

The conflict dynamics and themes in Paul's letter to Philemon

BH Meyers

 [orcid.org/ 0000-0002-3020-7905](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3020-7905)

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts* in *New Testament* at the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr JM Wessels

Graduation May 2018
26970090



PREFACE

Having already achieved a degree in conflict management, my eye is constantly looking toward what God's Word has to say about conflict. For my own personal Bible study, I enjoy translating the NT, and upon the occasion of translating Philemon, the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to this conflict. As I contemplated further academic research, this study was a natural fit for my interests, experience, and study of God's Word. Therefore, this analysis springs from my own translation and exegetical study of the book of Philemon, and it is a passion of mine to share the fruit of that study. My prayer is that this will be the beginning of more research on a biblical theology of conflict, and more importantly, the equipping of the saints to better respond to conflict.

I must begin by acknowledging the sacrifice, support, and encouragement of my wife, Susan, as without her, this work would not be complete – I love you! I also want to thank my children for their sacrifice of time with Dad in order for me to do research and to write.

I also want to thank my ministry partners at Berean Bible Institute – South Africa and Sandton Bible Church who sacrificed time and stepped into the gap in order for me to concentrate on this endeavour. More importantly, their faithful prayers were a great blessing and encouragement.

A special thanks is given for my friend Adebayo who not only prayed for me during this time, but whose advice was invaluable and such an encouragement. I have learned more from him than he'll ever know.

Where would this work be without the input, feedback, and encouragement of my professor Johannes Wessels? Thank you Prof for making time for phone calls, driving to campus, writing emails, and (for something no other professor of mine has ever communicated to me previously) for praying for me. Words cannot express what those prayers meant to me.

Finally, I want to thank my Heavenly Father, My Lord and Saviour – Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing me to this point in life where my understanding of the conflicts of life have shaped who I am and who I am becoming. I pray that God will be able to further use me in ways that impact lives for all eternity.

Brent Meyers

October 2017

ABSTRACT

Why doesn't Paul just come out directly and tell Philemon what he should do in regards to Onesimus – that seems so simple? Down through the ages, since its composition, many have provided various explanations for Paul's vagueness in this regard. By exploring the conflict dynamics and themes of Philemon, this research demonstrates that Paul's ambiguity was due to the nature of the conflict and the resolution that Paul proposed to Philemon to resolve the conflict with Onesimus. Predicating this proposal is a view of conflict where it is seen as an opportunity for growth (despite the uncomfortableness of the struggle that it creates) rather than as inherently evil or sinful. It is the assertion of this study that when conflict is viewed properly, the message of the book of Philemon becomes a blessing and resource for believers to learn how to respond to conflict appropriately. Since conflict is so prevalent in our lives, and since it is addressed in Scripture, believers would further benefit by exploring the development of a biblical theology of conflict.

Key terms: Paul, Philemon, Onesimus, identity, conflict, dynamics, slavery, themes, biblical theology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	I
ABSTRACT	II
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Title	1
1.2 Background and problem statement	1
1.2.1 Background	1
1.2.2 Problem statement.....	3
1.2.3 Aim	3
1.2.4 Objectives.....	4
1.3 Central theological argument	4
1.4 Methodology	4
1.5 Ethical risk assessment	6
1.6 Classification of chapters	6
1.7 Notes	6
CHAPTER 2: CONFLICT DEFINED	8
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Survey of definitions	11
2.2.1 Conceptual	11
2.2.1.1 Dictionaries.....	12
2.2.1.2 Conflict studies	13
2.2.1.2.1 Historical development of modern conflict studies.....	14
2.2.1.2.2 Types of conflict.....	17

2.2.1.2.3	Causes of conflict	19
2.2.1.2.4	Conflict resolution models.....	21
2.2.1.2.5	Stages of conflict	23
2.2.1.2.6	Conflict theory definitions.....	25
2.2.2	Practical or Experiential	29
2.2.2.1	Organizational	30
2.2.2.2	Cultural	31
2.2.2.3	Intra- and Interpersonal.....	33
2.2.2.4	Narrative	34
2.2.3	Theological	35
2.3	Thematic analysis.....	37
2.4	Working definition of conflict	38
2.5	Theological considerations.....	44
2.4.1	The beginning of conflict.....	45
2.5.2	A wrong or sinful response to conflict.....	48
2.5.3	A wise or godly response to conflict evidenced	49
2.5.4	Jesus' use of conflict.....	50
2.6	Conclusion.....	52
2.7	Notes	52
CHAPTER 3: THE <i>WIRKUNGSGESCHICTE</i> OF THE CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION IN THE BOOK OF PHILEMON.....		59
3.1	Introduction.....	59
3.1.1	Narrative approach vs. Literary approach	59

3.1.2	Slavery backdrop	60
3.1.3	Purpose	60
3.1.4	Narrative foci	61
3.1.5	Textual overview	61
3.2	Traditional narrative	62
3.3	Modern alterations to the traditional narrative	66
3.3.1	Early alterations	66
3.3.1.1	Seventh-Day Adventists.....	67
3.3.1.2	Knox	67
3.3.2	Modern nuances	67
3.3.2.1	Adjudicator.....	67
3.3.2.2	Gift.....	68
3.3.2.3	African community	68
3.3.3	Fundamental changes	69
3.3.3.1	Sexual exploitation.....	69
3.3.3.2	Slave owner.....	70
3.3.3.3	Marginalized	71
3.3.3.4	Brother of Philemon	72
3.3.4	Subversive components.....	72
3.4	Ambiguities	72
3.5	Conclusion.....	74
3.6	Notes	75

CHAPTER 4: KEY DYNAMICS AND THEMES SIGNIFICANT TO THE RESOLUTION

PRESENTED BY PAUL	86
4.1 Introduction	86
4.2 Definitions	88
4.2.1 Dynamics.....	88
4.2.2 Themes	88
4.2.3 Significance	88
4.3 Literary components	88
4.3.1 Genre	89
4.3.1.1 Epistolary analysis	89
4.3.1.2 Narrative.....	90
4.3.2 Compositional shifts.....	93
4.3.2.1 Diagrams	93
4.3.2.2 Textual chunks	98
4.3.3 Patterned recursion	99
4.3.3.1 Repetition and Restatement	99
4.3.3.2 Chiasmus	101
4.3.4 Artistic highlighting.....	104
4.3.4.1 Discourse analysis.....	104
4.3.4.2 Syntax and Semantics	107
4.3.5 Rhetorical shaping.....	108
4.3.5.1 Literary rhetorical.....	109
4.3.5.2 Visual rhetoric.....	111
4.3.6 Compilation of dynamics and themes	114

4.4	Solution offered	116
4.5	Conclusion	120
4.6	Endnotes	121
CHAPTER 5: CONTRIBUTIONS TO A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CONFLICT		135
5.1	Introduction	135
5.2	What is Biblical Theology?	136
5.2.1	Perspectives	136
5.2.1.1	Disciplines	137
5.2.1.2	Exegetical process.....	138
5.2.1.3	Context	139
5.2.1.4	Practical.....	139
5.2.1.5	Historical.....	140
5.2.1.6	Distinctives	141
5.2.2	Definition	143
5.2.2.1	Environment	143
5.2.2.2	Classification	144
5.2.3	Deficiency of Biblical Theology	146
5.2.3.1	Conflict misunderstood	146
5.2.3.2	Conflict overlooked	147
5.3	Contributions to Biblical Theology from Philemon	148
5.3.1	Working definition of conflict	149
5.3.2	Biblical understanding of conflict.....	150
5.3.3	Historical perspective.....	150

5.3.4	Identity-based conflict	151
5.3.4.1	What is identity?	151
5.3.4.2	What is identity-based conflict?.....	153
5.3.5	Managing conflict.....	156
5.4	Evaluation of alternatives for identity-based conflict	157
5.4.1	Rothman’s ARIA	157
5.4.2	White’s meaning-narrative framework.....	158
5.4.3	Meyers’ cross-cultural approach	159
5.5	Conclusion	161
5.6	Endnotes	163
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION		170
6.1	Critical observations	170
6.2	Challenge of definition	172
6.3	Challenge for understanding Philemon	173
6.4	Challenge for Biblical Theology	173
6.5	Endnotes	174
BIBLIOGRAPHY		175
ANNEXURE		204

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1:	Dictionary Definition Comparison	12
Table 2-2:	Conflict Historical Stages Analysis	14
Table 2-3:	Types of Conflict	17
Table 2-4:	Typology of Conflict Datasets.....	19
Table 2-5:	Causes of Conflict	20
Table 2-6:	Conflict Resolution Models.....	22
Table 2-7:	Overview of Kraybill's Five Conflict Resolution Styles	23
Table 2-8:	Stages of Conflict	24
Table 2-9:	Conflict Theory Definitions of Conflict.....	27
Table 2-10:	Organizational Definitions of Conflict.....	30
Table 2-11:	Cultural Definitions of Conflict	32
Table 2-12:	Intra- and Interpersonal Definitions of Conflict.....	33
Table 2-13:	Types of Narrative conflict.....	34
Table 2-14:	Identifying Conflict.....	35
Table 2-15:	Theological Definitions of Conflict	36
Table 2-16:	Thematic Elements	37
Table 2-17:	Simple Definitions of Conflict.....	40
Table 2-18:	Reflections on the Struggle	40
Table 2-19:	The Importance of the Response	41
Table 2-20:	English Translations Using the Word "Conflict".....	44
Table 4-1:	The Referential and Poetic Sequence of Actions in Philemon	91
Table 4-2:	Simple Comparison of Sequences	91

Table 4-3:	Basic Outline of Philemon	99
Table 4-4:	Runge’s Discourse Analysis of Philemon	105
Table 4-5:	Runge’s Functional Outline of Philemon.....	106
Table 4-6:	Thematic Elements in Philemon	108
Table 4-7:	Honour/Shame Concept as Win/Lose Performance	110
Table 4-8:	Benefits of Cooperation.....	110
Table 4-9:	Family or Kinship Rhetoric	110
Table 4-10:	Familial Terms and Their Underlying Value.....	112
Table 4-11:	Visual Scenes in Philemon.....	113
Table 4-12:	Dynamics and Themes from Literary Component Analysis.....	114
Table 5-1:	Contrasts Between Biblical and Systematic Theologies	138
Table 5-2:	Bird’s Problem with a Central Theme	143
Table 5-3:	Carson’s Evaluation of a Viable Biblical Theology	144
Table 5-4:	Castell’s Collective Identities	152
Table 5-5:	Identities in the Book of Philemon	153
Table 5-6:	White’s Meaning-Narrative in Context	158

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1:	Wheel of Conflict	20
Figure 2-2:	5 Stages of Conflict Cycle	25
Figure 2-3:	The Big Picture of Conflict Transformation	27
Figure 2-4:	The Process of Conflict	39
Figure 2-5:	Working Definition Visualized	39
Figure 4-1:	Diagram of Philemon 4-7.....	94
Figure 4-2:	Diagram of Philemon 8-12.....	95
Figure 4-3:	Diagram of Philemon 13-14.....	96
Figure 4-4:	Diagram of Philemon 15-16.....	97
Figure 4-5:	Diagram of Philemon 17-22.....	98
Figure 4-6:	Ring Composition of the Letter of Philemon	102
Figure 4-7:	Chiastic Structure of Verses 8-16.....	103
Figure 4-8:	Greek Chiastic Structure Emphasizing Love and Faith.....	103
Figure 4-9:	Chiastic Structure According to the Semantic Domain of Love	104
Figure 4-10:	Rhetorical Structure of Philemon.....	109
Figure 4-11:	Comparison of Relationships.....	111
Figure 4-12:	Solution Visualized.....	117
Figure 5-1:	Allison’s View of Biblical Theology.....	137
Figure 5-2:	Klink and Lockett Biblical Theology Overview	141
Figure 5-3:	Köstenberger Biblical Theology Overview	142
Figure 5-4:	Patel’s Layers of Conflict.....	154
Figure 5-5:	Rothman’s ARIA Framework	157

Figure 5-6:	Teacher Approach to Identity Issues	160
Figure 5-7:	Learner Approach to Identity Issues	160

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title

Title: The conflict dynamics and themes in Paul's letter to Philemon.

Key words: Paul, Philemon, Onesimus, identity, conflict, fellowship, slavery, refreshment, love, image of God

1.2 Background and problem statement

1.2.1 Background

Growing up as a pastor's son, where my father's theological¹ and practical conviction ('never split a church') would necessitate, every four years or so, another move to a different location, conflict had always been a part of my religious experience. Not until participating in a study module on *Healing the Wounds of Conflict*² did I ever encounter the truth that something positive could arise from conflict. That transformational notion started me on a journey that has continued for these last nineteen years of not *fearing* conflict but *embracing* the opportunity it affords to become the person that God wants me to become.

In researching conflict, it has become apparent that it has a drastic impact upon relationships (Portaro, 1996:27), which is very noteworthy, as researchers indicate that relationships are the predominate ingredient in what makes people happy (Parrott, 1996:2). Believers³ experience this impact more deeply as all that is done in the church is founded on relationships (Wise, 1994:2). Most significantly, one of the key components to the creation and constitution of mankind is that man⁴ is made in the image of God [*imago Dei*] (Tarus, 2016:18; Gardoski, 2007:5),⁵ which means that man was made to be in a relationship with God (Crabb, 1987:88; Campbell-Lane, 2003:20).⁶ Piper (1971:1; Kidwell, 2009:33) defines this concept as: "that in man which constitutes him as *he-whom-God-loves*," which indicates the blessed status of man's creation in comparison to the remainder of God's creation. Following man's creation and as an outworking of the mandate given to man by God (Gn. 1:28), man is to be in relationship with his fellow image-bearers (Crabb, 1987:110; Campbell-Lane, 2003:20). Conflict changes the nature of these interpersonal relationships because it illustrates and reveals one person's commitment to the relationship, and that commitment corresponds to an individual's perception of benefit (Kraybill, 2008:3). As Kilmann (2015:1) states, "The fundamental question in conflict situations is always the same: How can people resolve their differences so their needs and concerns – both short term and long term – will be met?" Some have provided insight into conflict's impact upon relationships, from a biblical perspective.⁷ What is needed is an exegetical study of a biblical

example of conflict, in order to contribute to a needed, biblical theology⁸ of conflict that indicates God-honouring solutions to man's relational challenges.

The book of Philemon provides such opportunity for an exegetical study of conflict in Scripture as it examines the relationship between a master and his slave who are both *believers* in Jesus Christ, have both come under the *lordship* of Christ, and have both experienced the *love* of God, and yet are at odds for an undefined reason (Nguyen, 2012:loc. 40278). Paul seeks the restoration of that relationship by writing the letter, as Lea and Black (2003:458) state, not from the standpoint of a "theologian or apostle to the Gentiles" but as "an intimate, personal account of Paul" which may be indicative of a different tactic than Paul normally used.⁹ As a result, the interaction between these three men becomes a kind of "pedagogy in biography"¹⁰ where the readers are drawn into the account and can sense and visualise the gravity of the situation. Paul's proposed remedy to this conflict must then be examined in light of these conflict dynamics and themes.

The purpose of this study is to determine the *key dynamics* in the conflict of the book of Philemon, to explore the *key themes* in this letter, and to ascertain their significance within Paul's proposed solution to the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus. As a result, this thematic development, in the context of the conflict dynamics of Philemon, provides foundational elements for a biblical theology¹¹ of conflict, which in turn enhances our present, biblical perspective on conflict¹² that must be considered by believers, as well as the field of conflict management¹³ as a whole.

To provide this enhanced perspective will require a way to determine the key dynamics, a means of identifying the themes, and a standard by which to evaluate their significance in the book of Philemon and, by application, to the field of conflict management. The use of observation, coupled with sound, hermeneutical principles,¹⁴ surfaces these key dynamics and themes. Exegetical principles¹⁵ will be used to ascertain the significance of these dynamics and themes to the message of the book. Even though Philemon is a letter,¹⁶ it contains summative statements that provide glimpses of the likely narration, and so a consideration of the genre of narrative may illuminate added significance to the book.¹⁷ Furthermore, by way of application, the use of Wise's "conflict management steps" (1994:24), and "basic conditions necessary for success" (1994:25) aids in demonstrating significance and relevance to the field of conflict management. Finally, a comparative study of present day theological scholarship can help to establish the necessity of this study to New Testament studies.

1.2.2 Problem statement

The book of Philemon, possibly due to its short length, has enjoyed an extensive investigation of its teaching, from in-depth examinations by Barth (2000), Fitzmyer (2000) and Tolmie (2010), to complimentary volumes with Colossians by Dunn (1996), Gromacki (2002), and Harris (2012), to complimentary volumes with Philippians by Thurston (2009), Still (2011), and Migliore (2014), and even complimentary volumes with the Pastoral Epistles by Johnson (1966), Larson (2000), and Saarinen (2008). The crucial topic of slavery, within the context of this book, has also been explored by Gaebelien (1939), Harrill (2006), and Johnson (2012). However, Philemon has not experienced that same diligent examination from the point of view of a biblical theology on conflict, nor has it seen the same level of thematic exploration.¹⁸

A likely reason for this missing viewpoint is that many people tend to consider conflict as bad or sinful (Tripp, 2002:75),¹⁹ and, in Philemon, from that framework, many commentators and researchers proffer a spiritual or theological analysis that seeks to explain why Paul would not condemn slavery as inhumane and ungodly (Bird, 2009a; Callahan, 1997). Further complicating the study is that while the concept of conflict is nothing new, the academic exploration of conflict is relatively new, and benefits derived from such study are slowly being considered by theological circles.²⁰ So then, missing is a correct and biblical understanding of the nature of conflict which, in turn, will augment our understanding of the problem of the book of Philemon.

In light of this missing view of a proper perception of conflict, as well as the possibility of an exegetical study of Philemon providing much needed insight into a biblical theology of conflict, the following questions need to be answered:

1. How should conflict be defined from a psychological and theological perspective?
2. What is the present status of New Testament research on the conflict in the book of Philemon?
3. What are the key dynamics and themes of the book of Philemon that provide insight into a biblical perspective of conflict?
4. How does this study contribute to a foundational, biblical theology of conflict that impacts both the interpretation of the book of Philemon and the study of conflict management?

1.2.3 Aim

The main aim of this study is to explore the conflict dynamics and themes in the book of Philemon, so as to enhance a biblical understanding of the conflict, and, particularly, the

solution that Paul presents to the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus. As a result, a contribution to a biblical theology of conflict is developed.

1.2.4 Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Define conflict practically and theologically.
2. Gain an understanding of the conflict and Paul's resolution in the book of Philemon.
3. Identify and analyse the impact of the key dynamics and themes upon Paul's proffered solution to the conflict.
4. Determine what aspects of this study contribute to a foundational, biblical theology of conflict that then enhances our understanding of the book of Philemon and conflict management.

1.3 Central theological argument

The basic hypothesis of this research is that in the book of Philemon, Paul utilized certain key dynamics and themes that allowed him to focus on his relationship with both Philemon and Onesimus rather than the conflict. By doing so he provided an avenue to present a viable and biblical solution to their conflict which would result in the restoration of their very important relationship. In turn, this conflict scenario provides important elements to the needed development of a biblical theology of conflict.

1.4 Methodology

All exegesis of the Greek text will be done from the framework of Bock's definition.²¹ Specifically, this interaction will involve a *contextual* approach, a *socio-historic* methodology, and an *emic* slant, but will be "enriched with the questions of the socio-scientists and the results of the models they use" (De Klerk & Van Rensburg, 2005:51-56). Such perspective will especially be significant in considering the biblical theology of conflict applications, or as Fee (1993:17) writes: "Interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the 'tension' that exists between its *eternal relevance* and its *historical particularity*".

In regards to the conflict references, this study will reflect a conflict *management* perspective, while keeping conflict *resolution*²² as the objective,²³ which, in turn, provides an additional vantage point for the exegesis of Scripture. Such a perspective will follow a similar vein to that proposed by Louw (2000:2): in advocating a *conflict* hermeneutics without relapsing into 'subjectivism', or in the method of Maier (1994:80): in developing another possible subset of

cognitive understanding called *conflict* understanding, or in the manner of Marsh (1973:410): in providing a *conflict* outlook.

The following methods are used to answer the proposed research questions:

In order to provide a comprehensive, and yet, utilitarian definition and viewpoint of conflict,²⁴ a comparative study of both secular and biblical sources will be done. The study's emphasis will be on the present-day scholarship due to conflict's relatively recent development in present-day terminology.

At the heart of this study is the conflict in the book of Philemon, so an overview of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* among New Testament scholars is attempted in order to provide perspective. Information will be drawn from relevant exegetical and historical studies.

In terms of determining the key dynamics and themes of the book of Philemon, an exegetical study of the Greek text will be done, culminating in a functional outline that identifies and analyses their significance in regards to the message sent by Paul to Philemon. An analysis of their use in the setting of Philemon will be compared and contrasted with other New Testament usages. A comparative study of journals, articles, and commentaries will be done to maintain an historical and theological perspective.

The determination of what is significant to the development of a *biblical theology of conflict* rests upon two considerations: 1) how this biblical perspective of conflict has impacted the interpretation of the book of Philemon (especially the conflict and resolution discussed) and thus its relevance to biblical theology, and 2) how the study of conflict management is enhanced through the development of a foundational, biblical theology of conflict. The first consideration will be assessed by comparison and evaluation of existing theories in New Testament scholarship. The second consideration will be assessed by evaluating the dynamics, themes, and resolution in light of the following conflict management principles:

- The six conflict management steps: 1) recognize there is a problem, 2) seek outside assistance if necessary, 3) empower people in the process, 4) identify/clarify issues, 5) co-labor together for mutually agreeable solutions, 6) covenant together for solutions (Wise, 1994:24).
- The five "basic conditions necessary for success": 1) provide a personal and psychological base, 2) provide a relational base, 3) establish constructive communication, 4) co-labour together, and 5) personal agreement to the solution (Wise, 1994:25).²⁵

1.5 Ethical risk assessment

This exegetical study involves no participants in the research protocol and is principally a document analysis. An aspect of the research topic could be considered *sensitive* in nature as one of the themes considered is slavery as discussed in the book of Philemon and as contextually considered. Therefore, the possibility exists for a reader to find offense with the conclusion, but that potential offense is no more than what might be experienced on a daily basis as the topic might arise in a conversation or in a reading. It is acknowledged, that there is the potential for offense and division due to the very nature of conflict, but the indirect and direct benefits of possible resolution outweighs all potential risks. Consequently, this study demonstrates low ethical risk.

1.6 Classification of chapters

1. Introduction
2. Conflict defined
3. The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the conflict and resolution in the book of Philemon
4. Key dynamics and themes significant to the solution presented by Paul
5. Contributions to a biblical theology of conflict
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography

1.7 Notes

¹ In using this term, it is understood that not all persons or organizations referred to in this research are qualified theologians, but rather, what is referenced is a believer's understanding of godliness as reflected in the study of God's Word. The word "biblical" is not used as the belief or understanding mentioned may or may not be an accurate reflection of God's Word, but that belief or understanding does spring from the study of God's Word, and that is why it is considered "theological". Throughout this study "theological" is used to reference thoughts and understanding arising from the study of God's Word in contrast to secular considerations.

² Class by Jim Morris, done in conjunction with *Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary* in Newburgh, Indiana on 14-17 Oct, 1998.

³ 'Believers' is a term used to describe people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior as described in the cry of the Reformation: *Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus*.

⁴ From this point on, unless specifically stated otherwise, it is to be understood that the Bible's use of the word "man" will automatically include the notion of woman.

⁵ Grudem states: "The Latin phrase *imago Dei* means 'image of God' and is sometimes used in theological discussions in place of the English phrase 'image of God.'" (1994:442)

⁶ This idea is captured by Dempsey and Shapiro (2011:6): "Because all creation is interrelated and human beings are created in God's image according to God's likeness, human beings are called to live

together in right relationship with one another and with all creation. Right relationship, then, is essential to sustaining creation. This vision of right relationship is foundational to understanding our yearning to transcend conflict and is embedded in the first two chapters of Genesis.”

⁷ Such works include: *The Peacemaker*, (Sande, 2008); *Paradigms in Conflict*, (Hesselgrave, 2005); *Cross-cultural Conflict*, (Elmer, 1993); and *Oneness Embraced*, (Evans, 2011).

⁸ Ryrie defines biblical theology as “that branch of theological science which deals systematically with the historically conditioned progress of the self-revelation of God as deposited in the Bible” (2005:intro.), and it is one of the four main branches or curriculum in the study of theology (Muller, 1991:xi). As Ladd writes, it has “the task of expounding the theology found in the Bible in its own historical setting, and its own terms, categories, and thought forms” (1993:20). Fanning adds its value “is to pay attention to this diverse texture of ideas and assess its development and significance rather than allow it to be flattened out too quickly in a broad amalgam of ‘Christian theology’” (2006:279), and it is “the framework within which exegesis is synthesized” (2006:281).

⁹ For example, Paul, in the Galatian conflict, refers to them as ‘foolish Galatians’ (Gal 3:1). In the theology of Romans, he states “keep your eye on those who cause dissensions” (Rm 16:17). In the Corinthian context, he “determined...that I would not come to you in sorrow again” (2 Cor 2:1), and in the correspondence with Timothy, Paul speaks of a drastic action (“whom I have handed over to Satan”) in responding to a conflict with two men (1 Tm 1:20).

¹⁰ Rodgers uses this term to describe how some of the Old Testament prophet’s actions became “a teaching, didactic experience, for the on-lookers” (1995:351).

¹¹ Fanning states, “Biblical theology serves as a bridge between exegesis and such contemporary use primarily in that it pulls together the Bible’s particular teachings into a coherent whole” (2006:285).

¹² It is acknowledged that conflict has many aspects to it, and Philemon does not address the scope and breadth of conflict, but Philemon does provide a basis and platform for further biblical discussion of conflict.

¹³ Conflict management is both a field of study that “involves designing effective...strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhancing the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness...” (Rahim, 2002:208), and an “ability to be able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently” (Mallappa & Kumar, 2015:200).

¹⁴ Such as Hendricks (1991:141) “six things to look for: things that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, unlike, and true to life”.

¹⁵ Such as re-creation where the “attitudes, motives, thoughts, and emotions of its writers and of those concerning whom they wrote” are recaptured and brought to life (Traina, 1985:93, 94).

¹⁶ In comparison to an epistle which is “more artistic in form and is intended as a self-explanatory treatise to a wider public” (Stein, 1994:169).

¹⁷ As seen in Gaebelien’s commentary subtitle: “A narrative and devotional commentary” (1939:3).

¹⁸ Abshire’s book (*Forgiveness: A Commentary on Philemon*) is an example of one of the thematic scholarly approaches to the book.

¹⁹ Tripp (2002:75) states, “Conflict is one of the principle effects of the Fall, and it doesn’t take much to incite it.”

²⁰ For example, in 1988, George Mason University was the first university in the world to admit students into their doctoral program of conflict analysis and resolution (Avruch *et al.*, 1991:2).

²¹ He defines exegesis as: “Setting forth the authors’/text’s meaning by interaction with the original language through the use of sound hermeneutics with a view to applying the text to the contemporary church and the world” (Bock, 2006:24).

²² Conflict resolution differs from conflict management (noted earlier) in that it “implies reduction, elimination, or termination of conflict” (Rahim, 2002:207).

²³ Huttenlocker writes, “Conflict management is what we have to settle for when conflict resolution is not possible” (1988:32).

²⁴ A natural consequence of studying conflict is the discussion of controversial topics, drawing opposing conclusions, and creating division, and there is no way around that fact. In doing so there is always a risk of offending people and seeming to marginalize some, but it is the hope that with honest dialogue, solutions and resolution can be found, and a *gaining of a brother* can be realized, as advocated in Matthew 18:15. Without an attempt for resolution, the Body of Christ remains divided and its impact upon the world is diminished.

²⁵ These modern-day principles ask the question: Is what we find in Philemon relevant to today and consequently germane to our understanding of the book of Philemon? If so, the field of conflict management would be wise to consider the implications of the book of Philemon.

CHAPTER 2: CONFLICT DEFINED

In the experience and investigation of this researcher, the following is an example of the theological instruction that believers often encounter in the discussion of conflict. The context of this instruction is on the home and the consequential negative results of unresolved conflict.

There are some people who think that if you have two committed Christians in a relationship that there will be no conflict or problems....The truth is – **ANY** relationship has the potential for varying levels of conflict simply because there are two people present with very active sinful tendencies....There are some people who think that if you are godly (I mean really godly) then you will not have any conflict....But even God does[n't] [sic] operate in a world like that. After all, He is holy and yet there was conflict in heaven with Satan and there was conflict in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. We see conflict between God and sinful man throughout the Bible....The problem is that a relationship takes two, and you cannot always control what the other person will do....The hope for the Christian is not the absence of conflict, but the possibility of really dealing with conflict....Conflict comes from the presence of sin. Christians know what to do about sin. The result should be that Christians know what to do about conflict. The Bible has a great deal to say about sin that causes conflict between people. In fact, a great deal of the New Testament was written because there was conflict taking place. In particular, First and Second Corinthians were written due to conflicts that arose in the church....There were times in the Bible when conflict was necessary (Christ with the Pharisees), but there were other times when conflict was needless and very sinful....*Learn to hate conflict* because of everything that it does! *Yet, conflict itself is not the enemy* – **SIN** is.

(National Road Church of Christ, n.d., my italics, their emphasis).

The question that arises, from this instruction, for this researcher, is why would you hate something that is not your enemy? And, if Christians should “know what to do about conflict”, and if the Bible provides that information, why is there “conflict in heaven”, and why is there “conflict between God and sinful man”? Is God unable to respond to conflict as His Word instructs? Hopefully, this church would not teach that line of thinking, but these questions illustrate the problem. Conflict is still an indefinite, misunderstood, misrepresented quantity that due to its pervasiveness in the lives of humanity, must be understood, and most importantly, explained properly, especially by those who teach God’s Word. As Hendricks (cited by Malphurs, 2003:163) often said, “A mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pew”.

2.1 Introduction

In order to understand and examine conflict, it must first be defined, and unfortunately, this aspect has often been overlooked and absent from theological discussion. What results from this omission is a rightful questioning of conclusions that may be built on a false premise.¹ Tjosvold (2007:88) has cogently decried this often missing component: “We have not paid sufficient attention to defining conflict and this oversight has very much contributed to the continued negative attitudes that conflict is destructive and to the wide spread belief that conflict escalation ‘just happens’ without human choice”. In fact, De Dreu (2008:6) poignantly describes Tjosvold’s observation with this apt description: “[He] suggested that we need more conflict about conflict research, should critically assess and debate our definitions, perspectives, and lines of inquiry”. This study begins by taking up that mantle.

The additional challenge is that there are many definitions of conflict to consider – more so than can be explored within the scope of this study – and so, a highlighting or survey of definitions must be conducted. However, this survey is essential as Tjosvold describes the consequences of ignoring this consideration: “Confusions about definitions have also contributed to a walling off of conflict research from related areas” (2006:88) and “frustrated our research progress” (2006:92). It would be foolish to contribute further to the often isolated and segmented research of the past.

Following the survey, an analysis of the definitions will hopefully yield several thematic elements for the defining of conflict. These themes, in turn, will be examined for their universal applicability and their simplicity. The purpose of this examination is to explore the possibility of a simple, practical, working definition of conflict that forms the basis for further fruitful applications in the various conflict scenarios.² Aminu & Marfo (2010:33) disagree with this goal when they write, “Like many other social science concepts, conflict does not submit itself to a single and widely accepted definition. Different authorities have given different definitions”. However, later in their article they speak of how “conflict is natural and an inevitable part of all human social relationship, and at all levels of society” (2010:35). If conflict has these *natural* characteristics, why should the pursuit of a working definition of conflict be dismissed out of hand? This study explores that possibility of a working definition.

Finally, the question: “Does the Bible provide a definition of conflict?” must be considered. If the Bible does define conflict then how will the proposed, practical definition interact mesh with the Scriptural definition? If the Bible does not provide that definition, are there principles that explain or illustrate conflict to the point where a definition can be derived, and then compared to and with the practical definition? The answers to these considerations impact our understanding of the conflicts found in the Word of God and experienced in life; they also contribute to the

development of a biblical theology of conflict that should guide our understandings and experiences.

As these definitions of conflict are explored and evaluated, it is important to note that the specific details of each conflict are not under deliberation. An aspect of defining conflict is to consider its ultimate origin, the root cause of that beginning, and its implications for further conflict reflection,³ but the specifics of each type of conflict or each situation is beyond the breadth of this study. It is the hope of this researcher that principles will arise that will assist in the further exploration of specific causes of conflict and specific responses to conflict, especially from a biblical perspective.

Additional insights are gained from this exercise, beyond that of simply deriving a basic definition. The acquisition of an overall perspective on how someone approaches conflict is obtained. First this viewpoint is grasped by the *narrative* used to explain the conflict (Mayer, 2012:39).⁴ Such information is significant as Mayer (2012:33) writes, “Our approach to conflict derives from what we have been taught about conflict, our experiences in conflict, our personality, culture, the nature of the conflicts we find ourselves in, and the roles we are playing”. Therefore, the very attempt at defining conflict is revelatory of this perspective.

Second, in now narrowing the focus, the perception of value ascribed to conflict is recognised. Mayer (2012:38) explains that an individual’s actions in various conflicts differ from conflict to conflict, based on the value assigned to that particular conflict. Although the individual may be unaware of the value they’ve placed on the conflict, their actions demonstrate its significance.⁵

Finally, the beliefs and attitudes towards conflict can be indicated by the definition proffered. For example, do they believe that conflict is beneficial and normal? Or do they believe, as Mayer (2012:36) describes them, that “conflict is a sign of failure – of personal, organizational, or societal malfunction”? Ultimately, the question that confronts those in the midst of conflict is: “Do I/we believe that there is a solution to the conflict?”. That belief impacts how conflict is viewed and how it is defined.

While these additional insights are difficult to quantify and are, admittedly, often interpretational, they are at least perceivable to the senses. As Mayer (2012:37) explains, it is much easier to work through a conflict when the other party has a similar approach, due to shared values and beliefs. In drawing a comparison to an athletic event, Downs (2010:33) adds, “Many contests are won or lost before they even begin; it all has to do with the mind-set you bring to the game. Conflict is no different”. How many times does a team lose to another team just because they don’t think that they can win or vice versa? Or, to put it another way, in piloting a plane, an eye must be kept on the Artificial Horizon (AH) which provides a visual of the *attitude* of the plane in

relationship to the ground, so that when the pilot pulls back on the yoke, thinking he is going up, he is not mistakenly going sideways or even descending due to an incorrect attitude. Other instruments (such as the VSI and Altimeter) provide the details, but the AH contributes the sense of relationship.⁶ This consideration of *sense* is significant to the processes of conflict.

It is the contention of this researcher that a part of defining conflict is to observe these additional insights, and so in this exercise of definition, the *wording* will be explored, but the *value* and *attitude* will also be observed and considered.

2.2 Survey of definitions

In providing a highlight of definitions, there is a specific order to the process. The examination begins with the conceptual, moves into the practical or experiential, and finally, explores the theological. The reasoning behind this order is twofold. First of all, it is the contention of this researcher that our theological circles have not dedicated the same *due diligence* in defining and exploring conflict as the practical realm has done. Lamenting this same observation, Mitchum (2014:37-40) cites numerous sources that relate in their ministry experiences the lack of adequate equipping in this area and the desperate need for such education. She includes a personal interview with a man who speaks of his “on the job training” as his only education, and she concludes with this statement: “It is imperative that church leaders are properly educated to effectively deal with conflict” (2014:41).

Secondly, if theological circles are going to do a better job with conflict studies that study must work from the known to the unknown – a process of deductive reasoning. This exercise of defining conflict begins with the larger body of analysis, works towards a practical definition, and then examines that potential definition in light of Scripture. It is the provision of a well-considered definition for biblical examination that is goal of this beginning task. Schaller (1972:97) defines this process as the “self-identified discrepancy” where people are enabled to “both define the ideal and to discover the difference between that ideal and their current situation”. Referring to Schaller’s concept, Staples (2016:95-96), in discussing how to create grassroots organizations, speaks of finding an ‘organizing issue’ that has both a level of interest and a level of discontent. It is the goal of this researcher, in this ‘grassroots’ exercise of defining conflict, to create a level of interest, in a level of discontent over what is viewed as *conflict* in theological circles today.

2.2.1 Conceptual

The conceptual exploration begins by examining the definitions provided by three modern dictionaries that represent authority, simplicity, and practicality, but each, understandably,

constrained by the breadth of their necessary perspective. Following the dictionaries, the much more focused perspective of conflict studies will be considered and compared.

2.2.1.1 Dictionaries

The Oxford English Dictionary (2016) asserts that the English noun *conflict* enters the vocabulary around A.D. 1430, finding its possible origin in the Latin word *conflictus* which refers to “striking together, shock, fight, conflict”.⁷ Now what does conflict mean to the modern world? The following three dictionaries (see Table 2-1) provide a conceptual comparison of current definitions: Oxford English Dictionary (2016), Dictionary.com (2016), and Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015). To provide a historical perspective, Webster’s 1828 dictionary is also included.

Table 2-1: Dictionary Definition Comparison

Oxford English Dictionary		Dictionary.com	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	1828 Webster Dictionary
Noun				
corporeal ⁸	an encounter with arms; a fight, battle ... a prolonged struggle ... martial strife	a fight, battle, or struggle, especially a prolonged struggle; strife ... controversy; quarrel	fight, battle, war	a fighting; combat, as between men, and applicable to individuals or to armies
figurative or psychological ⁹	a mental or spiritual struggle within a man ... the clashing or variance of opposed principles, statements, arguments ... the opposition, in an individual, of incompatible wishes or needs of approximately equal strength; also, the distressing emotional state resulting from such opposition	discord of action, feeling, or effect; antagonism or opposition, as of interests or principles ... incompatibility or interference, as of one idea, desire, event, or activity with another ... a mental struggle arising from opposing demands or impulses	competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) ... mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands	contention; strife; contest ... Struggling with difficulties; a striving to oppose, or overcome ... a struggling of the mind; distress; anxiety
spatial ¹⁰	dashing together, collision, or violent mutual impact of physical bodies	a striking together; collision		a striking or dashing against each other, as of two moving bodies in opposition; violent collision of substances ... opposing operations; countervailing action; collision; opposition
narrative ¹¹			the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction	
medical ¹²			mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands	the last struggle of life; agony

Verb				
corporeal	to engage in battle, to assault	to fight or contend; do battle		to drive or strike against, as contending men, or armies; to fight; to contend with violence
figurative	to contend, strive, struggle with ... of interests, opinions, statements, feelings, etc.: to come into collision, to clash; to be at variance, be incompatible ... to buffet with adversity (obsolete)	to come into collision or disagreement; be contradictory, at variance, or in opposition; clash	to show antagonism or irreconcilability: fail to be in agreement or accord ... to be different, opposed, or contradictory	to strive or struggle to resist and overcome ... to be in opposition or contradictory
spatial				to strike or dash against; to meet and oppose, as bodies driven by violence
simple ¹³			to happen at the same time as something else	

As can be seen, there is quite an extensive defining of the concept of conflict that impacts several areas of life, incorporating both the physical and the mental; primary to all of the definitions is the idea of a **struggle** (in some instances linked to violence) over **incompatible** issues. In none of the definitions is there any indication of a positive valuation. Interesting enough, none of these sources¹⁴ provides a definition to the concept of *conflict resolution* or *conflict management*, suggesting at best a non-committal attitude towards resolution. Merriam-Webster, however, provides more application than the others by addressing the field of literature and medicine (the 1828 version also includes the medical aspect), and it also provides a *simple definition* that is less negative and suggests the notion of **normalcy** – a proximity and time issue. Consequently the concepts of **struggle**, **incompatibility**, and the possible concept of **normalcy** will be added to the data for developing a working definition of conflict.

2.2.1.2 Conflict studies

With the rise of conflict resolution perspectives, in the 1950's, a more focused attention was given to the platform of conflict than simply international relations which previously had been the limited scope under consideration (Ramsbotham *et al*, 2011:8). From this interest, definitions of conflict have arisen that are less pessimistic in outlook. One such definition refers “to the widest set of circumstances in which conflict parties perceive that they have mutually incompatible goals” (Ramsbotham *et al*, 2011:9). In this definition the only negative narrative or evaluation is the use of the word *incompatible*, and there is no obvious attitudinal disposition against

resolution as observed by the use of the word *perceive*. So this is an example of where many modern definitions are headed.

More of these definitions will be considered, but first, five aspects of conflict are offered in order to provide context for some of the definitions and concepts. Kriesberg (2009:15) illustrates the necessity for this diversion when he states, “Workers in the CR [conflict resolution] field differ in the degree to which they focus on theory, research, or practice, attending to a single domain or to a wide range of arenas”. To avoid potential confusion, the following areas are introduced to provide that perspective: history of conflict, types of conflict, causes of conflict, conflict resolution models, and stages of conflict.

2.2.1.2.1 Historical development of modern conflict studies

An overview of the chronological development of modern conflict studies is needed and provided to deliver historical reference points. Since the creation of mankind, man has encountered conflict, avoided conflict, resolved conflict, and managed conflict, but until the modern age, conflict had not really been explored as a concept. According to Havenga (2004:18-19), three men had an early *negative*, psychological influence upon the modern conversation of conflict. Darwin emphasized competition in his survival of the fittest; Freud promoted an inward, biological struggle; and Marx disseminated his social struggle. In fact, Havenga states (2004:20), “Marx was one of the great protagonists of conflict and accepted conflict as one of the more dominant interactional processes of life”.

Following the 19th and early 20th century, conflict exploration grew in interest as mankind began questioning long-held beliefs and assumptions due to the world wars. Kriesberg (2009:17-27) describes four stages in the development of the modern conflict resolution movement, and these will be juxtaposed to the observations of Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:35-62).

Table 2-2: Conflict Historical Stages Analysis

Stages		Focus
Kriesberg		
1914-1945	preliminary developments	world wars, and the desire to stop warfare and provide protection led to exploration of alternative responses
1946-1969	laying the groundwork	academic involvement in exploring the positive side and minimalizing the negative side of conflict
1970-1989	expansion and institutionalization	governments, universities, and organizations became actively involved in the research and implementation
since 1989	diffusion and differentiation	many countries and organizations make conflict resolution compulsory aspect of processes
Ramsbotham <i>et al.</i>		
1918-1945	1 st generation – precursors	although a state-centric approach dominated the world, the desire for a “science’ of peace” emerged based on advances in psychology, politics, and international studies

Stages		Focus
1945-1965	2 nd generation – founders	state-centric approach still dominated but an urgency created by the nuclear race led to institutional involvement and pursuits beyond just preventing war
1965-1985	3 rd generation – consolidators	civil society approach began as it linked positive gains from the domestic realm to protracted international conflicts ¹⁵ leading to the development of <i>interactive conflict resolution</i> ¹⁶ techniques
1985-2005	4 th generation – reconstructors	complex and complementary approach: rise of NGO's and non-linear thinking ¹⁷
since 2005	5 th generation – post Cold War	cosmopolitan approach: necessity for cross-cultural exploration and transformation in recognition of a <i>shared humanity</i> ¹⁸

The main differences between the two presentations are: 1) Kriesberg has a more participatory focus while the focus of Ramsbotham *et al.* is more on the cognitive processes, and 2) Ramsbotham *et al.* sees an additional development of focus since the end of the Cold War. There are similarities between the two in the basic division of time and the conceptual development during those stages. Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:36) provides a summary of the concerns of conflict studies as a whole: 1) “the effort to identify the conditions for a new world order based on conflict analysis, conflict prevention and problem-solving”; and 2) “the effort to mobilize and inspire ever widening and inclusive constituencies based on the promotion of the values of non-violent peacemaking”. He adds that the combination of these two pursuits has developed an initiative that leads to the quest for the following: 1) “a radical reformation of world political systems”; 2) “promotion of an inclusive anti-war and pro-peace politics”; and 3) “the fashioning of methodologies and processes that provided the opportunity to move through the politics of protest towards a proactive peacemaking project” (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:36). While all those involved in conflict areas might not agree on the pursuits Ramsbotham *et al.* mentions, this historical overview at least provides perspective and the direction of present conflict studies.

Burton (1998:1) adds some insightful specifics to these overviews on conflict studies. First of all, conflict practitioners brought ‘analytical problem solving’ into the inter-state discussions rather than purely the concept of ‘power and alliance’ where the powerful and victorious make the decisions. Secondly, in the 1960’s, as organizational structures were reviewed, an emphasis on productivity, brought about by invited feedback, opened eyes to new processes that could work on a global scale. Thirdly, the recognition of *negotiable* and *non-negotiable* values and interests among individuals, groups, and cultures brought a dimension of needed understanding to the resolution process. And finally, the realization that the very processes of conflict resolution were at the heart of developing further conflict changed the focus to a ‘win-win’ approach.

From a legal perspective, Menkel-Meadow (2013:38) concedes that law and legal studies were late to the scene in conflict discussions but that much of what happens today in the field is impacted by this discipline and its theoretical attribute of integrity. Legal strategies, in the '70's and '80's, made an effort to move beyond the *how to defeat your enemy* and adversarial tactics of the '60's and '70's that often had little to do with the essence of the law, to ADR (alternative dispute resolution) strategies which considered how to actually solve the client's problems. Questions about individual's interests and needs led to more satisfactory solutions in negotiations and a pluralism of the processes. From these successes, attempts to integrate these methods on a global scale have met with varying degrees of success (Menkel-Meadow, 2013:35-40). She (2013:38) adds this summary: "So our field has different histories if looked at from the perspective of abstract theory development, untethered to any larger history, but a variety of very different histories if linked to the contextual frames in which conflict resolution theory and practice has developed – community, civic, ethnic, legal, labour, political, organizational or international conflict". All of these perspectives have moved conflict studies forward.

In summarizing the benefits of this historical reflection, consider Burton's (1998:1) words: "Classical thinking led us to believe that conflict was about negotiable interests only....What both conflict theory and resolution processes revealed was that protracted conflicts are primarily over non-negotiable human needs....This being the case, it is impossible to socialise the individual into behaviours that run counter to the pursuit of security, identity and other aspects of development". As a result, he advocates for a redefining of terms or the development of a new kind of language to accompany the development in recent conflict studies. And so, a historical perspective of terminology brings further clarity to the discussion and opens avenues for new explorations.

At this point, three caveats, in regards to conflict studies, need to be mentioned. First of all, as has been stated earlier by Ramsbotham *et al.*, one of the goals of many in conflict studies is the development of a "one world order" where war ceases to be an avenue of resolution, and mankind is more proactive in its prediction of detrimental conflict through a pervasive problem-solving methodology and philosophy that promotes cooperative relationships (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:49). Antagonistic to this ideology is that of ultimate truth which supersedes cooperative efforts that demand a circumvention of what is believed to be true (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:48). For believers, this concept takes on a personal reality due to the doctrine of special revelation¹⁹ where God instructs man in the cause of wars as springing from a 'war within' a man himself²⁰ (Ja 4:1-3) and not due to some inefficient nor outdated methodology.²¹ Stated emphatically, this *one world* pursuit is not the goal of this researcher, and so, as with all *secular* studies, a believer must evaluate the material through the lens of Scripture.

Secondly, and in connection with the previous point, this researcher’s exploration of conflict studies is not an advocating of the ‘two-book theory’ where general revelation is equal to special revelation, and “all truth is God’s truth”.²² Observational²³ truth cannot supersede inspired, propositional²⁴ truth, but observations can be a catalyst in expanding our thinking and evaluating our understanding (Crabb, 1987:44) as they are considered in the framework of special revelation (Murphy, 2006:67).

And finally, as indicated by the historical review, it is acknowledged that the study of conflict is a relatively new development, but not an unfamiliar one (its record begins in Genesis²⁵), and one whose long overdue development was necessitated by the doubts, fears, and confusion created by the world wars of the 20th century. Theological circles are familiar with this kind of urgency as *end-times* doctrinal development or resurgence has often come as a result of the ravages of war or oppression and the questions that arise from the sinful and despicable circumstances that challenge man’s perceived doctrines.²⁶ So the relatively recent developments in conflict studies should not automatically predispose a prejudicial evaluation by theologians due to its novelty – there is a history of innovation throughout theological antiquity. What this researcher hopes for is an evaluation on merit.

2.2.1.2.2 Types of conflict

The various considered definitions will obviously have their foci, and in order to understand the impact of that particular focus, a basic overview of types of conflict is helpful. Again, a scrutinised presentation of the specific types of conflict is beyond the scope of this particular study; however, a synopsis of other research can reduce the number to a manageable few basic categories that provide helpful insights. Three groupings of types are considered: 1) Leas & Kittlaus (1973:29) from a church background, 2) Types of conflict.org (2013:1) from a theoretical background, and 3) Chand (2015:1) from an organizational background.

Table 2-3: Types of Conflict

Type	Aspect
Leas & Kittlaus	
Intrapersonal	different parts of self compete with one another
Interpersonal	personality differences not related to issues
Substantive ²⁷	disputes over facts, values, goals, and beliefs
Types of Conflict.org²⁸	
Interpersonal	Personality
Intrapersonal	psychological: thoughts, values, principles, and emotions
Intragroup	interpersonal conflict, within a team
Intergroup	between groups, within an organization

Type	Aspect
Chand	
Conflict within the individual	Values
Interpersonal	personality
Individual and the group	normative standards
Intergroup	inherent factors to organizational structure
Inter-organizational	dependency

Apart from the *substantive* designation, the types of conflict basically boil down to the scope of the impact upon relationships. Intrapersonal, or conflict within the individual, would have little to no impact on relationships apart from the effect of forming a potential basis for conflict with other relationships. So for example, a struggle within could lead to anger, disappointment, selfishness, depression, etc. in an individual which then could impact how that individual responds to another conflict in another of these categories. This point should not be minimized, but rather, a salient point is made, illustrated again by James 4:1-3, where God’s Word indicates that the larger impact upon relationships begins with the inward conflict.

The *substantive* designation, by Leas, is also interesting as its “narrative” seems to indicate the possibility of separating the topic from the individual and allowing for discussion without making it personal. Along this line, Styles’ (2012:1-2) two aspects (within a partnership) could be added to this *substantive* discussion: 1) task conflict – “expression of differing points of view about the goals and content of the work that needs to be done”, and 2) process conflict – “differences in opinion about how the desired goal should be reached or task should be performed”. There needs to be the ability to disagree over an issue for a discussion to take place. In contrast, is the difficulty to categorize *identity-based* conflict where the challenge is to separate the issue from the individual whose identity is tied to that issue. Many times the added complication is that the identity issue is one-sided in that only one party has tied their identity to the issue (knowingly or unknowingly) and the personal attack blindsides the other party.²⁹ The result is that the conflict is *substantive* for one and *interpersonal* for the other; an example of this could be the King James Only argument.

As seen in the challenge of categorizing *identity-based* conflict, conflict studies have grown in perspicuity, and the typology of conflict may need to be enlarged. Two examples of this challenge of enlargement could be as follows: 1) Basson’s (2007:112) work on blended families where she introduces the ideas of “*intra-household* conflict (conflict between parents who reside in the same household) and *inter-household* conflict (conflict between biological parents who reside in different households)”, and 2) Anderton & Carter (2011:23-24) on levels of hostility. They list four categories with examples (see Table 2-4): 1) interstate – conflict between states,

2) intrastate – conflict between as state and groups residing within that state, 3) extra-state – conflict between a state and a transnational terrorist organization, colony, or other external non-state actor, and 4) non-state – conflict between non-state groups.

Table 2-4: Typology of Conflict Datasets

		Hostility Levels		
		Latent Conflict	Sub-War Conflict	War
Actor Types	Interstate	Iran/Israel, recent years	Ecuador/Peru, 1995	World War II, 1939-1945
	Intrastate	China/Tibetans, recent years	Thailand/Patani Insurgents, 2003-2007	USA/Confederacy, 1861-1865
	Extra-state	Morocco/Polisario (Western Sahara), recent years	France/Lao Issara (Laos), 1946-1953	UK/Palestine, 1936-1939
	Non-state	Rival religions and ethnic groups in Nigeria, recent years	Fatah/Hamas, 2006-2007	Shaka/Zulu, 1818-1828

[from Anderton & Carter (2011:24)]

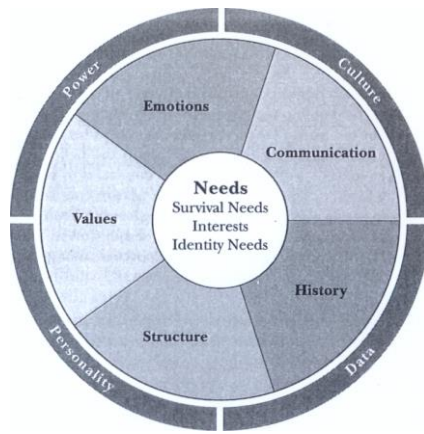
The challenge of conflict typology is becoming more complex, and it illustrates the range of needed conflict studies, but at least the overview provides a measure of insight into types of conflict and is useful for exploring a definition of conflict.

