux of the narrative lies in the restoration and freedom that Jesus – “the Holy One of God” – offers humanity in His authority over the demon. The result of the encounter depicts the awe of the crowd in light of Christ’s words, and “the demon openly admits defeat by throwing the liberated man into the midst of the crowd as it leaves him, and by doing this without hurting the man.”¹⁹⁴

Mark 5:1-20 is often reflected upon as the prototypical deliverance passage. Subtly mocking contemporary Western theology’s aversion toward this story, Donald Juel of Princeton University comments that he “never heard it read in church... probably because there are all sorts of uncomfortable things about the story – unclean spirits who talk, drowned pigs, and people who respond to miracles by asking Jesus to leave.”¹⁹⁵ Yet he continues onward, retelling the passage without demythologizing in this instance.

Though categorically classified as a “tale” or as a “miracle story,” the biblical exegesis is fairly straightforward (even with Morna Hooker’s assertion that it is the combination of two stories).¹⁹⁶ Not alluding to the Gentile background of the demonized or the spatial proximity to the tombs, Adela Collins remarks that the demon “is unclean because of its origin.”¹⁹⁷ She adds that when the man kneels before Jesus, “the reverential gesture is probably an act initiated by the unclean spirit.”¹⁹⁸ The demon is recognizing Jesus’ power and status.¹⁹⁹

In her comments on the text, Dr. Collins continues to highlight personal characteristics concerning the demons involved. Further into her analysis of Jesus and the demons’ conversation, the demons’ plea for mercy from torment also indicates “that exorcism is painful

¹⁹⁰ Bock, Darrell. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke 1:1 – 9:50*, Page 431.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Stein, Robert H. *New American Commentary: Luke*, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database.

¹⁹⁴ Bovon, François. *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, Page 163.

¹⁹⁵ Juel, Donald H. “Plundering Satan’s House: Mark 5:1-20” in *Word & World*, Vol. XVII, Num. 3, Summer 1997.

¹⁹⁶ Hooker, Morna. *Black’s New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to St Mark*, Page 143.

¹⁹⁷ Collins, Adela Yarbro. *Mark: A Commentary*, Pages 266-267.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, Page 267.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

or at least distressing for the spirit.”²⁰⁰ When Jesus permits their relocation into the nearby swine, He apparently wins the war of wits with ease, as the demons who wished to remain in the area were instead plunged into the Galilean lake.²⁰¹

Of course, she is not arguing that she believes in personal demonic beings; she is simply acknowledging that the text is framed in the context of a personal encounter. Other writers would prefer to further distance themselves from the notion of a personal demonic ontology. Thus, Robert Guelich says regarding Legion’s lack of resistance, “The ‘demon’ has abandoned all attempts to use his own power to gain control.”²⁰²

While some commentators advocate that this passage demonstrates the supernatural nature of these demons, others take another route. Building upon the “possession” motif, it can be argued that no distinction can be made between the demons and the inhabited man. Henry Turlington leans this direction and comments concerning the conversation chronicled in Mark 5, “The response of the man and the unclean spirit are not separable.”²⁰³ This allows the reader to arrive at psychological explanations of the demonic rather than supernatural and personal definitions.

Overall, Barth and Unger are not ostracized through the lens of recent scholarship. Instead, they read the passages as is, and they indirectly (Barth) or directly (Unger) form their theological perspectives concerning the demonic and their personhood. They maintain that the personal exchanges of the Scriptures are informative concerning our understanding of reality, unlike some contemporary scholars who have no problem admitting that the text conveys personal exchanges but then disconnect the text from our understanding of reality through demythologization.

2.6 The Demythological Theme in Contemporary Influential Biblical Scholarship in Relation to Barth and Unger’s Perspectives on the Personhood of the Demonic

From the scholarship presented over the past paragraphs, common themes arise. While a spectrum of theological perspectives exists regarding the ontological reality and independent personhood of the demonic, the analysis of the biblical texts themselves provides a fairly

²⁰⁰ Ibid, Page 268.

²⁰¹ Ibid, Page 271.

²⁰² Guelich, Robert A. *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*, Page 279.

²⁰³ Turlington, Henry. *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Page 308.

coherent and consistent consensus concerning exactly what the text aims to indicate. On a whole, scholars generally have no problem admitting that the Bible conveys a world view which increasingly includes personal beings (described as demons or other synonymous designations) who stand as malevolent toward God and His created order, though submissive to divine rule. However, that admission is then couched in the need for demythologization, disconnecting the portrayal of personhood from ontological reality.

Formally originating with Rudolph Bultmann in 1941, “the task of demythologization is... the elimination of the illusion of objectivity through the translation of myths into the appropriate language of existential participation...”²⁰⁴ But has this “translation” rendered the angelic and demonic figures of the Old and New Testaments to the ontological category of unicorns and every other imaginary creature? Who is qualified to unilaterally draw the mythological lines?

Karl Barth reacted strongly in his *Church Dogmatics* concerning the rise of demythologization, even as he felt pressure in academic circles against being too “mythological.”²⁰⁵ He rejects the value of demythologization in relegating the demonic world into a non-existent entity. Barth thinks the demons would appreciate such a perspective. Yet demonology, according to Barth, does require demythologization, but he defines it differently. Barth says:

*The demythologisation which will really hurt [demons] as required cannot consist in questioning their existence. Theological exorcism must be an act of the unbelief which is grounded in faith. It must consist in the fact that in the light, not of a world-outlook but of Christian truth, they are seen to be a myth, the myth which lurks in all myths, the lie which is the basis [of] all other lies, so that a positive relationship to them, an attitude of respect and reverence and obedience, is quite impossible.*²⁰⁶

This theological exorcism is a part of Barth’s program to dissuade the Christian from having any relationship with the demonic. Demons are not supposed to be viewed positively in any way, and a belief in them similar to our relationship toward God and His angels is unbecoming. Thus,

²⁰⁴ Fergusson, David. “Demythologization” in *Religion Past & Present*, Page 754.

²⁰⁵ Berkhof, Hendrikus. *Christ and The Powers*, Page 9. Berkhof’s work on the powers was nearly published in *Theologische Studien* due to the wishes of Karl Barth’s secretary. She later had to inform Berkhof that Barth “had reasons not to let this text appear in the series.” Barth eventually apologized for the rejection, explaining that “He felt that [Berkhof] was ‘mythologizing’ the Powers too much, and that he could not approve of such a publication at a time when his own theology was under the crossfire of Bultmann and his disciples.”

²⁰⁶ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Pages 521-522.

even though he mentions the reality of demons and describes them as personal beings, Barth reminds us “that the realism of the Bible in this respect consists exclusively in the clarity and vigor with which we are comforted and warned and set on our guard against this sphere, but called away from it rather than to it...”²⁰⁷

Merrill Unger also repudiates the undergirding philosophy beneath the academically prevalent hermeneutic of demythologization. Accepting the existence of a supernatural realm, Unger argues for the inadequacy of natural, scientific investigation on the subject, for “the supernatural realm is above natural laws of the physical universe and involves a sphere of reality beyond the control of scientific experimentation and strictly scientific inquiry.”²⁰⁸ Branding those who attempt to guide and source their demonological studies without a revelatory foundation as “handicapped” and “unqualified,” the biblical worldview of the supernatural “furnishes the only true criteria for understanding and evaluating the diverse and perplexing phenomena in this field.”²⁰⁹ Naturalistic pursuit without the Holy Spirit is “inevitably foredoomed to failure and deception.”²¹⁰

Addressing the issue of biblical criticism and exegesis in a brief article, Unger poses a question, “Is there a valid scientific approach to biblical criticism?”²¹¹ He says “yes,” and qualifies, “But it must not attempt to foist the purely naturalistic methods and presuppositions of physical or mathematical science upon the higher realm of personality and spirit where the Bible operates.”²¹² Unger consistently seeks the inclusion of the supernatural in our approach to the biblical material. When we skip this valuable ingredient, the repercussions are obvious – “...spiritual barrenness, empty intellectualism, and endless confusion...”²¹³ One can see this attitude in Unger’s response to Friedrich Strauss.

Unfortunately, Unger does not directly interact with Bultmann and the concept of demythologization, but Strauss is mentioned. In the context of Merrill Unger’s defense of the reality of demonization, he speaks of “Strauss and the mythical school” which attest “that the whole narrative of Jesus’ expulsions of demons is merely symbolic, without actual foundation of

²⁰⁷ Ibid, Page 522.

²⁰⁸ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 6.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Pages 6-7.

²¹⁰ Ibid, Page 7. His reasoning here depends heavily upon 1 Corinthians 2:14.

²¹¹ Unger, Merrill. “Scientific Biblical Criticism and Exegesis” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January 1964, Page 61.

²¹² Ibid, Pages 61-62.

²¹³ Ibid, Page 62.

fact.”²¹⁴ To this widespread thought, Unger responds, “...in the Gospel accounts, the plain prosaic narration of the incidents as facts, regardless of what might be considered as possible in highly poetical and avowedly figurative passages, would make their statement here, in pure prose, not a figure or a symbol, but a lie.”²¹⁵ Demanding widespread symbolism where realism is apparently intended leads us to the conclusion that the writer speaks mistruth, not figurative didactics.

With specific reference to demonology and the personhood of the demonic, Barth and Unger, with varying levels of emphasis, accept the revelation concerning malicious spirits as conveying reality, avoiding theological and philosophical imposition upon the text. Indeed, many Western theologies have accepted this philosophical concept from Bultmann and done what Barth warned every demon wanted.²¹⁶

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to analyze Karl Barth and Merrill Unger’s surprisingly united position regarding the personhood of the demonic, in light of biblical scholarship. In order to achieve these ends, we first clarified the scope of the scholarship utilized as interlocutors. After narrowing our scope to contemporary and influential sources, an identification and brief sketch of central biblical texts in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* and Unger’s *Biblical Demonology* helped provide a platform to engage with biblical scholarship. In our discussion with biblical scholarship, we specifically approached the topic of demonic personhood in Old and New Testament scholarship, concluding with a narrow analysis of the particular texts which feature in Barth and Unger’s demonology. Arising from biblical scholarship’s moderate affirmation of demonic personhood, we addressed the hermeneutical prevalence of demythologization, including Barth’s redefinition and Unger’s dismissal of it. We finally observed that Barth and Unger, though faced with a few criticisms, stand with the weight of a great deal of recent scholarship behind them.²¹⁷

Through this study, we have again confirmed that Barth and Unger rely heavily upon revelatory material to support their conclusions. Upon examining contemporary biblical

²¹⁴ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 90.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, Page 521.

²¹⁷ The strengths and weaknesses of their positions will be discussed in chapter four.

scholarship, most authors either advocated that the biblical material suggested a demonic personhood or described demons in the revelatory text as personal beings. Through the writings of Barth and Unger, we also raised the possibility that Western scholarship's interpretive practices may benefit the demonic realm and cause critics to doubt biblical value and veracity altogether. In the following chapter, we will pursue Barth and Unger's theology of demonic personhood with specific reference to a multicultural context.

3. A Critical Analysis of Barth and Unger's Perspective on the Personhood of the Demonic from a Multicultural Perspective

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we sought to engage biblical scholarship regarding the personhood of the demonic. Through the lens of Barth and Unger's demonologies, we examined recent influential scholarship on the Old and New Testaments' depiction of demons. A conclusion was reached that biblical studies generally confirmed that the intention of the revelatory material was to convey a worldview which included malevolent personal supernatural beings.

This chapter will aim to analyze Barth and Unger's perspectives regarding the personhood of the demonic in light of a multicultural context and hermeneutic. Why introduce multiculturalism? Why embark on such a perilous road? As it will be argued throughout this chapter, the multicultural dynamic is a nearly unavoidable aspect of human existence in this age. Then let us, as bearers of God's revelation, understand our audience, ponder the hermeneutical complexities of communicating in a multicultural context, and finally offer a well-rounded, biblically-consistent theology of demonic personhood attuned to the intricacies of the world we inhabit.

We begin this journey by first defining culture itself, followed by a lengthy explanation of multiculturalism and the hermeneutical results of a multicultural world. Utilizing the multicultural perspective, Barth and Unger's demonologies, specifically considering demonic personhood, will be sifted for Western impositions upon the biblical worldview. In response, a multicultural perspective, a way forward, will be proposed. Support and criticism of Barth and Unger will be provided as needed.

The topic of multiculturalism is of particular interest to me. Formerly a six-year resident of Chicago, I attended and became a member of a church community which contained an eclectic gathering of cultural backgrounds. The church was located near large communities of Chinese-Americans, African-Americans, and Caucasians. This demographic diversity translated into our church context, with no single group forming a majority in our fellowship. While such diversity proved to enhance our unity in Christ and further our appreciation for one another's heritage, it was easy to discern that cultural background influenced one's view of the demonic. Some members spoke openly about the demonic while others generally preferred to ignore the topic.

These differences often manifested along cultural lines. Furthermore, these ecclesiological experiences were further duplicated through multicultural contexts during my undergraduate studies.

3.2 A Definition of Culture

As we tackle the issue of multiculturalism, particularly concerning its hermeneutical implications with regard to Barth and Unger's perspective on the personhood of the demonic, we must first define "culture" itself. Mercy Oduyoye and Hendrik Vroom attest, "Cultures are patterns of meaning, value and normativity: ways in which social life is structured, both in respect to freedom and lack of freedom, communion and hierarchy."²¹⁸ Byang Kato simplifies that definition, saying, "Culture is the whole system of living made up of what society knows and does."²¹⁹

Throughout this chapter, a particular emphasis will be placed upon the African manifestation of cultural studies, simply because culture has proven to be an issue of interest and emphasis in African theological circles. Due to the missionary heritage accrued over the past centuries, Kwame Bediako and others have lamented the history of "European value-setting for African Christianity."²²⁰ Now that the African theological movement has taken great strides to throw this off, "the theological meaning of the pre-Christian past becomes an unavoidable element in all major African theological discussion."²²¹ But does this "unavoidable element" of African religious background create a proclivity toward certain errors?

