

RESEARCH BOOK

LIFE
DEATH
AND
FAITH

PETER **MÁLIK** (ED.)

Peter Málík (ed.)

Life, Death, and Faith

Sborník vědeckých článků doktorandů

Autoři studií

Sunday Akinola Olukoju, Alena Mulder, Théophile Divangamene

Knižní recenze

Libny H. Dubreuze, Sr

Praha 2022

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Vydává:

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Praha, 2022

ISBN 978-80-7356-049-2

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Slovo na úvod

Život a smrť sú dve kľúčové veličiny ľudskej existencie, pričom spôsob, akým ich jednotlivec či spoločnosť uchopí, má zásadné dôsledky na rôznych úrovniach. Je smrť bránou, nutným zlom, vrcholom existencie, alebo testom autentickosti bytia? Aké miesto má v živote, ktorého trajektória vedie jasne k smrti, viera a nádej? Čo dáva zmysel našej krehkej existencii? Na tieto zásadné otázky existuje mnoho odpovedí, či už filozofického alebo psychologického rázu. Pre evanjelického teológa je však nevyhnutné odpovede nachádzať v súzvu s biblickým textom, na základe zodpovednej teologickej reflexie.

Nasledovné príspevky vstupujú do diskusie na tieto páľčivé témy z rôznych uhlov. V prvom príspevku sa Mulderová a Masarik zaoberajú problémom vývoja nádeje, resp. jej straty, v kontexte postkomunistického Slovenska, hľadajúc odpoveď na otázku, ako prispeli evanjelické cirkvi v komunikovaní nádeje v rámci spoločnosti. Komunikovanie nádeje sa často deje v kontexte osobnom. Tematiku supervízie a klinicko-pastorálneho poradenstva v duchovenskej službe spracovala Mulderová v ďalšej štúdií. Theophile Masy Divigamene obracia našu optiku do u nás veľmi zanedbanej problematiky postkolonializmu a afrického kresťanstva. V poslednej eseji tohto zborníka Sunday Akin Olukoj analyzuje páľčivú tému eutanázie z perspektívy konštruktivismu. Zborník uzatvára Libny H. Dubreuzeho recenzia kreatívnej, jedinečnej systematickej teológie z pera evanjelického anglikánskeho bádateľa Geralda Braya.

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Search for hope in post-communist Slovakia

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Introduction

In our contribution, we are interested in the question of the development of hope/loss of hope in society and how evangelical churches in Slovakia have participated in formulating and communicating hope¹. Observations result from an analytical reading of 100 evangelical church sermons in Slovakia. The selection applies to churches where preachers with a maximum of a master's degree in theology and their lay colleagues preached. We have processed the information obtained using the qualitative method. This contribution was written before Covid 19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022.

Keywords: The political situation, hope, church, sermon

Hope in the socio-political context of Slovakia

The situation after 1989. Immediately following the political changes (velvet revolution) we experienced great euphoria. We expected things to change for the better and hope was the natural outcome of the situation. The former system sought to build a just society but had used unjust means in its formation (nationalization of businesses, a money system that deprived people of their life savings, imprisonment and elimination of those who resisted the system, etc.).

Thus, in the industry as well as in the arts, we were faced with the limitation of real creativity, the limitation of entrepreneurialism, and also the limitation of religious freedom on ideological grounds. People of faith were considered to be “religiously encumbered” and

¹ Following the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the Slovak Republic came into being on 1. 1. 1993 after the division of the Czechoslovak Federative Republic.

represented 2nd class citizens. They could not work in important positions and for reasons of faith a popular teacher, for example, became a factory worker. On the other hand, the communist functionaries had every possible advantage at their disposal. Therefore, we cannot speak of the socialist society as we experienced it as an 6 tis6vac and in 1989 we rejoiced that this political system ceased to exist.

We gained a new opportunity to be included among democratic states. But the new society did not continue problem-free for long. The great hopes people had immediately following the revolution in 1989 that we would build a free and just social structure remained unfulfilled.

- The disintegration of the Eastern block led to a loss of markets and a consequent bankruptcy among businesses.
- President Václav Havel's decision to end military production also led to economic losses and unemployment.
- Other businesses went bankrupt because of faulty privatization – they were acquired by people who neither knew how nor wanted to manage them. They wanted them as a source of financial gains, to sell machinery and property, and to accumulate personal wealth for themselves. Therefore, we struggled with high unemployment which was hitherto unknown, and reducing it by employing people in other businesses or by their departure for other countries was impossible.
- In the privatization of energy and water companies, state interests were not considered. It is assumed that those deciding about privatization were corruptly influenced by foreign investors. For these, Slovakia became an area of excellent profit – but for the population, it meant an unnecessary rise in prices (for example, the privatization of water systems, energy, etc.) The result was an increase in prices, therefore, which did not adequately consider people's incomes.
- The State did not have the resources to continue housing construction in the same way as under socialism – and there were no possibilities for construction from personal financial resources or via mortgages.
- Very low birth-rate.
- Joy from the end of one political party's rule but the daily economic problems of a large section of the population.

The situation in the recent past

A change in the political system does not automatically mean a change in the quality of social processes. Those who previously knew how to gain personal advantages to a limited degree learned how to flourish to an unforeseen degree under the present system. We may speak of arrogant minorities who use similar or the same methods of oppression as we observed under the totalitarian Marxist system.

The Arrogance of Power

During an attempt to remove Ján Richter from his office as minister for employment in 2014, told Pavol Paška, Parliamentary Speaker for the Slovak Republic: “Win the election and you can do anything”². This sentence is characteristic of the type of State rule and management during the election periods with the political influence of Smer – sociálna demokracia (social democracy – 2006–2020). Privileged groups have secured for themselves the possibility of misusing power in the police force³ (the police hid and did not investigate the crimes of influential groups⁴) and in the judicial system (release of criminals due to so-called procedural errors, or it was remarked with acts that frustrated society that “the act did not take place”)⁵.

Misuse of public funds in favor of privileged groups

As representational examples, we may mention the areas of agriculture and science, and research.

Members of the ruling party made so bold as to deal fraudulently with **euro funds for agriculture**. Resources meant for the cultivation of agricultural areas were also granted to one

² <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20797332/video-pavol-paska-zname-momenty-politickej-kariery.html#ixzz5j5d31zPg>

³ According to experts, special prosecutor Dušan Kováčik and police chief Tibor Gašpar created an obstacle to prevent cases coming to court. Read more: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20508728/preco-sa-verejnost-nedozvie-ci-to-bol-ficov-hlas.html#ixzz5j5HkZWsQ>.

From the twenty most notorious corruption cases analyzed by SME newspaper it emerges that investigation ended mostly with Kováčik himself or with the police force led by Gašpar. Read more: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20508728/preco-sa-verejnost-nedozvie-ci-to-bol-ficov-hlas.html#ixzz5j5I9mILR>.

⁴ From the twenty most notorious corruption cases analysed by SME newspaper it emerges that investigation ended mostly with (special prosecutor) Kováčik himself or with the police led by Gašpar. Read more: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20508728/preco-sa-verejnost-nedozvie-ci-to-bol-ficov-hlas.html#ixzz5j5I9mILR>.

⁵ “The sentence “The act did not take place” personifies the arrogance of power. We can see in photographs and videos that probably something really did happen but then there are institutions and individuals who will allege to us that the act did not take place,” said Karolína Farská, one of the organizers of the march.” <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20552279/skutky-sa-na-slovensku-nezvyknu-stavat.html#ixzz5j5HTsicA>.

of the ruling party members for such land as is in actuality a tarmac road and parking places. The deception was their method.

Likewise, we could also mention the area of the Ministry of Education. The Minister of Education violated many standards when **allocating 300 million euros in subsidies for science and research**. The money was not allocated to research institutes but to firms that did not do the science.

Breakdown of ethical principles and active breakdown of society. The Speaker of parliament was publically convicted of plagiarism in the attainment of his doctoral degree but did not step down from his position. Ruling party members voted against his removal. Minister of Education, Martina Lubyová (who was from the political party where Mr. Danko was chairman) relativized the problem with the sentence: "After 20 years they cannot begin to push you around because you did not insert quotation marks somewhere."⁶ For this reason, he was a parliamentary Speaker till the end of his term.

The response of the population and the current situation in society

In 2018 the situation became noticeably more polarized after the murder of investigative reporter Ján Kuciak and his fiancée. This reporter had written about corruption on the highest levels of politics in the handling of grants and had revealed how the Italian mafia had got close to leading government representatives (an Italian Mafioso's mistress had become the prime minister's mistress and became a government adviser. The Prime Minister took her with him to talks with German Prime Minister Merkel).

After protests which took place all over Slovakia (in reaction to the murder), the following had to resign: the prime minister, the minister for Internal Affairs, the chief of police, but also some state officials in lower positions.

If immediately after the political changes in 1989 we had hoped for the possibility of creating a new functioning society that would function both economically but also ethically, then in 2018 we experienced deep disillusionment in the corruption and non-professionalism of the political administration in individual departments'.

These circumstances give rise to anger and hopelessness. It is happening paradoxically even despite many promising changes in the areas of economy and social progress in increased salaries and improvement of living standards. The country did well economically. For the first time since 1989, the budget was balanced with a zero cash deficit. In Slovakia

⁶ <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/1873209-kauxa-rigorozky-stoji-na-slove-plagiat>.

more than 1 million vehicles used to be manufactured each year, meaning that we could transport the entire national population in the cars which were produced annually in our country. In January 2019 public employees' salaries rose by 10 %. But as a result of disillusionment with politics, subsidizing schemes, frauds, and corruption, there was much ill-feeling about public life. Contrasted with the everyday experience of dissatisfaction, areas were lacking that would infuse effort with meaning and provide hope.

The task of the church as a bearer of hope

How is the church fulfilling its role in such a context as one who should be the bearer of good news and hope? We might observe it on the level of generally beneficial activities⁷ or charitable (diaconal) activities⁸, or the planting of new churches, where we find several positive trends. But we have decided, for this article, to examine this task in sermons. Christian theology, developed in church practice, must reveal its value in its application to the many problems to which the transformation of a post-totalitarian society has given rise. This is the church's ambition and is expressed, for example, in the words of the former Evangelical bishop Július Fila in the introduction to the new Agenda in 1996: "May our Heavenly Father, our Saviour Jesus Christ and God the Spirit bless our church and allow us to be strengthened in our inner man that we might prove to be useful in our nation."

The research sample consists of 100 sermons, collected from evangelical churches in Slovakia.

The preaching of God's Word as a pathway to hope

We will divide the following section as follows: a) hope for the practicing Christian; b) hope for the world.

⁷ We should not create the impression that everything is bad. We also observe the very interesting initiatives of some clergy who are finding ways to meaningfully address believers and seekers (for example the project Kaplnka (chapel) in Bratislava) and also seeking ways to address people outside the church (for example, the Church planting project in Revúca). They want to contribute something that will improve life in society (for example, the successful church primary schools Narnia in Bratislava and in Banská Bystrica), and they offer popular language courses for youth in the form of summer camps in many towns of Slovakia etc.

⁸ One area of serious problems in the Slovak Republic is the Romany population, which comprises 10 % of the population. A large section of them is uneducated, socially dependant and has a high crime rate. Christian churches do outreach work with Romany and recent research shows that wherever a real life of faith in Christ is actively developed an improved social standing of the Romany can be observed in Slovakia. Therefore, the current Prime Minister declared that the government will financially support the creation of jobs for clergy in Romany faith communities. The area of church activities, therefore, represents a certain hope for the future.

Hope for the practicing Christian

In the sermons analyzed we find repeated encouragement in developing faith toward God in dealing with the strain of everyday life. A Christian can trust God, both in terms of the near and more distant future. In this lies hope for practicing Christians. For example, in sermon K2k7, the preacher focuses on seeking hope for practicing Christians who can trust God in their everyday cares⁹. Similarly also in K1k21 the preacher comments: “Yes, moments occur in the life of a Christ-follower when he says: “it cannot be done, 10 tis impossible. I cannot manage.” And again the invitation is here: “Think of Christ. And He will show you that it can be done.” And do you know why it can be done and how 10 tis possible that it can be done and when it can be done? When we are connected to God.”

Similarly also in L4k9: “...The Lord is sovereign God over every situation and thus we have the right to anticipate that He will resolve our situation and we are to trust the Lord and confess in our prayers: “May your will be done.” And in so doing give God full control over the situations in which we find ourselves.

In another sermon, we find the statement K1k11: “The Lord, thanks to His wisdom and sovereignty, has appointed a certain space for us to enter in with prayer. And we are invited to do so; to effectively influence reality ... and to fill our hands with good gifts. Therefore ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened unto you.”

Our evaluation: The emphasis on an active life of faith is repeatedly shown to be the foundation for coping with life’s difficulties and we often find it in sermons in the most varied of relational connections: concerning the most diverse family, health, economic, and work problems.

Hope for people outside the church

We noted that the researched sermons take into account a Christian’s hope in God both in terms of normal life problems as well as from an eschatological perspective. But is there any hope at all for a society that is in many respects abused and which from many viewpoints is dysfunctional?

⁹ K2k7 “We have a duty to care; life without a certain concern for our family and for what God has entrusted to us would not be possible. But the care about which we were talking belongs to God; commit your way to the Lord and He will do everything. The word confidence in the Lord is derived from the word faith; if we believe in the Lord then let us also trust Him. Because cares create more wrinkles on our foreheads than time. Be anxious for nothing but in in everything present your cares to God in prayers with thanksgiving and the peace of God which surpasses comprehension will guard your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

Hope in the affairs of ordinary life – for people outside the church

However, if we read these same sermons asking ourselves what hope they provide for society outside the church, we discover that concerning hope for the ordinary lives of people outside the church, these sermons

- do not investigate it
- and are not interested in it.

Preachers pay no attention whatsoever to questions of hope for the life of the person outside the church and this

(1) from the perspective of God's relationship to them and

(2) in respect to the attitudes of Christians who should become their "neighbors".

Simply put, these people remain outside the question of hope. We can also see this relatively often when the believers attending are invited to pray. In such cases, we find this structure: the preacher speaks about the possibility of praying to God (wide possibility – open concept), but in the end, as regards content matter, he merely provides subjects that relate to the needs of believers (narrowing of content- closed concept). Others are outside the focus.

In a certain sense, we find an exception with the preacher of L7k18, who appealed to the believers to pray for good politicians ahead of the elections. He perceived these prayers as a service to the nation where "God also wants to bless non-Christians, people worn-down by life, the government, and the state through Christians, their life and prayers."

This sermon approaches people outside the church positively but still does not create room for the Christian's contribution to society's existence and hope for people outside the church. Interaction with them or acts on their behalf are reduced to prayer for good politicians.

Naturally, the church is to pray for those in authority but this cannot be the only way of fulfilling the task of "loving one's neighbor", because along with prayer there must be also other ways of displaying neighborliness:

- to approach the person who uses the results of our work as valuable and worthy of our effort (J 3,16). By carrying out their calling to a high standard (as a worker, teacher, doctor, lawyer, politician, etc.) a Christian can contribute to the hope that the society in which he is working will function healthily. The 11 tis11v is that instead of supporting the development of one's career as a service to our neighbor in the observed sermons we only found the caution that a Christian should not be a careerist (that is unscrupulously muscle his way to a higher position). We need to develop a theology of work in Slovakia for this

purpose so that we do not see it only as a means to money but primarily as a tool for serving one's neighbor and a tool for glorifying God.

- another example of supporting hope for the public might be services that help people to cope with their lives better. For example, family mediation, qualified performance of clerical care in hospitals, accompanying the grieving, Divorce recovery training, etc., might belong here. Naturally, there are many more possibilities than these.

In Mt 25: 31-46 Jesus speaks about the last judgment. Here he mentions, as a criterion for evaluation, whether individuals were willing to engage with other people's problems and help solve them. Therefore, we can say that wherever the church does not go beyond prayer in its consideration of people outside the church, it is only doing part of its ministry and is not fully comprehending its task. Jesus also emphasized practical deeds on the neighbor's behalf that involve improving his/her life. We need to re-develop this part – as part of the church's calling in the world.

Hope for eternity – for people outside the church.

A limited method of drawing consequences from the text. The sermon L1k19 speaks about being prepared for Christ's coming (the ten virgins, Mt. 25); the preacher only focuses on the expression "readiness" and is addressing the believer. But he makes no connection between this readiness and the requirement of doing good on behalf of the needy, which Mt develops in this same chapter. Therefore, the preacher cannot achieve either the liberating joy of the hearer that with God's help he lives and acts as he ought nor a clear incentive for correction (if necessary). Thus Jesus' emphasis on stewarding what we have of value (talents) and serving our neighbor (about the last judgment) is completely lost from view although they form the context of the parable preached about by the preacher. Subsequently, he is only leading the listeners to guard selected religious signs and not to a complex Christian life, which should be beneficial for God's kingdom by being beneficial to its surroundings.

Partial communication of connections. If there are hints of a relationship to surroundings in which the particular church is functioning (town, state...) these hints usually remain incomplete, like in L1k6¹⁰, for example, where we find the formulation:

"And thus may the Lord give us grace to live as God's children and God's people in this time and in the social and political system in which we live."

¹⁰ Similarly also in K16.

In this sermon, we were interested that the preacher touches on the social and political context. He wants, together with other believers “to live as God’s children” but he communicates as though the application of what he means by this were obvious. Therefore, he does not even need to look for what it means “to live as God’s children in this political system”. He directs believers to stay “pure” but not to a practice of faith that should in some way be related to the healing process in society, or with improving the quality of life “of one’s neighbor”.

Similarly, we can see inadequate formulation in sermon L7k18:

- “We pray for ourselves that we would be perfected for every good deed and prepared for every good deed.”

Here we might expect the preacher to expand on examples of “every good deed” to also include people outside the church, but in the same breath he turns it in an evangelistic direction:

- God wants more than us to feel fine; He wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

That means that if the benefit that is derived from faith is to also affect people outside the church somehow, this tends to be almost exclusively in an evangelistic sense¹¹. This has its roots in Scripture; therefore we cannot say that this dimension should not be there. But at the same time, it overlooks the fact that Jesus’ actions did not only impact the life of faith but also solutions to life problems (healing, satisfying the hungry, stilling the storm is safety on a stormy sea, etc.) Therefore, we must note that the gospel approach is much broader than we find in the analyzed sermons. In them, an inner acceptance of people, who are not in a relationship with the church, is lacking, and also lacking is an expression of an attitude of goodwill towards them. The problem is possibly even more profound. The Croatian theologian Ksenja Magda observes a similar environment in Croatia and notes:

„Evangelicals too, talk a lot about mercy and love, but in many places, their small church ghettos are more concerned with... judging others than with mercy and forgiveness... Christians in Central Europe are much more equipped to exclude others than to include and love them.“¹²

¹¹ L5k12: “Brothers and sisters, let us live in such a way that we would know how to say as a church: „Come, we are ordinary people suffering various problems but we know, even in spite of these many unfavourable circumstances, how to live this life happily and with immense hope for eternity“.

¹² MAGDA, K.: comment in Central and Eastern Bible Commentary, Gospel of John, unpublished manuscript (will be published by Langham, GB).

Conclusion

Sermons devote attention to accents on (1) Christians' inner purity, (2) their life response of faith, and (3) their interpersonal relationships and in this way, they guide them to a life marked by Christian hope.

At the same time, we observe that these sermons do not lead them to a complex pursuit of welfare and hope for the non-church public. This shows that we have abdicated the task of responsibly sharing in society's formation. People outside the church only interest us as an object of evangelistic effort.