2.2.1.2.3 Causes of conflict

Sullivan (2016:1) lists four types of conflict in organizations: 1) definition of responsibility unclear, 2) conflict of interest, 3) not enough resources, and 4) interpersonal relationships. This listing corresponds to both the *types* and *causes* of conflict and demonstrates the necessity for clarity in the discussion, as her typology has really spilled over into causality. Thus, the significance of a brief look at the categorization of causes of conflict.

Having made that evaluation of Sullivan, it is important to acknowledge the difficulty of endeavouring to determine the cause of any conflict. Furlong (2005:4) compares the process of discovering the cause of conflict to ‘a practice profession’ where he makes this relevant point: “the nature of every practice profession is that the first critical skill the practice professional must have is the ability to diagnose, to determine the root cause of a specific problem”.

Mayer (2012:10-11) provides an excellent visual summary of potential causes (see Figure 2-1), where he describes human needs as central to all conflict; needs which are revealed in different forces that influence our responses to conflict.³⁰ He (2012:10) states, “Different sources of conflict produce different challenges for conflict engagement”, and he cites five crucial factors and the variables that impact them (see Table 2-5).



[from Mayer (2012:10)]

Figure 2-1: Wheel of Conflict

Table 2-5: Causes of Conflict

Cause	Explanation	Variables			
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often built on assumptions • often done imperfectly • complicated by culture, gender, age, class, cognitive abilities, and environment 	Culture – imbedded in who we are	Power – can obscure or highlight	Personality – styles of conflict engagement	Data – can complicate conflict via its use
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often the energy of the conflict • often related to past experiences • often revealed by the conflict 				
Values ³¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beliefs about importance • surrender of values is a kind of compromise • often easier to stigmatized opposing values • often leads to intractability 				
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essence of the process of resolution complicates the resolution – i.e., politics, litigation • understanding of the process is essential 				
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding is uniquely linked to this context • without this perspective, parties are confounded by the seeming intransience of the other 				

[adapted from Mayer (2012:9-18)]

Not all conflict theorists agree with this assessment of the centrality of needs. Galtung, Burton, Roy, Tidwell, and Lederach (to name a few of the esteemed conflict studies scholars)³² all have their ‘takes’ on the causes of conflict, but at least this overview provides a perspective for further informed discussion in defining conflict.

As an interesting regional perspective, Mazrui, lists two main causes of conflict in Africa. First of all, *colonialism*, which impacted two aspects: 1) without providing an adequate substitution, traditional African methodologies and institutions for resolving conflict were removed, and 2) the creation of borders, juxtaposing peoples who had “no traditions of shared authority or shared systems of settling disputes” as well as separating peoples who shared those systems (2008:37). The second cause he states is *tribal* as identity is at the heart of the issue. He continues, “While blacks clash with whites in Africa over resources, blacks clash with blacks

over their identities. White and black people, in other words, fight each other about who owns what, but blacks fight blacks about who is who. Racial conflicts between blacks and whites in Africa are ultimately economic” (2008:38). This is an interesting observation that merits further consideration and highlights the challenge to quantify everything in terms of conflict.

Mayer alluded to this, but Downs (2003:33) states an interesting and insightful observation in this discussion of causality: conflict often reveals that which is hidden.³³ Conflict surfaces what is important and significant to the individual; sometimes, even when it is unknown to the individual(s) engaged in the conflict. Gangel and Canine (1992:138) frame this concept as the revelation of values which are often codified in the wake of the conflict. So regardless of the cause,³⁴ the effect is noticeable: something is revealed because of the conflict.

2.2.1.2.4 Conflict resolution models

Another necessary background item for consideration involves how someone responds to conflict, and there are a number of models that quantify the typical responses. As previously stated, this discussion will only be an overview, but due to the fact that some of the definitions under consideration tend to include a responsive contemplation, it is a vital survey. Before reviewing some of the models it is essential to remember that conflict was not always considered (even in the least bit) to be beneficial. De Beer (2008:220-221) provides this perspective as he delineates the historical schools of thought concerning conflict that have developed in organizations: 1) traditional or classical – conflict is destructive and, by good managing, can be eliminated from the workplace; 2) Behavioural³⁵ – conflict is seen as unavoidable and a fundamental aspect of interaction with others; and 3) Interaction – promoting constructive conflict and cooperation instead of destructive situations.

Mitchum (2014:22), in summarizing Putnam’s six misconceptions embraced in that traditional, historically negative era, writes:

These misconceptions suggested: harmony is normal and conflict is abnormal; conflicts and disagreements are similar and should be resolved with similar strategies; conflict is pathological and makes one dysfunctional; conflict should be avoided, if conflict is addressed it should be managed by the person in the higher-powered position; conflict is only the result of problematic personalities; and conflict and anger are synonymous terms.

By contrast, most researchers of conflict studies *today* see the positive outcomes from conflict that provide advancements in many areas (Bohlander, 2014:31), and would be supportive of the school of interaction (mentioned above), and as indicated in the historical review (Table 2-2).

The significance of this ideological development from negative views to positive views has led to some of the models discussed below.

Havenga (see Table 2-6) has provided an excellent classification table of his study³⁶ in this area of conflict resolution models to which this researcher has added some of the latest materials and concepts such as Kraybill's *Style Matters* and Eckerd College's *Conflict Dynamics Profile*.³⁷

Table 2-6: Conflict Resolution Models

Jung (1923)	Blake & Mouton (1964)	Thomas-Killman (1976)
<p>Four Factures Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 different levels of perception/behaviour: 	<p>Conceptual Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for people • Concern for self 	<p>Two-dimensional model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assertiveness • Cooperation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking > competing • Sensing > compromising • Intuition > avoiding • Feeling > obliging > collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forcing • Withdrawing • Smoothing • Compromising • Problem solving 	<p>Five independent styles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating • Dominating • Obliging • Avoiding • Compromising
<p>Rahim (1983)</p>	<p>CMS – model (Hall, 1986)</p>	<p>Kraybill (2008)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Relationships <p>Cultural Specific setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualistic • Collectivist <p>Conflict Realization setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm • Storm <p>Five specific styles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperating • Directing • Compromising • Avoiding • Harmonizing
<p>Two-dimensional model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for self • Concern for others 	<p>Two-dimensional model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for relationship • Concern for personal goals 	
<p>Five specific styles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating (collaboration) • Dominating (competing) • Obliging (accommodation) • Avoiding (withdrawing) • Compromising 	<p>Five independent styles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9/1 win-lose style • 1/9 yield-lose style • 9/9 synergistic style • 1/1 lose-lose style • Compromising style 	

Dynamic Conflict Model (1998?)	
<p>One-dimensional model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior (actual versus potential) 	
<p>Precipitating Event/Hot button</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Initiation of Conflict</p>	
<p>Constructive Responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active • Passive 	<p>Destructive Responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active • Passive
<p>Cognitive conflict</p>	<p>Affective conflict</p>
<p>Conflict de-escalates</p>	<p>Conflict escalates</p>

[adapted from Havenga (2004:137)]

How an individual responds to a specific conflict is impacted by a number of considerations including what is valued most, what is the situational context, and how far has the conflict

advanced. Since Kraybill's is the latest model, it will serve as an example of the process of responding to conflict. First of all, as a conflict arises, the individual (consciously or subconsciously) determines what is valued most: agenda or relationship.³⁸ This decision-making process is complicated by the cultural context as some societies promote an individualistic approach, while others a collectivist or familial mentality. Furthermore, a sense of the gravity of the conflict complicates the decision as well – how emotionally intense is this conflict. As an individual (consciously or subconsciously) settles these considerations, the response to the conflict follows one of these five specific styles mentioned by Kraybill.³⁹ Table 2-7 provides a summary of his conclusions.

Table 2-7: Overview of Kraybill's Five Conflict Resolution Styles

	Directing	Cooperating	Compromising	Avoiding	Harmonizing
Focus	High agenda Low relationship	High agenda High relationship	Medium agenda Medium relationship	Low agenda Low relationship	Low agenda High relationship
Summary	I win and you lose	I win and you win	You and I win some	We both lose	I lose & you win
Strategy	Convince, control, capitulation, even attack	Get the insight of others	Negotiate a mutually beneficial settlement	Withdraw, delay, suppress, inaccessible	Supportive, agreeable, conciliate
Source of power	Position, assets	Trust, dexterity	Equity, pragmatic	Silence, reticence	Approval, capitulation
Benefits	Efficiency, steadiness, decisiveness	Trust, affinity, satisfaction	Resolution, cooperation	Status quo, detachment	Amenable, appreciative
Cost of overuse	Disparity, antagonism, conformity	Inefficiency, over analysis	Mediocrity, symptomatic, dissatisfaction	Disengaged, unaccountable	Dependency, unchallenged
Helpful when...	Crisis, lack of time, principles at risk	Value desired, creativity needed	Decision needed, limitations set, at an impasse	Trivial matters, interruption, capitulation	Unimportant issue, retaliation possible
Unhelpful when...	Overused, devalues others	Short time, trivial matters	Ideological concession	Important issues, and ignoring obligations	People pleasing, creates resentment

As seen in Table 2-6, these models summarize the development of conflict resolution theories, at the beginning of the 21st century, which have quantified the resulting observations in a practical way that guides individuals to better understanding and an improved response to the various conflict situations, and this understanding is helpful to defining conflict.

2.2.1.2.5 Stages of conflict

Recognizing that unresolved conflict isn't static, but rather dynamic, has led to a classification of stages, phases, or levels of conflict to describe the escalating process and hopefully lead to proper steps for managing the conflict until resolution is possible.⁴⁰ A number of the definitions to be explored will anticipate the various levels and the necessity for managing the conflict, and so an overview of possible conflict stages is helpful. The stages described by Pondy (1967:300-

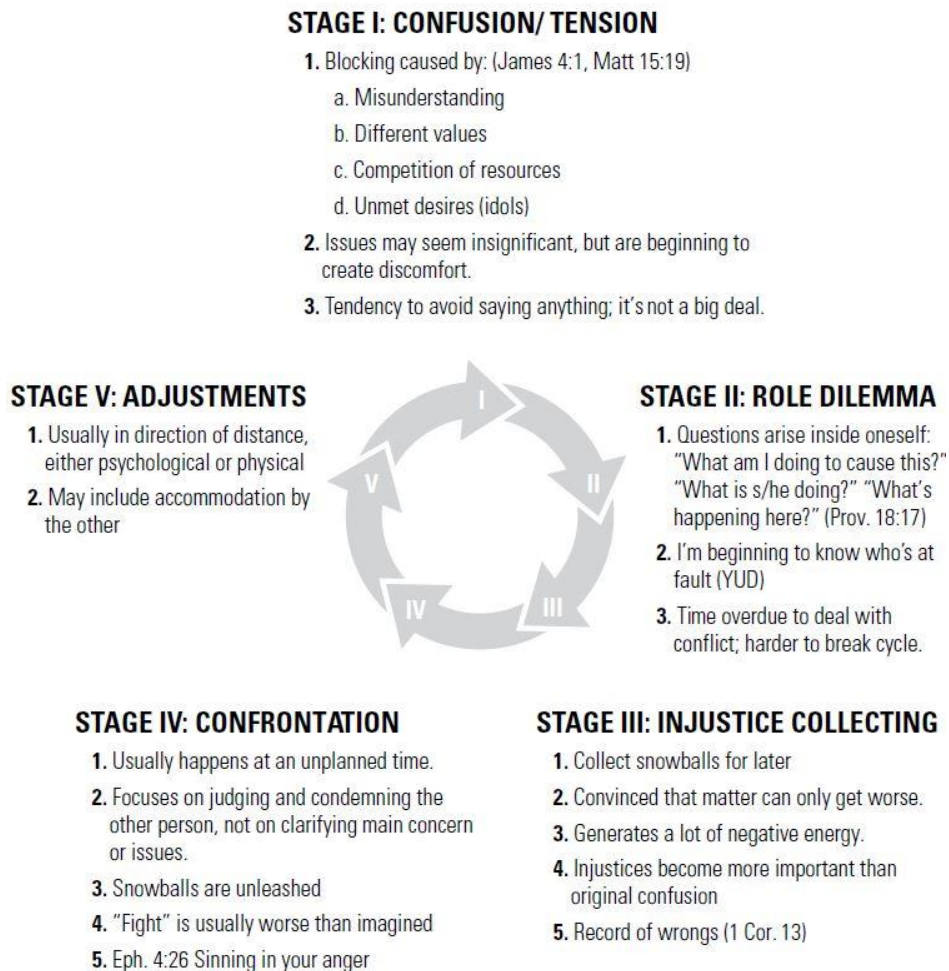
305), Robbins (2010:402-409), Kimsey, *et al.* (2006:491-496), and Lacey (2000:18-19) are considered and compared.

Table 2-8: Stages of Conflict

Stages	Aspect
Pondy	
Latent conflict (conditions)	open conflict is not visible, but underlying processes are present
Perceived conflict (cognition)	defining stage of what is happening and the cause
Felt conflict (affect)	feelings emerge and cooperation is affected (personalization)
Manifest conflict (behaviour)	effectiveness is hampered due to responses to conflict
Conflict aftermath (conditions)	results (good or bad) impact future conflicts
Robbins, et al.	
Potential opposition or incompatibility	communication, structure, and variables are potential sources ...
Cognition and personalization	a negative impact of one of the sources upon someone creates ...
Intentions	perceptions lead to intended responses (insert 5 conflict styles)
Behaviour	actual declarations, deeds, and responses of participants
Outcomes	functional or dysfunctional results
Kimsey, et al.	
Objectification	strategic means of proving who is right
Personification	focus moves to personal flaws of those not concurring
Magnification	attaching perceived facts to bolster position and negate opposition
Glorification	positive reflection to transcend any negatives and promote favour
Reification	creating buttressing behaviours and actions
Signification	designate meanings that obtain supportive deductions
Justification	proofs that sanction earlier unsupported claims
Lacey	
Discomfort stage	feeling that something is amiss
Incident	conflict situation
Misunderstanding	not clarified or explained
Stage of tension	rising emotions and concerns
Crisis	explosive situation

The table began with Pondy as he was one of the first to provide these classifications of stages, and upon reflection twenty years later, he (1992:259) states that all he would amend to his classifications is that the idea of *organizational cooperation* in this process is **less likely**. Robbins⁴¹ writes from the perspective where the goal is to make the outcomes functional and an enhancement in performance. Kimsey, *et al.* (2006:491) writes from a church ministry perspective and points out that “individuals abandon the identification of others as persons and begin a seven-phase process that ultimately leads to alienation, polarization, and group jeopardy”.⁴² Lacey (2000:11), who writes from an organizational perspective, adds this important observation: “Conflicts, whether inter or intra-personal, domestic, social or global, are all made

up of the same ingredients”. Theologically, these stages have been visualized in Figure 2-2 in a similar five step fashion to Ponder, Robbins, and Lacey.⁴³



[Adapted from The Well Community Church (2012:49)]

Figure 2-2: 5 Stages of Conflict Cycle

In summation, Diehl (2006:199) has put it concisely, “[W]hat happens in one stage of conflict has downstream consequences in a later stage”. In the context of militarized disputes, he bemoans his observation that scholars prefer to explore the stages independently of one another and not as *interdependent* (2006:200) which is an important consideration for other contexts. These stages provide an important understanding in defining conflict.

2.2.1.2.6 Conflict theory definitions

Mitchum (2014:18) astutely observed, “Ask any group of individuals and they will describe conflict in terms of its characteristics or by describing how people feel when they experience it: conflict is uncomfortable; conflict is about disagreement; conflict means something is wrong, not just right, out of harmony”. This observation is no different amongst theorists. Before using a

table to draw comparisons and formulate observations on their perceptions, due to their complexity, some definitions need explanation and framework; these will be considered first.

Pondy (1967:298-299) provided an early working definition of conflict that defined conflict as one of four possible classes: 1) antecedent conditions – which set the stage for potential conflict, 2) affective states – additional personal complications, 3) cognitive states – personal awareness of conflict, and 4) conflictful behaviour – response to conflict. Rather than choose between possibilities, he advocated for understanding conflict as a “dynamic process” that is episodic, leading to “a gradual escalation to a state of disorder”. His perspective is purely organizational (1967:308), but it is helpful in seeing how he views conflict as a definable, sequential, and even potentially successive *process*.

Galtung (2002:9) describes conflict as rooted in *contradiction* which occurs in a multitude of “actors, goals, [and] clashes” that leads to an *attitude* (positive or negative perceptions and misperceptions), which then leads to a *behaviour* (constructive or destructive). He refers to this combination as an A, B, C triangle for which all three elements must be at hand in order to have a full conflict, as cited by Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:11). This distinction of a ‘full conflict’ is germane to Galtung’s perspective in international affairs. As is seen in Table 2-9, he provides a simplified definition, but this comprehensive definition provides further insight into the machinations of conflict.

Lederach (2003:4), another of the leading scholars in the field of conflict studies, venerated a term: *conflict transformation*, due to his focus on “constructive change”. His focus builds on two principles: “conflict is normal in human relationships, and conflict is a motor of change” (2003:5). He goes further to say that “conflict flows from life...and creates life”, and in reality “is an opportunity, a gift” (2003:18). As a part of his *conflict transformation* (see Figure 2-3), he includes the notions of conflict as: 1) a *presenting situation* which “reminds us that the immediate issues are rooted in context – in patterns of relationships and structures, all with history” (2003:34), 2) *the horizon of the future* where an orientation to the situation is acquired, and 3) *the development of change processes* where responses to conflict are seen as the advancement of practices of change (2003:34-39). So his perspective is historical and contextual, and in Table 2-9, he provides a summative definition from this perspective.

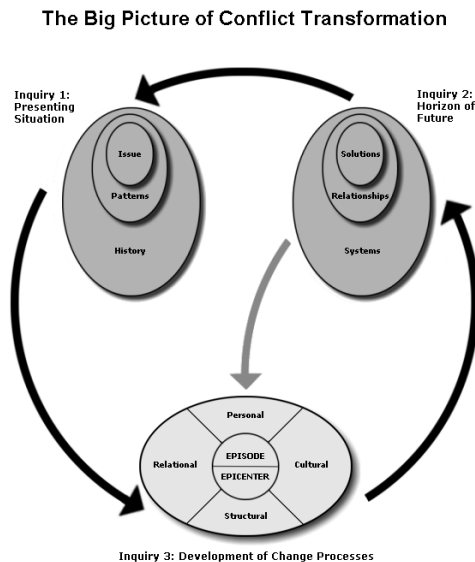


Figure 2-3: The Big Picture of Conflict Transformation

In the modern day, conflict resolution practitioners have seen that the classical thinking (see 2.2.1.2.4) regarding *negotiable interests* being at the heart of conflict is not always correct, and this has led to a redefining of traditional words (Burton, 1998:1). Burton, who many see as one of the fathers of conflict studies, advocates for this redefinition: “a ‘dispute’ may be a matter for negotiation, but a ‘conflict’ has its sources in values that are not subject to bargaining or negotiation” (1998:1). Roberts (2007:46) adds this observation of Burton’s thoughts, “The difference between the two is that conflicts are rooted in human behavior, whereas disputes have their source within the power structure of a society. The resolution of conflict can only occur in treating the problems that cause the conflict, those problems oftentimes being the very institutions which determine what the settlement of a dispute will be”. As a result of this thinking, Burton (2001:1) coined the term *provention* to emphasize the necessity to focus on the decision-making process versus the interactive process of problem-solving.

The remaining additional definitions are chosen due to their distinctiveness in order to provide scope and a measure of comparison. The three observations of Mayer (narrative, value, and belief) are again used to gain a sense of the attitude of the definer.

Table 2-9: Conflict Theory Definitions of Conflict

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
Coser (1956:8)	“A struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources, a struggle in which the aims of opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals.”	struggle over importance	negative	win/lose
Lacey (2000:ix)	“Conflict is neither good nor bad, it is simply a fact of life. How we deal with conflict is what matters. Without conflicting opinions, there	fact of life	value is in the response	valuable progression

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
	would be no impetus to change, no progress, no onward movement.”			
Furlong (2005:3)	“universal human experience”	Universality	??	??
Manyedi (2006:13)	“Definitions of conflict tend to be associated with negative features and situations which give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or dysfunctional consequences.”	historical tendency	historically negative	historically ineffective
Groom (2004:vii)	“It is, after all, a sign of life to be in conflict. A person or society without conflict is dead. Conflict is the means by which we learn through feedback from the environment of other people. Whether or not we respond to that feedback determines whether the conflict will take a functional or dysfunctional turn.”	sign of life/ learning	value is in the response	functional aim
Ramsbotham, <i>et al.</i> (2011:30)	“The pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups.”	Pursuit	incompatible	??
Galtung (2002:30)	“Conflict is as human as life itself. Conceived of as contradiction, there is only one conflict free human being: a dead human being. The same goes for societies and societies of societies: world communities. Conflict-free is to be lifeless. To talk about ‘conflict prevention’ is like talking about ‘life prevention’....The problem is not conflict, but our approach. Conflict means that two or more goals, of the same or different actors, are incompatible, contradictory. That calls for creativity, a maximum of empathy with the actor behind that other goal....”	contradiction intrinsic to life	opportunity	develops creativity
Heitler (1990:5)	“A situation in which seemingly incompatible elements exert force in opposing or divergent directions.”	Dynamics	seemingly incompatible	??
Lederach (2003:18)	“Conflict can be understood as the motor of change, that which keeps relationships and social structures honest, alive, and dynamically responsive to human needs, aspirations, and growth”	motor of change	honesty and sensitivity	??
Types of conflict.org	“Conflict comes naturally; the clashing of thoughts and ideas is a part of human experience...It is a way to come up with more meaningful realizations that can certainly be helpful to the individuals involved...Conflict can be seen as an opportunity for learning and understanding our differences.”	helpful clash intrinsic to humanity	opportunity	??
Baksh-Mohammed [Jugenheimer and Kelley (2009:106)]	“Conflict is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests. It can be internal (within oneself) or external (between two or more individuals).”	state of discord	??	??
Leas and Kittlaus (1973:28)	“Conflict happens when two pieces of matter try to occupy the same space at the same time....Conflicting goals are two purposes or objectives of a group that cannot occupy the same group at the same time.”	proximity and time issue	??	??
Mickey and Wilson (1973:14)	“Conflict occurs any time there is a disturbance in the equilibrium and security of a protective environment. This may be an environment of religious beliefs, political thought, personality, integrity, or nature itself. ...conflict is a process and is neutral in itself, moving from chaos to reconciliation. It becomes valuable or threatening only as people experience its	environmental disturbance	neutral	process moving from chaos to reconciliation

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
	peculiar and redemptive way of joining the old and established to the new and not yet.”			

The idea of *struggle* is again seen in these definitions but with some additional components: 1) its universality, 2) its intrinsic nature to life, and 3) its helpfulness, so there is often a greater value placed on the struggle than previously seen in 2.2.1.1. The notion of *incompatibility* is often addressed in these definitions but with the added idea of “apparent” which conveys the idea that if one digs a little deeper, he may discover that the goals are the same, only expressed differently. There are again some thoroughly negative definitions, but the biggest attitudinal variation, in this group of definitions, is seen in the ***opportunistic*** outlook – one that speaks of change, clarification, process, and importance – which places the burden on the response to conflict and not the conflict itself. In the simple definition of Leas & Kittlaus, proximity and time are again seen, and the perception of *normalcy* arises in that when something gets close enough to something else, or the fact that two worthwhile ideas are considered at the same time, conflict is experienced. This proximity and time are not unusual occasions; in fact Mickey & Wilson described it as a disturbance or threat which can happen at any time. They also are the ones who explicitly state conflict’s value as *neutral*; its benefit is found in the process of moving towards reconciliation. And this leads to an interesting observation from these definitions: the less negative the narrative of the definition, the less discussion on the belief of the outcome to the conflict. It’s as if the potential resolution of the conflict is not as important as what is gained from the journey.

As a result of these definitions, the awareness of ***opportunity*** will be added to the data for a working definition of conflict. The additional nuances to the struggle, incompatibility, and normalcy concepts will also be considered in the working definition.

2.2.2 Practical or Experiential

The theoretical concept of a struggle, whether physical or mental, has direct implications that many other researchers have explored in practice. Runde (2016:1) emphasizes the significance of this practical exploration of conflict when he writes, “While it may be a critical competency, leaders are no more comfortable or competent in dealing with conflict than anyone else. This may be one reason why leaders rank it as the top area for personal development”. Whatever field one may find himself, at some point, conflict will be encountered, and success often hinges on suitable preparation.⁴⁴ The following are practical examples of the definition of conflict, within their given framework.⁴⁵

2.2.2.1 Organizational

The Oxford Dictionary (2016:1) defines an organization biologically as “the development or coordination of parts...in order to carry out vital functions; the condition of being or process of becoming organized” and functionally as “an organized body of people with a particular purpose, as a business, government department, charity, etc.”. Today, many organizations have studied conflict in order to move their agenda forward in a timely and profitable way. For example, Steele (2008:1) did an empirical study on what he calls “conflict efficacy” where what individuals believed about their ability to resolve interpersonal conflict in organizations was impacted by the definition of conflict that was used. While his results and conclusions were more helpful to the discussion of the development of methodologies for future empirical analysis, his purpose in exploring the significance of conflict definitions is germane to this research. Again, the goal is to explore the development of a working definition of conflict. The following definitions are from this field of organizational theory.

Table 2-10: Organizational Definitions of Conflict

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
The Foundation Coalition	“Conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined.”	inevitable struggle	oppositional	not predetermined
Rahim (2002:207)	“An interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individual, group, organization, etc.)”	incompatible, disagreement, dissonance	interactive	??
Hoban	“Conflict is a natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs.”	disagreement	natural	??
Havenga (2004:59)	“Conflict is a situation that develops when individuals or groups experience incompatibility when their physical, material or psychological interests are threatened, and the different forces resulting from this can be interpreted as irreconcilable.”	incompatible	threat	irreconcilable
Jaabosigo (2012:4)	“Conflict occurs because someone is dissatisfied about a certain issue; hence conflict is a disagreement between individuals or groups.”	disagreement	dissatisfied	??
Dana (2001:4-5)	“A condition between or among workers whose jobs are interdependent, who feel angry, who perceive the other(s) as being at fault, and who act in ways that cause a business problem... to be correctly understood as a ‘conflict,’ a situation must contain each of the four elements of our definition.”	4 conditions: a. reliance b. anger c. liability d. detrimental result	worse than disagreement, indecision, or stress ⁴⁶	??
Robbins, <i>et al.</i> (2010:400)	“A process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about.”	perception	negatively affected	process

The magnitude of understanding what conflict really is about in organizational situations is practically seen in the research of Milton (2014:22-24) where he describes the stresses of daily interactions in the nursing profession that lead to conflict, and over time, create a willingness to leave the profession and further burden the already existing staff shortage crisis. In organizations, this is a common detrimental occurrence, and not only in the medical field, but also in the education field. Jaabosigo (2012:10) says that “it is on the daily menu of school principals”. While Jaabosigo (2012:3) describes conflict as “a neutral part of collective human experience”, Tawil and Harley (2004:10) speak of conflict in terms of “situations of armed conflict”, speaking of the impact that conflict has upon social cohesion.

In these definitions, organizational theory sees conflict as an inevitable or natural *struggle*, again with the *incompatible* issues, but this time softened to the idea of *disagreement* or even *dissonance*. This dissonance over incompatible issues is often considered a threat, due to its oppositional component, but to this Rahim adds the notion of *interactive*, suggesting dialogue and collaboration in the face of this discord. The indication that the result is not predetermined lends itself to the idea of potential – an *opportunity* for a different outcome. Robbins describes conflict as a *process* that leads somewhere. Consequently, these definitions don’t really add a new component for consideration; they just provide further tones to colour the descriptions.⁴⁷

2.2.2.2 Cultural

The Oxford Dictionary (2016:1) defines culture as “the distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc.”, and with the use of an accompanying noun adds this element of *identity*: “a way of life or social environment characterized by or associated with the specified quality or thing; a group of people subscribing or belonging to this”. In this regard, Shrestha (2014:1) states, “Societies consist of individuals with different identities, and when people fail to understand identities different from their own, conflict can occur”, and this conflict of identity is typical of intergroup conflict (see 2.2.1.2.2). Such a description is not so profound until it is realized that in intergroup or cultural conflict often the goal is domination by one of the groups over the other group which creates a painful experience for the group being dominated (Doob, 1998:ix). Augsberger (1992:16) provides further illumination on cultural conflict when he adds, “Conflict exists in this tension between same and other: Conflict arises from the competition of same and other; conflict erupts as those who are same seek to control the other (and reduce its otherness), subordinate the other (and exploit its otherness), destroy the other (and annihilate its otherness), and exclude the other (escape from the threat of otherness)”. That is why he adds that if you want to understand how a culture views reality, explore their conflicts (1992:16). The following definitions are from this field of cultural study.

Table 2-11: Cultural Definitions of Conflict

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
Augsberger (1992:11)	“Conflict is a crisis that forces us to recognize that we live with multiple realities and must negotiate a common reality; that we bring to each situation differing – frequently contrasting – stories and must create together a single shared story with a role for each and for both.”	multiple realities and contrasting stories	single shared story	negotiation
Lederach (1991:166-168)	“Conflicts are...cultural events...‘Conflict’ is perceived as an academic term, and when used at a folk level refers primarily to violent, armed, intergroup struggles...Perhaps the term that best indicates and describes the folk concept of conflict is <i>un enredo</i> , or <i>estamos bien enredados</i> (we are all entangled)...To be <i>enredado</i> is to be tangled, caught in a net. The image is one of knots and connections, an intimate and intricate mess. When untangled it still remains connected and knotted. It is a whole.”	a tangled connection	better than violent armed intergroup struggles	whole or connection
Avruch (1998:24-25)	“Conflict occurs when two related parties – individuals, groups, communities, or nation-states – find themselves divided by perceived incompatible interests or goals or in competition for control of scarce resources.”	find themselves divided	perceived as incompatible	??
Abu-Nimer (2003:xi)	“Conflict emerges when people have difficulties dealing with differences – differences related to race, ethnicity, language, class, gender, age, religion, and more. These differences influence the lenses through which people view each other, often leading to mismatched perceptions and expectations, resulting in conflict.”	mismatched perceptions and expectations	influence and often lead to	difficulties dealing with differences
LeBaron (2003:4, 11)	“Conflict occurs when identities and meanings feel threatened. In conflict we react because we care. We care to protect our identities and the meanings we cherish. We care to preserve our ways of life, our views of the world. We care to safeguard those we love...Conflict, put simply, is a difference that matters.”	identities and meanings are threatened	demonstration of importance	??

It is so easy to assume that that one’s own way is the only correct way of doing something, and, except for special revelation where God declares the true way, mankind would operate under this assumption, but would have no way of providing proof. The cultural definitions really demonstrate how blind man can be to other perspectives as these definitions are markedly different than any of the previous ones considered, but in reality, they share similar concepts.

The *struggle* here is seen as a crisis that leads to an understanding, and that understanding is that someone’s perspective is not the only one – there are other realities and stories to be considered. This idea meshes well with the notion of proximity and time where it is *normal* to encounter a different perspective as there is a shared planet and story. The emphasis on **connection**, despite the differences (incompatible or not), is important. Avruch’s concept of *finding themselves divided* seems to be a tongue-in-cheek way of describing the reality of connection despite perceptions. The description of *mismatched perceptions and expectations* emphasizes that the difficulty is not insurmountable. And the idea of a threat to someone’s

identity accentuates the **evaluation** of what is truly important to the discussion. As indicated, this process is not necessarily an easy one, but, due to the connections, a certainty. The concepts of **connection** and **evaluation** will be added to the data for developing a working definition of conflict.

2.2.2.3 Intra- and Interpersonal

Intra- and interpersonal conflict have many aspects to them as can be imagined. In the context of divorce and family courts, Anderson, *et al.* (2011:11), addresses a term, called *high conflict*, describing “relationships that are mired in conflict”. Discussing Weeks and Treat’s typology of conflict among couples, Anderson, *et al.* (2011:13) provides these descriptions: “Low-level conflict is generally issue-focused...Medium-level conflict involves patterns of relating that are often carried over from each of the partner’s family-of-origin experiences...High-level conflict is defined as having a ‘chronic quality,’ and a ‘high degree of emotional reactivity, blaming and vilification’”. So *high conflict* references a persistent, adverse environment of conflict (Anderson, *et al.*, 2011:24).

In addressing the medical field, O’Connor (cited by MacDonald, *et al.*, 2016:86), discusses using the *Decisional Conflict Scale* to assist families in making difficult, medical decisions. She defines decisional conflict as “‘a state of uncertainty about the course of action to take’ which is ‘likely when making choices involving risk or uncertainty of outcomes.’” Certain types of conflict involve extremely difficult decisions with outcomes that are life altering. Apart from Turcotte, the definitions provided next are more general and typical of most intra- and interpersonal conflicts.

Table 2-12: Intra- and Interpersonal Definitions of Conflict

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
Kriesberg (2007:2)	“A social conflict arises when two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible objectives.”	manifest the belief of incompatibility	neutral: arises	??
Turcotte, <i>et al.</i> (2015:921)	“The concept of decisional conflict...refers to an individual’s internal conflict or uncertainty about what to do when choice among competing actions involves risk, loss, regret, or challenge to personal life values.”	risk over choices	uncertainty	??
Squires (2012:3)	“Conflict on an interpersonal level is an expressed struggle that places internal strain on the parties who enact conflict behaviour...The activity of interpersonal conflict is more than a disagreement; it is a struggle on the inside and the outside.”	expressed struggle	internal strain	??
Zacchilli (2007:1)	“Any situation in which two or more people hold incompatible goals, and one person’s attempt at attaining the goal interferes with goal attainment of the other person.”	attempt to attain the goal	interference	??

In these definitions the potential idea is replaced by the actual. There is the exhibition of belief in the incompatible nature of objectives; there is uncertainty over the very real risk inherent in the choices; there is an expressed struggle which creates strain on the individual; and there is the actual attempt at achieving the goal despite the opposition of another. So in considering the ideas of *struggle* and *incompatibility*, which are again seen in these definitions, the notion of **actual and not just potential** will be added to the data under consideration.

2.2.2.4 Narrative

Some may think of why mention narrative in the exploration of conflict. The reason, as Ware (2014:1) states, “Narrative is one of the fundamental cognitive tools that we use to understand the world around us”, and as indicated by Mayer earlier, it is one of the ways in which a sense of someone’s specific approach to conflict is understood. Burer, in explaining narrative as a genre of Scripture, describes narrative as a story where “characters are followed through various events that are connected to form a plot with an initial conflict and eventual resolution” (2006:198-199). He goes on to add that the “key to understanding the plot is determining the nature of the conflict, how it gets resolved, and which characters are involved (2006:201). So in a biblical narrative, conflict is what typically moves the plot forward which provides the context for the lesson to be learned. Just the use of the terms *protagonist* (as the central character) and *antagonist* (a character who in some way is in opposition to the protagonist) is instructive about the fundamental role of conflict in stories (Burer, 2006:200).⁴⁸ Moving on from a purely biblical perspective, Nichol states, “Every work of literature, and much nonfiction narrative, is based on at least one of the following conflicts” (2014:1).

Table 2-13: Types of Narrative conflict

Types	Aspect
Person vs. Fate/God	Society and its constructs
Person vs. Self	Prejudices, doubts, or flaws
Person vs. Person	Hero vs. villain
Person vs. Society	Societal ills
Person vs. Nature	Natural forces beyond control
Person vs. Supernatural	Supernatural forces beyond control
Person vs. Technology	Advancements that constrict

[Adapted from Nichol (2014:1)]

Ware (2014:6) adds three important purposes that conflict serves in a story: 1) it provides structure that moves the action towards a climax and the resolution of the main conflict of the story, 2) it provides motivation for the action of the story, and 3) it engages the audience with the story. Mintle (2014:13) draws this connection: “In life and in fiction, every good story needs conflict. Great stories are built on the rise and fall of conflict.”

Such information hints at other aspects of conflict but really illustrates the essential nature of conflict to the development and communication of any story that is worth reading or hearing, from biblical to secular. Without conflict, there is no worthwhile story. So the *integrability* of conflict will be added to the data for developing a working definition of conflict. And, for this researcher, such knowledge begs the question, “Why would anyone want to avoid⁴⁹ the central component of the story of our life?”

2.2.3 Theological

Unlike many of the other disciplines, in theology, conflict has often maintained a negative consideration. When, in the experience of this researcher, believers discuss conflict, here is a typical response:

“I wish I never had to deal with conflict. I am a card-carrying conflict avoider. Whatever the reason (character, context, sin, etc). I would rather run away from conflict than take it head on. It wasn’t until I began my training as a counselor at nearly thirty-years-old that someone explained conflict didn’t always have to do damage. In fact, it was possible to have conflict with a person and to feel closer to them in the wake of it. This was a revolutionary idea to me” (Squires, 2015:1).

Even with that seemingly positive transition, Squires goes on to finish this article on five ways to *fight* conflict (2015:1). Imprecision in the discussion leads to confusion: why would someone want to fight a process that has potential to build a relationship? In contrast, Gangel and Canine provide a wonderful comparison in his chapter on defining and clarifying conflict where he points out that “conflict does not occur as an isolated event. It functions as part of an ongoing process” (1992:132). He references this belief with a contrast of the misconceptions and essential elements of conflict as seen in Table 2-14.

Table 2-14: Identifying Conflict

Misconceptions	Leads to ...
Conflict is abnormal	unrealistic view of life
Conflict and disagreement are the same	misunderstanding of intensity
Conflict is pathological	thoughts of abnormality or dysfunction
Conflict must be reduced or avoided	whatever it takes to subdue conflict
Conflict is a personality problem	superficial examination of conflict
Conflict is linked only with anger	faulty consideration of philosophical differences
Conflict is the admission of failure	missing out on the benefits of conflict
Essential Elements of Conflict	
Interdependency	understanding that some sort of relationship exists
Interactive struggle	desire to <i>not give in</i>
Incompatible goals	understanding that there are differences

Perceived interference	understanding impediment to progress
Interface of opposition and cooperation	realization of larger relationship: Body of Christ

[Adapted from Gangel & Canine (1992:129-132)]

So, in the opinion of this researcher, there is a wide discrepancy in theology over the definition of conflict and the value of conflict. The definitions in Table 2-15 represent this discrepancy and illustrate further the need for clarity and explanation. They also illustrate the challenge of actually finding definitions of conflict in theological circles, as it appears that many discussions of conflict are built on an assumed definition.

Table 2-15: Theological Definitions of Conflict

Name	Definition	Observed Traits		
		Narrative	Value	Belief
Tink (2011:163-164)	“Conflict is the state of dispute, disagreement, or open clash between opposing groups or individuals, ideas or interests. It may suggest antagonism or opposition even to the point of hostility and violence....Antonyms are <i>accord</i> , <i>harmony</i> , and <i>unity</i>The word <i>conflict</i> is used only occasionally in recent translations of Scripture. Equivalent words are... <i>strife</i> , <i>contention</i> , and <i>quarreling</i>Sadly, the history of Christianity is replete with conflict.”	sadly, it is the opposite of unity	contentious	historically negative
Sande and Johnson (2011:14-15)	“Conflict happens when you are at odds with another person over what you think, want, or do. Conflict begins when you don’t get what you want....As Christians we can’t escape conflict....Conflict happens among Christians because our sinful self gladly cooperates with messages that say, ‘I can have whatever I want.’”	inescapable self-focus	sinful	??
Portaro (1996:1)	“Conflict is the collision of differences. The confrontation of difference may be ordered and civil, or it may be chaotic and violent. It is always challenging and often painful.”	collision of differences	may be civil or chaotic	challenging and painful
Alban Institute (2012:12)	“Conflict is not bad....It’s a natural, inevitable consequence of having more than one idea in the room at the same time....Conflict is a necessary part of life in any healthy group.”	inevitable consequence	natural	healthy
Gangel & Canine (1992:140)	“To understand conflict we must view it as an expressed struggle where opposition and cooperation exist within the same relationship.”	expressed struggle	opposition and cooperation	exists within the same relationship

The motif of struggle continues to be seen but couched in different terminology; now there is the idea of *disunity* and a *collision of differences*. To the idea of incompatibility is added the aspect of *self-focus* – our eyes are on ourselves, and instead of seeing conflict as normal, intrinsic, or inevitable, some see conflict as *sinful* and something to be overcome. However, Portaro, Alban, and Gangel and Canine all see conflict in terms of an opportunity for good or bad outcomes, and Alban specifically emphasizes that conflict is *intrinsic to a healthy status*. So, while there are no new themes via theology, there is definitely conflict over the definition of conflict, and there

are additional distinctions to previous concepts that will be added to the consideration for defining conflict.

2.3 Thematic analysis

The definitions from these different fields run the whole gamut, from positive to negative, from hopeful to hopeless, from natural to unnatural, and from opposition to interaction. From this overview of definitions certain thematic elements have arisen, and obviously not all definitions cover all the elements, but what has been noted previously is now compiled. After observing these themes and then looking back over the definitions, certain phrases within the definitions seem to be indicative of additional insights, and they are included as well. These themes and their particular nuances are highlighted in Table 2-16.

Table 2-16: Thematic Elements⁵⁰

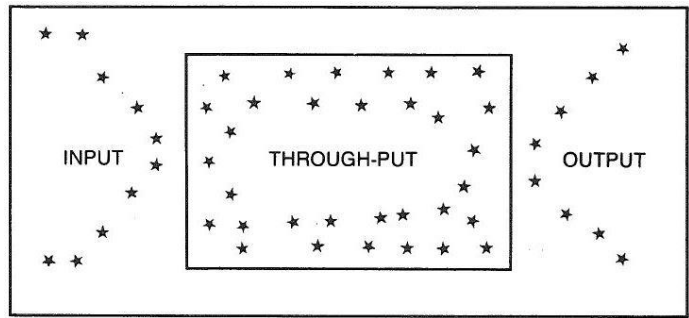
Theme	Source	Nuance
Struggle	Dictionaries	sometimes linked to violence
	Conflict theories	universal
	Organizational	inevitable and natural
	Cultural	difficulty dealing with differences
	Intra- & Interpersonal	within and without
	Narrative	antagonist vs. protagonist
	Theological	disunity and collision of differences (uniqueness)
Incompatibility	Dictionaries	issues that differ
	Conflict theories	apparent
	Organizational	softened to: disagreement or dissonance [interaction]
	Cultural	mismatched perceptions and expectations
	Intra- & Interpersonal	actual interference (not just potential)
	Narrative	develops the plot
	Theological	self-focus
Normalcy	Dictionaries	happens at the same time
	Conflict theories	fact of life
	Organizational	natural / neutral
	Cultural	live with multiple realities
	Intra- & Interpersonal	
	Narrative	key to understanding the plot
	Theological	sinful
Opportunity or Potential	Dictionaries	
	Conflict theories	for change and clarification
	Organizational	result is not predetermined / process begins
	Cultural	must negotiate a common reality
	Intra- & Interpersonal	choice among competing actions
	Narrative	to understand our world
	Theological	opposition and cooperation in the same relationship

Connection	Dictionaries	
	Conflict theories	we learn through feedback / call for creativity
	Organizational	
	Cultural	despite the differences there is a shared planet and story
	Intra- & Interpersonal	social
	Narrative	draws in the audience
	Theological	
Evaluation of importance	Dictionaries	
	Conflict theories	level of importance
	Organizational	
	Cultural	threat to identity (what are we willing to fight over?)
	Intra- & Interpersonal	uncertainty about what to do
	Narrative	
	Theological	consequence of having more than one idea
Integrability	Dictionaries	
	Conflict theories	intrinsic to life
	Organizational	
	Cultural	crisis that leads to understanding
	Intra- & Interpersonal	
	Narrative	essential component to a worthwhile story
	Theological	healthy status

So can these seven themes coalesce into a practical definition of conflict? That answer is the goal of the next section.

2.4 Working definition of conflict

A working definition is tentative and designed to provide clarity, especially in regards to previously accepted meanings, and arises for a specific purpose and occasion. It can eventually develop into an authoritative definition (Google Sites, 2017), but to begin with it remains a practical exercise. To this researcher, these seven themes can combine to address or discuss a process – a process which may or may not: 1) be an escalation, 2) be cognitive (it may be very tangible), and 3) be completely resolved (leading to conflict management). This exercise is imperative, as Kriesberg (2009:16) explains, “Every conflict is unique in some ways, but like some other conflicts in certain ways; determining how a conflict is like and unlike other conflicts helps decide what would be appropriate actions”. And, a number of years ago, Gangel visualized this *process of conflict* in a holistic manner of handling change (see Figure 2-4).



Key: * = Conflict

[From Gangel & Canine (1992:133)]

Figure 2-4: The Process of Conflict

There is a great deal of merit to what he has composed, but it is too theoretical in nature for this inquiry. The goal in this section is to provide a practical definition that can serve as a foundation for further developments and discussions. What this researcher suggests is a working definition of conflict that focuses on the process⁵¹ of conflict in three phases: encounter, struggle, and response.⁵² These three phases capture the seven themes, addressing them sequentially as they are experienced.⁵³ This working definition⁵⁴ is visualized in Figure 2-5.

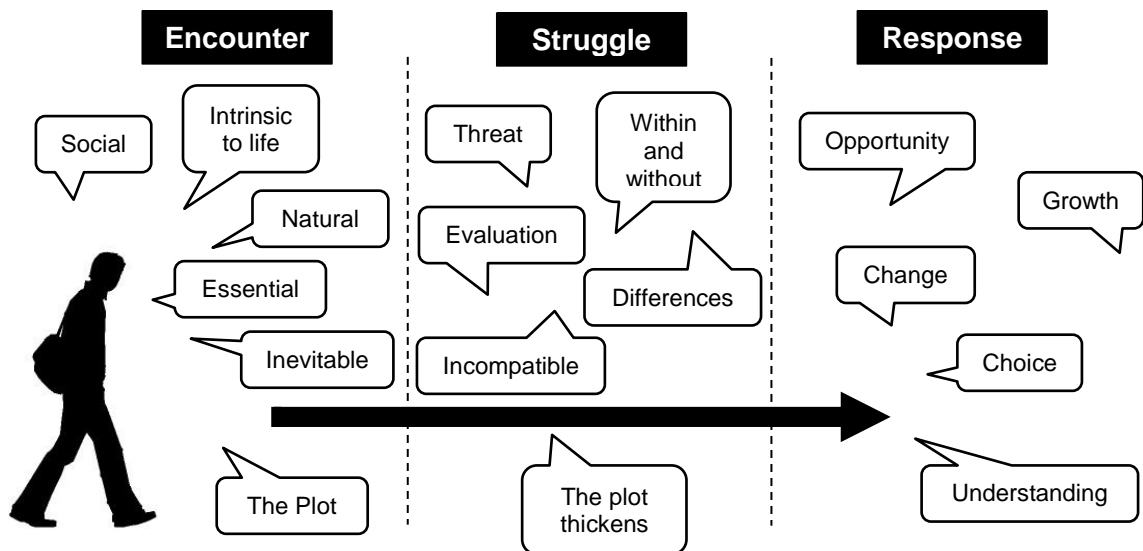


Figure 2-5: Working Definition Visualized

What is visually represented is a person, who, because he is human and alive, will encounter conflict in some form. It may be physical; it may be mental; it may be organizational (the form is not the indicating factor), but it is natural, inevitable, and essential to growth or personal development.⁵⁵ The encounter phase is what is portrayed by the simple definitions as reviewed in Table 2-17. And, reflecting on the initial observation of this chapter where that church viewed conflict as deriving from the existence of sin, and considering certain theological definitions of

conflict, some would also view the encounter phase as an experience of sinful behaviour.⁵⁶ In contrast, this *encounter* is what establishes the plot of a good narrative. Lacey (2000:14) simply puts the encounter this way that “conflict starts with two points of view”, and Portaro (1996:6) provides an apt description of this phase (in regards to interpersonal conflict): “Each time one person’s uniqueness strikes hard against another person’s uniqueness, conflict is encountered”.

Table 2-17: Simple Definitions of Conflict

Source	Table	Statement
M-W Dictionary	2-1	“to happen at the same time as something else”
Lacey	2-9	“it is simply a fact of life”
Groom	2-9	“it is...a sign of life to be in conflict”
Galtung	2-9	“conflict is as human as life itself...conflict free is to be lifeless”
Leas and Kittlaus	2-9	“when two pieces of matter try to occupy the same space at the same time”
Hoban	2-10	“a natural disagreement”
Augsberger	2-11	“we live with multiple realities”
Alban	2-15	“it’s a natural, inevitable consequence of having more than one idea in the room”

The question that surfaces is this: does the “simple” definition of Merriam-Webster (see 2.1.1.1), which refers only to the encounter phase, adequately describe the entire experience of the conflict? No, it omits the struggle (which arises from the encounter) which is over issues (often perceived as incompatible) that necessitates the evaluation of what is important to that individual. This struggle is over a real or perceived threat (within and without) to the person and/or that with which they choose to identify. Here again, some theologians see this struggle as an indication of the sin of self-centredness – “I’m not getting what I want”.⁵⁷ However, narratively, as mentioned earlier, this struggle phase is what drives a good story and what draws the reader/listener into the story. Rivera (1992:11) describes this struggle as *normal tension* which can be empowering and equipping. As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:26, the struggle is very real, takes time to process, and can be done without involving sin. So the struggle phase of conflict describes the normal, subsequent phase to the encounter, which can be energising, and is also reflected in the statements from definitions explored previously (see Table 2-18).

Table 2-18: Reflections on the Struggle

Source	Table	Statement
Lacey	2-9	“without conflicting opinions, there would be no impetus to change, no progress, no onward movement”
Groom	2-9	“the means by which we learn through feedback from the environment of other people”
Galtung	2-9	“there is only one conflict free human being: a dead human being”
Lederach	2-9	“that which keeps relationships and social structures honest, alive, and dynamically responsive to human needs, aspirations, and growth”

Source	Table	Statement
Types of conflict	2-9	“an opportunity for learning and understanding our differences”
Foundation	2-10	“opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals”
Augsberger	2-11	“must negotiate a common reality”
Lederach	2-11	“an intimate and intricate mess”
Abu-Nimer	2-11	“difficulties dealing with differences”
LeBaron	2-11	“we care to protect our identities and the meanings we cherish”
Turcotte	2-12	“an individual’s internal conflict or uncertainty about what to do”
Squires	2-12	“more than a disagreement; it is a struggle on the inside and the outside”
Alban	2-15	“necessary part of life in any healthy group”

As an outworking of the struggle phase is some sort of response to what has been encountered, and this response is based on the results or outcomes of the struggle and the process of evaluation of what is important. Furlong (2005:2) describes conflict in a similar fashion as a two-step response to some dispute that an individual encounters. First, the individual assesses the situation, and then he determines his response to the situation. This point is true, even as a part of a group; the group decision may be decided by majority rules, but the individual will have some sort of response to the group decision even if it has little to no effect on the outcome of the group decision. It is also true of an intra-personal conflict where whatever the individual is conflicted over requires some sort of response even if that response is inaction.

The point is that the burden of response lies with each individual since, as Caspersen (2015:xiii) writes, “You can’t change how other people act in a conflict, and often you can’t change your situation. But you can change what you do”. Mayer (2012:3) adds that “the problem is not the existence of conflict but how we handle it”. In reality, we, as individuals, need to control the conflict and not allow it to control us, and we do so by responding properly to the conflict (Scudder, 2012:22; Tjosvold, 2006:91). A number of the previously mentioned definitions have emphasized this point (see Table 2-19).