Kato signals a few of these common "pitfalls." As African Christian theologians have tirelessly wrought theologies which diverge from past "European value-setting," it is easy to agree with Kato that "Africa has come of age."²²² But what is the result? "Now the temptation is to magnify all that is African, especially in cultural and religious heritage. It is felt that as the West boasts of modern technology, Africa can boast of a long-standing history. It is even wrongly held that as Christianity is a religion of the West, Africa should be proud of her

²¹⁸ Oduyoye, Mercy, and Hendrik M. Vroom. *One Gospel - Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross Cultural Theology*, Page 4.

²¹⁹ Kato, Byang. *African Cultural Revolution and Christian Faith*, Page 7.

²²⁰ Bediako, Kwame. *Theology and Identity*, Page 237.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Kato, Byang. *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, Page 12.

religious heritage. [This] tends to universalism.”²²³ While culture helps form the contextual bridge by which the gospel can be communicated, we cannot permit culture – ancient or modern, African or Western – to dictate the reshaping of the biblical material, specifically the news and work of Christ.

For clarity’s sake, the term “gospel,” as used throughout this thesis, refers to the biblical definition of “gospel” set down by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. The gospel is (1) Received, (2) Exclusive, and (3) Supernatural – transcendent and immanent in the Person of Christ alone. One possesses the gospel upon the reception of and reliance upon Christ Himself by faith, while acknowledging the sin He exposes, the redemption He offers, and the judgment and vindication He will one day bring. The historical nature of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection are inseparable from this. Because He was raised in history, our coming story includes our literal resurrection as well. Indeed, if the dead are not eschatologically raised, if our salvation is not defined by actual events in space/time, then we should recapitulate Paul’s cry and live out our meaningless days as Epicureans (v32). The gospel is factually grounded in past, present, and soon-to-be consummated realities and contextually bound to historical and locative events. Holding the gospel high, we can proclaim, “It is not neo-colonialism to plead the uniqueness of finality of Jesus Christ. It is not arrogance to herald the fact that all who are not ‘in Christ’ are lost. It is merely articulating what the Scriptures say.”²²⁴

Let us return to the issue of culture. What role does culture play in the hermeneutical and theological process? We cannot avoid the question. Culture’s relationship with hermeneutics is nearly indistinguishable. “We all apply *hermeneutics* – that is principles of interpretation – whenever we engage in any communication process... we employ hermeneutics, even though in our own culture and in familiar surroundings we are usually completely unaware of the process. We decode what we hear and settle on its meaning.”²²⁵ Because of our cultural context, we have particular hermeneutical presuppositions with which we operate. These are inherently engaged when we enter the theological arena.

This is where we must resist the temptation to dilute theology into a merely sociological and anthropological activity. Leaning heavily upon Gordon Kaufman, Kathryn Tanner argues

²²³ Ibid, Pages 12-13.

²²⁴ Ibid, Page 16.

²²⁵ Klein, William. “Evangelical Hermeneutics” in *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Page 320.

that “Theology is a particular version of this search for meaning, for a pattern of fundamental categories that will, as cultures do, orient, guide, and order human life. The adequacy of theology can therefore be judged by how well it performs these general cultural tasks.”²²⁶ This completely neglects theology’s necessary relationship with revelation. Without that relationship, theology becomes anthropocentric instead of theocentric, virtually social anthropology.

Commenting on the relationship of theology and secular knowledge, T. F. Torrance says:

*...because theology has problems that overlap with philosophy and other sciences (including cultural studies), it must subject itself to rigorous control and the discipline of self-critical revision in order to ensure that it is really being good theology, and not some debased brand of theology that confuses its task and its subject-matter with those of philosophy and or some science of nature. Thus, while recognizing its own peculiar nature, and pursuing it with unceasing vigilance and exacting criticism, it must think out its relation with philosophy and natural science and make clear its distinction from them.*²²⁷

In pursuing this “self-critical revision” our primary source ought to be the biblical canon. All searches for meaning without “good theology,” wherein God speaks to us, become a grasping at air – desiring to cling to something and never attaining a grip. Unless our meaning and purpose is connected to something heavenly, something eternal; all meaning is temporal and fleeting. We have no grounds for a certain hope, the faith which has signified God’s people.

Theology is the reception of revelatory information and its reasonable and accessible translation into a cultural context(s), not to “tickle the ears” of the hearer but to accurately divulge the needs and purposes of God. In Jesus and His cause, we find objective purpose, meaning, and hope. Theology’s adequacy is not primarily judged upon our reception and the fulfillment of cultural tasks but upon its faithful contextualization of the Revelator’s intention and the successful communication of His truth, containing His perspective and tasks. The benefits of anthropological purpose and meaning are a derivative of this communication. Current hermeneutical thought, embodied by Tanner and others, is seemingly obsessed with flipping the object of theology (from God to humanity) by focusing the theological endeavor upon our search for meaning. Yes, this does have its place, but first and foremost, we must chase after God and His revelation that He may be honored. In God, we obtain meaning.

²²⁶ Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Page 64.

²²⁷ Torrance, Thomas F. *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, Page 51. Clarification added.

Though the agents involved in revelation's original transmission were indeed human, within a particular context, the Holy Spirit preserved the words of God in the prophetic office.²²⁸ In the same way, we should be careful to not exclude His influence even now. Does the Spirit no longer work? In fact, we recognize that the Spirit's relationship to us and the Word of God has not eroded.²²⁹ Yet we must continue to be vigilant, for spirits which do not guide us into truth are many.²³⁰

As we consider culture, we must also clarify that it is not morally removed. Though humanity was originally crafted in a perfect cultural context, corruption is introduced. "... Because humanity is sinful, culture bears the imprint of human sinfulness. However beautiful, great and highly cultivated it may be it is affected by human sin."²³¹ On some level, all cultures enshrine false thinking and behavior; they install human corruption as a communal norm. It is a fool's errand to assert that a perfect culture exists apart from the first or second Eden.²³² Therefore, we cannot pursue ends which would rewrite the cultural studies of the past century and conclude that some cultures are not civilized while some are. Instead, every culture, when it encounters the true and living God through revelation, is left challenged and transformed, for "not all Christian values are compatible with the values of any given culture..."²³³

Considering the Niebuhrian baggage attached to the word "transformed," this thesis is not employing that term to assert that Christianity's primary communal purpose is to transform

²²⁸ 2 Peter 1:20-21, Romans 3:2. Addressing the meaning of the 2 Peter text, Kelly articulates that human will was only ever involved in the revelatory process, whether in cooperation or "under compulsion," because they were influenced by the Holy Spirit. Kelly, J. N. D. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Pages 324-325.

²²⁹ John 14:6, 15-17, 26; 16:12-15. Beasley-Murray comments on 14:17, saying, "In contrast to the world the disciples are to know the Paraclete because 'he will remain alongside you...' and 'will be in you...'" The passage simultaneously affirms "the presence of the Spirit with the disciples, while yet recognizing that the latter points to the Spirit's inner presence in individual believers..." Concerning 16:13, Beasley-Murray continues to exegete the work of the coming Paraclete, "... the truth has been made known by Jesus to the disciples, but their grasp of it has been limited; the task of the Paraclete will be to lead them that they may comprehend the depths and heights of the revelation as yet unperceived by them." Beasley-Murray, George R. *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, Pages 257-258, 283.

²³⁰ 1 John 4:1-4. "The author takes for granted the existence of a variety of spirits... the community is warned not to submit itself to the various spirits, but to maintain a critical distance from them, that is, to 'test' them." Strecker, Georg. *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*, Page 132.

²³¹ Nieder-Heitmann, J. H. *An Analysis and Evaluation of John S. Mbiti's Theological Evaluation of African Traditional Religions*, Page 106.

²³² The first Eden, with Adam and Eve, depicts a singular culture with distinguished roles and ontological equality. The second Eden, the new heavens and earth, does not display the abolition of diverse cultures but the marvelous uniting of every culture in Christ. Thus, the first Eden is a vision of the perfect culture in relationship to God and others, and the second Eden is a vision of the perfect multicultural context in relationship to God and others.

²³³ Oduyoye, Mercy Amba, and Hendrik M. Vroom. *One Gospel - Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross Cultural Theology*, Page 4.

cultures. In contrast to a militant perspective, cultural transformation is a natural result of a rendezvous between Christian revelation and human culture. Even by carrying out one command of Christ, such as “love your enemies,” cultures are affected, and the world is changed.²³⁴ But Christians on every level desire that Christian ethics, as exemplified through Jesus and His apostles, should lead us toward cultural service in some regard. Should those who have been bestowed with the words of life be silent and still while a culture perpetuates systems of repression against women and attitudes of normalcy toward child abuse? To these and other injustices, we bear the biblical witness with divine authority to identify evil for what it is. Will we not defend the downtrodden? When we remove revelation from centrality, judgments and criticisms of cultural norms often manifest as one culture intolerantly accusing another. Only God’s utterance offers a foundation by which we can employ a moral compass in the global cultural marketplace fraught with injustices amongst the richness of its innumerable wares.

The canonical texts are also shaped by the cultural currents during their composition. “God’s self-revelation in the Bible was recorded faithfully by the biblical writers, who used whatever cultural materials they had at their disposal.”²³⁵ Biblical writers, such as John with *logos* theology, often expropriated cultural/religious terms of their day in order to coherently convey the surpassing nature of Christ. Because God chose to reveal Himself at particular times to specific people in certain contexts, culture remains an issue from start to finish in the Christian’s relationship with God’s Word. We must understand the biblical cultures to accurately ascertain the intention of the divinely superintended authors, and we must be acquainted with current cultures in order to translate the gospel truth, while not subjecting the latter to the former.²³⁶ But our concern lies with the hermeneutical implications on the backend of that process.

²³⁴ Matthew 5:44. What a unique and convicting statement! The “love your enemies” text from the Sermon on the Mount “is a classic example of Jesus’ exegesis of the Torah; far from breaking with the Torah, he interpreted it in terms of Jewish hermeneutics of the time in order to propose a startlingly innovative interpretation...” Betz, Hans Dieter. *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, Page 309.

²³⁵ Lak, Yeow Choo. “Christianity in a Southeast-Asian Metropolis: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics” in *One Gospel - Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross Cultural Theology*, Page 22.

²³⁶ Even with the cultural context which flavors the revelatory writings, the perspicuity of the Bible is remarkable. Humanity’s ability to observe, form hermeneutical conclusions, and develop applicational consequences allows everyone to access the truth with a reasonable amount of accuracy, while simultaneously allowing for the possibility of a new understanding based upon other canonical contexts and ANE cultural insights.

3.3 Multiculturalism and a Multicultural Hermeneutic

We stand at the gateway to a new era, wearing the traditional garb of our fathers and employing the thoughts crafted in the context of the past. The distance which once slowed and separated global discourse has rapidly shrunk and virtually vanished, and Christian theological thought cannot ignore the consequences. It is not a question of “will we respond to this changing environment or not?” Rather, we must ask “how will we respond?” “There are methodological implications for undertaking theology in light of the sheer expansion of data brought about by globalization, inculturation and non-Western theologies.”²³⁷ Before we approach the hermeneutical endeavor, let us first assess the situation.

As a resident of the ever-diversifying England, Graham Ward paints the following scene:

*I live in the northern part of Manchester, Salford, where the first language is now arguably Punjabi – certainly it is arguable the extent to which it is English... My local supermarket will serve you in English, but if you took an average day the staff probably speak more Polish (to each other and their customers) than they speak English. All the local shops, whether... serving pizzas, kebabs... tandoori... milk... cheap vodka, are owned by Punjabi speakers. If I walk less than 200 yards further up the road on which my house is situated, I enter an area of several square miles occupied by Hasidic Jews... These speak a variety of Yiddish dialects. So as a Christian living in that area I cannot live out my faith, in fact I could not even live, without being multicultural.*²³⁸

This vibrant multiculturalism leads to exceedingly profound enrichment, which Ward describes in his personal experiences in England as “energizing.”²³⁹ Invigorating diversity is increasing not only on the streets of Manchester but around the globe, in the university and in the church.

One of the foremost scholars concerning culture and its relationship to theological practice, Tanner argues that cultures are not “sharply bounded, self-contained units.”²⁴⁰ Furthermore, she thinks that “the cultures that anthropologists study are never likely to have been closed systems in fact.”²⁴¹ But now, the innumerable cultures of the earth are more evidently fluid due to our “age of global world systems.”²⁴²

²³⁷ Cartledge, Mark J. and David Cheetam. *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes*, Page 1.

²³⁸ Ward, Graham. “Intercultural Theology and Political Discipleship” in *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes*, Page 30.

²³⁹ Ibid, Page 31.

²⁴⁰ Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Page 53.

²⁴¹ Ibid, Page 54.

²⁴² Ibid.

The danger we face at this level is the inner urge to return. Faced with the daunting reality of being swallowed up into the multicultural façade, will our theology retreat to the narrow “development of contextual theology” centered upon one arbitrarily isolated cultural manifestation and persist in resisting a multicultural theology?²⁴³ As Ward says, “...the context today is multicultural and multi-faith...”²⁴⁴ We cannot return to ages past when Christian theologians and pastors could formulate and practice theologies which were crafted and conditioned by one culture. Too many worldviews operate simultaneously in small areas – communities, universities, and churches. With Yeow Choo Lak, we can agree that in our changing context, “there is no place for provincialism.”²⁴⁵

A great deal of theological energy has been exerted in forming helpful and insightful American, African, and Chinese theological studies (to name but a few). For instance, in constructing his African theological composition, Charles Nyamiti says, “... while doing African theology, we should arrive at the stage where e.g. a Kikuyu theologian freely employs cultural elements taken from Ghana, Congo, South Africa, etc. and integrates them in his/her Kikuyu theology – for the simple reason that they are authentic African values, and as values they transcend all ethnics limits.”²⁴⁶ But do such admirable sentiments portray the hermeneutical ideals of the past rather than the hermeneutical challenges of the future? Can we truly construct an “African theology” or an “American theology” any longer? How long will this be the case? Even if we can outline distinct theologies, should we develop them?