But consideration of questions, which might contribute to the quality of life in society, such as, for example, the development of various types of services (family mediation, Divorce recovery training, accompanying the grieving, a high standard of pastoral care in hospitals, etc.), is not developed in these sermons, although preachers from this environment, besides their work of preaching, organize and perform these activities for the public:

- creation of jobs for the long-term unemployed (even if only in small numbers)
- support of systemic work with alcoholics both in the field as well as in psychiatric clinics,
- petitions for preventing the approval of gambling businesses in Slovak towns etc.

Why this broader understanding is not also reflected in sermons remains a mystery to us. From the wording of the sermons, we were unable to identify whether they avoid them because of differently defined ideas of faith or because listeners think that these themes (do not) belong behind the pulpit, or simply because they are running away from problems they do not know how to solve.

Supervízia v duchovenskej službe (Supervision in spiritual care)

Alena Mulderová

Abstrakt

Článok popisuje supervíziu a jej význam v duchovenskej službe. Charakterizuje priebeh procesu supervízie, fázy a úrovne reflexie a zručnosti, ktoré si tento proces vyžaduje. Zaoberá sa špecifickými formami pastorálnej supervízie, materiálmi a metódami, ktoré sa používajú pri individuálnej a skupinovej supervízii, ako aj jej špecifickej formy v rámci supervízneho „klinicko-pastorálneho vzdelávania“.

Kľúčové slová: definícia supervízie, reflexia, pastorálna supervízia, supervízor, verbatim, duchovná biografická, klinicko-pastorálne vzdelávanie

Abstract

This article describes supervision and its importance in spiritual care. It characterizes the course of the supervision process, phases and levels of reflection, and the skills that are required during the process. It handles specific forms of pastoral supervision, the materials and methods which are used in individual and in group supervision as well as in the specific form within the supervisory "Clinical Pastoral Education".

Keywords: definition of supervision, reflection, pastoral supervision, supervisor, verbatim, religious biography, clinical pastoral education

Definícia supervízie

„V supervíznom procese učenia má centrálnu postavu osoba supervidovaného. Východiskovým bodom pre učenie je jeho životný príbeh, cesta ktorou už prešiel, ocenenie toho čo nazbiera.“ [Körver a kol. 2007, 50–51] Supervízia sa sústreďuje na to ako sa môžeme učiť z vlastnej skúsenosti tak, aby sme na základe vlastných alebo pozorovaných skúsenosti

mohli profesionálne rásť. Prebieha formou ústnej, písomnej alebo kreatívnej reflexie pracovných skúsenosti, v rámci učebného procesu, ktorý je časovo ohraničený. „Ocenenie toho kto dotýčny je a čo prináša, pozornosť pre jeho životný príbeh v rámci jeho pracovných skúseností podporuje integráciu myslenia, cítenia, chcenia a konania medzi osobou, profesiou a jeho pracovným prostredím [Körver a kol. 2007, 50–51]. Supervízna metóda učenia sa používa v profesiách, ktoré sú zamerané na prácu s ľuďmi. Siegers definuje supervíziu ako didaktickú metódu, „ktorá sa používa v oblastiach, kde zohráva rolu cieľavedomé zaobchádzanie so vzťahmi, pričom sa jedná o učenie, zamerané na zlepšenie výkonu profesionalizovaného poskytovania služieb.“ [Siegers, 2002, str. 31]

V novej príručke Multiperspektívna supervízia, je supervízia opísaná ako: „učenie na základe pracovnej skúsenosti cez reflexiu, ktoré prebieha v určitom pracovnom kontexte a je zamerané na kvalitu poskytovaných služieb, na samostatné vykonávanie vlastného povolania a na samoriadiace učenie“ [Boomen a kol. 2015, str. 306–309]. Táto definícia nám zdôrazňuje, že v supervízii sa jedná o vytváranie priestoru k sebareflexii, ktorá človeku dáva priestor na vlastné pochopenie danej situácie a hľadá spôsoby na integrovanie týchto poznatkov do života človeka. „Na to aby tieto procesy mohli vzniknúť je potrebné aby boli v popredí dva druhy učebných aktivít: afektívne (chcem sa učiť) a regulatívne alebo metarefektívne (sebasmerovanie). Toto umožňuje učenie „zvnútra“ na rozdiel od učenia prostredníctvom prenosu vedomostí, inštrukcií a spätnej väzby.“ [Hoonhout & Boer, 2015, str. 122–143]

Proces supervízie

V Biblii sa s reflexiou vlastnej skúsenosti stretávame už hneď v jej začiatku, v knihe Genezis. Boh tvoril a reflektuje svoju vlastnú prácu (v Gn 1,4.10.25 opakovane uvádza po stvorení jednotlivých častí slová: „A Boh videl, že je to dobré“ a vo v. 31 napokon konštatuje: „...a hľa, bolo to veľmi dobré.“). Aj v situácii, kde dochádza k napätiu medzi Adamom a Bohom (Gn 3,9–10), ho Boh vyzýva k reflexii jeho vlastného konania: „*Hospodín, Boh, zavolal na človeka a opýtal sa ho: „Kde si?“ On odpovedal: „Počul som tvoj hlas v záhrade, zľakol som sa, pretože som nahý, a tak som sa skryl.“* [Biblia, SEB, 2007]

V danom texte Starej zmluvy sa stretávame s človekom, ktorý v rámci výkonu svojej práce zažíva dôležitý moment prekročenia hraníc. Adam ako správca, má presne určené úlohy. Jeho „sprevádzajúci“ vie kde sa nachádza a napriek tomu mu kladie otázku „kde si?“. Adam tu dostáva priestor na reflexiu pri ktorej opisuje:

- čo zažil – počul som tvoj hlas v záhrade

- čo vtedy cítil – zľakol som sa
- jako seba vníma – som nahý
- jako konal – skryl som sa.

Rozhovor mu pomáha dostať vlastný náhľad do svojej situácie a môže v ňom komunikovať svojej základne postoje: Táto situácia ovplyvnila môj vzťah s Bohom. V rámci tejto komunikácie si súčasne odpovedá aj na otázku zodpovednosti. V tomto starozmluvnom texte sa stretávame s komunikáciou, ktorá má dôraz na vlastné zadefinovania situácie, čo je štandardnou súčasťou supervízneho sprevádzania. Supervízia neostáva iba pri reflexii toho čo sa udialo, ako sme sa pri tom cítili, čo sme mysleli alebo ako sme konali, ale pracovné skúsenosti cieľavedome vyberáme a tvoríme si z nich vlastný učebný materiál. Siegers popisuje základné zručnosti, ktoré sa supervidovaný potrebuje naučiť, aby dokázal správne reflektovať vlastné skúsenosti. Pre supervíziu považuje za kľúčovú schopnosť „problematizovať“, ktorá plní centrálnu a spojovaciu úlohu v procese učenia supervidovaného, pretože práve ona robí supervíziu didaktickou metódou. Proces supervízie je možný len za predpokladu, že supervidovaný dokáže reflektovať svoje pracovné skúsenosti. Predpokladom pre ňu je schopnosť supervidovaného zažiť, explicitovať a konkretizovať určitú skúsenosť [Siegers, 2002, str. 170].

Dané pojmy Siegers ďalej vysvetľuje nasledovne:

Zažiť znamená, že supervidovaný sa v rámci svojej práce stretáva s určitou skúsenosťou ku ktorej sa musí svojim spôsobom postaviť.

Explicitovanie skúsenosti znamená, že supervidovaný svoju skúsenosť postaví mimo seba a dá tejto skúsenosti určitý význam. Tento význam je subjektívny. Supervidovaný môže popisovať to, na čo bol sústredený v danom kontakte a čo v danej situácii zažíval.

Konkretizovanie sa dotýka tak osoby supervidovaného, ako aj situácie či udalosti, ktorou bol supervidovaný dotknutý. Verbálne formulovanie špecifickosti danej situácie umožňuje dobrú východiskovú pozíciu k reflexii.

Reflexia je schopnosť vrátiť sa späť k určitej skúsenosti a získať z nej nový význam. Tento význam môže byť získaný z rozličných perspektív. Supervidovaný dáva svojim pracovným skúsenostiam primárny význam na základe vlastného profesionálneho rámca. Situácii však dáva význam aj na základe osobného rámca (mimo profesionálnych súvislostí).

Problematizovanie podľa Siegersa neznamena „mať problém“, ale je špecifickou formou reflexie. Problematizovanie pracovnej skúsenosti je zamerané na vytváranie vlastného učebného materiálu. A supervidovaný je konfrontovaný s nasledovnými otázkami:

- Čo táto situácia znamená pre moje učenie, 18 tis z danej situácie môžem naučiť?
- Aké špecifické kompetencie potrebujem získať alebo zdokonaľiť?
- Čo potrebujem zmeniť alebo rozvinúť?

Ako ďalšiu kompetenciu popisuje Siegers potrebu konceptualizovať.

Konceptualizovanie si vyžaduje schopnosť abstrahovať (odvodzovať, vyvodzovať, napr. všeobecné závery či pojmy z jednotlivých javov či pojmov). V supervízii to znamená nájsť prepojenie medzi konkrétnou situáciou a pojmi, konceptmi a pastorálnou teologickou teóriou.

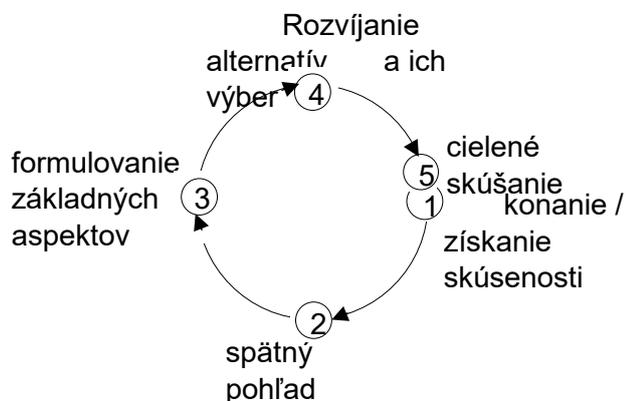
Generalizovanie poukazuje na objavenie určitých schém, vzorov alebo často opakujúcich sa javov, v sebe, v práci či v kultúrnom prostredí.

Proces supervízie je učením cez cielené skúšanie. To čo chce supervidovaný skúšať musí byť dostatočne konkrétne.

Integrácia – Pri integrácii sa jedná o kvalitu konania. Supervidovaný integruje do svojej práce svoje učebné ciele a zhodnocuje, do akej miery jeho pracovný výkon zodpovedá tomu, čo jeho profesia v danej konkrétnej situácii od neho očakáva.

V rámci supervízneho procesu sa supervidovaný učí sám sebe klásť otázky supervízora a rozvíja reflexný postoj a schopnosti.

Proces supervízie a reflexie je v literatúre popísaný rozličným spôsobom. Korthagen popisuje spôsob reflexie v nasledovnom modeli, ktorý má 5 krokov:



Obr. Č. 1: Špirálový model reflexie [Korthagen, 1998, str. 2]

Prvý krok: získanie skúsenosti – konanie

Druhý krok: Spätný pohľad

Kladenie si otázok:

Čo som chcel ja? Čo chcel dotyčný?

Čo som cítil? Čo cítil dotyčný?

Čo som si myslel? Čo si myslel dotyčný?

Čo som robil? Čo robil dotyčný?

Tretí krok: Formulovanie základných aspektov

Čo som považoval počas tohto konania za dôležité?

Čo z toho mohol dotyčný vnímať?

Aké to bolo pre dotyčného?

Čo to znamená pre mňa?

Čo je teraz kľúčové?

Štvrtý krok: Vývoj nových alternatív a výber alternatívy.

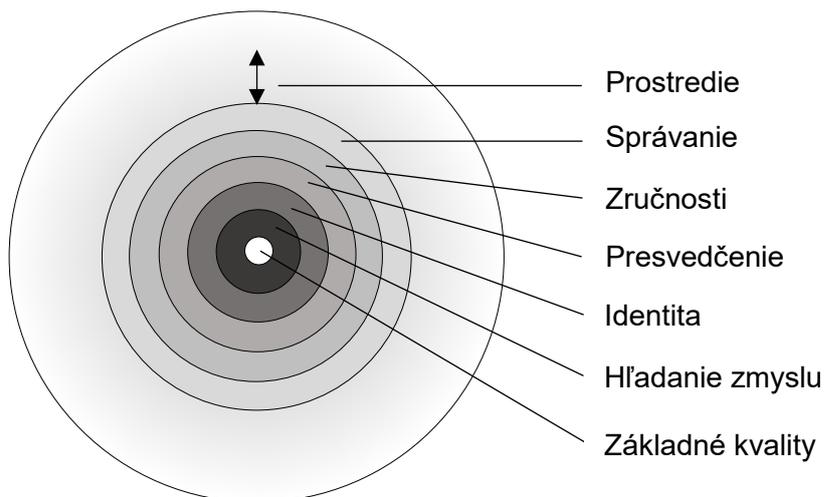
K akým predsavzatiam a „cieľom učenia“ ma toto vedie?

Piaty krok: Vyskúšanie v novej situácii

Čo chcem dosiahnuť?

[Korthagen, 1998, str. 5]

Korthagen poukazuje na to, že reflexia nemá len svoj časový priebeh ale má aj rozličné úrovne v rámci ktorých prebieha. Popri špirálovej reflexii popísal aj vnútornú reflexiu, ktorá je založená na myšlienkovom odkaze Batesona & Diltsa.



Obr. Č. 2: Schéma vnútorných úrovní reflexie [Korthagen, 2014, str. 80]

Prostredie: Na čo reagujem, kedy a s kým?

Správanie: Čo robím, ako konám? Čo je účinne a čo nie.

Zručnosti: Čo môžem, ako sa do toho pustím? Reflexia na to, čo pomáha adekvátne reagovať.

Presvedčenie: Prečo to robím, čo pokladám za dôležité? Reflexia vlastných presvedčení, ktoré podvedome vedú naše konanie.

Identita: Čo cítim, kto som, čo chcem? Reflexia pracovnej a osobnej identity vo vzťahu k obrazu ktorý má človek o sebe. Kto som? Akú mám profesionálnu úlohu?

Dávanie zmyslu: Aký som, na základe čoho konám? Reflexia motivácie, vlastného zapojenia či vášne. Tu patrí aj otázka vlastnej viery a spirituality. Prečo to všetko robím? Aký väčší celok ma priťahuje?

Korthagen v tomto modeli priraduje dve úrovne: (1) úroveň identity a prepojenia, a (2) úroveň hľadania zmyslu a spirituality. Tieto úrovne rozlišuje nasledovne: pokiaľ úroveň identity sa vzťahuje na prežívanie osobnostnej jednoty, na úrovni hľadania zmyslu sa jedná o uvedomenie si významu vlastnej existencie vo väčšej perspektíve a jedná sa tu aj o vnímanie vlastného poslania človeka vo vzťahu k ostatným“[Kieviť, Interní vzdelávací materiál KPV].

Role supervízora

V supervíznom procese supervízor striedavo naplňa rozličné úlohy. Jeho úlohou je srdečne vítať jednotlivca či skupinu, je facilitátorom bezpečného prostredia, ale aj jasný komunikátor. Je odvážny, vie pomenovať potrebné aspekty ale súčasne je aj harmonizujúci. Vie používať vlastné poznatky tak, aby vytváral podmienky pre učebný proces supervidovaného.

Ktoré z jeho úloh by sme mohli považovať za primárne pre jeho funkciu? Leach & Paterson popisujú štyri základné role od Tonyho Williamsa ako rolu facilitátora, učiteľa, konzultanta a evaluátora.

Facilitátor vytvára štruktúru, v rámci ktorej môže byť preskúmaná supervízna otázka. Proces facilituje tým, že sa stáva hostiteľom v určitom fyzickom priestore, ktorý je usporiadaný tak, aby pôsobil priateľsky pre supervidovaného. V roli facilitátora pomáha supervidovanému nájsť spôsob, aby bol schopný produktívnym spôsobom v určenom čase preskúmať prinesené pracovné otázky. Facilitátor nie je expertom v danej problematike a neočakáva sa od neho, že by prichádzal s úžasnými náhľadmi. Pozná dynamiku supervízneho priestoru a supervidovaného jednotlivca alebo skupinu môže prevádzať jeho (alebo ich) procesom, bez ohľadu na to, či sa jedná o verbálny alebo kreatívny proces.

V roli učiteľa stretáva supervidovaný niekoho, kto má vedomosť, ktorá môže byť pre neho vhodná. Môže sa jednať o teoretickú znalosť určitých konceptov, ale táto znalosť nie je v supervíznom priestore ponúkaná tak ako v klasickej triede. Potreby výučby vychádza zo supervízie a môže byť pomenovaná ako „potreba vedieť“. Výučba môže v tomto procese znamenať ujasnenie určitých konkrétnych procesov, vhodných komunikačných prístupov alebo alternatívnych intervencií.

V roli konzultanta môže supervízor reagovať na danú situáciu na základe svojich vlastných skúseností. Do tejto role vstupuje len s veľkou opatrnosťou aby predišiel tomu že sa počas celej supervízie dostane do role poradcu. Leach & Paterson zdôrazňujú, že hlavne pri supervízii začínajúcich pracovníkov sa môže stať že by chceli dať zodpovednosť za rozhodnutie do ruky supervízora. Ak supervízor nie je v tejto pozícii opatrný, môže zabrzdiť rozvoj supervidovaného.

V roli evaluátora supervízor zvažuje čo bude prezentované a akým spôsobom sa dá najlepšie pracovať s prinesenou problematikou. Tento aspekt je jasne viditeľný pri tom, keď supervidovanému pomáha zamerať sa na konkrétne skutočnosti v rámci procesu ako aj udrжанím prehľadu o procesoch počas predchádzajúcich stretnutí, tak aby rozhovory v rámci

stretnutí a aktivity korešpondovali s dohodnutou zákazkou [Leach & Paterson, 2019, str. 162-163].

Špecifikum pastorálnej supervízie

Odborná literatúra vníma supervíziu ako všeobecne uplatniteľnú "generickú didaktickú metódu, generickú v tom zmysle, že nie je špecificky spojená s určitou profesiou. To znamená, že pri jej formovaní sa vytvoril odstup od charakteristík v ktorých sa profesie od seba navzájom líšia. Toto robí supervíziu vhodnou pre učenie v rámci rozličných profesií. V generickom koncepte sa vzdľujeme od konkrétnych praktík v rámci rôznych profesií a do popredia sa dostáva samotné učenie supervidovaného. Avšak v momente kedy supervízor a supervidovaný začínajú spolupracovať, supervízia sa stáva špecifickou a princípy a metódy supervidovaného sa stávajú obsahom učebného materiálu." [Körver a kol. 2007, str.15] Vyššie uvedené všeobecné zásady supervízie však nevytvárajú predpoklady pre zachytenie špecifických daností v supervízií pastorálneho sprevádzania. Na to výstižne poukazujú Bodson & Riemslag, keď konštatujú: "Pre pastorálnu supervíziu je typické, že sa špecifická pozornosť v reflexii nezameriava iba na profesionálnu úlohu supervidovaného ale aj na jeho vlastné duchovné prežívanie. Tým sa myslí schopnosť prežívať fragmenty skutočnosti v rámci vlastného bytia v ich vzájomnom vzťahu k transcencii" [Bodson & Riemslag, 2007, str. 13].

Čo sa týka teoretických prístupov pastorálna supervízia čerpá mnoho z metodík všeobecnej supervízie ale aj naopak, pastorálna supervízia môže značne obohatiť všeobecnú supervíziu.