Table 2-19: The Importance of the Response

Source	Table	Statement
Lacey	2-9	“how we deal with conflict is what matters”
Groom	2-9	“whether or not we respond to that feedback determines whether the conflict will take a functional or dysfunctional turn.”
Galtung	2-9	“the problem is not conflict, but our approach”
Foundation	2-10	“conflict on teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined”
Augsberger	2-11	“conflict is a crisis that forces us to recognize that we live with multiple realities and must negotiate a common reality”
LeBaron	2-11	“we react because we care”
Gangel	2-15	“an expressed struggle where opposition and cooperation exist within the same relationship”

This notion of the significance of our response is often difficult to accept, but critical to understand. Mintle (2015:13) adds this perspective: “Conflict is difficult to handle because it involves other people, and we can’t fully control other people. While that reality makes us uncomfortable and complicates things, we do control our part in any conflict situation....We focus on the part we control, not on what someone else is doing or not doing. This shift in focus is critical”. And as Heitler (1990:47) indicates: “The health of any given system, be it an individual, couple, or group can be seen as a function of its ability to negotiate conflict”.

Mayer (2012:32) points out: “There is no single correct response to conflict, but that does not mean there are not wise and unwise responses to any particular conflict”; in fact, this is the phase of conflict which often becomes sinful. Rather than seeing the encounter and struggle as “an opportunity to step back, assess the situation, find creative solutions” (Scudder, 2012:35), man sees it as a time to defend himself and does so in a sinful manner. For this researcher, the response phase is crucial to understanding sin’s impact in conflict. It may or may not be true, depending on the particular conflict, that the initial conflict encounter was a result of someone’s sinful actions – it could just as well be a result of differences or uniqueness. And is it sinful to struggle over how to respond? Again, the struggle is where someone determines what is most valuable; is it worth the trouble? No, the sin can be seen in how someone responds to the encounter. Poirier (2006:30) emphasizes this declaration: “[T]ake special note that this...does not automatically equate conflict with sin. Conflict is not *necessarily* a consequence of sin, though it is assuredly a frequent occasion for it” [his emphasis].

The challenge is well stated by Mayer (2012:3), “If we are to be effective in handling conflict, we must start with a way to make sense of it and to embrace both its complexity and its essence”. That has been the goal of developing this working definition of conflict. It has been the recognition that “conflict is not an atypical experience in an individual’s life; in its basic component, it is a consequence of being alive with other ‘alive’ people” (Meyers & Wessels, 2017:3). And if we, as human beings, are to grow then we must see conflict as “a prerequisite for development. Creativity, innovation and development constitute part of the life of the individual, the group and the community and is brought about by the role of conflict between groups and individuals” (Havenga, 2004:52).

Why is a proper understanding of conflict so important, especially for believers? As has been noted earlier, in theological circles, conflict has often maintained a negative persona. For example, Miller (2013:11) writes, “Less attention to conflict allows more time and focus to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ”. But, as Shawchuck (1983:7) points out, “A unique characteristic of the church is that it is the world’s greatest agent for peace – yet its very message is conflict producing”. For example, conflict is endemic to the Gospel message. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul writes that “we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and

folly to Gentiles”.⁵⁸ Maturing in Christ leads to conflict: “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). Mintle (2015:19) adds, “Knowing God does not give you a ticket to escape conflict. Sometimes...knowing God can bring more trouble because it creates conflict in your relationships”.

Encountering conflict is not problematic; struggling over what this encounter means is not the difficulty; the critical issue is in how someone responds to the conflict. Strauch (2011:3) writes, “Conflict can help us to discover our character weaknesses, correct mistaken theological ideas, sharpen our beliefs, refine our plans, grow in wisdom and life experiences, learn to trust God during difficult times, and deepen our prayer lives”. There are so many possible benefits to conflict. However, Strauch (2011:3) adds, “What is wrong is for believers to behave in an ungodly, unbiblical manner in the midst of their disagreements”. This notion is such a striking point! “We need never be embarrassed, however, because we fail to agree. We need to be embarrassed only if we fail to care. It is not unbecoming to have differences. We need to accept that there will be differences in the church as there are everywhere else” (Huttenlocker, 1988:8). And yet despite these observations, many believers, church leaders, and biblically-based organizations shy away from conflict. Why? In the mind of this researcher there are a number of reasons, but they lie beyond the scope of this study.⁵⁹ Regardless of the reason(s) what must be understood has been captured well by Mitchum (2014:6): “The difference between a successful ministry and an unsuccessful ministry is not the amount of conflict or its intensity, but the way the conflict is resolved”.

Is it possible to capture the essence of this working definition in a sentence? To the mind of this researcher, any description of the visual must address these three aspects: 1) What?, 2) Significance?, and 3) Response? (review Figure 2-5). Based on the data from the research of this chapter, the following definition is suggested.

Working definition: Conflict is when something is encountered, creating a struggle over how to respond to that encounter.

Expanded working definition: Conflict is when something is encountered (real or imagined), creating a struggle (within and/or without) over how to respond (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally) to that encounter leading to the possibility of growth (via conflict resolution or conflict management).

The expanded definition is to illustrate how clarifications can build on this basic statement and provide impetus for further research and discovery. For the believer, however, this practical definition must be considered in light of the special revelation of God – the Bible.

2.5 Theological considerations

Does the Bible provide a definition of conflict? Words are used throughout the Bible that in English translations have been translated and/or could be translated using the word *conflict*.⁶⁰ In Table 2-20, a record of English translations is submitted illustrating how various translations⁶¹ render certain words with the term *conflict*. As is seen, these occasions are few and far between, occurring most often in four main passages: 1) Dn 10:1, 2) 2 Cor 7:5, 3) Phlp 1:30, and 4) 1 Th 2:2. What is also interesting is that out of the sixteen occurrences of מִלְחָמָה in the Old Testament text, eight times the HCSB chooses to render it with *conflict* while none of the other translations do so.

Table 2-20: English Translations Using the Word “Conflict”

Ref.	Lexical form	KJV 1769	ASV 1901	RSV 1952	NKJV 1982	NIV 1984	NASB 1995	ESV 2001	NLT 2004	HCSB 2004	Lexham 2013
Gn 13:8	מְרִיבָה								•		
Jdg 12:2	רִיב									•	
1 Sm 14:52	הַמְלָחָמָה									•	
Ps 55:9	וְרִיב								•		
Pr 13:10	מַצָּה								•		
Pr 15:18	מִדּוֹן									•	
Pr 16:28	מִדּוֹן									•	
Pr 17:1	זִבְחֵי-רִיב:								•		
Pr 17:14	מִדּוֹן									•	
Pr 22:10	מִדּוֹן									•	
Pr 26:20	מִדּוֹן									•	
Pr 28:25	מִדּוֹן									•	
Pr 29:22	מִדּוֹן									•	
Jr 15:10	מִדּוֹן									•	
Jr 50:24	הַתְּגָרִית:						•				
Dn 10:1	וְצָבָא			•	•		•	•		•	
Am 7:4	לָרֵב				•						
Hab 1:3	וּמִדּוֹן					•				•	
Ac 23:10	στάσις								•		
2 Cor 7:5	μάχη				•	•	•		•		
Gl 3:21	κατὰ (trs)								•		
Gl 5:17	ἀντίκειμαι					•					
Phlp 1:30	ἀγών	•	•	•	•		•	•			
Col 2:1	ἀγών	•			•						
1 Th 2:2	ἀγών		•		•		•	•			
Heb 10:32	ἄθλησις		•				•				
Ja 4:1	πόλεμος						•				•

As is shown, a word study has the potential to provide insight, but in reality, insight only into particular *conflict situations*. Due to their principled nature, the Proverbs passages (as translated by the HCSB) have potential to impact a definition of conflict, but a *well-defined definition* of

conflict is not discussed in the Bible.⁶² As a result, the study of conflict possibly has a limited capacity to impact the life and actions of a believer.

However, as Gangel and Canine (1992:155) write, “From Genesis to Revelation God tells us about conflict”. So despite the reality that Scripture does not provide a definition of conflict, especially as conflict relates to modernity, there are many examples, stories, and principles that are recorded that provide the occasion for comparison and evaluation. A comprehensive study of conflict principles is beyond the parameters of this study, and so, a few key situations will be considered that are germane to this evaluation.

2.4.1 The beginning of conflict

To the mind of this researcher, if a biblical evaluation of the working definition is to be properly deliberated, then it necessitates an exploration of the beginning of conflict. Scripture starts with the “beginning” of the world through the revelation of God’s creative acts in six days, and progresses to the placing of God’s representatives in the idyllic Garden of Eden, tasked with a mandate, and confronted with a prohibition. At this point, Shawchuck (1986:8) states, “Conflict came very early in human history. It started with a question, ‘Indeed, has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’ ...Deep down inside, Eve experienced a tension she had not known before”. As has been reflected in the earlier definitions, some theologians and scholars would support this observation. But the question that arises is what makes *that* question, or the struggle over that question, the beginning of conflict? Was it because Adam and Eve were faced now with an alternative consideration? Would not the fact that God had stated earlier in Genesis 2:17 of the consequence of eating from this prohibited tree make it clear that there was another option for Adam and Eve?⁶³ What makes *this* option by the serpent more significant than what God had described as an option? If conflict is defined by the presence of an alternative outcome, then God’s prohibition to Adam and Eve, would be the original possibility of conflict for them.

Some, again as seen in previous definitions and explanations, would see the origin of conflict when Adam and Eve fell into sin by responding incorrectly and eating of the forbidden fruit. If that notion is correct, then the working definition of conflict (third phase), previously posited, fits nicely as it is the incorrect or immoral response to conflict which is problematic (sinful); it is not the encounter of conflict itself that is sinful nor even the struggle within over what is most important that is sinful. If this additional explanation is true, then another question arises. Is there a previous time when someone responded incorrectly to conflict? The fall of Lucifer, along with a certain segment of the angels, is indicative of a wrong response to conflict that precedes that of Adam and Eve.

This researcher would describe Adam and Eve's situation in this manner. Adam and Eve encountered conflict for the first time when God forbade them from eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and warned them of the consequence of eating from that tree (Gn 2:17). Scripture doesn't indicate the intervening time, but until the Serpent came along and provided an alternative in a different light, Adam and Eve responded to their original conflict in a right and biblical manner. But, when they sinned, their *sinful* response corresponded to the sinful response of Lucifer whose lies led to their deception and downfall (Jn 8:44).

This explanation is visualized next in the story of Cain and Abel where Abel's offering is accepted and Cain's is rejected.⁶⁴ God responds to Cain's disappointment with these words: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it" (Gn 4:7). Cain's sin would be realised in how he responded to this rejection. Again, it is the response to the conflict which can be sinful as illustrated by Cain. Now that man was a sinful or fallen creature, a sinful response to conflict became the norm and not the exception.

Before exploring further the examples in the Bible of *responding* to conflict, it is important to contemplate an additional consideration to the beginning of conflict. It is the contention of this researcher that conflict's beginning (as seen in the working definition) is found within the Godhead itself, which is characterized by unity through *diversity*. Evans (2011:44) speaking of the Godhead says, "Unity is not uniformity, nor is it sameness....Unity occurs when we combine our unique differences together as we head toward a common goal". In speaking of the lesson for man, Evans adds (2011:63), "Acknowledging and embracing our differences in a context of oneness more accurately reflects the kingdom of heaven than any other thing". In other words, the Body of Christ's unity, despite our uniquenesses, is reflective of God's unity in the midst of His diversity as seen at Jesus' baptism (Mk 1:10-11).

God's unity is further appreciated in the fact that the Triune God always responds to the conflict encountered, and the struggle which arises from His diversity, in a right way. This truth is established in many places throughout Scripture, but a couple of examples are presented at this juncture. The first example is realised in Christ where all three phases of conflict are clearly depicted.

From Philippians 2:8, it is learned that the incarnation of Christ – God becoming a man – necessitated the humiliation of Christ,⁶⁵ and the means⁶⁶ by which this humbling took place was in an act of obedience.⁶⁷ He responded to the will of the Father by refusing to consider His equality⁶⁸ with the Father as something to hold on to,⁶⁹ and instead the great kenosis⁷⁰ took place, where God became⁷¹ a servant and went to the cross in order to redeem mankind. This passage describes the *right* response of Jesus to the conflict He encountered in fulfilling the will

of the Father. Wallace (1996:635) has summarized the exegetical study of this passage with these apt words:

Putting the interpretation of all the elements together yields the following. Although Christ was truly God (μορφή Θεοῦ), two things resulted: (1) he did not attempt to “outrank” the Father, as it were (cf. John 14:28 for a similar thought: “The Father is greater than I am”); (2) instead, he submitted himself to the Father’s will, even to the point of death on a cross. It was thus not Christ’s deity that compelled his incarnation and passion, but his obedience.

The enormity of Jesus’ struggle is seen in the Garden of Gethsemane where Luke describes his struggle in terms of physiology where “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lk 22:44). This physical reaction was due to the struggle within over the Father’s plan for His life.⁷² Jesus at one point cried out, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Lk 22:42). And that struggle continued on the cross when Jesus uttered the cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34). The conflict that Jesus experienced was very real, and a part of the Father’s redemptive plan for mankind.

The struggle that Jesus encountered was over something that He needed to learn: obedience. Matthew 4:1 begins with the Holy Spirit’s leading of Jesus “into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil”. His successful education resulted in His suitability for ministry: “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:8-10). This ministry inspires confidence in sinners and believers, so that they put their trust in Jesus Christ: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:15-16). Jesus’ right response to the struggle of the conflict led to the provision of salvation for all mankind (Jn 3:16-18).

Finally, this obedient response of Christ’s comes full circle, for when the Son has subjected all things under the father, He then subjects⁷³ himself to the Father which results in the declaration “that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).⁷⁴ Here the third person personal pronoun [αὐτός] is found in the predicate position identifying⁷⁵ the Son in His action of submission.⁷⁶ So the particular roles that the Godhead plays in redemption, predicated upon and evidenced in their embrace of the role (right response), brings God to the place of ultimate harmony, exaltation, and glorification for which He is fully deserving. Conflict is an aspect of the plan to accomplish this.

While not as clear of an example, it still demonstrates a measure of conflict within the Trinity. Jesus made it clear that if He left for heaven, the Holy Spirit would come and testify of Jesus (Jn 15:26). The Holy Spirit's role is to promote someone else. That elevation of someone else is seen in John 14:26 where the Holy Spirit will remind mankind of the teachings of Jesus, and ultimately, He will glorify Jesus (Jn 16:14). Again, what is at least demonstrated is the submission of one member of the Godhead to another member, and done so willingly, which addresses the issue of a right response to conflict.

What is seen by these examples is that conflict has been exhibited within the Godhead, yet only with godly, right responses – as would be expected of God. The first ungodly, or wrong, response to conflict was seen in the life of Lucifer. His sin led to the first ungodly, or wrong, response by God's representative, Adam, and as a result all mankind was corrupted to the point that man's response to conflict is typically a sinful one.

2.5.2 A wrong or sinful response to conflict

With the fall of Adam, sin entered the world and impacted all future generations (Rm 5:12). Now man normally responds to the encounter of conflict and the ensuing struggle in an incorrect or sinful way. There are many instances in the Scripture of this truth, but three are presented here as examples.

Rehoboam has been crowned the new king of Israel, and at his coronation, Jeroboam and the people request a respite to their taxation and conscription. In response to this encounter, Rehoboam requests time to consider the petition. In seeking advice, he encounters a struggle over the best rejoinder and ultimately settles on the advice of his peers to increase his encumbrance. This selfish and intolerable response led to the schism of the nation, and ultimately, the fulfilment of God's prophetic word. As an important sidenote, while Rehoboam's sinful response led to the dissolution of the nation (as seen and experienced under the rule of David and Solomon), the right response of these same parties to the word of God, at the mouth of Shemaiah, saved the nation from civil war (1 Ki 12:1-24).

In Mark 11:27-33, Jesus is questioned by the Jewish leaders as to His authority. His response is a willingness to divulge that information if they will respond to His question – a question of the origin of John's message and ministry. The dialogue of these leaders is captured and portrayed for all to see: they struggled⁷⁷ over the right response to the conflict they encountered in Jesus' question. Sadly, they responded incorrectly and suffered as a result.

The final example is found in Acts 16:16-40, where Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned for casting an evil spirit out of a fortune-telling slave girl and causing the financial loss of the owners. While in prison, an earthquake releases them, and an occasion is provided to share the

Gospel with the jailor. The next day brings news from the authorities that they are free to go. Paul, shockingly responds that they aren't going anywhere until a public apology is made for them as Roman citizens.⁷⁸ At this point, the Roman officials realize that they were culpable as they had previously responded incorrectly to the accusations brought against Paul and Silas by not providing a trial. In retrospect, they realize their mistake and respond properly, this time, with an apology.

Some may say that encounters like these were initiated by a sinful action. That may or may not be true, but that doesn't make it sinful for Rehoboam, or the Jewish leaders (at the hand of Jesus), or the Roman officials and Paul to encounter the conflict or even to struggle over how to respond; the sinful aspect can be seen, for them, in the response to the conflict, especially as they had no control over the timing of the encounter nor its cause.

2.5.3 A wise or godly response to conflict evidenced

At the same time, there are examples of right responses to very difficult conflicts; this is especially true of those who have experienced the transforming work of righteousness in their lives (Rm 5:18-19).

In Genesis 13:1-12, the enormity of Abram's entourage and possessions, coupled with those of his nephew, Lot, were beyond what the land could manage, and as a result conflict arose amongst their herdsmen. What to do? Abram responded with these words, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." What is also enlightening is that Abram recognizes the importance of their relationship: "Let's not quarrel about this!" Such a notion again fits well with the second phase of conflict where the struggle over *how to respond* identifies what is really important. Now some may say that Lot's choice indicated a sinful response as the area where he chose to live was near to a very wicked city. That may or may not be true, but the point of the passage was about Abram's response to the conflict, and he chose wisely.

Acts 6 describes a conflict that arose in the early church over neglected widows. The Apostles communicate to this early group of believers two ideas: 1) their (Apostles) struggle over priorities in regards to this conflict, and 2) their response of deferment to the believers to select godly men to resolve this situation. From this conflict and righteous response, godly men arise to address and resolve the issue. For many churches and denominations, this occasion begins the office of deacon to address similar issues in the church.

Finally, in one of the most dramatic conflicts of the New Testament times, the fledgling church gathers to decide upon the role of the Law in the life of Gentile believers (Ac 15:1, 5). Peter's testimony of his experience with Cornelius causes further reflection upon the burden of the Law in the life of the Jews. After hearing more of their work among the Gentiles, James stands and provides biblical context to what is at the heart of the discussion – what is God doing among the Gentiles at this time. His advice is to not burden the new Gentile believers further, but simply to ask them to refrain from certain things. In the official letter of response, the leaders emphasize their unity on this decision by stating that they had become of one mind⁷⁹ in this matter (Ac 15:25). They respond correctly (unified) to a potentially disastrous conflict.

With these examples in mind, it is helpful also to reflect on Jesus⁸⁰ use of conflict throughout His ministry. There are again many instances of Jesus in conflict, but for this discussion a few samples will suffice, as they illustrate diversity and an emphasis again on response to conflict.

2.5.4 Jesus' use of conflict

First of all, Jesus *created* conflict (Mt 21:12-16). Due to the pervasiveness of sin in the Temple industry, Jesus angrily dismisses the merchants of the Temple area. On top of that He heals those who were blind and lame,⁸¹ demonstrating to the Jewish leaders what should be taking place in the Temple area (Blomberg, 1992:316). Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, obviously was not sinning in this action of cleansing the Temple; He was responding to the sinful actions of others in a righteous way that in turn created conflict for them. While it is possible to surmise, there is no further information provided on how they responded to Jesus' actions; only His response is known.

In addition, Jesus' use of parables was designed to bring conflict into the lives of the hearers. Responding to the disciples' question about His use of parables, Jesus explains that Isaiah's prophetic word is being fulfilled (Mt 13:10-14) as the unwillingness of the hearers to accept His message is confronted. Blomberg (1992:216) writes, "The hidden aspect of the parables' message is thus both a cause of and a response to people's unwillingness to follow Jesus". Later, with His continuing use of parabolic discourse, the Pharisees come to understand that they are the object of his lesson (Mt 21:45), and their response was a desire to arrest Him, but they were thwarted by His popularity with the crowds.

Jesus also *resolved* conflict (Jn 8:3-11) by His reply to the inquiry of how to respond to this woman who was caught in the act of adultery. His response was weighted upon the sinlessness of her accusers, and they all depart in acknowledgment of their own sinfulness. None of her accusers was unsoiled enough to condemn her, and the One who was sinless did not condemn her, but called on her to turn from her sin. Again, the record does not indicate how the woman

responded, but the response of the accusers to Jesus' assertion is highlighted and that is the focus of the conflict – her tricky case was resolved.

Another significant example of Jesus' resolution of conflict is seen in Mark 12:13-17 where the Jewish leaders attempt to entrap Jesus with his response to their polarizing question. His retort is to place the burden of decision back on them as they had to decide upon the right action, and His imperative confined them to one recourse in this situation. Mark's term⁸² for their realization of how Jesus had escaped their seeming paralyzing enigma and had instead trapped them, was an intensification of awe. They marvelled at His ability to resolve the intricate conflicts they sent His way. In fact, later in the chapter, after resolving the supremely nuanced marriage question of the Sadducees, no one dared to present Him with any more scenarios (v. 34).

Finally, Jesus, in some measure, also *avoided* conflict as is seen in His response to the angry response of His hometown to His reading of and declaration of fulfilment of the Messianic passage of Isaiah 61 and subsequent acknowledgement of their disbelief (Lk 4:16-28). As they sought to throw Him off the cliff, He simply walked back through the crowd⁸³ and left (v. 30). Similar avoidance or escape tactics are recorded in the book of John,⁸⁴ and earlier in the same book (7:30), the reason for Jesus' avoidance manoeuvres is stated: it wasn't yet time for conflict resolution.⁸⁵

In a similar vein, John 7:1-10 provides greater context to the notion of timing. Jesus' brothers mockingly ask Him about his attendance and ministry at the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles, and He twice responds with the declaration that it was not the appropriate time for public ministry. After His brothers leave, Jesus attends the feast privately, and when He begins to engage the crowd with His teaching, the comment stated is: "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?" (Jn 7:25-26). As has been mentioned, it is learned later that it was not Jesus' time to face that conflict with the Jewish leadership.

So as it suited Jesus' purposes, He responded to conflict in different ways. On some occasions He created conflict; on some occasions He resolved conflict; on some occasions He avoided conflict. In all of these responses there is no sinful or wrong response on His part (Heb 4:15; 5:9; 7:26), and this is indicative of the fact that one can respond to conflict correctly, even when it may not seem so to outsiders or even those with whom one might be in conflict.⁸⁶ Furthermore, whether or not the encounter of the conflict was occasioned by a sinful action does not make the conflict sinful for the person who encounters it or Jesus would have sinned many times. Nor does the struggle over how to respond to the conflict indicate sin has occurred, for if that were the case then Jesus would have sinned in the Garden discourse. What may be sinful by an individual is the response to conflict.⁸⁷

As a result of this biblical overview, the biblical principles support the working definition of conflict and its three phases: encounter, struggle, and response. The overview has also demonstrated that the notion of conflict as being sinful is not true; it is neither sinful to encounter conflict nor struggle over the decision of how to respond to conflict. What can be sinful is the response to the conflict, and any response that is not supported by scripture is indeed sinful.

2.6 Conclusion

Due to the infrequent provision of definitions to conflict by theologians, coupled with the often assumptive foundational understanding of conflict indicated in writings, this research began with the quest to provide a definition of conflict that can be biblically assessed and ultimately used to analyse the conflict of the book of Philemon. This research began by exploring the definitions of other study disciplines, and these disciplines were divided into the conceptual and practical realms. Each definition was evaluated in light of the words chosen for the definition, the value of conflict indicated, and the belief or attitude towards resolution. In order to properly evaluate these definitions five aspects of conflict were first provided for contextual understanding of these definitions. These definitions provided a pool of information that was used to create a working definition of conflict: *conflict is when something is encountered, creating a struggle over how to respond to that encounter*. Since there is no biblical definition of conflict stated in scripture, principles were considered to assess the viability of the working definition, and this proffered definition was demonstrated to be biblically viable.

How does all of this conflict study, research, and overview impact an exploration of the conflict dynamics and themes in the book of Philemon? First, it provides a backdrop in understanding a modern field of study – it really began in earnest in the twentieth century with failure of long-held beliefs to adequately answer the cause of the world wars. Second, it provides a working definition of conflict based on the research, experience, and understanding of other disciplines that provides a framework for a similar exploration in theological circles – it is a definition of terminology and a basis for comparison. Third, it provides a basic evaluation of the working definition of conflict in light of biblical revelation – while there is no complete definition of conflict in Scripture, the principles support the working definition. Finally, these three points provide a clear and well-defined basis for exploring the conflict dynamics and themes found in the book of Philemon.

2.7 Notes

¹ A practical example of the necessity of this defining step is seen in considering the dissertation of Basson where she explores “interpersonal conflict within the blended family”. While it is an indispensable study, one in which branches of conflict (intra- and inter-household) are defined (2007:112), types of conflict (parental, stepparent and children, and sibling) are described (2007:209-210), and forms of

conflict (rights, expectations, and quarrels) are stated (2007:2), it is also a study where conflict is not defined, but rather, it appears, a definition is assumed, and this leads to an unfortunate questioning of these helpful considerations.

² Some, such as Van Tonder, *et al.* (2008:378), in their particular discipline, feel that providing an overall definition of conflict may be counterproductive to their processes, but defining conflict is essential to exploring the themes and dynamics of Philemon and foundational to building a biblical theology.

³ A brief overview of causes is considered in 2.2.1.2.3, but that is for contextual purposes only.

⁴ By correlation, it is proposed that the very words used in defining conflict provide a sense of someone's approach and viewpoint of conflict.

⁵ It is submitted that the very definitions posited give insight into their author's valuation of conflict as well.

⁶ This researcher is indebted to his pilot friend, Myles Bloye, for the helpful instructions and practical application.

⁷ Leas (1973:28) dissects the notion further and provides some helpful comparisons. He writes, "The root word, *fligere*, means 'to strike.' This root is found in the word 'inflict,' which means to strike something onto (in) somebody, and in the word 'profligate,' which literally means to 'strike forward' or to knock someone on the face. The word 'conflict' means to 'strike together'."

⁸ The word *corporeal* is descriptive of the physicality of the conflict

⁹ The words *figurative* or *psychological* are representative of the categorization by the dictionaries.

¹⁰ The word *spatial* is descriptive of the proximity of the conflict.

¹¹ The word *narrative* is representative of the categorization by the dictionary.

¹² The word *medical* is representative of the categorization by the dictionary.

¹³ The word *simple* is representative of the categorization by the dictionary.

¹⁴ Even *Cambridge Dictionary* does not define these words.

¹⁵ The international conflicts were reduced to three aspects: 1) averting nuclear war, 2) eradicating disparities and unjust practices in the world, and 3) ecological stability and direction. (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:49).

¹⁶ Also known as *third-party consultation*, *process-promoting workshops*, or *facilitated dialogues* where the use of the problem-solving approach, with non-official participants (who were still influential), meeting in private, assisted by third-party guidance, shared information, concerns, and perspectives with their opponent, seeking a joint solution to the conflict. The result was that these attempts "were seen as non-binding, non-official micro-processes, which, it was hoped, would contribute to macro-level negotiations" (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:51).

¹⁷ Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011:58), provides an example of non-linear thinking by discussing the concept of *systemic conflict transformation* where "rather than solving a problem in linear style, as in traditional strategic thinking, the aim is to understand a complex ecology and to learn how to operate successfully within it". He states that this kind of approach is needed to respond to the current challenges of: 1) conflict complexity, 2) conflict asymmetry, 3) cultural diversity, and 4) conflict intractability (Ramsbotham *et al.*, 2011:57-61).

¹⁸ This last summary of the 5th generation is taken from the last chapter and specifically a summary of pages 423-426 in Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011).

¹⁹ There are much more complicated and in depth explanations of special revelation, but for the purposes of this study, special revelation is defined as that which man could not know apart from God revealing it to him. That revelation is in the form of God's Word (the Bible), and in God's Word, man discovers that God will hold man accountable for what God has revealed to man in His Word. As a result, man is to consider and operate under the truth that God's Word is authoritative and his rule for all of life.

²⁰ Unless referring to a biblical passage, and unless specifically stated otherwise, any reference to a male pronoun or female pronoun will automatically include the other gender.

²¹ An example of this challenge is illustrated by the *Circle of Conflict* model that sees values (such as religious beliefs) as important but often leading to an escalation of conflict, and therefore the mediator's goal is to move away from that value, as it is not something that can be resolved between the parties at conflict, and to instead help the parties focus on what can be understood and resolved (which is the information and structure of the conflict) (Furlong, 2005:29-39). However, for a believer, to put their values in a second position is undesirable as it may be considered as compromise. By contrast the *Conflict Dynamics Profile* might classify this *values* challenge as a "hot button" and include that component as a significant consideration in the conflict analysis (2008:6).

²² This concept was introduced by Francis Bacon (Hutchinson, 1998:88), and may be summarized as: "saving knowledge comes from Scripture[;] knowledge of nature and creation comes through observation of general revelation" (Gerety, 2007:1). In practice it leads to the thought that "if God has spoken more clearly in one place than another about a particular subject, then we should spend more time studying the more relevant book" (Crabb, 1987:37). Bookman has an excellent critique of this concept (1994:68-78).

²³ Observational truth is understood as truths that are learned via man's senses.

²⁴ Propositional truth is understood as truths that are revealed to man through the statements and events of God's Word – truths that could not be known unless God revealed them to man. It is acknowledged that these explanations of observational and propositional truths are simplistic and there is much study on these topics to be considered, but the purpose of these explanations is simply to provide a perspective and not a definitive statement on the topic. Crabb (1987:35-45) has a good discussion on this topic.

²⁵ This notion will be addressed later in the chapter.

²⁶ For example, Hannah (2001:324) writes, "Alsted turned from the amillennial view of end-times events...because of the tragedies and devastations connected with the Thirty Years Wars that ravished Germany". In contrast, Walvoord (2003:1351) attributes the 20th century abandonment of postmillennialism for amillennialism with this statement, "World War I, with its millions of casualties, destroyed the illusion that the world was improving".

²⁷ Leas & Kittlaus (1973:31-33) divide this aspect further into: 1) facts of a situation, 2) method or means, 3) ends or goals, and 4) values.

²⁸ Mitchum's (2014:27) research indicates that this designation is accepted by most scholars as the correct delineation.

²⁹ For further discussion on identity-based conflict see *Resolving Identity-based Conflict for Believers* by Meyers & Wessels (2017).

³⁰ Scudder, *et al.* (2012:84-86) alternatively sees *self-worth* as the central motivation and consequently the pursuit of that goal is the main cause of conflict. They categorize that pursuit in three routes: 1) assertive-directing – task accomplishment, 2) altruistic-nurturing – protection, growth, and welfare, and 3) analytic-autonomizing – precision and order. These routes can also form combinations that are called *flexible-cohering*. The pursuit of self-worth via these routes creates conflict.

³¹ Nish (2011:34) has an interesting take on values where she refers to the challenge of differing values, in the organizational world, as "conflicting the core". She states, "Conflicting the core happens when mutually opposing core values exist between members in the organization to such an extent that at least one member is seen to be acting beyond the acceptable boundaries of what others perceive as the organizational core values".

³² Mitchum (2014:24-27) provides an excellent examination of the works of Stimac, Deutsch, and Pneuman in this area of causes or sources of conflict, and even adds some helpful observations herself.

³³ Tripp (2002:76) describes this revelation of what is hidden as an "illuminating window into our hearts", and refers to what is being revealed, via the conflict, as "spiritual adultery" in that what he sees as being revealed is, in reality, whatever I love more than God (2002:82). Another term that he uses is "spiritual idolatry" where the conflict reveals what I've allowed to rule my heart in the place of God (2002:66). These negative concepts spring from his view that conflict is a result of the fall of Adam (2002:75).

³⁴ Gatlin, *et al.* (2015:1-2) have compiled eight causes of conflict in the workplace from the work of Bell and Hart: 1) conflicting needs, 2) conflicting styles, 3) conflicting perceptions, 4) conflicting goals, 5) conflicting pressures, 6) conflicting roles, 7) different personal values, and 8) unpredictable policies. From a societal perspective, Havenga (2004:22-25) lists ten causes of conflict: 1) poverty rights, 2) division of labour, 3) poverty, 4) insufficient upward mobility, 5) competition, 6) unemployment, 7) national unity, 8) political organization, 9) class consciousness, and 10) alienation. This is the kind of specificity that has developed from modern conflict studies.

³⁵ Robbins, *et al.* (2010:400) refers to this school of thought by the term *human relations*.

³⁶ Some, like Song (2015:14-15) would disagree with the original source, mentioning the work of Follett and later Deutsch, but would agree that the two-dimensional model begins with Blake and Mouton.

³⁷ This model explains its focus by way of comparison stating that the "styles" models focus on "a combination of behavior, personality, and motivation that can be difficult to change – we made the decision to focus exclusively on the behaviors people typically display when faced with conflict. We made this choice for two reasons. First, focusing on specific sets of behaviors would allow detailed examination, and subsequently greater understanding, of how people typically respond to conflict. Second, an explicit behavioral approach, we believed, would provide especially useful information to individuals whose goal is to change. Because we do not focus on personality and motivation, but only on how people act, we take the optimistic position that people can change their behavior for the better. That is, people can change the way they respond to conflict, and the more people know, the better equipped they will be to change. Specifically, the more they know about how they act before, during, and after conflict, what sets them off most easily, and what responses to conflict are especially harmful in their own organization, then the better equipped and (it is hoped) motivated they will be to change" (Capobianco, *et al.*, 2008:3).

³⁸ Previous models have coined these values differently, but, in essence, they are very similar and differ largely with the context of the conflict.

³⁹ These styles have morphed in names over the years, as seen in Table 2-6, but the essence of them is basically the same.

⁴⁰ Kennedy (2010:4-5) describes this same phenomenon as a spiral, developing into further and further aggression.

⁴¹ He has written a definitive work on organizational behaviour which is now in its 17th edition.

⁴² Kimsey, *et al.* (2006:487-490) describes seven phases that build on some interesting observations about the *nature* of conflict. He states that the first understanding needed is *worldview*: it is what fashions significance in a person's life; it is what they deem is true. Relationships are built by like-minded people. The second observation begins when the group now creates a "comparative system for justifying their beliefs", and he calls this a *frame of irony*: it "serves the purpose of deflecting reasonable inquiry, thus protecting the existing worldview" and "is similar to a false dichotomy in which the elicited response requires that one comply with the status quo or be judged as a part of the problem and, even worse, labeled a heretic for not conforming" (2006:488). His final observation involves the *spiral of silence*: where truth's silence leads to conflict within the individual in the group and can lead to their leaving the group lest they experience the wrath of the group (2006:490).

⁴³ Leas (1992:85-93) has a similar classification where he provides five levels of conflict: 1) predicaments – focus is on the problem, not the person, and leads to positive outcomes, 2) disagreement – focus on self-protection and generalizations arise, 3) contest – people now want to win, 4) fight/flight – parting of ways, 5) intractable – destruction of the opposition.

⁴⁴ A humorous exception: as this researcher was taking a module on *Managing Conflict*, one of his classmates, who had already planted thirty-three churches at the time, confided in him that he never really encounters conflict in his churches, and so this classmate was asked what he does when someone comes to him with a problem or disagreement. His response was that he tells them it is probably time for them to look for another church! If only dealing with conflict was so simple.

⁴⁵ Again, this exercise is not meant to be comprehensive, as that lies outside the scope of this research, but representative of a variety of fields and experiences.

⁴⁶ Dana (2001:1-5) provides several examples of what he views conflict to be and not to be, and he distinguishes conflict as containing all four aspects of his definition. His thought is that conflict management principles will not help situations that are not really full-blown conflicts.

⁴⁷ The exception would be the defining characteristics that Dana (2001:1-5) provides. While it is certainly his right to define conflict in this manner, and it makes sense that the correct tools must be used. However, the problem for this researcher is that his prescription is sort of like visiting a dermatologist to discover the condition of some unusual skin markings, only to be told that since they are only pre-cancerous, wait until they turn into cancer to have them removed with the proper tool. Why wait until something is "full-blown" in order to respond to it with the proper tool when a certain tool can be used in multiple phases of the cancer's development. Why not respond to it in the "pre-cancerous" stage knowing it is likely to develop into more? That is why a dermatologist will often remove the markings as a precaution.

⁴⁸ Greenway (2000:1) provides instruction on how to get one's story off to a great start by pulling the reader into the fabric of the story from the very beginning. He explains how most readers identify with the protagonist, and so he provides eight rules to guide a writer in beginning a story well.

⁴⁹ Mickey and Wilson (1973:27) correctly observe: "avoidance or denial of conflict is the least favorable resolution. It is ultimately the most painful and expensive way of responding to a situation".

⁵⁰ Blank spaces in the table mean either nothing of this element was discussed in that section or nothing of this element, from that section, brought an additional contribution to the study. What are included are aspects that brought new nuances of the theme to the discussion for consideration.

⁵¹ Mickey and Wilson (1973:16) clearly state: "Conflict is a process; it is a means to an end". They go on to clarify this statement further by describing conflict as "part-process" where it should not be the ambition of believers, but conflict is vital to the life of the believer in moving them to the place where God would have them to be (1973:18).

⁵² This description is what draws a distinction from the previous overview of stages (see 2.2.1.2.5), where stages are used as levels in an *escalating* process.

⁵³ Normalcy, connection, and integrability are seen in the encounter phase. Struggle and the evaluation of importance are experienced in the struggle phase. Opportunity or potential is explored in the response phase.

⁵⁴ These three aspects of conflict bear a resemblance to the work of several others: Pondy, Galtung, Lederach, and Shawchuck. The distinction is that this researcher sees all three phases happening in *every* conflict, even though all three phases may not be seen or even understood. Most conflict is resolved quickly and efficiently; it is those that are not resolved in this manner that gain our attention and become the focus of resolution or management processes, often out of necessity. This definition is

closest to Shawchuck's description of conflict as *action, threat, and reaction* (1983:35), but differs in that the encounter phase may or may not be a result of an action (by another party); it may simply be an internal struggle (intra-personal – "I am conflicted over a decision"). It does seem to mesh with Galtung's idea of a "full conflict", but it differs with the notion again that every conflict is "full" even when not recognized or understood – it has been resolved quickly and efficiently. A simple example of this quick and efficient resolution is choosing what to eat or wear.

⁵⁵ Mickey and Wilson (1973:15) aptly stated it this way: "We must accept disruption and chaos in order to have improvement and beauty".

⁵⁶ Strauch (2011:1) states, "Because of sin, all human relationships are a struggle and are prone to conflict". Sande (2011:14-15), who defines conflict as what "happens when you are at odds with another person over what you think, want, or do", adds two further aspects: 1) "Conflict begins when you don't get what you want", and 2) "Conflict happens among Christians because our sinful self gladly cooperates with messages that say 'I can have whatever I want'".

⁵⁷ Tripp (2002:78) makes this observation: "any attempt to examine the causes of conflict must begin with the heart". Warren (1996?:7-3) states this leadership law: "The root cause of internal conflict and discord is always selfishness". Patterson (1997:39) says, "Church conflict will always find its roots in our passion to make ourselves—our needs, our opinions, our group, our goals, our theology—the center of the universe". These are just a few examples of the thinking in theological circles.

⁵⁸ Unless noted differently, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*.

⁵⁹ One important consideration at this juncture is captured by Patterson (2012:3): "Church people tend only to name something as conflict once it has become damaging. I suggest therefore that it is helpful to adopt a notion of conflict which allows that it is not inherently destructive."

⁶⁰ Tink (2011:163) also makes this observation, provides examples, and points out that the use of the word *conflict* really finds its articulation in the newer translations. Kirk-Duggan (2006:716-717) provides a word study on conflict that provides some additional helpful perspective to the word study.

⁶¹ This table is meant to be representative of the major English translations from different centuries and decades. It is not submitted as an exhaustive look at how "conflict" is translated. As the HCSB demonstrates, there are other occasions for the translation of a word as "conflict", but most translations have chosen to go in a different direction. In addition, the NLT chooses to provide an interpretive translation of the preposition *κατὰ* with "conflict" that none of the other included translations replicate at any point. Thus, further word study on "conflict" is needed, however, that study is more helpful to particular *conflict* situations but has limited helpfulness in defining *conflict* as there are many more occasions in the Bible where a word for "conflict" is absent but the presence of a *conflict* situation is abundantly clear. For example, consider Joshua 24:15 where the Israelites are facing a grave choice over whom they will serve, and Joshua indicates his personal resolution of the matter.

⁶² For reference, an example of a well-defined scriptural definition is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 where Paul explains the gospel message as consisting of the death, burial, and verified resurrection of Jesus. This well-defined definition then has implications in the life of a believer as he lives out his faith. For example, as an ordinance of the church, believer's baptism by immersion reflects this same Gospel definition as it addresses the issue of a believer's union with Christ as seen in Romans 6:3-8.

⁶³ It is recognized that the original prohibition was given to Adam prior to Eve's creation (Gen. 2:16-17), but her response to the serpent's question, indicates that she knew of the prohibition. Another possible conflict prior to the Fall could be the naming of the animals and the inability to find a suitable partner for Adam.

⁶⁴ It is understood that there are differing opinions and viewpoints on Cain's sacrifice being rejected: was the sacrifice itself sinful or not sinful. That determination is not the point here; the point of record in God's response to Cain's down crest expression was that Cain could respond to this rejection in a right way or a sinful way. Mathews (1996:270) sees the original sacrifice as sinful but has captured the critical point well when he writes, "The consequences of his reaction to God's correction are more far-reaching than the initial sin itself, for if he pursues sin's anger, it will result in sin's mastery over him. This is his decision. It is possible for Cain to recover from sin quickly if he chooses the right thing". Cain's sinful response to the conflict over the rejection of his sacrifice led to Abel's death and Cain's ostracism. Cain responded sinfully to God's rejection of his sacrifice.

⁶⁵ The action, *ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν*, speaks of an understanding and embracing of *creatureliness*, as Trench (1983:150) coins it, and addresses His utter dependence, as a man, upon His Father. This mind of Christ is what believers should practice in their interaction in this world.

⁶⁶ The adverbial use of *γενόμενος* is seen here as means (Harris, *et al.*, 2012:note on Phil. 2:8).

⁶⁷ The unusual adjective, *ὑπήκοος*, found only in Acts 7:39, 2 Cor. 2:9, and Phil. 2:8 in the New Testament, is derived from the verb *ὑπακούω*. Louw-Nida (1996:note 5) distinguishes this verb from *εἰσακούω* by stating that *ὑπακούω* "may suggest primarily submission, while *εἰσακούω* may focus more

upon attentive listening with resulting obedience". Again, this distinction fits well with the concept of Jesus' response to the encounter and struggle with a response of submission or obedience.

⁶⁸ The neuter plural of ἴσος often functions as an adverb but in this phrase it functions as an adjective in conjunction with the infinitive εἶναι (Reinecker, 1980:550). Louw-Nida (1996:588) defines it as "that which is equal, either in number, size, quality, or characteristics".

⁶⁹ The Greek word, ἀρπαγμὸν, is found only here in the New Testament, and Louw-Nida (1996:583) provides this explanation: "ἀρπαγμός may mean not only 'to grasp something forcefully which one does not have' (57.235) but also 'to retain by force what one possesses,' it is possible to translate Php 2:6 in two quite different ways. This second interpretation of ἀρπαγμός presumes the position of Jesus prior to the incarnation and hence his willingness to experience the kenosis...". Its placement in the sentence emphasizes the importance of His understanding. Jesus was not clutching at what did not belong to Him; He knew who He was, and He knew why He came, and He willingly submitted (responded) to that plan and purpose.

⁷⁰ Scholars disagree on exactly what "emptying" took place, but regardless, the divestiture did not lessen His divinity, but rather speaks of a submission or right response to what was asked of Him by His Father.

⁷¹ The morphology (μορφή) of Jesus changes from v. 6 to v. 7 where He began (ὑπάρχω) as God and added (λαμβάνω) the form of servant to His constitution, and this transition, in the context of Philippians 2, speaks of a willingness to submit to a plan.

⁷² Mark's gospel captures this clearly with his use of three terms in 14:33-34. The first two are infinitives that complete the action begun. At the point of beginning to pray and face the crucifixion ahead, Jesus also began to experience two things: 1) ἐκθαμβέω: which speaks of amazement and alarm (even to the point of fear and terror), and 2) ἀδημονέω: which speaks of an overwhelming burden, trouble, or distress. Thayer (1889:11) even defines this second term as: "accordingly uncomfortable, as not at home" – potentially the idea of being *homesick*. The third term functions as a predicate adjective describing the condition of Jesus' soul. Mark uses περίλυπος which conveys the notion of being surrounded or enveloped with grief or sorrow. France (2002:582) states this about the predicate adjective: "A third strongly emotional term, περίλυπος, adds further to the impression that Jesus is being stretched to the limit. The LXX uses περίλυπος for Cain's state of mind before he killed Abel (Gn. 4:6)". France's note on the LXX passage draws an interesting correlation to this researcher's early point about Cain. Brooks (1991:234) summarizes Jesus' struggle in this way: "Mark indicated that Jesus did not die with stoic apathy as though death were of no consequence. He really hurt as he approached the cross".

⁷³ Lenski (1998c:683-684) makes an interesting comment on the meaning of this *subjection*: "Our versions regard ὑποταγήσεται as a future passive: 'shall be subjected' by God. But this form is also a future middle, R. 809, and here the thought calls for the middle sense. When all things are subjected to Christ, force is brought to bear upon them; they are conquered and thus subjected. After such a thought Paul would not write a passive and say that the Son, too, shall be subjected, for the implication would be that force is brought to bear also upon him in order to coerce his subjection. The opposite is the fact. By a free act, in harmony with the whole divine plan that made him supreme over all things, Christ subjects himself to the Father, regarding whom we once more read that it is he who 'did subject all things to him,' namely to Christ".

⁷⁴ Lenski (1998c:685) summarizes the phrase with these words: "one perfect harmony with not a hand or a voice in the whole universe raised against him".

⁷⁵ Dana & Mantey (1955:129) explain: "the function of the intensive pronoun is to emphasize identity".

⁷⁶ Fee (1987:760) clarifies this act: "the language of the subordination of the Son to the Father is functional, referring to his 'work' of redemption, not ontological, referring to his being as such. The unity of God lies behind all such language". This statement is not an embracing of the early Arian heresy of subordinationist Christology where Christ is less than the Father.

⁷⁷ According to Louw-Nida (1996:350) the verb διαλογίζομαι doesn't convey the notion of a contentious discussion but rather the carefulness or comprehensiveness of their reasoning process. It was the nature of the responses that they were considering that was problematic.

⁷⁸ In a sidenote, Paul's response to his potential liberation demonstrates that a right response may not be what is expected nor is it just the release from a stressful situation, and this is seen in the fact that although faced with freedom, he chose to continue incarceration awaiting vindication.

⁷⁹ Zodhiates (2000:1040) defines this adverb with an emphasis on unanimity and accord. That idea, linked with the dative participle γενομένοις, ascribes to ἡμῖν the impression of having come to a unanimous resolution or agreement. This notion fits well with Young's (1994:151) description of a participle functioning as an adjective: "A restrictive adjective phrase is one that is essential for the proper identification of the head noun. It will limit the noun to a particular individual, thing, or group in order for the readers to identify it".

⁸⁰ Mickey and Wilson (1973:20-21) emphasize the importance of conflict to theology: “Jesus employed conflict as a means in his ministry. Thus, both in principle and practice we have authority in theology to reintroduce conflict as an integral part of Christian ministry”.

⁸¹ France (2007:788) makes this observation: “This is remarkable as the only synoptic reference to Jesus healing in Jerusalem, where he will be presented otherwise as a teacher and controversialist, not as a miracle worker – the emergency action of Luke 22:51 is hardly an exception”.

⁸² Found only here in the New Testament, ἐκθαυμάζω is an expression of profound amazement. As Lenski (1998a:524) writes, “Jesus had nullified their efforts completely”.

⁸³ There is disagreement over the miraculous implications of this event. It is not the purpose of this study to address that issue, but simply to point out that it happened within the circumstances of conflict, and it postponed the resolution of that particular conflict.

⁸⁴ John 8:59 speaks of Jesus hiding from those who were trying to stone Him, and 10:39 describes Him as eluding those who were trying to seize Him.

⁸⁵ That resolution would have different meanings for different groups. For example, the death of Jesus, to the Jews, would potentially mean the removal of a threat. For Gentiles, Jesus’ death, would open the door for the calling of Gentiles to His kingdom. The point is that Jesus determined that the time for all of this to transpire was “not yet”.

⁸⁶ For example, when Jesus was answering the questions of his own people in Nazareth and putting in context their unbelief, they responded to His correct response with a desire to kill Him (Luke 4:28-29). This same idea is also seen in His parable of a man who plants a vineyard (Mark 12:1-12), and as a result the Jewish leaders want to incarcerate Him.

⁸⁷ It is again important to note that one’s *sinful* response to conflict may create conflict for others and be the *occasion* or *encounter* of conflict for someone else, but it is also true, as seen in Jesus, that the *right* response to conflict can still create conflict for others.

CHAPTER 3: THE *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE* OF THE CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION IN THE BOOK OF PHILEMON

3.1 Introduction

With a working definition of conflict provided (*conflict is when something is encountered, creating a struggle over how to respond to that encounter*), attention turns from the modern to the historical. Consisting of a manageable twenty-five verses and discussing essentially one main topic,¹ this New Testament book lends itself to an extensive critique,² and such is the case with the book of Philemon.³ In addition, while the book is aptly categorised as an epistle or letter,⁴ its content⁵ also closely follows that of a narrative⁶ with the introduction of characters, conflict, character development, and conflict resolution.⁷ The resulting duality⁸ has created some canonical and interpretational issues throughout church history,⁹ and so it is important to pause and reflect on these complementary¹⁰ components of the book's classification.

3.1.1 Narrative approach vs. Literary approach

As was considered in 2.2.2.4, narrative¹¹ essentially explores the conflict of the situation in the lives of different characters, leading to a resolution that is warranted either by its character development or lack thereof. What makes this information so important? Well, as the audience of a narrative, the reader wants to know *why* certain things happened, and *what* was the impact of that decision upon the outcome; it is the search for these answers that both attracts and enthralls the reader in the narrative.¹² Further, the conflict's resolution provides a measure of satisfaction to the story or the story doesn't make sense. The resolution provides an "aha!" moment for the reader that results in a measure of needed closure (Petersen, 1985:13, 15).¹³ Unlike history, a good story adds an additional task of grasping the message the author wanted to convey in organizing the historical details in the chosen fashion¹⁴ (Petersen, 1985:8).¹⁵ In summation, a good story reaches out and grabs someone and pulls him in because he wants to know how it all works out in the end. At the conclusion of the story, the significance is grasped to the degree that the message is understood.

In juxtaposition, the literary approach¹⁶ focuses on specifics of the letter. This entails questions such as: Who wrote it? From which location was it written? When was it written? What was going on in the world at that time? All good surveys, introductions, backgrounds, and even commentaries provide this important information, but for this study, those details are of secondary importance. Whether or not Paul's imprisonment was in Ephesus, Rome, or Caesarea Maritima¹⁷ doesn't change the fact that while incarcerated, he led Onesimus to faith in Christ.¹⁸ Whether or not the proximity of Ephesus helps Onesimus reach Paul in prison doesn't

change the fact that he connected with Paul.¹⁹ The details of the story, the conflict, and the resolution are what are of vital importance to this research, and so for the following historical study, the narrative perspective is more effective in gleaning insights into conflict,²⁰ and so that vein of thought will be followed.²¹

3.1.2 Slavery backdrop

Initially, a basic, first-century Roman slavery meta-narrative²² is established in order to provide an environment with which to draw comparison and correlation. Despite the multitude of varying research opinions on the extent, laws, and morality of the institution,²³ what is an established fact is that slavery was woven throughout the very fabric of Roman society²⁴ during the timeframe of the book of Philemon.²⁵ Ancient slavery differed from modern slavery in that it crossed all spectrums of society and was often an aspect of war spoils.²⁶ Cho (2014:102-103) describes slaves of that era²⁷ as having “no legal rights”; regarded, both as individuals and in their service, as commodities; and subject completely to the will of the master.²⁸ In fact, de Wet (2016:274) emphasizes that in the Roman mind, slaves were to be subjugated by fear.²⁹ Ethical treatment of slaves was based more on the financial impact for the master than on any sense of magnanimity.³⁰ Manumission, while a possibility for a slave, was determined by the master and skewed in his favour.³¹ Cho (2014:105-106) adds that a runaway slave created a major financial challenge for a master as he lost both the valued property and the service to be rendered, and as a result, the punishment for an apprehended runaway slave was often severe and lethal. Normally as an outcome, the best that a runaway slave could have hoped for was a swift and disfiguring result.³² Additionally, in the case of runaway slaves, laws and obligations were in place that mandated how a slave was to be returned to his master.³³ Often *slave catchers* were employed to find and return the recalcitrant slave to his master for appropriate punishment and/or recompense from those who sheltered the fugitive (Cho, 2014:106).