Kato advocated, “The noble desire to indigenize Christianity in Africa must not be forsaken... But must one betray Scriptural principles of God and His dealing with man at the altar of any regional theology? Should human sympathy and rationalism override what is clearly taught in Scripture?”²⁴⁷ His desire to maintain a focus upon the biblical revelation is commendable, but the time of “regional theology” is in decline. This is now being acknowledged.

In recognition of the multicultural era we inhabit, education has sought to be at the forefront of multicultural issues. “Multicultural education” is a pliable term, “an umbrella term,

²⁴³ Ibid, Page 32.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, Page 30.

²⁴⁵ Lak, Yeow Choo. “Christianity in a Southeast-Asian Metropolis: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics” in *One Gospel - Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross Cultural Theology*, Page 13.

²⁴⁶ Nyamiti, Charles. *Studies in African Christian Theology: Vol. 1, Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian Foundations*, Page 15. Italics removed.

²⁴⁷ Kato, Byang. *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, Page 16.

used to refer to a variety of approved or demanded practices in education establishments.”²⁴⁸

Mal Leicester explains that three primary strands exist:

1. *Education through many cultures.*
2. *Education in many cultures.*
3. *Education for a multicultural society.*²⁴⁹

Without delving into the plethora of resulting debates, the overall agenda is clear: education cannot be monocultural or ethnocentric. South Africa’s education system is confronted by this on a broad scale, due to the amount of “learners from diverse cultural, linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds.”²⁵⁰ In a school, all these contexts meet. Yet in Western, Eastern, and African religious education; do we recognize and account for such diversity in our theology? Are we guilty of prescribing the wrong remedy for the prevailing symptoms, elevating one past or current cultural expression of Christianity to a superior position? The simple answer must be yes; we do this far too often. Then what does a multicultural hermeneutic look like at the dawn of this new day?

Having been confronted by the current multicultural trend, David Cheetham wisely reminds us of the necessary eschatological perspective, citing the multitudes from every “nation, tribe, people, and language” who stand before the Lamb in Revelation 7:9. He calls this the “multicultural vision of the Kingdom of God...”²⁵¹ This adequately reminds us of the ultimate calling of God’s people. We are not eschatologically destined to the permutations of Christian theology but rather to unity before Christ. He is our focus and our destiny. Unity in the person, work, and teaching of Christ is coming soon, even as we struggle for cohesion now.

However, Cheetham is not so concerned with the reality of multiple cultures operating in one setting. He is concerned with “intercultural theology” which “could easily be described as merely a global intra-Christian discourse.”²⁵² Many others have nobly sought the “significant development of Christian theology in one cultural context through interaction with theologies developed in other cultural contexts.”²⁵³ This is not our primary focus in this study, and our

²⁴⁸ Leicester, Mal. *Multicultural Education: From Theory to Practice*, Page 22.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, Page 23.

²⁵⁰ Lemmer, Eleanor, Corinne Meier, and Noleen van Wyk. *Multicultural Education*, Page v.

²⁵¹ Cheetham, David. “Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies” in *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes*, Page 43.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Fulljames, Peter. *God and Creation in Intercultural Theology: Dialogue between Theologies of Barth, Dickson, Pobe, Nyamiti, and Pannenberg*, Page 173.

study does not seek to formally address the traditional “Christ and culture” paradigms. Lak says, “While most theologians have to wrestle with the intricate ‘Gospel and cultures’ motif, others have had to go beyond that to deal with the ‘Christ in multi- and cross-cultural contexts’ motif.”²⁵⁴ More and more theologians are being confronted by the latter, and his recognition of multiculturalism’s reality (specifically in Singapore) illustrates that argument.

In this thesis, it is posited that the theologians of the present and the theologians of the future will not have one cultural context and neither will the parishioners, the students, and the churches that they serve. In our attempt to move beyond monocultural and intercultural studies, Walter Hollenweger, from the University of Birmingham, provides the way forward - crucial material - as he formulated the field of intercultural theology.²⁵⁵

Of his seven point list of presuppositions for his argumentation, Hollenweger’s fifth principle says, “The point of contact between our traditions and the new theologies from the Third World is Scripture.”²⁵⁶ Without denying that every Christian will select texts and share the gospel through their particular cultural, traditional lens; this “point of contact” is an advance in the multicultural communicative dilemma.

Two primary responses arise to the multicultural theological tapestry that floods the Christian world. On one hand, we may seek to look back to the hermeneutics which seeks to preserve and enshrine one particular cultural expression of Christianity, preserving and mining it for its richness. The perils to this perspective are many. If we continue in this path, we may champion the safeguarding of particular cultural theological strands, but we risk losing touch with the culturally pluralistic world we now inhabit. Are we the defenders of past isolation or of

²⁵⁴ Lak, Yeow Choo. “Christianity in a Southeast-Asian Metropolis: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics” in *One Gospel - Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross Cultural Theology*, Page 15.

²⁵⁵ Hollenweger, Walter J. “Intercultural Theology” in *Theology Today*, April 1986, Vol. 43, Num. 1, Page 29. “Intercultural theology” as a discipline is defined as “(1) All theologies are contextually conditioned. (2) There is nothing wrong with theology being contextually conditioned. (3) It may take others to show us how conditioned, parochial, or ideologically captive our own theology is. (4) Even if once we could ignore such voices, now we can no longer do so. (5) The point of contact between our traditions and the new theologies from the Third World is Scripture. (6) Only in creative tension with the widest possible perspective can we develop theologies appropriate to our own particular situations. (7) Since within the church the ultimate loyalty is not simply to nation, class, or culture, the universal church is uniquely suited to provide the context in which the task of creative theologizing can take place.” While this field proves to be absolutely critical for theological communication across Christian cultural barriers in academic settings, the ramifications of the fifth point seem to be lost in the midst of the methodological chatter.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. His seven point list is included in the previous footnote.

future unity?²⁵⁷ On the other hand, we may adventure forward to a hermeneutics which recognizes the multicultural intersection of the peoples. Yes, distinctions remain. So we must ask: how will Christian hermeneutics and the resulting theology find unity and inspire unity in such times?

As Hollenweger suggests, we must renew our focus, not upon the particular cultural manifestations, but upon the Bible itself. The Scriptures and the Holy Spirit who accompanies them are what bind us together. The Bible is what unites us in the midst of the numerous expressions of Christian theology and elucidates which theologies are not truly Christian. An unwavering fastidiousness to the Bible and its teachings is what bridges the cultural divides present in our Christian communities - universities, churches, and homes. The Bible, with its grand multicultural eschatological hope, is what will continue to maintain cohesion between the numerous theological traditions. Without disregard for the cultural distinctions that exist, we must emphasize that which unites us, the Scriptures and the Trinitarian God of salvation it espouses – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁵⁸ The further we drift from this One God, His works, and His perspective as superintended by the Holy Spirit in the revelatory composition of the Old and New Testaments, the further we drift from true unity. We lose our point of contact, not only with one another, but with our Heavenly Father for “God alone is the ground and source of authentic Christian doctrine.”²⁵⁹ Thus, revelation from God is what binds us together, to God.

With a biblical prioritization response to the multicultural context in which we live, we avoid the error of letting “theological content [be] determined by the cultural milieu, as happened in western theological liberalism.”²⁶⁰ We can successfully skirt “the peril that threatens churches of every age and culture as they seek to appropriate and communicate the message of the gospel

²⁵⁷ By using the word “isolation,” the intention is not to denigrate our past but rather to state the past’s reality. As cultures throughout history were far more isolated, the present globalization fervor demands a shift in our hermeneutical paradigm.

²⁵⁸ Some may perhaps choose at this point to claim the cultural dependency of this argument as I have referenced Trinitarian theology. While it was formulated in the Greco-Roman context, I would assert that the Trinitarian theology, though expressed in and through cultural parameters, was not manufactured but recognized, sourced from the revelation of Scripture. Therefore, in a hypothetical attempt to translate Christianity into another culture, we should not aim to deprive it of Trinitarian theology, but instead convey it with different language. In a multicultural context, Trinitarian questions and therefore Trinitarian biblical theology is the natural result of biblical study. Some theological questions are not determined by the context in which the Bible is received. They are determined by the very context of Scripture itself. Trinitarianism arises in such a manner.

²⁵⁹ Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, Page 62.

²⁶⁰ Ferdinando, Keith. *Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 406.

in their own contexts.”²⁶¹ Our Christian multicultural agenda must “ensure that its theology so reflects the biblical emphases that it is the authentic New Testament gospel in its depth and completeness that it is communicating.”²⁶²

Though fervent in its desire for biblical grounding, the Evangelical perspective does not fit the above prescription. The confession must be made that, as a Christian movement, it does not adequately delve into the multicultural context and reflect upon it. William Dyrness says, “...large segments of evangelicalism remain untouched by these conversations. The continuing failure to integrate expanding multicultural experience into a consistent understanding of culture and cultural engagement still bedevils the evangelical movement.”²⁶³ But with its radical desire for the whole biblical truth to stabilize its faith and theological direction, perhaps it is better prepared to respond to this multicultural context – not to “take back culture” but to speak the transformative reality of redemption through Christ alone into every culture?

As we return to the focal point of this thesis (the personhood of the demonic as defined by Karl Barth and Merrill Unger), the multicultural hermeneutic outlined here in 3.3 will be utilized. Recognizing the numerous cultural currents which now simultaneously exist, we will attempt to identify cultural elements in Barth and Unger which may be imposing a Western worldview instead of propagating a biblical worldview. Once these elements are identified, we will then proceed to offer a multicultural understanding of the personhood of the demonic, highlighting particular cultural tendencies which either support a biblical perspective or lead us farther away from it.

3.4 Reflections on Barth in the Context of Theology and Culture

As we begin our endeavor into Barth’s cultural dimensions through his demonological project, we must first state a glaring issue with Karl Barth’s theological method in general. Robert Palma, in his detailing of Barth’s theology of culture, says that “there can be no facile typing of Barth’s theological understanding of culture.”²⁶⁴ Through his estimation of Barth’s diverse interactions and engagement with culture, Palma wonders if Barth could be placed

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Dyrness, William A. “Evangelical Theology and Culture” in the *Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, Page 155.

²⁶⁴ Palma, Robert J. *Karl Barth’s Theology of Culture*, Page 6.

“somewhere between the ‘Christ and Culture in Paradox’ model and the ‘Christ the Transformer of Culture’ model?”²⁶⁵

Peter Fulljames rightly roots Barth’s theological expression back into his view of the supremacy of Scripture. We serve Christ, and “it is the Bible who witnesses to Jesus Christ.”²⁶⁶ In the resulting interpretation, all ends must lead to Christ. The hermeneutical endeavor must be grounded in Him.²⁶⁷ Throughout *Church Dogmatics*, Barth focuses on this goal. A major issue of theology is “the relation of revelation to the *Being* and *Person* of God Himself. In God’s self-revelation in the Bible... God speaks to us in Person. In other words, revelation is God-in-his-revelation, God-in-his-Word.”²⁶⁸ Thus, he offers “a theology which is an ontology for it is an account of God as He is in relationship with all things.”²⁶⁹ This includes his assessment of the demonic.

With this ontological attitude toward theological formation, culture does not play an intentionally central role in Barth’s demonology. By rooting everything into Christ, revelation is designed to serve as the focal point of his dogmatic project. With that method, he does convey the biblical emphasis – which is not upon the demonic itself but upon their activity and defeat in relationship to Christ’s victorious rule. Also, his perspective concerning personhood in general is profoundly biblical, especially in light of the Genesis creation narrative. Adam was a living being - a person – not because of his role in culture/society but because of his relationship to God. Essentially, God, the ultimate Person, made and declared a person to be. Therefore, a person is. But a few aspects of Barthian demonology are more related to Western cultural philosophy than to biblical parameters. Without attempting to exhaust every topic of discussion, we will examine a pair of issues.

In Barth’s demonology, nothingness is a key subject of discussion. In fact, Geoffrey Bromiley sums up Barth’s thought saying, “[Demons] belong to nothingness.”²⁷⁰ Because of this prevalent concept of nothingness – “the third order” - which we have already addressed at length,

²⁶⁵ Ibid. These models are shaped by Reinhold Niebuhr’s landmark work *Christ and Culture*.

²⁶⁶ Fulljames, Peter. *God and Creation in Intercultural Theology: Dialogue between Theologies of Barth, Dickson, Pobe, Nyamiti, and Pannenberg*, Page 15.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, Page 16.

²⁶⁸ Torrance, Thomas F. *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, Page 43.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, Page 18.

²⁷⁰ Bromiley, Geoffrey W. *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, Page 154.

he begins down some frustrating and perhaps self-contradictory paths.²⁷¹ This is exemplified in Barth's argument that "... God has not created [demons], and therefore they are not creaturely."²⁷² Yet this theological conclusion is most certainly the result of Western philosophical underpinnings rather than the Scriptures which alludes that demons were created, though they probably selected and subsequently championed malevolence.²⁷³ At one point, he actually argues that nothingness is how the Scripture understands the demonic - "this alien element."²⁷⁴ Yet no support is given.