Vo svojej knihe "Professionele begeleiding en spiritualiteit (Profesionálne sprevádzanie a spiritualita)" Willemine Regouin a Sjaak Körver poukazujú na viaceré oblasti ktorými môže pastorálna supervízia obohatiť všeobecnú supervíziu. Tu uvediem len niektoré z nich:

- Rozvíjať dilemy prítomnosť versus intervencia. To znamená hľadať, kedy a kde má jednotlivец vstupovať do akcie, vykonávať intervencie a kedy je možno obmedziť na úctívú a tichú prítomnosť, lebo aj samotná prítomnosť môže byť veľmi efektívna.
- Podporovať záujem o rozvoj spirituality tak u supervízora ako aj u supervidovaných prostredníctvom supervízie.
- Podporovať lepšie chápanie a priniesť metodické prístupy pre zohľadňovanie vzťahu osobnostných problémov supervidovaných k ich existenciálnym otázkam.

- Poskytovať informácie o získaných pohľadoch na etickú problematiku s 23 tis23 sa stretávajú supervidovaný a metodické prístupy v 23 tis23 situáciách. [Körver & Regouin, 2007, str. 231–231]

Počas posledných desaťročí pastorálna supervízia výrazne rozvinula svoje prístupy a tieto môžu byť nápomocné i vo všeobecnej supervízii. Špecifickým v porovnaní so všeobecnou supervíziou je zameranie na reflexiu duchovnej a existenciálnej dimenzie.

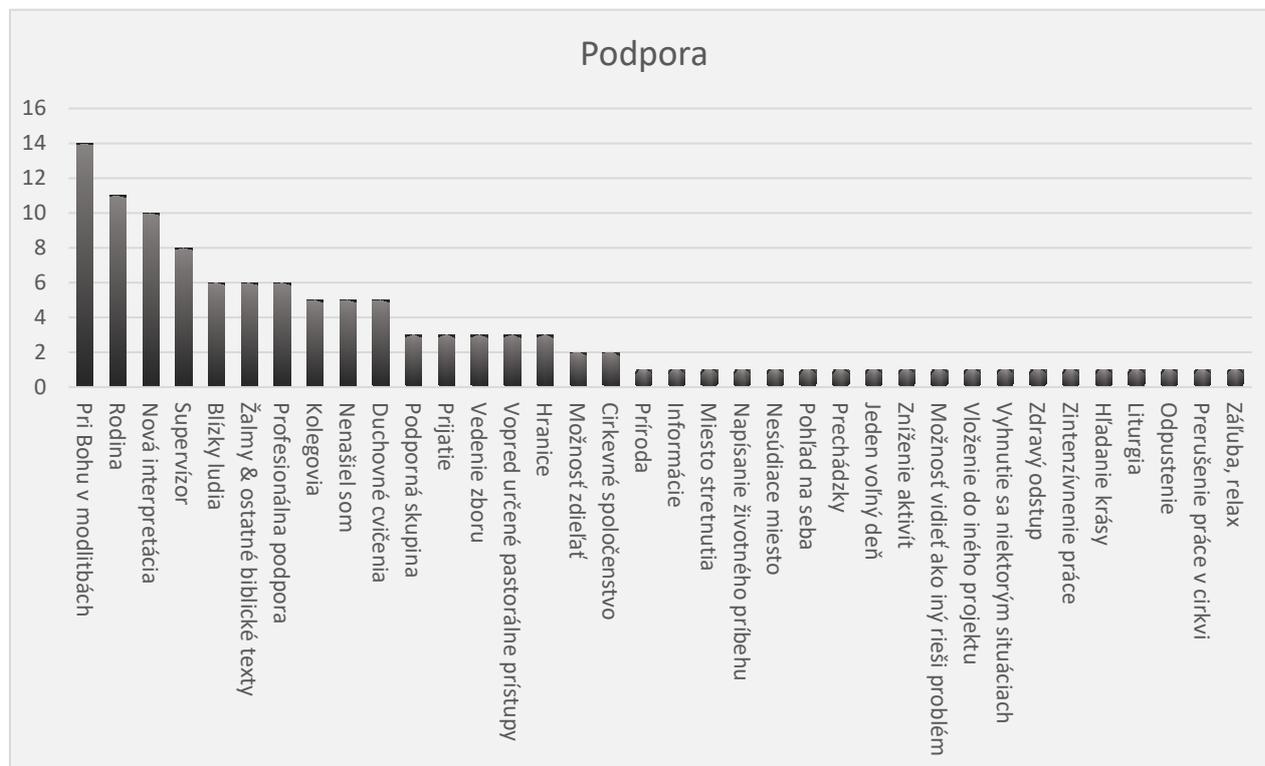
Význam supervízie v duchovenskej službe

V rámci dizertačnej práce som robila 39 hĺbkových rozhovorov s duchovnými na Slovensku, v Čechách a v Holandsku, v ktorých som im kládla otázku: “Zažili ste vo svojom živote skúsenosť, že vykonávanie pastorálnych intervencií Vás doviedlo do silne záťažovej alebo krízovej situácie?”

Z tejto skupiny respondentov mi jeden odpovedal neviem, šiesti odpovedali, že takéto situácie nezažili a ostatných 32 mi podalo 60 kazuistík z ktorých 10 bolo záťažových a 50 bolo krízových a silne záťažových, niektoré dokonca s ohrozením zdravia a života.

To znamená, že v rámci svojej profesnej kariéry 32 zo 39 duchovných zažili to, že vykonávanie pastorálnej starostlivosti ich samých previedlo do krízovej alebo silne záťažovej situácie a niektorých z nich aj opakovane.

Na otázku, kde nachádzali v krízových situáciách podporu, duchovní podali celý súbor odpovedí, ktoré zobrazuje nasledovný graf.



Tento graf ukazuje, že supervízia bola štvrtou najfrekvencovanejšou oblasťou podpory. Väčšina z tých, ktorí našli podporu v supervízii, boli duchovní z Holandska, kde je supervízia už dlhé roky prirodzenou súčasťou ich pracovného života.

Toto pozorovanie poukazuje na význam supervízie v duchovenskej službe a aj potrebu jej rozvinutia v kontexte Slovenskej republiky a to tak v obvyklej supervízii jednotlivcov či skupín, ako aj s využitím jej metodológie v rámci špecializačného vzdelávania duchovných pre výkon duchovenských činností vo väzenstve, polícii, armáde a zdravotníctve (napr. väzenskí alebo nemocniční kapláni). Toto vzdelávanie zatiaľ v rámci pilotnej formy špecializačných kurzov Klinicko-pastorálneho formovania na Slovensku zabezpečuje Inštitút teológie, misie a sociálnej práce, n. o. v spolupráci s „Klinische pastorale vorming (Klinicko-pastorálnym vzdelávaním, KPV)“ v Holandsku.

Súčasná prax pastorálnej supervízie v cirkevných spoločenstvách v Holandsku

V súčasnosti je v Holandsku supervízia integrovanou súčasťou pracovného života duchovných, ktorí pracujú v inštitucionalizovaných zariadeniach (nemocnice, domovy starostlivosti

o starších občanov alebo ľudí s telesným postihnutím, armádne zložky, väzenstvo a polícia). Aj mnohé cirkevné spoločenstvá majú supervíziu ako súčasť celoživotného vzdelávania duchovných. Jedná sa tu o individuálnu a skupinovú supervíziu duchovných, vedení cirkevných zborov (presbytéria a zborové rady). Podobne aj teologické fakulty a semináre zabezpečujú supervíziu pre svojich študentov. Pastorálni supervízory sa nezameriavajú výlučne len na supervíziu duchovných ale vedú aj supervíziu tímov zdravotníckeho personálu, alebo tímov, v rámci ktorých pracujú (nemocnice, väzenstvo, armáda, domy sociálnych služieb a pod.). Ďalšou oblasťou supervízie duchovných je špecializačné vzdelávanie (KPV).

Pastorálna supervízia v rámci klinicko-pastorálneho vzdelávania

Klinicko-pastorálne vzdelávanie je supervíznou formou vzdelávania. Z metodického pohľadu je to „učenie konaním“ a to formou supervízie ale taktiež formou štúdia literatúry a tematických prednášok.

V rámci supervízie je v neustálej interakcii konanie a reflexia na ňaj. Cieľom tohto supervízneho procesu je naučiť sa učiť sa z vlastnej skúsenosti, aby supervidovaný mohol lepšie pracovať vo svojej profesionálnej oblasti, bez ohľadu na to, či pracuje ako duchovný v cirkevnom spoločenstve, v nemocnici, vo väzenskom prostredí, alebo v armádnych zložkách.

V supervíznom procese sa „sústredzuje na vlastnú pracovnú skúsenosť, ktorá je prepojená s vlastným životným postojom, teológiou a osobnou biografiou. Jedná sa tu o podpora kompetencie učiť sa z vlastnej pracovnej skúsenosti a tieto poznatky integrovať do svojho života. Tento proces nie je možné realizovať bez reflexívnych kompetencií pred konaním, počas konania a po ňom v rozličných kontextoch práce duchovného.“ [Kievit, *Interný vzdelávací materiál KPV, preprint*]

V rámci pastorálneho vzdelávania sa využíva forma skupinovej aj individuálnej supervízie. Duchovní absolvujú jednoročný vzdelávací trajekt v ktorom je určitá časť vzdelávacou časťou týkajúcej sa otázok s ktorými sa duchovný stretáva v pastorálnej praxi. Jedná sa tu o rozpoznanie a prístupy v oblasti psychopatológie, sprevádzanie pri traume, riešenie konfliktov atď. Obsahovo najväčšia časť tohto programu je skupinová supervízia, ktorá používa špecifické metódy vlastné pastorálnej práci. V rámci supervízneho procesu sa pracuje s prepisom pastorálneho rozhovoru, supervíznou analýzou kázne, prípadovými kazuistikami a s vlastnou duchovnou biografiou. Využívajú sa aj kreatívne formy supervízie.

Základom pre supervíziu v rámci tohto vzdelávania je vytvorenie bezpečného priestoru, kde duchovný môže byť sám sebou. Jedná sa tu o priestor vzájomnej dôvery, možnosť byť

sám sebou a to či vo svojej výnimočnosti ale taktiež vo svojej zraniteľnosti. Ekumenický rozmer tejto skupiny tu vytvára možnosť širšej reflexie.

Formy supervízie v pastorálnom vzdelávaní

Supervízia formou analýzy verbatimu

Verbatim (z latinského prekladu “doslovný”) je písomný prepis pastorálneho rozhovoru. Duchovný si pýta od klienta súhlas aby mohol doniesť daný rozhovor do supervízie. Nejedná sa tu o nahrávku ale o záznam rozhovoru tak ako si ho duchovný pamätá. Tento spätný pohľad na pastorálny rozhovor je procesom reflexie, usporiadania myšlienok a preto je vhodnejší do supervízie ako nahrávka rozhovoru. Popisuje situáciu v ktorej sa daný rozhovor uskutočnil, jeho obsah a podáva aj reflexiu myšlienok a otázok duchovného.

Zijlstra poukazuje na to, že verbatim je ako expresionalistická maľba v porovnaní s fotkou. Verbatim znázorňuje, ako duchovný prežíval daný rozhovor, ako sa sám vnímal v rámci stretnutia s druhým človekom a ako vnímal daného človeka. Je to vždy subjektívne zafarbený pohľad a niekedy možno aj vymaľovaný inými farbami. Jeho prínosom pre proces učenia je, že poskytuje duchovnému jasnejší vhľad do danej situácie, pohľad na seba a aj na daného človeka.

Začiatky tohto prístupu vznikli v Holandsku už v šesťdesiatych rokoch, keď vznikol okruh Klinicko pastorálneho formovania “*learning by doing*”, učenie na základe vlastnej pracovnej skúsenosti. Reflektovanie vlastnej pracovnej skúsenosti takto získalo svoje uplatnenie v rámci pastorálneho vzdelávania [Zijlstra,1973, str.24].

V sedemdesiatych rokoch sa v Holandsku rozvinula Pastorálna supervízia v rámci modelu učenia v Klinicko pastorálnom formovaní.

Supervíziu na základe pastorálneho rozhovoru (verbatimu) popisuje Zijlstra nasledovne: “V prvom rade sa jedná o to čo duchovný zažíval a pozoroval v rozhovore s iným a v rozhovore so sebou samým. Potom je tento materiál skúsenosti teologicky, ale aj psychologicky, kriticky premyslený a teoreticky ujasnený. Toto ujasnenie zaostruje pohľad a senzitivitu duchovného v ďalších rozhovoroch. Týmto spôsobom sa teoretické znalosti integrujú do celku už získaného “živého” poznania duchovného” [Zijlstra,1973, str.24].

Pozornosť sa tu taktiež zameriava na metodické konanie duchovného. Zijlstra sa pozerá na tento spôsob učenia nasledovne: “Úloha supervízora je úloha pôrodného asistenta: je nápomocný pri rodení nových pohľadov. Preto ostáva v prvom rade pri otázkach. Duchovný

sám, spolu so skupinou, musí nachádzať odpovede. Pretože len to čo duchovný (supervidovaný) sám objavil je to čo sa skutočne naučil [Zijlstra, 1973, str. 60].

Hennie Kievit vo svojom článku „Het verbatim in Pastorele Supervisie“ – poukazuje na to, že supervízia pomocou verbatimu poskytuje:

- reflexiu 27 tis27vac konania
- podporuje ujasnenie potrieb učenia v špecifických 27 tis27vací27h situáciách
- umožňuje ujasnenie vplyvu vlastnej osoby na priame metodické konanie
- rozvíja vôľu konať
- podporuje intencionálne učenie
- poskytuje reflexiu 27 tis27 ktorá sa týka danej skutočnosti
- poskytuje reflexiu pastorálno-teologickej 27 tis27
- umožňuje učiť sa v rámci diverzity.

Pastorálny rozhovor (verbatim) sprevádzanému poskytuje priestor na to, aby hovoril o svojom duchovnom živote a svojich existencionálnych otázkach. Supervízia verbatimu preto reflektuje duchovnú a existenciálnu dimenziu [Kievit, 2011, str. 4–5].

Metóda využívania verbatimu je v praxi vnímaná ako veľmi osvedčená metóda. Menken-Bekius & Schaap poukazujú nato že: „reflexia verbatimu je metodologicky zodpovednou metódou. Autori tu popisujú základný model verbatimu ako spôsob osobnej reflexie a taktiež aj ako metódu vedeckého výskumu. Tieto kroky dávajú dobrý obraz toho ako pastorálni supervízory pomáhajú supervidovaným učiť sa zbierať pracovný materiál, tento správnym spôsobom usporiadať tak aby z neho mohli získavať vlastný materiál učenia“ [Menken-Bekius & Schaap, 2010, str. 47].

Supervízia formou reflexie vlastnej duchovnej biografie

Duchovný v rámci pastorálneho sprevádzania opakovane vstupuje do rozhovoru so sprevádzaným. Dáva mu priestor hovoriť o jeho prežívaní duchovna a jeho existenciálnych otázkach. Toto si od neho vyžaduje aby si jasne uvedomoval svoje vlastné duchovné zdroje, svoj duchovný vývoj ale aj svoj náboženský coping.

Pre tento účel sa v supervízii využíva forma práce s vlastnou duchovnou biografiou, ktorá je nápomocná pri uvedomovaní si vlastného duchovného vývoja, vlastného spôsobu zaobchádzania v rozličných situáciách a taktiež vplyvu vlastnej biografie na prístup počas pastorálnych intervencií.

Supervízia formou analýzy kázne (homílie)

Duchovný prináša so sebou kázeň zaznamenanú ako video nahrávku. Supervidovaný pred rozborom pomenováva čo je cieľom jeho učenia v rámci danej kázne, na čo sa chce sústrediť pri jej rozbere. Pri supervíznej analýze kázne sa využívajú rozličné prístupy, ktoré sú v súlade s potrebami učenia supervidovaného.

Supervízia formou prípadových kazuistík

Supervidovaný prináša napísanú kazuistiku alebo ústne vysvetlí danú konkrétnu situáciu. Pri supervízii prípadovej kazuistiky sa pozoruje či sa tu jedná o problematiku komunikácie, vzťahov či tu dochádza k problematike v rámci riadiacich aspektov alebo či sa jedná o etickú problematiku a pod. V rámci danej kazuistiky sa reflexia zameriava taktiež na rozličné úrovne vplyvov a supervidovaný spolu so skupinou hľadá nové pohľady, ktoré môže neskôr aplikovať v praxi.

Záver

V rámci supervíznej skupiny na Slovensku supervízor položil novej skupine otázku: "Pomenuj si pre seba čo sa potrebuješ učiť". Jeden so skupiny supervidovaných odpovedal: „Ja som sa prestal učiť potom ako som skončil vysokú školu. Momentálne som len zameraný na prax.“ Častokrát je učenie v slovenskom kontexte vnímané len ako absorbovanie určitého množstva informácií. Ale nadobúdanie konkrétnych zručností, pomenovanie vlastných rušivých aspektov rozvoj nových kompetencií, nie je vnímané ako forma učenia. Práve preto je supervízia veľmi dôležitou formou vzdelávania pre slovenské prostredie. Súčasná prax v Holandsku ukazuje, že supervízia duchovných je podpornou disciplínou a duchovní ju vnímajú ako efektívnu formu podpory v krízových a záťažových situáciách. Supervízia tu však nie je formou intervencií v záťažových situáciách ale je formou celoživotného vzdelávania a prirodzenou súčasťou učenia. Pozitívnu skúsenosť so supervíziou vyjadril aj jeden z duchovných na Slovensku ktorý bol súčasťou supervízneho vzdelávania KPV. Povedal: "škoda, že som niečo podobné nemohol absolvovať už pred 25 rokmi. Mohlo to silne ovplyvniť moju prax".

Pri pohľade na súčasnú prax a prínos supervízie dúfam, že si aj na Slovensku nájde svoje široké uplatnenie.

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Understanding Christian Witness of the “other”

Western Christianity facing Kimbanguism, a prophetic and messianic movement during the colonial period in the Congo

Theophile Masy Divangamene

Abstract

This article is devoted to a thematic analysis of purely African Christianity as a “religion of the other” in the face of the Belgian colonial authority accompanied by Catholic and Protestant Churches as evidenced by the prophet Simon Kimbangu and his messianic movement. In fact, Simon Kimbangu, the founder of Kimbanguist movement and church (the 3rd major religious denomination in the Democratic Congo and one of the oldest independent African churches) is unquestionably not only a symbol of Congolese nationalism and a figure of African resistance in the fight against colonial oppression, but also the greatest prophet of African Christianity recognized throughout the world. If Jesus Christ came for the salvation of all humanity, regardless of their racial colours, why Simon Kimbangu, Prophet of God (sent to the Blacks) and his Christian message must have troubled Western missionaries and the colonial administration in Congo until condemning him to death?

The article challenges the idea that Christianity is a Western religion and at the same time demonstrates the salvation and grace of God in Christ is a universal affair as confirmed by the book of Acts 2, 39: “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call”. Thus, Africans have fully right to appropriate an authentic Christianity which resembles to their culture as a global religion.

The article generally contributes to the study of the history of the independent African Church within the framework of a contextual Christianity.

Keywords: Inculturation, Prophetic and Messianic Movement, Colonialism, Kimbanguist Church, African Christianity, Syncretism

1. Introduction

On the occasion of the celebration of the centenary of the messianic and prophetic movement of Simon Kimbangu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I decided to write this article entitled: Western Christianity facing Kimbanguism, a prophetic and messianic movement which started during the colonial period in the Congo. In this article, I will try to show the hostile treatment of the Belgian authority and the Catholic and Protestant missions towards this new unusual movement.

The title of the essay is probably provocative for many readers, especially when they notice that “the others” are also Christians, but oppose their brothers whom they find hostile in a kind of confrontation between colonial Christianity as Christianity of the center against Africanized Christianity as Christianity of the periphery.

One of the objectives of this work is to specify the relations that existed between the colonial Christian missions and the messianic movement of Simon Kimbangu as well as their involvement in the persecutions of this movement and the incarceration of Simon Kimbangu, its leader.