In reflecting upon that subservient context, although their responses to slavery varied, de Wet (2016:265) sees most early theologians as viewing slavery's beginning as a result of sin and not due to any sort of natural occurrence.³⁴ And, while the narrative of a slave would normally be anything but informative to the spiritual growth of a believer, it was a concept embraced by Christianity.³⁵

3.1.3 Purpose

With this backdrop in mind, how have the characters, conflict, and resolution (the narrative) of the book of Philemon been understood by theologians since its earliest evaluation? What can be learned from this analysis? One important lesson that Williams (2012:13) discusses is that an analysis that both interacts with the text and chronicles the historical interpretation and

treatment of Philemon can unearth “new interpretative possibilities”.³⁶ Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the *Wirkungsgeschichte*³⁷ of the conflict of this book so as to provide historical context³⁸ for the future exploration of the conflict dynamics and themes in the book of Philemon.

3.1.4 Narrative foci

As this assessment is undertaken, three specific narrative³⁹ foci⁴⁰ will be considered as represented by the following questions: 1) who are the main characters, 2) what is the main problem or conflict, and 3) if there is a resolution offered, what is it.⁴¹ Over many earlier centuries, the answers to these questions did not vacillate greatly;⁴² however, recent scholarship⁴³ has explored a number of other possibilities.⁴⁴ In order to facilitate the exploration of the following historical perspectives and make it manageable in this context, the study begins with a textual overview of this researcher’s observations in answer to the questions above.

3.1.5 Textual overview

The book of Philemon opens with the designation of the authors as Paul and Timothy, however, beginning in verse four, the communication has narrowed to the perspective of only one individual as is indicated by the use of the first person⁴⁵ onwards, culminating in the designation of Paul as that person, as clearly specified in verse nineteen. Consequently, the first main character indicated is Paul who at the time of the writing was imprisoned and emphasises that characterisation with his appellation as a prisoner⁴⁶ of Christ Jesus.

The introduction of the second main character begins as well with a plural introduction but also quickly recedes to a single individual. Specified via the use of the dative case, this letter is addressed to four parties: 1) Philemon, 2) Apphia, 3) Archippus, and finally 4) the collective church that meets in his home. While there is a plurality of addressees, the use of the singular second person personal pronoun⁴⁷ in verse two denotes that the body of the letter is for one individual,⁴⁸ and that singular label continues on throughout the letter, only reverting back to the plural in verses twenty-two and twenty-five. This evidence makes it highly unlikely that the focus is upon the church and the resulting notion that they are simply referred to by a collective singular.⁴⁹ Due to the use of the *masculine* vocative⁵⁰ designation in verse seven, Apphia is ruled out as well, and the only two possible designees then are Philemon or Archippus. The reality that Philemon is mentioned first⁵¹ lends credence to the notion that he is the main focus⁵² of the letter.⁵³ Coupled with this idea is the fact that of all the characters introduced in this letter, only Philemon is announced with a double designation.⁵⁴ Paul goes on to declare Philemon’s sterling character and refreshing attitude.

Finally, the remaining principal character is introduced in verse ten as Onesimus⁵⁵ where the interplay on his name, in verse eleven, further establishes his significance.⁵⁶ Identifying him as a transformed⁵⁷ slave,⁵⁸ in verse sixteen,⁵⁹ introduces his occupation and brings perspective to the sensitivity of the conflict situation.⁶⁰

The conflict or problem is that Onesimus was gone from the master's domicile and, in doing so, had wronged his owner, Philemon, in some way.⁶¹ Paul spends about 35% of the book (v. 10-18) directly addressing Onesimus, his changed character, his necessity to right a wrong, and the opportunity for Philemon to aid in this conflict resolution by his positive response to Onesimus' return.⁶² Most of the remainder of the book is either groundwork for this conflict dialogue (v. 1-9) or a part of the conflict resolution discussion (v. 17-21). It is the crafting of this largest section of the book that evidences (but doesn't define) Paul's conflict in this situation by endeavoring to construct an argument that would convince Philemon of right action towards Onesimus (resolution), and so, while Paul's conflict is not directly addressed in the letter, it is still easily discerned.⁶³ The resolution to the conflict, proffered by Paul, involves three aspects: 1) the necessity for Onesimus⁶⁴ to right a wrong,⁶⁵ 2) the welcoming⁶⁶ of Onesimus back by Philemon,⁶⁷ and 3) the promise of potential recompense by Paul.^{68 69}

In conclusion, this researcher, identifies three main characters in the book of Philemon: Paul, the author and mutual associate of the other two; Philemon, the owner of Onesimus, a man of character, and the one who had been wronged; and Onesimus, the runaway slave, who had come to faith in Christ and was now transformed in character. The conflict of the book encompasses the flight of Onesimus, the resulting hurt or wrongdoing to Philemon, and the struggle over how Philemon was to respond to the return of Onesimus. Finally, the resolution by Paul involves the return of Onesimus to Philemon, the urged welcoming action of Philemon towards Onesimus, and the offer of personal financial restitution, on behalf of Onesimus, to Philemon.⁷⁰

3.2 Traditional narrative

Simply put, the narrative of Philemon has been understood traditionally⁷¹ as a slave, named Onesimus, who fled from his master and has found his way to Paul, who is imprisoned in Rome, and who leads Onesimus to faith in Christ. In response to this occasion, the letter from Paul to Philemon is sent with Onesimus, returning him to his master, Philemon, and asking for Philemon to receive Onesimus, the now believing slave, back into his home, and, furthermore, into fellowship. Limited discussion is made of the evil of slavery, and at this point in time, no discussion is provided for Onesimus' manumission.

According to Decock (2010:273), the work of three men⁷² are foundational to this traditional view of the book of Philemon. The first is Jerome's commentary which recent scholarship surmises is largely influenced by Origen.⁷³ Second are Chrysostom's sermons in defence of the veracity of the book of Philemon. Third are Augustine's deliberations on *what is to be enjoyed* and *what is to be used*, springing from the *benefit*⁷⁴ notion of verse twenty in Philemon. Although, their objectives were not the significance of the details of the book⁷⁵ but rather the challenge to spiritual commitment,⁷⁶ their understanding of certain aspects of the book provides this traditional framework.

For example, Chrysostom, in response to the negative view of the book of Philemon (due to its seemingly insignificant discussion) emphasises the importance of the details in the apostle's life⁷⁷ in spurring greater spiritual passion in the lives of believers (Decock, 2010:277). In fact, Decock (2010:277-278) states three significant issues that Chrysostom highlights as lessons to be learned, and two of these are informative to this study. He begins with Chrysostom's idea that Paul was unashamed to return a fugitive slave with his approval – one known as a thief.⁷⁸ Second, Chrysostom pointed out that a slave shouldn't be taken away from his master without the master's agreement.⁷⁹ So as Chrysostom related, Onesimus was a thief and runaway slave that shouldn't be removed from his master without that necessary consent.⁸⁰

Jerome, according to Friedl (2010:302), viewed Onesimus as Philemon's slave who stole part of the family's wealth and fled to Italy to escape capture. There, after wasting the money, he is led to faith in Christ through Paul, and thus received Paul's commendation of transformation in this letter to Philemon. Jerome sees the conflict for Philemon as either accede to Paul's wishes to make Onesimus his partner or risk the loss of fellowship with Paul, and Paul is confident of Philemon's acquiescence (p. 308). To Jerome, Onesimus and Philemon were now bound together eternally, and, as a result, Philemon was constrained to act in accordance, approximating the bondage of Paul (p. 311). Jerome also views the anticipated response of Philemon with such confidence that Paul's resolution asks less of Philemon than he could, knowing that he will do more than requested (p. 312). So Jerome also regarded Onesimus as a thieving, runaway slave, but additionally considers him, due to his new faith in Christ, as bound to Philemon. As a result, Paul asks of Philemon to embrace that relational bondage.

Friedl (2010:313) believes that the reason for Jerome's lack of discussion on the possible manumission of Onesimus is due to his embracing the culture of that day. He demonstrates this observation in Jerome's understanding of verse sixteen where he views Onesimus as doubly bound now to Philemon: "by the necessity of the flesh in time", and "by the Spirit in eternity" (p. 314). Friedl (p. 314) also highlights Jerome's critical view of Onesimus' actions with the translated terms of "sin", "disgraceful deed", "injustice", and "villainous".⁸¹ Finally, Friedl (p. 314) describes Jerome's view of the resolution as an offer of spiritual liberty and not physical liberty.

Unlike Jerome, Chrysostom was clearly against slavery, viewing it as sinful. As he addressed the issues of the book of Philemon, he too viewed Onesimus as a thieving, runaway slave who, in Rome, came to faith in Christ through the ministry of Paul (De Wet, 2010:320). He saw the main characters of the letter as Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus, and as De Wet (p. 321) mentions, Chrysostom saw these characters as participants in a “close honour-proximity” relationship where he consigns them to the same status level.⁸² However, De Wet (p. 267-268) also notes that Chrysostom embraced the “principle of divine punishment” where a master demonstrates a godly attribute in punishing disobedient slaves and so teaching them virtue.

According to Tolmie (2016:4), Chrysostom’s portrayal of Paul is placatory to the angry slave-owner, and in that role, Paul uses two strategies to pacify Philemon’s fury (De Wet, 2010:324). First, Paul underscores Onesimus’ new value, and second, Paul holds off on referencing Onesimus until he has emphasized the character of Philemon. Furthermore, Chrysostom sees the absence as a *separation for a purpose* and honours Onesimus by regarding it so (p. 325). As a result of these views, Chrysostom sees all believers as slaves of God, and so all believing owners should treat their slaves as God treats His slaves (p. 326). So Chrysostom saw the components of the narrative in a similar way to Jerome, but with the differing viewpoint of physical slavery as sinful.

Theodore of Mopsuestia was another of this era who wrote on the book of Philemon, especially due to its controversial acceptance. Fitzgerald (2010:348-349) conveys Theodore’s positive evaluation of the book of Philemon as exemplary of how a believer (specifically a church leader) should confront another believer on private issues, and thus, model humility. In his discussion of the narrative, Theodore sees Paul’s humility as insinuating Philemon grant a pardon to Onesimus, and so to Theodore, it is this action that provides the value in the book – its ability to communicate humility to others (p. 350). Fitzgerald (p. 351) also sees Theodore’s view of Paul’s humble request for pardon as not implying manumission, evidencing the declaration of Theodore himself that he felt that many people of his day had that expectation for Christian slaves. Theodore further refers to Paul’s statement that believers should remain where they are,⁸³ and this inequality of social structure was within God’s purposes (p. 353; Tolmie, 2016:5). The significance, for Theodore, was the instruction for masters to evangelise their slaves, thus turning them into better servants as demonstrated in the life of Onesimus (p. 356).

In contrast to Chrysostom, Theodore rejected the notion of an angry response to Onesimus’ flight by Philemon and viewed him as sorrowful instead (Fitzgerald, 2010:357). Theodore also has an interesting stance on the status of Philemon’s church as indicated in verse two; he viewed this terminology as indicative of Philemon’s status as having multiple believing slaves. As a result, Theodore viewed Philemon’s struggle as one over not needing this slave anymore as his household was functioning fine without Onesimus, but Paul wanted Philemon to provide

Onesimus with forgiveness and another opportunity (p. 357, 359). However, Theodore is in agreement with Chrysostom and some of the church leaders of that day that Onesimus needed to be returned to his owner and either receive his emancipation or approval prior to ordination (De Wet, 2010:329; Fitzgerald, 2010:360) or once again provide his services as the owner's rightful property (Fitzgerald, 2010:360).

During the time of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas saw Onesimus as the slave of Philemon who had escaped and now, through the work of Paul, is returned to his master for a voluntary reconciliation and restoration of relationship. Murphy (2005:195) describes the process this way: "it is a roundabout request for the return of Onesimus to himself, a means of getting Philemon to practice the New Law through his own inclination and free will".⁸⁴

In the time of the Reformation, Calvin saw Onesimus as a thieving, runaway slave for whom Paul requests a pardon; in making this request, Paul evidences such biblical forbearance that his message becomes a testimony to the entire Church (Calvin & Pringle, 2010:347). Calvin understands Paul to be recasting the flight of Onesimus as a departure that was actually advantageous, for as long as Onesimus was a runaway in heart (maybe not yet in practice), Philemon was not receiving his benefit (p. 356). However, he sees great character development in Onesimus, to the point where he describes Onesimus as "a memorable example of repentance" (p. 357). In conclusion, Pauls seeks not manumission but a pardon and restoration as a result of drawing this inference: "the faith of the gospel does not overturn civil government, or set aside the power and authority which masters have over slaves" (p. 359-360).

In summation, the traditional view, while having some variables in application and significance, viewed the narrative of Philemon as a story about three main characters: Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus.⁸⁵ They saw the conflict in two forms: 1) Onesimus stealing from his owner, running away, and having to face the consequences, and 2) Philemon having to make a choice about Paul's request on behalf of Onesimus. In terms of character development, they perceived through the words of Paul, a tremendous change in the life of Onesimus. Finally, for various reasons, they saw the resolution as Paul's return of Onesimus and his request to Philemon as one not of manumission but rather forgiveness, acceptance, and restoration.⁸⁶

The traditional view can best be summarized as a narrative, based on the documentation that is available from the early church, which was not focused on the exegesis of the text as much as the story and the applications that can be drawn from the story. Some of those applications would be ethical treatment, responsibility, forgiveness, and restoration.⁸⁷

3.3 Modern alterations to the traditional narrative

Why do contemporary commentators see the need to re-evaluate the traditional narrative of the book of Philemon long held for so many centuries? Cho (2014:100) provides this possible insight: “some modern interpreters – noticing the ‘astonishing’ absence of explicit references in the text both to Onesimus being a runaway slave and to the specific occasion of the letter – have challenged this traditional interpretation”.⁸⁸ Coupled with that reasoning may be the modern emphasis on exegesis rather than the spiritualization of the text.

Another possible motivation for this re-evaluation of the traditional view may arise from modern discoveries that provide possible insights into the missing components of the letter. For example, one of the aids in this discovery is the use of Roman and Greek legal documents.⁸⁹ However, Byron (2009:210) has done an admirable job of capturing the struggle over the desired missing information with these words: “If ever a Pauline letter required a combination of detective skills and imagination, Philemon is that letter”.⁹⁰

While there is uncertainty over the reasons for the reassessment of the message of Philemon, there are undoubtedly a number of distinct alternatives (to the traditional narrative) posited in the last one hundred plus years.⁹¹ Not all of them will be considered here; only those who are germane to the narrative⁹² of the book as the focus of this chapter is upon how the conflict and resolution of the book has been understood historically.⁹³

3.3.1 Early alterations

With the rise of the abolitionist movement, people began to take a new look at the narrative of the book of Philemon. Typically, the traditional view was embraced by the slave owners,⁹⁴ but others⁹⁵ began to see Paul as requesting the manumission of Onesimus and used that understanding as a resource for abolition. At this same time, the circumstances surrounding the US Civil War gave rise to discussions about the use of the book of Philemon. Hale (2008:9) provides numerous examples of how the book’s use spanned denominations and was employed extensively by both slave owners⁹⁶ and abolitionists. In fact, Conway (2009:482) is of the opinion that starting from the mid-1800’s there are enough examples of responses to the book of Philemon to observe the following positions on its message: 1) promotion of complete elimination of slavery, 2) promotion of submissive compliance to the master,⁹⁷ and even 3) refusal to accept its message at all, due to the content of the message.⁹⁸ So the rise of the abolitionist movement commenced a modern revisiting of the use of Paul’s letter to Philemon. On their heels follow other groups and individuals who will introduce additional ideas, alterations, and even dramatic changes to both the traditional understanding and content of the book of Philemon.

3.3.1.1 Seventh-Day Adventists

From the beginning of the Adventist movement in the mid-1800's, their leaders decried slavery and the use of the book of Philemon for advocating slavery. Their intense abolitionist viewpoint largely arose from their concern over the impending judgment the world was facing and not from any sense of the development of society as other abolitionists sought (Blanco, 2014:78-82). Within this context, the Adventists relooked at the book of Philemon and some rejected the notion that Onesimus was a slave; opting instead for him to simply be in need of reconciliation with Philemon.⁹⁹ Others accepted the opinion that Onesimus was a thieving slave who committed to repay Philemon; in so doing they rejected the thought that Paul was advocating for slavery and instead was promoting Onesimus to beloved brother status (Blanco, 2014:83-84).¹⁰⁰ In doing so, they viewed Paul as "instead of sanctioning chattelism, positively denied it by affirming voluntary service, the equality of men as brethren, to be loved as Christ himself" (Blanco, 2014:84). So the willingness to take a new look at the book of Philemon and to question the traditional viewpoint possibly began in earnest with the Seventh-Day Adventists.

3.3.1.2 Knox

Based on the link that he sees between the letter to the Colossians and the letter to Philemon,¹⁰¹ as well as the uncertainty that the book was written to Philemon as the owner of the slave,¹⁰² Onesimus, Knox (1960:54) introduces the notion that Archippus was the real slave owner.¹⁰³ The reason why Paul then wrote to Philemon was because of the significance of their shared relationship at the church in Colossae, and because Paul didn't have that kind of relationship with Archippus,¹⁰⁴ there was a need for intercession on behalf of Paul as he requested for Onesimus' release to come back and serve Paul.¹⁰⁵ So in this viewpoint, Knox alters the traditional view to include: 1) an additional main character, Archippus, the real slave owner, 2) an additional conflict of the needed intercession of Philemon on Paul's behalf, and 3) the definite request for Onesimus' manumission to assist Paul.

3.3.2 Modern nuances

3.3.2.1 Adjudicator

In this mediator scenario, Onesimus wasn't a runaway slave, but instead, he fled to Paul for assistance¹⁰⁶ in changing owners. Lampe (2010:63) posited the notion that Onesimus wasn't really a runaway slave (*fugitivus*)¹⁰⁷ but instead left the domicile of his master for a time but anticipated returning home after consulting a third party.¹⁰⁸ Arzt-Grabner sees Onesimus as simply leaving his master¹⁰⁹ (possibly again)¹¹⁰ and Paul now intercedes on his behalf¹¹¹ (Tolmie, 2010:6).¹¹² According to Punt (2010:235), textual evidence demonstrates the possibility for a slave to petition a friend or patron¹¹³ of the master to intercede on his behalf.¹¹⁴ Tiroyabone

(2016:231) understands Onesimus as specifically running to Paul for aid in obtaining manumission,¹¹⁵ and explains that seeing him in any other way, is colonial in outlook and demonizes Onesimus. Tiroyabone (2016:232) admits that manumission would still create a dependency¹¹⁶ on Philemon, but it would provide much more freedom for Onesimus. There are variations to this narrative¹¹⁷ but the main concept of the narrative remains intact.

3.3.2.2 Gift

In a different tact, Winter (1987:1) suggested a complete revision¹¹⁸ of the understanding of the book by viewing the letter as communal¹¹⁹ instead of personal, and seeing Paul's designations as indicative of functionality in the church. From the outset, she rejects the notion of Onesimus' presence with Paul as indicative of a runaway status due to the lack of mention in the *thanksgiving* section of the letter.¹²⁰ Instead, she proposes that the slave, Onesimus, was sent by the church to help sustain Paul during his imprisonment,¹²¹ similar to the ministry of Epaphroditus in Philippians.¹²² There is no view of injustice on the part of Onesimus, as is often seen in verse 18, opting instead for Paul to simply be satisfying any outstanding debt on his behalf. Due to the construction of the body of the letter, Winter describes verses 8-14 as legal discussion between Paul and the church and not as some sort of arbitration of behalf of Onesimus. Finally, she views verses 15-16 as the theological justification for the request of manumission found in verse 17, resulting in a formal agreement.¹²³ In essence, Paul would like Onesimus' voluntary service with him in his ministry and draws up such an agreement.¹²⁴

3.3.2.3 African community

Recently, a different "lens" has been provided for viewing the narrative of Philemon. It doesn't so much alter the characteristics of the narrative as much as to see the story from another angle, and for that reason it is included in the nuanced section. "Paul's letter to Philemon can be summarized by the word *community*", states Vilanculo (2008:49), and after defining the concept of *ubuntu*, as "humanity towards others", he demonstrates the link between Paul's idea of community in Philemon and the community idea in *ubuntu*. As a result, he sees Paul as seeking "to reintegrate Onesimus into the community of the Colossae church" (p. 55),¹²⁵ and the terminology used in this request beautifully illustrates a number of *ubuntu* sub-concepts. The idea of *belonging*, where the community defines the individual, is seen in Paul's placement of Onesimus on the same footing as Philemon (v. 16) (p. 50-51).¹²⁶ The notion of *diversity* or *complementarity* (as Tutu describes it) is grasped in Paul's provision of choice to Philemon in regards to the return of Onesimus (v. 8-9) (p. 52-53). The concept of *dignity* and *humanness* is realized in Paul's description of the significance of Onesimus and the benefit that he would be to the community in Colossae (v. 16) (p. 54-55). The challenge of *dialogue* (*indaba*) and *consensus* (*simunye*) is conceptualized in Paul's crafting of the letter to Philemon (p. 55-57).

Paul's offer of repayment (v. 18-19) is indicative of the idea of *neighbour* and *selflessness* (p. 57-58). Despite the fact that there were some successful and significant slaves, most slaves toiled in menial and legal obscurity, but Paul turned that notion on its head by promoting the *brotherhood* and *equality* of Onesimus (p. 58-59). *Hospitality* is indicative of an understanding of *homo africanus* and is seen in Paul's invitation to Philemon to *welcome* the returning Onesimus (p. 59-60). Finally, Paul's recognition of the collaborative efforts of others emphasizes the role of African partnerships (p. 60). These attributes, idealized by Africans, are promoted in the letter to Philemon.

As a result, Vilanculo promotes the communal identity of the Church and the fact that its Gospel message unites strangers in a way that impacts the world in real ways (p. 60). For him, the letter to Philemon, illustrates how God wants His children to implement His heart for community.¹²⁷ Simply put, this viewpoint allows Philemon to be seen through the eyes of a non-westerner and the individual-centric idea.

3.3.3 Fundamental changes

3.3.3.1 Sexual exploitation

While there is no question that slaves have experienced sexual exploitation throughout history,¹²⁸ Marchal (2011:751) introduces the concept that Paul's letter to Philemon was dispatched for the purpose of gaining the master's consent for the sexual utility of his slave, Onesimus.¹²⁹ Based on his understanding of the term *χρησις*,¹³⁰ he views Paul's play on the name of Onesimus (in v. 11)¹³¹ as having sexual overtones. He, therefore, alludes to what he calls a "priapic protocol" in the message of the book as it was normative and acceptable for a master to use his male or female slave to meet his sexual needs.¹³² He considers the offer of potential manumission as manipulative while awaiting the availability of a younger slave body (p. 757). Furthermore, Marchal (p. 758) connects the sexual use of the slave to the development of a familial relationship for the slave, since, as a slave, there was no family link.¹³³ Inexplicably, he is of the opinion that this sexual connotation is compatible with the theological narrative of Philemon¹³⁴ and the analogy of Scripture¹³⁵ (p. 760-761), and that this understanding provides "a richer understanding of the letter to Philemon" (p. 768).

In regards to the institution of slavery, Marchal draws the conclusion that Paul is "callously indifferent to the fate of the figures behind the asymmetrical dynamics and descriptions" of the book of Philemon (p. 761). In fact, Marchal believes that Paul's statement, in verse 14, of seeking Philemon's consent, amounts to nothing more than a slave master mentality (p. 761-762). Finally, Marchal sees Paul's use of emotive terminology¹³⁶ as "affectionate language" that "is not foreign to the imperially and erotically asymmetrical dynamics of ancient slavery", and

concludes, that the “warmth” of the communication didn’t diminish the mistreatment, but “may have softened the slave’s feelings about it” (p. 762).

3.3.3.2 Slave owner

In a different vein, Roth (2014:103) understands Paul’s narrative choices in the letter as arising from the fact that he was a slave owner himself. From the outset, he sees the letter as moving from an interpersonal level to a communal level creating a dual layer of communication which finds its connexion in “the concept and reality of *κοινωνία*” (p. 105). Roth further defines his understanding of *κοινωνία*¹³⁷ as “a private (voluntary) association of two or more members that aimed at the pooling of resources for a specific goal, located in this world and of a temporary nature” (p. 105).¹³⁸ He doesn’t see *κοινωνία* as problematic for existing organisations but rather as having the ability to work within those frameworks. The participants in the association also didn’t have to contribute equally nor with the same kind of asset. Due to the terminology in the book of Philemon, Roth perceives a legal and contractual arrangement as its basis (p. 105-106), and he postulates the idea that this physical arrangement in no way impinges on the spiritual component of the letter. His point is that the *κοινωνία* arrangement, in essence, made Paul a co-owner of Onesimus, and Paul was simply using him in such a way.

How did Roth arrive at this conclusion? He believes that without this type of arrangement, Paul’s negotiations with Philemon are groundless and without incentive (p. 108). For this reason, Roth interprets verse 17 as involving three aspects: 1) indicative of a *formal* *κοινωνία* agreement, 2) reminder of contractual responsibility, and 3) declaration of the particular resource under discussion (p. 109-110). The play on Onesimus’ name, in verse 11, demonstrates that while the asset was unprofitable to Philemon, his work for Paul has been the opposite, and now that Onesimus is a believer, he can move from secular ministry to spiritual ministry within the Church. Roth sees Paul’s imprisonment as creating an interruption in the *κοινωνία* agreement,¹³⁹ and Paul is responding to Philemon’s undoubted uneasiness over Onesimus’ prolonged absence (v. 15) (p. 112). In short, Paul reverts to referencing the terms of the agreement in this letter to Philemon, in order to see the completion of the *κοινωνία* agreement (p. 114). Finally, Roth emphasizes that this physical *κοινωνία* agreement is based upon the spiritual *κοινωνία* agreement as indicated in verse 6 (p. 115).

What is the impact of this understanding upon Paul’s letter to Philemon? Since Roth (p. 118-120) viewed the letter as “framed by Greek customs and law”, he pursued the Greek concept of *κοινωνία* where all participants in the agreement are viewed as co-owners of all properties and possessions supplied by those participating in the agreement. As a result, Paul, as a member of the agreement, becomes a *de facto* slave owner so that when Paul calls Philemon to welcome Onesimus as if he were Paul, he is in reality an extension of his master and is to be understood

as such (p. 121). And when referencing Onesimus' services in verse 16 as "in the flesh" and "in the Lord", Paul is denoting Onesimus' dual role of physical slave as well as brother (p. 122). For Roth, Paul is "thinking like a slave master" (p. 123). The caveat that Roth includes is that Paul places higher demands upon himself than was required of a *κοινωνία* agreement in his statement of restitution (v. 19), and coupled with Paul's empowerment of Onesimus to status of "brother", indicates that Paul is comfortable with living in parallel worlds (p. 123-124). In fact, Roth cannot envisage how the ministries of the Apostles could have functioned in that world without the benefit of slave labour (both physically and spiritually) (p. 129-130). So for this reason, Roth can conclude that there was no hostility between the world of slavery and the world of brotherhood, and that is why Paul did not request the manumission of Onesimus (p. 128).

3.3.3.3 Marginalized

Akin to Vilanculo's viewpoint on the *ubuntu* lens, Lim has summarized another proposed perspective, but this one makes a radical change in direction; it is amplifying the voice of someone who is only heard in the background. Lim (2016:215) believes that the book of Philemon is an example of how a marginalized character could impact a change in his status. He observes the traditional three main characters (trilateral relationship), but he sees the conflict as between the voice of Paul and the voice of Onesimus where Paul's view dominates the letter, and so Lim advocates for the marginalized by providing a *postcolonial optic*¹⁴⁰ in which to regard the narrative of the book of Philemon through the voice of Onesimus (p. 217-218).¹⁴¹ Working off the *emplotting* design of Petersen (1985), Lim presents Onesimus as the central character of the story due to the narrative beginning with the departure of Onesimus and ending with the return of Onesimus (p. 220-221).¹⁴² He views Paul's request in verse 17 as damaging the authority of Philemon because Onesimus "cajoles Paul into intervening with his master Philemon",¹⁴³ and in doing so operates "as a creative agent who tactfully resists the local power of the slaveholder Philemon by borrowing power from the authority of Paul" (p. 225). The resolution then is seen in what Lim describes as the development of an "ambivalence" due to Onesimus' new identity as a Christian (by mimicking Paul), and as a result, "undermines colonial authority" (p. 227-228).¹⁴⁴

So for Lim (and others who promote a post-colonial agenda), it is about recasting the text itself to reflect a desired viewpoint. It is not about just the righting of a wrong in the narrative of the story, but it is, most importantly, about righting the wrong of interpretation itself. This is a fundamental change to both the traditional narrative and the inspired text.

3.3.3.4 Brother of Philemon

Uniquely, Callahan's (1997:x) understanding of the book of Philemon¹⁴⁵ finds its solidarity in the message of the "nineteenth-century American abolitionist interpreters".¹⁴⁶ He bemoans the fact that the book became inexorably linked to the slavery issue¹⁴⁷ as he doesn't find any inkling¹⁴⁸ of slavery in the biblical record.¹⁴⁹ Instead, he attributes the slavery context to the innovative effort¹⁵⁰ of Chrysostom in seeking to gain the canonical support for a book that he deemed of great importance (p. 13-19). Rather, Callahan posits the concept that Onesimus was the estranged brother of Philemon, whom Paul, due to his imprisonment, sent as his proxy for the ministry in the church, and sent this letter in recognition of their alienation, seeking to ameliorate that issue (p. 69). Any financial burden this reunion places upon Philemon will be borne by Paul, with his signature as promissory (p. 62).¹⁵¹

In this sibling narrative, the main characters remain the same, although their roles change. The conflict is still over a wrong (but now between brothers) and how to respond to that wrong, but the resolution seems to be that for the sake of the ministry of the church, the two brothers need to reconcile.

3.3.4 Subversive components

Obviously, some of these proposed narratives are radically different, but what do most of these narratives have in common? While many acknowledge that Paul did not actively confront the issue of slavery,¹⁵² they clearly see the destabilising action of Paul's revolutionary approach to the institution by asking Philemon to welcome Onesimus back (Cho, 2014:99).¹⁵³ Even the Adventists viewed an attack on the institution of slavery as something that would imperil the Gospel's triumph, choosing instead to focus on principles that implemented would "undermine the whole system" (Blanco, 2014:84). Byron (2009:216) too sees this as an affective undermining of what he calls the "artificial structures of slavery and the effects of natal alienation" as a result of the proper response of Philemon to Paul's request to recognize the kinship of Onesimus.¹⁵⁴ Even from a post-colonial perspective, Punt (2010:249) observes that "Paul at once subverted or at least unsettled the conventional social structure of ancient society". In addition, Turner (2013:7) highlights the fact that the behavioural actions advocated by both Jesus and Paul were "designed to subvert conventional patterns of social behavior".¹⁵⁵ And so, for many interpreters of the book of Philemon, while there is a lack of clarity in position, there is abundant clarity on what came as a result of Paul's proposed resolution.¹⁵⁶

3.4 Ambiguities

What this historical review has shown is that until the last several generations, the traditional view of the book was accepted and applied. Recently, the text has been questioned by

numerous theologians due to the likely uncomfortableness with Paul's lack of denunciation of slavery as well as his lack of a definitive request for manumission of Onesimus. However, the ambiguities¹⁵⁷ of the text can be very beneficial.¹⁵⁸ While it is understood that there is nothing amiss in seeking to explore the possibility of answering ambiguities, there is also caution needed.¹⁵⁹ In the mind of this researcher, the words of Conway (2009:481) encapsulate the problem that arises with some of the modern conclusions on the conflict and resolution of Philemon:

What readings such as this reveal is a history of attempts to erase the letter's cryptic quality by supplying the body of Onesimus. Indeed, whether Onesimus be a fugitive slave, a sent servant or an estranged brother, commentators have long supplied his missing body in an attempt to bring stability to the reading of this text.¹⁶⁰

Do these new insights bring a better understanding or provide a better practical application? Is that removal of the mystique necessary or desired? Is there something significant to be learned in that uncomfortableness? This researcher's thoughts are articulated by the words of Wright (2013:loc. 946-949, 953-955):

There were good reasons why Paul could not and would not simply say 'Please set him free' – however frustrating that may be to us post-Enlightenment moralists, for whom the issue of slavery has become something of a moral touchstone, not least due to the great abolitionist movements of the nineteenth century and the link of the slavery then abolished with colonialism and racism, neither of which had anything to do with slavery in Paul's world...The apostle was, after all, quite capable of being very, very clear and direct when he wanted to be. When he appears unclear to us it may well be both that he is saying something different from what we expect him to say, and that he is aware of sensitivities which generate a roundabout style in order to conform, not only to local rhetorical expectations, but also to the actual situation.

What Paul is doing here is to biblically challenge man's thinking. He is seeking for believers "to think within the biblical narrative, to see themselves as actors within the ongoing scriptural drama: to allow their erstwhile pagan thought-forms to be transformed by a biblically based renewal of the mind" (Wright, 2013:loc. 1013-1014). Unfortunately, as a result of the obliqueness of the book, some have relegated Philemon again to a lower status of significance for modernity (Hale, 2008:14). The challenge of this ambiguity¹⁶¹ lays the groundwork for the next chapter in which the conflict dynamics and themes will be explored in order to focus on what Paul is doing to resolve the conflict in the scenario of the book of Philemon.

3.5 Conclusion

The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the narrative in the book of Philemon has demonstrated some important lessons. First, up until the nineteenth century, the traditional view of Philemon was universally accepted even if there was an early debate over the book's significance and thus, canonicity; what differed from interpreter to interpreter was the application, often via spiritual lessons learned. Second, the working definition of conflict then corresponds well with the narrative as illustrated in the lives of the three main characters. Paul encounters a struggle over how to convince Philemon of a right response to the now believing Onesimus' situation. Onesimus struggles over how to make things right with his master with his given limitations. Philemon struggles over how he will respond to the wrong that he received at the hands of Onesimus. Third, in the last century and a half, the traditional narrative has been questioned, altered, nuanced, and even fundamentally changed.

What brought about the re-evaluation of the narrative of the book? While it is speculation, the timing coincides with the rise of the abolition movement.¹⁶² As originally stated in 3.1.1, one of the components of a good narrative is the provision of a satisfactory ending. Up until the nineteenth century the traditional view of the narrative provided that fulfilment, but with the rise of the abolition movement, the traditional view no longer provided that satisfaction. As a result, much of the recent re-assessment of the traditional view appears to be motivated by the lack of anti-slavery sentiment directly stated in the narrative.¹⁶³

Is there a way to reconcile this seeming lack of rejection of slavery with modernity? Is that needed? The modern interpreters seem more focused on the conflict created by Paul's lack of discussion on the end of slavery than by the conflict stated within the narrative.¹⁶⁴ Yet, Paul, and God's Word, are clearly comfortable with referencing slavery in a personal way.¹⁶⁵ The need for reconciliation of positions continues to be open for debate, but in doing so, there must be an acceptance of the benefit of the ambiguities of the book.

Is the modern re-evaluation of the narrative significant, especially in regards to this study? It is significant in providing a satisfactory ending to the narrative for some, but it is also significant in confirming the viability of the working definition of conflict. Apart from Knox, in all of these modern modifications, the number of main characters remains the same: Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon. In all of them, the characters still encounter some sort of challenge to them as an individual, as property, or as a representative.¹⁶⁶ There is also some sort of resolution offered that tries to provide a satisfactory ending to the narrative. And so, for this study, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* has verified that the working definition is workable historically.

3.6 Notes

¹ Arzt-Grabner (2010:113) summarises the topic as predominantly about “the relationship between a slave and his master”. Burse (2015:10) phrases it as a “one on one to Philemon about his slave, Onesimus.

² One of the reasons for this optimal opportunity for analysis (in regards to the narrative aspect about to mentioned) is that unlike most other narratives in the Bible, an added complication of assessing the material is locating that particular narrative in the larger corpus of material within that book of the Bible (Why this narrative in relation to the other chosen narratives?). Philemon is a comprehensive whole that can be examined in its entirety and is essentially one narrative. As will be discussed in 4.3.1.2, there is definitely a larger narrative at play, and some of it can be surmised from the text, but this narrative doesn't have to also be located within the context of the book—it is the context (Kaiser, 1981:loc. 2607).

³ To illustrate, Kreitzer (2008:4-18) contends that in the last one hundred years, the exploration of the book of Philemon has fallen under five “different, but interlocking” analyses: form-critical, linguistic and rhetorical, sociological, ethical, and canonical.

⁴ Grassmick (2006:223) describes a *letter* as “a substitute for a personal meeting between a sender and recipient who were separated by physical distance”. Duvall and Hays (2005:229) describe a letter as “occasional and situational”. These characteristic are met in Paul's letter to Philemon. Additionally, Petersen (1985:53) discusses how the occasion of the letter and the act of substitution are a part of the sociology of the letter. Paul wants to communicate something to Philemon and it cannot wait.

⁵ Most secular letters of antiquity are shorter than Philemon (Wright, 1986:164).

⁶ As already referenced in 2.2.2.4, Burer (2006:198-199) aptly describes a *narrative* as “characters are followed through various events that are connected to form a plot with an initial conflict and eventual resolution”. Petersen (1985:8) describes the book of Philemon as having “a narrative quality because they comprise a selective sequence of events between which Paul posits certain links”. These features also characterize Paul's letter to Philemon. It is also helpful to remember, as Petersen (1985:2) highlights, that whatever resource is referenced in summarizing one of Paul's letters, it invariably reverts to a narrative form in providing a synopsis of the letter or book.

⁷ Petersen (1985:13) refers to this sequence as the *plot*, and references the specific parts of conflict and resolution as *closure*. Jordaan and Nolte (2010:2) describe this situation as a disorganised story due to encountering another master narrative (referred to as *resistance*). In summation, all of this involves the creation of a story to provide insight into a person's life (Jordaan & Nolte, 2010:2).

⁸ This same point of the convergence of a narrative and letter is made by Jordaan and Nolte (2010:2). Petersen (1985:2) adds the astute observation that commentators in their writing and readers in their recollection resort to a story form when summarizing the book, and this is indeed the case with Philemon. Conway (2009:477) sees the duality between anecdote and canonical authority—a somewhat similar concept.

⁹ This point is captured in the observation of Dahl (Fitzgerald, 2010:344), in reference to the veracity of Paul's writings, where he states, “Philemon is the only known example of a Pauline letter explicitly rejected because of its limited scope”. He further adds that this was particularly the case in the Syrian church (Fitzgerald, 2010:346). Theodore of Mopsuestia, while acknowledging these difficulties associated with the book, defends its veracity and canonization (Fitzgerald, 2010:347). Conway (2009:478) declares that it was this monastic movement of the 4th century that rescued the book from the inconsequential attitude of that day by highlighting the problems of slavery. It lies beyond the scope of this study to pursue and interact further with those historical issues that were eventually resolved with the finalization of the canon of Scripture.

¹⁰ The challenge, Petersen (1985:9) presents, is that letters subordinate “the story and its narrative world” to the arrangement of the communication, and so we find the story “in the message”. This occurrence is demonstrated in his comparison of the referential and poetic sequences of Philemon. So it is a purposeful challenge that Paul uses both in the lives of the two opponents as well as the Church at large.

¹¹ From this point forward in the chapter the word *story* will be used interchangeably with *narrative*.

¹² Unlike the original recipients of the letter, who well understood the events and references, those who follow in reading the letter are tasked with making sense of those same details, without an equivalent degree of symbolic understanding for they weren't a part of the narrative (Petersen, 1985:4). That challenge of understanding is the task of all sound exegesis and study of the biblical text. In this research, that exegetical study will be explored in chapter 4.

¹³ It is the contention of this researcher that this necessity of a satisfactory ending is what has largely influenced the relatively recent reassessment of the narrative in the book of Philemon.

¹⁴ This task is seeking to understand the point of view of the author: why did he choose the events that he did? (Petersen, 1995:11). The choices made are indicative of importance as Petersen (1995:12) writes: “In the process, what we deem to be significant takes on a thematic character in the organizing of the selected actions. The theme or themes will provide links of cause and effect or of motivation between the actions we narrate, even though at the time the actions took place those links did not yet exist. They did not exist because we only created them later in response to a question, and as often as not in view of what we think our questioner might consider significant.” Furthermore, as one seeks to understand the world in which the narrative occurred, one must understand the dynamics of that time as well (Petersen, 1985:15). These themes and dynamics will be explored further in chapter 4.

¹⁵ In this particular historical study that follows, the message of Philemon is subordinate in importance to the story, only because this study is primarily focused on the conflict of the narrative.

¹⁶ This researcher understands that it is an overgeneralization to group all other approaches to the book of Philemon as literary, but it is done so to emphasize that this particular research is focused on the story and not the details of the story. The following dialogue is illustrative of the approach used in this chapter.

“Bob, where is John?”

“He went to buy some food for us all, Sam.”

“Where did he go? What is he buying?”

“I don’t know; he didn’t tell me.”

Further dialogue can illuminate the story with more details, but even without those details, the essence of the story is understood: John went to buy food for himself, Sam, and Bob. What is the essential story in the book of Philemon and how has it been understood historically is the focus of this chapter. Williams (2012:14) refers to this type of implementation as an “ideological optic”, and that is the point here – a *narrative* ideological optic.

¹⁷ A good overview of the three positions and supporters is provided by Fitzmyer (2000:9-10).

¹⁸ Fitzmyer (2000:11) notes the difficulty of making a final decision on the location of Paul’s incarceration and provides the important perspective: “Fortunately, however, the exposition of the letter depends only marginally on the conclusion regarding its place of writing, so that to that extent the issue can be left open”.

¹⁹ In fact, Gloer & Stepp (2008), after assessing all the options in regards to the likely captivity of Paul write: “In the end, nothing demands that the traditional view of Roman provenance be abandoned”. What this conveys is that the answer to the question of location doesn’t alter the impact of the letter.

²⁰ Byron (2009:207) has aptly summarized the focus with these words: “This means that while all of the various historical and socio-rhetorical aspects must be considered, the ultimate goal is to observe Paul’s strategy as pastor and how he repairs a broken relationship with the context of the church”.

²¹ One of the benefits is seen in the observation of Jordaan and Nolte (2010:1) where they state: “It shows how Paul might have used certain ideas/events from the past to create a new narrative”. That new narrative is what will be juxtaposed to the conflict narrative and allow the possibility of the implementation or acceptance of the *new* narrative.

²² Oxford (2016) defines meta-narrative in this way: “a piece of narrative...which provides a schematic world view upon which an individual’s experiences and perceptions may be ordered”. For the sake of this study it will be limited to the basic master-slave relationship in the milieu of Roman slavery.

²³ This reality is greatly influenced, as Barclay (1991:161) aptly observes, because “[t]here are more than enough difficulties in attempting to grasp the true character and significance of slavery in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century, due not merely to the fragmentary and onesided nature of our evidence but also to the deep-rooted political and philosophical commitments which influence almost every significant treatment of the topic”.

²⁴ Witherington (2007:26) adds this perspective: “No ancient government ever sought to abolish slavery in general, no former slaves wrote treatises attacking the institution, and even when slaves revolted it was not in an attempt to abolish slavery in general but rather an attempt to rectify abuses of the system”. Clearly, slavery was an established institution at that time. As a result, Taylor (1996:261) adds that it “was fundamental to the economy and social order in the Graeco-Roman world”. Osiek (2000:130) retorts that recognizing this point is not the same as approving of it.

²⁵ Richards and O’Brien (2016:loc. 951-953) estimate that as many as 25 percent of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were slaves” and it “was a normal part of Roman life and it was generally accepted as morally appropriate”. Additionally, Turner (2013:3) states that “over 30% of the population of Roman Italy at the beginning of the Christian era were slaves, had been freed from slavery, or were of slave origin”.

²⁶ “Conquest or re-conquest was a primary source of new slaves”, states Wessels (2010:148). And, as Punt (2010:228) describes the institution of slavery it “was not restricted to a social class or status, and nor did slaves constitute a single, specific social class, with a particular, clearly definable status”.

²⁷ Punt (2010:229) wisely distinguishes ancient slavery from modern slavery (which was largely based on *race* and *economics*). To that list, this researcher would add the *tribal* component as well.

²⁸ Wessels (2010:148) goes further in arguing that the condition for slaves was worse than that of possessions to that of “dead people walking”. Socially, they had no existence while physically being alive. In fact, a slave could be punished in the place of the master who had failed to live up to some sort of obligation (Wessels, 2010:159).

²⁹ According to Punt (2010:230) threats of “punishment, torture, and execution” motivated the slave to toe the line.

³⁰ Wessels (2010:150-152) deftly refers to these kindnesses as “lubrication” in allowing the machinations of the system to work smoothly. He even discusses the use of holidays and marriages in furthering the master’s agenda and purposes.

³¹ Wessels (2010:154-158) argues that the release of the slave was rarely due to some altruistic reason, but due to legal, financial, and productive reasons. He even goes so far as to say that the saving of funds for manumission, by the slave, could have been seen as manipulative actions by the master as a future potential savings.

³² Scars from whipping (and even branding) were “the defining marks of the slave body, and were symbols of social disgrace”, according to De Wet (2016:270).

³³ See Fitzmyer on this process (2000:28).

³⁴ Ironically, despite their view of slavery’s sinful origin, De Wet (2016:264) states his opinion that amongst the early church, only Gregory of Nyssa sought to abolish slavery.

³⁵ Paul would introduce himself as a δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in Romans 1:1 and again, in conjunction with Timothy in Philippians 1:1. He also uses the term δούλος θεοῦ in Titus 1:1. As Wessels (2005:102) demonstrates, Paul goes to great lengths in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 to show how the cultural conflict could be overcome by “self-enslavement”. Clearly, Paul embraced the concept of slavery personally. In fact, De Wet (2016:269) reminds us of the popularity of the concept of being God’s slave throughout the works of the early believers. Richards (2016:loc. 1024-1088) illustrates how Paul was comfortable with embracing the idea of slavery but our modern translations have weaned us from this by using the translation *servant* instead. Referencing our slavery to sin, Williams (2008:17) addresses the ability for all to relate to Onesimus’ situation as we too seek salvation from our enslavement. He also adds that because Jesus embraced the role of a slave (μορφήν δούλου λαβών – Phlp 2:7), we too should embrace that role (Williams, 2008:17-18), and that acceptance must be voluntary, just as it was for Jesus (Williams, 2008:22). By consenting to being a slave to God, we find redemption from other forms of slavery (Williams, 2008:25).

³⁶ Additionally, Williams (2012:13-14) points out that this historical research also reveals ideological inclinations that can mute other viewpoints – specifically what he refers to as the “marginalized”, and they will be discussed further in 3.3.3.3. And Lin (2016:216) references the work of Callahan in illustrating “that there is a colonizing legacy in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (or reception history) of the biblical text”.

³⁷ For the purposes of this study, *Wirkungsgeschichte* is understood as the “history of how a text has been received” (Knight, 2010:138), a kind of *reception history*, and is not concerned with evaluating all the possible modes of media as Ulrich Luz defines it (Knight, 2010:138). However, it is viewed as subsequent to exegesis and not intrinsic to the exegetical process, for how theologians have comprehended a text doesn’t alter the meaning of the text, but it does provide significance in how it is understood and applied. The irony here is that in this research, the reception history of Philemon is examined prior to the main exegetical exploration, but that is due to the conflict nature of this study.

³⁸ This is the very point that de Wet (2010:317-318) makes as he considers the writing of Chrysostom.

³⁹ The epistolary and rhetoric aspects of Philemon will be considered in chapter 4 where their discussion is warranted by the exegetical study. Again, the *etic* focus here is necessitated by exploring the historical understanding of the narrative from a conflict perspective.

⁴⁰ The reason for the selection of these three focal points is due to the conflict nature of this study. It is understood that such a focus introduces a socio-scientific methodology and an *etic* slant to this socio-historic study, but in order to develop a conflict understanding and outlook so that conflict can be understood in terms of human experience, it must be done. In the words of De Klerk and Van Rensburg (2005:55), the socio-historic method needs to be “enriched with the questions of the socio-scientists and the results of the models they use”. If a biblical theology of conflict is to be developed, then it must spring from the Word of God, keeping in mind today’s issue of “how do we biblically resolve conflict today”.

⁴¹ In the use of the work of Epston and White by Jordaan and Nolte (2010:2-3), they present a therapeutic narrative framework to the book of Philemon. In this framework, the overall story is told via the *stories* of the characters introduced. These various stories are interrupted by some kind of *resistance* (referred to as a *dominant* narrative) that is foisted upon one of the characters which establishes a kind of “*problem-saturated story*” (which needs to be adjusted to a degree that makes sense of their story). The *alternative*

narrative introduced supplies that sense to the problem. Finally, “therapy occurs when the dominant narrative is effectively challenged by an alternative narrative”. In essence, the problem is seen as lying outside of the individual and needs to be surfaced or externalized, and then it can be dealt with properly. While much of this work dovetails nicely with the present study, the difficulty for this researcher is in the assumption that the problem lies outside of the person. As is seen in the narrative description used in this research, one of the significant factors demanded of a good story is the character development of an individual that warrants the application of the solution to the conflict. Without character development the resolution leads to an unsatisfactory ending in the life of the conflicted character. Additionally, while there is beneficial categorization in the therapeutic narrative, the introduction of another socio-scientific framework unnecessarily complicates this historical perspective study, and so the simplified narrative framework presented in this paper and used in story-telling for millennia is used instead.

⁴² In fact, Tolmie (2010:2) portrays it this way: “30 years ago most scholars would not have spent too much time on Onesimus’ status. In general, what could be called ‘the traditional view’ was accepted in this regard: Onesimus was a runaway slave who in some way had wronged his master, Philemon, and who, in fear, had fled to Paul, by whom he had been converted to Christianity. Paul then sent him back to Philemon.”

⁴³ In 1935, John Knox proposed an alternative view of who owned Onesimus, but it really wasn’t until 1985, beginning with Peter Lampe, that others began to question the “traditional view” (Tolmie, 2010:2-3).

⁴⁴ These possibilities will be explored later in the chapter.

⁴⁵ This is seen in both the use of the 1st person personal pronoun as well as the 1st person singular verbs.

⁴⁶ “ὄεσμιος” (v. 1). Raubenheimer (2008:30) points out the significance of this term in its only use, by Paul, in describing himself, despite the presence of other prison epistles.

⁴⁷ Elliott (2011:55) astutely observes: “Every substantial statement in the letter’s body is made to a singular you (σου)”.

⁴⁸ By referencing the ἐκκλησία in his house, there is obviously a wider application that the Church benefits from today, but the communiqué is directed toward the decision of an individual. Ehorn (2011) draws this same conclusion, suggesting that there are “implications for the Christian community”.

⁴⁹ Burse (2015:10-13), who believes that this letter is written mainly to Philemon about Onesimus, cogently introduces the key reason for Paul’s use of the plurals in the book of Philemon as due to the “whole house church listening in”, and the need for these believers to welcome Onesimus into the church family as well.

⁵⁰ “ἀδελφέ” (v. 7). As Runge (2010a:5) states in his discourse grammar, “choice implies meaning”. Paul easily could have used the feminine vocative form if he wanted to reference the woman Apphia at this point. Obviously, as used throughout the New Testament, certain words can be applied in a generic way, but Paul introduced Apphia earlier with the feminine appellation τῆ ἀδελφῆ (While it is true that there are some textual variations in regards to this appellation, Metzger [1994:588] has demonstrated the reason for rating the feminine form with an [A]). Inconsistency in Paul’s designation of individuals would lead to confusion which is the opposite of the goal of this letter. Jeal (2008:18) supports this conclusion as well.