Barth also demands that there is no relationship between the angelic and demonic realms. Demons are not fallen angels; they are not of the same kind. He compares their relationship to "nonsense" which "does not denote a particular species of sense, but that which is negated and excluded by sense..."²⁷⁵ Barth brushes over the implications of passages such as Revelation 12:7 and Matthew 25:41 in order to angle his readers to this end. Throughout his treatment, the emphasis is continually and rightfully placed on the "radical conflict" as the demonic must always be portrayed in light of their defeat.²⁷⁶ But the means by which he attains such a "radical conflict" is in doubt from a biblical standpoint.

Concerning this whole issue of the demonic, Bromiley illuminates that Barth's stand concerning the uncreated nature of demons and his repudiation of an angelic fall is problematic. In light of the handful of texts which suggest otherwise, Bromiley says:

Unfortunately he does not back up the objection with any direct biblical material. His interpretation stands, then, under the shadow cast by these verses. They do indeed suggest an "angelic catastrophe" as Augustine put it. Nor would it seem that Barth's understanding is totally compromised if this be their meaning. Yet he takes a firm stand on the issue and in so doing lays himself open to criticism at a vital point: Is he really obeying scripture as the criterion of dogmatic purity and truth?²⁷⁷

The logical response is no. His Western philosophical background hijacks his demonology away from his rigid desire for revelatory primacy to such a point that scholars like Bromiley are left

²⁷¹ Mallow, Vernon R. *The Demonic: A Selected Theological Study: An Examination into the Theology of Edwin Lewis, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich*, Page 64.

²⁷² Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 523.

²⁷³ Romans 8:38-39. Demons are included in Paul's list of created things. The text emphasizes that the forces and powers listed "are all creatures, just as humans are, and no creature has the power to contend with God." Jewett, Robert. *Romans: A Commentary*, Page 554.

²⁷⁴ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 523.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, Page 524.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁷ Bromiley, Geoffrey W. *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, Page 155.

saddened. Bromiley summarizes, “When he has done so much to restore angels (and demons) as a theme of serious theological enquiry, it is a pity that the whole discussion should end with so questionable a thesis and procedure.”²⁷⁸ For being a man who wants to be judged by his “fidelity to the Bible,” his demonology is a rare misstep.²⁷⁹

3.5 Reflections on Unger in the Context of Theology and Culture

Watered by the Evangelical tradition, Merrill Unger’s theology bears the earmarks of this widespread teaching. Though occasionally a point of contention, “a high view of Scripture has always been part and parcel of Evangelical thought.”²⁸⁰ Sometimes this manifests as the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, and while it is not directly affirmed in Biblical Demonology, inerrancy theology is clearly assumed throughout. His perspective of biblical superiority exudes throughout every one of his demonological works.

*... Whereas the Scripture account of the origin and reality of evil supernaturalism offers a solid and substantial basis of explanation for the widespread persistence and manifestation of Satanic and demonological phenomena from the most ancient times to the present, naturalistic speculations can but inadequately attribute the facts to man’s religiously superstitious mind, or to some similarly unsatisfactory basis.*²⁸¹

*Demons do exist, first and foremost, for God in His Word says they exist.*²⁸²

*The Word of God attests the reality of evil supernaturalism through the career of both Satan and his myriads of helpers called demons or evil spirits (Luke 10:17, 20).*²⁸³

*It is high time for believers to see Satan and demonic powers in their true light and full Scripture perspective.*²⁸⁴

Even with this revelation-oriented perspective, Evangelical hermeneutics still recognizes the need for cultural studies, especially with reference to the past.²⁸⁵ In order to properly understand the Bible, one must “walk in their sandals’ to understand their writings as they

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ford, D. F. “Conclusion: Assessing Barth” in *Karl Barth – Studies of His Theological Methods*, Page 199.

²⁸⁰ König, Adrio. “Evangelical Theology” in *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Page 101.

²⁸¹ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 17.

²⁸² Ibid, Page 36.

²⁸³ Unger, Merrill. *Demons in the World Today*, Page 8.

²⁸⁴ Unger, Merrill. *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, Page 12.

²⁸⁵ There is a “growing and sophisticated conversation about culture [that] has taken root among evangelicals...” Dyrness, William A. “Evangelical Theology and Culture” in the *Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, Page 154.

would have.”²⁸⁶ The other side of the equation however, is less structured, as Evangelicals often try to present the words of Scripture as plainly as possible, and if that particular passage confronts or confirms the prevailing culture, so be it. Daniel Treier observes, “‘Contextualization’ has become a fairly popular way for evangelicals to describe their theological encounter with Scripture in culture(s), consistent with their persistent commitment to Bible translation.”²⁸⁷ Terms and concepts of the prevailing context and language are utilized in the expressing of the truth, but nothing is above the rebuke of the biblical material. The intention of the Bible must be taught for that is what is true; all else submits, conforms, and agrees.²⁸⁸ Ergo, concerning the field of demonology, “The fact of Christians’ engagement in an on-going battle with the devil and his cohorts is a biblical fact which evangelical theology attests to.”²⁸⁹

Evangelicalism’s ongoing problem with the issue of culture is again replayed in Unger’s theology. William Dyrness accurately comments concerning Evangelical theology:

*Throughout their history evangelicals have displayed ambivalence toward their cultural context. The world was either something to be won over in the name of Christ, or to be avoided as a source of temptation, but it could also represent a resource to be exploited in pursuit of their evangelical calling. As a result, their relationship with culture has been ambiguous, marked more often by vigorous campaigns against particular evils believed to threaten Christian living... than by thoughtful engagement with the complexities of culture.*²⁹⁰

Unger’s relationship to this summary is close. As Unger attempts to affirm a biblical perspective utilizing whatever resources are available to him (primarily Scripture), he does engage wholesale with cultural issues, but only in an attempt to usher away skepticism, remove cultural superstitions, and validate biblical propositions concerning the reality of evil supernaturalism (including the worldwide presence of occultism). He prefers to remain where certainty can be grasped, saying:

Since demonological phenomena have been found to be almost universally prevalent among people of various religions and of varying degrees of culture, from the remotest ages of antiquity to the present, it is practically impossible to interpret accurately and to evaluate properly the religious phenomena and

²⁸⁶ Klein, William. “Evangelical Hermeneutics” in *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Page 328.

²⁸⁷ Treier, Daniel J. “Scripture and Hermeneutics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, Page 44.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, Pages 323-324.

²⁸⁹ Ampong, Ebenezer Adu. *Deliverance in Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostal Ministries: A Critical Assessment from an Evangelical Perspective*, Page 87.

²⁹⁰ Dyrness, William A. “Evangelical Theology and Culture” in the *Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, Page 145.

practices of various peoples, which frequently are confusingly involved, without a discriminating grasp of this subject."²⁹¹

Gaining this "discriminating grasp" is pursued in the words of Scripture which charts the course between skepticism and superstition.²⁹²

Merrill Unger, even with his biblical centrality, still weaves non-biblical contributions into his demonology.²⁹³ In his case for the reality of the demonic realm in *Biblical Demonology*, he inaugurates his argumentation with scriptural material and then continues with evidence from physical nature, human nature, and human experience.²⁹⁴ From these influxes alone, culture and his cultural conceptions of the human and natural world are quietly inserted. Yet his devotion to the scriptural revelation continues to shape and guide these secondary sources.

In Unger's *Biblical Demonology*, one theological misstep habitually surfaces, one which Barth vehemently sought to discard for its unbiblical "nature."²⁹⁵ Traditional demonology has consistently defined demonic ontology prior to demonic activity. While ontological priority might be a suitable practice for Theology Proper, the biblical testimony, en masse, does little to outline the demonic horde's origin or nature. Instead, it consistently and overtly witnesses demonic activity in relationship to Bibliology, Theology Proper, Christology, Anthropology, Eschatology, and so on. We consequently gain insight into who they are.²⁹⁶ In the case of the demonic, a biblical perspective should emphasize activity before shouldering ontology's tasks.²⁹⁷

3.6 Multiculturalism and the Personhood of the Demonic

Utilizing the previously outlined multicultural emphasis upon revelation, how then should we approach the personhood of the demonic? How should we dialogue concerning the

²⁹¹ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 1. Sadly, it appears that he still operates under the older Western impression that there is a hierarchy of culture.

²⁹² Ibid, Page 8.

²⁹³ He and Barth are quite united in their oversight of their own cultural presuppositions.

²⁹⁴ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Pages 36-39.

²⁹⁵ Whether or not Barth avoided this fault is up for debate, especially considering how the ontological reality of nothingness overshadows the architecture of his demonology.

²⁹⁶ Matthew 12:43-45 is a helpful example of the principle stated above. While describing the activity of an expelled demon, we are granted the knowledge of a gradation of evil among these ambient spirits. The fact that the demon returns with seven others "more evil than itself, to lodge in the same person..." is critical to the point Jesus is arguing. The "last state... of the person has become worse than the first state..." Jesus' miracles had helped, but the "evil generation" showed no repentance or commitment to Him and His cause. So they were left worse off than before. Hagner, Donald A. *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*, Page 357.

²⁹⁷ Since this thesis is an analytical work on previously constructed systematic demonologies, there is no harm in pursuing an ontologically driven endeavor. If this was an article attempting to offer a new biblical demonology for others' analysis, a structural reorientation to prioritize demonic activity before ontology would be pursued.

personal supernatural beings, especially considering the massive worldview gaps between the Western and African minds?

First, the Bible must speak, and we must listen. Regarding the study of demons, the African worldview will face less direct confrontation. Keith Ferdinando, a preeminent scholar in the realm of demonology in the African context, remarks, “Indeed in key respects African beliefs are closer to a biblical paradigm than is western rationalistic scepticism.”²⁹⁸ The cosmological views of the Bible offer “a perspective more sympathetic to African beliefs” than the paradigms of the West.²⁹⁹ Thus, an African who maintains that “the invisible and visible worlds are not... two separate spheres but... different dimensions of a single indivisible reality...” has less of an intellectual journey than a Westerner when he encounters the biblical material.³⁰⁰ But the Bible transforms everyone’s understanding of the world, with each culture and person being affected differently.

Unfortunately, even some Africans would prefer to title a great deal as superstition, saying, “The Devil, satyrs, fauns, the legendary inhabitants of the Golden Age and the noble savage of the Age of Enlightenment are other imaginary creations of Western man.”³⁰¹ But are not the Devil (and perhaps satyrs) a part of biblical cosmology? Can we steal one part of the Christian world (Jesus) without the whole? Who are we to determine what is true, real, and relevant? In this regard, syncretism, polytheism, and naturalism await the adventurous.

These attempts at an intellectual rejection of the revelatory witness with its recordings of supernatural phenomena are more commonly a Western activity. But how wise are these endeavors? Ferdinando comments, “Most peoples, for most of history, have believed in spirits, witchcraft and sorcery.”³⁰² The Encyclopedia of the Paranormal mentions that “belief in spirits is widespread in the ancient and modern world.”³⁰³ If we narrow the subject to apparitions and necromancy, in overtly skeptical Western Countries, another source alleges that an increasing

²⁹⁸ Ferdinando, Keith. *Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 5.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, Pages 378-379.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, Page 27.

³⁰¹ p’Bitek, Okot. *African Religions in Western Scholarship*, Page 35.

³⁰² Ferdinando, Keith. *Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 376.

³⁰³ Stein, Gordon. “Spiritualism” in *The Encyclopedia of the Paranormal*, Page 713.

number of adults over the past century and a half have seen an apparition of some kind, nearly one third of those most recently polled.³⁰⁴ The paranormal is not out of style.

In a global context, a multicultural forum would present the modern skeptic as being the odd one out. Should they not bear the burden of disproving the norm?³⁰⁵ In the revealing light of the biblical material, the case against the skeptic grows greater. As Ferdinando candidly posits, “Biblical supernaturalism contrasts sharply with western skepticism...”³⁰⁶

While the biblical material regarding the demonic may prove profoundly plausible in a multicultural context, personhood is a different discussion. Specifically within African traditionalism, there are major distinctions between it and the Western worldview. In his work *The Living Dead and the Living God*, Klaus Nürnberger comments:

*In the West, a person is characterized by communicative competence on one hand and definite personality traits on the other... However, the concept of “personal” may be understood quite differently in traditionalist Africa. The individual is part of a greater structure of relationships in which each element impacts the other according to relative proximity and relative “weight.” The decisive ingredients are “presence” and “authority.” One’s identity is not defined so much by one’s individual personality traits as by one’s location in the communal hierarchy and the impact of this “status” on everything else in one’s life world.*³⁰⁷

But do either personhood positions, though culturally widespread within their respective environments which increasingly junction and blend, bear out how God wishes us to understand ourselves? Perhaps these particular cultural manifestations of the nature of personhood reflect the results of living as persons. As in, because we are persons, we “love our neighbors as ourselves,” and serve our Christian community because we are a body together not apart.³⁰⁸ But ultimately we are persons because God made us to be persons, in community with Him.³⁰⁹ The

³⁰⁴ Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. “Apparitions” in *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits*, Page 15. She leans heavily upon the polling of the University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Council (NORC). According to Guiley, the last poll on apparitions was completed in 1987, and forty-two percent of American adults surveyed admitted some form of contact with the dead, with seventy-eight percent of those who had contact reporting an apparition of some kind.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ferdinando, Keith. *Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 379.

³⁰⁷ Nürnberger, Klaus. *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa*, Page 31.

³⁰⁸ Mark 12:31, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Regarding the figure of the body in 1 Corinthians 12, Conzelmann believes “that Paul’s attack is directed against the practice of individuals’ disassociating themselves from the ‘body,’ that is, against enthusiastic individualism.” Together, we are whole. Being apart is never supposed to occur.