In my approach, I will try to show how the other, like the same religion but colored by the local culture, is stigmatized. I will also show how the other is although confessing the same Lord Jesus Christ is deemed hostile. As Amin Maalouf wrote:

« on donne souvent trop de place à l'influence des religions sur des peuples et leur histoire, et pas assez à l'influence des peuples et leur histoire sur les religions. L'influence est réciproque, je le sais ; la société façonne la religion qui, à son tour, façonne la société ; j'observe toutefois qu'une fois qu'une certaine habitude de pensée nous conduit à ne voir qu'un seul aspect de cette dialectique, ce qui fausse singulièrement la perspective¹³ ».

Translation: We often give too much space to the influence of religions on peoples and their history, and not enough to the influence of peoples and their history on religions. I know, society shapes religion which, in turn shapes society; however, I observe that a certain habit of thought leads us to see only one aspect of this dialectic, which singularly distorts the perspective.

¹³ Maalouf, Amin. 1998, 91.

How easy it is to justify the cause of many interhuman conflicts by religion and ignore that social, cultural, political or economic factors can also be triggering elements of a religious conflict. This is what I will demonstrate from this work.

2. Christianity and Colonization in Belgian Congo

Towards the end of the 19th century, two explorers, Scottish clergyman and physician David Livingstone and professional journalist Henry Morton Stanley from England came to evangelize the natives of the Congo. This new era marks the beginning of the establishment of Protestant missions in the Congo. The Catholic mission will resume its hegemony after the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) which will give the basin of the whole Congo to King Leopold II.

During this period, Catholic and Protestant missionaries collaborated with the Belgian state and large multinational corporations in the Congo Free State under the control of King Leopold II. This collaboration was noticed because of the ambiguous methods adopted by the missionaries to evangelize the natives of the Belgian Congo. Indeed, the missionaries used, at the beginning, an evangelization according to the orders of King Leopold II and later, controlled by the colonial administration. At a certain point, when the mistreatment inflicted on the Congolese natives by the King of the Belgians became humanly unbearable, Protestant missionaries dissociated themselves from the Belgian colonial regime and began to condemn it and officially denounce it to international institutions. Unlike the Catholic missionaries who kept silent and continued to collaborate with King Leopold and the colonial administration. The attitude of the Protestant missionaries did not please the King of the Belgians and provoked antipathy on both sides. This divorce worked in favor of the Catholic mission. As a result, King Leopold excluded Protestant missionaries from state grants and subsidies. This royal position was also the source of hostilities between Protestants and Catholics. Protestant missionaries were closer to the Congolese natives while Catholic missionaries had a closer collaboration with the Belgian state by instituting a paternalistic and Eurocentric relationship with the Congolese natives. Besides excluding direct collaboration with the Protestant mission, Leopold II limited their presence in the Congo Free State.

Professor M'bokolo wrote : *“Si les missionnaires protestants se sont montrés bien critiques à l’égard de l’action coloniale belge, les catholiques s’y sont activement associés, surtout après que le roi eut signé avec le Vatican en 1906 une convention identique à un concordat. L’État colonial subventionnait les missions et donnait à chacune de leurs stations cent à deux cents hectares*

de terres cultivables. D'après leurs instructions, les agents du gouvernement, quelles que puissent leurs opinions, avaient l'obligation stricte d'aider les missionnaires chrétiens. En échange, ces derniers donnaient aux Noirs une évangélisation et, surtout, une instruction conforme aux objectifs de la colonisation. Il résultait de cet accord une densité de missionnaires unique en Afrique : en 1930, ils étaient aussi nombreux que les fonctionnaires et, en 1948, on comptait un missionnaire pour deux mille habitants. L'Église Catholique a ainsi acquis, par sa fortune foncière, sa richesse économique, ses services sociaux, sa politique hégémonique dans l'enseignement, une puissance temporelle redoutable dont devaient souffrir les États successeurs du Congo belge. Le paternalisme à l'égard des Noirs, considérés comme de « grands enfants », était l'attitude la plus répandue parmi les Européens, fonctionnaires, cadres des sociétés ou missionnaires.”¹⁴.

Translation: “If the Protestant missionaries were very critical with regard to the Belgian colonial action, the Catholics associated themselves with it, especially after the king had signed with the Vatican in 1906 an agreement identical to a concordat. The colonial state subsidized the missions and gave each of their stations one hundred to two hundred hectares of cultivable land. According to their instructions, government agents, regardless of their opinions, had a strict obligation to help Christian missionaries. In exchange, the latter gave blacks an evangelization and above all an education in keeping with the objectives of colonization. This agreement resulted in a density of missionaries unique in Africa: in 1930, they were as numerous as civil servants and, in 1948, there was one missionary for two thousand inhabitants. The Catholic Church thus acquires, through its land wealth, its economic wealth, its social services, its hegemonic policy in the field of education, a formidable temporal power from which the successor states of the Belgian Congo will suffer. Paternalism towards blacks, interpreted as “big children”, is the most competent attitude among Europeans, civil servants, business executives or missionaries.”

This is to show the Belgian king's predilection for the Catholic Church and his contempt for the Protestant Church, whose missionaries had to encounter enormous operational difficulties compared to their Catholic brothers in the Congo. In deduction, the missionary objectivity of the Protestant Church and its positioning in favor of the natives of the Belgian Congo was the price of its divorce with the King of the Belgians as well as with the colonial government. As a result, when the Congo Free State became a Belgian colony in 1908, the Catholic mission had already taken precedence over the Protestant mission. It had an

¹⁴Elikia M'boloko, 1985, 189.

overwhelming majority of Christians. Catholics introduced inculturation as a missionary policy in the Congo, while Protestants adopted that of assimilation. Curiously enough, shortly before the independence of the Congo, Catholics joined their Protestant brothers in criticizing the colonial system and its abuses, and this in a more acerbic way than their Protestant brothers.

3. Simon Kimbangu, his Life and Ministry

Simon Kimbangu was born on September 24, 1889 in Nkamba in the territory of Cataractes, district of Bas Congo, Province of Léopoldville in Belgian Congo.

He lost his parents very early and Kinzembo, his maternal aunt took care of him as Kongo custom wanted. One day, a badly received Baptist missionary in the village of Nkamba ended up finding favor in the Kinzembo hut where he was offered food and drink. The missionary before taking leave of this family, blesses the aunt and her nephew. Curiously, the life of the young Kimbangu was impacted by the blessing of this strange Baptist missionary. A few years later, Kimbangu received the gifts of dreams, visions and prophecies.

In his youth, Kimbangu was a Christian filled with zeal for the gospel of Christ. He attended an English Baptist mission where he stood out for his intelligence. He quickly learned the knowledge of the Bible. In 1913, he married customarily Mwilu Kiawanga Nzitani and on July 4, 1915, just after their baptism, the couple married religiously. From this union were born three sons.

Thus, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) entrusted him with the task of catechist. During the flu epidemic of 1918, Kimbangu who was in his house, received a vision in which a strange voice spoke to him and ordered him to graze his flock. Kimbangu underestimated himself to accomplish such a mission and considered it worthy of the pastors and deacons of the Baptist Missionary Society. But this vision was repeated for nights and Kimbangu, like the prophet Jonas who refused to go and announce the word of God in Nineveh, fled to Tarshish, Simon Kimbangu, fled in his turn to Léopoldville where he was hired in a local oil mill. But God complicated his life in Léopoldville, and this vision did not leave him alone until he decided to return to Nkamba and to accomplish the will of God in this pastoral and prophetic mission. On April 6, 1921, while concentrating on agricultural work, he learned that a woman named Nkiatondo was seriously ill in Ngobe Kinsuka, a village not far from Nkamba, he went there to pray for the young woman. She was healed instantly. Kimbangu performed many other miracles¹⁵, such as the healing of the paralytic Matubuka and the crippled Thomas de Lombo,

¹⁵ Many authors have reported on Kimbangu's miracles, among them, one of the most prestigious French anthropologist Georges Balandier in his book: *Messianisme et Nationalisme en Afrique noire, cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, Vol. 14, Paris 1953, and Marie Louise Martin, in her book: *Simon Kimbangu, un Prophete et son Église*, Lausanne 1981.

the recovery of the sight of the blind Ngoma and the resurrection of a man named Alphonse Kiabelwa and a little girl Dina.

Kimbangu's teachings, characterized primarily by Bible reading and sermon, were Christocentric. He urged his people to destroy all fetishes and banned polygamy. In his religious services, the adoration of a real, unique God, Creator of heaven and earth occupied a very important place. This God who was called "Nzambi", the Supreme Being in African belief who, according to Kimbangu, was inseparable from black peoples. During worship accompanied by songs and prayers, Kimbangu, moved by the Spirit of God, laid hands on the sick who were healed, the blind who could see again, and the dead who came back to life.

Echoes of Simon Kimbangu's ministry reached beyond the southwestern confines of Belgian Congo to such an extent that Congolese from Léopoldville, and other Africans from the French colony of Congo, now Congo Brazzaville and Angola, began to invade Nkamba in order to listening to a black prophet who spoke about the God of the Bible who had risen to solve the problems of black people.

Kimbangu's message touched the Congolese people and freed their minds from any spirit of fear in the face of colonial authority. Kimbangu predicted the independence of Congo and the emancipation of African peoples. If his message was sometimes perceived as nationalist and could unfortunately attract both the attention and the hostility of the colonial and religious authorities, he nevertheless had no political vocation. Nothing is new under the sun; many prophets of the Bible suffered a similar situation because of their freedom of expression like Kimbangu who prophetically announced the independence of the African people and was cruelly punished by the political and religious authorities.

4. Relations between the colonial Christian missions and Kimbangu's Messianic Movement

How did the Catholic and Protestant Churches perceive the prophetic mission of the Kimbangu?

For many historians and specialists of Congolese history, the beginning of Kimbangu's prophetic mission had even been encouraged by Protestant and Catholic missionaries initially fascinated by the force of his teaching, because he succeeded easily where Western missionaries harvested meager fruits in the evangelization of the aborigines.

This first moment of admiration and fascination was only temporary because of his exploits which made the missionaries and the colonial administration uncomfortable.

For example, in Nkamba, his native village and stronghold of his ministry, Kimbangu received daily about four thousand pilgrims who came to seek healing and listen to the word of God. The catechumenate and the missionary hospitals were gradually emptying.

On the one hand, because of the overzealousness of a popular lay preacher, and on the other hand, because of the helplessness of the planters in the face of the absenteeism of the native workers, the Catholic mission put pressure on the colonial administration to arrest Simon Kimbangu. As for the Protestants, not only had they not hindered the Kimbanguist propaganda, but had also risen up to support its conquering march, seeing in it a sort of “revival” similar to that which they had known in the churches of their country of origin.

In the eyes of the Protestant missionaries, Kimbangu, exceptionally inspired and enthusiastic, had revived the faith of their followers. They even confirmed that Kimbangu’s teachings were based on the Bible he always held in his hand. Moreover, his moral attitude appealed to all who listened to his message.

5. Arrestation of Simon Kimbangu and the attitude of his followers toward missionaries

Kimbangu, as a peacemaker, advised his followers to submit to the authorities and pay taxes to the government, unfortunately the latter had shown an attitude of xenophobia and hostility towards the colonial authority as well as towards his subjects because of the banning of their messianic movement and the arrest of their leader on September 14, 1921.

The arbitrary arrest and conviction by the colonial Martial Court of Léopoldville, without the defense of Kimbangu or the intervention of a lawyer on his behalf, had overheated the spirits of the African population and especially of Kimbangu’s followers, which profiled a possible popular uprising. This situation was appeased thanks to the intervention of Albert I, King of the Belgians who exchanged this sentence pronounced by the colonial Martial Court by 120 lashes and life imprisonment.

To justify this judicial decision, it was necessary to invent a reason for his incarceration. In this specific case, the prophet Simon Kimbangu was accused of manipulating and corrupting the dark-finned native mobs. Despite a theatrical trial, he humbly accepted his sentence as his Master Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who (Jesus) who was in his time denied, misunderstood, arbitrarily arrested and savagely abused by the Romans under the pressure of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Jesus then received the death sentence by crucifixion in Jerusalem away from Nazareth in his hometown. A condemnation that Jesus Christ accepted without defense or

justification. Kimbangu died on October 12, 1951 in Elisabethville prison (now Lubumbashi) where he had already served 30 years of his life sentence. He is thus the oldest African prisoner in history, even surpassing Nelson Mandela who suffered 28 years in prison.

6. Conclusion

What can we learn from the Encounter of Missionary Christian Witness and Africanized Christianity?

History teaches us that conviviality becomes utopian in interhuman encounters when one of the groups because of civilizational values, in this case religion, pejoratively uses the notion of otherness as a weapon.

This article is tinged with different questions related to the understanding of otherness. As I have already mentioned above, religious conflicts can influence men and their history, in the same way, men and their history can also influence religion. The Catholic and Protestant interreligious conflict in the Congo is a political problem caused by Leopold II, the King of the Belgians. Leopold II excluded Protestant missionaries from Belgian state subsidies and imposed territorial taxes on them only because they denounced his atrocities against the natives of the Congo. He decided to favor the Catholics, instead of acknowledging his atrocities on the natives of the Congo and resolving to treat them humanely. He preferred rather to marginalize the Protestant missionaries who, in his eyes, became hell, enemies, or even competitors in a Sartrean existentialist conception of the *other* who obstructs his enterprise.

Over here, Leopold II, was abusing his royal power to influence religion. I succeeded in twisting the mission of Catholic evangelization and experienced Protestant resistance which automatically led to hostility between the two institutions.

I would qualify the Protestant Church to represent the "*other*" on a low scale, because of opposing the imperialist civilizational project planned and financed by the colonial administration and entrusted to the Catholic Church thanks to the missionary gospel in way of alienating the Congolese natives by making them docile to forced labor which would benefit the enrichment of the Kingdom of Belgium.

The hidden agenda of this Machiavellian undertaking was the progressive destruction of the civilization of an entire people, of its culture and of its religion.

The Kimbangu's movement was considered hostile to the colonial administration because it carried a black and liberating Christian message for an oppressed and bruised people who needed to become aware of their ancestral values as black people. I confirm that

Christianity as a religion is not spared from cultural influence. Could Jesus Christ not reveal himself to a black man as was the case of Kimbangu to entrust him with the mission of liberating his people, victims of colonial oppression? Or would Christianity be an exclusivity of one race, people or nation to the detriment of others? Catholic missionaries opposed the religion of Kimbangu as the capital “other” for the simple reason that their gospel was inappropriate for blacks and risked becoming a source of fantasy production that did not reflect the daily realities of local populations.

Paradoxically, Kimbangu, thanks to his social and cultural affinities, could very well touch the hearts of his people. It carried the real message of the time, that of the liberation of the black race from colonial oppression. This message was not only full of certainties so that it led many people to conversion, but also accompanied by proofs (miracles, healings, resurrection of the dead and deliverance from evil spirits). Each one of them exclaimed and said that God had sent a prophet among us!

This black Christianity taxed as syncretic, “religion of the other”, had upset the colonial administration. As I said a little above, the Kimbangu movement paralyzed the colonial economy and the imported churches, because all the black populations went to Nkamba, some to listen to the good news of Christ adapted to their living conditions and to their hopes, announced by a black prophet, their brother. To suppress this movement, violence was the best solution instead of an interreligious dialogue.

The best way to deconstruct “otherness” is for people on all sides to become tolerant, to accept social, cultural or religious differences in order to break down the hostile borders to harmonious cohabitation.

The opposite will automatically lead only to xenophobic consequences. The messianic and prophetic movement of Kimbangu became over time a movement that was both religious and nationalist because of the persecutions suffered by its followers.

What must be understood in this article is the misunderstanding of the “*other*”. This virus that ate Christians, people of the Bible, people who believed in Christ, the Son of man who came to free humanity from sins. Humanity is made up of a complexity of races. Thus, to make of the Christian religion, an exclusivity of a race or a single nation, is a gross aberration because Peter, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, in the book of Acts 2, 39, announced that this gospel was not intended only for the Jews but also for those who are far away in such large numbers according to the call of God.

We have learned in this work that Christianity, as a religion, has the mission of shaping peoples and their history (converting them, even the missionaries themselves, were once

sinner), reciprocity is that in the historical journey of Christianity, peoples and their history in a sociolinguistic and political environment have also imperatively influenced the Christian religion. This is why it is not surprising that the same God who manifested himself to the Jews and the pagans took into account their cultural contexts. So, no people have a monopoly on cataloguing divine principles in a culturally complex Christianity. In the same context, Jean Isidore Nkondog protested against:

*« une théologie et un enseignement qui ne tiennent pas compte des réalités africaines, une théologie qui bien souvent se contente de reproduire servilement un schéma préparé en Occident. L'auteur va plus loin en disant que « c'est ceci particulièrement vrai pour la théologie morale, pour des problèmes africains, il fallait trouver des solutions à l'Occidentale. Formulé en termes positifs, l'auteur appelle à un enseignement théologique en Afrique (qui) tiennent compte des angoisses et des espérances quotidiennes des africains, aptes à prendre en compte les réalités africaines dans tous les domaines ».*¹⁶

Translation: “a theology and a teaching that does not take African realities into account, a theology that very often is content to slavishly reproduce a schema prepared in the West. The author goes further by saying that “this is particularly true for theology Morally, for African problems, Western-style solutions had to be found. Formulated in positive terms, the author calls for theological education in Africa (which) take into account the anxieties and daily hopes of Africans, able to take into account African realities in all areas.

The imprisonment of the Prophet Kimbangu and the atrocious persecution of his followers by the Belgian colonial administration did not prevent them from continuing to venerate their leader. During this period of resistance and clandestinity, the number of followers of Kimbangu increased in Kongo, in Africa, then everywhere else in the world.

It was therefore legitimate that God raised from the middle of the Africans of the Belgian Congo, prophet Simon Kimbangu to put a barrier to prefabricated theologies from the outside on the dosage of Africans without affinities with their daily realities.

The same God, had proven that Africans have fully right to appropriate an authentic Christianity which resembles their culture as a global religion.

The persecution of others (Kimbangu and his movement) initiated by the colonial administration and the Catholic Church, who refused to recognize the divine call of Kimbangu,

¹⁶ Jean Isidore Nkondog 2019, 12–13

would have spared the loss of human lives and the paralysis of the colonial economy in the South-West of the Belgian Congo, if there would have been a rapprochement for a social and interreligious dialogue between the messianic movement on one side and the Catholics and the colonial administration on the other side. Unfortunately, distrust and fear of the *other* (the messianic movement) had prevailed over the acceptance of the *other* in the name of lasting peace. Martin Forward commented that:

Many Christian theologians contended that a relevant Christian theology of religions, which takes the fact of religious pluralism seriously, is urgently needed in the contemporary world. They believe that we are living through a period when there has been a significant paradigm shift¹⁷.

41 tis wise not to have prejudices about the religions of others by comparing them with your own religion, because we live in a period of Christianity in its plurality because of our geographical and socio-cultural spaces which make Christians both similar and different. But the majority and the opposition, although different in their political ideologies, work together for the harmonious development of a political entity, a country or a nation.

Doesn't the majority make its law in democratic principles without always being really right? Fortunately, the minority or the opposition also has its *raison d'être* as a safeguard against any excess or abuse of power.

Had not Gamaliel¹⁸, a wise and intelligent Pharisee, doctor of Jewish law, advised the members of the Sanhedrin because of the unproductive persecutions against the followers of Christ, to leave them alone? Of course, by assuring them that if this enterprise or this work came from men, that it would destroy itself and that if God was behind it, no one could destroy it. He even warned his colleagues to be careful of waging a fight against God.

I will conclude with the following comment of Hans Ucko

Our world presents us with stark alternatives. Either we seek to understand each other better or we contribute to increasing violence in its many forms. Our process of thinking together has given us tools, inspiration, and hope that we can overcome through peaceful religious encounter. We have much to gain from thinking together¹⁹.