⁵¹ Drawing on documentary evidence of the time, Wright (1985:170) concludes that the first mentioned is the chief intention. Taylor (1996:260) adds that the order of placement indicates that Philemon is the likely owner of Onesimus. Winter (1987:2), however, disagrees with this assumption and due to her understanding of Archippus designation as συστρατιώτη, submits that the letter is ultimately pointed at Archippus but principally directed to the church.

⁵² Petersen (1985:84) states emphatically that Paul, in his use of the first person singular, speaks only to Philemon.

⁵³ Nordling (2010:297) adds that Philemon’s importance expanded to the city of Colossae itself. Further support is given to this conclusion by the observation of Friedl (2010:302, 305, 306) that Jerome viewed the church as meeting in the house of Philemon and not Archippus due to the fact that Paul addresses only Philemon after this introduction.

⁵⁴ “τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν” (v. 1). This construction fits the article-substantive-καὶ-substantive designation of the Granville Sharp Rule (Wallace, 1996:275) and are, therefore, both descriptive of the same individual, Philemon. Nordling (2010:297) suggests that as a result of these textual nuances, Philemon “was a person of considerable importance at Colossae, both in Paul’s estimation of him and in view of the congregation that worshiped in his house”.

⁵⁵ What is notable with the mention of Onesimus’ name is that the normal anonymity of the slave in the N.T. is missing. Taylor (1996:262) notes that “Onesimus is unique in being the only slave identified by name and status in the New Testament”.

⁵⁶ “Ὀνήσιμον...ἄχρηστον...εὐχρηστον” (v. 10, 11). Hoehner *et al* (2008:430) state that this was a familiar name to that time and region, derived from the verb for *profit*. The play on words involves not his name *per se*, but the fact that those from the Phrygian area were often typecast as *useless*. So while his name

conveyed the idea of profit, his background and likely his actions, transmitted the notion of *useless*. His coming to faith in Christ changed all of this, to the point where Paul now characterizes him as *useful* which is now in keeping with his name. Arzt-Grabner (2010:120) also points out that this statement in verse 11 may be indicative of Onesimus' status amongst the slaves of the household. He further adds that the fact that Paul knew about Philemon's designation of Onesimus as *useless* indicates that it must have had an historical aspect to it, and it was not simply for this present situation of Onesimus' flight (Arzt-Grabner, 2010:121).

⁵⁷ Taylor (1995:133) cogently argues that this transformation meant that Onesimus now personally embraced Christianity as opposed to the likely scenario that as a part of Philemon's household, he would have involuntarily been incorporated into the Christian community with the conversion of Philemon. Osiek (2000:127) has a similar view but believes that what resulted was Onesimus' baptism.

⁵⁸ "δοῦλος". Nordling (2010b:97) believes that even before his spiritual transformation, Onesimus' role was not as a menial slave but a manager of "considerable ability". Goede (2010:163) astutely observes that it seems odd to not then have him referenced as οἰκονόμος which was easy enough to do.

⁵⁹ In this verse, Paul conveys four characterisations of Onesimus that speak of the transition and change in his life. He is no longer just what he once was (οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον), but he had developed into more than he was (ὑπὲρ δοῦλον), and was considered by Paul to be a beloved brother (ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί), and now Paul encourages Philemon to adopt the same perspective in both thought and action (πρόσω δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ).

⁶⁰ As will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, the development of Paul's argument in the book of Philemon bears a lot of resemblance to classical rhetoric, demonstrating why Philemon should accept Onesimus back and treat him in a way that is indicative of the character change in Onesimus (Young, 1994:250).

⁶¹ "εἰ δὲ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει" (v. 18). Here an emphasis is seen on the injustice and indebtedness within a first class conditional sentence. Paul suspects that this injury may indeed be the case, and if so, then charge (τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα) it to him.

⁶² Fitzmyer (2000:23) advances this notion as the purpose of the book.

⁶³ Winter (1987:5) sees the construction of the sentence (v. 8-14) as making the point that the conflict is really just between Paul and Philemon. This researcher would see her point as indicative of Paul's point of view in writing the letter on behalf of Onesimus, but it doesn't summarize the conflict for all the characters in the narrative.

⁶⁴ As Fitzmyer (2000:24) observes, this book is not a discussion of slavery: "it differs notably from the regulations for slaves laid down in Colossians 3:22-4:1 and Ephesians 6:5-9, and even from what Paul himself wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:20-24".

⁶⁵ "ἀνέπεμψά" (v. 12). In verse 13, Paul expresses his desire to detain (κατέχειν) Onesimus due to his usefulness, but he could not do so without Philemon's consent (γνώμης) as stated in verse 14. Paul could easily have asked Philemon for this permission to keep Onesimus rather than send him back with the letter. He has made other similar requests in 2 Timothy and Titus, and even sent a recommendation with Phoebe in Romans 15, but here the emphasis is on Philemon's voluntary (κατὰ ἐκούσιον) embrace of an action. Coupled with the actions stated in verses 15-19, there seems to be a necessity for Onesimus to right a wrong. Dunn (1996:330) states that it was Onesimus that wanted to make amends but Paul was the one procrastinating his return. Regardless of whose motivation it was, an aspect of this conflict resolution was the need for a wrong to be made right.

⁶⁶ "προσλαβοῦ" (v. 17). Louw-Nida (1996:452) includes this word in the semantic domain of "to accept the presence of a person with friendliness – 'to welcome'".

⁶⁷ Emancipation could certainly be implied by the discussion of verse 21 – confidently resting in Philemon's affirmative response leads to wonder at the possibility – but since it is not directly stated, it cannot be a part of the narrative.

⁶⁸ "ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω" (v. 19). As a point of emphasis, Paul affirms it with his own signature (ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ).

⁶⁹ For this researcher, while verse 22 could be seen as an additional aspect of the resolution (accountability), it doesn't fit the flow of the passage, especially following verse 21 where Paul has communicated his confidence in Philemon's positive response to the resolution. Although that approach could be seen in the ending of verse 19 (kind of an attachment), after the challenge in verse 20 and the confidence seen in verse 21 the accountability idea seems anticlimactic. It seems better to view it as a heartfelt desire reflective of the warmth of their relationship.

⁷⁰ As Taylor (1996:260) observes scholars are especially divided on the nature and components of the resolution.

⁷¹ See Wright (2013:location 840); Cho (2014:102); Nordling (2010b:85); Callahan (1997:ix, 1); Kreitzer (2008:37), and Taylor (1996:259).

⁷² Tolmie (2016:2) states that the earliest extant work on Philemon is by an author who is later referred to as “Ambrosiaster”. According to De Wet (2016:272), he believed that God would judge a master in the same way that a master treated his slave.

⁷³ Some believe that Origen’s work on Philemon might even be an initial commentary on the book (Decock, 2010:273), and while that work is no longer found, it is accessible through the work of Jerome’s commentary (Tolmie, 2106:3).

⁷⁴ Decock (2010:285) stresses the tendency of this church era “to focus on words rather than units of discourse”.

⁷⁵ Augustine, for example, used the concept of *benefit* (ὀναίμην) in verse 20 to highlight the significance of biblical enjoyment rather than its impact upon the relationship of Philemon and Paul (Decock, 2010:282-286).

⁷⁶ Decock (2010:276) aptly describes their approach as one of “stepping stones” to further understanding and a “creative form of exegesis”, and Tolmie (2016:4) communicates Jerome’s view is that Paul is “always striving ‘towards deeper things’”.

⁷⁷ Chrysostom (1889:545) frames the viewpoint with this statement: “some say, that it was superfluous that this Epistle should be annexed, since he is making a request about a small matter in behalf of one man”.

⁷⁸ In Chrysostom’s application this fact is reproduced: “For if Paul bestows so much concern upon a runaway, a thief, and a robber, and does not refuse nor is ashamed to send him back with such commendations; much more does it become us not to be negligent in such matters” (Chrysostom, 1889:546).

⁷⁹ Again, by way of application, Chrysostom’s view on slavery is seen: “For if Paul, who had such confidence in Philemon, was unwilling to detain Onesimus, so useful and serviceable to minister to himself, without the consent of his master, much less ought we so to act. For if the servant is so excellent, he ought by all means to continue in that service, and to acknowledge the authority of his master, that he may be the occasion of benefit to all in that house. Why dost thou take the candle from the candlestick to place it in the bushel?” (Chrysostom, 1889:546).

⁸⁰ According to Callahan (1997:13-14), because of the predominant unenthusiastic estimation of the book of Philemon, Chrysostom developed a novel interpretation of the book which would facilitate its acceptance into the canon.

⁸¹ Friedl (2010:314) spotlights an important and controversial point of Jerome’s insight in this matter when he states, “Slaves do not have to run away like Onesimus did, in order to become disciples of the apostles”.

⁸² Galatians 3:28 was his biblical support for this decision.

⁸³ 1 Corinthians 7:17, 20 was his biblical support for this conclusion.

⁸⁴ In agreement with Augustine, Aquinas too refers to verse 20 and the desire for spiritual refreshment coming from Philemon’s response to Paul’s request (Murphy, 2005:195-196).

⁸⁵ Conway (2009:475) describes the book as a “personal letter to a ‘dear friend’ about a particular situation that involves Paul, Philemon and a certain man named Onesimus”.

⁸⁶ Schaff (1899:546) adds this comment to Chrysostom’s translation as a way of explanation for a lack of discussion on ending slavery: “The views of the Fathers on Slavery and Emancipation were very conservative, as slavery was interwoven with the whole structure of the Roman empire and could not be suddenly abolished without a radical social revolution. But the spirit of Christianity always suggested and encouraged individual emancipation and the ultimate abolition of the institution by teaching the universal love of God, the common redemption and brotherhood of men, and the sacredness of personality”. However, as De Wet (2016:269) points out, it must be remembered that the early church often referred to the Christian as the “slave of God”. This metaphorical approach certainly impacted their view of the institution of slavery.

⁸⁷ For this researcher, the focus on the spiritual application (vs. literal details) of the early church is a big contributor to the lack of discussion on slavery issues

⁸⁸ It is important to note that absence of material doesn’t necessarily correlate to its rejection, as Barclay (1991:164) writes: “The fact that the letter makes no explicit reference to Onesimus’ running away is no conclusive evidence that he did not do so”.

⁸⁹ Byron (2009:211-212) supplies an overview of the problems with these sources in providing definitive information. He provides three issues: 1) the *Digest of Justinian* as “the primary source for Roman law” may not be as helpful as anticipated due to the reality that it only preserves the laws still relevant to the early 6th century which is far removed from the time of Paul; 2) legal material may not accurately reflect social custom or tradition; and 3) what may be true for Rome, may not have been true for its provinces, even though it was law for Romans.

⁹⁰ Byron (2009:210) provides his list of desired missing information: “the location of Paul’s imprisonment; the exact status of Onesimus in regards to his absence from Philemon’s household; how Onesimus came to encounter the imprisoned apostle; the final outcome of the situation between Onesimus and his master Philemon; and whether or not Onesimus later became a second-century bishop in Ephesus”.

⁹¹ For example, White (2017:40) has an extensive list of modern commentator’s contrasting positions on the manumission of Onesimus.

⁹² While admitting that the type of conflict is unclear, Osborne (2016:loc. 2480-2507) categorizes five likely scenarios to the conflict: 1) traditional runaway slave, 2) asylum seeking slave, 3) slave of Archippus, 4) assistance providing slave, and 5) slave in need of intercession.

⁹³ Many others have explored the plethora of possible modern interpretations of Philemon [see Williams (2012), Kreitzer (2008)].

⁹⁴ Conway (2009:480) cites the work of George Junkins who impugns the character of runaway slaves by referencing the book of Philemon. Bishop Lightfoot is often cited as a key voice for ministers who use the traditional view of the book.

⁹⁵ Often referenced in this regard is the anecdotal report of Albert Barnes who in 1857 shared how his teaching of the traditional view of the book of Philemon to a runaway slave left both of them disenchanted, and as a result wrote a book researching what Scripture teaches on slavery (Conway, 2009:479-480).

⁹⁶ He observes that one noticeable missing characteristic in the pro-slavery realm was the discussion of “ambiguities and exegetical problems inherent” in the text (Hale, 2008:10). He describes this absence with these words: “advocates of slavery blithely adopted these portions of Scripture to undergird their cause without engaging with their thornier aspects” (Hale, 2008:10). Callahan (2009:332) adds that the book of Philemon came to be known as “the Pauline mandate” by those in favor of slavery.

⁹⁷ Fitzmyer (2000:35-36) is typical of this belief that the book’s significance was viewed only as a polarity – for or against slavery, but Conway’s introduction of the third position of ignoring or rejecting it challenges that dichotomy, and is therefore important to this discussion.

⁹⁸ Her indication is that this was the position of most slaves as they were taught the book of Philemon (2009:482) again referencing another anecdotal story of Albert Barnes. Callahan (1997:1) echoes this same sentiment with another antebellum record of teaching slaves the book of Philemon and receiving a less than enthusiastic response – some stating that such a letter didn’t appear in the Bible, and even casting “their vote against pro-slavery exegesis with their feet” (Callahan, 2009:332). It is Williams (2012:20) that makes the historical observation that apart from “enslaved African Americans” no modern interpreter doubted the veracity of the book of Philemon apart from F. C. Bauer and the Tübingen school.

⁹⁹ James S. White used the writings of Luther Lee to advocate for this understanding of Philemon (Blanco, 2014:83-84).

¹⁰⁰ Ellen G. White had this opposing view to her husband but agreed with his conclusion (Blanco, 2014:84).

¹⁰¹ Referencing Colossians 3:25, Knox (1960:31-33) as alluding to the situation in the narrative of Philemon and states that the section from 3:18-4:1 “reflects the concrete facts of Onesimus’ case”. He also sees the statement of Colossians 4:17 as a direct statement to implement what was alluded to in Philemon (1960:60).

¹⁰² Knox (1960:52-54) is skeptical of the idea that because Philemon is mentioned first in the book that he is the slave owner. However, Fitzmyer (2000:16) argues for the opposite position as the normal way of reading the passage, noting that this conclusion is the stance that makes most sense of verse 19, a passage that Knox doesn’t reference.

¹⁰³ In his opinion, the only explicit reference to the slave owner is in the use of the singular σου (v. 2) which he observes is a natural fit for the name previously mentioned, Archippus (Knox, 1960:54).

¹⁰⁴ Knox (1960:55) views the affable tenor of the letter as less an expression of reality and more a purposeful rhetorical tactic due to his lack of personal contact with the Colossians.

¹⁰⁵ Bringing the narrative full circle, Knox (1960:60) writes, “He was Onesimus’ master; through Philemon and the church, he is asked to give him up for Paul’s service. Thus and thus only does this important sentence at the very end of Colossians become not only intelligible but luminous.”

¹⁰⁶ Winter (1987:2) rejects this idea as unlikely that Roman authorities would allow the prison situation to become a haven for this negotiation process.

¹⁰⁷ This idea is termed a “triangular theory” by Hale (2008:12) and promotes that rather than flight or escape, it was pursuing assistance from an advocate. Taylor (1996:267) adds that the *fugitivus* theory is problematic for how would it be kept hidden from the authorities where Paul was imprisoned.

¹⁰⁸ Witherington (2007:27-28) is “unconvinced” by the adjudication theory. The fact that there is no mention of “legal intervention”, no “plea for mercy”, nor “mention of repentance” negates its rhetorical

parallel with *amicus domini* characteristics. Byron (2009:211) too finds Lampe's hypothesis problematic as he sees as "an overreliance on legal codes as a source for the situation of first-century slaves".

¹⁰⁹ It is a possibility, states Artz-Grabner (2010:134) that a member of the church actually brought Onesimus to Paul for this intercession.

¹¹⁰ The distinction is made by "the slave's attitude towards the master", and an intention to return would only provide the classification of truant and not a runaway (Artz-Grabner, 2010:133).

¹¹¹ Additionally, Artz-Grabner (2010:133) comments that the return of Onesimus, by Paul, mitigates against the runaway view, as under the law, Paul was obligated to deliver the fugitive to the authorities.

¹¹² Manumission was possible, but more likely Philemon agreed to entrust Onesimus with responsibilities again as a part of the reconciliation (Artz-Grabner, 2010:141).

¹¹³ This resulting *patron-client relationship*, states de Vos (2001:97) is an unequal affiliation that still results in the authority residing in the hands of the person of higher status.

¹¹⁴ One of the problems with this idea is found in verse 15 with the inclusion of τάχα where it is unlikely that uncertainty in sincerity would be an aspect of intercession (Wright, 2013:loc. 887).

¹¹⁵ His viewpoint is that Onesimus is the instigator of the discussion and not Paul interceding on his behalf (a colonial outlook) (Tiroyabone, 2016:233). In summation, he believes that "Onesimus ran to Rome in an attempt to move away from the periphery to the centre. He had been in the margins for too long and he was determined to occupy the centre spot" (Tiroyabone, 2016:234).

¹¹⁶ In fact, De Vos (2001:101) agrees and demonstrates that "the legal act of manumission, in and of itself, would not have fundamentally altered the actual relationship between the freed slave and his/her former master". Taylor (1996:269) makes this clarification: "the status of *libertus* would not in reality have been very much ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, and it was undoubtedly a far cry from the status of ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν". He adds that the freedman's obligations and consequences remained similar but the security was removed. In fact, he makes this observation regarding the status: "Manumission would have diminished Philemon's obligations with increasing Onesimus' wellbeing or security" (Taylor, 1996:271).

¹¹⁷ Osiek (2000:128) suggests the idea that Onesimus could have actually been captured while away from his master and that is how he ended up in prison where he meets Paul. Now Onesimus is being returned to his master (as per the law) but is returning with the benefit of Paul's letter to aid his cause. Taylor (1996:267) disagrees with this assessment for if Onesimus was imprisoned at the time of the writing, the legal proceedings would take precedence.

¹¹⁸ Hale (2008:12) views Winter's theory as mistakenly revelatory on her part and views Lampe's idea that Onesimus wasn't a runaway slave as preeminent in questioning the traditional narrative. In the mind of this researcher, they are both unique alterations to the traditional narrative.

¹¹⁹ Winter (1987:2) argues for her communal idea from the "commercial and legal technical" terminology used throughout the letter. Osiek (2000:127) adds that this communal idea would add extra pressure upon Philemon to follow Paul's resolution rather than the societal norm.

¹²⁰ If Onesimus' presence with Paul was unknown to Philemon and the church, then, with no mention of his arrival in the thanksgiving section, it signals a previous communication of some sort (Winter, 1987:3).

¹²¹ A very in-depth examination of this idea is found in the work of Joubert (2000), especially in chapter 2.

¹²² Schenk has a similar take on the narrative as Winter, but emphasizes a completely different pre-story to the narrative where Philemon was a persecutor of the Church until coming to faith in Christ (Tolmie, 2010:4-5).

¹²³ Winter's (1987:11) position that once Philemon granted Paul's request for the full-time use of Onesimus in his ministry (as a freeman), they enter into a formal partnership in remuneration (*societas*) is similar to Roth's concept for κοινωμία. The distinction is that he sees the entire letter as a discussion of that agreement and Winter sees it only resulting from the acceptance of Paul's request.

¹²⁴ Fitzmyer (2000:18) decries this position as inadequate in "glossing over too much of the subtle argumentation of Paul's letter and scarcely explaining why Onesimus, a 'useless' pagan slave (v 11), would have been sent by Philemon or the Colossian congregation to help Paul". In defense of this "gift" idea, Roth's view of κοινωμία would answer Fitzmyer's complaint.

¹²⁵ Vilanculo (2008:6) does hold to the traditional view of the narrative of Philemon.

¹²⁶ The problem with this idea is that while the culture defined the individual as a slave, it is God who defines the believing individual as *child of God* and *brothers and sisters in Christ*; it is not the Christian community that does so. If it were, then Paul would not be using the tact of aligning Philemon's understanding of Onesimus' new identity with that of Paul and Philemon, for it would already be determined and Paul would reference the community's decision.

¹²⁷ Vilanculo (2008:13) concludes with this apt observation about Philemon: "Philemon could only find meaning and dignity in Christ, when freemen in the redeemed community would make room in the inn to accept and receive him as a dear brother; only when the estranged and outcast would be made one of

them; and only when they, the redeemed, would set aside the lenses of otherness and take on the mantle of a brother's keeper."

¹²⁸ While this view is ubiquitous amongst scholars, Wessels (2010:158-160) has captured its significance by addressing the fact that although the slave had a body, they were a nobody, instead of a somebody and as a result, intercourse with a slave was morally neutral.

¹²⁹ "It is not impossible that Paul is arguing that Onesimus is 'good-for-use' as a slave, and thus 'easy-to-use' sexually, for the letter's addressee, for other community members, but also even for Paul himself" (Marchal, 2011:761).

¹³⁰ Marchal (2011:753-754) views the sexual use of slaves as ubiquitous in that day and age. Using the term *χρησις*, he traces the sexual exploitation of slaves throughout classic Greek literature even making the inclusion of the verb *χράομαι* in a sexual sense. While it is true that the only two New Testament occurrences, in Romans 1:26-27, use this feminine noun in a sexual sense, the eleven occurrences of the verb in the New Testament are never used in this fashion. The idea consistently conveyed is of need, such as the need to use wine for Timothy's stomach ailments to the necessity of making the ship seaworthy.

¹³¹ "ἄχρηστος" and "εὐχρηστος". Due to their lexical derivation, Marchal (2011:751) sees these adjectives as carrying a similar connotation to the feminine noun *χρησις*.

¹³² According to Marchal (2011:752), the only time that sexual intercourse with someone other than one's spouse was wrong, was when it involved another freeborn Roman.

¹³³ Byron (2009:216) too sees this forging of kinship, but not for the sexual reasons posited by Marchal.

¹³⁴ Marchal (2011:769) boldly proclaims: "In terms of ancient legal, social, literary, and moral background, this condition of slavery has nearly as much historical attestation as the conditions lifted up by various fugitive slave, emissary, apprenticed slave, and third-party intercession hypotheses that have assembled around the interpretation of this letter".

¹³⁵ In referencing Paul's remarks elsewhere in the New Testament, Marchal (2011:768) states, "There is little in these letters that is incompatible with reading Philemon in light of the sexual use of slaves. In both Paul's letters and the ancient priapic protocol discussed above, the priority is on managing one's self, treating a wife, and generally expressing one's status (particularly that of dominion) in appropriate ways. In the priapic protocol, the sexual use of slaves is a mostly consequence-free strategy for properly fulfilling these roles. Recall that in this context the *χρησις* of slaves is one way to show respect to one's wife (Plutarch) or to indulge in ways that still preserve one's purity (Epictetus). In such a worldview, sexual contact with women and young male slaves need not contradict the reputation for chastity of a figure such as Virgil (in Seutonius)."

¹³⁶ Terms such as ἀγαπητῷ (v. 1, 16), ἐγέννησα (v. 10), and σπλάγγνα (v. 12) reflect this familial atmosphere.

¹³⁷ Byron (2009:208) views the concept of *κοινωνία* differently, as having the dual role of spiritual fellowship but also an informal partnership in the Lord's work.

¹³⁸ Roth (2014:105) sees its parallel in the Latin term *societas*.

¹³⁹ Artz-Grabner (2010:137) doesn't find ancient documentary support for the conclusion that "a slave could sometimes be referred to by his master as a *κοινωνός*".

¹⁴⁰ Tiroyabone (2016:227) regards this methodology as enabling of seeing Onesimus in a positive light since the traditional view sees him as a thieving, runaway slave. The problem with this idea is that it upstages God's perspective in emphasizing the change in Onesimus' life by Paul's *useful* and *believing* description of Onesimus. Seeing this perspective as "eminently suitable" in light of the slavery context, Punt (2010:228-229) explains how this optic doesn't discard the previous understandings, but rather, explores the mistakes in the hopes of further dialogue that encompasses the power struggles.

¹⁴¹ Again, one of the main problems with Lim's endeavor is simply that if God wanted man to understand Onesimus' perspective, He could have had it written from the perspective. The fact that God didn't do that speaks volumes on how the book should be understood, at least in the mind of this researcher. Punt (2010:225) agrees that the book is not written from Onesimus' perspective.

¹⁴² Lim (2016:220) describes this process as a decolonizing reading of Philemon.

¹⁴³ While not coined with such manipulative motivation as Lim presents, Punt (2010:239) sees Onesimus as taking the initiative in making contact with Paul in this conflict. See n. 112 for Tiroyabone's opinion.

¹⁴⁴ In this argument, Lim (2016:226-227) presents Paul as a colonizer because he led Onesimus to faith in Christ which resulted in Onesimus emulating him. Lim then references the *imitation* verses in the Bible, including 1 Corinthians 11:1 which then creates a problem as Christ would then be a colonizer, for Paul imitated Him.

¹⁴⁵ His interpretation is germane to this study not only for the historical impact but also for the conflict studies of this research. He states: "I argue that this alternative reading of the letter offers a paradigm for

Christian reconciliation that includes diplomacy, persuasion, forbearance, and reparations for injured parties” (Callahan, 1997:x). This researcher’s study is exploring a paradigm for biblical theology.

¹⁴⁶ The aforementioned early questioners of the traditional view of the book find a modern communicator.

¹⁴⁷ Callahan (1997:5) states: “Reference to Philemon in discussion of slavery have frequently proved inconclusive, yet scholarship is now so constrained by centuries of exegetical tradition that it is impossible to talk about the epistle without talking about ancient slavery and vice versa. But in the beginning it was not so.”

¹⁴⁸ The problem with the slavery notion, as Callahan (1997:5) sees it, is that there are no “verbs of flight” nor any reason for flight offered.

¹⁴⁹ The only possible reference to slavery, in Callahan’s (1997:10) mind, is found in verse 16, but he points out that the adverb ὡς, in the phrase οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον, is used metaphorically in verse 17 and questions why it cannot be used so in verse 16. In the commentary section, he further explains the importance of δοῦλος in Paul’s theology as well as the metaphorical use in referencing the alienation of the brothers (Callahan, 1997:44-54). Fitzmyer (2000:19) views this interpretation of δοῦλος as very dubious and linked to the KJV translation. Osiek (2000:130) emphasizes that this interpretation turns on the interpretation of verse 16.

¹⁵⁰ Callahan (1997:13-14) boldly states: “Nothing in his words suggests that Chrysostom is drawing on an interpretation either current or traditional. Precisely the contrary: in his *hypothesis* Chrysostom is offering a novel interpretation and is thus constrained to argue for its validity.” See also (2009:330).

¹⁵¹ Chrysostom is blamed for the theory that theft was a part of the picture in this narrative (Callahan, 1997:62).

¹⁵² One of the dissenting voices is Barclay (1991:184) who views the notion of subtle confrontation as “wishful thinking” and writes: “There was nothing especially revolutionary in the fact that Paul treated slaves as human beings, urged their humane treatment and even called them ‘brothers’, so long as he did not spell out any practical implications which could conflict with the continuing practice of slavery”.

¹⁵³ Cho (2014:102) sees Paul’s approach in the letter as pastoral and thus the “euphemistic manner” in which he considers the subject of slavery, and he believes that this approach was chosen as the pervasiveness of slavery in the Roman machinations made emancipation impractical (2014:111). This perspective is provided to make sense of the seeming indifference that Paul evidences in not demanding manumission of Onesimus (2014:113). He (2014:113) concludes with the following statement: “Perhaps the only viable solution would be to act within the fabric of the world wherein the early Christians lived, and embed the Christian ethical values in – or ‘put the leaven of the gospel’ into – the rigid social structures of the Empire”. Witherington (2007:30) echoes this sentiment by saying: “He must start with society as he finds it”.

¹⁵⁴ In the mind of this researcher, Byron (2009:216) captures the essence of the goal of the book of Philemon, in regards to slavery, with these words: “While New Testament scholars have often lamented Paul’s relative silence on the topic of slavery, we may be missing his most significant critique. The bonds of kinship created within the body of Christ can replace the artificial ones created by slavery.”

¹⁵⁵ The ideas surrounding slavery were certainly embraced by Paul and Jesus to “characterize the life of discipleship” (Turner, 2013:7). He adds: “Paul has introduced the metaphor of slavery into this context, not because it is any kind of aberration, but for the positive reason – odd as it might seem to us in our social situation – that a slave is an exemplar of what it is to be faithful and obedient, which Paul has chosen as the highest of virtues before God” (2013:10).

¹⁵⁶ Williams (2008:20) reminds us that it just took us eighteen centuries to work through what Paul wrote.

¹⁵⁷ Inherent in the genre of narrative (as opposed to discourse) is the use of ambiguity. Goldingay (2000:135) makes this astute observation: “[P]art of narrative’s genius is its capacity to embrace ambiguity, to discuss complexity, to embrace mystery”. Possibly, this was an aspect of Paul’s reasoning in taking the approach that he did.

¹⁵⁸ Diplomacy, in the midst of a challenging conflict, answers some of the indirect statements of the narrative and there is much to learn from that exercise (Nordling, 2010b:89). Additionally, the fact that a copy of the book of Philemon exists today is a testimony to the successful response to Paul’s letter even though certainty of the nature of that result is missing.

¹⁵⁹ In fact, ambiguity can be a useful rhetorical tool that actually conveys more than any clarification (Elliott, 2011:57).

¹⁶⁰ Tolmie (2010:6) references this action as filling in the gaps of the narrative and admits that what is inserted into that gap impacts the picture of the narrative.

¹⁶¹ According to Botha (2010:254), this ambiguity is deliberate and purposeful.

¹⁶² The concept of manumission was foreign to the understanding of the book until the morality of slavery was questioned, according to Taylor (1996:269). In fact, he declares that any understanding of verse 16 that calls for manumission is equally capable of calling for obedient servitude. In addition, Punt

(2011:405) says that the timing with anti-slavery rhetoric is when “the letter has become valued in its own right”.

¹⁶³ Nordling (2010b:111) interposes *bias* as the reason for ignoring the compelling evidence for the traditional view. According to Taylor (1996:261), it is noteworthy that none of Paul’s letters discuss either the legitimacy or illegitimacy of slavery and any inferences from Philemon must be kept in context.

¹⁶⁴ The traditional narrative “delivers a much greater theological punch” according to Nordling (2010b:114), but the other views, such as Knox, have occupied the recent thinking of interpreters.

¹⁶⁵ For an excellent summation of how Paul embraced the role of God’s slave, see Williams (2008) *Free to be a Slave*.

¹⁶⁶ In one sense, Paul was the representative of the Church in the Philemon narrative (Taylor, 1996:276).

CHAPTER 4: KEY DYNAMICS AND THEMES SIGNIFICANT TO THE RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY PAUL

Having provided a working definition of conflict that permits a conversant discussion of the conflict in the book of Philemon, and having explored the historical understanding of the conflict and resolution within the narrative of Philemon, attention now turns to the text itself.¹ Many students and authors have previously explored the answer to the *what* question of Philemon: “What was Paul seeking to accomplish with this letter – what was his purpose?” As has been shown in the previous chapter, there are varieties of answers offered from those exploring the book. So, too, has the *how* question been pursued and explained by many: “How did Paul go about seeking to accomplish his purpose – what methodologies and techniques of persuasion did he use?”² (Some of these methodologies will be explored in this chapter.) However, the question that remains to be answered, or at least answered more fully,³ is the *why*⁴ question: “Why did Paul use a seemingly circuitous route⁵ in stating his desire purpose – why didn’t he just come out at the beginning and state what he wanted of Philemon?”⁶ If Paul used a Graeco-Roman format for his letter, why was it longer than the majority of the preserved letters of antiquity? Why the ambiguous expectations? The *why* question demands a deeper level of understanding from Philemon, and by extension, from any reader of this inspired text.⁷

What will assist someone in gaining that understanding of the *why*? It is the hypothesis of this chapter that the key conflict dynamics and themes of the book facilitate that understanding and deduction.⁸ When the forces at play and the topics discussed are surfaced, compiled, and considered, a clearer picture of the narrative is seen, understood, evaluated, and synthesized into an application for the modern world.⁹ It is not sufficient to just provide an answer to whether or not Paul was trying to abolish slavery.¹⁰ In reality, it makes little difference to the spiritual growth of a believer whether or not Onesimus was a fugitive slave or an estranged slave seeking Paul’s assistance.¹¹ What *does* make an eternal difference for all is the answer to *why* did Paul communicate to Philemon in the way that he did. That answer can inform, motivate, and advise believers in how to better communicate and resolve conflict in their experiences.

How do these dynamics and themes come to light? That task of bringing these items to the forefront is the beginning exercise of the chapter, and it will be followed by answering the *why* question through considering these items.

4.1 Introduction

A definition of the terms *dynamics* and *themes* begins this discussion so that there is an informed analysis, lessening again the likelihood of assumptions. These definitions provide the framework for the exploration of this chapter as well as the distinction of this study – what are

the key conflict dynamics and themes that impact the resolution offered by Paul in the situation between Onesimus and Philemon. Those, in turn, provide the basis for answering the why question of Paul's chosen persuasive technique.

Numerous methodologies¹² have been used on the book of Philemon to gain insight and understanding. Since it isn't the purpose of this chapter to review all those methodologies but rather to find the conflict dynamics and themes, only methodologies that provide insight into Paul's strategy are referenced here.¹³ As a guide in this matter, Wendland's (2010:79-111) compilation of text-based, literary components¹⁴ is used to reconstruct Paul's persuasive strategy.¹⁵ The first component from Wendland is *genre*, where Paul chose the style of communication that best suited the function for what he was seeking to accomplish. Secondly, *compositional shifts* are where the text itself provides clues into the unfolding progress of the communication. Third, *patterned recursions* are what provide coherence to the message via many stylistic mechanisms. Fourth, *artistic highlighting* is used to provide emphasis or accent certain parts of the message – the microstructure. And finally, the *rhetorical shaping* is what is used to connect with and convince the recipient of the message. These five components are used to synthesize the methodologies utilised in this study.¹⁶

Previously, in 2.3, conflict was defined as *when something is encountered, creating a struggle over how to respond to that encounter*, and in 3.1.5, three conflicts in this letter were presented as fitting that definition. As evidenced by the tact and arguments used in the letter, Paul is conflicted over how to write the letter.¹⁷ Onesimus has created conflict with Philemon by his wrong actions and must make things right with him. And, Philemon faces the conflict of being asked to welcome back to his home someone who has wronged him. The resolutions to these conflicts are simple but by no means easy. Paul had to craft a letter to convince Philemon of right actions towards Onesimus whom Paul was sending back to right the wrong he created when he ran away from Philemon. His arrival at the home of Philemon (aided with Paul's letter) would coerce that discussion. The unknown factor (although Paul was assured of it) was how would Philemon would react to this request of Paul,¹⁸ and the reality is that apart from the presence of this book in the canon of Scripture, there are no definitive facts available to answer that question.

Therefore, as a result of the dynamics and themes surfaced by the aforementioned methodologies, a compilation of them will be presented and deliberated in order to better understand the solutions to the conflicts addressed in this letter. In essence, only one solution really needs to be explored as it provides the narrative for the other two solutions: why did Paul craft the letter in the manner that he did? Onesimus' solution was simple: go and be reconciled (as depicted later in Mt 5:23-24), but how would that be possible if Philemon didn't make a right choice (based on right information) even though he was a man of great character. So Paul had

to get the right information to Philemon in a way that would allow him to see beyond the hurt and wrong and respond in a way commensurate with Onesimus' changed identity.

4.2 Definitions¹⁹

4.2.1 Dynamics

The word *dynamics* is defined by Oxford English Dictionary (2017) as “the moving physical or moral forces in any sphere, or the laws by which they act”.²⁰ For the sake of this study, the focus will be upon the *moral forces* of the first century that impacted the narrative of Philemon. In addition, dynamics suggest what agency, influence, or power impacted morality in a way that either brought about change or perpetuated the status quo? Thus, in this study, dynamics refers to the moral forces that influence, for good or bad, the actions of individuals in the first century.²¹

4.2.2 Themes

The word *theme* is defined by Oxford English Dictionary (2017) as “the subject of discourse, discussion, conversation, meditation, or composition; a topic”. Despite the efforts of some to establish the voice of Onesimus,²² textually,²³ this narrative is one-sided, and so, for sake of this study, the focus will be on the subject of the *discourse* from Paul, to Philemon, about his essential relationship with Onesimus.

4.2.3 Significance

Why is this defining important? Unfortunately, as seen in the historical analysis, the understanding of the book of Philemon tends to become myopic – especially about the topic of slavery.²⁴ And, while slavery is familiar to the vast majority of the world and is discussed in the book of Philemon, it is not the only thematic element in the book, nor is it the only dynamic influencing the proposed solution.²⁵ It is the intended desire of the following research to demonstrate that reality and its magnitude.

Additionally, it needs to be noted that the defining of dynamics and themes doesn't preclude the conclusion that a theme can also be a dynamic and vice versa. For example, *love* can be both a theme of discussion and a dynamic impacting what is discussed, what is requested, and how or why all of the choices are made in the discussion. Therefore, the categorising of topics is not so cut and dry as it might appear, and this understanding will be important in exploring the conflict.

4.3 Literary components²⁶

The very nature of letter writing is to begin, continue, or conclude an oral conversation in the absence of the ability to be face to face (Tite, 2010:58-59).²⁷ The desired communication

determines the components used in the letter to accomplish this task.²⁸ Each component, in turn, is employed to surface certain information that is germane to the conversation.²⁹ As a result, it is essential to briefly explore these components and their contribution.

4.3.1 Genre³⁰

4.3.1.1 Epistolary analysis

Paul, in his use of the various forms within his letter to Philemon, employs the aspects of letter writing that he desires in order to accomplish his goal in this communication.³¹ Four forms are utilised by Paul in this letter: the opening, thanksgiving,³² body, and closing (Weima, 2010:30). Weima (2010:30) asserts that Paul's reason for using these forms is "so that the persuasive force of his argument is greatly enhanced and powerful pressure is placed upon Philemon to agree to the apostle's explicit and implicit requests".³³

Often overlooked as simply formulaic, the prescript³⁴ or opening has the definite purpose of "setting the tone for the letter's contents" (Tite, 2010:59). Changes to the norm are indicative of purpose or significance in the communication and not just variation (p. 65).³⁵ For example, Tite (p. 70) writes, "The inclusion or exclusion of co-workers suggests a typological distinction based on the need for Paul to assert his position or set a particular tone for the rest of the letter".³⁶ This is further seen in both Paul's positioning of Philemon in his opening³⁷ and his expansion of the greeting in order to highlight "the relational standing between the sender and recipient of a letter" (p. 72-73).³⁸ What arises from these alterations is the formation of "a mutuality of religious identity" (p. 74),³⁹ and this **identity** is a crucial *dynamic* for our consideration.⁴⁰ In addition, Paul's description of himself is an "implicit appeal to authority" (p. 81), and this **authority** is also an important dynamic to contemplate.⁴¹ Finally, as a result of these choices, another dynamic is conveyed (explicitly or implicitly) – the dynamic of **argument** or **persuasion**.

The thanksgiving form⁴² skilfully foreshadows the dynamics and themes developed in the body of the letter (Weima, 2010:41); ones such as love, authority, fellowship, and refreshment. This researcher would label this section as the *report*, heard by Paul, which gives rise to the occasion of rejoicing or of giving of thanks. The combination of the opening and thanksgiving sections then provides the foundation for the body of the letter.

While there are various opinions to the length of the body of the letter,⁴³ the point is that Paul uses this format to convey his request or to make his appeal to Philemon. Furthermore, the foreshadowed topics are expanded and applied in this section. Verses 8-14 develop Paul's discussion of **authority**⁴⁴ be referencing what could be done, but is foregone for the desired voluntary response. In verse 9, **love** becomes the basis for what Paul is urging Philemon to do in regards to Onesimus.⁴⁵ An expansion of **fellowship** is expressed in verse 17 as introduced in

verse 6. Finally, in verse 20, Paul desires to experience the same *refreshment*, at the hands of Philemon, that others experienced as reported to Paul in verse 7.

The closing⁴⁶ format reinforces information pertinent to the discussion. Besides Paul looking forward to physical fellowship with Philemon,⁴⁷ there is again the assignment of identities to the characters that send their greetings.⁴⁸ Therefore, all of the forms employed by Paul in his letter to Philemon have purpose and provide significant insight into the conflict of the book, and as a result, the highlighted observations above on dynamics and thematic elements of Philemon from the epistolary analysis will be added to the list for later consideration.

4.3.1.2 Narrative⁴⁹

While the concept of a narrative has been previously discussed,⁵⁰ it is imperative to realize that this viewpoint or methodology opens up new avenues of discovery⁵¹ that are unobserved when simply seeing the book of Philemon as a letter.⁵² Petersen (1985:43) presents a method for moving back and forth from a letter to story (what he calls *narratology*) which is germane at this juncture.⁵³ The distinction between a letter and the story of the letter has largely to do with time. The writer is recording information that is past,⁵⁴ present,⁵⁵ and future,⁵⁶ but when read by the recipient it is has a greater degree of history to it. When viewed by others, the story has a sense of antiquity to it. The order of events or actions recorded by the author indicates cause or motivation and establishes the plot to the story. In reality, the author becomes the narrator as he tells the story, and his writing actually becomes one action within the actions of the story. His narration explains the purpose of the letter in relation to the recipient of the letter. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the time of the writing and the time of the narrative whether or not those events are real, anticipated, or inferred as they are all important to the story. It is this reconstruction of the narrative that aids in understanding the letter (Petersen, 1985:44-45).⁵⁷

The reconstruction is divided into the *chronological* or *referential* sequence (what events or actions are indicated in the text) and the *poetic* sequence (order in which the events or actions appear in the text). The distinction lies in the fact that the author may reorder the events from chronological order to suit his purpose(s). That revelatory choice is indicative of strategic importance (Petersen, 1985:48). An additional crucial element to the restoration of the narrative is the letter's arrival as it is a part of the purpose of the author, and it functions as a proxy for his presence (Petersen, 1985:50-53).⁵⁸

In order to understand the significance of this methodology, Petersen (1985:70) recreates the story by contrasting the referential and poetic sequences of the Philemon narrative. But whose story should be followed as there are three main characters? Petersen (1985:66) contends that it should be Paul's relationship with Philemon.⁵⁹ As Table 4-1 demonstrates, that referential

relationship begins with Philemon incurring a debt to Paul⁶⁰ even though it is not the first event in the poetic sequence.⁶¹ The second and third events are flexible in order, but they must occur prior to event four – the salvation of Onesimus. The details of Paul’s hearing of Philemon’s testimony are not stated nor are they significant to the sequence; what is important is that the hearing occurred prior to events six and seven. Events eight and nine are necessary implications for the referential sequence, again occurring prior to the arrival of Paul in event ten.

Table 4-1: The Referential and Poetic Sequence of Actions in Philemon

Referential Sequence			Poetic Sequence	
Action	#	Pericope	#	Pericope
Philemon incurs a debt to Paul	1	v. 19b	5	v. 4-7
Paul is imprisoned	2	v. 9 (cp. 1, 10, 13, 23)	2	v. 9
Onesimus runs away and incurs a debt to Philemon	3	v. 15 (cp. 11-13, 18-19a)	--	-----
Onesimus is converted by an imprisoned Paul	4	v. 10 (cp. 13)	4	v. 10
Paul hears of Philemon’s love and faith	5	v. 4-7	--	-----
Pauls sends Onesimus back to Philemon	6	v. 12	6	v. 12
----- ⁶²	--		3	v. 15
Paul sends a letter of approval to Philemon and offers to pay debt	7	v. 17-19a	7	v. 17-19a
-----	--		1	v. 19b
Onesimus and the letter arrive	8	implied	8	implied
Philemon responds to Paul’s appeal	9	v. 20-21	9	v. 20-21
Paul’s anticipated visit to Philemon	10	v. 22	10	v. 22

[adapted from Petersen (1985:70)]

Prior to reviewing the poetic sequence it is necessary to pause and reflect on the point that the narrative examines the actions that are pertinent to the story. Not all actions are pertinent, even though they are recorded in the text. For example, Paul’s thankfulness⁶³ is an action, but it doesn’t impact the sequence of the narrative; however, his hearing of Philemon’s testimony does impact the sequence (Petersen, 1985:68). And so, as listed in Table 4-1, the poetic sequence differs from the referential one but includes the same events. Table 4-2 provides an alternative simplification of the sequence of events.

Table 4-2: Simple Comparison of Sequences

Referential Sequence	1	2	3	4	5	6	--	7	--	(8)	(9)	10
Poetic Sequence	<u>5</u>	2	--	4	--	6	<u>3</u>	7	<u>1</u>	(8)	9	10

[From Petersen (1985:69)]

While there are a number of actions that the two sequences have in common, there are three that are out of chronological order, and this leads to a prospective impact. Petersen (1985:70) writes: “A poetically relocated referential action is of potential referential significance because it has been selected for relocation, and it is of poetic significance because of its role in the poetic

sequence”. As a result, the letter’s reader has the challenge of ascertaining how these rearrangements relate to the events surrounding their new location (Petersen, 1985:71). Therefore, the movement of events in a story has potential value.

What is the actual importance of these relocations? According to Petersen (1985:71), without the rearranged events, the narrative is straightforward – no obligations. However, by moving the events, Paul is signalling the significance of the debt concept.⁶⁴ Paul will use the debt idea rhetorically as needed in his communication, and this is seen when he mentions the debts only after describing the positive implications in the lives of Onesimus and Philemon (Petersen, 1985:72-73). The purpose behind the placement of the relocations is in crafting a narrative that leads to: 1) Paul’s refreshment by Philemon via his acceptance and transcendence of Paul’s submitted resolution (v. 20), 2) Onesimus’ restoration and promotion to brotherhood (v. 15-16), and 3) Philemon’s enjoyment of fellowship with Paul (v. 17). All of this is potentially accomplished by the positioning of events, reallocating “the burden of indebtedness from Onesimus to Philemon”⁶⁵ (Petersen, 1985:74).

So for Petersen, the narrative of the book of Philemon begins with Philemon incurring a debt to Paul. Paul, after leading Philemon’s thieving, runaway slave to faith in Christ, sends Onesimus back as a changed man, seeking not only his restoration to the household but his promotion as spiritual brother. He does so by reflecting on Philemon’s character and recalling an outstanding indebtedness. What the reader is left with, however, is an ambiguity as apart from the fact that the letter has been preserved, there is no recorded response of Philemon to Paul’s request. Additionally, Paul’s request for lodging may be indicative of accountability in this response (Petersen, 1985:77); although again, there is only an implied record of that event. While certain concepts are unanswered, the idea of **indebtedness** is clear and will be added to the list of themes and dynamics for consideration.

Although Petersen doesn’t discuss it, and it has only been briefly mentioned in 4.3.1.1, Lyons (2006:118) spotlights the fact that the introduction of characters, within the narrative, and the author’s characterization of them, is an important identifying element to the story. Paul’s narrative is removed from an authoritarian position; Philemon’s narrative is cast in virtue; Onesimus’ narrative receives an increased valuation – a sort of re-identification⁶⁶ (Lyons, 2006:119-120).⁶⁷ In fact, any endeavour “to offer a full description of human being must come to terms with the narrative structure of human identity”, states Stroup (1981:87). Again, notice must be made of the prominence of **identity** in the book of Philemon.

4.3.2 Compositional shifts

4.3.2.1 Diagrams⁶⁸

There is no way to visually replicate the entire diagram of the book of Philemon in one graphic, so it will be broken down into segments, illustrating the development of themes and dynamics. Since verses 1-3 and at least verses 23-25 are considered greetings, they will not be included in the diagrams submitted.⁶⁹ Ramey (2017:181) has diagrammed the entire New Testament and his work will be used for the following diagrams.

In Figure 4-1, Ramey's diagram of verses 4-7 demonstrates that Paul's giving of thanks⁷⁰ for Philemon is the main idea which is developed further in the remainder of this pericope. Paul uses three participles (two stated⁷¹ and one understood⁷²) to broaden his thankfulness, and the object of his thankfulness is conveyed in two words: love⁷³ and faith⁷⁴. Finally, these two words are encapsulated in a word that speaks of relationship – fellowship,⁷⁵ and this fellowship is what Paul desires to become effective⁷⁶ in the experience of Philemon. In essence, Paul expresses gratitude to God for Philemon's testimony of love and faith that finds expression in fellowship with other believers,⁷⁷ and Paul's prayer for Philemon is that this manifestation of love and faith might become more effective in impacting lives. Therefore, for the first pericope or chunk,⁷⁸ the following concepts will be added for further consideration: **thankfulness, love, faith, fellowship.**

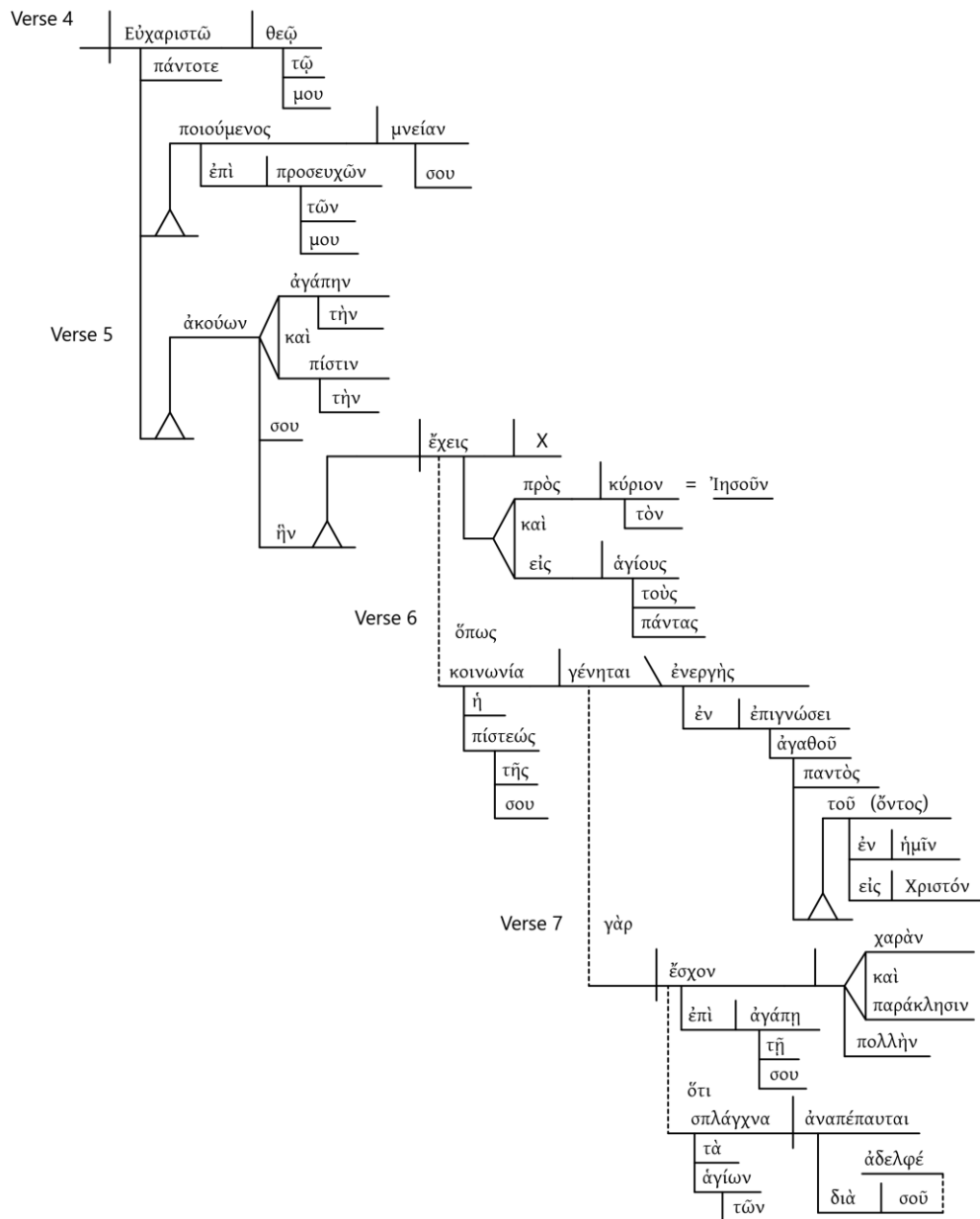


Figure 4-1: Diagram of Philemon 4-7

The second major section of the letter (v. 8-16) is too large for one visual and will be broken into three parts (see Figures 4-2 through 4-4).⁷⁹ Introduced by *wherefore*,⁸⁰ this next section highlights two parallel utilisations of the verb *urge*.⁸¹ In beginning with a reference to the previous discourse, the indication is that in light of the thankfulness of verses 4-7, there are two issues that Paul urges upon Philemon: 1) on the basis of love, and 2) in regards to Onesimus. In the case of the first urging, there is no indication of what is urged, only the basis for the urging. In the second case, the urging is in regards to Paul's sending Onesimus back to Philemon, as a changed man. Here, then, is seen the first indication of any sort of request from Paul to Philemon, and, as introduced in verse 10, this request will involve Onesimus. So for further consideration, the ideas of **request**, **love**, and **Onesimus** will be added.