³⁰⁹ Genesis 1:26, 2:7. We are who we are, persons, because of God who made us in entirety, and even from the context of Eden, we are not supposed to be alone. Essentially, God creates a person who is displayed as a person in

resulting cultural theories as to what amounts to “personhood” are simply derivative outworkings of our personhood as grounded in God’s creative work.

Let us begin to turn to the issue of demonic personhood. Nürnberger broadens this discussion on personhood to more than simply the human and divine. He says:

*But this network of human relationships is not restricted to the human community. In fact, there are no clearly defined boundaries between the self, the other and the whole. Therefore we do not find a sharp distinction between the personal and the impersonal that one finds in Western thought patterns, just as there is no clear distinction between the immanent and transcendent. Reality is one vast system of relationships. In this sense, the whole of reality is “personalized.” When a calamity strikes, the first question is always, “Who did it?” The cause can be sorcerers, witches or their (non-human) “familiar.”*³¹⁰

As we continue to let the African cultural context offer input into our discussion concerning personhood, Herbert Bucher, in his analysis of Shona cosmology, says, “Power is wielded both by tangible persons and by invisible entities, which latter are however, no less real an experience than the former.”³¹¹ Though these “invisible entities” do not directly correlate to the malevolent demons of the Bible, their conceptions of ancestral territorial spirits, with their indispensable role in the community power systems, certainly allows conceptual space for unseen demons with personhood.

It should be mentioned that Nürnberger falls into the common problem of letting one’s needs dictate the discussion. Speaking about the unfortunate nature of many Christian Africans’ religious duplicities, he asserts, “. . .the Christ they came to know through the message of the missionaries, subsequent religious leaders, even their own reading of the Bible, does not seem to have covered their most pressing spiritual needs.”³¹² As we already posited in chapter one, seeking to remedy “needs” is too often a false avenue. Perhaps instead of seeking Christ as the response to their needs, the religiously bifurcated African (or Westerner) ought to seek Christ that He may define both his needs and solutions. But Nürnberger chooses to limit the level of dialogue permissible saying that “dialogue between Christian and African religions should not

and through community. Bill Arnold says on Genesis 2:7, “The ‘living being’ is not some disembodied component of the human being, distinct from his physical existence; a ‘soul’ comprising one portion of a person’s whole being. Rather the ‘living being’ denotes the totality of the human.” Arnold, Bill T. *Genesis*, Pages 57-58.

³¹⁰ Nürnberger, Klaus. *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa*, Page 31. Nürnberger proceeds to indicate myriads of other possible causes.

³¹¹ Bucher, Hubert. *Spirits and Power: An Analysis of Shona Cosmology*, Page 189.

³¹² *Ibid*, Page 40.

happen... at the level of ontological speculation.”³¹³ The result is that the Bible is not allowed to define the players and needs, and it is left only to submit the moldable clay of Christ who may or may not fit into an African’s situation.

As we continue to move toward tackling the issue of demonic personhood in light of a multicultural context, we must again recall the preeminence of revelatory information. John Mbiti writes:

*Any viable theology must have a biblical basis... nothing can substitute for the Bible. However much African cultural religious background may be close to the biblical world, we must guard against references like “the hitherto unwritten ‘African Old Testament’” or sentiments that see any final revelation of God in the African religious heritage.*³¹⁴

Yet, while this brief statement appears to place emphasis and priority on the influx of biblical material into a formidable Christian theology, it remains to be seen if this plays out in practice. In light of theological formation around the world, it must be conceded that Christian theology can be formed with the Bible and without African cultural input. In reverse, a truly “Christian” theology cannot be constructed with African cultural input and without the Bible. The cultural information and context is interchangeable (though not superfluous); the biblical/revelatory contribution is essential.³¹⁵

J. H. Nieder-Heitmann rejects anyone who would attempt to completely rescue any cultural element from transformation, “Sin has totally permeated man’s being, religion and culture. Religion is a systematic unity and every element revolves around the axis of a religion. For these reasons there are no unblemished values in African Religion(s) which can be separated from the ‘dead’ and ‘rotten’ elements.”³¹⁶ Such is true in every context. Since culture is an interwoven, interconnected tapestry, any change or influx creates a new whole. Too many seek to rescue, prune, and redeem their religious heritage, when in reality it stands wholly affected. As Amos chided ancient humanity for following the idolatrous religion of their ancestors, as Paul so passionately declared that the Colossians were free from “philosophy which depends upon human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces this world rather than on Christ,” we too must

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Mbiti, John S. *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Page 59.

³¹⁵ In no way is this statement seeking to demean the richness of culture’s contributions to the Christian experience.

³¹⁶ Nieder-Heitmann, J. H. *An Analysis and Evaluation of John S. Mbiti’s Theological Evaluation of African Traditional Religions*, Page 104

be prepared for the consequences of accepting the Word of God.³¹⁷ But why should we worry? What is a new perspective and a fresh attitude toward our culture when, as Paul says, we gain Christ, “who possesses all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?”³¹⁸

As the oceans that divide the Western and African cultures evaporate with Christians of both (and other) backgrounds converging in churches, universities, and communities; how then will we aim to provide a multicultural Christian response (especially to the personhood of the demonic) where one culture is not elevated by pejorative perspectives and prejudicial posturing? We must let biblical revelation speak truth into our conceptions of the malevolent spirit world (or lack thereof). The Bible must lead as our primary source of truth and unity in a multicultural world. It stands as “the final judge of every culture.”³¹⁹

Such a bold perspective between the Bible and culture easily garners criticism as being narrow and unaccepting. A bibliocentric and Christocentric attitude can and does tend to err toward a disposition of cultural engagement marred by laziness, ignorance, and dismissiveness.³²⁰ But the abuse of a position does not negate its validity. Revelatory priority still stands. In a multicultural situation, criticism of each particular culture which composes the context is inevitable. “Once multiculturalism is more widely accepted, then the much needed internal critique of traditions and customs will accelerate.”³²¹ This is not a curse but a blessing. After we accept the multicultural reality, the issue then changes. As Christians who are directed by the revelatory truth of the Bible, shall we let another culture or our own culture determine the corrections that should be embraced? This thesis urges us to embrace the Word of God, first and foremost, and in our pursuit of biblical Christianity, our relationship and perspective toward culture will consequently transform.

³¹⁷ Amos 2:4; Colossians 2:8, author’s paraphrase. Amos indicts Judah not only because they had turned from the true God but because they had accepted false ones. This led to a traditional, generational rebellion. “The action of the parents becomes paradigmatic to their children. The sons follow their parents in being led astray by idol worship.” Paul, Shalom M. *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, Page 75.

³¹⁸ Colossians 2:3, author’s paraphrase. The exclusivity of Colossians 2 is jarring. “Just as the right understanding of the community is dependent upon Christ alone, so also ‘Wisdom...’ and ‘knowledge...’ have their ground only in him.” The Greek term *pantes* “bans all exceptions, so that all attempts to search out other sources of knowledge besides Christ are vain and false.” Christ is exalted by Paul due to the dangers of deceivers in verse 4 and captors in verse 8. Lohse, Eduard. *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Page 82.

³¹⁹ Kato, Byang. *African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith*, Page 42.

³²⁰ The opposite is far worse. A culture-centric theology lends itself to “laziness, ignorance, and dismissiveness” toward God’s revealed truth. This position flirts with a Christ-less Christianity, the far greater evil.

³²¹ Katsiaticas, George, and Teodros Kiros. *The Promise of Multiculturalism*, Page 7.

This conclusion is not supposed to leave the multicultural context devoid of cultural richness. Once the Scripture has taken its place as the central invigorator and director of the Christian faith, we do not and cannot leave our cultures. We cannot obliterate our pasts. But in the glorious light of our Savior, we rejoice in our cultural diversity within the unity we now have in Christ. We are not divided, for there is no longer “Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.”³²² Let us abscond from such misleading titles as Christian Africans or Christian Westerners, and be radically united with Christ, in identity and activity. We have been inseparably united to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The time has come to turn directly to the issue of demonic personhood in a multicultural context. In our desire to let God speak and to let His Word shape our needs, practices, and solutions; we have already highlighted the African’s spiritual (non-skeptical) worldview as helpful in approaching God’s supernatural revelation. Indeed, in a diverse context, they have much to offer in their fresh biblical perspectives which will further ground us in the Scriptures, as it was meant to be read. But what cultural tendencies may arise which would serve as stumbling blocks toward a cohesive multicultural community?

One of the most controversial topics, especially in African theological circles, is regarding ancestors, which form a vital part of the African worldview. Simply put, they “are still a part of the family.”³²³ In relationship to the issue of personhood, we should remember Nürnberger’s assessment, “...the whole of reality is ‘personalized.’”³²⁴ Personhood does not bear the brunt of scrutiny; rather, the issue of “demonic” does. This specifically is raised concerning the African’s relationship with their ancestors. So Nürnberger comments, “...ancestors should never be mistaken as being part of the demonic realm, as has sometimes been done in missionary and evangelistic circles. According to the biblical witness, ancestors have been normal human beings when they were alive... They cannot be anything else in

³²² Colossians 3:11, NASB. “What separates men from one another in the world – which of course still exists – has been abolished in the community of Jesus Christ.” The author of Colossians “speaks about men of completely diverse origins who have been gathered together in unity in Christ through allegiance to one Lord. True, they also continue to live in the roles that the world assigns to them as Greeks or Jews, slaves or free. But where the Body of Christ exists and where his members are joined together into a fellowship, there the differences which separate men from one another are abolished.” Lohse, Eduard. *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pages 143-145.

³²³ Steyne, Philip M. *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists*, Page 80.

³²⁴ Nürnberger, Klaus. *The Living Dead and the Living God: Christ and the Ancestors in a Changing Africa*, Page 31.

death.”³²⁵ After an examination the biblical text, he concludes in a plenary fashion, “As far as the authority of the deceased is concerned, therefore, the messages of the Old Testament and the New Testament leave no room for doubt; nothing, absolutely nothing, should ever assume authority over God’s people, or be given space to stand between God and His people.”³²⁶ Thus, the Christian led by revelation does not lose his ancestors, but instead, his relationship to them is drastically reshaped. Especially within a Christian context; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the pantheon of faithful believers, as recounted in Hebrews 11, do not serve as present authorities or intermediaries but as relevant examples and encouragements in our present situation.³²⁷ This cultural issue is simultaneously affirmed, corrected, and transformed. In a multicultural context, a biblical perspective of the ancestors would add to the richness of theological understanding, speaking into the past paradigms which still operate amongst those of other cultures. No doubt many of a more Western persuasion could be reminded of the biblical value and theological importance of our spiritual forbearers.

Since we have properly bifurcated the subjects of ancestors and demons, we must turn to the spirits themselves. Gerrit Brand observes “...it is doubtful whether African Traditional Religion ever knew of an absolutely evil spirit, comparable to the figure of Satan. It is, in any case, abundantly clear that *most* African spirits – whether ancestors of non-human spirits – are, like humans, regarded as morally ambiguous.”³²⁸ How far is this ambiguousness from the biblical revelation? If we consider (1) the spirit of Job 4:12-21, (2) Satan’s ability to disguise himself in 2 Corinthians 11:14, and (3) the Johannine command to test the spirits in 1 John 4:1-4; ambiguity seems to be an inherent dynamic of the biblical recording of spiritual interactions.³²⁹ But the Scriptures see fit to delineate and distinguish the actuality of the spirit world, not merely our perception of it. Evil spirits (demons) exist, exerting varying levels of perverse influence in this realm. Therefore, we must approach ambiguous circumstances with caution!

³²⁵ Ibid, Page 14.

³²⁶ Ibid, Page 62.

³²⁷ Probably the most remarkable outworking of this engagement of revelation with culture is concerning Abraham. Indeed, as Christians, he is our ancestor, and we are his seed.

³²⁸ Brand, Gerrit. *Speaking of a Fabulous Ghost: In Search of Theological Criteria, with Special Reference to the Debate on Salvation in African Christian Theology*, Page 100.

³²⁹ For more on Job 4:12-21, see section 2.5.2. For more on 1 John 4:1-4, see section 3.2. As for the text in 2 Corinthians 11:14, debate does exist as to whether it reflects one instance of Satanic disguise or his “habitual activity.” But from the passage itself, no reason is apparent which would limit Satan’s masquerade to one instance, just as his servants (human false apostles) continue their fraud. For more on this discussion, see Thrall, Margaret, E. *II Corinthians: Volume II*, Pages 695-696.

Another issue, as we have repeatedly addressed throughout this thesis, is the skeptical proclivities of the Western mind in the Christian context. Though it might be an understatement to classify it as merely a “tendency,” Ferdinando summarizes, “Western scholarship has tended to be skeptical toward African claims about both spirit and occult attack...”³³⁰ Possession, witchcraft, and other manifestations of a malevolent, accessible, and personal spiritual realm are often relegated to the psychological sphere. Of course, the logic of such bold skepticism is tedious, as the denial of every so-called spiritual or demonic event requires far more investigation and faith than the openness and acceptance of the possibility. The odds are not in skepticism’s favor.³³¹ Ferdinando concludes, “... the case for the predominantly skeptical western approach has not been established.”³³²

In a multicultural context composed of but not limited to African and Western Christians, the biblical material concerning the demonic, on a canonical level, harshly rebukes this Western skepticism while not necessary confirming the entire perspective of the African Christian. However, this rebuked skepticism does serve a valid biblical function. While others may lean toward being too accepting in a diverse context, this skepticism may prove helpful to the whole in dispelling and remedying the overall ambiguity of the spirit realm. Ergo, as Christians who are first and foremost directed by the testimony of Scripture, a chastened skepticism should no longer deny the demonic but clarify it.