¹⁷ Forward, Martin, 2001, 38–39

¹⁸ Acts 5, 34–39

¹⁹ Ucko, Hans: 2005, 58.

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Constructivism as a tool of perception, understanding, and acceptance of the concept of euthanasia or assisted dying in the promotion of dignity in dying

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Abstract

How people frame and define a concept would determine their perception, understanding, and acceptance of its meaning and subsequent response. In this research article, a first-hand interview with a woman whose husband chose and died via assisted dying shed light on the role constructivism can play in socially reconstructing the concept of dignity in dying, sanctity of life, and the role of assisted dying or euthanasia in guaranteeing a satisfying closure while promoting dignity in dying. As a result, the choice of assisted dying/euthanasia was seen as a good closure, and one that guaranteed dignity in dying from a socially reconstructed point of spiritual perspective that sees human soul as indestructible no matter how the dying human flesh/body is disposed of. In addition to the case study, this article also reviewed 50 other cases of assisted dying based on their social construct of the term, and their desired expectation based on that construct.

Reviewing why ethical considerations in assisted dying and death may have gained momentum

Dying is the process and death is the end-of-the-road result of all living beings. The Bible says in Genesis 3:19: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread, until you return to the ground – because out of it were you taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return²⁰.” This is a clear confirmation that every human being must die, sooner or later. However, between now and when this happens, human beings live in suspense. This suspense has fueled the urgency to have a better understanding in order to plan for the eventual end. The Bible says in 2 Samuel 14:14: “For surely, we will die and be like water poured out on the ground, which cannot be recovered. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises ways

²⁰ *Berean Study Bible*, 2016, Genesis 3:19

that the banished one may not be cast out from Him²¹.” Again, human beings are likened to water that would be poured out on the ground. While believes in Jesus Christ will argue that God devised the way of salvation through Jesus to reconcile “the banished one”, it still leaves men with the fear of how to die – whether a good death or a traumatic one. The Bible also says in Ecclesiastes 3:2: “a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot²²,” Many Christians talk about good death from the word of God in Hebrews 9:27: “And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this comes judgment²³”. Hence, good death will be more about living a righteousness life. This line of argument also touches on whether people should suffer while dying or die with dignity. To this end, ethical issues have been used in explaining the concept of dying and death.

The four principles of ethical considerations of autonomy, non-maleficence, justice, and beneficence by Beauchamp and Childress²⁴ have become popular points of social reconstruction of dying and death. These four areas may have encouraged Porter, Johnson, and Warren to call attention to why ethical issues around dying and death may have gained moment, and these reasons may include “Fear of the dying process being prolonged because of medical intervention”²⁵ which may not be seen as beneficial by the patient or patient’s family, which leads to “a right to refuse treatment or hospitalization, even if death occurs as a result”²⁶. They also identify others as the “fear of living too long” possibly to avoid age-related physical pain or illnesses, the “fear of the degradations of senility and dependence”, and the “fear of loss of control”²⁷. Porter et al explain that “End-of-life issues include identifying futile treatments and establishing patient self determination through advance directives, living wills, durable power of attorney, and do not resuscitate (DNR) orders”²⁸.

Using the case study of Margarita’s husband, this research work, based on the first-hand information gathered during research, will tie together the reasons why assisted dying is gaining momentum, what dignity in dying is, how people perceive what makes sanctity of life important, as well as why people may opt for assisted dying or euthanasia.

²¹ *New International Version*, 2011, 2 Sam. 14:14

²² *New International Version*, 2011, Ecclesiastes 3:2

²³ *New American Standard Bible*, 2020, Hebrews 9:27

²⁴ T. L. Beauchamp and J. F. Childress (2001). *Principles of biomedical ethics*. 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

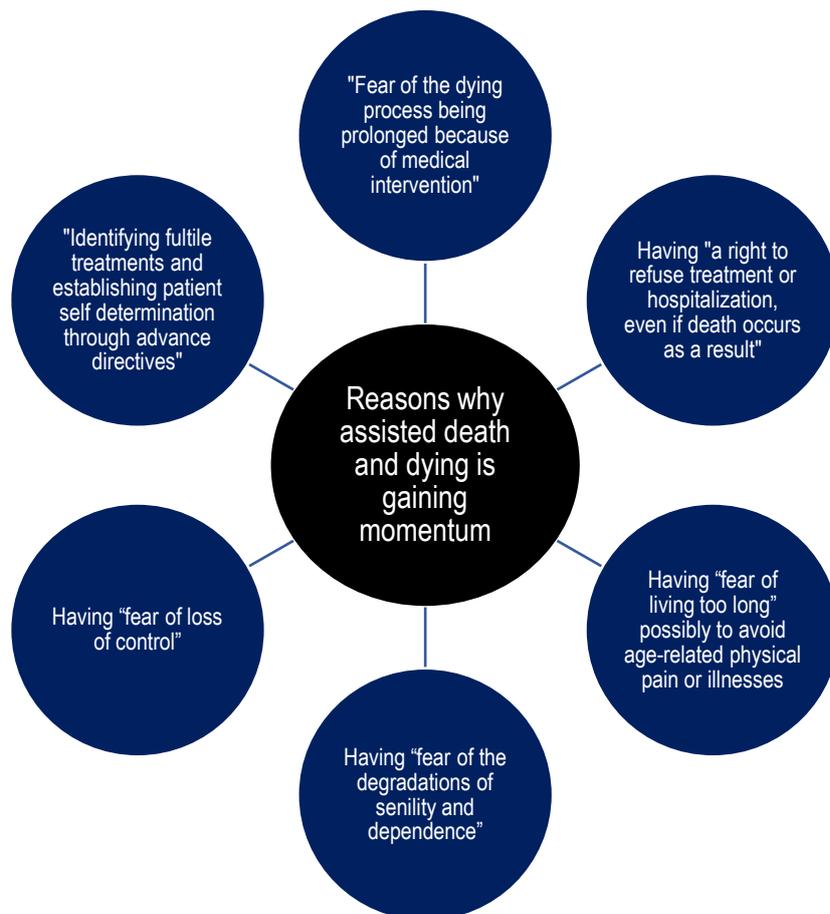
²⁵ T. Porter, P. Johnson, and N.A. Warren (2005). Bioethical issues concerning death: Death, dying, and end-of-life rights. *Critical Care Nursing Quarterly* 28(1), 87.

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*, 85.

Figure 1: Adaptation from Porter, Johnson, and Warren's analysis (2005, pp. 85–87).



From the above, ethical considerations such as one's freedom to choose how to die because it does not inflict harm on others, one's ability to enjoy a system that ensures equitable benefits, one's ability to deliberately plan and decide how to end one's life, including the ability to avoid losing control due to excruciating physical pain are some of the ways many people are re-defining dignity in passing. Even persons with disabilities now have option that could be of benefit through the option of euthanasia or assisted dying. The clincher argument is that assisted dying offers the option of dying with dignity.

What is dignity in dying/passing?

Kung and Jens see dignity in dying as the ability of the dying person to bear only "what is tolerable for the person today and tomorrow"²⁹, and "for the person and the family, in whose memory the dying person wants to remain as a subject claiming autonomy and not as an

²⁹ H. Küng and W. Jens (1998). Dying with dignity: A plea for personal responsibility. The Continuum Publishing Company, 64.

undignified caricature of a being whose wretched image blots out all others!”³⁰ The duo “draw our attention especially to that fifth right of the sick and dying, the right not to have to suffer but to be able to die in peace and dignity”³¹; just “as the Universal Commission of Human Rights of the Council of Europe has formulated it in article 2.”³² In a democratic society, the ability to have options about how to die gives birth to the idea of dignity in dying. The essence of dignity in dying is the ability to chose how to die in a way the dying person and significant others see as respectful, edifying, and praiseworthy. The definition of dignity in dying has given various options of accelerated dying a significantly differently meaning in the public domain. This has also eroded the sacredness many may have hitherto attached to the act of dying. Even state jurisdictions now encode this freedom to die.

For example, regarding state legislation, the Oregon Health Authority, “On October 27, 1997, Oregon [in the United States] enacted the Death with Dignity Act which allows terminally ill individuals to end their lives through the voluntary self-administration of lethal medications, expressly prescribed by a physician for that purpose.”³³ While the website gives little or no explanation as to the reason behind the name, the loss of dignity in this case could include the inability to express meaningful communication with significant others due largely to serious or severe health concerns, inability to have a firm control of symptoms that could be problematic, inability to maintain one’s freedom and autonomy, inability to minimize medically invasive procedures to the barest or lowest level, inability to protect one’s privacy, and lack of access to a peaceful and respectful care in a safe environment.³⁴ In some cases, it could be due to inability to be in control of one’s health challenges that could be terminal. In the case study of Margarita’s husband under reference in this article, and in all the 50 other cases this research reviewed, many of the reasons above were mentioned in the constructivist insight into why people opt for euthanasia/assisted dying, in addition to their firm belief that sanctity of life was not compromised in the process. From Margarita’s first-hand information, the sanctity of life principle was not compromised in her husband’s decision to die via assisted dying due to her constructivist meaning of euthanasia/assisted dying. So, what is sanctity of life, really?

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid, 63

³² Ibid

³³ Oregon Health Authority (n.d.). Oregon's death with dignity act, para 1.

Retrieved December 4, 2021 from

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/providerpartnerresources/evaluationresearch/deathwithdignityact/pages/index.aspx>

x

³⁴ Q. Guo and C. S. Jacelon (2014) An integrative review of dignity in end-of-life care. *Palliative Medicine* 28, 931-940.

What is sanctity of life?

While Baranzke sees sanctity of life more of a spiritual and virtue-ethical way of how to use one's own physical existence rather than a value of biological existence³⁵, Weikart sees sanctity of life as the promotion of "objective morality and human rights"³⁶ with individuals using "every opportunity to speak up for the weak and vulnerable"³⁷ that "includes the unborn, but also those who are terminally ill or disabled"³⁸, and insisting "that they share in the equal rights we enjoy."³⁹ Weikart relentlessly asserts that "In the face of these secular dehumanizing tendencies and the culture of death it has spawned, we need to reassert the position that human life has value,"⁴⁰ and "that human lives are equal in value, and that humans have inalienable rights."⁴¹ For the purpose of this research study, sanctity of life is the inalienable right to life by every human being, no matter one's state of health. The case study of Margarita's husband appears to enjoy some support from Baranzke's position that affirms that sanctity of life is more of a spiritual and virtue-ethical way of how to use one's own physical existence rather than a value of biological existence.

On sanctity of life, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada says, "Respect for life is a core principle"⁴², and goes on to say "Section 7 of the Charter states that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person..."⁴³, and that "The Supreme Court recognized that Canadian society is "based upon respect for the intrinsic value of human life and on the inherent dignity of every human being..." in the Rodriguez decision."⁴⁴ From the Christian perspective, the preservation of life is non-negotiable, although some biblical passages do not outrightly condemn the acts of suicide and assisted suicide/dying in the Bible. It is important to examine those few cases.

³⁵ H. Baranzke (2012). 'Sanctity-of-life'-A bioethical principle for a right to life? *Ethical Theory & Moral Practice*, 15(3), 295.

³⁶ R. Weikart (2017). Upholding the sanctity of life in a culture of death. *Issues in Law & Medicine*, 32(2), 275.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (n.d.). Sanctity of life. (para 3) Retrieved April 15, 2021 from <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/Themes/Sanctity-of-Life>

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

Background on biblical views on euthanasia/assisted suicide or assisted dying

It is imperative to ask: Why did Saul's armor bearer refuse to kill King Saul (1 Samuel 31:4-5)⁴⁵? On the contrary, why did Abimelech's armor bearer run his sword through Abimelech to fulfill his master's wish to be killed after he had sustained a fatal skull fracture? One clear difference between the two cases: the first was a king and a trained soldier who was fatally wounded in a grueling warfront encounter between trained male soldiers while the second case was that of a fatally wounded king and trained soldier who fell victim to the millstone dropped by a woman-civilian from her window on Abimelech's head (Judges 9:52-54)⁴⁶. Abimelech's dire call to his armor bearer to kill him and save him from the shame of becoming a vanquished king that fell prey to what he had culturally perceived as an ordinary woman's attack may have warranted the action of this other armor bearer who went on to kill Abimelech, possibly to avoid what could be culturally perceived as a disgrace. In both cases, the casualties are both kings who also double as top soldiers, and they had been fatally wounded without immediate or easy access to any high-powered medical help. Since both cases involved top military commanders; and because the circumstances were related to military warfare; the act of suicide by any fatally injured soldier could be seen as a demonstration of gallantry and bravery, particularly if the soldiers do it to avoid being captured alive or to avoid any collateral damage and or prevent the possibility of a disgraceful, psychologically devastating painful torture. However, euthanasia or assisted suicide is a concept that involves regular civilians or average people who may prefer an accelerated end to living because of a painful battle with a terminal disease. Usually, the dying would likely be going through excruciating pain and suffering. The dying person may also want to avoid seen a mere shell of a former self, possibly subjected to a pitiable state of dirtiness and wretchedness that could be dishonoring to see by others. The trend is now changing to include those who may not necessarily have a terminal disease. The CNN, while alluding to Reuters, carried the story of "Colombian Victor Escobar [who] became the first person in the Andean country with a non-terminal illness to die by legally regulated euthanasia."⁴⁷ A constructivist approach that defines a planned death/dying as a gratifying closure or the victorious pathway to avoid or dodge a potential or predictable ailment like dementia could be accepted as the best vengeance against a future problem that is unavoidable.

⁴⁵ *New International Version*, 2011, 1 Samuel 31:4-5

⁴⁶ *New International Version*, 2011, Judges 9:52-54

⁴⁷ CNN (2022, January 9). Man becomes first person in Colombia with non-terminal illness to die by legal euthanasia, para 1. Original Source: Reuters. Retrieved November 4, 2021, from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/09/americas/colombia-euthanasia-intl/index.html>

It is pertinent to revisit the relevant biblical examples on this topic and raise some illuminating questions. In the case of Abimelech in Judges 9:52-54 who obviously requested assisted suicide, could this be justified on the grounds of compassion for Abimelech or accepted as a good reason for averting the disgrace of being vanquished by a civilian woman who threw the millstone? In the case of prophet Ahithophel who committed suicide when his good counsel was rejected by Absalom after he had betrayed David in 2 Samuel 17:23⁴⁸, could this be perceived as a courageous act by Ahithophel or a punitive act of God worthy of celebrating? In the case of Zimri who set his house on fire while staying put inside after a military defeat in 1 Kings 16:18⁴⁹, could this be likened to what king Saul did, possibly to avoid being captured, disgraced, and then taken into slavery, and or possibly tortured till he dies? Should this act be condemned or commended? In the case of king Saul whose armor-bearer committed suicide after refusing to heed king Saul's request for assisted suicide in 1 Sam 31:4-5 and 1 Chronicles 10:1-6⁵⁰, could king Saul's act be justified as a gallant and courageous way to escape national disgrace if captured by uncircumcised Philistines, and could his armor-bearer who committed suicide following the example of his master the king be justified as an act of supreme loyalty? In the case of Samson who pleaded with, and received the power of God to pull down the entire building upon himself and the people that captured him in Judges 16:28⁵¹, could this act be seen as a justifiable sweet revenge worthy of praise? Can one justify murder-suicide with this example since the Bible does not condemn the act, and since God is the One that enabled Samson to avenge his foes? The last but not the least, is the popular case of Jesus' disciple, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ and ended up committing suicide in Matthew 27:3-5⁵². Could this be perceived as a deserving punishment for a betrayer who deserves no pity, or can one define it as a lesson for anyone who plans to betray Jesus in today's world? The Bible appears to have reserved comments or judgements on these actions, and this could give the impression that the Bible gives a tacit approval to suicide and assisted suicide under certain circumstances, particularly if the wicked and the unrighteous ended up this way like the rejected king Saul, Judas Iscariot, and Abimelech. While it is true that the Bible teaches the preservation of lives, at no point did the Bible condemn or disapprove the insinuations of suicides in the Bible. Could the silence be due to the circumstances that warranted each case? In today's pluralistic or secular world, are there circumstances that could legitimize assisted suicide/dying and suicide like the ones in the Bible? It is necessary to point out that a king in the Bible died because of severe pain without seeking to end his life. In 2

⁴⁸ *New International Version*, 2011, 2 Samuel 17:23

⁴⁹ *New International Version*, 2011, 1 Kings 16:18

⁵⁰ *New International Version*, 2011, 1 Chronicles 10:1-6

⁵¹ *New International Version*, 2011, Judges 16:28

⁵² *New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 27:3-5

Chronicles 21:18-20⁵³, one reads the story of king Jehoram who was afflicted with a disease that forced his intestines to come out before succumbing to death after a severe pain. This example proves that the Bible does not see pain as an aberration since Jesus Christ Himself was painfully scorched, battered, bloodied, and eventually crucified in a most horrific way.

The Bible, the final authority on the position and decisions of Christians is specific on the concept of deliberate killing and or elimination of another human being. In many passages, the Bible is very explicit. Some examples include Genesis 9:5-6⁵⁴ – “And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting...And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.” The passage goes on to say that “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.” In short, no man has a right to kill another one by virtue of the shared image with God. While Exodus 20:13⁵⁵ states categorically that “*You shall not murder*”, Exodus 23:7⁵⁶ adds a clause: “Have nothing to do with a false charge and *do not put an innocent or honest person to death*, for I will not acquit the guilty.” This gives a window into the possibility of a legitimate killing – if the person is deserving of such a punishment. In Leviticus 24:17⁵⁷, the Bible says “Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death”, this can only refer to an illegitimate act of killing an innocent person who did not commit any sin or guilty of an illegal or despicable act. In Deuteronomy 5:17⁵⁸, the Bible is again very specific: “*You shall not murder.*” This is like a grandfather clause that is overarching on the issue around murder or killing. In Proverbs 6:16-19⁵⁹, the word of God says, “There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him”, and the Bible goes on to identify them as “haughty eyes, a lying tongue, *hands that shed innocent blood*”, and the last one here specifically warned against the shedding of innocent blood. The passage goes on to pinpoint others: “a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.” Shedding innocent blood is another clause that differentiates it from guilty or wicked blood. Could the shedding of the blood of king Saul, Abimelech, and or Judas Iscariot be attributed to that of the shedding of guilty blood? Jesus Christ Himself addressed this issue in Matthew 5:21⁶⁰: “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘*You shall not murder*, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’” This is a statement that confirms that as it has been in the past, it is still relevant today, and

⁵³ *New International Version*, 2011, 2 Chronicles 21:18-20

⁵⁴ *New International Version*, 2011, Genesis 9:5-6

⁵⁵ *New International Version*, 2011, Exodus 20:13

⁵⁶ *New International Version*, 2011, Exodus 23:7

⁵⁷ *New International Version*, 2011, Leviticus 24:17

⁵⁸ *New International Version*, 2011, Deuteronomy 5:17

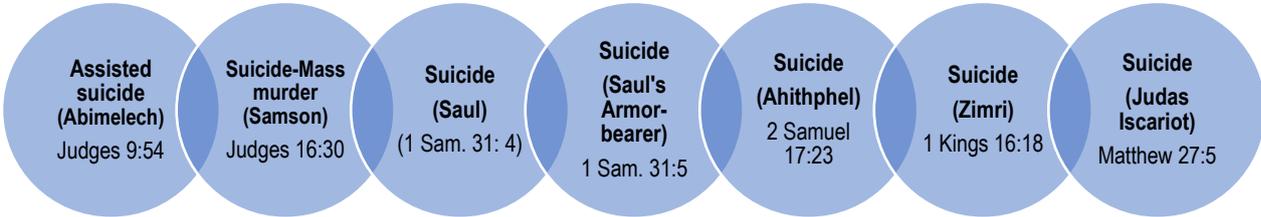
⁵⁹ *New International Version*, 2011, Proverbs 6:16-19

⁶⁰ *New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 5:21

applicable in the future. Apostle Paul in Romans 13:9⁶¹ also speaks to this issue: “The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “*You shall not murder,*” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This context reminds humankind that loving one’s neighbor is as important as the forbidding of the act of murder, stealing, and covetousness. John in the Book of Revelation 21:8⁶² says, “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, *the murderers,* the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” Murderers shall be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Obviously, it is doubtful if Abimelech’s armor-bearer would be liable given the context and circumstances of his action, especially as the Bible remains silent on any possible consequences.