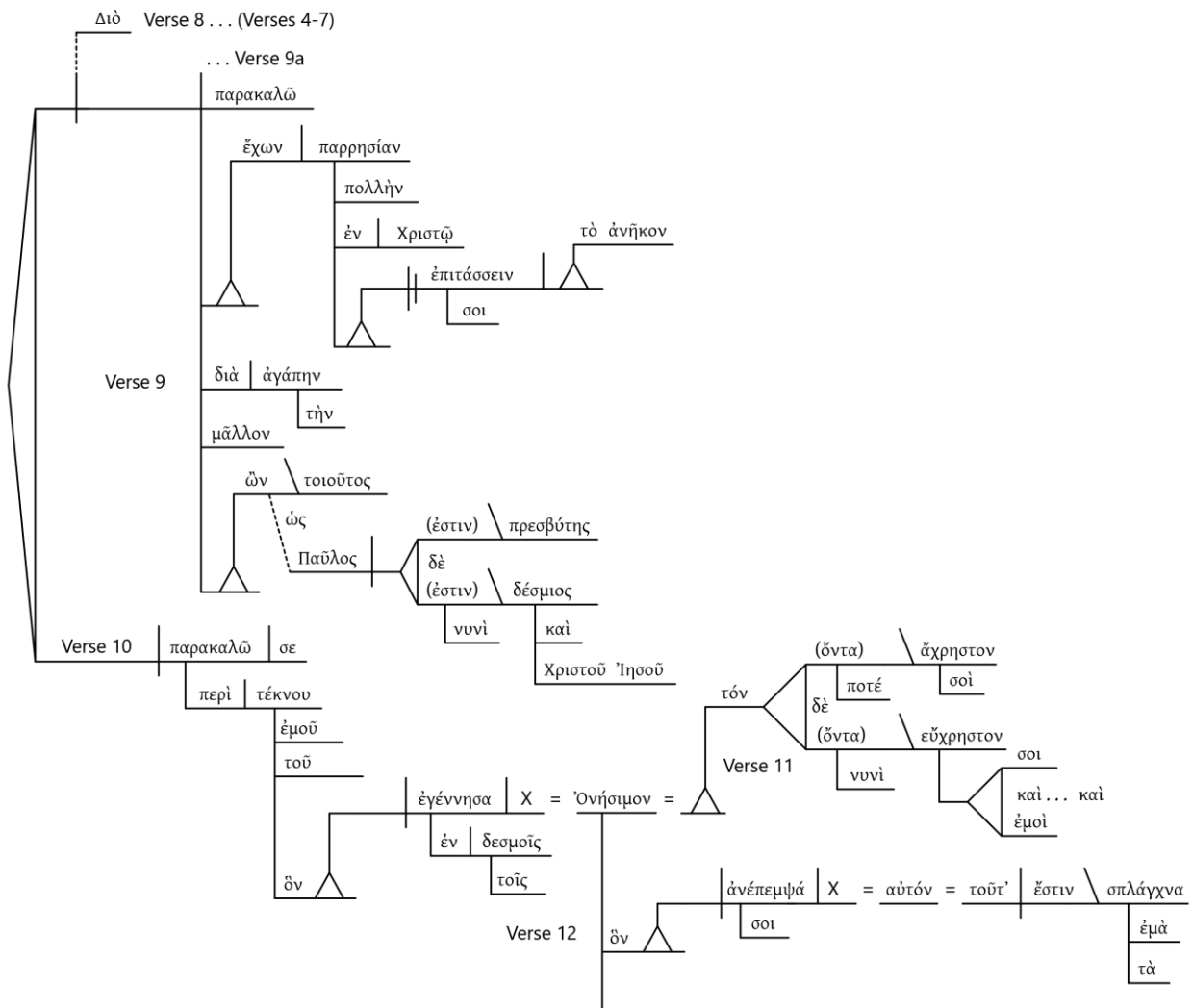


Figure 4-2: Diagram of Philemon 8-12

Verse 13 continues the discussion by focusing upon Paul’s desire or wish in regards to Onesimus.⁸² Here Paul uses two words that express his will: βούλομαι and θέλω.⁸³ Each of these verbs then uses infinitives⁸⁴ to complete the desired action which conveys the idea of two similar but competing desires. Why this is important is because Paul clearly states two *competing dynamics* at play in regards to his aspirations for Onesimus. First is Onesimus’ ministry to Paul on behalf of Philemon that Paul wishes could continue, and this dynamic involves a re-orientation of the context of service.⁸⁵ The other comprises the necessity for Philemon’s voluntary⁸⁶ involvement⁸⁷ in the decision-making process, and the essence of this second aspiration is captured in the contrast constructed with *compulsion*.⁸⁸ Paul refused to take the tact of coercion. As a result, the *idea* of competing interests and the *competing interests* themselves will be added to the list for additional consideration.

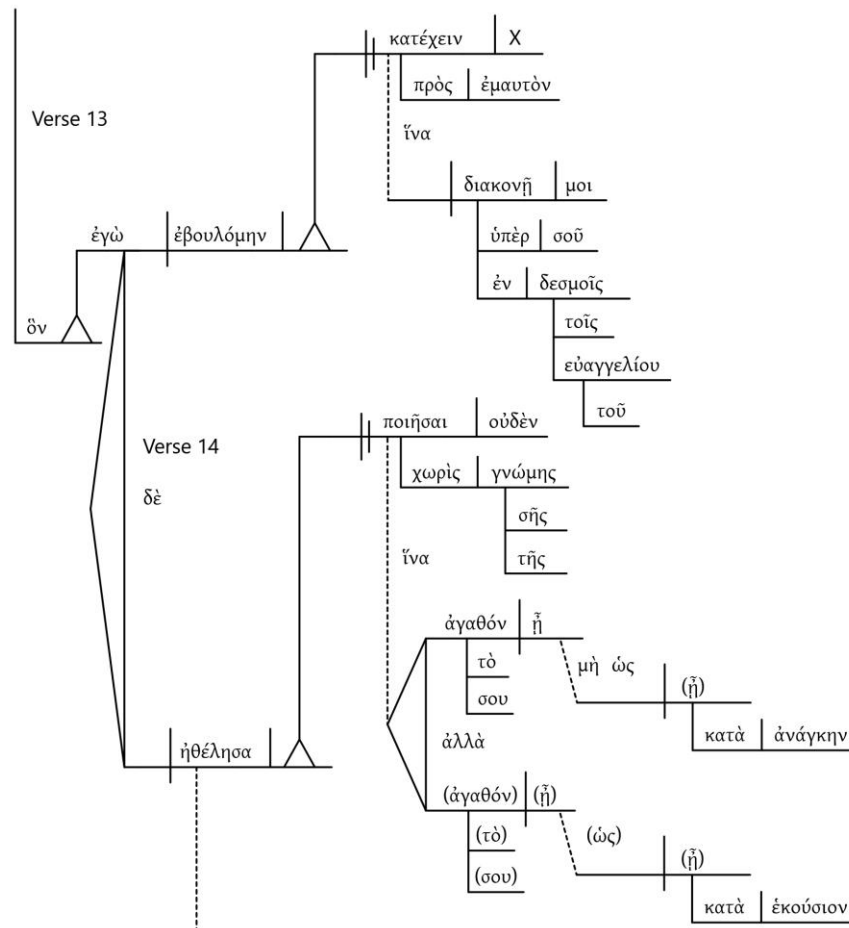


Figure 4-3: Diagram of Philemon 13-14

Paul begins verse 15 with an indication of possibility,⁸⁹ followed by an inexact phrase,⁹⁰ and completed with a passive form.⁹¹ Paul seems to be introducing what some have referred to as the *divine initiative* or *intervention*⁹² where the fracturing of the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon is viewed as a *brief*⁹³ *separation* from God's perspective.⁹⁴ Again, a re-orientation⁹⁵ is provided by Paul so that Philemon may see his relationship with Onesimus in a different light.⁹⁶ Paul calls attention to the fact that the benefit for Philemon far outweighs the momentary inconvenience:⁹⁷ Philemon receives Onesimus back⁹⁸ not only in the role he once fulfilled but in a far greater role of *brother* in Christ (to Paul as well).⁹⁹ This transformation has both a physical and spiritual application to their relationship;¹⁰⁰ Paul has experienced this vital connection with Onesimus, and he wants Philemon to experience it as well. So for further consideration, the ideas of **transformation** and **brotherhood**,¹⁰¹ in regards to Onesimus, will be added to the list.

Compiling the results of this diagram with the other two previous ones of this major section reveals an interesting observation. Paul had two wishes for Philemon: one on the basis of love and the other towards Onesimus. Paul had two dynamics impacting him: the desire to keep Onesimus with him, and the desire to gain Philemon's consent. Finally, there were two

outcomes: the hand of God working in their temporary separation, and the transformation of Onesimus to the status of brother. These dualities encompass the background of the request.

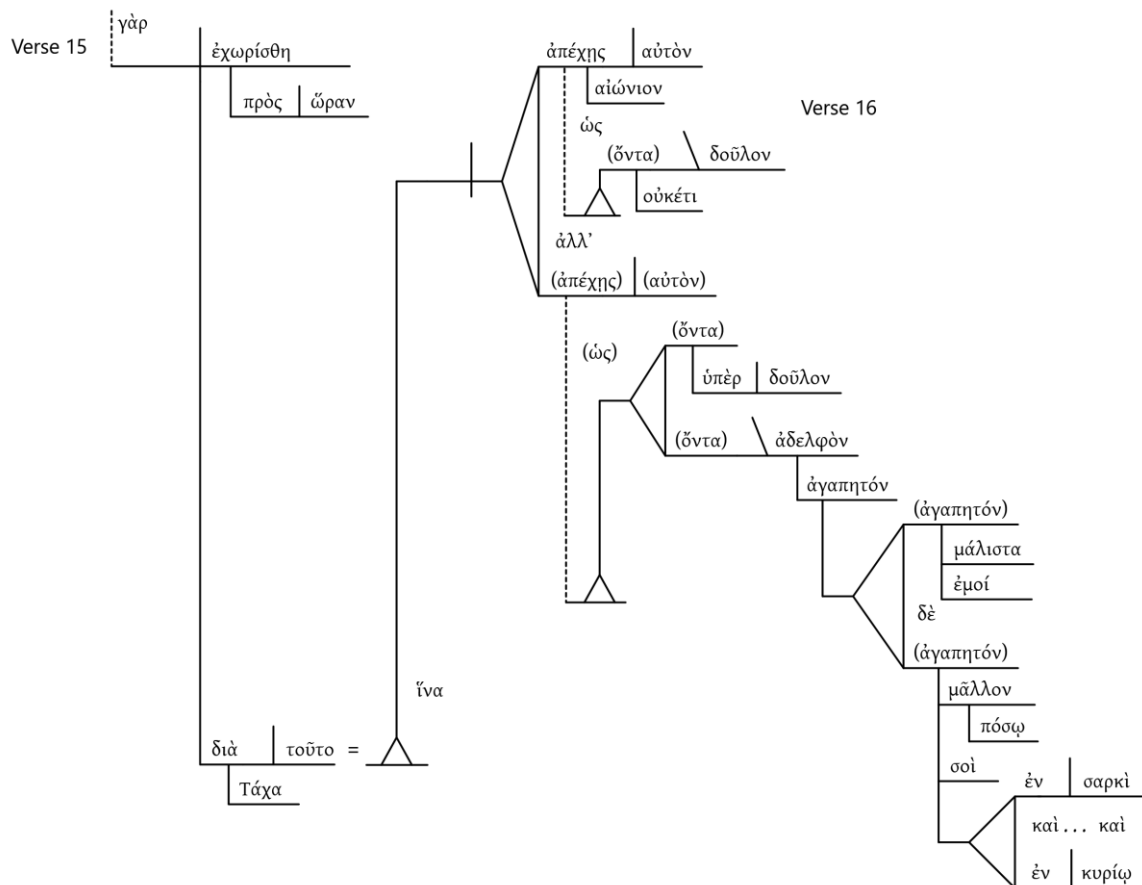


Figure 4-4: Diagram of Philemon 15-16

The third major section (v. 17-22)¹⁰² is also introduced with a reference to the previous discussion via another *inferential* particle¹⁰³ and encompasses a series of statements in which are contained the only four imperatives of the book – the actual request from Paul to Philemon. The first two imperatives are located in separate first-class conditional sentences,¹⁰⁴ having an almost assumptive function – I [Paul] assume that these are true,¹⁰⁵ and I’m acting accordingly.¹⁰⁶ The first three imperatives are connected via *δέ*¹⁰⁷ denoting their correlation – the relationship of the three main characters hinges on this. The final imperative involves Paul’s future anticipated visit – in answer to your prayers, I hope to be restored.¹⁰⁸

In content then, Paul’s request has four components: 1) welcome¹⁰⁹ Onesimus (as if it were me), 2) charge¹¹⁰ me,¹¹¹ 3) refresh¹¹² me, and 4) prepare¹¹³ for me.¹¹⁴ While there are many explanatory and even controversial aspects that could be considered in this section (and much has been written about them), from a structural perspective, this section elucidates the content of Paul’s request to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. These four elements will be added to the list for future consideration.

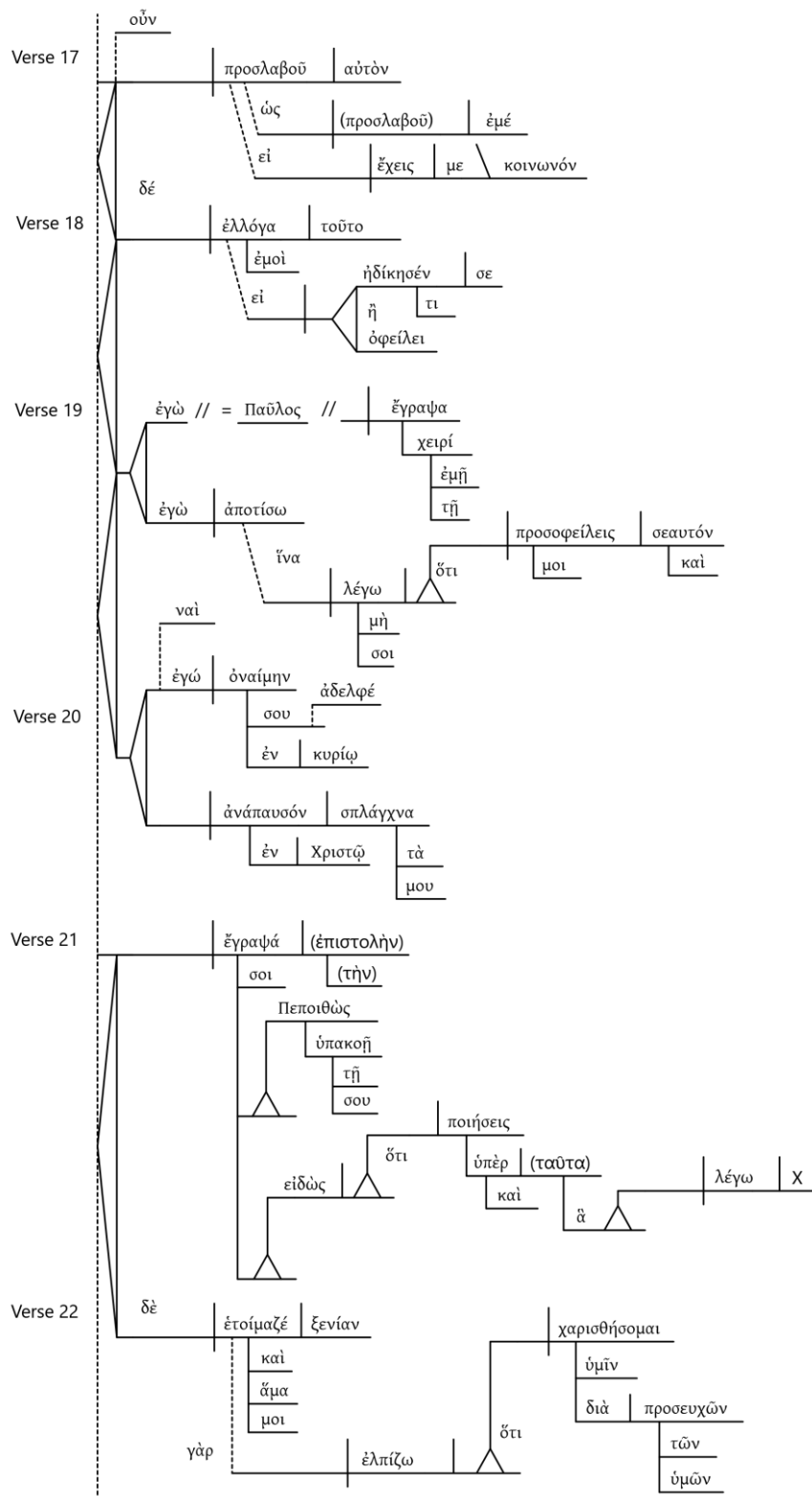


Figure 4-5: Diagram of Philemon 17-22

4.3.2.2 Textual chunks

Based on his text-centred analysis, Snyman (2009:181) divides the book into five phases:¹¹⁵ 1-3, 4-7, 8-16, 17-20, and 21-25. This researcher has a similar division of the book with the

distinction of including verses 21-22 in the pericope that begins with verse 17 and starting the conclusion with verse 23 (see Table 4-3).¹¹⁶ Such reasoning is two-fold: 1) the purpose of the letter is to persuade Philemon of a certain course of action, of which verse 21 is a fitting conclusion to that purpose, and 2) as demonstrated in 4.3.2.1, the four imperatives are found only in verses 17-22. Regardless of which division is chosen, recognition that the changes in the composition are purposeful and indicative of importance, highlights what the author is communicating.¹¹⁷ Additionally, what the author conveys by the shifts in composition demands a higher cognitive level of understanding from the reader and results in a greater dimension of knowledge for the reader.¹¹⁸ As a result, the chunking demonstrates that the book directs Philemon and the readers to Paul's *request* on behalf of Onesimus, and this too will be added to the list for further consideration.

Table 4-3: Basic Outline of Philemon

Introduction	(v. 1-3)
The encouraging report about Philemon	(v. 4-7)
The background of Paul's request to Philemon	(v. 8-16)
Paul's request to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus	(v. 17-22)
Conclusion	(v. 23-25)

4.3.3 Patterned recursion¹¹⁹

4.3.3.1 Repetition and Restatement

Sometimes something is simply restated for emphasis, and other times it is reiterated in a different way to draw attention to an aspect of the statement or concept. For example, the repetition of the singular pronoun [σου], apart from the opening and concluding parts of the letter, is emphasising that the focus of the body of the letter is directed at one individual – Philemon.¹²⁰ There are many other examples of repetition and restatement in the book, but only those pertinent to the discussion of conflict and not explored elsewhere are examined here.

The use of the noun prisoner [δέσμιος],¹²¹ in verse 1 is repeated in verse 9; it is then referenced in verse 10 and verse 13, via the noun δεσμὸς.¹²² Whether it addresses the person bound or the means by which someone is bound, the notion of bondage is expressed with two interesting observations. First, none of the occurrences relates to Philemon's relationship with Onesimus – which would be expected as master and slave. And second, all of these occurrences have to do with a spiritual relationship. Twice Paul is announced as a prisoner of Christ. Onesimus is seen as coming to faith in Christ while Paul is imprisoned. And Onesimus is visualised in Gospel ministry. So the notion of bondage is discussed, but not in the context anticipated.

In light of the aforementioned connection to the Gospel, a brief aside must be touched on here. As Turner (2006:38-39) accentuates, while the word *reconciliation* doesn't appear in the letter, "Philemon is 'all about' human reconciliation: indeed probably the most detailed discussion in the New Testament", and it is accurate for commentators to maintain that it is at the core of the letter. In fact, Nordling (2007:71) has an excellent discussion about the Gospel message in Philemon where he indicates that Paul's offer to pay Onesimus' debt is "founded upon and intentionally reflects the payment for all sin which the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for the world". To this researcher, the impact of the Gospel message, lived out in daily practice, had a greater impact upon the letter to Philemon than the Roman or Greek rhetorical and argumentative devices. Obviously, Paul employed their use (that is why they are being examined) but only to the degree that it matched with his purpose; however, the paramount influence was the implementation of the Gospel message.¹²³ Nordling (2007:72) observes that Paul's offer of substitutionary payment was based on "the atoning sacrifice of Christ, not simply with Paul's generosity".¹²⁴ Most significantly, Paul understood the cost that this Gospel living demanded of Philemon if he was to respond positively to Paul's request. Green (2013:77) cogently writes that "this will require a complete transformation of their relationship, even if their legal relationship as slave and master remains unchanged".¹²⁵ And so, while the **Gospel** is only mentioned directly one time (v. 13), its impact is seen throughout the book and must be added to the list for further consideration.

A second repetitive word is found in verses 7, 12, and 20 and is often translated as *heart* and conveys a visceral perception.¹²⁶ Possibly one of the best explanations is expressed by Kittel *et al.* (1985:1068) where it states that *σπλάγχνον* is used "not merely to express natural emotions but as a very forceful term to signify an expression of the total personality at the deepest level".¹²⁷ Paul employs this robust word to signal the ramifications of Philemon's actions: he has in the past refreshed the saints (v. 7); he needs to understand Paul's connection with Onesimus (v. 12), and he has the opportunity to refresh or encourage Paul (v. 20). The question that arises is what will Philemon do at this *deepest level* of relationship with both Paul and Onesimus – they are inextricably linked.

The final repetition is not a word but a concept: *identity*.¹²⁸ It has been mentioned previously¹²⁹ but not defined. The Oxford English Dictionary (2017) expresses the essence of the word in relationship to man as: "Who or what a person or thing is; a distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or perceived by others; a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others". Within a social context many use Tajfel's definition: "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tucker, 2014:409). Together, these definitions signify what makes a person who

they are or what makes a person who they are within a group.¹³⁰ The introduction and the concluding remarks of Philemon are replete with examples of both of these aspects of the concept of identity.¹³¹ Therefore, the content of the book is wrapped in identities.

In the body of the letter, Paul builds off of the identities of the three main characters. While this is not the only time Paul uses the appellation *prisoner of Christ*,¹³² it is the only occasion where he establishes that identity from the outset.¹³³ As he writes the letter, Paul doesn't alter that identity except to add that he is now an old man.¹³⁴ What Paul does revise is that he will not take advantage of his persona (as Paul) and demand a certain response from Philemon. Philemon's identity is also established at the beginning in a dual role¹³⁵ as one who is esteemed¹³⁶ and one who is a co-worker.¹³⁷ Paul's only revision to Philemon's identity is to strengthen it. He does so via the glowing report he has received about Philemon – he spiritually refreshes the saints (v. 7) – and through his confident appraisal of Philemon's response to Paul's request about Onesimus (v. 21). However, in regards to Onesimus, there is a great deal of movement in his identity. Paul shows the progression of his identity from unsaved to saved (v. 10), from useless to useful (v. 11),¹³⁸ and from slave to beloved brother in Christ (v. 16). Without Paul's explanation of the change in Onesimus, there is no reason to suspect that Philemon would vary in his outlook of Onesimus.¹³⁹ So, by means of this alteration in identity, Paul hopes that Philemon will change his viewpoint and incorporate Onesimus into the shared identity of brother in Christ. By doing so, Philemon would continue to express his identity, and Paul would have the opportunity to experience that refreshment first-hand. This discussion is summarised well by Tucker (2014:424) when he states: "For Paul, all of life was 'in Christ', and thus he sought to form the social identity of those within the Pauline Christ-movement in the context of existing identities, 'both in the flesh and in the Lord'".

As a result of the study of repetition and restatement the concepts of ***bondage to Christ***, ***deepest levels of relationship***, the ***Gospel***, and ***impact of identity*** will be added to the list for further consideration.

4.3.3.2 Chiasmus¹⁴⁰

Extensive work¹⁴¹ has been done in the area of the chiastic¹⁴² structure of the Bible and of the book of Philemon in particular. Simply put, a chiasmus involves the *succession of ideas*, and as Lund¹⁴³ (1930:79) states: "In a given system the ideas occur in a given order, until the center is reached, after which they are repeated in the *reverse* order, until the end of the system is reached".¹⁴⁴ As McCoy (2003:18) describes it, at the heart of a chiasmus structure is the *dynamic* of moving "toward and away from a strategic central component", and so the essence of this methodology is the identification of a central idea or ideas. Complementing that notion is the development of the thoughts that point to the central idea; thoughts that become "thematic

twins which specify, intensify, or complete one another” (McCoy, 2003:32).¹⁴⁵ Together they clarify and develop the big idea of the passage or book.

In his work, Bailey (2012:1) presents six separate chiasms within the book of Philemon that together result in a chiastic construction of the entire letter.¹⁴⁶ Structurally, he states the first and last chiasms as “greetings and blessings”. The second and fifth concepts are arranged in prayers, and at the centre are “two appeals for reconciliation with Onesimus”.¹⁴⁷ These appeals then form the core of what Paul is conveying to Philemon (see Figure 4-6).

1-3	Paul’s greeting to Philemon and grace from the Lord Jesus
4-7	Thanks and prayers for Philemon
8-16	Appeal to Philemon to receive Onesimus (“useful”) as a brother, once useless but now useful to both Paul and Philemon, as voluntarily as Onesimus and Paul have returned him
17-20	Appeal to Philemon to welcome Onesimus as he would welcome Paul, and as a brother and debtor to Paul to consider being useful to Paul (by returning Onesimus to Paul)
21-22	Confidence in Philemon to do even more than Paul has asked explicitly
23-25	Greetings from those with Paul and grace from the Lord Jesus

[from Bailey (2012:1)]

Figure 4-6: Ring Composition of the Letter of Philemon

According to Bailey (2012:1), the first appeal (see Figure 4-7), to *receive*, is founded upon shared freedom and is illustrated in each of the main characters’ *unrestricted* actions (v. 10-14). In this particular chiastic structure, the central idea is found in verses 11-13¹⁴⁸ and is predicated upon the voluntary actions of both Paul and Onesimus. Sandwiching the main idea are two references to the voluntary nature of the desired response of Philemon. The second appeal, to *welcome*, is founded upon *shared* indebtedness and is illustrated in the main characters’ stated obligations. Central to these obligations is Paul’s willingness to meet any unmet debt on the part of Onesimus. Together, he views these appeals as identifying the *request for reconciliation* as the main idea of the letter and narrative. So for the purposes of this study, the focus upon a ***request for reconciliation*** through the appeals of ***receive*** and ***welcome*** will be included in the list for consideration. In addition, the thematic elements of ***voluntary*** and ***indebtedness*** will also be deliberated.

8 Therefore, having in Anointed full assurance to command you what is useful,
 9 for love's sake
 I rather appeal,
 being such as Paul an old man and now also a prisoner of Anointed Jesus.
 10 I appeal to you
 for my child,
 whom I have fathered in *my* chains, Onesimus,
 11 once to you useless, but now to you and me useful,
 12 **whom I have sent back to you, himself,**
that is, my own heart,
 13 **whom I wanted to keep for myself,**
 so that on your behalf he might serve me in the chains of the good news.
 14 But without your consent
 nothing I wanted to do,
 so that not forced your kindness may be
 but voluntary.
 15 Perhaps this is why he was taken away
 for a while,
 so forever
 you may receive him
 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother,
 especially to me,
 but how much more to you,
 both in *the* flesh and in *the* Lord.

[from Bailey (2012:2) with his emphasis]

Figure 4-7: Chiastic Structure of Verses 8-16

In addition, De Villiers (2010:259-263) looks at the chiastic structure of verses 4-8 (see Figure 4-8) and explores how this section introduces the central idea in the book of love and faith (see underlined).¹⁴⁹ With the insertion of fellowship (κοινωνία) into B', De Villiers (2010:260-261) perceives faith as qualified by its horizontal implications and framed by love. The point of Paul's communication is to demonstrate to Philemon that he should continue to "uphold his reputation of a loving relationship with the saints", especially in regards to the now believing Onesimus.¹⁵⁰ In turn, Paul's lesson and Philemon's response are a *pedagogy in biography*¹⁵¹ to their local church and the universal church as they read this inspired letter.

A Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνεῖαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην
 B καὶ τὴν πίστιν, ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους,
 B' ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν.
 A' χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπταται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ.

[from De Villiers (2010:260) with his emphasis]

Figure 4-8: Greek Chiastic Structure Emphasizing Love and Faith

Finally, by referencing the *semantic domain* of the word love,¹⁵² De Villiers (2010:263-264) demonstrates how *love* provides the coherence of the entire letter (see Figure 4-9). Ultimately, while it is not the central theme, it is this love that provides the resolution to the conflict of the book and is foundational to the transformation of the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. So **faith** and **love** will be added to the list under consideration.

- A Paul writes to Philemon as a “*beloved*” brother (1-3) about
- B his fellowship in faith and for his refreshing love for the Lord and for others (4-6).
- C Paul then appeals on the basis of *love* to Philemon to do “what is fitting” towards Onesimus (7-11).
- D Paul is reluctantly *sending back* Onesimus who is Paul’s “*heart*” though he would like to keep him (12-13).
- E Paul embeds an explanation that he wanted to do nothing without Philemon’s knowledge. Philemon should *do good* voluntarily—out of choice, rather than being forced (14).
- D’ Paul then returns to the sending back. Onesimus is *sent back* to Philemon to be welcomed as a “*beloved brother*” (15-17).
- C’ Paul will stand in for anything that stands in the way of Philemon’s reconciliation with Onesimus and prevents them from living as (beloved) brethren (18-19).
- B’ Philemon’s benevolent love towards Onesimus will refresh Paul (20-22).
- A’ Philemon is remembered by the community of believers (23-35).

[from De Villiers (2010:264) with his emphasis]

Figure 4-9: Chiasmic Structure According to the Semantic Domain of Love

4.3.4 Artistic highlighting

While the patterned recursion focuses on the macrostructure of the letter, artistic highlighting concentrates on the microstructure, examining what the author seeks to highlight in specific portions of the text (Wendland, 2010:92).¹⁵³

4.3.4.1 Discourse analysis

An immense amount of work has been done in this area by Runge (2010a) in his discourse analysis¹⁵⁴ where he focused on answering the *why* question (not the question of *why* Paul wrote the letter to Philemon specifically), but *why* did the author make the choices that he did.¹⁵⁵ In other words, what was the purpose in highlighting that portion of the letter? What was he seeking to accomplish?

By exploring the functionality of the choices made, Runge (2010a:13-16) demonstrates how the author provides prominence to certain issues or points and how he contrasts that with other issues or points. He explains that when there is a divergence from a normal pattern (or expectation) it creates a question of *why*, and that question in and of itself establishes a contrast with something else under consideration. For example, the semantic (or inherent) meaning of a word or phrase, while not changing, can impact the reader in a different way (the pragmatic use) based on where it is located in the text or how it is used in the text.¹⁵⁶

Table 4-4 is a summary of Runge’s (2010a) discourse analysis of the book of Philemon. Within this summary are three categories¹⁵⁷ of functions in the choices made by Paul in his communication of this letter. These categories are as follows: 1) forward-pointing devices (FP),¹⁵⁸ 2) thematic highlighting (TH),¹⁵⁹ and 3) information structuring (IS).¹⁶⁰ Paul had options

in how to communicate his message, and this is a summary of the chosen options and the desired effect of those choices upon Philemon and the readers to follow.

Table 4-4: Runge's Discourse Analysis of Philemon

v.	Information	Discourse analysis	Function
3	χάρις και ειρήνη	main clause emphasis ¹⁶¹	IS
4	μνείαν σου	main clause emphasis	IS
6	ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου	topical frame ¹⁶²	IS
6	ἐνεργῆς	main clause emphasis	IS
7	χαρὰν πολλὴν καὶ παράκλησιν	main clause emphasis	IS
7	τὰ σπλάγχχνα τῶν ἀγίων	topical frame	IS
7	ἀδελφέ	thematic address ¹⁶³	TH
8	πολλὴν παρρησίαν	nominative circumstantial frame ¹⁶⁴	IS
8	ἐν Χριστῷ	subordinate clause emphasis ¹⁶⁵	IS
8	πολλὴν ... ἀνήκον	nominative circumstantial frame	IS
9	διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην	main clause emphasis	IS
9	τοιούτος	forward point ref./near demon. pronoun ¹⁶⁶	FP/TH
9	πρεσβύτης	forward pointing target ¹⁶⁷	FP
9	νυνὶ	temporal frame ¹⁶⁸	IS
9	καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ	thematic addition ¹⁶⁹ /forward point. target	TH/FP
10	τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς	overspecification ¹⁷⁰	TH
11	τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ καὶ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον	overspecification	TH
11	ποτέ	temporal frame	IS
11	νυνὶ	temporal frame	IS
11	καὶ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ	thematic addition	TH
12	ὃν	continuative relative ¹⁷¹	IS
12	τοῦτ'	topical frame	IS
12	τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχχνα	overspecification	TH
13	ὃν	continuative relative	IS
13	ἐγὼ	topical frame	IS
13	κατέχειν	subordinate clause emphasis	IS
13	ὑπὲρ σοῦ	subordinate clause emphasis	IS
14	χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης	spatial frame ¹⁷²	IS
14	οὐδὲν	main clause emphasis	IS
14	μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθόν σου ἢ	counterpoint ¹⁷³	FP
14	κατὰ ἐκούσιον	point ¹⁷⁴ /main clause emphasis - other ¹⁷⁵	FP/IS
15	διὰ τοῦτο	forward pointing reference ¹⁷⁶	FP
15	αἰώνιον	forward pointing target	FP
16	οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον	counterpoint - clause	FP
16	ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν	point - clause	FP
16	καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ	thematic addition	TH
17	εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν	conditional frame ¹⁷⁷	IS
17	με	subordinate clause emphasis	IS
18	εἰ δὲ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει	left dislocation ¹⁷⁸	IS
18	τι	topical frame	IS
18	τοῦτο	topical frame	IS
18	ἐμοὶ	main clause emphasis	IS
19	ἐγὼ Παῦλος	topical frame	IS
19	ἐγὼ	topical frame	IS
19	καὶ σεαυτόν	thematic addition	TH
20	ἀδελφέ	thematic address	TH
20	ἐγὼ	topical frame	IS
20	σου	main clause emphasis	IS
21	Πεποιθώς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου	nominative circumstantial frame	IS
21	καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω	thematic addition/main clause emphasis	TH/IS
22	ἅμα	temporal frame	IS
22	καὶ ἐτοίμαζέ	thematic addition	TH
22	διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν	spatial frame	IS
23	ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ	overspecification	TH

[Adapted from Runge (2010b)]

What is gained from this discourse picture of Philemon is a functional outline based on Paul's statements and how they are supported, elaborated, distinguished, and then even principlized.

Table 4-5 provides that outline which is differentiated from other structures that emphasize *form* over *function*.

Table 4-5: Runge’s Functional Outline of Philemon¹⁷⁹

Function	Information
Sentence ¹⁸⁰	1 Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός
Bullet ¹⁸¹	Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ ἡμῶν
Bullet	2 καὶ Ἀπφία τῇ ἀδελφῇ
Bullet	καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν
Bullet	καὶ τῇ κατ’ οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ
Sentence	3 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
Sentence	4 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε
Elaboration	μνείαν σου ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου
Elabor. ¹⁸²	5 ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν
Sub-point ¹⁸³	ἣν ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους
Sub-point	6 ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν
Support ¹⁸⁴	7 χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου
Sub-point	ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπταται διὰ σοῦ ἀδελφέ
Principle ¹⁸⁵	8 Διὸ πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσει σοὶ τὸ ἀνήκον 9 διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ
Elaboration	τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος
Bullet	πρεσβύτης
Bullet	νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
Sentence	10 παρακαλῶ σε
Bullet	περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς
Bullet	Ὀνήσιμον
Bullet	11 τὸν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον
Bullet	νυνὶ δὲ καὶ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον
Sentence	12 ὃν ἀνέπεμψά σοι
Bullet	αὐτόν
Bullet	τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα
Sentence	13 ὃν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν κατέχειν
Sub-point	ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου
Sentence	14 χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι
Sub-point	ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθὸν σου ἦ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἐκούσιον
Support	15 τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὦραν
Sub-point	ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχης
Bullet	16 οὐκέτι ὡς δούλον
Bullet	ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ δούλον ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν
Bullet	μάλιστα ἐμοὶ
Bullet	πόσω δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ
Principle	17 Εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν προσλαβοῦ αὐτόν ὡς ἐμέ
Sentence	18 εἰ δὲ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα
Sentence	19 ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ
Sentence	ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω
Sub-point	ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοι
Sub-point	ὅτι καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις
Sentence	20 ναὶ ἀδελφέ ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ
Sentence	ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ
Sentence	21 Πεπειθῶς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι
Elaboration	εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις
Sentence	22 ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοιμαζέ μοι ξενίαν
Support	ἐλπίζω γὰρ
Sub-point	ὅτι διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν
Sentence	23 Ἀσπάζεται σε
Bullet	Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
Bullet	24 Μάρκος
Bullet	Ἀρίσταρχος
Bullet	Δημᾶς
Bullet	Λουκᾶς
Bullet	οἱ συνεργοί μου
Sentence	25 Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν

[Adapted from Runge (2010b)]

Two principles are drawn from this functional outline. Based on the previous information, verse 8 conveys what Paul could do but chooses not to do,¹⁸⁶ and, based on the information from verse 9-16, verse 17 conveys what Paul would like Philemon to do, knowing that he doesn’t have to do so.¹⁸⁷ These two points are essential in understanding the *why* to the approach that

Paul took in this discourse with Philemon. Paul wanted Philemon to know what was within his rights to do, but abandoned for a greater good. While it certainly doesn't carry the same consequence as what was being asked of Philemon, it does set the stage for the request to Philemon to also abandon his right all for a greater good.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, these principles will be added to the list for further consideration.

4.3.4.2 Syntax and Semantics

The way that words are patterned and the associated meaning that is gained from that patterning is also important to consider in artistic highlighting (Black, 1995:9). Four examples that are germane to the conflict are explored here.

In verses 19-20, Paul employs a heavy use of ἐγώ¹⁸⁹ which Runge (2008a) states is a *topical frame* that exhibits “a specific frame of reference regarding the theme of the clause that follows”.¹⁹⁰ While not the most important information, it establishes a mental picture of the *starting point* of the important discourse to follow, and, in this case, emphasising who is acting at this juncture.¹⁹¹ Why is this important? In this passage, Paul is emphasising what course of action he undertakes, what he is willing to do to make things right between Philemon and Onesimus, and what he desires from Philemon. Both Philemon and Onesimus clearly understand Paul's role and actions in this conflict.

Verse 16 includes the only direct mention of slavery¹⁹² in this letter, and Paul uses this idea to create a *counterpoint* to Philemon's previous understanding of Onesimus. As Runge (2008a) describes it, a second statement of greater importance replaces the first statement. Thus, Paul is seeking to augment Philemon's perspective of Onesimus. Why would Paul do this? Obviously, there is new information that Philemon needs to appreciate, but for this researcher there is a greater reason. In verse 13, Paul, in speaking of the role of a servant, uses a different word than what is expected in light of verse 16 (and the influential, historical, slavery issues); he uses the verb διακονέω¹⁹³ instead of δουλόω.¹⁹⁴ It appears that what Paul is accentuating is that the service Onesimus did for Paul, in the absence of Philemon, is more important than the role of the one who did it (and this service even becomes an essential office¹⁹⁵ of the church).¹⁹⁶ Thus, Paul redefines what Onesimus did: he, as a slave, did what you (Philemon) would have done for me, and so see him for what he did and not what is his role.

In introducing Onesimus to the story, Paul uses overspecification,¹⁹⁷ and as Runge (2008b) writes: “This extra information is often ‘thematically-loaded’, connected to the theme of the context in some way”. In the span of three verses, to Paul, Onesimus has become his child, birthed in chains, useful to him, and even his own heart. Paul could have simply named

Onesimus, but by the overspecification he is re-characterizing him in a way that signals to Philemon the way in which he should perceive of Onesimus.

Finally, throughout the book of Philemon (as visualized in Table 4-6), Paul highlights a consistent message involving four thematic elements,¹⁹⁸ and these elements are central components of the conflict narrative in Paul’s message to Philemon. In fact, Wendland (2010:96) wonderfully demonstrates the *semantic force* of these elements with the following summative statement: “CHRIST *motivates the personal* AFFECTION *arising from* FAITH, *which transforms servile human* BONDAGE *into brotherly* PARTNERSHIP *through mutual* SERVICE *in his* CHURCH [his emphasis].¹⁹⁹ These pertinent concepts of **affection**, **bondage**, **partnership**, and **service** will be added to the list for further consideration.

Table 4-6: Thematic Elements in Philemon

Verse	Affection	Bondage/Debt	Partnership	Service
1	beloved	prisoner of Christ	brother/co-worker	co-worker
2	sister		fellow-soldier/church	fellow-soldier
3	grace/peace/Father		God	Lord
4	thanks		prayers	
5	love		saints	Lord
6		good thing in Christ	fellowship	
7	joy/love/brother		saints	encourage/refresh
8	heart		in Christ	do what is proper
9	love	prisoner of Christ		
10	child	chains		
11			to you and me	useless/useful
12	my own heart			
13		chains		serve...gospel
14			consent	voluntary good work
15			receive him back forever	
16	beloved brother	servant	to me and you	more than a servant/Lord
17			fellowship	welcome him
18		wronged/owes/charge		
19		repay/owe yourself		
20	brother/heart			benefit/refresh
21				obedience/do more
22	guest room			prayer/prepare
23	greet	fellow-prisoner	fellow-prisoner	
24			co-worker	
25	grace			Lord

[adapted from Wendland (2010:95)]

4.3.5 Rhetorical shaping

One of the purposes of rhetoric is to cause the reader to become personally involved in the message by rousing their emotions (Lampe, 2010:61).²⁰⁰ For example, Paul seeks to move Philemon away from aggression towards Onesimus, and he does so by substituting himself for Onesimus – Paul identifies himself with the changed person of Onesimus (Lampe, 2010:67).²⁰¹ How this substitution takes place or how the emotions are raised is explored in this rhetorical section. The section is divided into the *literary form* (how the argument is crafted with words) and the *visual form* (the desired visual impact upon the reader).

4.3.5.1 Literary rhetorical

While the New Testament form doesn't follow precisely the classical form,²⁰² it still provides insight into the possible structural emphasis of the letter.²⁰³ According to Young (1994:250), rhetoric of the first century adhered to the following formula. The *exordium* is an introduction that stirs the interest of the reader and frames the context for them. The *narratio* states the situation under consideration, while the *propositio* summarises the matter for the audience. The *probatio* presents the support for the situation and is often sub-divided into three types of proof: 1) *ethos* – ethical appeal, 2) *pathos* – emotional appeal, and 3) *logos* – rational appeal. The *confutatio* anticipates the rebuttals and seeks to assuage them, and finally, the *peroratio* conveys the conclusion of the matter. As is seen in Figure 4-10, the structure of Philemon follows this pattern.²⁰⁴

Opening	1-3	Epistolary opening bracket
Body	4-22	Hortatory discourse
<i>Exordium</i>	4-7	[rapport] Philemon's love and faith
<i>Narratio</i>	8-11	[Appeal] I appeal for Onesimus
<i>Propositio</i>	12	[tension] I am sending him back to you
<i>Probatio</i>	13-17	[basis for the appeal]
<i>Pathos</i>	13-14	I would not keep him without your consent
<i>Logos</i>	15-16	Onesimus is now a Christian
<i>Ethos</i>	17	I am your partner
<i>Confutatio</i>	18-19	[enablement] I will repay anything owed
<i>Peroratio</i>	20-22	I know you will do more than what I say
Closing	23-25	Epistolary closing bracket

[From Young (1994:250)]

Figure 4-10: Rhetorical Structure of Philemon

From the rhetorical structure, a purpose of the narrative is seen as the *appeal* to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.²⁰⁵ Callahan (2009:333) summarises the *appeal's nature* as observed in this methodology: "In this short, diplomatic letter we find an appeal to solidarity instead of *apologiae* for alterity, a rhetoric of indebtedness instead of pretensions to entitlement, a discourse of what is right instead of claims to rights, and persuasion instead of coercion".²⁰⁶

Using modern game theory applications placed upon this rhetorical framework, White (2017:34-39) seeks to determine the *content of that appeal*.²⁰⁷ For instance, Paul didn't use the zero-sum game as it would be represented by Paul demanding certain actions from Philemon in order to gain the honour (see Table 4-7); how atypical this would be for the one who consistently sought the eternal over the present. On the other hand, Paul didn't just seek Philemon's cooperation, as beneficial as that may be for the larger group – the church (see Table 4-8). Philemon would then be motivated by personal benefit – a lower ethical motivation.²⁰⁸

Table 4-7: Honour/Shame Concept as Win/Lose Performance

Outcome	Paul	Philemon
Paul demands Onesimus' freedom and Philemon accedes	increased honour	decreased honour
Paul demands Onesimus' freedom and Philemon refuses	decreased honour	increased honour

[From White (2017:34)]

Table 4-8: Benefits of Cooperation

party gains from	Paul	Philemon	Onesimus	Church
Paul	---	strengthened friendship and admiration	greater standing	recognition of autonomy
Philemon	strengthened friendship and gratitude	---	freedom and forgiveness	stronger leader and unity affirmed
Onesimus	loyal co-worker	gratitude and loyalty	---	increased devotion and joy in service
Church	recognition of authority and respect	standing confirmed and greater honour	recognition of equality	---

[From White (2017:35)]

Table 4-9: Family or Kinship Rhetoric

v. 1	Timothy is the <i>brother</i>	ἀδελφός
v. 2	Apphia is the <i>sister</i>	ἀδελφῆ
v. 2	Church is the <i>household</i>	οἶκος
v. 7, 20	Philemon is Paul's <i>brother</i>	ἀδελφός
v. 10	Onesimus is <i>my child</i>	τὸν τέκνον ἐμοῦ
v. 16	Philemon should receive Onesimus as a <i>beloved brother</i>	ἀδελφός ἀγαπητός
v. 7, 12, 20	(metaphorical use) <i>heart</i>	σπλάγχνα
v. 10	(metaphorical use) <i>birthed</i>	γεννάω
v. 9	<i>old man</i>	πρεσβύτες

[Adapted from White (2017:37-38)]

Instead, White (2017:38) posits the notion that based upon the family or kinship rhetoric (see Table 4-9), which was challenging Philemon's understanding of Onesimus, Paul was "using kinship language to deconstruct accepted values and norms, reconfiguring them around the new reality that characterizes their relationships in Christ".²⁰⁹ As illustrated in Figure 4-11, White (2017:38) states,

He has ingenuously turned the relationship between master and slave – a key to maintaining the economic and social fabric of the Roman Empire – on its head and subverted it entirely. For if Philemon adopts Paul's way of viewing his

relationship with Onesimus, i.e. if Philemon begins to view Onesimus as a family member, it must *result* in a change of status.

Thus, Webb’s (2008:3) comment that Paul’s purpose was “to be as persuasive as possible without being coercive so as not to expose Onesimus to excessive punishment and possible death” acknowledges that Paul’s appeal was not normative.²¹⁰ The possibility of capital punishment would have been well within Philemon’s legal rights.²¹¹ Paul had to communicate in a way that provided the opportunity for Philemon to consider the change in Onesimus before acting upon his previous knowledge and understanding. Plus, the motivation needed to be greater than simply Philemon’s own benefit.

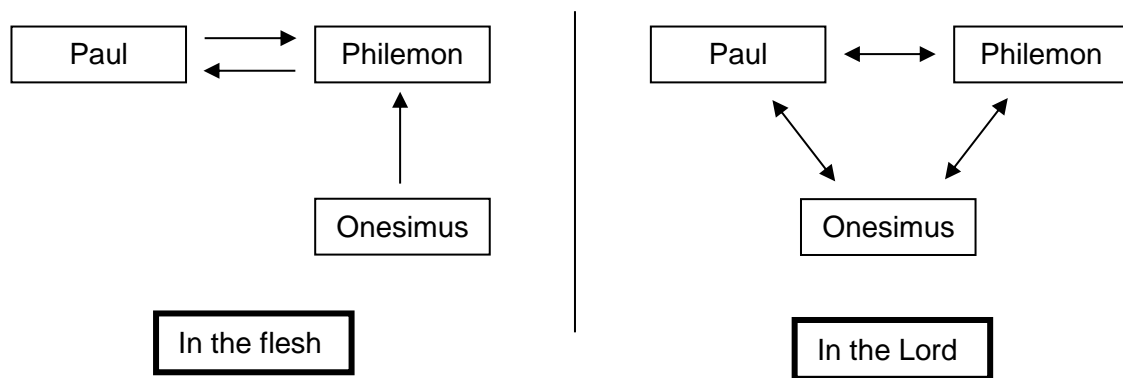


Figure 4-11: Comparison of Relationships

Therefore, according to White (2017:39), the content of Paul’s appeal was not manumission; instead it was “the re-invisioning of relationships among believers so that the adequately reflect a revolutionary new theological reality”. They are brother and sisters in Christ, and they need to act like who they really are as believers. Accordingly, the idea of ***communicating new relationships*** will be added to the list for later consideration.

In addition, Wendland (2010:102) advances the view that the very structure of exhortative communication is pertinent to a correct understanding of Philemon as it shows the process of moving from the problem to the solution. As will be portrayed in the visual rhetoric, if someone cannot envisage the solution from the communicated words, the likelihood of someone embracing the solution greatly diminishes.

4.3.5.2 Visual rhetoric

The distinction between literary and visual rhetoric lies in its effect upon the reader. A literary rhetorical device is used to convince; whereas visual rhetoric is what is seen in the mind of the reader whether or not they are ever convinced. The visual experience also impacts a reader’s understanding of the information under consideration. Jeal (2008:11) describes this intersection between what is visualised and what is read as “a blurred space”, not because it is unknown but

because it is often ignored since it occurs so normally and seems so apparent.²¹² *Rhetography*, as Jeal (2008:12) calls it, is “the pictorial, graphic narration that occurs in texts”, and it provides “clarity and coherence to the ideas being expressed, indeed they help carry arguments along”. This clarity is accomplished by the emotional responses to the mental imagery created by the words used which in turn predispose the reader to the desired response (Jeal, 2008:14). So in the book of Philemon, what words did Paul use to lead Philemon to the conclusion that Onesimus was now more than his previous characteristics and now a beloved brother? For example, an interesting compilation has been adapted by Webb (2008:4)²¹³ that links the aspect of Paul’s plea with its rhetorical affect upon Philemon (and the reader) via the *familial* terms used (see Table 4-10).²¹⁴ This interweaving of words and mental imagery Jeal (2008:12) terms *intermedia* and contributes to Paul’s use of *rhetography*.²¹⁵ In summation, Webb (2008:3) draws this astute conclusion from these observations: “Paul’s tact lies in his making use of the points of argument without making their rhetorical undertones explicit”.