Therefore, in a multicultural context, the path to unity while avoiding ethnocentrism and isolationism is found in a biblical adherence which transcends and transforms our relationship to our cultures. This is profoundly crucial concerning our approach to the personhood of the demonic and the spirit realm in a diverse setting. In multicultural churches and communities, the reading together of the biblical information concerning the demonic becomes paramount. By this, cultural superstitions are dispersed, and cultural skepticism is reshaped. Accepting the Scripture as our primary guide, we, of every people and tongue, are left

³³⁰ Ferdinando, Keith. *The Triumph of Christ in the African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 372.

³³¹ For a skeptic to be validated in his dismissive attitude toward the reality of the demonic realm, every single instance must be thoroughly disproven beyond the level of reasonable doubt. Undermining such skeptics only requires one instance of the “so-called” demonic which provides a unexplainable level of curiosity-provoking evidence. As Christians, should not the biblical narratives of Jesus’ ministry in the Gospels provoke us to openness instead of driving us to skepticism?

³³² Ferdinando, Keith. *The Triumph of Christ in the African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context*, Page 378.

with the distinct biblical theology that the demonic realm is indeed personal in description. To those who experience it, caution and sobriety is ordered, that they might avoid remedies which do not find their root in the authority and testimony of Christ. To those who do not knowingly encounter demonic personalities, faithfulness and watchfulness is commanded that they might pursue the cause of Christ in a world ruled and manipulated by the enemy's servants.

3.7 Conclusion

As we conclude this chapter, let us recapitulate the divulged argumentation. In order to analyze Barth and Unger's perspective concerning the personhood of the demonic in a multicultural context, groundwork had to be laid. Culture itself was initially described, particularly focusing on its relationship to the gospel and hermeneutics. Primarily utilizing African theological compositions, we advocated that "Africans need to formulate theological concepts in the language of Africa. But theology itself in its essence must be left alone. The Bible must remain the basic source of Christian theology."³³³ Avoiding tendencies to champion solely "Western" or "African" theologies, we ultimately resisted any attempts to simply attribute theology as being another manifestation of cultural processes and goals. Because theology is ultimately concerned with the proper reception and comprehension of the revelatory material and hermeneutically conveying it into our cultural context, theology and culture are indeed related, but the revelatory weight of the Word of God lends theology the strength to speak into our cultures and to transform (affirming and rebuking) our relationships with them.

Having established a revelation-centered understanding of culture, multiculturalism and its impact upon hermeneutical and theological arenas was investigated. With increasing diversity in churches, Christian communities, and universities in limited geographical areas, God's people can no longer function as isolated cultural manifestations of Christianity, because multiple cultures are present. How do we find Christian cohesion? Some might attempt to service one culture's particular needs, and yes, some division may be necessary in order to bridge linguistic gaps. But our emphasis must lie on the elevation of the biblical perspective in the midst of a multicultural community. Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, unites.

As the overarching foil for our analysis of the personhood of the demonic, Barth and Unger's perspective toward theology and culture was integrated into the discussion. We

³³³ Kato, Byang H. "Theological Anemia in Africa" in *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, Page 12.

concluded that while Barth desired to have a theology which was biblically derived, his demonology is essentially “hijacked” by his Western philosophical presuppositions. Even Bromiley was left saddened by Barth’s demonological conclusions. Somehow through it all, he maintains a demonic realm which is personal, remaining true to a biblical perspective, yet the demonic’s uncreated origin and its relationship with nothingness is incongruent with the revelatory material.

Merrill Unger constructs a demonology that is far more biblical. However, he quickly succumbs to the ever-popular Evangelical mistake of failing to fully define the roles of other sources which inevitably surface in any theology. In Unger’s case, he elevates biblical authority yet allows traditional (cultural) paradigms to define the very system with which he approaches the personal demonic beings described in Scripture. Thus, unlike the Bible, he formulates a demonology that is grounded upon their ontology, when revelation ushers in demonic themes through their activity. Only through demons’ activities do we begin to discern their ontology.

We then turned to multiculturalism and the personhood of the demonic. In a diverse context, the Bible must speak, and the African perspective is largely affirmed by the Bible’s primarily personal understanding of the spiritual world. Yet the African spiritual world is not beyond biblical transformation for the African Christian in a multicultural context. After properly dividing the subject of the ancestors from the malevolent spirits, spirits in general require caution and testing due to the remarkable level of ambiguity in biblically recorded instances. Western Christianity’s tendency toward skepticism is also transformed in light of the biblical material. Revelatory acceptance instead of empirical presumptuousness is required, but a skeptical mindset still lends itself to usefulness balancing and correcting those who might be far too oblivious and ambitious with their relationship to unseen evils.

Therefore, we can conclude that when we accept the biblical material concerning the personhood of the demonic in chapter two, it transforms the multicultural Christian community’s perspective toward the demonic. The Bible affirms and rebukes, leaving us united and enriched by our contextual perspectives yet grounded and directed by a singular understanding and response to the personal malevolent spirit realm.

4. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Barth and Unger's Positions toward a Defensible Account of the Personal Nature of the Demonic

4.1 Introduction

Now that we have outlined and interacted with the pivotal topics of recent biblical scholarship and the multicultural context, we will draw out some concerns and affirmations from those theological avenues with regard to the demonological contributions of Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* and Merrill Unger in *Biblical Demonology*. Since we concluded in chapter two that the majority of authors advocated that the Bible does envision intermediary beings which act malevolently and that these beings progressively manifest as personal demons, we must then ask if Barth and Unger have strengths and weaknesses in these areas. Also, since we affirmed in chapter three that our increasingly multicultural context demands a biblical emphasis in order to avoid cultural preferences over one another, we must also investigate any strength or weaknesses which may turn up in Barth and Unger's theology of demonic personhood when it is challenged by the multicultural context.

As we confront Barth and Unger's writings with our assessments from the recent biblical scholarship and the multicultural context, we must be reminded: no work of scholarship, no cultural study is absolute. Their criticisms and encouragements toward Barth and Unger should not be unreflectively swallowed, for their perspectives are flawed, just as the perspectives of this thesis are certainly defective in places. With that in mind, let us first delve into Barth's theological offerings.

4.2 Karl Barth's Strengths with Regard to the Personhood of the Demonic

While Barth's theology does not address the personhood of the demonic at length, it is briefly mentioned. As we have seen, this arises because of his overwhelming desire to maintain a biblical perspective. His stand against demythologization, in the Bultmann sense of the word, is quite contrary to the academic thought at that time. But overall, we observed that Barth's demonology as a whole is swamped with philosophical convictions. Therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of Barth's demonological positions are tenuous and debatable, as one cannot always discern what source (whether Scripture, reason/philosophy, or culture) is grounding his theological decision.

When we narrow the topic to simply demonic personhood, Barth's biblical presuppositions shine. Speaking from a Barthian perspective, it is likely an over-step to designate demons as fully ontological beings, though he might inadvertently refer to them as beings.³³⁴ But as uncreated "beings" derived from nothingness, "which ultimately traces back... to God," they are most certainly real.³³⁵ Barth has no problem describing them in personal ways.³³⁶ They are essentially nothingness in personal form. With such an arguably non-biblical (and eisegetical) concept of nothingness which would easily lend itself to a completely depersonalized view of evil, why would Barth reach a personalized conclusion?

His biblicism demands this conclusion. Indeed, the Bible describes demons as a part of the kingdom which stands opposed against God. Barth aggressively asserts:

...it is for the Bible no mere figure of speech or poetic fancy or expression of human concern but the simple truth that nothingness has this dynamic, that it is a kingdom on the march and engaged in invasion and assault... a kingdom which by the very fact that God confronts it is characterised from the very outset as weak and futile... yet a real kingdom, a nexus of form and power and movement and activity, of real menace and danger within its appointed limits. This is how Holy Scripture sees nothingness. And this is how it also sees demons.³³⁷ Nothingness is falsehood. It exists as such, having a kind of substance and person, vitality and spontaneity, form and power and movement. As such it founds and organises its kingdom. And demons are its exponents, the powers of falsehood in a thousand different forms.³³⁸

Of course, this reality is always posed in tension. He wishes to cede no ground to those who "boldly demythologise." Demons cannot be ignored. But they cannot be respected as true powers. Their falsehood, their nothingness should never be out of view.

In light of recent biblical scholarship, what is Barth's strength? By far, Barth's stated desire for activity's preeminence in the demonic field stands out. Biblical scholarship is quite uniform on the matter; demonology itself, though frequently referenced, is a supplementary theme throughout the Scriptures. Barth says well, "...the Bible only touches on this sphere at all

³³⁴ "We cannot deny but must soberly recognise that in all these things the demons are constantly present and active. Fortunately the angels are also present and active. But there can be no doubt that the demons are there too, beings which betray their nature by this fatal 'too.'" Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 528. He even utters the term "demonic being" two pages later.

³³⁵ Mallow, Vernon R. *The Demonic: A Selected Theological Study: An Examination into the Theology of Edwin Lewis, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich*, Page 54.

³³⁶ Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, Page 481.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, Page 524.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, Page 527.

as it shows God and His angels to be in conflict with it... it does not in the least require us to consider or take this sphere seriously in and for itself.”³³⁹ This perspective floods into his idea of demonic personhood. While he is completely comfortable discussing anthropology and Christology with their respective ontological ramifications, demonology is not afforded the same attention but is discussed with direct reference to their activity of opposition. In his demonology, ontology is a concern, as he is still defending the doctrine of nothingness, but demonic personhood occurs more incidentally.³⁴⁰

This thesis then moved forward from recent biblical scholarship in order to approach and integrate the multicultural context into the analysis at hand. Again, Barth’s strength flows from his prioritization of the biblical material, at least with regard to demonic personhood. Thus, in a European context comfortable with Bultmann’s demythological project, Barth surprisingly advocates that the Scriptures assert personal perspectives toward the demonic realm. From the conclusions provided in chapter three, Barth’s demonology proves fairly coherent in a multicultural context, though his philosophical thought concerning nothingness and other outstanding issues do cause hindrances in attaining communal unity in the Scriptures.

4.3 Karl Barth’s Weaknesses with Regard to the Personhood of the Demonic

After examining biblical scholarship concerning the personhood of the demonic, the problems with Barth’s demonological project are quite glaring. Karl Barth, while engaging the major theological trends and questions of his time, is found to be inconsistent. While claiming a demonology grounded in Scripture, his perspective in *Church Dogmatics* rarely returns to it, leaving the reader to question what scholarship and texts he entertained to construct his positions. Yes, he offers biblical conclusions, as in a demonic realm that is real, active, and personal, but though those demonological conclusions may fit within the larger work, they certainly strike as unusual in his nothingness-dominated demonology.³⁴¹ When he does directly

³³⁹ Ibid, Page 522.

³⁴⁰ While this is a strength of Barth’s, this is a noticeable flaw in Unger’s demonology. The biblical material relegates the ontology and origin of the demonic as nearly inconsequential. Instead, we are consistently warned to be alert because of their activities. This biblical orientation is not embraced by Unger. He argues for the reality and origin of demons long before he directly assesses their influence and effect in the created realm. In *Biblical Demonology*, Pages 35-66 address their reality, identity, and description. Page 67 begins Unger’s analysis of demonic activity.

³⁴¹ Bromiley, Geoffrey W. *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth*, Page 155.

utilize Scripture, the Apocalypse surprisingly stands as a central text, blurring an already difficult subject with a difficult genre.³⁴²

Again, we turn to the topic of culture and theology. We will now highlight Barth's primary weakness in his personhood of the demonic in light of the multicultural context, but we must be careful to not offer an anachronological critique. As in, when he wrote in the middle of the 1900's, could we declare that the processes of globalism and multiculturalism had begun in full? How then could we admonish Barth for not taking it into account!

As we noticed, Barth's theological relationship to culture is not obvious.³⁴³ As all theologians do, he clearly operates within a cultural framework, but his stated desire is to be directed by revelation. This sentiment and his discomfort with demonology combine to offer us little interaction with cultural ramifications of his demonology. Maintaining a biblical demonology, especially with regard to personhood, does inevitably lead us to various confrontation and affirmation situations with the cultural information we are sociologically fed. Unfortunately, this is not a concern of Barth's, and we are left to do this task. But this weakness is perhaps a strength in a multicultural context, as no particular culture is elevated to being a primary interlocutor, though he does not identify and engage his own cultural presuppositions. Instead, he wishes that the biblical material might speak, and it does in part. Now let us shift to the strengths and weaknesses of Merrill Unger's personhood of the demonic.

4.4 Merrill Unger's Strengths with Regard to the Personhood of the Demonic

Biblical Demonology is a direct systematic attempt to compile and analyze the biblical information regarding the demonic, with the hope of providing meaningful and challenging application for the Christian in the world. In his endeavor to search out the demonic subject, he avoids common arbitrary hermeneutical assumptions, desiring that he might remain consistent to the biblical claims. The end result perhaps overwhelms the reader with references. Fidelity to the biblical material and what it intended to convey, from a canonical perspective, is a clear priority. He says:

³⁴² Barth fails to interact with biblical scholars throughout his demonological section (angelology is a different matter). A common, unfortunate error of some systematic theologians is the disconnection of biblical scholarship from the formal theological enterprise. On this subject, he is a perfect example. But Unger completely contrasts Barth's absence of interlocutors with a persistent interaction with biblical and theological scholarship.

³⁴³ Fulljames, Peter. *God and Creation in Intercultural Theology: Dialogue between Theologies of Barth, Dickson, Pobe, Nyamiti, and Pannenberg*, Page 15.