For the records, this study will graphically display the five recorded suicide cases as well as the one assisted suicide case, and one suicide-mass murder case in the Bible; and will try to examine how people or the Bible responded to such acts.

Figure 2



It is unclear how the Bible frowns at each of the acts above. As a matter of fact, Saul’s act of suicide motivated his armour-bearer’s act of suicide. The Bible neither condemned nor commended these people for their action, and this may be a tacit acknowledgment that certain circumstances could warrant such actions. One should be quick to say that at no point and in nowhere has the Bible described the acts above as courageous or appropriate. However, one can also raise some pertinent questions. Can one’s act of suicide encourage someone else to copy the act, as done by Saul’s armour-bearer? When we talk about constructivism, which leads to the formation of ideas, identities, and shared interests, could the idea of ending one’s

⁶¹ *New International Version*, 2011, Romans 13:9
⁶² *New International Version*, 2011, Revelation 21:8

life become reasonable enough to become a laudable idea, and shared by some people if convincing reasons are given to justify it? For example, in Judges 16:30⁶³, the Bible says, “Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus, he killed many more when he died than while he lived.” Could this become a shared norm particularly among Christians, as the Bible appears to focus more on the number of Philistines (Israel’s enemies) that died through the act than on the act of suicide-mass murder that occurred? Can one justify assisted suicide (dying) through the act of Abimelech’s armour-bearer (Judges 9:54) as an act that promotes dignity in dying since Abimelech did not want people to say “A woman killed him”? Would it be fair to leave Abimelech to suffer until he died, or would he have felt terribly disgraced with no dignity as his life ebbed away? While the Bible is crystal clear on the instruction against killing, it leaves a window of constructivist interpretation to the examples here. This may have encouraged today’s secular world to the formation of new ideas about assisted dying or euthanasia. We can then ask: What is euthanasia/assisted dying?

What is euthanasia/assisted dying?

Weikart (2017) explains that “the term euthanasia, which literally means “good death, had previously meant trying to relieve pain and suffering for those nearing death”⁶⁴ but “the term was redefined in the late nineteenth century by a new movement that favored taking active measures to end the lives of those who were either suffering or disabled”⁶⁵ based on “a new debate about the value of human life”⁶⁶. The idea of a redefinition of the term in the late nineteenth century confirms the concept of constructivism. Weikart goes on to explain that “while many early euthanasia proponents supported assisted suicide or voluntary euthanasia, some began supporting killing disabled infants and sometimes adults.”⁶⁷ Killing disabled infants and adults could be a constructivist approach that redefines human value based on the individual’s ability to contribute to the local economy or ability to join the army and fight. Weikart then asserts that “Nazi Germany became the most radical promoter of euthanasia, when under the cover of World War II Hitler introduced a program to kill people with disabilities”⁶⁸; and that this “Nazi euthanasia program killed over 200,000 disabled Germans and untold thousands more in Nazi-occupied territories.”⁶⁹ It should be noted that the example here was imposed by

⁶³ *New International Version*, 2011, Judges 16:30

⁶⁴ R. Weikart (2017). Upholding the sanctity of life in a culture of death. *Issues in Law & Medicine*, 32(2), 274.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

the government and not an option selected by the individual. Also, the options of assisted dying that could include prescription of drugs, use of intravenous (IV) whereby the medicine or fluid of death is administered through a needle or tube (catheter) that goes into a vein, or injection through needle to discharge the fluid of death, or even the turning of knobs of death by the individual who chose assisted dying to end accomplish the end-of-life goal. This last option is common in Switzerland.

In defining assisted dying/euthanasia, Davis says “Assisted dying can be used to mean both euthanasia, generally voluntary, and assisted suicide.”⁷⁰ . It is imperative to define the concept of euthanasia, particularly against the backdrop of some other descriptive words about the same concept. The CTV News explains that “While often used interchangeably, it is important to note that there are differences in the terms used when discussing assisted death.”⁷¹ The source goes on to say that “Euthanasia is generally defined as the practice of intentionally performing an act to end the life of another, in order to relieve their pain and suffering”⁷², and that “Euthanasia can be categorized in different ways, including active (when a person directly and deliberately acts to cause a patient's death), or passive (when a death is brought about by withdrawing or withholding treatment).”⁷³ Continuing, CTV News elucidates further that euthanasia “can also be categorized as voluntary (when an act is carried out at the request of the patient) and non-voluntary (when the patient is unable to ask for euthanasia or indicate their request due to their medical condition).”⁷⁴ This same source goes on to explain that “Assisted suicide is generally defined as the act of intentionally killing oneself with the assistance of another person who provides knowledge, means, or both.”⁷⁵

In Canada, the terms euthanasia and medically assisted dying/medically assisted suicide are used interchangeably. The BBC News (2019) defines euthanasia as “the act of intentionally ending a life to relieve suffering - for example a lethal injection administered by a doctor”⁷⁶; and that “Under English law euthanasia is illegal and is considered manslaughter or murder”⁷⁷ while assisted suicide is defined as “Intentionally helping another person to kill themselves.”⁷⁸

⁷⁰ N. Davis (2019, July 15). What's the difference between euthanasia, assisted dying and assisted suicide, para 3. The Guardian. Retrieved November 20, 2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jul/15/euthanasia-and-assisted-dying-rates-are-soaring-but-where-are-they-legal>

⁷¹ CTV News (2015, December 15). Euthanasia and physician-assisted death: A glossary of terms, para 1. Retrieved December 2, 2021 from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/euthanasia-and-physician-assisted-death-a-glossary-of-terms-1.2700677#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Health%20Law,to%20end%20another%20person's%20life.>

⁷² Ibid, para 2

⁷³ Ibid, para 3

⁷⁴ Ibid, para 4

⁷⁵ Ibid, para 5

⁷⁶ BBC (2019, February 8). What's the difference between assisted suicide and euthanasia? para 3 Retrieved April 8, 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47158287>

⁷⁷ Ibid, para 3

⁷⁸ Ibid, para 8

Davis⁷⁹ also supports the same definition above. The Slovak Spectator shares the result of a survey that shows that most Slovaks are most likely in agreement with euthanasia. According to the report, “nearly 59 percent of people in Slovakia think it is important to deal with the issue of euthanasia, according to a survey carried out by Focus agency on behalf of the liberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) party.”⁸⁰ This same source goes on to reveal that of the “sample of 1,051 respondents”⁸¹ approximately “33 percent of committed Catholics, 55 percent of more casual believers, 69 percent of non-religious individuals, 72 percent of atheists and 57 percent of agnostics thought that this should be allowed”⁸², hence they fully consented to the “the right to choose euthanasia.”⁸³ This is another confirmation about how the constructivist idea redefines euthanasia as a term that adds value, prevents pain, avoids undignified dying, and one that gives people control to end their lives on their own terms. In some cases, individuals who opt for euthanasia/assisted dying do so based on constructivist approach of defining, understanding, and accepting the option as one that also accommodates sanctity of life in so far as the sacredness of the soul is guaranteed while the disposition of the dying body/flesh is inevitable. The original approach that situates concept of death and dying as sacred has evolved over time to what we can describe as a secular constructivism.

Historically, Boer assesses the five decades of Dutch euthanasia and accompanying lessons, and concludes that, “worldwide the Netherlands has the broadest experience with organizing voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide.”⁸⁴ Boer identifies “three phases” that include the first phase from “1968-1985” when “euthanasia was vividly debated”; and although “it was illegal, it was at best tolerated.”⁸⁵ Boer situates the second phase to be from “1985, beginning with a verdict of the Supreme Court”, when “euthanasia became officially tolerated and gradually legalized in 2002, after which the numbers stabilized until 2006”⁸⁶; while “the onset of the third phase was in 2007”⁸⁷ Based on Boer’s records, and “since that year, the numbers tripled”⁸⁸, and while “new pathologies were accepted as a reason for euthanasia, the number of people with a long-life expectancy increased, and mobile euthanizing teams were established that provide euthanasia without a prior doctor patient relationship.”⁸⁹ Boer concludes that “these developments were made possible by a combination of cultural

⁷⁹ N. Davis (2019, July 15).

⁸⁰ The Slovak Spectator (2014, September 5). Euthanasia okay, according to most of Slovaks. (para 1) Retrieved December 22, 2021, from <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20051898/euthanasia-okay-according-to-most-of-slovaks.html>

⁸¹ Ibid, para 3

⁸² Ibid, para 6

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Boer, T. A. (2018). A dialectics of lead: Fifty years of Dutch euthanasia and its lessons. *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 75(2), 239.

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid

developments, the absence of restrictive legal norms, and a far-reaching mandate of the Review Committees.”⁹⁰

It is clear from Boer’s assessment that the issue of voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide are products of many factors, but the identification of “cultural developments” gives oxygen to the idea of constructivism that redefines the concept of death and dying from a sacred perspective to secular, value-driven, culturally motivated shared ideas about possible benefits, which may include the freedom to choose, the power to be in control, the ability to end life at one’s own terms, and or the ability to take the wind out of the sail of a debilitating or potentially ailment that could lead to one’s disgraceful and helpless end. It therefore become imperative to ask the question: How does the concept of constructivism play out as a framework that gives vent to the new definition that could make euthanasia/assisted dying an attractive option?

Theoretical framework

Consistent with Grant and Osanloo’s (2014) insight regarding how “A theoretical framework permits the researcher to identify the design and the evaluation of a problem in a way that will allow the theory to be measured, tested, and extended to serve as a guide for the design of a study”⁹¹, this research inquiry has situated the concept of euthanasia/ assisted suicide-dying as a human decision based on shared ideas and interests of individuals. In this case, measuring perceptions through the right instruments, and gaining knowledge through direct interviews would be most ideal for researching the topic of euthanasia/assisted suicide/dying. A theory that deals with shared ideas and interests of actors is constructivism. Constructivism, in terms of definition, is a theoretical concept that places less emphasis on material forces but more on shared ideas; and one that believes that identities and interests of actors are never given by nature but constructed by these shared ideas.⁹² Cohn and Hira break this down further by saying that the choices of actors (or people) may be less rational but influenced more by “the beliefs, traditions, roles, ideologies, and patterns of influence that shape preferences, behavior, and outcomes.”⁹³ (Cohn & Hira, 2021, p. 114) Zaidi (2014) opines that “culture determines many aspects of end-of-life issues”, since “traditions and cultural norms are akin to a body within which resides the soul in the form of faith, religion and

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ C. Grant and A. Osanloo (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your house. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 4(2), 21.

⁹² A. Wendt (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁹³ T. H. Cohn and A. Hira (2021). *Global political economy: Theory and practice* (8th Ed.). New York: Routledge, p. 114.

beliefs.”⁹⁴ Zaidi goes on to submit that “Christian thought is deeply influenced by culture”⁹⁵, and that “it is therefore dependent on many factors”⁹⁶, but necessary to note that “most believe that there is no obligation to delay death, but there may be a duty to employ to use technology to gain one more chance to ask forgiveness of those who may have been harmed.”⁹⁷

Although a social science theory, this is applicable to all facets of human behavior, especially personal decisions like beliefs when the social environment that such an individual exists is becoming saturated with a shared idea powered by a resilient and pervasive media. In this case, the theoretical framework is on the premise that people are possibly constructing their new normal on the concept of euthanasia/assisted dying by having a new look at their theological and ethical positions viz-a-viz pain the patient is going through and the need to show compassion. Grant and Osanloo espouse that “The theoretical framework serves as a guide to your research and assists in determining what things you will measure and examine.”⁹⁸ This underpins the plan to measure perceptions of and reasons or ideas that encourage actors (individuals) to opt for euthanasia and or assisted suicide/dying {otherwise known as medical assistance in dying (MAiD) in the Manitoba province of Canada}. It is also pertinent to find out whether the decision to opt for euthanasia has anything to do with the cost of keeping someone alive or with the time and attention commitment to care for individuals living in suffering. It therefore becomes necessary to inquire whether, through constructivism, a new interpretation, or misinterpretations of death, dying, pain, and sanctity of life could have any theological and ethical implications, based on the personal experience of tragedy by those living and caring for those suffering.

Just like Zaidi (2014) suggests that “Protestants are happy with the life sustaining machines”⁹⁹, he also discloses that the same people “agree to the withdrawal of machines in certain inevitable situations”¹⁰⁰, while he also asserts that “they oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, but they also do not encourage doctors to play God.”¹⁰¹ In other words, Protestants have a shared belief in sustaining life by machines as long as they believe that God can still perform a miracle of healing but would also accept the idea of ending a life they possibly realize would not survive, hence the option to end such a life by accepting the withdrawal of the life sustaining machine. From the foregoing, does it mean protestants have

⁹⁴ S. H. Zaidi (2014). *Ethics in medicine*. Springer International Publishing Switzerland, p. 228.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 233

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁸ C. Grant and A. Osanloo (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your house. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 4(2), 18.

⁹⁹ S. H. Zaidi (2014). *Ethics in medicine*. Springer International Publishing Switzerland, p. 228.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 234

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*

a shared idea or culture about how to end a human life they perceive as unsustainable? A graphical illustration will show how shared ideas in the super-structure affects how others begin to construct their new reality.

A graphical illustration of how social construction of new ideas can be born in assisted death and dying

Figure 3a

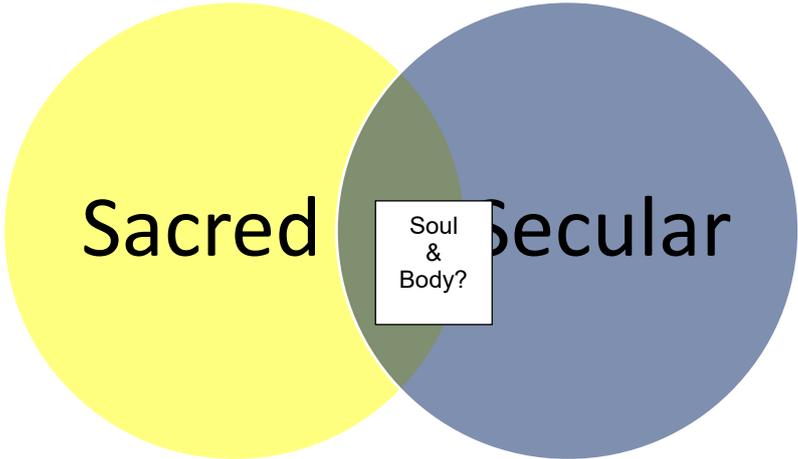
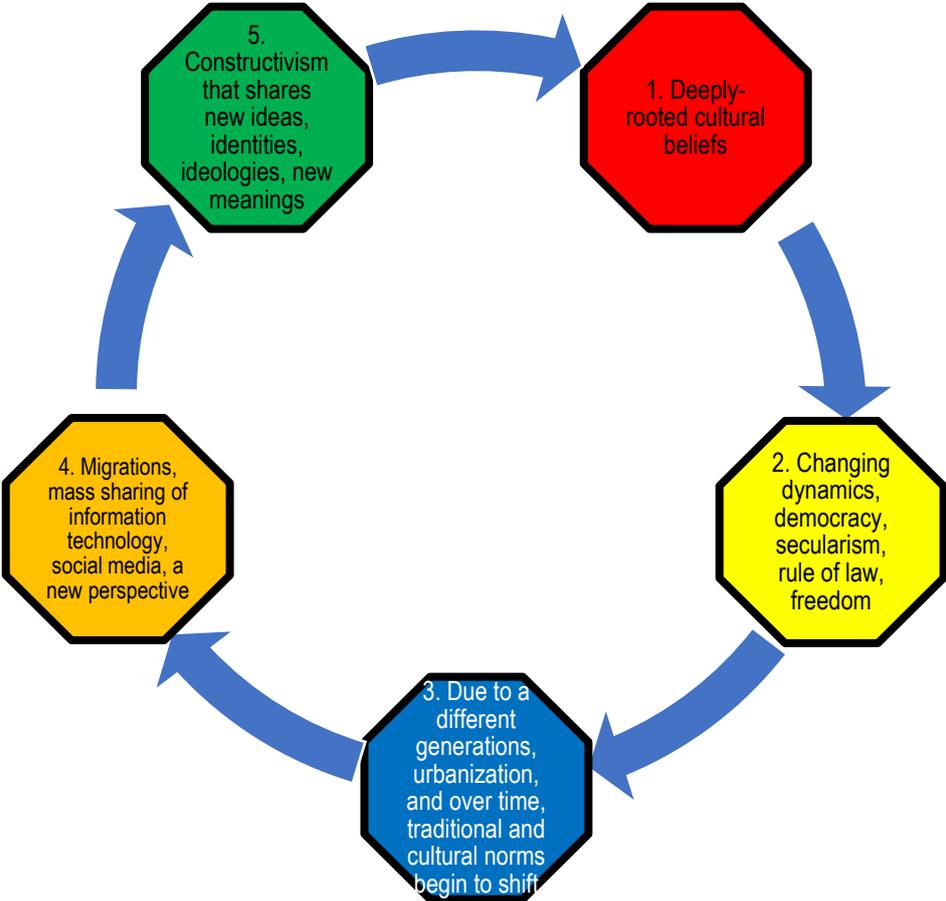


Figure 3b



The illustrations above (Figure 3a and 3b) simply show how new ideas are formed based on new meaning and interpretations of beliefs, traditions, value-added, and cultural norms, among others. Could it be that when a human body is dying, and subsequently perceived as unsustainable to keep the dying person alive, do they see the soul as sacred and indestructible, while the human body is defined as disposable, obviously viewed from a secular perspective of mortality that is perishable?

Qualitative case study – First-hand information by Margarita, wife of the man who died via assisted dying

This study is a first-hand information based on one-on-one interview with Margarita, Wayne's wife – in this case, it is a Case Study (Qualitative) of Wayne's case, followed by subsequent review of some other 50 similar cases. This forms the data collection approach for this study. This research work follows the qualitative case study approach of Creswell, that is, the data analysis approach of description, recurring themes, and assertions¹⁰². Wayne's wife, Margarita was gracious enough to give this writer full interview where she narrated Wayne's terminal illness, decision to, and final death via medical assistance in dying (MAiD), a regularly used terminology for euthanasia or medically assisted dying in Manitoba, Canada¹⁰³. Again, it is important to clarify that over time, the term euthanasia has evolved in many jurisdictions, including Manitoba province of Canada, and individuals electing to end their lives have variously fallen under terminologies such as euthanasia, medically assisted suicide, medically assisted dying, and medical assistance in dying (MAiD). Margarita and I had earlier spoken on the phone two times and thereafter scheduled a date to talk extensively via zoom, the best medium for a conversation that will give the opportunity to see face to face at the height of the restrictive government policy during the most devastating period of COVID 19 pandemic¹⁰⁴. Eventually, the interview with Margarita took place on December 2, 2021, via zoom. Below is the transcript of the interview with Margarita (personal communication, December 2, 2021) whose husband ended his life via medical assistance in dying (MAiD).

¹⁰² J. W. Creswell (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publications, p. 65.