Table 4-10: Familial Terms and Their Underlying Value

Familial Terms	Rhetorical Undertone
1. Age	Having worked for many years, <i>paid my dues</i> and deserving respect...
2. Status as a prisoner	Having faced many challenges for the gospel and in a position of suffering myself...
3. The close bond of love between himself and Philemon	This love must surely count for something.
4. The assertion that Philemon is in debt to him (Paul)	This obligation is surely felt by you.
5. Paul’s fatherly love for Onesimus as well as the fact that he considers Onesimus a <i>dear brother</i>	This closeness between us is a sure sign that he has changed, proved his trustworthiness and that I no longer consider him a slave.
6. Onesimus’ current <i>usefulness</i>	His present usefulness makes it a huge advantage for you to have him.
7. God’s perspective	If this is the manner of God’s working in the situation, it would be wise to give it considerable thought.
8. Partnership with Philemon in the gospel	We are all partners in Christ now, including Onesimus. Receive him as such.
9. The assurance of Philemon’s obedience (and more than obedience)	I’m really counting on our good relationship
10. Paul’s determination to visit Philemon should his personal circumstances change	I’d like to experience the new relationship you will have with Onesimus.

[Adapted from Webb (2008:4)]

In the book of Philemon, Jeal (2008:15) concludes that there are nine visual sequences, and in each sequential step, the words used provide a visual scene in the minds of the readers. Those scenes can have images in the *foreground* (F), *background* (B), and even in the *midground* (M), and they can even include multiple images like a movie and not just a snapshot in time. From these mental pictures, much information²¹⁶ is gathered that can affect the reader in different ways. Table 4-11 summarises the observations of Jeal (2008:16-33).

Table 4-11: Visual Scenes in Philemon

Scene	Paul			Philemon			Onesimus			
	F	M	B	F	M	B	F	M	B	
v. 1-7	✓				✓					
v. 8-10	✓			✓					✓	
v. 11		✓			✓		✓			
v. 12-14	✓				✓		✓			
v. 15-16		✓			✓		✓			
v. 17-20	✓			✓				✓		
v. 21	✓				✓				✓	
v. 22	✓				✓				✓	
v. 23-25		✓				✓			✓	

From this table, many mental images flood the mind of the reader and each is designed to lead to a conclusion just as was its original intent in the life of Philemon (and those in his church). Jeal (2008:34) identifies the result of this visual methodology as the mixing together of socially diverse and possibly hostile characters visually, and this is important because if someone cannot see it happening in their mind, the likelihood of it becoming a reality is greatly diminished. As a result, Philemon (and the readers) can visualize Paul fellowshiping in the home of Philemon where both are enjoying the company of Onesimus. New social and moral relationships have replaced the old ones. Thus, the “visual scenes are themselves a rhetoric that bring about social formation” (Jeal, 2008:34), and so for this study, **visualising social and moral change** in anticipation of actual change will be added to the list for consideration.

4.3.6 Compilation of dynamics and themes

As a result of reviewing these five text-based, literary components and exploring methodologies contained within these categories, the following conflict dynamics and themes emerge. Table 4-12 is a compilation of all of them providing the setting as well as an aspectual understanding of the context for each one. Although, as demonstrated in both the textual analysis and Table 4-12, **slavery** is downplayed in this letter, it is still an additional dynamic that influences the narrative of the letter, for it is the topic that occasioned the letter's beginning. **Forgiveness**²¹⁷ is another example of an influencing dynamic that, in this case, is not even mentioned in the letter. However, it is a significant influence upon Philemon as a prerequisite of welcoming Onesimus – even though Paul offered to fulfil any financial obligation, for Philemon would still have to forgive Onesimus in order for their relationship to experience any restoration or advancement. These too will be added to the consideration process.

Table 4-12: Dynamics and Themes from Literary Component Analysis

Literary Component	Dynamic	Aspect	Theme	Aspect
Epistolary Analysis	identity	sets the tone	authority	what could be but won't be
	authority	Paul's link to Christ	love	basis of appeal
	argument/persuasion	crafting of the letter	fellowship	experience of believers
Narrative	debt	obligation	indebtedness	Onesimus to Philemon
	identity	sets the tone		Philemon to Paul
Diagram	request	opportunity	thankfulness	for Philemon's testimony
	com. interests	what Paul desires: service and consent	love	Philemon's testimonial
	God's plan	His purposes	faith	Philemon's testimonial
	4 requests	1. welcome him (as if it were me) 2. charge me 3. refresh me 4. prepare for me	fellowship	result of Philemon's testimony
			Onesimus	letter's referent
brotherhood			kinship of Onesimus and Philemon	
Chunks	request	opportunity	service	ministry of Onesimus to Paul
			consent	voluntary agreement
Repetition and Reiteration	bondage	to Christ	prisoner	unexpected context
	deeper level	most meaningful (emotional)		
	identity	sets the tone – brother or not?		
	Gospel	perspective		
Chiasmus	request	opportunity – reconciliation	receive back	eternal implications
			welcome	attitude
			faith	Philemon's testimonial
			love	Philemon's testimonial
			voluntary	no manipulation
Discourse Analysis	2 principles	1. Paul could but won't 2. Philemon should	indebtedness	Philemon to Paul
Syntax and Semantics	Paul's role	actions	affection	emotions
	Onesimus' role	actions	bondage	greater power
	re-characterize	changed	partnership	connection
Rhetoric	request	opportunity	change	social
	new relations	new opportunities		moral

The dynamics at play in this letter are centred around the identity of Onesimus (both before and after salvation). Some exist as a part of the conflict pre-narrative, and some arise due to Paul's intercessory writing to Philemon about his request in regards to Onesimus that is based on new

information.²¹⁸ The themes comprise the essential information Philemon needed in order to respond appropriately to Paul's request. Without this information, Philemon would make a decision based upon previous information that is complicated by the dynamics of slavery in the Graeco-Roman world in which he lived. He was also undoubtedly influenced by his understanding of biblical teaching, but the question is: which moral force would win out?²¹⁹ Based upon the research conducted, it is the belief of this researcher that Paul concluded that without the proper information, Philemon would respond as his cultural identity dictated. However, with the correct information, presented in a way that didn't endanger Philemon's own identity, and based upon his spiritual character, Philemon could be encouraged to accept Onesimus as his spiritual brother who had come to make things right between them.

Some of the dynamics could not be changed (they were what they were), but some of the dynamics could be altered in light of the new information. For example, the slavery context could not be altered (that was the reality), but the indebtedness dynamic could be altered, and Paul offers to do so. Onesimus' identity issue could be changed, and Paul justified that alteration. Themes, such as love, fellowship, refreshment, and brotherhood were employed and presented in a way so as to provide the vital information Philemon needed to respond positively to the dynamics he encountered. Other themes such as authority, service, consent, voluntary, partnership, and *prisoner of Christ* helped Philemon to understand the cost involved in viewing Onesimus differently.

To see Onesimus differently would require counter-cultural action on Philemon's part (Gloer & Stepp, 2008). He would have to resolve the "inconsistency of status" that a brother in Christ now was experiencing (Wolter, 2010:175), and Paul would not resolve that for him. He would have to reconsider social relationships "which are expressive of a selfish way of life" (Du Plessis, 2006:411), but again, Paul would not resolve that issue for him. Paul had confidence in Philemon's ability to work through these issues biblically, but Paul's task was to put Philemon in a place where he would think outside of the cultural box. Once Philemon's eyes were open to that possibility, Paul believed and acted upon the fact that Philemon's character would respond accordingly.²²⁰

At this juncture, Marohl (2014:101-103) has an interesting insight. He finds that people can have multiple social identities. One of them consists of the common ingroup to which someone relates. In this case, Philemon was a slavemaster and Onesimus was a slave – two different identities – but linked by a second identity, a *superordinate identity*,²²¹ which in this instance is slavery as a part of the cultural norm in their world. Paul doesn't deny that reality; he simply juxtaposes it with an alternative, more significant superordinate identity: the brotherhood of Christ. That higher identity doesn't necessarily abnegate the lower identity, but it certainly impacts it.²²² There is debate over how this can be achieved, but it is the belief of this

researcher that the work of the Holy Spirit is significant in achieving this reality in the lives of believers. Wolters (2010:175) provides an excellent summary of these multiple identities within the context of the book of Philemon, and what Paul seeks to accomplish:

What Paul wants to achieve by means of his letter is easy to understand: In a situation of conflicting identities he urges Philemon to let the Christian identity of Onesimus become predominant over his legal identity, and to treat his slave as a beloved brother – not only in the congregation (ἐν κυρίῳ), but also in the social world of his household (ἐν σαρκι). And this imposition is not at all alleviated by any proposal to change Onesimus' legal status by manumission! Paul does not ask Philemon to set his slave free.

In essence, what is gained from this surfacing of conflict dynamics and themes is an answer to the *why* question stated at the beginning of the chapter. Why would Paul not just come out and say what he wanted of Philemon (when he could have done so and did so in other places that demanded confrontation)? Why did he take this circuitous route to get to verse 17?²²³ Paul did what he did in order to resolve the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus and bring reconciliation to them. In order for that to happen, a new relationship (not simply a restoration) had to develop between them. In order for this to happen, Philemon needed to understand the change that had occurred in Onesimus. In order for Philemon to see this change, he needed to be able to look beyond his previous view (identity) of Onesimus. And here is the kicker: that view happened to involve the concept of slavery.²²⁴ It could have been any scenario²²⁵ but the slavery scenario was germane to life of that day as well as providing the occasion for Paul to teach the church about resolving conflict.²²⁶ The point is that this was not just any conflict. Paul had dealt with conflict on many other occasions (Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, etc.), but this conflict was different in that it centred around identities,²²⁷ and those identity issues are what drove Paul to follow the path that he did, incorporating the persuasive tools that he did.

4.4 Solution offered

Although as Punt (2015:167) correctly states: “The letter of Philemon as a skilful rhetorical masterpiece of suggestion and appeal presupposes the complex practical situation from which it emerged”, Paul clearly knew what needed to be done in this difficult situation – reconciliation of the parties. The challenge was how to go about this reconciliation in light of the identity issues represented. That is the reason that the answer to the *why* question, via the conflict dynamics and themes, is so vital. The solution Paul promotes to Philemon countermands the identity crisis of Onesimus in the eyes of Philemon. Instead of *knocking heads* over the problem of Onesimus, Paul has removed the barrier by providing the information of change in Onesimus that Philemon needed to know, and if that is not enough, he has linked Onesimus to himself (v. 17) as well as

to Philemon (v. 13). For that reason, Paul can provide this option to Philemon: If you are having fellowship with me, welcome him (who served me in your stead) as if it were me. And, Paul can provide this motivation: Allow me to experience the refreshment that everyone else has experienced at your hand via your treatment of Onesimus. Neither the option nor the motivation is possible without Paul writing and crafting his letter in the way that he did. Philemon would have responded in the way that he was conditioned to respond via his identity as a slavemaster in a slave-driven world.

Using the model of Wendland (2010:102) in visualizing the speech act of appealing to someone on behalf of someone else, the dynamics and themes explored in the letter to Philemon are summarised, amalgamated, and inserted in a visual representation (see Figure 4-12) of the solution to the conflict between Onesimus and Philemon that was offered by Paul.

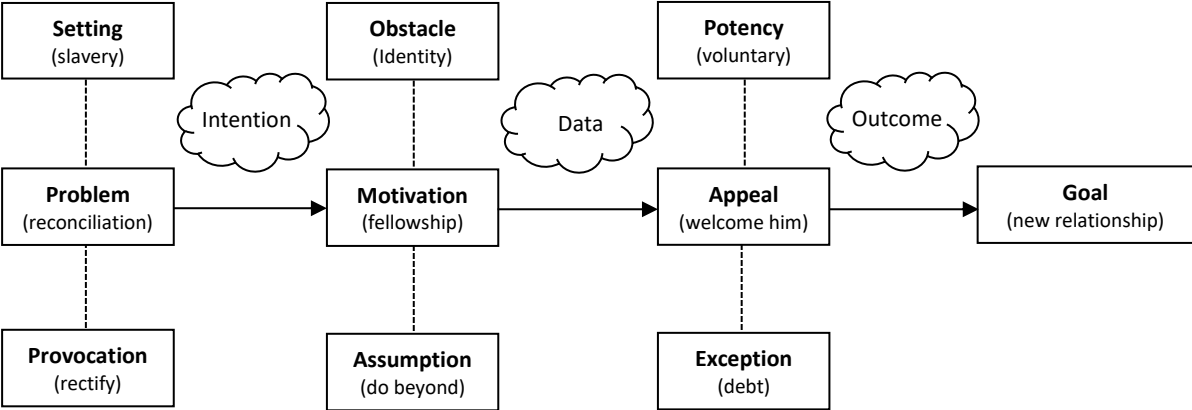


Figure 4-12: Solution Visualized

The setting of the narrative is slavery. The problem is the broken or damaged relationship between Onesimus and Philemon that needed reconciliation. What provoked this letter from Paul is the opportunity to rectify the situation as God had providentially brought him into the picture.

As Paul writes, he realises that the *useless* identity of Onesimus stands as an obstacle to reconciliation, but thankfully a change has occurred in Onesimus, via salvation, and Paul can confidently pass along the now *useful* identity of Onesimus to the uninformed Philemon. Paul’s motivation is the renowned fellowship of Philemon needs to be experienced by Onesimus as well as Paul himself. And, due to the character of Philemon, Paul assumes that with the correct information, Philemon will act accordingly.

The techniques Paul uses (consciously and subconsciously) convey information to Philemon in a way that don’t exacerbate the situation by attacking Philemon’s identity and manipulating him to respond in a way contrary to his choice. Paul makes it abundantly clear that the value of this

letter lies in the knowledge that Philemon must voluntarily choose to allow this new information to alter his preconceived perception of Onesimus; this action cannot be forced upon Philemon. He can be forced into certain actions, but he cannot be forced into changed thinking (and subsequent actions based upon changed thinking). And so, Paul appeals to Philemon to welcome Onesimus home just as he would welcome Paul if he was the one who stood before him. By way of a final impetus, he even removes the possible exception: I'll cover whatever debt he has caused you!

The goal of this magnificent letter is to establish a new relationship between Onesimus and Philemon, built upon the acceptance of the new information, presented in a way that didn't attack Philemon's identity nor manipulate him into doing something that he was not committing himself to do. The superlative notion is the confidence that Paul placed in the character of Philemon to not only positively act upon this new information, but to do more than anyone could ask.

The magnitude of this letter lies in its practicality. The implications of the application of truth to life goes beyond just this scenario. As (Gloer & Stepp, 2008) write: "Indeed, in Philemon we encounter a practical working out of Paul's foundational theological ideas (grace, faith, atonement, reconciliation, freedom in Christ, new creation, and the ethical life that stems from these). Philemon is no less than a case study of the implications of Paul's gospel". For this reason, in the mind of this researcher, it is unimportant as to whether or not Philemon manumitted Onesimus. What is important is that Philemon was faced with the implications of what he believed in the scenario in which he lived. He now had a choice to make of how he would live out *brotherhood* at this critical juncture.²²⁸

A second practical implication of Paul's gospel was the necessity for Onesimus to rectify things with Philemon. He had wronged him, and needed to set it right with Philemon.²²⁹ If this were not true, then there was no need for Paul to send Onesimus back. The letter could accomplish all that was needed. Of course, Philemon might not like it, but he would be helpless to change the situation – it was all for the sake of the gospel!

A final practical implication of Paul's gospel lies in the letter's impact upon the church and churches throughout history. Two concepts need to be considered, although they were not necessarily a part of Paul's thinking: 1) how to resolve this type of conflict, and 2) how this is a visual of Christ's intercession on our behalf. The first concept has been considered throughout and will be explored further in chapter 5, but the visual representation needs to be considered now.

As Wolter (2010:170) writes, Martin Luther “compares Paul’s intercession with Philemon for the benefit of Onesimus to what Christ did on behalf of sinners before God”. The gospel message, highlights Nordling (2007:72), is intimately linked to the letter to Philemon – in fact he writes that it is “as prominent in Philemon as one finds anywhere else in Paul’s writings”. That may or may not be true,²³⁰ but it is certainly more likely that Paul wrote in the way that he did influenced more by the gospel message than by Graeco-Roman cultural norms. As Gloer & Stepp (2008) write: “With Paul’s repeated promise, we hear another echo of the gospel: Paul will absorb the wrongs that Onesimus has committed, just as Jesus has absorbed in himself all the wrongs we have committed”, and that is a more likely scenario than the notion that Paul was motivated by altruism. Finally, Nordling (2007:83) provides an excellent summary of the likely impact of this book upon the Church:

Surrounding congregations, which the New Testament indicates were no less filled with peevish masters and chafing slaves, must quickly have taken note of how repentance, forgiveness, and restoration genuinely prevailed in Philemon’s house congregation as a result of the proper use of Paul’s brief letter, not force, retaliation, or even the so-called “justice” that today merely masquerades as the gospel.

A grasp of both why Paul wrote the letter in the manner that he did and the solution that he proposed to Philemon is eminently important in countering the conclusions that result from misunderstanding the nature of Paul’s request to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Many of these have been discussed throughout, but a few needed to be addressed now. In his application of game theory, White (2017:33) concludes that Paul’s “conscious rhetorical strategy [was] designed to avoid confrontation”. How could that be when Onesimus would stand before Philemon with letter-in-hand? Confrontation had to occur; it just had to occur on better footing. Barclay (1991:175) believes that Paul’s vagueness lies in the fact that he “did not know what to recommend” to Philemon. How does that concept mesh with Paul’s four imperatives of verses 17-22? Ambiguity can be purposeful and provide for freedom of expression within certain delineated parameters. And finally, a minimalistic appraisal of the letter is countered when Philemon is properly understood. Elliott (2010:63) regrettably states:

Paul’s letter to Philemon is little more than a scrap of correspondence concerned primarily with merely three individuals, the nature of whose relationship is obscure; theologically, its content is mundane and pedestrian, and its ‘tone’ is slippery, elusive, and thoroughly conditioned by knowledge to which only the parties involved are privy. The letter does not yield its meaning easily, much less the precise details that occasioned it.

And Hale (2008:14) sadly echoes that sentiment:

[A] consideration of Philemon reminds us that some portions of Scripture are, frankly, of vastly less value than others to us in the modern world. Although this epistle contains a fervent appeal for compassionate treatment of a slave and underscores the stature of Paul as a respected apostle, it offers little to Christians today which extends beyond what one can read elsewhere, and with fewer problematical ambiguities, in the New Testament. Quite appropriately, Philemon typically occupies only a very modest place in those lectionaries which include it at all.

Does not this lack of appreciation have more to do with rejecting a narrative that doesn't fall in line with one's expectations than it does with ascertaining the inspired implications of this magnificent letter?

4.5 Conclusion

Beginning with definitions of dynamics and themes, this chapter has sought to explore how they impacted the solution to the conflict between Onesimus and Philemon. Five literary components were then employed to reconstruct Paul's persuasive strategy and surface the conflict dynamics at play in the narrative as well as the thematic elements Paul used in his request to Philemon. These dynamics and themes were compiled and synthesized, and it was discovered that the dynamics centred around the identity of Onesimus, and Paul used certain themes to provide previously unknown but necessary information for Philemon so that he could make a decision on how he would respond to the return of Onesimus. Without that information, it was very likely that he would respond as his identity as a slaveowner dictated. This realization provided a deeper level of understanding in this exploration of the letter – it answered the *why* question. Why did Paul compose the letter in the manner that he did?

The solution proffered by Paul was considered in light of this information, and a visual was provided to demonstrate the backdrop to the letter and the challenges that Paul faced in seeking the reconciliation of Onesimus and Philemon. A new identity needed to be understood by Philemon or he would likely respond to the only identity that he knew of Onesimus. Paul, with great skill provided that new information for Philemon so that he could welcome Onesimus just as if it were Paul standing before him.

Practical examples of the employment of Paul's theology to life were also examined. Was Paul's theology only good for believing and not good for living? This book demonstrates the practical realities if employed wisely – even as costly as that may be. This in turn is a reflection of the sacrifice, love, and action of Christ Himself – what a wonderful testimony of grace!

Finally, an emphasis was laid on how an understanding of the identity issues in this letter better respond to the misgivings of some in regards to the narrative of the book. The letter to Philemon is not a second-tier book in the canon of Scripture nor a means of avoiding conflict; it is a finely crafted letter to a godly man that conveys information desperately needed. Despite the norms of Graeco-Roman society (as regards slavery), Paul wanted Philemon to treat Onesimus as a spiritual brother (which he really was) and not as simply a slave. At the same time he wanted Onesimus to make things right with Philemon. Finally, under the inspiration of God, Paul wanted to demonstrate to the church how to respond to this type of conflict (today called *identity-based conflict*).

4.6 Endnotes

¹ For this researcher, as indicated in the previous chapter, the traditional view makes the most sense and that notion is expressed most clearly by Botha (2010:253) when he writes that “the most straightforward and logical way to read the text, and especially v. 16, is to accept that the status of Onesimus was that of a slave, and that his being a slave was a significant factor in the negotiation between Paul and Philemon”.

² As Frilingos (2000:98-99) demonstrates, there are not a lot of answers provided in either the text or early Christian records, yet that hasn’t stopped people from attempting to find those answers. He highlights four aspects to the story that find common agreement: 1) Paul, writing from prison, sends the letter by Philemon’s slave Onesimus, 2) there is a damaged relationship between the two, 3) Paul has a good relationship with both of them, and 4) Paul requests something from Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.

³ Some, such as Punt (2011:408-411) view the reason for Paul avoiding addressing slavery as a social system is because of his eschatology – he saw the world as soon passing away and it was unproductive to focus on what was not going to last anyway. The problem with this notion is that contextually, eschatological insight is not present in the letter (apart from the possible allusion in Paul’s statement of *forever* in verse 15). And this possibility doesn’t answer the *why* of Paul’s crafting of the letter in the way that he did – it only addresses a likely solution to the lack of social condemnation in the letter. Botha (2010:256) is an example of someone who does begin to examine the *why* question as he explores: “why and how this discourse persuades, and to what effect”.

⁴ The impact of the use of narrative in answering the *why* question is highlighted by Ganz (2008:3) as he writes: “When we consider purposeful action, we ask ourselves two questions: why and how. Analysis helps answer the ‘how question’ – how do we use resources efficiently to detect opportunities, compare costs, etc. But to answer the ‘why question’ – why does this matter, why do we care, why do we value one goal over another – we turn to narrative. The why question in[s] [sic] not why we think we *ought* to act, but, rather why we *do* act, what moves us to act, our motivation, our values” [his emphasis]. The value of the *why* question is underscored by the use of the narrative rather than the epistolary mode.

⁵ Barclay (1991:174) observes: “At the very least one would have to acknowledge that Paul could have made his request a lot clearer than he has”.

⁶ For example, after a brief introduction, Paul went right to the task in hand in his letter to the Galatians, his first letter to Timothy, and his letter to Titus. However, as Wendland (2010:80) states, in Philemon, Paul “delays the expression of his primary purpose – namely, his personal plea to Philemon – until he has adeptly developed a case that would urge eventual acceptance”. Why would Paul do this? It wasn’t by happenstance; Runge (2008b) wisely observes: “The choices we make have meaning associated with them. The choice to break the expected pattern implies that there was some reason not to follow the pattern.” Barclay (1991:164) astutely observes that “the extraordinarily tactful approach that Paul adopts throughout this letter is a clear indication that he recognises that he is dealing with a delicate situation in which Philemon could well react awkwardly”.

⁷ The revision of Bloom’s taxonomy by Krathwohl (2002:212-218) provided the basis for understanding the distinctions of the level of understanding and kinds of knowledge. Further insight on the types of questions was gained from the work of Gallagher & Aschner (1963:183-194).

⁸ Attempted in this research is the recognition of the limitations of being able to access the actual thoughts and mindset of Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon. Therefore, there is the need for a means of reconstructing those thoughts and mindset from the text itself, and that is the goal of examining these

dynamics and themes from a conflict perspective. Such work is done in acknowledgement of the warning of Clarke & Tucker (2014:46).

⁹ Although his direct application has to do with social identities, Tucker (2014:411) draws a similar conclusion about the benefits of exploring dynamics.

¹⁰ As first discussed in 3.1.2 (n. 33), 3.3.4 (n. 153) and 3.5 (n. 160), if Paul embraced the notion that he was a slave of Christ (cp. Col 1:7, 25), why would he condemn the idea? The fact that he doesn't do so indicates that there is a larger issue before mankind. That issue is depicted in this letter to Philemon. This observation is echoed by Raubenheimer (2008:38) when we writes: "the book of Philemon is more than a biblical footnote about slavery". The problem arises when people attempt "to make hermeneutical and theological judgments on sparse exegetical grounds" (Ehorn, 2011).

¹¹ As an example of this, Punt (2011:406) writes: "[T]he traditional view fails to explain how it came about that Paul and Onesimus were in prison together, the nature of their contact with one another, or Paul's authority to sent [sic] Onesimus back". Or Barclay (1991:165) adds an additional twist by conceding that both the nature of Onesimus' debt and the cause of his encounter with Paul are speculative, but Paul's return of Onesimus to Philemon is in contradiction to Deuteronomy 23:15-16. These *how* questions create intrigue but isn't nearly as significant a question as: "*why* didn't Paul provide that answer". Obviously, it was because it wasn't as noteworthy as what Paul did include in his letter, or it may be because the main characters already knew the answer. As Ehorn (2011) cogently explains, it is the modern reader who is "operating at a deficit". Regardless of the answer, the *how* question is on a lower level of importance than the *why* question.

¹² Kreitzer (2008:4-18) has an excellent in-depth summary of the various methodologies used since the twentieth century.

¹³ The main reason for exploring these methodologies is to steer clear of *isogesis* and what may or may not be personally important to this researcher—in other words, objectivity. In order to answer the *why* of this chapter, an objective means must be used that is also faithful to the text, and that is the reason for taking the time to consider the conclusions of these methodologies.

¹⁴ This approach is very similar to that employed by Snyman (2009:178-193) in adaptation of Tolmie's work in Galatians (2004). To this researcher the artificial distinction Snyman makes is more along the lines of perception where the work of Snyman and Tolmie is referred to as *text-centred* and a *minimal theoretical framework*. Wendland is not advocating a maximum theoretical framework, but simply recognition of a possible connection to conventional items. Snyman (and Tolmie) should be praised for his commitment, but in reality, his conclusions don't differ much from Wendland.

¹⁵ The conflict dynamics and themes present at the time of the writing and utilized in the writing are what created and comprised Paul's persuasive strategy. Obviously, as Wendland (2010:79-80) states various techniques were used to persuade Philemon, but the focus in this research is not on the technique but rather upon the dynamic or theme surfaced or represented by the technique. "Why was Paul doing this?"

¹⁶ As Wendland (2010:81) states: "Together these overlapping and interconnected compositional tactics were presumably employed by an author to strategically fashion a particular passage of Scripture into its present textual form, one that reflects the specific theological or ethical purposes for which it was initially composed". The purpose of this methodological review goes a step further; it is to surface the dynamics and themes which Paul is using to convey the idea(s) that he seeks to convey in order to understand *why* he did what he did in this letter.

¹⁷ This is not for the reason that Barclay (1991:175) suggests – that Paul didn't know what to recommend to Philemon. Further reasons will be provided to evidence that Paul knew exactly what he was doing.

¹⁸ In reality, this is the crucial issue for many interpreters: *what* was Paul asking of Philemon in order to restore his relationship with Onesimus? For others, who believe that that is open-ended, the crucial issue is *why* did Paul leave the resolution open-ended. Still, for others who believe that Paul states his resolution, the *why* he crafted the letter in the way that he did is the crucial issue. The conflict dynamics and themes help to answer that final question and are instructive even to the other interpretative questions.

¹⁹ Other terms will be discussed throughout the chapter but they will be done within the context of their section. The definitions here are pertinent throughout the chapter.

²⁰ Mickey and Wilson (1973:22) provide clarity from the ancient Greek perspective: "It is the relationship between the tensions and equilibriums of various energy forms or forces". This idea of resulting *tension* is an important addition.

²¹ Many have discussed certain dynamics that were at play in the first century. For example, Keazirian (2013:127) mentions three key social dynamics encountered in the first century world: 1) honor-shame, 2) patron-client, and 3) friendship-enmity. While obviously, even the believing Paul and Philemon could not be exempt from any sort of influence from these, only those dynamics mentioned in the book and at the level discussed in the book are explored in this study. Otherwise, any discussion is speculative at best.

To what degree the work of the Holy Spirit had transformed these dynamics in the lives of the believers is unknown. An example of another dynamic that is definitely discussed (although briefly) is slavery, and so that dynamic will be addressed. Thus, the goal is not walk the road of others, but to explore new avenues of discovery, correlating with what is pertinent from that which has already been explored.

²² This view has been discussed in 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4

²³ While acknowledging the work of Lim (2016), Tiroyabone (2016), Punt (2010, 2015), Callahan (1997), and Wessels (2010), in the mind of this researcher, the voice of Onesimus cannot be discussed textually but only surmised creatively, and since this study is a textual exploration, the voice of Onesimus will only have an implicit consideration. Botha (2010:258) echoes this sentiment: “Onesimus is not really present in the letter”.

²⁴ Ehorn (2011) makes this astute observation: “[T]he pervasiveness of readings that have revolved around slavery have overshadowed the letter itself. Sadly, not only has this produced an emphasis on an issue that is peripheral, but it has drawn emphasis off the central issue(s)”.

²⁵ The fact that there are multiple themes and dynamics in the book is indicative of the fact that this letter is about more than just slavery. In fact, Green (2013:78) states that while there is a slave and master involved, the letter is not about slavery, and Du Plessis (2006:410) adds: “Paul’s concern with social questions is mostly focussed on the situation within the church and shows remarkable reticence for such issues beyond the confines of the church”. However, as Punt (2015:153) highlights slavery is more than just a theme; it enlightens “the framework *and* gist of the letter” [his emphasis], and that is a wise observation.

²⁶ As Wendland (2010:81) notes, these categories overlap and interconnect as they are employed in communication, and so there is no attempt to create artificial lines of demarcation with regards to their use.

²⁷ In fact, Grassmick (2006:226) notes that “from the beginning the NT letters had a normative, authoritative status with a distinctive familial tone”.

²⁸ Often at issue were specific problems that the author chose to address at the occasion of the writing (Grassmick, 2006:228).

²⁹ For example, in the context of identity issues, as found in Philemon, Tucker (2014:407) makes this observation: “The continual weighing of alternative levels of categorization seems to be in view in this letter and makes it a useful candidate for studying the dynamics of cooperation in the context of competing social structures within the Pauline Christ-movement”. This is the point of using these different components in order to bring to light the dynamics and themes in the book of Philemon.

³⁰ This form, as Wendland (2010:81) writes: “sets up a pattern of expectations which acts like a roadmap along with a guidebook, or set of directions, that enables the analyst to know where s/he is going within the discourse and how to move from one place to another with greater confidence and understanding”.

³¹ In this case, it is the resolution of the conflict between Philemon and Onesimus, regardless of how that resolution may be viewed in its application to today.

³² Some combine the opening and thanksgiving sections, such as Tite (2010:58), Wendland, (2010:82), and Grassmick (2006:230).

³³ Unfortunately, some, like by Raubenheimer (2008:28), see little benefit in exploring these forms. While exegesis of the text is essential to a proper understanding of the text, it is by no means the only aspect that needs to be considered in understanding the message that is being conveyed. It is the belief of this researcher that while no conclusions about the message should be in contradiction to the exegesis of the text, the fact remains that expositors are using all viable means to bridge the gap in our understanding of Scripture. Plus, there has been a comprehensive exegesis of the text by many in the centuries prior to this, but the area that is lacking is the exploration of the letter’s relationship to conflict and what can be learned from this study.

³⁴ According to Tate (2010:62), the prescript normally contains the following elements: “the sender (*superscriptio*) in the nominative case, the recipient (*adscriptio*) in the dative, while the greeting or *salutatio* (most commonly χαίρειν) appears in the infinitive”. To these Grassmick (2006:230) adds “an introductory prayer”.

³⁵ The Pauline significance of these changes in the prescript is documented and considered in Tite’s (2010:66) presentation of three categories of Paul’s letter writing: 1) where his authority is not questioned, 2) where his authority is questioned but there is a good relationship with the recipient, and 3) where he needs to establish his authority with those whose relationship is strained or lacking.

³⁶ Sadly, Cotter (2010:188) views the inclusion of the church as a sign of Paul’s lack of trust in Philemon as that runs counter to the entire tenor of the letter.

³⁷ This grammatical aspect has been discussed in 3.1.5, but Tite (2010:72) makes this important addition, “In Philemon, κατ’ οἴκόν σου is used to qualify τῆ...ἐκκλησίᾳ in order to place stress upon Philemon’s role

within that particular community". His use of this information adds significance to the prescript and sets the stage for further development of Paul's communication.

³⁸ Described by Tite (2010:74) as "a Christianized expression of blessing", this expansion to *grace and peace* is Paul's normative greeting in his letters.

³⁹ "Paul skillfully uses these opening sections to place himself and his readers in such a relationship to one another that his purposes in the letter are furthered", explains Weima (2010:32), and this is not manipulation but the components of persuasion. Weima (2010:58-59) rejects the notion of manipulation for the following astute reasons. "First, Paul does not compromise his integrity by resorting to false praise or feigned emotions." "Second, we ought to judge Paul's actions not by our modern, western standards but by the social norms of his day." "Third, it must be remembered that Paul writes from a powerless position of being in prison and at a great distance away and with no legal authority to compel Philemon to act."

⁴⁰ For example, Weima (2010:34) references Paul's use of *prisoner* rather than *apostle* for his identity is indicative of the nature of the letter's request.

⁴¹ Viewing Philemon as "a letter of petition (rather than recommendation or reconciliation)" Tite (2010:80-81) notes the rarity of a "superior petitioning an inferior".

⁴² The thanksgiving section is comprised of verses 4-7 where it follows upon the opening section in verses 1-3 and is separate from the body of the letter (beginning in verse 8) as indicated by the inferential *διό*.

⁴³ For example, this researcher sees the body of the letter in two sections. The first is the background to the request as found in verses 8-16 and the request itself is made in verses 17-22. Additionally, Elliott (2011:56) comments that one of the reasons for these varying opinions is that verses 8-14 are "a single, highly complex sentence, arguably one of the most convoluted in the Pauline corpus". However, Ehorn (2011) provides solid exegetical evidence for this choice: "Various factors – grammar, syntax, and thematic – make Phlm 8 the likeliest candidate for the beginning of the letter body", and "Phlm vv 8–22 make up the letter body. This is due to the use of four Greek imperatives that occur in vv 17, 18, 20, and v 22."

⁴⁴ The very nature of the word *πρεσβύτης* (in v. 9) conveys an aspect of authority and this concept is used by Paul elsewhere in his letters as an aspect of church leadership.

⁴⁵ Weima (2010:47) makes this astute observation: "Pressure is thus applied to Philemon to act according to the principle of love that the apostle twice praised him for in the preceding epistolary unit".

⁴⁶ Here too there are varying opinions on what verse begins the closing. For example, Weima (2010:53-54) views the closing as beginning in verse 19 with Paul's autograph formula. This researcher sees the closing beginning in verse 23, and while there are similarities to Weima's categorization, the determining factor is what Paul is communicating.

⁴⁷ Many, such as Weima (2010:57), see verse 22 as a veiled threat used to pressure Philemon to accede to Paul's request. For this researcher, any sort of threat runs counter to the message and crafting of the letter.

⁴⁸ As far as this researcher can find, this book is the only one of Paul's writings where every character mentioned or introduced is assigned an identity. That observation is one of the reasons for this present research.

⁴⁹ Interestingly, Lyons (2006:125) makes this comparison: "Though the theological impressions of Paul's letter perceived solely through its epistolary form are admittedly implicit, Paul's actions, derived from a narrative reading are essentially explicit". Both avenues bring value, but the distinction is worthwhile. Longenecker (2002:3) illustrates this same concept historically and provides this enlightened observation of the two fields of study: "Paul's epistolary discourse is like a membrane that is tightly stretched over a narrative framework, revealing many narrative contours from beneath". In addition, Longenecker (2002:6) explains that the "narrative substructure is not 'behind' the text, detachable from it, but 'beneath' the text, undergirding it, supporting it, animating it, and giving it coherence, while also constraining its discursive options". This observation is vital to a proper understanding of the relationship between the epistolary form and the narrative form of Philemon.

⁵⁰ The concept of narrative has been previously referenced and discussed practically in 2.2.2.4, 3.1.1, 3.1.4, 3.2, and 3.3, but in this section it will be discussed conceptually. For example, Wendland (2010:84) writes, "A *narrative* consists of a series of chronologically arranged events (the "story"), which is often re-arranged (e.g., flash-backs, flash-forwards) or otherwise modified (e.g., through repetition, paraphrase, deletion, and selective intensification) by a skillful writer in order to create greater impact and appeal". This notion is what is developed in this section.

⁵¹ For example, attention is conveyed to the "'pre-textual' ingredients that factored into and influence Paul's reflections at any given point" as Longenecker (2002:4) indicates.

⁵² It is noteworthy that exploring the narrative perspective of the book is not a dismissal of the epistolary nature of the book, but rather an acknowledgement of what is *housed* in that letter. As Lyons (2006:117) indicates the exegetical tools used in narratives become available with this viewpoint.

⁵³ Hays (2002:29) presents an alternative, simplified process of identifying the substructures of the narrative in two steps: 1) finding “allusions to the story” within the discourse and then discerning a form to them, and 2) probing how the story impacts the author’s line of reasoning.

⁵⁴ It is referencing both the context of the relationship between author and recipient as well as the context of the present circumstances.

⁵⁵ This is the purpose for the occasion of the letter.

⁵⁶ This is the discussion of the desired outcome of the letter.

⁵⁷ Admittedly, there is a measure of uncertainty in recreating the particulars of the conflict narrative; however, the gist of the story is plainly evident: Paul sought to reconcile two individuals (Keazirian, 2014:136).

⁵⁸ Petersen (1985:53-63) makes an excellent point in his sociology of letters of the distinction between a face to face encounter and the reception of a letter. Receiving a letter calls to mind the last personal encounter and builds upon that recollection, while a face to face encounter demands adjustments in response to non-verbal communications. For a letter to be understood, there must be a reciprocal grasp of the symbolic or typical that is being communicated – he calls them “shared spheres of relevance”. In addition to this reality is the added dimension of spiritual implications and relationships within the Church where there is a shared spiritual sphere in addition to the physical sphere. What results is an identity that synthesizes the memories of the past with what is being communicated, and can create a shared identity. What Paul does in his letters is to inform this spiritual world as it collides with the physical.

As a result of this understanding, Petersen (1985:63-65) posits five fundamental principles of the sociology of letters and their stories:

1) Every letter presupposes some form of previous relationship between the addresser and the addressee.

2) Every letter, once it has been received, constitutes a new moment or event in the relationship between the addresser and the addressee.

3) Every letter implies at least one future stage in the relationship beyond the reception of the letter – the addressee’s response.

4) Addressers, addressees, and other persons referred to in letters are related to one another within a ‘system of typifications, relevances, roles, positions, statuses’.

5) The rhetoric, the style, and the tone of a letter correspond to the addresser’s perception of his or her status in relation to the addressee.

Such understanding may indicate why modern readers struggle with the ambiguities of the text of Philemon while Paul clearly communicates his confidence in Philemon’s response to the letter.

⁵⁹ He indicates that Onesimus’ story is “a story within a story”, and his story “does not figure in the end of the referential sequence, because his return to Philemon is followed by Philemon’s response to both Onesimus’s appearance and the arrival of Paul’s letter, and by Paul’s possible visit to Philemon, which is the final action in the referential sequence” (Petersen, 1985:66). So for this reason, Onesimus’ story is not the one to trace.

⁶⁰ He, along with others, views this debt as a metaphorical reference to Philemon’s coming to faith in Christ at the hands of Paul (Petersen, 1985:66).

⁶¹ It is for this reason that Petersen (1985:66) believes that “the story of Onesimus’s running away/debt, conversion, return, and of Paul’s repayment of the debt occur within the story of *Philemon’s* conversion/debt and his projected repayment of his debt in the form of his response to Paul’s appeal”.

⁶² The dashes indicate that the poetic sequence has altered the chronological sequence.

⁶³ This importance is illustrated in 4.2.1.4.

⁶⁴ Petersen (1985:71) astutely observes: “Philemon also proves to be the focal actor because he is both a debtor and a debtee, and the thematic plot of the story concerns debts and their repayment”. This element is significant to this study as it elevates a theme for consideration.

⁶⁵ The question that needs to be answered here is how does this reordering of events, for a strategic purpose, differ from manipulation. Did Paul manipulate the events in order to manipulate Philemon? Is this a kind of consequentialism? In the mind of this researcher, it is not “the end justifies the means”, but rather it is Paul’s way of separating the problem from the person in order for the person to examine the problem without prejudice. With the prevalence of slavery and the verity that Philemon had the legal right to respond to a wrong in a culturally acceptable way, how was Paul to circumvent that action without implementing his apostolic or senior authority? It is proposed here that what Paul was facing was identity-based conflict, and in how he approached Philemon, Paul demonstrated a way to successfully respond to

identity-based conflict and that is instructive for all mankind. This concept of resolving identity-based conflict must be explored further.

⁶⁶ Ehorn (2011) summarizes what many have observed in regards to the identity of Onesimus: “For the first time, Onesimus has an identity that transcends the boundaries of his status as a slave”.

⁶⁷ In fact, Lyons (2006:120) astutely observes that Paul presents three levels of status for Onesimus – “two realized and one anticipated”.

⁶⁸ Although many of the dynamics and themes mentioned in this section have been mentioned in previous sections, the semantic contribution has not been considered previously as they were not explored as concepts but simply surfaced as concepts. So the diagrammatical section with its exegetical bent seems the most conducive place to provide a basic definition of the terms.

⁶⁹ They have value and contribute to the topic at hand (that has been demonstrated in 4.3.1.1), but structurally they don’t contribute to the discussion.

⁷⁰ An attitude of gratitude is expressed by εὐχαριστέω (Zodhiates, 2000:687).

⁷¹ ποιούμενος (which has a temporal idea attached) and ἀκούων (most likely with a causal idea attached) are the stated participles, referencing something Paul is doing as well as the reason for doing it.

⁷² Even though the content changes, structurally the notion continues of Paul’s prayer for Philemon (Melick, 1991:353), and this idea of the prayer continuing is supported by Dunn (1996:318), Moo (2008:394), and Lenski (1998b:956) who add that ὅπως follows “verbs of asking”. Further, the difficulty of this verse is well captured by Melick (1991:353) as he additionally references the words of Moule: “Almost every part of this statement demands interpretation. It is ‘notoriously the most obscure verse in the letter’.” Moo (2008:389) supports this conclusion: “This verse is universally recognized as the most difficult in Philemon”.

⁷³ Already scrutinized abundantly, this researcher prefers the definition that emphasizes the practical aspect of ἀγάπη which is raised in this verse, and that definition is “targeted affection”, for “agape chooses”, and “when it has chosen deliberately, it over-rides feelings, even instincts” (Joy, 2000:25). As De Villiers (2010:199) writes: “Love inspires believers to undergo transformation in their relationships”, and that is at the heart of the letter to Philemon.

⁷⁴ *Faith* has a wide semantic domain, but in the context of verse 6, Gromacki (2002:186) defines πίστις this way: “Paul did not refer to Philemon’s initial saving faith, but rather to his daily, practical faith which the Christian should exercise as he walks by faith” which is indicated by the presence of the article. Louw-Nida (1996:378) echoes this by stating that it contains the idea of being a follower of Christ.

⁷⁵ Communion or participation is at the heart of κοινωνία as Louw-Nida (1996:445) explains: “an association involving close mutual relations and involvement – ‘close association, fellowship’”.

⁷⁶ Paul’s desire for the life of faith in Philemon is effectiveness as indicated by the use of the adjective ἐνεργής (Louw-Nida, 1996:162).

⁷⁷ This is indicated by the use of εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους in verse 4.

⁷⁸ *Chunking* is the term Wendland (2010:85) uses to differentiate the “frames of reference that an author employs to direct his/her readers (hearers) along the path of interpreting the message that s/he wishes to communicate to them”. Thus, the distinctions between these chunks provide direction to the discourse.

⁷⁹ Figure 4-3 continues the discussion on Onesimus, and figure 4-4 continues the thought on the separation experienced between Philemon and Onesimus.

⁸⁰ The inferential particle διό is suggestive of a forward pointing device based on Paul’s description of Philemon and his impact upon Paul and other believers.

⁸¹ The two usages of παρακαλέω in verses 9 and 10 convey the idea of appealing based on “the delicacy of the situation (Moo, 2008:402). Louw-Nida (1996:407) nuance it this way: “to ask for something earnestly and with propriety”.

⁸² The specifics about Onesimus are important details (as will be seen) in the process of persuasion but not as much in the structure of the argument. What is essential is Paul’s use of three personal pronoun phrases (based on ὃν – v. 10, 12, 13) to describe Onesimus as well as the definite article (τόν – v. 11) functioning in a similar vein.

⁸³ While both of these words are expressive of wanting something or wanting to experience something, their distinction lies in the additional notion of planning as contained in βούλομαι (Louw-Nida, 1996:287). Dunn (1996:330) adds that the difference in tenses (βούλομαι is in the imperfect versus the aorist for θέλω) indicates that “the decision to send Onesimus back was not easily or quickly made”, and it “implies a period during which Paul weighed the consequences of his action and during which the value of Onesimus’s presence was a considerable factor in his deliberation”.

⁸⁴ The first infinitive κατέχειν (present tense), attached to βούλομαι by way of an indirect discourse construction, conveys the idea of *detain* or *retain* (Zodhiates, 2000:850) and *hold back* by Arndt, *et al.* (1979:422), and is contrasted with ἀπέχω as found in verse 15 [see n. 96]. The second infinitive ποιῆσαι

(aorist tense), also using an indirect discourse construction with θέλω, simply notes that Paul's action hinged on Philemon's consent.

⁸⁵ This idea will be explored more fully in 4.3.4.2, but Paul avoids any connotation with δούλος, as his focus is on the ministry of service and not the one who is fulfilling the service.

⁸⁶ This NT ἄπαξ λεγόμενον [ἐκούσιος] is defined by Zodhiates (2000:550) as “willingly, uncompelled, gladly” and translated with the idea of *voluntary*, but Ehorn (2011) adds that it “was regularly used in the LXX versions in reference to a “freewill offering”.

⁸⁷ Philemon's consent [γνώμη] is linked by Zodhiates (2000:377) to our “capacity of judgment, faculty of discernment as far as conduct is determined” and “agreement based on knowledge” by Louw-Nida (1996:366).

⁸⁸ Zodhiates (2000:146) describes ἀνάγκη as “[n]ecessity” or “compelling force”, and Arndt, *et al* (1979:52) add: “pressure of any kind, outer or inner, brought about by the nature of things”. Specifically, Paul refused to use this tactic which would be characteristic of manipulation.

⁸⁹ In contrast to ἴσως and εἰ τύχοι (other words in a similar semantic domain), τάχα conveys a less likely possibility (Louw-Nida, 1996:669) as seen in its only other occurrence in Romans 5:7. Paul seems to be introducing the idea of God's intervention – *maybe* this is the plan of God.

⁹⁰ Does διὰ τοῦτο point forward or backward? While it is true that the vast majority of the 65 uses of this phrase in the NT are referencing a previous point, according to Wallace (1996:333) this is one of the occasions where the phrase is introducing to the point to come.

⁹¹ In the diagram (see Figure 4-4) the verb ἐχωρίσθη is placed first as it constitutes the kernel of the sentence. This verb has been explored extensively by many with some different conclusions. For example, Louw-Nida (1996:727) defines this passive form in this way: “to cause to be at a distance—‘to remove at a distance, to separate considerably’”, and in his earlier work (Bratcher & Nida, 1977:127), describes the verb: “the use of the passive form of the verb “to be separated,” and the avoidance of the verb “he ran away (from you)” implies that in all this God was at work to bring about the intended result which Paul so ardently hopes to achieve”. Others such as Arzt-Grabner (2010:123-124) view this verb as containing “an active meaning that is best translated as ‘to go away, to depart, to leave’”. In fact, he rejects the notion that χωρίζω ever suggests the idea of separation when referencing a person. This researcher is inclined to accept the passive form and understanding due to the context and the semantic domain in which Louw-Nida locate it: put or place.

⁹² Keazirian (2013:144) describes it as Philemon reflecting upon “God's initiatives and purposes in all that has happened”, and Ehorn (2011) adds that it “is regularly understood as a divine passive, used when the unspoken agent of the action is none other than God”. In application, like Joseph before him, “Philemon was summoned to look upon his circumstances and see them as the outworking of God” (Ehorn, 2011).

⁹³ The emphasis of a short time is drawn from the stress of verse 15 upon the eternal [αἰώνιον].

⁹⁴ This may have been necessitated by the understanding that there could be resistance on the part of Philemon to accept this re-orientation of Onesimus' identity. As Marohl (2014:95) writes: “If potential future changes in identity are identified as being inconsistent with this past, it is likely that there will either be resistance to the change or a need to reinterpret the past”. Thus, the possible introduction of τάχα.

⁹⁵ As Moo (2008:422) highlights, the use of οὐκέτι with the subjunctive (rather than the expected μηκέτι) indicates that Paul is emphasizing the facts of what has transpired in Onesimus' life and not the potential.

⁹⁶ Paul is neither condoning nor overlooking the wrong done by Onesimus (nor for that matter the wrong done to Onesimus via enslavement), but he is viewing this situation through the lens of redemption; God had bigger plans than the visual predicament. As Melick (1991:364) writes: “God constructed his plans in spite of, through, and above human events and circumstances...he saw how God could triumph over sin by grace”.

⁹⁷ Melick (1991:365) provides a reminder that most of the time situations like this resulted in irreparable harm to the relationship between owner and slave, but in this case, through the intervention of God, they can enjoy a better relationship than before.

⁹⁸ Due to its linkage with financial concepts [Arndt, *et al.* (1979:84) describe it as a “commercial t.t. receive a sum in full and give a receipt for it”], some have seen ἀπέχω as a part of the patron/client concept, but in light of the contrast with verse 13, it makes better contextual sense to view it as: “to experience an event to the limit of what one could expect” (Louw-Nida, 1996:806). Philemon comes out of this situation much better in the end.

⁹⁹ This is the essence of the contrast between ὡς δούλον and ὑπὲρ δούλον. Onesimus' status has changed from “a walking household utility” (Wright, 1986:192) to what is indicated by the appositional phrase (also in the accusative case) to a beloved brother.

¹⁰⁰ This phrase ἐν σαρκί καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ raises again the issue of manumission. Is Paul asking for Onesimus' physical release as he has been released from his spiritual bondage? For this researcher, that answer is irrelevant as the point is that of relationship. Without Philemon accepting this new identity for Onesimus,

his release wouldn't change the relationship with Philemon. Inward transformation precedes lasting outward transformation. Baker (2013:35) has a poignant observation here (although contextually he uses it differently): "Paul's method of utilizing a personal relationship with the master to move the master to release the slave gives the passage a feeling of a unique event instead of repeatable guidelines". Since Paul is not making a statement on the morality of slavery, what would be the timeless spiritual significance of the message of the book if he was demanding manumission?

¹⁰¹ Punt (2012:161-162) emphasizes that the sibling connotation is a significant aspect to identity development in the New Testament. Barclay (1991:181-182) points out that in Paul's mind this brotherhood did not find its basis in ethnicity but in its unity in Christ. He writes: "Clearly it involves equal participation in salvation and equal access to baptism and the fellowship of a Christian congregation".

¹⁰² The inclusion of verse 22 is sometimes viewed as providing additional motivation for compliance on the part of Philemon (see Barclay, 1991:171). In the mind of this researcher, the addition of verse 22 to the request as supplementary motivation is counterproductive to the very nature of Paul's request and his emphatic observation in verse 21. Melick (1991:368) writes that this verse "has caused more scholarly discussion than it merits...Some have assumed that Paul threatened to come to see if his requests had been honored. The tone of this letter makes that unlikely. Friendship and fellowship predominate."

¹⁰³ Whereas *διό* (in v. 8) functioned as a result of Paul's thankfulness for the wonderful report about Philemon, here *οὐν* functions in almost a dual role. It arises from a result of the reasoning, but it also operates as a resumption of verse 12. It is as if Paul were saying: "Since Onesimus is my heart, then welcome him as if it were me".

¹⁰⁴ Wallace (1996:690) defines this as a statement that is "assumed true for the argument's sake".