... there is not a hint that Jesus or any of the New Testament writers had the slightest doubt as to the real existence of either Satan or the demons. They believed in their reality as much as in the existence of God, or of the good angels. Only slight investigation is necessary to expose the extreme crudity, destructiveness, and untenability of the rationalistic and mythical view of Satan and demons. It not only jeopardizes the character and truthfulness of the Son of God himself, but challenges the authenticity and reliability of the whole Bible. For if the teachings of Scripture on the subject of Satan and demons are judged mythical, any other doctrine of Holy Writ may likewise be declared mythical at the caprice of the critic, who is disposed to offset his opinions against those of the prophets, apostles, and the Lord himself.³⁴⁴

This humble approach, wherein he sets the Scriptures above himself, dictates his approach to the demonic.

Unger's greatest strength is his unashamed attitude of receptivity toward the Bible. Because he seeks to simply accept the text instead of reinterpreting it, his personhood of the demonic, much like Barth's, finds few enemies amongst modern biblical scholarship, though he certainly has less friends in the theological realm considering how strongly he rebukes imposed textual judgments which stray from the original intention of the author. With the gospels at center stage, he attempts to describe the phenomena recorded, and he consequently dismisses any conclusion that would seek to depersonify the demonic.³⁴⁵ As the previously analyzed biblical scholarship mostly recognized the personal nature of the demonic confrontations in the gospels and remained open to the possibility of personhood in other texts, Unger, accepting the Scriptures as a canonical whole, has no problem viewing the entire demonic theme as personal even when it is not explicitly revealed.

Again, considering that *Biblical Demonology* was originally composed in the 1952, we cannot expect Unger to fully account for the multicultural context in his demonology. But he does have an eye for diversity. The near universal existence of "demonological phenomena" serves as an introductory context by which he begins his study.³⁴⁶ Even with his clearly Western background, he seeks to encounter the text in such a way that it speaks to the global experience.

Unger does not arrive at his biblical study of the demonic out of unusual curiosity; demonology's practicality demands that it be a subject carefully parsed.

³⁴⁴ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Pages 36-37.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, Page 41.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, Page 1.

Some would view the whole subject of Biblical demonology as accidental and essentially purposeless, a mere incursion of popular contemporary superstitions into the Biblical accounts. Others would trace the facts to remnants of animistic or polytheistic belief in the evolutionary process from a more primitive and cruder faith. The emptiness of such baseless naturalistic hypotheses, however, is emphasized by the eminent practicality and intrinsic purposefulness of Biblical demonology.³⁴⁷

Of course, his work continues on to address many practical issues after constructing a biblical framework for the reality, identity, origin, and activity of the demonic realm. A biblical and practical response is offered in response to possession, magic, divination, necromancy, heresy, world governments, eschatology, and deliverance practices.³⁴⁸ His reception of the biblical material, with its portrayal of demons as active and personal beings, leads him to have a meaningful voice in the global and multicultural context, as these are relevant issues in virtually any society.

However, this voice, seeking to remain biblical yet inevitably colored by a Western cultural lens shaped by historical expeditions into demonology, does not and cannot unconsciously accept the spiritual practices of the West or the rest of the world which result from a personhood of the demonic. In an attempt to relay God's revelation into the global context, Unger lets the Bible both affirm the reality of experience and challenge our response to it. This disposition, which places the Bible in the seat of authority, is a profound strength in a multicultural context. The Christian community ultimately coheres, not according to a fluctuating set of cultural parameters, but upon the unchanging Word of God.

If we turn directly to the personhood of the demonic, Unger's strength, in relationship to the multicultural context, is that he accepts the reality and personhood of the demonic from the biblical material and attempts to apply it in light of the global context. How could he reach a mythical understanding of the demonic when the Bible does not convey it and the global context does not bear it out? Believing that demonization is directly or indirectly caused by demons, he will not ignore:

³⁴⁷ Ibid, Page 25.

³⁴⁸ After arriving at the conclusion that the demonic realm is personal, we should not dismiss the contributions of Migliore (*The Power of God and the gods of Power*) and Wink (*Engaging the Powers*). Rather, the demonic's relationship to power, especially human government, is left as a subject requiring even further engagement. Unger says, "In every age of human history and in every phase of daily life demons have played a tremendous and very important role. In no realm is their activity more significant than in the sphere of human government. In this area possibly more than in any other field of their operation their activity has frequently not been clearly discerned or even partially understood." Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 181.

*Cases both of spontaneous or involuntary and voluntary possession are practically universal in extent, there being no quarter of the globe where such phenomena have not been authenticated nor any class or society, primitive or civilized, where they have not occurred, nor any period, ancient, or medieval, or modern, in which cases cannot be cited.*³⁴⁹

Unger sees this context, and since God has revealed Himself in such a way that offers victory over the personal and malevolent spirit world, he proclaims that God's truth be received and trumpeted.

4.5 Merrill Unger's Weaknesses with Regard to the Personhood of the Demonic

As we cast a glance upon the primary weaknesses of Unger's personhood of the demonic, it is likely that the reader has already noticed them as they were exposed throughout this thesis. Unger's relationship to recent biblical scholarship is fairly amicable. As an Old Testament scholar with a PhD in Semitics and Biblical Archeology, his respect for the Word of God is evident. But blind spots do crop up. He does not incorporate the progressive nature of revelation into his analysis of the demonic, and the vaguenesses of the Old Testament witness concerning the spirit world are not discussed at length. Indeed, this seems to avoid scrutiny due to his canonical hermeneutic wherein the New Testament grants luciferous insights, which reveals a fuller understanding of the Old Testament.³⁵⁰ While this thesis does not desire to undermine the centrality of canonical hermeneutics in the Christian religion, the progression of demonology (and especially personhood) throughout the biblical text does demand interaction and assessment.

As a brief aside concerning the progression of demonological thought in the Scriptures, speculation regarding the transmission of ANE thought to Hebrew theology is commonplace in contemporary scholarship. In reference to Zoroastrianism's influence in the ancient world, G. J. Riley says, "Circles within Judaism used [the Zoroastrian demonological] framework to revalue older myths and produced after the Exile the dualistic strains of Judaism visible in post-exilic

³⁴⁹ Ibid, Page 84. Unger's inherently ethnocentric understanding of culture and "civilization" permeates this statement, yet it should sadly be recognized that his perspective was not uncommon at the time of his writing. He cites T. K. Oesterreich's *Possession, Demoniactal and Other among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times* (New York: R. Long and R. Smith, Inc., 1930. Pages 131-380) to support his argument.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, Pages 15-16. In this section, he is building a biblical understanding of Satan. His interpretation of the Old Testament texts hinges upon the presence of the New Testament.

and intertestamental literature and in Christianity.³⁵¹ Yes, an increase in flamboyant demonological literature, such as the book of Enoch, does surface especially in the intertestamental period, which may have been influenced by such currents. But those superstitious works bear little in common with the biblical material, in both the Old and New Testaments.³⁵² As an Old Testament scholar, Unger notes, “Even Jewish demonology, in spite of the chaste and lofty example of the Old Testament Scriptures, has by the time of our Lord degenerated into a system of almost incredible and fanciful superstition, in sharp contrast to both Old and New Testament teaching.”³⁵³ It should also be considered that while similarities in terms and categories may be worthy of study, conclusions which directly assert cause (Zoroastrian dualism) and effect (post-exilic Hebrew demonology) are ultimately speculative. Thus, in the midst of such speculation which overtly overlooks the revelatory nature of the Scriptures, this thesis posits that we should instead place our focus upon our remarkable canon of sixty-six works, which elucidates an unusually unadorned and perspicuous demonology. Unger’s emphasis is clearly upon the text, but not engaging with the demonological progression in the biblical material is a noticeable omission.

Unger’s personhood of the demonic in light of the growing multicultural context also has its problems as well. The most prominent is that he fails to state and account for his own cultural influences as he attempts to present a truly biblical and personal demonology. This lack of self-analysis leads Unger to one of the frequent errors of his time: an archaic idea of culture and the preeminence of Western culture as true “civilization.”³⁵⁴

This lack of reflection is particularly prominent when he discusses “The Character of Ethnic Demonology” in chapter three.³⁵⁵ He systematically contrasts the revelation of God – the “true and thoroughly reliable... criterion of appraisal” – with the briefly sketched demonological thoughts of numerous cultures.³⁵⁶ Yet as he rightly critiques others, he does not pose the possibility that his own presentation of a biblical demonology, with its blunt acceptance of a demonic personhood, may be shaded by his cultural relationship to the topic. On top of this

³⁵¹ Riley, G. C. “Demon” in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, Page 238.

³⁵² Is there a spot in the biblical text which definitively asserts a dualistic cosmology? In the Old and New Testaments, Satan and his demons are consistently portrayed as underlings, subservient to God’s sovereignty and unable to persist in thwarting God’s power. All spirits appear to be under His control.

³⁵³ Unger, Merrill. *Biblical Demonology*, Page 4.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Page 1.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Pages 29-32.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid*, Page 29.

problem, a more substantial response to mythology, demythologization, and symbolism is noticeably absent. Understanding culture more broadly, these academic enterprises might perhaps deserve to be placed under his survey of “ethnic demonology,” but instead, these subjects barely garner a few paragraphs.³⁵⁷ But what conclusions can we discern from our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Barth and Unger’s demonic personhoods?

4.6 Conclusion

On a whole, Barth and Unger are left relatively unscathed and largely affirmed by contemporary scholarship in their reading of the biblical material concerning the personhood of the demonic. The biblical scholarship often implicates that the textual intention is to convey a personal demonic ontology. While not overwhelmingly supported, Barth and Unger’s theological conclusions from the text are, at least, vindicated as valid. Of course, while the text seems to indicate demonic personhood, many choose to impose demythological methodologies, but this interpretive endeavor is not supplied or supported from Scripture. In no way should we misconstrue Barth and Unger’s position as unbiblical.

Furthermore, Barth and Unger’s theology of demonic personhood stands up well in a multicultural context. While their unreflective perspective toward culture does create significant blind spots, their overwhelming desire to focus upon the biblical texts and to found their demonologies upon those texts results in a surprising level of unity regarding the personhood of the demonic. This is a remarkable event considering Barth and Unger’s divergent contexts. But this biblical emphasis translates well into the multicultural context, wherein we can bring our cultural backgrounds, sit at the feet of God’s Word, be united together, and transformed in our cultural perspectives.

As we conclude this thesis, we must finally turn to the natural conclusions of accepting the reality and language of demonic personhood. What theological consequences are there? What practical ramifications occur? How can we further study and further equip the church on this issue?

³⁵⁷ Ibid, Page 90.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Study

5.1 Introduction

In chapter one, we surveyed the demonological contributions of Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* and Merrill Unger in *Biblical Demonology*. We posed the question of whether or not they advocated for an impersonal or personal perspective toward the demonic. Though surrounded and crafted by widely differing theological contexts, they both opted to convey the reality of demons through personal indicators, as they both desired to remain faithful to the revelatory language of the Bible.

This led us to chapter two, wherein we investigated if the biblical witness, as shown through contemporary scholarship, indicated and validated a demonic which is personal. While we did encounter a progressive introduction of demonic personhood throughout the biblical text, many scholars advocated that the texts which referenced the demonic contained personal references. Barth and Unger's reading of the biblical material was found to be remarkably valid.

Cultural context's input into the topic was presented in chapter three. After outlining culture and the rise of multiculturalism, we assessed the cultural perspectives of Barth and Unger. Employing a host of African sources, we engaged the plausibility of a personhood of the demonic in a multicultural context. This thesis asserted that Christian cohesion in a diverse community is forged through biblical fidelity and that fidelity results in affirmation, correction, and transformation of every culture represented. From this instruction, we concluded that Barth and Unger's acceptance of the biblical language of a personal demonic realm was appropriate, especially in a multicultural setting.

Chapter four then asked analytical questions concerning Barth and Unger's personhood of the demonic. We assessed their strengths and weakness with regard to the previously provided input of recent biblical scholarship and the multicultural context. While numerous flaws were uncovered, both theologians were deemed proficient, as they both operated using personal references to the demonic due to their biblical perspective, which grants theological strength and unity to the multicultural Christian community.

Finally, in response to these four chapters, we must now ask, "What are the consequences of accepting a demonology with personhood?" The range of responses is evident. On one hand, Barth prefers to theologically demythologize the subject, and on the other hand, Unger offers

numerous applications, spilling into his other works in the demonological field. But how will we respond? The theological and practical complications could be discussed at great length, requiring their own thesis! In that light, suggestions for further research will be suggested. Let us begin with the theological ramifications of integrating a demonic personhood into our theological structures.

5.2 Theological Consequences of a Personhood of the Demonic

No theological enterprise should be performed in isolation. A systematic study, such as this one, cannot be left to stand alone. Can we pursue a consistent and inter-related theological perspective in order that we can present a cohesive and consistent Christianity, before a watching world and church? With that question in mind, what theological ramifications stem from accepting a personhood of the demonic in our systematics? Here are three suggested fields for reevaluation.

If we accept that the extant narratives of the gospels truly depict our Savior expelling demonic persons from the demonized, our Christological efforts ought to reflect those realities. While the primary biblical motifs of Christ the Prophet, Priest, and King should not be supplanted, Christ the Exorcist should be integrated as a subsidiary motif. Diane Stinton, in her work *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, researched the prevalence of particular Christological titles. In the study of “Jesus as liberator,” she found that a common sentiment was, in the words of interviewed clergyman Abraham Akrong, “I think he’s liberator only in the sense of the one who liberates us from demons and witches but not in terms of social, political liberation.”³⁵⁸ She later concluded, “Analysis of the oral Christologies reveals almost unanimous assent to the image of Jesus as liberator, with interpretations generally favoring personal and spiritual dimensions such as deliverance from sin, fear, and evil powers.”³⁵⁹ This common perspective merits further systematic emphasis and investigation in light of a personal demonic.