¹⁰³ Government of Canada (n.d.). *Medical assistance in dying*. Retrieved January 12, 2022 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying.html>

¹⁰⁴ Rachel Bergen · CBC News (2021, December 1). *No omicron cases in Manitoba, 24 travellers isolating, as 124 new COVID cases, 2 deaths reported Wednesday*. Retrieved December 10, 2021 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-covid-19-december-1-2021-1.6269531>

Researcher: Thank you so much for agreeing to share details about your former husband's decision to end his life via euthanasia/assisted dying/medical assistance in dying. Please feel free to share. I can interject if I seek additional clarifications.

Margarita: Thank you for the opportunity to share details about my former husband's decision to end his life through medical assistance in dying otherwise known as assisted dying/euthanasia. My former husband, Wayne, was dying from complicated ALS (that is, *Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis*). In the house before he moved to the ALS House, he would cough endlessly and be in serious pain as phlegm would block his air passage and choke him. The Doctors said Wayne's nerves, tissues and muscles will eventually wane, and eventually start dying off, while he will be in serious pain. Eventually, Wayne finally moved into an ALS House where he would cough endlessly. Whenever his son visits, he watches his helpless Dad cough so hard and become so helpless as he struggled to breathe and as he struggled to go through endless pain.

Researcher: That must have been so tough for you, and for him especially.

Margarita: It was tough on all of us. Wayne's sister, Coleen who is a Science and Mind Preacher in the US flew up to be with and assist her brother. She was emotional when she saw how much pain he was in. She desires to see him exit with dignity. She discussed with Wayne, and both agreed on the decision to chose medical assistance in dying (MAiD) otherwise known as euthanasia. His sister planned the entire process with him. Before this time, Wayne and I had been separated, although we made sure that our son shared equal time with both of us.

Researcher: Did you witness the procedure?

Margarita: Yes, I was there during the end-of-life procedure. Wayne loved music, so his friends in the music band with whom he played music were at his bedside singing, based on Wayne's desire, when the IV [that is, intravenous, which means the end-of-life medication is administered through the veins of the person who chose euthanasia/medical assistance in dying] was administered.

Researcher: Can you share any specific detail of how the procedure went?

Margarita: Yes. The way assisted dying happened in the case of Wayne was through the administration of medication in the IV as I mentioned before, and in Wayne's case, it took between 5 to 7 minutes for the IV drips to hit home to stop Wayne's heart from beating. Wayne slipped away peacefully, beating the discomfort, disability, and the excruciating pain, particularly with the huge phlegm that was choking him to death, denying him the comfort of a free-flowing air passage.

Researcher: What was the experience like?

Margarita: Friends and family members were there by his bedside to support him. Wayne held firmly to his son's hands with one hand till the very end when there was no more life in him, while one of the medical team members carrying out the assisted dying procedure held onto Wayne's other hand in a very caring way. The atmosphere was done in the most dignifying way. The medical team was satisfied just as the family of Wayne was. We all found the process very beneficial.

Researcher: So, he must be close to his son? And it appears the medical team that carried out the procedure impressed you?

Margarita: Yes, the medical team handled everything professionally. Even till the last minute, Wayne was given the right to back out of the procedure if he decided to. There was no pressure whatsoever. The medical team members that came to carry out the procedure (euthanasia/assisted dying/medical assistance in dying) kept asking him if he would like to change his mind. He assured them that he wasn't going back on the decision. And yes, Wayne was very close to his son, his only child.

Researcher: From your own understanding, what were the reasons for the decision to chose euthanasia/medical assistance in dying?

Margarita: The excruciating pain, frustration, and as his motor neurons degenerate leading to weakness or stiffness, and with degenerating strength in his ability to speak, eat, move, and even breathe, imminent respiratory failure all compound to make the decision for euthanasia/assistance in dying easier to make. Another reason that encouraged the choice of euthanasia/medical assistance in dying was because of our shared belief in spirituality.

Researcher: You just mentioned spirituality as a reason for choosing to die via euthanasia/medical assistance in dying. Can you shed more light on this?

Margarita: Yes, I'll be glad to. In terms of spirituality, Wayne was spiritual but not religious just like me. Wayne and I were never Christians, but we were (and I am still) spiritual. We believe in the common moral themes of every religion – such as love, peace, joy, and the belief that a human soul exists or lives forever while the body that is full of pain is disposable.

Researcher: Humm...human soul exists or lives forever... [Researcher starts to silently reflect on Matthew 10:28; Matthew 16:26]

Margarita: Yes, we believe the soul survives death, and that when the body dies, the soul lives on. Wayne and I had always believed, and I continue to believe that as long as our soul is okay, our options on how to end the pain we are going through in our body is up to us.

Thankfully, the law allows such a decision by anyone who opts for it, as it affects no one else in any bad way.

Researcher: Your information is revealing. Thank you. Would you like to share anything again in his last moments?

Margarita: Wayne was moved to Grace Hospital from the ALS House where the assisted dying was carried out. Family members surrounded his death bed, and some rubbed his feet with oil, while he held on to his son's hand, and his son held on to him tightly. I believe Wayne received the support and approval of family members and friends till the very end. His friends were singing all through the process of the procedure, based on Wayne's request as a musician and singer himself. Wayne went through excruciating pain - with profound difficulty in breathing. His system was gradually shutting down. His organs were giving out. As a spiritual person, and as someone who liked to inspire people with his dignity and humour, especially as he was a comedian with boundless and unique sense of humour, his attitude to a borderline situation like this would be to respond to ALS with euthanasia/medical assistance in dying.

Researcher: So, you were able to make a connection of your spirituality to help Wayne make the decision to overcome the pain he was going through in his body...

Margarita: Yes, I can say that theologically, my belief and that of Wayne on the spiritual reality that the human soul lives forever brought comfort in the decision to end the pain by ending the life or the body that housed the pain. There were no concerns [such as theological or ethical issues] to worry about. Our spirituality was an influential reason behind the decision to opt for euthanasia/medical assistance in dying. Each time I remember the last moments of Wayne going through the assisted dying, I am emotional all over – but thankful for the opportunity to witness the peaceful passing of Wayne, and thankful that my son and Wayne's only child witnessed the peaceful ending of Wayne's pain. Wayne's son and only child saw his father transit peacefully while ending the excruciating pain. Our personal experience watching Wayne in excruciating pain and severe suffering also supported our decision to opt for euthanasia/medical assistance in dying.

Researcher: Thanks for sharing. Would you remember any role or involvement of family members, friends, or significant others?

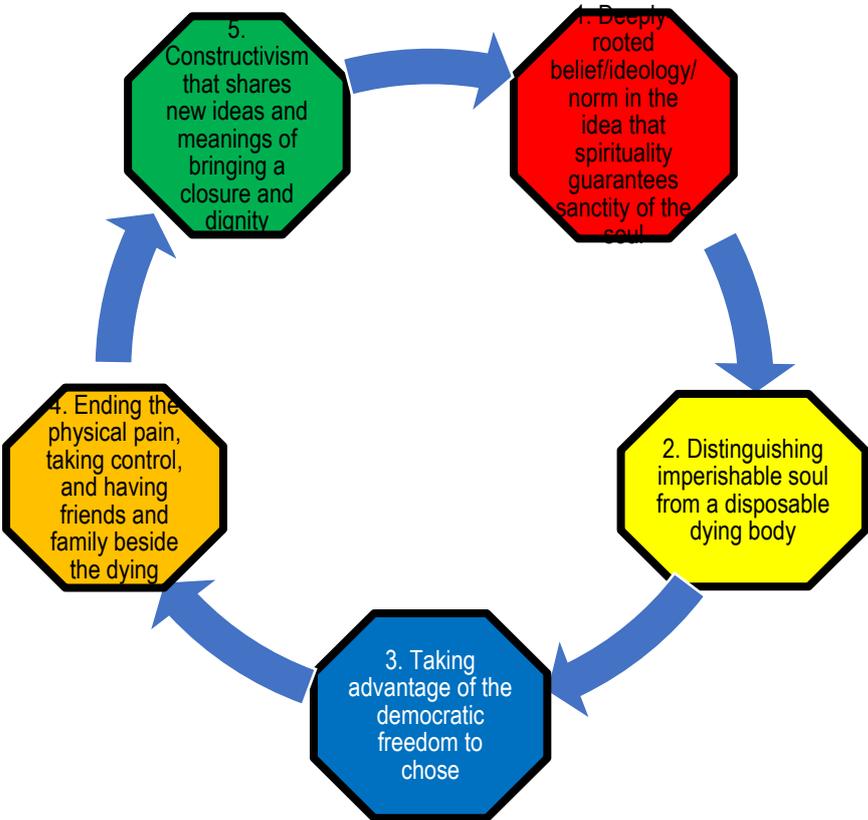
Margarita: Yes, friends and family members were very involved, and I am thankful that family members and friends were there to sing and celebrate him until he stopped breathing. Wayne's sister, Coleen, who, as I mentioned earlier as Science and Mind Preacher in the US, worked closely with Wayne, and planned the whole thing, and guided her brother in processing, and in later making the decision to end his life via assisted dying. Wayne's decision was not

sudden or overnight. Euthanasia or medical assistance in dying option has many benefits for Wayne. Wayne’s decision to chose euthanasia/medical assistance in dying was processed over several months before the final decision, and several months followed again before the final act, and he was always reminded about his free-will to change his decision or mind even at the last second.

Researcher: So, in terms of dignity in dying, as well as a compassionate closure, would you say these were accomplished for Wayne?

Margarita: Yes. I believe that the procedural event that allowed family members and friends to be present gave our son a final closure on the death of his father – and able to transit from seeing his dying father in excruciating pain while he could no longer function – to witnessing a peaceful removal from a place of excruciating pain to a place of eternal rest from the physical pain, and while all of these were going on, his only child had the privilege of holding his father’s hand till he stopped breathing. I see this as an assurance for our son that he will continue to hold his father’s hand forever. There was no negative post-death effects or trauma but a good closure for us.

Figure 4: A graphical illustration of how Margarita’s social construction of euthanasia/assisted dying give birth to new ideas



The illustration above simply shows how Margarita's new ideas give new meaning to the concept of assisted dying and death in dignity while guaranteeing the sanctity of the imperishable soul. The emphasis on the eventual ending of her husband's pain and the professionalism of the medical professionals in handling the peaceful exit of her husband give the impression of a satisfactory end through euthanasia/assisted dying.

From the first-hand, primary source information collected from Margarita, the following facts became obvious – although some were deductible:

1. Excruciating pain suffered by the dying loved one or family member (in this case, former husband) from a terminal illness drove the decision to opt for medical assistance in dying.
2. The desire to see the suffering family member freed from pain and supported to exit this world with dignity also guided the decision to opt for medical assistance in dying.
3. Emotional response to the dying person's excruciating pain played a decisive role in the decision to support the decision for euthanasia or medically assisted dying.
4. A perspective on spirituality that holds firm to the idea of an imperishable soul that lives forever while a dying body could be disposed of explains why respondent and her former husband opted for medical assistance in dying. In this case, an imperishable soul settles any theological and ethical issues that may arise.
5. The need to release a dying family member from continued suffering could most likely be a deductible compassionate reason to support medical assistance in dying in this case.
6. The issue of financial stress did not come up at all in the information shared by the primary informant, and based on the Manitoba Healthcare system, it can be deduced that there was no connection to financial stress in this case.
7. The desire to see Margarita's husband die with dignity is very true in this case.
8. Based on the level of professionalism displayed by the medical team that carried out the medical assistance in dying, including the level of care and respect shown to the person who chose medical assistance in dying and his family, one can deduce that there were no negative effects on the family members, and some may likely be attracted to the option of medical assistance in dying.
9. From one's deduction from the first-hand information shared by the interviewee, it is safe to say that the democratic principle that protects autonomy (one's freedom to choose how to die) empowered the decision to support/opt for euthanasia/medical assistance in dying in this case.

10. Based on deduction from the first-hand information obtained, the ethical argument of non-maleficence (the principle that the act does not inflict harm on others, and decision affects no one else) most likely supported the decision to support/opt for euthanasia/medical assistance in dying.
11. Again, one's deduction from the interviewee's first-hand information is that the ethical argument of justice (that promotes a system that ensures equitable benefits) most likely informed the decision to support/opt for euthanasia/medically assistance in dying.
12. Based on the first-hand information obtained from the interviewee, the ethical argument of beneficence (act that is helpful and beneficial to person with disabilities) informed the decision to opt for euthanasia/medical assistance in dying in this case.
13. From the reasoning of the interviewee and her late former husband, their idea of an imperishable soul gives a new social construction, ideas, meaning, perceptions, and interests (constructivism) that will likely have theological and ethical implications for a new insight about the legalization of euthanasia/medically assisted dying.
14. Interviewee and her late former husband never followed any religious faith but derived their spiritual beliefs from various religious perspectives from where they developed their perspectives of spirituality that supports a perishable body but an imperishable soul – spirituality in this case becomes a shared idea powered by constructivism.
15. Interviewee does not see any support for medical assistance in dying as a possible inadvertent promotion or encouragement of suicide or murder.
16. Based on interviewee's spirituality argument that believes that the human soul is imperishable while a dying body could be disposed off; one can deduce from the interviewee's reasoning that sanctity of life is only limited, most likely, to a human soul that is imperishable, and definitely not applicable to a dying or afflicted human body that is suffering from a terminal disease, especially one that has a very low propensity or probability to beat the odds and survive.
17. From the narratives of the interviewee, particularly about how her former husband endured excruciating pain in the presence of his son, the personal experience of tragedy of living with someone experiencing severe suffering most likely supported the decision to opt for euthanasia/medically assisted dying.
18. Based on interviewee's first-hand information that described the experience of medical assistance in dying as an option that provided a good closure to her former husband's

suffering, it is safe to say that there was most likely no devastating or negative post-death effects of euthanasia/medically assisted dying on family members.

In comparison, and consistent with Creswell submission that a case study should also include multiple sources such as similar or relevant documents, archival records, interviews, observations, and or physical artifacts¹⁰⁵, this study reviewed 50 cases of individuals who opted for euthanasia/assisted dying. The perception that drove the 50 cases appear similar, and this study will focus on those similarities. Of the cases under review, 11 out of the 54 individuals or approximately 20 per cent of reviewed cases have a similar constructivist approach, and subsequently, shared similar ideas of why assisted dying is ideal. Hence, Jean Elizabeth Ayre¹⁰⁶, Susan Elizabeth Wah (nee Olafson)¹⁰⁷, Audrey Parker¹⁰⁸, Kristine Mary Lee¹⁰⁹, Katherine “Kay” Cross¹¹⁰, George Dawson¹¹¹, Jennifer Ellis¹¹², Owen¹¹³, Natalie¹¹⁴, as well as Charlie and Francie Emerick¹¹⁵ (couple) were all *terminally ill, in pain*, and they all chose to *die dignified with family and friends around*. Their idea of dying dignified is the shared norm that gives a new meaning to sanctity of life – one in which the soul is willingly released while disposing off the dying encasement in the form of the afflicted human body.

Another 23 of the 54 cases, representing 43 per cent constructed dignity in dying, like Margarita’s husband, Wayne, as a happy release of a suffering and dying human body from a terminal ailment and excruciating pain, suffering, and in some cases, squalor. So, Randy Pettit¹¹⁶, Jordan Robert Chalmers “Jordie”¹¹⁷, Brian Weeks (Brian)¹¹⁸, Clarence Byrd and his

¹⁰⁵ J. W. Creswell (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publications, p. 65.

¹⁰⁶ Neil Bardal Funeral Centre (n.d.). Obituary for Jean Elizabeth Ayre. Retrieved December 14, 2021 from <https://memorials.neilbardalfuneralhome.com/Ayre-Jean/3384939/obituary.php>

¹⁰⁷ Winnipeg Free Press Passages (2021, October 9). SUSAN ELIZABETH WAH (nee OLAFSON). Retrieved December 8, 2021, from https://passages.winnipegfreepress.com/passage-details/id-301989/WAH_SUSAN

¹⁰⁸ CTV News. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/audrey-parker-writes-her-own-obit-i-died-a-beautiful-death-1.4160689>

¹⁰⁹ Obituary of Kristine Mary Lee. Retrieved December 8 from <https://humphreymiles.com/tribute/details/6355/Kristine-Lee/obituary.html>

¹¹⁰ Tribute Archive. Retrieved from <https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/22547425/dr-katherine-kay-cross>

¹¹¹ Egan, K. (2021, November 3). Egan: He chose a 'beautiful' death to avoid being a burden. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved December 14, 2021, from <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/egan-he-chose-a-beautiful-death-to-avoid-being-a-burden>

¹¹² Dunham, J. (2018, November 2). Audrey Parker writes her own obit: 'I died a beautiful death'. *CTV News*. Retrieved December 6, 2021 from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/audrey-parker-writes-her-own-obit-i-died-a-beautiful-death-1.4160689>

¹¹³ Dying with Dignity Canada. Retrieved December 12, 2021 from https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/owen_story

¹¹⁴ Dying With Dignity Canada: https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/rachel_story

¹¹⁵ Aleccia, J. (2018, March 6). This couple died by assisted suicide together. Here’s their story. *Kaiser Health News*. Retrieved December 8, 2021 from <https://time.com/5179977/assisted-suicide-couple-death/>

¹¹⁶ H. Ollenberger (2019, July 31). I see myself out: Medical assisted dying. *Calgary Journal*. Retrieved December 5, 2021 from <https://calgaryjournal.ca/2019/07/31/i-ill-see-myself-out-medical-assisted-dying/>

¹¹⁷ Wheatland Funeral Home (n.d.). Obituary of Jordan Robert Chalmers. Retrieved December 14, 2021 from <https://wheatlandfuneralhome.ca/tribute/details/2089/Jordan-Chalmers/obituary.html>

¹¹⁸ The Globe and Mail – <https://www.legacy.com/ca/obituaries/theglobeandmail/name/brian-weeks-obituary?pid=201320516#:~:text=Brian%20decided%20on%20assisted%20death,he%20said%2C%20and%20he%20did>

wife – Ida Chen¹¹⁹ (couple), Ronald Bayne¹²⁰, Chris Gladders¹²¹, Marisa Nini¹²², Sheila¹²³, Linda Levy¹²⁴, Louise¹²⁵, Carolyn Sitlington¹²⁶, Michael Hoskins¹²⁷, Cindy Shepler¹²⁸, Myra¹²⁹, Kayly¹³⁰, Nancy Vickers¹³¹, Aurelia Brouwers¹³², Cindy Siegel Shepler¹³³, Brittany Maynard¹³⁴, Nathan¹³⁵, born Nancy Verhelst, Sean Tagert¹³⁶, and “terminally ill 17-year-old¹³⁷” would see the peaceful release of the suffering human body from suffering and pain as possibly not only dignified, but also most likely a solemn way to release a “spiritual” or “sacred” soul that is indestructible through the pathway of ending the disposable and destructible dying and afflicted human body that has been described in the Bible as “perishable” and “immortal” (1 Corinthians 15:53¹³⁸).