Theologies of personhood also need to be widely reevaluated. Throughout this study, we have rejected that personhood is merely the result of a certain attribute of communicative ability, intellectual capacity, or social designation. Yes, they are valuable indicators, but they serve to

³⁵⁸ Stinton, Diane B. *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, Page 209.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Page 213.

identify what already exists with or without them. Concerning humanity, a person is a person because God created them as one. In the case of the demonic, we only observe the results of personhood (will, intellect, emotion, and social hierarchy/relationship) sketched by divine revelation in personal terms, with no biblical creation account included for further clarity. Reorienting our personhood studies around the ultimate Person would be a logical step. Before He created, God was the only Person; a Person in a far greater sense than we can ever convey or articulate. The created spirit realm and humanity bear personhood, not because of empirical and sociological signs but because of our Father's gracious act of creation. While other insights are valuable, a divine perspective is primary.

As a subject of critical study, demonology, by far, bears the strongest relationship with soteriology, regardless of whether the demonology in question espouses an impersonal or personal demonic. Works like Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor* have championed this strong tie.³⁶⁰ But how does a personal demonic realm affect this association? It adds a level of tangibility to redemption. Yes, the sins which we exhibit everyday have been addressed by the work of Christ. These are performed by every person everywhere, even now, but as the author of Hebrews argues, Christ is the sufficient sacrifice and high priest to satisfy the wages of such behavior. And yes, Christ has dramatically reshaped our affiliation with the world – the patterns, goals, and practices developed by its inhabitants. And yes, Christ has rescued us, ransomed us from the hateful grip of Satan and his servants. Our salvation is never amorphous. We are saved from the wrath of the ultimate Person, from the sinful patterns of a world of persons, from the unsatisfying desires of our own person, and from the schemes of a largely unseen realm of malevolent persons. All of this is not accomplished by a moral code, a sacrificed animal, or an intellectual paradigm but the compassionate action of the person Jesus Christ. Thus, our salvation is plausible, tangible, and consistent. But this consistency is not as clear unless we maintain the personhood of the demonic. In that light, it may prove beneficial to reassess soteriology as a personal subject.

³⁶⁰ Aulén, Gustaf. *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*. Pages 47-55 especially illuminate the relationship of Satan and salvation. Sadly, his focus primarily rests upon Satan himself, not the wider idea of the demonic.

5.3 Practical Consequences of a Personhood of the Demonic

Too often, we engage in theological pursuits with little to no relationship to the practical realm, to the detriment of the church's health and the gospel's spread. Intellectual stimulation and even self-gratification can be our theological ends. The hope is that even this thesis could largely remain accessible to the church and beneficial for its nourishment. With that in mind, we will draw some specific outworkings of a demonic personhood in the ecclesiological context.

One group has affirmed, with near universality, the personal nature of the demonic. So then, what must we do with the testimony and instruction of exorcists and deliverance practitioners? Should their empirical contributions be dismissed? While empiricism is a flawed system because as an inherently naturalistic process it cannot fully account for spiritual factors, the observations and testimonies of personal encounters similar to the biblical witness should be evaluated. Theologians such as J. Janse van Rensburg argue strongly for the relevance and value of empirical research, advocating and participating in qualitative studies into deliverance ministries.

Throughout the history of the church, godly men have detailed their personal confrontations with the demonic. Among the church fathers, the accounts are numerous. Tertullian writes, "For God, Creator of the universe, has no need of odours or of blood. These things are the food of devils. But we not only reject those wicked spirits: we overcome them; we daily hold them up to contempt; we exorcise them from their victims, as multitudes can testify."³⁶¹ Irenaeus was more than comfortable concluding that a "whom" had demonized the ancient heretic Marcus.³⁶² The so-called ministry of the "Holy Spirit" through a demonized woman is discussed by Firmilian in his letter to Cyprian, wherein her deceptions with the aid of at least one demon and her subsequent deliverance by a Christian exorcist are recounted.³⁶³ A compilation of the early Christian demonological accounts would be a vast undertaking! But cataloging the sheer number of contemporary reports would also prove difficult.

³⁶¹ Tertullian, "To Scapula: Chapter 2" in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database.

³⁶² Irenaeus, "Against Heresies: The Deceitful Arts and Nefarious Practices of Marcus" in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database.

³⁶³ Cyprian, "Epistle 74 – Firmilian to Cyprian: Chapter 10" in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database.

Within the past century, numerous deliverance specialists have recorded empirical offerings on this matter.³⁶⁴ Kurt Koch, the late German theologian, controversially discussed hundreds of cases of apparently occultic and demonic activities, describing a demonic realm which is profoundly personal.³⁶⁵ In a straightforward manner, van Rensberg recounts the ministry of André O’Kennedy, a Dutch Reformed Minister, who conversed in Afrikaans with a demon who dwelled in a man who could not speak that language.³⁶⁶ Others, such as Karl Payne, have sought to not only document the variety of demonic attacks but also to train leaders and laypersons to systematically utilize biblical principles with restraint and courage, when necessary.³⁶⁷ Even Dr. Ed Murphy, from a Pentecostal background, directs readers of his *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* to lead deliverance sessions which keep spirits silent, avoiding confusion and unnecessary clamor.³⁶⁸ All of these practitioners and others are responding to the same phenomena – the apparent acts of unseen malevolent persons. Can we dismiss their input and perspective in light of the work of Christ, Paul, Steven, and others?

Can we also concede our past errors, as a Christian community, in this regard? Aversion and skepticism toward this topic may be the result of Christianity’s unfortunate treatment of the demonic in the past. Satan and his compatriots have been sensationalized by authors like Danté, and they have been misconstrued as being far more powerful than they actually are. Erwin Lutzer corrects this notion saying, “...although Lucifer rebelled that he might no longer be God’s

³⁶⁴ Only a limited number of examples are included for the sake of brevity. Opponents to the reality of the demonic admit that empirical evidence may arise in opposition to their position. “Could demons perhaps be written off on the basis of empirical motives? This is a problematic argument, for our experience of ‘empirical facts’ is codetermined by a normative world-picture: Proponents of the view that demons exist will probably have empirical arguments of their own. Therefore, we shall have to provide good argumentative justification for maintaining the normativeness of the modern world-picture as far as scepticism about demons is concerned. This could be done by pointing to the achievements of modern science after 1600. The rejection of demonology is part of the broader development: Today, we have *better, more successful* explanatory theories at hand, namely psychiatric categories. However, this argument would hardly impress the opponent, for in his view, it is precisely natural science that has a blind spot for these kinds of realities.” Labooy, Guus. *Freedom and Dispositions*, Page 277.

³⁶⁵ Probably his two most famous works are *Occult ABC* and *Christian Counseling and Occultism*. As for instances of personal encounters, they are numerous, but one extreme instance is found in *Occultism ABC*, pages 304-305.

³⁶⁶ Van Rensberg, J. Janse. “A Qualitative Investigation into the So-Called Ministry of Deliverance” in *In die Skriflig* 44 (3 & 4), 2010, Page 689-690.

³⁶⁷ Payne, Karl I. *Spiritual Warfare: Christians, Demonization, and Deliverance*. Chapter two contains a pair of more obvious instances of demons acting as individual persons within a human host, but this is far from Karl Payne’s emphasis. He is primarily concerned with the contemporary church’s laxity toward the nuanced advances of the enemy against the laity. He says on page 135, “Demonic warfare is usually a battle of mental subtleties and deception that more often than not focuses upon growing Christians.”

³⁶⁸ Murphy, Ed. *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, Pages 595-599. Dr. Murphy’s work is perhaps the most thorough presentation of theological and practical insights regarding the demonic, utilizing a plethora of first hand experiences and biblical references.

servant, he still is.”³⁶⁹ God’s sovereignty has not been subverted; His children need not fear the unseen, unnecessarily avoid the biblical identifiers of personhood, or glamorize the church’s ministries against the demonic. From the scholarship we assessed, the realm of the demons, with their described personhood and activities, is a simple truth of God’s revelation, depicted to bring glory not to the conquered but the Conqueror – Jesus Christ.

Finally, if we accept the revelatory commitment that demons are defined as personal beings which interact within the visible world we inhabit, then our pastoral and counseling care should account for their impact like any other factor. Unger comments:

*Because demons are spirit personalities, they can act upon and influence man’s body and mind. Counselors, parapsychologists, and psychiatrists who deny or ignore this sphere of reality render themselves unequipped to deal with patients who may be suffering from occult oppression and subjection...*³⁷⁰

Hence, contributions such as the Resources for Christian Counseling series which includes an entire volume entitled *Counseling and the Demonic* should perhaps be further utilized.³⁷¹

Rodger Bufford’s balanced perspective dictates stringent diagnostic standards and an aversion toward one-size-fits-all deliverance activities, instead suggesting multiple spiritual intervention methods of which “exorcism” is simply one. In sum, Bufford, Payne, and others offer tangible steps, which could be carefully introduced in pastoral circles.³⁷² Hopefully this would blunt the prevalence of pastoral silence toward occultism and its victims.³⁷³

³⁶⁹ Lutzer, Erwin W. *The Serpent of Paradise: The Incredible Story of How Satan’s Rebellion Serves God’s Purposes*, Page 21.

³⁷⁰ Unger, Merrill. *Demons in the World Today*, Page 23.

³⁷¹ Bufford has an extraordinarily clinical and restrained approach toward the issue. In his introduction, he describes his work as “Biblical accounts of demonism and the work of Satan and his agents are compared and contrasted with the American Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R). After defining the problem and setting it in context, biblical principles for dealing with demonism are addressed along with practical suggestions from psychology and counseling. Examples from the counseling office are given to illustrate various approaches.” Bufford, Rodger K. *Counseling and the Demonic*, Page 13.

³⁷² Anderson, Neil T. and Timothy M. Warner. *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Warfare*. Beyond the necessity of equipping leadership, Anderson and Warner penned this work so that laypersons could be equipped to properly evaluate their relationship with the flesh, the world, and the enemy. This brief book contains a particularly insightful yet accessible chapter (3) concerning the inadequacy of the Western worldview and the importance of acquiring a biblical one.

³⁷³ Van Rensburg, J. Janse. “A Qualitative Investigation into the So-Called Ministry of Deliverance” in *In die Skriflig* 44 (3 & 4), 2010, Page 691.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study

Without a doubt, as one ponders on demonic personhood as evidenced throughout Barth and Unger's writings, questions inevitably arise. On theological and practical levels, this subject is far from exhausted. Beneficial insight and research are yet to be obtained. With the contribution of this thesis in mind, let us examine a few areas which merit further investigation.

First, as this thesis analyzed Barth's *Church Dogmatics* and Unger's *Biblical Demonology*, plenty of critical works reviewing Barth's theology were available, but when the focus was narrowed to the field of demonology, only Vernon Mallow, who grouped Barth with two other theologians for his analysis, took a specific and sizeable look at the demonic. The situation was even worse when the study turned to Unger, as lengthy critiques on American Evangelical demonology were noticeably absent. A contemporary analytical work or series on the spectrum of demonologies in the past and present of the broader Christian community would appear to be a distinct need.

Obviously, while this thesis undertook the theme of demonic personhood in Barth and Unger, angelology could easily undergo the same examination. The study would be fairly straightforward as well. As Barth provides far more content concerning angels than demons, more material would be available for assessment. Since Unger does not contribute to the field of angelology in any substantial way, he could easily be swapped out for another Evangelical composition such as *Angels: Elect and Evil* by C. Fred Dickason.

A completely original work on the personhood of the angelic/demonic realm would also be appropriate. Founded upon revelatory data, supported by cultural information from around the world, supplied with specialists' observations, informed by the numerous historical traditions; an academic and systematic work of such magnitude would no doubt serve as a starting point for numerous other studies. But while personhood is a major topic in anthropology and theology proper, it remains an underdeveloped theme with regard to biblical intermediaries.

Finally, upon the composition of a demonology which utilizes personal indicators, the results remain somewhat similar to early Christianity's understanding of the demonic realm. With the academic trends for the past decades mostly modeling an impersonal demonic, perhaps this has forged a wedge of disassociation with the demonology and the context of the early church. Thus, an academic recovery and critique of ancient demonology would naturally follow after asserting a demonic personhood. Recognizing the presence of Greek philosophical and

ontological underpinnings, an unwavering fidelity to biblical commitments and priorities would be essential.³⁷⁴

5.5 Conclusion

The theological area selected for this thesis, demonic personhood in the writings of Karl Barth and Merrill Unger, was not chosen at random or upon the whim of a passing curiosity. As this chapter hopefully demonstrates, the topic is not without its implications and further questions. This brief section began by noting some theological results of maintaining a personal demonic like Barth and Unger. Our Christology needs to be more obvious and personal in accounting for Christ's role as an exorcist. Personhood studies need to be more theological than anthropological in nature; if not, the idea of a personhood of the demonic will be likely ushered away from serious thought and consideration. Finally, soteriology is reshaped as a consistently personal process.

We also considered a few practical and pastoral consequences. First, we engaged the relevance and value of historical and contemporary observations regarding the demonic, especially in personal manifestations. We followed this strand of thought to its end - the reintegration of biblical and empirical studies on the demonic into our pastoral and counseling practices.

In conclusion, we suggested a few areas which require further study. Academic, analytical studies into demonology are very much in need. Evangelical demonology as a whole lacked significant critiques with which this thesis could interact. Also, a near repetition of this study for the subject of angels in Barth and others would also address more personhood questions which were left mostly untouched. After this, we also outlined the need, in light of a demonic personhood, to revisit the demonology of the early church in order that their theological wealth might instruct and their theological errors might warn.

³⁷⁴ A suitable starting point for a historical study would be Everett Ferguson's *Demonology of the Early Christian World*. His incredible research distinguishes the biblical perspective on demonology from the prevalent Jewish and Greek teachings on the subject. But he does not intentionally develop or critique their relationship with modern demonology.

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