The remaining 20 of the 54 cases, representing 37 per cent of the reviewed cases *finished life on their terms with proper care, and without losing control or their independence,*

¹¹⁹ Byrd, C. (2020, May 29). On eve of his death, Ottawa man reflects on decision to choose medical assistance in dying. Ottawa Citizen. Retrieved December 19, 2021 from <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/on-eve-of-his-death-ottawa-man-reflects-on-decision-to-choose-medical-assistance-in-dying>

¹²⁰ Ontario Medical Association. Retrieved December 12, 2021 from <https://www.oma.org/newsroom/in-memoriam/dr-james-ronald-douglas-bayne/>

¹²¹ Levy, S. (2021, February 6). Man says brother, 35, with rare disease died in squalor at retirement home. Toronto Sun. Retrieved December 14, 2021 from <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/levy-man-says-brother-35-with-rare-disease-died-in-squalor-at-retirement-home>

¹²² MacArthur, C. (2017, July 5). Marisa's last days: A family's experience with medically assisted death. CBC News. Retrieved December 15, 2021 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-family-medically-assisted-death-experience-1.4190358>

¹²³ Dying With Dignity – Retrieved December 22, 2021 from https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/janis_story

¹²⁴ Dying With Dignity - https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/lorne_story

¹²⁵ Dying With Dignity Canada - https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/jenny_story

¹²⁶ Folkins, T. (2018, December 28). Medical assistance in dying: One Anglican family's story. Anglican Journal. Retrieved December 5, 2021 from <https://anglicanjournal.com/assisted-dying-one-anglican-family-story/>

¹²⁷ Ackerman, J. (2019, April 17). Dying with dignity: Sask. woman shares story of brother's doctor-assisted death. Regina Leader-Post. Retrieved December 6, 2021 from <https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/dying-with-dignity-sask-woman-shares-story-of-brothers-doctor-assisted-death>

¹²⁸ Sullivan, C. (2020, June 17). 'When is enough, enough?' After years of pain, one woman's story of choosing death by assisted suicide. 10 News. Retrieved December 5, 2021 from <https://www.wbir.com/article/news/health/when-is-enough-enough-after-years-of-pain-one-womans-story-of-choosing-death-by-assisted-suicide/51-a2efebd2-9964-4d0a-bd57-e7632a43e817>

¹²⁹ Dying With Dignity - https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/it_was_maid_for_myra

¹³⁰ Dying With Dignity - https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/leann_forced_transfer

¹³¹ CBC News: The National. (2017, December 12). Assisted dying: What happens when doctors disagree on what the law says? Youtube. Accessed January 12, 2021 via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmewDxkxZw&ab_channel=CBCNews%3ATheNational

¹³² Pressly, (2018, August 9). The troubled 29-year-old helped to die by Dutch doctors. BBC News, The Netherlands. Retrieved December 23, 2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-45117163>

¹³³ Prior, R. (2020, June 7). My friend chose an assisted death in Switzerland. Her dying wish was to tell you why. CNN Health. Retrieved November 18, 2021 from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/07/health/cindy-shepler-assisted-death-wellness-trnd/index.html>

¹³⁴ Murano, G. (2015, March 9). 8 most controversial cases of euthanasia. “The terminally ill 29-year-old wife who moved to Oregon to have the right to die on her own terms.” Oddee. Retrieved November 7, 2021 from https://www.oddee.com/item_99258.aspx

¹³⁵ Murano, G. (2015, March 9). 8 most controversial cases of euthanasia. “The Belgian man who was killed by euthanasia after a botched sex change operation.” Oddee. Retrieved November 7, 2021 from https://www.oddee.com/item_99258.aspx

¹³⁶ CBC News (2019, August 13). B.C. man with ALS chooses medically assisted death after years of struggling to fund 24-hour care. Retrieved December 5, 2021 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/als-bc-man-medically-assisted-death-1.5244731>

¹³⁷ Euro News (2016, September 17). 17-year-old becomes first minor to die by euthanasia in Belgium. YouTube. Accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPX1J9HmfeM&ab_channel=euronews

¹³⁸ *New International Version*, 2011, 1 Corinthians 15:53

able to bid farewell proper goodbye, in some cases, getting involved in the planning of their funeral, and even having the ability to sign off papers to donate organs. Those in this category are David Malcolm Stuart¹³⁹, Judy Slakov¹⁴⁰, Willem Jewett¹⁴¹, Bob and Margi Wilson¹⁴² (couple), Leila Bell¹⁴³, Martine Partridge¹⁴⁴, John Davey¹⁴⁵, Linda Phillips¹⁴⁶, Jane Hamilton¹⁴⁷, Don Kent¹⁴⁸, Ralph Harms¹⁴⁹, identical twins – Marc and Eddy Verbessem¹⁵⁰, Sharron Demchuk¹⁵¹, Erik Carlson¹⁵², Tempra Jones¹⁵³, Will Pegg¹⁵⁴, Bob Cole¹⁵⁵, and Andrew Tyler¹⁵⁶. A graphical illustration of the constructivist approach that explains how a reconstruction of definition and meaning of sanctity of life and dignity in passing may have influenced the decision to chose euthanasia or assisted dying, and subsequently, raise some theological implications on the sacredness of death and dying against the imposing secular ideation of sanctity of life via dignity in dying constructivist argument.

¹³⁹ McInnis and Holloway Funeral Homes (n.d.). Obituary of David Malcolm Stuart. Retrieved December 12, 2021 from <https://mhfh.com/tribute/details/31335/David-STUART/obituary.html>

¹⁴⁰ Haywards Funeral Services (n.d.). Judy Slakov. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from <https://www.haywardsfuneral.ca/obituary/judy-slakov/>

¹⁴¹ Bellware, K. (2022, January 20). Former lawmaker dies using medical suicide law he helped pass nearly a decade ago. The Washington Post. Retrieved February 8, 2022 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/01/20/willem-jewett-medical-suicide/>

¹⁴² Fraser, S. (2021, June 4). P.E.I. couple who used medically assisted dying 'went out on their own terms,' says family. CBC News. Retrieved January 9, 2022 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-maid-assisted-dying-1.6050270>

¹⁴³ Frangou, C. (2020, March 4). When assisted dying means you have to go before you're ready. The Guardian. Retrieved December 21, 2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/04/assisted-dying-maid-canada-leila-bell>

¹⁴⁴ Gerein, K. (2017, June 15). In her words: Why I chose a medically assisted death. Edmonton Journal. Retrieved December 17, 2021 from <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/in-her-words-why-i-chose-a-medically-assisted-death>

¹⁴⁵ Taylor, N. (2019, June 13). Orillia woman shares husband's experience with medically assisted death. Orillia Matters. Retrieved December 22, 2021 from <https://www.orilliamatters.com/local-news/orillia-woman-shares-husbands-experience-with-medically-assisted-death-1504141>

¹⁴⁶ Retirees' Association of Lakehead University (RALU) (n.d.). In Memoriam. Retrieved December 16, 2021, from <https://www.lakeheadretirees.ca/in-memoriam/>

¹⁴⁷ Dying With Dignity Canada (2018, September 28). Retrieved December 6, 2021 from https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/wendy_story

¹⁴⁸ Dying With Dignity - https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/sandra_story

¹⁴⁹ ThePressDemocrat (2021, August 14). Ralph Harms chooses a death with dignity. Youtube. Accessed on February 2, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esVf6MdJXhA&ab_channel=ThePressDemocrat

¹⁵⁰ Murano, G. (2015, March 9). 8 most controversial cases of euthanasia. "The twins who were going blind and asked to be euthanized". Oddee. Retrieved November 7, 2021 from https://www.oddee.com/item_99258.aspx

¹⁵¹ Brown, L. (2022, January 12). N.B. woman first in province to donate organs after MAID. CTV News. Retrieved February 4, 2022 from <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/n-b-woman-first-in-province-to-donate-organs-after-maid-1.5737612>

¹⁵² NEWS CENTER Maine (2020, December 3). Death with dignity: One family's story. YouTube. Accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp_OcCYlyv0&ab_channel=NEWSCENTERMaine

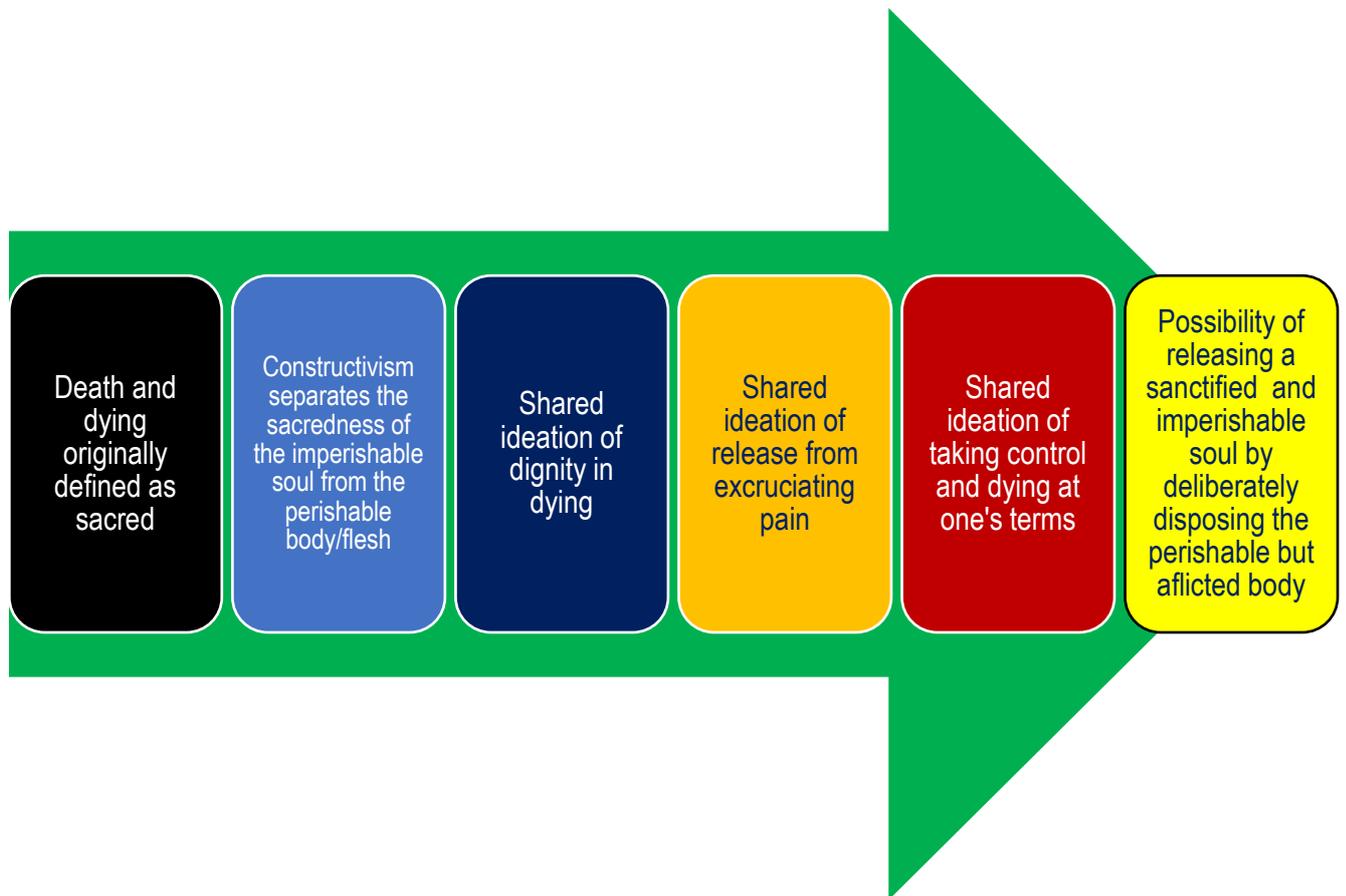
¹⁵³ 12 News (2020, February 11.). Dying with Dignity: Seattle woman decides to die on her own terms after cancer returns for 4th time. YouTube. Accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mic8WX3EN4&ab_channel=12News

¹⁵⁴ WebMD (2019, January 22). Dying on your own terms. YouTube. Accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXtBgUw7D1M&ab_channel=WebMD

¹⁵⁵ ITV News (2015, August 17). Right-to-die campaigner ends life in Swiss clinic. YouTube. Accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f4lSTVt9w&ab_channel=ITVNews

¹⁵⁶ Joseph, A. (2017, August 4). 'My last big adventure': Ex-NME music writer, 70, dies at Dignitas after filming his final weeks battling Parkinson's in heart-wrenching videoblog that calls for assisted dying to be legalised here. Daily Mail Online. Retrieved November 14, 2021 from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4760200/Ex-NME-music-writer-Andrew-Tyler-70-dies-Dignitas.html>

Figure 5: Graphical illustration of how ideation may have led to a constructivist approach



Conclusion

Margarita calls attention to the differentiation between spirituality and the sanctity of the soul on the one hand, and the freedom to end an excruciating pain by disposing the human body that carried the disease. Are there theological implications in the way constructivism has redefined how people see sanctity of life and dying with dignity, based on the examples in this research? While it is plausible to conclude that secular reasoning of constructivism may have placed more importance on the definition, understanding, and acceptance of the concept of euthanasia or assisted dying and death, it is also fair to differentiate this approach to one that uses the sacred lens to define the concept of death and dying. This study reviewed 54 individuals who chose assisted dying and obtained a first-hand information from the wife of the man who chose and died via assisted dying. The fact that they all seem to possibly see sanctity of life from the constructivist perspective of releasing the imperishable soul by the act of disposing of the perishable, but afflicted body of pain and suffering could raise some questions that have some theological implications. In this case, can the constructivist idea of equating

sanctity of life with the spirituality argument of an indestructible soul become an acceptable norm? Can the approach of separating the human soul from the human body give vent to the idea of equating assisted dying to how Jesus Christ voluntarily submitted his life on the Cross? Can one pray for, seek, and receive forgiveness from God, and subsequently obtain a guarantee of making heaven at the point of ending one's life through assisted dying? These are pertinent questions to pursue in subsequent research on this topic. Even then, questions regarding the non-judgmental stance of the Bible on Samson's murder-suicide or the obvious silence on the act of suicide by king Saul or the assisted suicide carried out by Abimelech's armor-bearer will likely continue to fuel the likely constructivist idea of assisted suicide as biblical, and possibly pursued as having theological implications that could tacitly support the concept of euthanasia or assisted dying. This surely calls more researchers to pursue further research in this area.

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RECENZE

BOOK REVIEW

Bray, G. 2012. *God is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2012. 767 p. ISBN 978-1-4335-2269-7

The book *God is Love* was written by Professor Gerald Bray from Beeson Divinity School, Alabama. It is a reference to scholarly materials on systematic theology. In his book the author presents illustrative thoughts about the love of God manifested through time and in different circumstances in history. It is rich in data and documentation for theology professors, pastors and for theology students. The sections of it on equality in racial and ethnic challenges together with how we can better understand and adapt to communities are valued and used as teaching material by many teachers and institutions.

Without a doubt, Bray offers us some insightful and helpful thoughts that indeed require careful reflection on what God's love looks like and how it shapes relationships as human beings. The sections of it on equality in racial and ethnic challenges together with how we can better understand and adapt to communities are valued and used as teaching material by many teachers and institutions.

God is Love is a 767 – page book, divided into 5 parts and 31 main chapters. The first part deals with the dialectic of love. The second part deals with love as the very nature of God. The focus of the third part is the love of God manifested towards his creation. The fourth part characterizes the human rejection of God's love. The main idea of the fifth part is God's deep and immeasurable love for the world.

Often, we hear the opinion that the Old Testament does not exhibit much of the love of God as it does in the New Testament; however, reading the book *God is Love* by Professor Gerald Bray, one senses the inexhaustible depth of the immeasurable love and mercy of God. This immeasurable and great love is this undeserved love towards Israel in the desert, nourishing the people with provisions, water and pleasing orientations manifested through nature, plants, and the tender and soft songs of the doves, the refreshing water, the birds with gratitude exalting the Creator and for His presence at every moment with us.

The book demonstrates that the Bible is the tangible proof of the potential harmonious relationship between God and man. God created human beings with the capacity to enjoy this harmony with Him without losing the option to choose between good and evil. The aim or purpose of humanity is to demonstrate that the love of God has been manifested to prioritize

the salvation of fallen men and rescue them from the ignominious (unspeakable) filth of sin. The offering of Jesus as a redemptive act to makes mankind free from misfortune shackled by cataclysmic sin. God's merciful decision had as its fundamental objective to prevent the human being from becoming a slave to destructive sinfulness by getting out of this dazed circle of destruction.

G. Bray tried to demonstrate that love is the essence of spiritual life. From the creation to the eschatological announcement of the return of Jesus on earth and the establishment of the kingdom of God, humanity may evidence the sign of love sublimely manifested despite the fall of the human being, the deviations and detrimental overhasty decisions of the being created by God with free will. Throughout history, however, God in His infinitely merciful love gives a look full of compassion and of a redemption rescue mission. The happiness of a life in harmony with the virtues, values, and mutual support for each one, are indisputable acts that we belong to the discipleship of Christ and are made ready to testify and share with people that we are children of God and belong to Him. Societal, congregational, and professional relationships must be built and polished based on the mutual touch of the fruits of the Spirit indicating the relationship with Christ. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22–23, New International Version). "Where love is the compelling power, there is no sense of strain or conflict or bondage in doing what is right: the man or woman who is compelled by Jesus' love and empowered by His Spirit does the will of God from the heart".¹⁵⁷

God is Love is essentially a systematic theology. But unlike many scholarly works by theologians, Bray starts by writing that he writes to "reach those who would not normally find systematic theology appealing or even comprehensible" (p.12). I would say Bray accomplishes this mission well. Highly readable and accessible.

G. Bray emphasizes that God, out of His love, used valuable men and women despite their frailties and shady past, like Abraham who lied (Genesis 20:1–18), Moses who killed (Exodus 2:11–13), David with an idle mind, greed, adultery and murder (Psalm 51), Mary who coveted and cherished the reputation and position of Moses (Numbers 12), and more, to show that under no circumstances to tolerate a sinful life rather than repent and leave a tasteless life, and return to a life full of spiritual achievement. The experience of Peter, the treacherous, who swore to not be knowing Jesus (Mark 14:66–72), Saul of Tarsus who became Paul but had mercilessly persecuted Christians to condemn them (Acts 9:1–20) in New Testament are all examples of changed individuals who repented and experienced spiritual achievement – because of God's love. The first step of knowing God is to understand His love for you

¹⁵⁷ Bruce, F. F. 1977. *Paul – Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Quicksilver Drive Dulles: Eerdmans, 1977 p. 21.

personally. God demonstrates His love for individual by providing their needs in ways that steer them toward salvation. Not a blade of grass, fruit or vegetable can grow without receiving life from God. All this He does for humanity. Though he cursed the earth for man's sake, God again and again shows he is trustworthy, and that he desires an intimate relationship with humans. Satan, on the other hand, has done his best to represent God as a vicious tyrant awaiting His first opportunity to destroy anyone who even slightly strays from God's path. Christ came not only to save humanity but to show the Father's true character, which exposes Satan's lies. God and Jesus' characters are the same – so loving in nature that children flocked to Jesus. Satan applies to God his own attributes of him and using the Old Testament as proof; many believe this lie. Yet the Old Testament shows that God would have no need of using discipline or destruction were it not for Satan's influence.

Bray describes the fulfillment of God's Love in Jesus' sacrifice for humanhood. When Jesus rose to heaven, he left the Holy Spirit, the "comforter" to be with us in our weaknesses and strengthen us and in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the presence of the Holy Spirit is evidenced (Acts chapters 1 and 2). The first great work that the Holy Spirit began was the work of converting Christ's chosen people to a living faith. It is difficult to say when the disciples of Jesus became believers, and it seems that some still had their natural clothes even after resurrection of Jesus. Presumably, they must have believed something to give up their previous lives and follow Him.

Bray focuses also on the climax of this immeasurable love that is yet to come. When God mentions that he is preparing a heavenly abode for the elect, our capacity for knowledge cannot understand such a sublime act of love. It reminds us of the disciples who still doubted the profound act of Jesus in the resurrection until Thomas mentioned if he did not touch the hands of Jesus, he did not believe. God reserves for each one of us an enormous reward and not because humans deserve it, but rather Christ paid our ransom through His blood. Jesus comforts His disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[a]; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going." (John 14:1–4, Bible Gateway).

As can be seen from the overview of the main ideas, the book is not only a starting study text of systematic theology for theologians, but I also recommend it for encouragement to other workers and active members of the church.

Libny H. Dubreuze, Sr.