¹⁰⁵ In both of these assumptive instances (fellowship and wronged) there are many opinions as to what is represented here. Moo (2008:425-426) seems to have the soundest insight in this regards when he explains that there is nothing in this situation to provide a specific nuance but rather the focus is upon a shared faith.

¹⁰⁶ As Moo (2008:426) astutely observes: "The 'if' language in this clause does not call into question the reality of this fellowship, but puts the onus on Philemon to acknowledge it".

¹⁰⁷ Runge (2010a:29) categorizes *δέ* as a *development marker* moving the reader on to the next aspect of the discussion and describes it in this way: "The use of *δέ* represents the writer's choice to explicitly signal that what follows is a new, distinct development in the story or argument, based on how the writer conceived of it" (p. 31).

¹⁰⁸ As alluded to previously (n. 70, in 3.1.5) and in notes 47 and 102, the mention of room preparation as a final persuasive tactic is anticlimactic if Paul is convinced of Philemon's action. Cotter's (2010:206) statement, in this context, makes much more sense: "Paul's actual promise of an imminent visit provides the immediate model of how Onesimus is to be welcomed". Keazirian (2014:147) echoes this statement as a reaffirmation. Nordling (2007:75) provides an interesting alternative view as he sees the room preparation as Paul coming with the promised funds to fulfil his pledge on behalf of Onesimus.

¹⁰⁹ As first mentioned in note 67 of 3.1, welcome is an expression of *προσλαμβάνω*. Some, such as Dunn (1996:337-338) see a business connection here, but in light of the comparative statement — as if it were me — that nuance seems to be unnecessarily restrictive. Philemon was to imagine that Paul was standing there and respond accordingly. Moo's (2008:427) observation fits the context better when he adds that Philemon should welcome Onesimus "with all the revolutionary implications of that action". For this researcher, this is a salient teaching moment that Paul takes in the relationship and conflict between all three of these main characters.

¹¹⁰ Its only other occurrence in the NT is in Romans 5:13, and *ἐλλογέω* is a "commercial technical term charge to someone's (*τινί*) account (Arndt, *et al.*, 1979:252).

¹¹¹ Paul's personal guarantee (via his signature) is unprecedented and is symbolic of his goal. Richards (2004:173) writes: "Since this type of postscript was used primarily in legal records and not personal letters, the rhetoric is more striking, for a postscript was not expected. Paul's use of a custom normally reserved for legal documents was to underscore his wishes, implying an almost legal contract between him and Philemon." As Lenski (1998b:971) promotes: "the one thing Paul desires is the removal of anything whatever from the mind of Philemon that might hinder him from genuinely receiving Onesimus as a child of Paul's". In doing so, a wonderful picture of the redemption and reconciliation of Christ is practically displayed before the eyes of Philemon and all who read this letter.

¹¹² Coming full circle from verse 7, *ἀναπαύω* is what Paul desires to experience at the hand of Philemon just as others had enjoyed that experience. "It is now Philemon's turn to be 'useful' to Paul — by doing for Paul what he is apparently good at doing for everybody else", states Wright (1986:195). That work is to provide rest, to provide tranquillity, to refresh (Zodhiates, 2000:156).

¹¹³ In this instance *ἐτοιμάζω* provides an anticipatory outlook that, as Cotter observes (n. 91), prepares Philemon's heart and mind for the return of Onesimus.

¹¹⁴ This point is echoed by Wright (1986:193).

¹¹⁵ An excellent summation is made by Wendland (2010:85-86) in providing a strategy for identifying the chunks of a text. By using ten discourse features, he illustrates how any significant alteration in the direction of the text is noteworthy. He adds this salient point: “The more features that are modified at a particular point in the composition, the more prominent and noteworthy the disjunction that occurs there”. Additionally, this helps with distinguishing major and minor points.

¹¹⁶ Goede (2010:161) uses the same outline for his study.

¹¹⁷ While this statement is true, the chunking impacts how readers understand the letter as it influences how the goal of the author is understood (Wendland, 2010:88).

¹¹⁸ Again, the work of Krathwohl (2002) and Gallagher & Aschner (1963:183-194) are referenced as this is what is demanded of Philemon in understanding Paul’s request as well as in understanding the nature of his request and the response he will give to the request.

¹¹⁹ An interesting biblical connotation is drawn by Wendland (2010:89) in this regards. He refers to patterned recursion as *unity in diversity*. It answers the question of how the little parts fit with the whole.

¹²⁰ See 3.1.5 for further discussion.

¹²¹ This simply refers to “one who is bound” (Zodhiates, 2000:407).

¹²² Louw-Nida (1996:54) defines δεσμός as: “any instrument or means of binding”.

¹²³ Nordling (2007:72) cogently proclaims that what Paul writes in the letter “is intimately connected also to Paul’s *coherent* understanding of the gospel, as prominent in Philemon as one finds anywhere else in Paul’s writings” [his emphasis].

¹²⁴ If Paul’s character were not one of serving a greater good, he would not “have located himself so centrally” in the narrative (Nordling, 2007:74).

¹²⁵ Barclay (1991:182) makes this observation that “there must be some tension here between the Pauline ideals of brotherhood and the practical realities of slavery”, and he points out that it is displayed in the ambiguities of the letter. Barclay (1991:178) asks a number of great questions that demonstrate the potential cost involved for Philemon and the difficulty created by heeding Paul’s request. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, this challenge seems insurmountable, but as indicated in the instructive master/slave passages (i.e., Eph 6:5–9; Col 3:22–4:1; 1 Tm 6:1–2; 1 Pt 2:18–25), it is possible.

¹²⁶ The notion of *visceral* is demonstrated in the following definitions: Zodhiates (2000:1306) states: “In Class. Gr. writers, it is chiefly spoken of the upper viscera of animals, as the heart, lungs, and liver which were eaten during or after the sacrifice. In the NT, of persons generally, the intestines, bowels”. Arndt, *et al.* (1979:763) says: “a. lit. inward parts, entrails” and “b. fig., of the seat of the emotions”. Thayer (1889:584) writes: “in the Grk. poets fr. Aeschyl. down the bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the scat of the tenderer affections, esp. kindness, benevolence, compassion”. And as Dunn (1996:321) highlights, the foregoing of καρδία emphasizes this emotional aspect.

¹²⁷ In fact, Gloer & Stepp (2008) mark this word as referencing “the deepest part of a human being”.

¹²⁸ We are accustomed to Paul’s use of identity in his letters. In fact, Snyman (2009:182) remarks: “Identification with the audience is regarded as a strong persuasive tool in all of Paul’s letters”.

¹²⁹ See especially note 39.

¹³⁰ Marohl (2014:99-100) identifies these as *personal* and *social* identities and highlights the fact that each of these categories can have multiple aspects to them, but together, they comprise an individual’s self-concept. In interacting with someone else, both that individual’s self-concept and their assignment of a social category (with its expectations) to the other person impact the interaction. Paul understood that without altering Philemon’s perception of Onesimus’ identity (as Philemon knew it), he would be operating under a false assumption and would likely proceed based on that false assumption.

¹³¹ Individuals, such as Archippus, Epaphras, and Luke are identified, but social groups such as the church [ἐκκλησία] that also meets in Philemon’s home [οἶκος] are also identified. Furthermore, through the multiple use of familial language, such as brother [ἀδελφός] and sister [ἀδελφή], Paul takes the concept further and forms a kinship that is typical of an ingroup (Tucker, 2014:412).

¹³² Paul also references this concept in Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; and 2 Timothy 1:8.

¹³³ He establishes his identity as a slave of Christ (Rm 1:1; Phlp 1:1; Tt 1:1) and an apostle of Christ (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gl 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tm 1:1; 2 Tm 1:1). In the two books to the Thessalonians, he doesn’t establish any identity.

¹³⁴ According to Nordling (2007:77) the ancients used πρεσβύτης to “designate the sixth of a man’s seven ages in life”, and this indicated that Paul was 49-56 years old when he wrote the letter.

¹³⁵ See 3.1.5 for further explanation.

¹³⁶ This idea is based off of the definitions of ἀγαπητός.

¹³⁷ This idea is based off of the definitions of συνεργός. Punt (2012:164) views this connotation as suggestive of “missionary co-workers” who possibly had a close connection with Paul’s mission.

¹³⁸ See previous discussion in 3.1.5, note 54.

¹³⁹ There is a lot of discussion on the idea of whether or not one can have dual identities. Tucker (2014:411-416) has some great insights into that discussion. The salient point Tucker (2014:415) makes is that Paul's "process of recategorization" of Onesimus' identity to a higher or *superordinate* identity did not negate *subordinate* identities, and this may be indicative of why Paul didn't address the issue of slavery. Because Onesimus is now part of the Body of Christ, doesn't mean that all previous identities are swept away, but without the superordinate identity, there is no eternal link between Philemon and Onesimus, and that is the key recategorization. Tucker (2014:421) adds that this dual role is indicated by the phrase καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ at the end of verse 16. He adds: "these phrases are not describing discrete domains but are inclusive descriptors of life within the Christ-movement as Paul sees it".

¹⁴⁰ In some senses, chiasmus is a visual portrayal of the repetition and restatement.

¹⁴¹ For an understanding of the history of this interpretative device see Lund (1930:74-93). He categorizes this device as a Semitic influence more than a Greek influence, and this conclusion is echoed by McCoy (2003:26) as well. See McCoy (2003:22-25) for an excellent summation of the modern use of this methodology in biblical interpretation.

¹⁴² According to Ramey (2014:1), a chiasmus or chiasma is "an important ancient technique of organizing material...by reverse parallelism", and explains that in a time without modern literary methodology, it was used to demarcate the smaller units of thought from the larger ones. It was used extensively throughout the ancient cultures. One of its benefits is that its structure "symmetrically encompasses a central idea or theme", and for this reason it is beneficial to this study.

¹⁴³ McCoy (2003:25) views Lund's work as "the seminal modern work which has proven to be foundational to the contemporary recognition of the importance of chiasmus as a literary device/form in biblical literature".

¹⁴⁴ As McCoy (2003:19-20) explains, a chiasmus uses inverted parallelism but is distinguished from it by having "a distinct central component". Therefore, a minimal chiasmic structure would be abcb'a'.

¹⁴⁵ This goal, as McCoy (2003:30) fittingly describes it, is "an integral part of the exegetical process of tracing the progression of an author's general thought and specific emphases". He goes on to list three ways in which the chiasmic structure aids exegesis: 1) determining divisions of thought, 2) providing structural balance around the central idea, and 3) offering further insight into subpoints as they are developed or contrasted.

¹⁴⁶ This chiasm at the macro level is also known as a *ring composition* (Raubenheimer, 2008:29; De Villiers, 2010:259). Raubenheimer (2008:30) views the central component as Paul's appeal to Philemon based upon love. Wendland (2010:91) too, echoes the sentiment that verse 13 is the centre.

¹⁴⁷ Heil (2001:188) carries this chiasmic structure further by making v. 14 (Philemon's consent) the central component.

¹⁴⁸ This conclusion is based upon the ABA chiasmic structure of verses 8-16 by Bailey (2012:2) and is seen in his layout in Figure 4-2.

¹⁴⁹ While these are to some extent simply opinions, it is beneficial to note that in the previous methodology of epistolary analysis, Tite viewed the introduction as setting the tone of the book.

¹⁵⁰ Raubenheimer (2008:30) echoes this observation with by demonstrating that the focal point of Paul's appeal itself is the "motive which lies behind it: Divine love – agape love".

¹⁵¹ See note 9 from chapter 1 for the definition.

¹⁵² He uses the work of Louw-Nida for his study of the semantic domain of love.

¹⁵³ Wendland (2010:93) posits four examples of this highlighting: "marked syntactic arrangement, conceptual recycling, intertextual resonance, and phonological foregrounding". These will not be explored in this study; only the general category is considered. Runge's categorization is preferred as it is based upon functionality – leading to answers to the *why* question.

¹⁵⁴ Clearly communicated by Runge (2010a:5), this approach is complementary to the formal approaches, and that is why the discourse analysis is only one of the approaches to the text used in surfacing the dynamics and themes of Philemon.

¹⁵⁵ As has been previously stated in n. 47 of chapter 3, "choice implies meaning", and this is one of the bases upon which Runge has done his research on discourse analysis. The other two are described in the next paragraph.

¹⁵⁶ He uses the example of the historical present in the Greek New Testament (Runge, 2008b); it is "taking an established pattern of usage and breaking it in order to achieve a specific pragmatic effect", as he states.

¹⁵⁷ These are general categories, each having several aspects to them, but the result of the various aspects within the category is the same.

¹⁵⁸ These devices are used to draw attention to something that might be otherwise overlooked. Runge (2008a) describes them as a kind of speed bump causing the reader to slow down and notice what is

ahead. There are two key elements in this element: 1) the device is unnecessary in order to understand what is communicated, and 2) the same information could have been communicated in a more streamlined fashion (Runge, 2010a:59).

¹⁵⁹ These devices provide extra information in order to re-characterize someone or something so that they are viewed in a particular way – the author’s way (Runge, 2008a). This term is also used in a much more specific way by Runge than that of Wendland.

¹⁶⁰ As Runge (2010a:188) writes: “Most every clause in a discourse is a combination of *established* information and *nonestablished* information”, and the established information, which comes from preceding information or from general knowledge, serves to provide context and foundational understanding (mental image) of the non-established information. “Communicating new information is the ultimate goal of a discourse”, and so the goal is to mesh the reader’s understanding with that of the author.

¹⁶¹ *Main clause emphasis* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “the movement of the most important element(s) of the main clause on a given propositional level to a position of prominence in order to attract extra attention to it using a change in word order”. While it is true that word order does carry the same weight of importance as in other languages, in Greek it is used for emphasis, and a change in normal word order highlights what is considered most important.

¹⁶² *Topical frame* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The fronting of some thematic element of the clause (often the grammatical subject) in order to establish a specific frame of reference regarding the theme of the clause that follows”, and this is often used to introduce new things to the discussion or highlight changes in the discussion.

¹⁶³ *Thematic address* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The use of vocatives or nominatives of address containing extra descriptive information that is either not required to identify the addressee(s)” and this underscores the author’s view of the person, so that the reader joins in a similar viewpoint.

¹⁶⁴ *Nominative circumstantial frame* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “Nominative participial clauses that are positioned before the main verb to establish a state of affairs for the clause that flows”. This participial use is designed to provide a backdrop to the main verb by putting the attached information in the background.

¹⁶⁵ *Subordinate clause emphasis* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “Describes the placement of what is most important within a subordinate clause in a position of prominence when the subordinate clause occurs on the same propositional level as the main clause that governs it”. This importance is limited to the extent of the subordinate clause.

¹⁶⁶ *Near demonstrative pronoun* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The use of the ‘near’ demonstrative pronoun (οὗτός, this/these) to establish a near/far distinction either where one literally exists, or to figuratively create one”. Such an use indicates the essential nature of the thematic element to the discussion.

¹⁶⁷ *Forward pointing target* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The use of pronouns like ‘this’, ‘those’ or ‘it’ to point ahead to some ‘target’ that has not yet been mentioned or introduced. The thing to which it points is the target”, and by doing so, it brings emphasis to the item yet to be presented.

¹⁶⁸ *Temporal frame* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The fronting of temporal information to an initial position in the clause in order to establish a specific time frame for the clause that follows”. The distinction from the *topical frame* is the emphasis here upon the aspect of time.

¹⁶⁹ *Thematic addition* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The use of various means to create a connection between two things, essentially ‘adding’ the current element to some preceding parallel element”, and by doing so enhances the understanding of the topic being discussed.

¹⁷⁰ *Overspecification* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The description of individuals or ideas that is more specific than required to identify the intended referent”, and the effect is to cause the reader to view what is at focus in a different way.

¹⁷¹ *Continuative relative* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The continuative relative clause advances the discourse similarly to an independent clause, even though it is technically dependent” which results in connection with what has preceded.

¹⁷² *Spatial frame* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The fronting of information describing the scene, setting or location to provide a specific frame of reference for processing the clause that follows” which stresses a different setting than was expected.

¹⁷³ *Counterpoint* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “One part of a paired set of statements that is usually replaced by a more-important point”, and this clarifies what is to be replaced by that which is more important in function.

¹⁷⁴ *Point* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “One part of a paired set of statements that usually replaces the counterpoint, and is the more important of the two”, and this again provides clarification in outlook. Something is to be understood as *this* and not as *that*.

¹⁷⁵ *Main clause emphasis* – other is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “Describes the placement of the most important element(s) of the main clause in a position of prominence to attract extra attention to it based on something besides word order”, and as it is in this case, it often is a result of point/counterpoint usage.

¹⁷⁶ Although it appeared earlier in the table, for the sake of formatting it is only defined now. *Forward pointing reference* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The use of pronouns like ‘this’, ‘those’ or ‘it’ to point ahead to some ‘target’ that has not yet been introduced. The forward-pointing pronoun is the reference”. Along with the *forward pointing target*, this unnecessary information piques one’s interest.

¹⁷⁷ *Conditional frame* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The fronting of subordinate conditional clauses to create a specific frame of reference for the proposition that follows, indicating that the proposition is contingent upon the condition of the frame being met”. Such information provides a precise framework for the main point of emphasis.

¹⁷⁸ *Left dislocation* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “The introduction of information that is syntactically outside the main clause (i.e. it is ‘dislocated’), which is then reiterated somewhere in the main clause using a pronoun or other generic reference”. Often due to the complexity of the information, it is not included in the main clause but is referenced for emphasis.

¹⁷⁹ *Function* differs from the English to the Greek and that is the reason for the use of the Greek. There may indeed be overlap but there also may not be that overlap (Runge, 2010a:7).

¹⁸⁰ *Sentence* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “One or more clauses that have a coordinate relationship to the preceding discourse...Sentences are coordinated to the preceding discourse using καὶ, δὲ, or asyndeton”. Obviously, the first sentence in the book doesn’t relate to another previous clause, but it can certainly be true about other sentences as regards their function.

¹⁸¹ *Bullet* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “A part of a clause that has been placed on its own line to attract attention to parallelism, a list, or a point-counterpoint set. The bullet is a dependent component of another clause”. The point is that while it doesn’t have a stand-alone form in the sentence, its function needs to be considered by itself.

¹⁸² *Elaboration* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “A participial clause that expands upon the action of the main clause on which it depends. Elaboration follows the clause it elaborates”. Here the point is that the participial phrase fulfills a greater role than normally would be expected grammatically.

¹⁸³ *Sub-point* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “A clause that is grammatically dependent upon another one...Sub-points are normally signaled in Greek by ὅτι, ἵνα, εἰ, ἐάν, καθώς, or by a relative pronoun”. Its function differs in that it is not simply a restatement or some sort of appositional function to what has just been said.

¹⁸⁴ *Support* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “A sentence that is marked as strengthening or supporting the preceding discourse”; it doesn’t expand the point, but simply reinforces the point.

¹⁸⁵ *Principle* is defined by Runge (2008b) as: “A sentence that is [sic] marked as drawing an inference or assertion from the preceding discourse. Principles are normally signaled by οὖν, διὸ, διὰ τοῦτο or πλὴν”. Here, the key is that a conclusion or observation is drawn from the preceding information communicated.

¹⁸⁶ Lyons (2006:124) makes the relevant point that this was not Paul discarding his apostolic authority, but simply choosing not to use it as “a mechanism toward compliance in this instance”. Frilingos (2000:100) adds this observation that what Paul is doing here is an example of ἀντίφρασις or abandoning “an apparently strong line of argument”.

¹⁸⁷ Turner (2006:41) echoes this sentiment: “Philemon is implicitly invited to forgo his ‘rights’, and lovingly embrace Onesimus, even as he would Paul himself”.

¹⁸⁸ One of the iniquitous results of slavery is its stolen identity of the slave himself – he becomes property. Turner (2006:41) makes this erudite observation about Paul: “he anticipates something much more profound than merely the stabilisation of conventional social relations after they have become disrupted by a conflict”, and that is why he doesn’t attack the institution of slavery. Through his advice to Philemon with the belief that Philemon will act positively upon that advice, Onesimus would in effect recoup “the personal identity, honour and social standing (‘brother’ rather than ‘slave’) that the institution itself effectively denied or effaced.”

¹⁸⁹ Its one other use is found in verse 13 where Paul speaks of what he wished could happen.

¹⁹⁰ It is actually redundant in form as the verb itself [ἔγραψα] conveys that information, and unfortunately, it is often not translated for that reason. However, its inclusion in the text is for emphatic reasons that further Paul’s message of reconciliation, and for that reason, it is highlighted here.

¹⁹¹ Nordling (2007:74) describes it as Paul providing a “virtual incarnation of Paul himself into the text of the letter at this point”.

¹⁹² Using the word δοῦλος, Paul is emphasizing the limitations of his previous condition which Louw-Nida (1996:471) defines as: “pertaining to a state of being completely controlled by someone or something”.

¹⁹³ It is defined by Zodhiates (2000:429) as: “To serve, wait upon, with emphasis on the work to be done and not on the relationship between lord and servant”.

¹⁹⁴ This word is defined by Zodhiates (2000:484) as: “To be a slave, to serve, from *δούλος*...It denotes not so much a relation of service as primarily one of dependence upon, or bondage to, something”.

¹⁹⁵ Arndt *et al*, (1979:184) defines *διάκονος* as: “servant of someone”.

¹⁹⁶ In an interesting sidenote, Wright (1986:190) observes: “The identity (*koinōnia* again) between them as master and slave makes Onesimus’ service particularly appropriate, and enables Paul to credit his master for his work”.

¹⁹⁷ This technique is described by Runge (2008b) as: “The description of individuals or ideas that is more specific than required to identify the intended referent”.

¹⁹⁸ In an excellent summary of the reality of the book of Philemon, Wendland (2010:95) writes: “This is obviously a very tight-knit letter in terms of its lexical inventory and conceptual integration. A relative small corpus of key ideas is interwoven throughout the discourse to function as the basis for its central appeal and supporting argumentation: affection, bondage, partnership, and service. In many verses, three or more of these notions are manifested. They are enacted by a small cast of characters within the letter: Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus”.

¹⁹⁹ Unfortunately, what is not considered in this articulation is the answer to *why* – why did Paul need to communicate this and in his chosen methodology in this letter.

²⁰⁰ There are many kinds of arguments and techniques available to Paul for implementation in his letter. Snyman (2009:192) reviews these and discusses the many rhetorical devices utilized by Paul. It is beyond the scope of this research to study all of these as the focus is upon the conflict dynamics and themes surfaced through this kind of technique.

²⁰¹ It shouldn’t be a surprise that Paul was well versed in rhetoric. In fact, as Gloer & Stepp (2008) notice, it would be more of a surprise if Paul didn’t use these devices. They make this salient point: “He may not have been deliberately constructing them. But in his efforts to communicate and persuade, he made use of devices familiar to him”.

²⁰² Young (1994:250) aptly states this distinction: “Classical rhetoric is more of a rhetoric of demonstration, whereas New Testament rhetoric is more of a rhetoric of proclamation (*kerygma*)”.

²⁰³ The important issue is the *function* of the form and not its precision in following all the minutiae of the form. Paul’s choice of epistolary genre allows the flexibility for him to follow a certain hermeneutic while essentially telling a story (Wendland, 2010:82), and this will be seen in the information gathered from the exploration of rhetoric.

²⁰⁴ It is not the purpose of this overview of rhetoric to explore the method in detail, but rather to learn what the central purpose of this crafting of the letter sought to accomplish, and that is clearly seen in the appeal to Philemon, by Paul, on behalf of Onesimus.

²⁰⁵ A keen observation has been made by Webb (2008:5); Paul’s petition was not prescriptive and binding, but his expectations were clear and demanding.

²⁰⁶ Some, like Elliott (2011:51-64), observe a nuanced approach from Paul where he refuses to be bound by the honour code of that day and instead creatively engages in a power struggle with Philemon as his patron. Such an approach is based upon the idea that Onesimus was sent by Philemon to serve Paul while he was imprisoned (see 3.3.2.2). As has been discussed by others, why would Philemon send an unbelieving servant with character flaws to Paul for use in his somewhat limited ministry.

²⁰⁷ The background to White’s (2017:34) understanding is the honour/shame worldview of that day.

²⁰⁸ White (2017:36-37) demonstrates this conclusion by the use of the *prisoner’s dilemma*.

²⁰⁹ As a result, White (2017:38) views verses 15-16 as fundamental to a proper understanding of what Paul requests.

²¹⁰ What exactly is contained in the appeal is still debated, but as Webb (2008:5) proposes, the implications of this appeal would affect a much larger group. How would this appeal and Philemon’s response impact Philemon’s household, the church itself, and churches that are under the influence of this group of believers? In fact, he raises two important questions, for which no answer is supplied from the text, but which must be at least acknowledged as an important dynamic in the conflict. First, how would Philemon’s household react to this embracing of Onesimus as a brother? Would he be manumitted in order to practically implement the change in disposition? Would other possibly believing slaves in Philemon’s also undergo the same experience as that advocated by Paul? And second, how would believing slaves from other households now be treated? Again, the text supplies no answers, but this dynamic is important for further consideration.

²¹¹ Punt (2015:155) argues: “Slavery as an institution was maintained by the threat and use of violence, including punishment, torture, and even execution”.

²¹² The term used for this junction of the recorded and the visualized is called *intermedia* by Jeal (2008:12).

²¹³ This adaptation by Webb is from Hendriksen's commentary on Philemon in the *New Testament Commentary* series.

²¹⁴ An interesting point to remember in this discussion is voiced by Lewis (1985:183): "In no cases in this letter are there any family terms which are used literally", however, it doesn't make the spiritual implication any less significant.

²¹⁵ Obviously Paul did not know these terms. They are used to qualify what Paul did in the first century in terms of the 21st century.

²¹⁶ Information such as "themes, scenes, colour, sound, tone, characters, characterization, and emotion" are highlighted (Jeal, 2008:14).

²¹⁷ Raubenheimer (2008:33) writes: "Just as we must always maintain perspective and know that we have been forgiven much by God, so also we must know that God's forgiveness has no limits. Neither should ours."

²¹⁸ This statement tracks with the traditional narrative as stated in chapter 4 and the working definition in chapter 3.

²¹⁹ Lyons (2006:125) adds this important point: "The narratology of Paul's letter depicts God as transforming individuals, and shows that transformation to have a bearing on human social relationships".

²²⁰ Ehorn (2011) has summarized Paul's actions in this way: "Thus, Paul was not interested in dictating what Philemon should or should not do with respect to Onesimus; he was interested in stimulating Philemon's theological thought".

²²¹ *Superordinate identity* is defined by Marohl (2014:102) as a "psychological state that derives from members of multiple units feeling a sense of belonging to or identification with a higher-order organizational aggregate".

²²² There are others, such as Tucker (2014) who have a good discussion on the challenge of multiple identities in the book of Philemon.

²²³ Regardless of what methodology is chosen, verse 17 becomes the focal point. Kreitzer (2008:7) illustrates the same point; he even notes that Godet, over 100 years ago, drew this same conclusion.

²²⁴ Kreitzer (2008:14) refers to slavery as the test case over the implementation of Paul's ethics, and Cotter (2010:194) adds this important observation about the assumption of manumission as the focus of this letter that "never in other letters does the apostle presume that everything will be all right if only and as soon as a person gains economical, political and social freedom".

²²⁵ Webb (2008:6) wisely says: "In one sense, the letter is not about slavery at all. It seeks to lay the basic theological foundation that 'faith and love should determine the action of the Christian...It just so happens that this situation in question involves a slave and a slave owner. The principle could apply to any other situation such as husbands and wives, employers and employees or pastor and congregation".

²²⁶ Even though the letter is directed to Philemon, as De Villiers (2010:191) writes, "Paul understands that Philemon's actions will affect not only Onesimus, but also his co-workers and their churches". For this reason, Paul makes it a teaching moment from the life and experience of Philemon.

²²⁷ Some might refer to Corinth (1 Cor 3) as also centering around identities, but that was really about carnality that was manifesting itself in people identifying with certain personalities. Philemon was a man of sterling character as Paul goes to great lengths to highlight, and Paul anticipated that he would continue to act in accordance with his character. The topic in Philemon is about the altered identity of Onesimus who was also acting in a godly fashion. However, there is much more study that needs to be done on conflict that centers around identity.

²²⁸ The challenge for Paul was getting Philemon to face that reality and not just respond as his identity of slaveholder necessitated. Paul's challenge was to do so without creating a barrier for Philemon to considering the implications of the changed identity of Onesimus.

²²⁹ Nordling (2007:79) makes the astute observation it is likely that Paul had already gone through the points of the letter with Onesimus, and he too had to understand and accept the implications of the gospel message in day-to-day life.

²³⁰ As Nordling (2007:83) highlights it must at least be true that the book rests "upon the same theological substructure that Paul builds upon everywhere else in his corpus".

CHAPTER 5: CONTRIBUTIONS TO A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CONFLICT

Although conflict wasn't studied as a discipline until the modern age, its impact throughout history is incontrovertible. What the modern age has provided is a focus that underscores the benefits that arise from conflict. However, even as of forty years ago, Mickey and Wilson (1973:13-14) observed that believers tended to avoid conflict because it was viewed as a *termination point* rather than as an opportunity to move forward. Viewed in this negative fashion, conflict can be considered chaotic, hurtful, and even destructive, as it manifests in the disintegration of the old setting with its security and safety. However, viewed in a more positive fashion, conflict can also be a conduit of reconciliation that brings vast development – “We must accept disruption and chaos in order to have improvement and beauty” (p. 15). Thus, reconciliation is the goal where participants experience that there is “mutual recognition that a conflict is ended” (p. 16). Thus it could be said that “[c]onflict is anchored in *chaos* and *reconciliation*” [their emphasis] (p. 16). While considering this reality of conflict, Mickey and Wilson posit this important deliberation: “Must we have conflict to change things? Perhaps there should be a better way, but there is not” (p. 17). That salient point may be the key to unlocking the mystery of our aversion to change or our negative viewpoint of conflict. Mankind would like there to be an *advanced* way to address change (take a pill or a shot), but the reality is that conflict is God's way of causing change. In fact, to this researcher, as demonstrated in this inspired book of the Bible, there was no better way for Paul to bring reconciliation to Philemon and Onesimus than by the chaotic means of confronting Philemon with the needed information of the change in identity to Onesimus and asking this godly man to respond accordingly. Otherwise there would be no resolution to the pre-existing conflict between them. Therefore, while it is often unwelcome and misrepresented, there is no mistaking conflict's presence and value.¹

Within this conceptual framework, attention now turns to the practical implications of conflict in the life of a believer. Are there lessons that can be derived from this study of the conflict dynamics and themes in Philemon that help equip believers to resolve conflict or at least manage it properly? Can these implications be quantified in a way that is conducive to the foundational development of a biblical theology of conflict? The provision of answers to these questions is the goal of this chapter.

5.1 Introduction

The discussion begins with delineating biblical theology, briefly exploring six perspectives of this vast field of study. It will begin with placing biblical theology within the various disciplines, and

then move to where it is located in the exegetical process. Then its emphasis will be explored, followed by its historical understanding. Finally, distinctive classifications of biblical theology are considered in order to locate the results of this study in a general area for comparison purposes. During this investigation of biblical theology, the present status of conflict consideration is reviewed, and as will be demonstrated, biblical theology presently is lacking in that discussion of conflict, and the likely reasons for that omission are due to misunderstanding conflict and overlooking it. Following that exploration, five contributions from Philemon, to a basic biblical theology of conflict, will be reviewed and analysed. Those contributions are seen in the provision of a definition of conflict, a biblical understanding of conflict, a grasp of the historical implications to Philemon, a method of responding to identity-based conflict, and biblical conflict management principles. In addition, since a significant aspect of Philemon's contribution is the discussion of identity-based conflict, contemporary models for conflict resolution of identity-based conflict will be summarised and assessed in light of Philemon in order to demonstrate the consequence of this study for biblical theology.

5.2 What is Biblical Theology?

Biblical theology is a diverse, multi-faceted branch of theology that requires some explanation at the outset of this exploration. It is not the mandate of this study to provide an in-depth analysis of the field of biblical theology,² however, certain analysis is required due to the varying opinions of what constitutes biblical theology.³ For that reason, placing it within context will help to provide an understanding that is pertinent to this research. Therefore, since there is so much variation over its methodology, structure, and subject matter, an overview of different perspectives is included to provide that context. Furthermore, a definition of biblical theology is attempted to which the study of conflict will be assessed.⁴ Finally, reasons are proposed for the lack of discussion on conflict within the realm of biblical theology.

While it may be more true of the past, as biblical theology is explored currently, it is certainly wise to remember this cautionary observation: “[B]iblical theology has tended to draw its certainties from trends in the larger academic world....Biblical theology will move forward, if it does, as its practitioners know, love, and submit to the God of the Bible rather than the ideologies of the age” (Yarbrough, 1996:65, 66).⁵ To this warning could be added the necessity of submitting one's theological preconceptions to the biblical text as well,⁶ and this is especially true in the area of conflict.

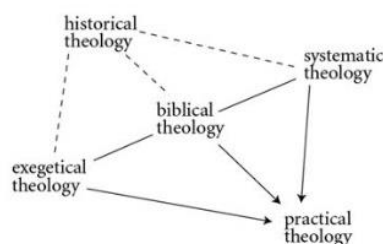
5.2.1 Perspectives

A perspective of biblical theology is rightly conveyed by Third Millennium Ministries (2012) as “falling along a spectrum of broad and narrow senses”. In the broad sense, it is about the

content of the Bible – any content that correctly echoes Scripture’s teaching. In the narrow sense, the notion of Scriptural *priorities* is added to the content, and they draw this summation: “[B]iblical theology adheres not just to what the Bible teaches but also to how the Bible arranges or organizes its theology. It is in this narrow sense that biblical theology has become a formal discipline” (p. 2).⁷ In methodology, Marr (2016:1) aptly describes it this way: “Biblical theology asks questions of the Bible – what does it teach or say about a topic, what is the significance of a repeated theme or event – and then carefully studies the text in context to find answers from the Bible itself”. These notions convey simplicity in the study of biblical theology; the reality is far different. Although voiced many years ago, McKenzie’s (1974:17) words still echo into the 21st century: “Biblical theology is the only discipline or subdiscipline in the field of theology that lacks generally accepted principles, methods and structure. There is not even a generally accepted definition of its purpose and scope.”⁸ Definitely strides have been made in this area,⁹ but as this overview will show, there is still much to be done. For this reason, a perspectival overview is provided in anticipation of a relevant definition.

5.2.1.1 Disciplines

By classification, biblical theology is one of the main links in theology,¹⁰ and it is visualized by Allison (2011:31-32) through placing it within the framework of other theological disciplines (see Figure 5-1). Biblical theology, along with exegetical and systematic, is seen as working directly with God’s Word and thus having an authoritative source.¹¹ Each of these three disciplines is informed with perspective via historical theology,¹² and together forms the basis of what needs to be communicated to the Church via practical theology. Exegetical theology explores the meanings of particular pericopes; biblical theology discovers the development of theology within the different genres and groupings of Scripture; and systematic theology is what the Church needs to “believe, do, and be” in order to be in conformity with the Word of God. As a result of this awareness, and as envisaged in Figure 5-1, Rosner (2000:4) makes the following observation: “Without denying the immensity of the intellectual challenge, biblical theology calls for the disciplines to work together towards a common goal”.¹³ Therefore, biblical theology is the intersection of exegetical, historical, and systematic theologies in providing practical application for believers to live out in their spiritual walk.¹⁴ In a nutshell, that is how biblical theology differs from the other theological disciplines.¹⁵



[from Allison, 2011:31]

Figure 5-1: Allison’s View of Biblical Theology

Due to the view of some that disagree with the distinctions and amalgamate biblical and systematic theologies,¹⁶ a greater probing of their distinction is briefly considered.¹⁷ Merrill (1991:1) highlights that in comparison to the deductive approach of systematic theology “which finds expression in logical and philosophical categories”, biblical theology is inductive in its methodology and communication, springing from the Word itself and not via some imposed ideology. In fact, inherent in systematic theology is a deficiency underscored by Carson (2000:102): “What is transparently clear about all such systematic theology, however, is that its organizing principles do not encourage the exploration of the Bible’s plot-line,¹⁸ except incidentally”. Contrariwise, Osborne (1988:339) highlights the ability of biblical theology as “devoted to identifying distinctive themes in various sections of the Bible (e.g., the OT or the writings of the apostle Paul), tracing them from one section to another, and discovering any overall unifying theme that draws the whole Bible together”. Much more could be said about their distinctions,¹⁹ but a summary is provided in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: Contrasts Between Biblical and Systematic Theologies

Biblical Theology		Systematic Theology	
Topic	Scripture	Topic	Scripture and other sources
Scope	The <i>parts</i> of Scripture	Scope	The <i>whole</i> of Scripture
Question	<i>Why or how</i> a doctrine developed?	Question	<i>What</i> was ultimately written?
Goal	Understand the <i>process</i> and <i>product</i>	Goal	Understand the result—the <i>product</i>
View	The <i>progress</i> of revelation in different eras	View	The <i>culmination</i> of God’s revelation
Outlook	Diachronic or historical	Outlook	Synchronic or descriptive
Process	Precedes systematic	Process	Follows biblical
Task	Collection of specific data	Task	Correlation of data from all the Scriptures
Approach	Inductive	Approach	Deductive

[adapted from Enns (1989:23) and Merrill (1991:1-3)]

5.2.1.2 Exegetical process

Procedurally, according to Bock (1994:11-17), biblical theology follows on exegesis (it’s the fruit of exegesis);²⁰ once someone understands the original intention of the biblical author, then pertinent questions can be asked of this information that inform contemporary actions. Systematic theology builds on the foundation of exegesis and biblical theology²¹ to form a grid through which this information can be synthesized. In reality, biblical and systematic theology ask questions of the exegetical results from different perspectives. For biblical theology it is again in the role of a bridge, between exegesis and systematic theology – a bridge between “the meaning of individual passages and the synthesis of theological proposition” (p. 17). As a result, Bock (p. 13) provides this relevant point: “Biblical theology is an attempt to study the individual contributions of a given writer or a given period to the canon’s message. It combines analysis and synthesis.”²² For Rosner (2000:3), it is indispensable to the exegetical progression as he asserts: “Biblical theology is integral to the whole process of discerning the meaning of the biblical text and of applying this meaning to the contemporary scene”. In fact, he makes this

definitive statement: “Biblical study is incomplete until biblical theology has been done” (p. 4). That is a sobering thought!²³

5.2.1.3 Context²⁴

All study of God’s Word should be done with an examination of the context,²⁵ but historically, biblical theology is fixated on context, and Yarbrough (1996:61) defines it as “an attempt to articulate the theology that the Bible contains as its writers addressed their particular settings”.²⁶ Additionally, Osborne (2017:loc. 2578-2579) makes this wise application: “Every book of the Bible has a set of theological messages for the readers, and it is the task of biblical theology to ascertain what those points are”. As this research on the particular conflict of Philemon is presented, what is most appealing about its contribution to biblical theology is the observation of Bird (2009:271): “In many cases the theological message of a given book emerges against the backdrop of certain controversies in a particular milieu”. The very endeavour of doing biblical theology (discovering the context of a given book) is often laced with conflict.

5.2.1.4 Practical

While *practical theology* has been mentioned in 5.2.1.1 as a part of the discussion on theological disciplines, the *practical perspective* is an emphasis upon biblical theology’s context and application for the Church.²⁷ In light of these truths revealed by biblical theology, how should believers now live? This challenging and distinguishing reality is portrayed by Adam (2000:106):²⁸

Theologians can avoid the demands of biblical theology. They can ignore the Bible, or base their theology on their favourite verses. Bible commentators can avoid biblical theology by concentrating on the pre-history of the text, by assuming that the Bible has no intellectual coherence, by isolating one Testament from the other, or by commenting on other commentators rather than on the text itself. The preacher has nowhere to hide: every sermon presupposes a good or bad biblical theology.²⁹

While Goldsworthy (2000:22), rightly or wrongly, advocates for a metanarrative distinction (which will be discussed shortly), his following comments are illustrative of the process of using biblical theology in a message:

From the evangelical preacher’s point of view, biblical theology involves the quest for the big picture, or the overview of biblical revelation. It is of the nature of biblical theology that it tells a story rather than sets out timeless principles in abstraction. It does contain many timeless principles, but not in abstract. They

are given in an historical context of progressive revelation. If we allow the Bible to tell its own story, we find a coherent and meaningful whole.

It is for this reason that House (2002:278) highlights the fact that “biblical theology needs to be at the forefront of preaching, church renewal, advancement and mission”.³⁰ It has the capability of inspiring believers in the application of these truths to their lives (Köstenberger, 2012:449).³¹ At the same time, when the Church doesn’t present *good* biblical theology, believers suffer in their thinking and actions, with eternal ramifications. For example, as has been demonstrated previously, conflict is a normal aspect of everyone’s life, and without a biblical theology of conflict being proclaimed in church, the Body of Christ suffers from a lack of biblical instruction, biblical exhortation, and biblical actions in this area of Christian living.

5.2.1.5 Historical

As has been previously introduced in 5.2.1.1, biblical theology is the newcomer to the theological disciplines. While there is great affinity for that notion amongst theologians today, there is still a difference of opinion over the beginning of the concept of biblical theology. Many believe that Johann Philipp Gabler introduced the concept during a lecture, delivered in 1787 at the University of Altdorf (Köstenberger, 2012:445).³² On the other hand, Scobie (2003:3) states that the term first appeared in a book by Christmann in 1629 (no extant copies remain) and in the title of Diest’s book (*Theologia Biblica*) in 1643. Regardless of when the term first found use, Scobie astutely observes that that doesn’t preclude the pre-existence of the concept.³³

In terms of the scope of history, the beginning of biblical theology as a discipline has a basic consensus – 17th to 18th century. However, where biblical theology has gone from there has taken a wide divergence. Sadly, Carson (2000:91) reflects that “the history of ‘biblical theology’ is extraordinarily diverse. Everyone does that which is right in his or her own eyes, and calls it biblical theology”. In order to summarize how biblical theology has been viewed by modernity, Erickson (1998:25-26) has provided three senses or denotations. First, there is the theological movement of the 1940’s, ‘50’s, and ‘60’s, and it was closely associated with neo-orthodoxy. Secondly, the theology found within the OT and NT which was considered by some to be prescriptive³⁴ and by others to be pure³⁵ or normative.³⁶ And finally, “simply theology that is biblical, that is, based on and faithful to the teachings of the Bible” (p. 26). As will be seen in the next section, there are many more distinctions, but this at least gives a sense of how biblical theology has historically been understood.³⁷

Historically, what has been ignored or forgotten in biblical theology is the topic of conflict. The comments of Mickey and Wilson (1973:21) are pertinent at this juncture: “Conflict is a hallmark of the church, and its birthmark. It is inescapable. Conflict is an appropriate theological

category”, and add: “Jesus employed conflict as a means in his ministry. Thus, both in principle and practice we have authority in theology to reintroduce conflict as an integral part of Christian ministry”. Again, it is the goal of this research to demonstrate that needed component of biblical theology.

5.2.1.6 Distinctives

There are many opinions, descriptions, and definitions,³⁸ and while there is much disagreement, there are some observable classifications that can assist in understanding the scope of this discussion. Two viewpoints are provided as each provides an important distinction for consideration.³⁹

Klink and Lockett (2012:22-25) have provided an overview of five types or approaches to biblical theology, and each is considered via specific thematic elements.⁴⁰ In addition, these types are measured across two spectrums. In the first, history or theology demonstrate the method of retrieval, and in the second, academics or church demonstrate who has the main responsibility (see Figure 5-2). For purposes of contextualization in the field of biblical theology, this research on the conflict of Philemon is visually represented as well in each figure, approximating where it may be categorized. For example, in Klink and Lockett, the research of Philemon could be considered *canonical* because it connects the impact of Paul’s actions in Philemon to the proposed actions for the Church today.⁴¹

Klink and Lockett						
	Historical Description	History of Redemption	Worldview	Canonical	Theological	
	what is meant (rooted in history)	theology of Bible	narrative continuity	history meets contemporary (descriptive and prescriptive) ⁴²	ruled by faith, not academics	
				<i>Philemon is descriptive of how Paul acted and prescriptive of how believers should act</i>		
Thematic elements	—————▶					
History	◀—————▶					Theology
Academics	◀—————▶					Church

Figure 5-2: Klink and Lockett Biblical Theology Overview

Köstenberger (2012:446-458) has presented what he calls four rubrics under which biblical theology is viewed. These span the spectrum from the individual contribution to the single uniting aspect (see Figure 5-3). The advantage of this overview is the inclusion of strengths and weaknesses, and this addresses Osborne’s (1988:344) observation: “Most scholars recognize the necessity of combining several of the above methods to maximize their strengths and

minimize their weaknesses. True biblical theology must somehow utilize the best from all the methods.” In this overview, the conflict research likely covers both classical and thematic elements, as Paul’s proposed resolution to the conflict is the contribution of one book, outlining the particular thematic element of conflict. However, as indicated, its weakness is clearly seen in the lack of synthesis to the bigger picture.

Köstenberger				
	Classical	Central – themes	Single – centre	Metanarrative ⁴³
Description	message of specific book ↓ synthesis overall	major themes or motifs	canon revolves around this theme	canon revolves around this narrative which has thematic elements
Strength	considers individual contribution of each book	helpful in tracing important motifs throughout canon	works best in certain areas of Scripture: prophetic	storyline can carry more concepts than single theme
Weakness	incomplete synthesis to overarching storyline	organization of motifs needs further synthesis	feasibility of one idea throughout the canon	1. danger of marginalizing certain material 2. neglect of certain doctrines
	<i>The specific message of Philemon is deliberated, however synthesis is only commenced because conflict has not been previously considered a major thematic element or motif to be explored</i>			

Figure 5-3: Köstenberger Biblical Theology Overview

An interesting and credible observation of House (2002:268-270) is that what will help the discussion of biblical theology develop further is for an interpreter to disclose his presuppositions since those drastically impact conclusions. A brief overview of his presuppositional distinctives is included since they closely align with those of this researcher and impact this study. First, in interpretation, the emphasis resides in the text; background is important but subordinate. Second, Scripture’s core interest lies in presenting God’s character. Third, Scripture is not a jumble of books but “a connected, canonical, theological whole” which can facilitate further development of biblical theology. Fourth, an orderly reading of Scripture is advantageous to discerning meaning of the parts. Fifth, biblical theology develops from biblical exegesis with history in a supporting role. Sixth, there is a connection between the character of God and His revelation (a coherent message – unitary). And finally, the coherent message “is the best venue for experts in these fields to share their best insights with one another” (p. 270). Such a view obviates the turf war mentality and facilitates discussion.

Based on these presuppositions, House (2002:270-271) provides this astute outlook to the future of biblical theology:

I think the future of biblical theology lies in unitary reading that will lead to canonical interpretation that will reveal a doctrine of God that will guide

systematic theology that will inform and empower church doctrine and practice. This approach will be largely thematic, yet it will not cast off history, archaeology, linguistics, or other related disciplines. Instead, it will use these legitimate academic exercises as ways to inform, correct, enlarge and shape thematic analysis. This approach will refuse to pit the OT against the NT, or biblical theology against systematic theology, or the academy against the church. Steps will be taken so that in the future scholars will not be tempted to define biblical theology over against other disciplines but will stress its positive, unifying function. At the same time, this method will not gloss over sharp edges in the biblical material. This approach will always be a work in progress, since we will never expound the nature of God and God's revelation fully. Still, the attempt must be made if we are to be faithful to the faithful God who gave us a faithful revelation.

Such an outlook is germane to this research since, in many ways, this study is a new contribution to biblical theology. The objective is not to belittle what has gone before, but to illustrate that without the conflict distinction, biblical theology is incomplete.

5.2.2 Definition

5.2.2.1 Environment

At the outset of seeking a definition for biblical theology, it is essential to note the observation of Bird (2009b:269) that biblical theology can be undertaken by means of several methods as the text "sets the agenda", and that can create challenges – especially to those of a single theme or metanarrative persuasion.⁴⁴ He provides what he calls a "hobgoblin of diversity" that presents five problems that must be taken into account (p. 274-276) (see Table 5-2). While there may be disagreement with his conclusions, it must be acknowledged that developing a definition of biblical theology must deliberate on these issues.

Table 5-2: Bird's Problem with a Central Theme⁴⁵

Problem	Concept
Centrality	Does the theological centre of the NT have to be the centre of every part?
Contingency	How does NT theology account for the cultural or situational limitations?
Development	How does NT theology consider the theological development of its authors?
Disengagement	How is the gap between the theology of the authors and communities bridged and ordered?
Difference	How is the difference between the biblical authors clarified?

In beginning to define biblical theology, Carson (1995a:18-26) outlines five conceptual approaches to the task (see Table 5-3). These are postulated despite the knowledge of some hurdles. For example, he writes: "At one level, there cannot be a 'right' or 'wrong' definition of

biblical theology”; “[e]veryone is free to use the expression as he or she sees fit” (p. 27), and this is valid. In addition, it is difficult to reference the history of the Church for a traditional understanding of biblical theology, nor to the Scriptures for textual uses of the phrase, and that creates uncertainty. However, Carson advances five constraints that provide clarity in the midst of these difficulties (p. 27-32). In doing so, as has been mentioned previously, and as stated directly by Carson, joining biblical and systematic theology is excluded from a viable definition of biblical theology; the other concepts have their strengths and weaknesses, but are at least viable options. As a result of respecting these limitations, an informed discussion of definition can move forward.

Table 5-3: Carson’s Evaluation of a Viable Biblical Theology

Definitional Concept	Explanation	Essential Limitations for the sake of Clarity				
		Historical	Canon	Inductive	Connection	Exhortation
		Historically developing documents	Coherent and settled	Text sets agenda	Intertextual	To godly living
Systematic	Identified with systematic theology	X				
Whole Bible	Descriptively and historically considered					
Various corpora	Diversities arise at book level					
Thematic	Diversities arise at theme level					
Narrative	Viewed only as part of the story					
Serious study	Fruit of intense exegetical study					

Finally, in reflecting upon the presuppositions mentioned previously by House, it is crucial to remember that no one comes to the Word of God as a blank slate, but instead comes covered in the influences of others. The goal of biblical theology, as indicated by Köstenberger (2012:462), “must continue to be accurately perceiving the convictions of the OT and NT writers”.⁴⁶ That means that there are opposing forces at play: human influence and textual communication. The goal is not to come to Scripture unencumbered (that is not possible), but to come submitting one’s *framework* to the text (Leadership Resources, 2014:4-5), and that is possible.⁴⁷

5.2.2.2 Classification

As has been demonstrated in this overview of biblical theology, there is a vast spectrum of beliefs about and a wide diversity in explanations of biblical theology. Perhaps, rather than trying to encompass all of this miscellany in one definition, the better objective is to attempt to classify what is meant by biblical theology.⁴⁸ Three statements will be considered in order to

provide that classification. Many years ago, Martens (1977:123) defined biblical theology in this way:

By Biblical theology I mean that approach to Scripture which attempts to see Biblical material holistically and to describe this wholeness or synthesis in Biblical categories. Biblical theology attempts to embrace the message of the Bible and to arrive at an intelligible coherence of the whole despite the great diversity of the parts. Or, put another way: Biblical theology investigates the themes presented in Scripture and defines their interrelationships. Biblical theology is an attempt to get to the theological heart of the Bible.

In reality, biblical theology is an actual attempt to get to the *theological heart of the Bible*; the problem is that different themes and elements keep getting in the way. That endeavor and challenge is acceptable because it embraces the gauntlet thrown down by 2 Timothy 2:15 of “rightly handling the word of truth”. The complication is the scope of the task, and that mission is fairly depicted by Goldsworthy (2002:280) where he states that biblical theology “seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole, and to achieve this it must work with the mutual interaction of the literary, historical and theological dimensions of the various corpora and with the interrelationships of the corpora within the whole canon of Scripture.” This is a daunting task, but one worthy of a life of dedication, and a reflection of eternity.

Additionally, the following statement by Osborne is instructive of the duality of what is being attempted. He (1988:339) describes biblical theology as a “[b]ranch of theological inquiry devoted to identifying distinctive themes in various sections of the Bible (e.g., the OT or the writings of the apostle Paul), tracing them from one section to another, and discovering any overall unifying theme that draws the whole Bible together”.⁴⁹ This present study of conflict, as presented in the book of Philemon, fits nicely with the complementary undertaking as described by Osborne. The distinct theme of conflict has been explored in its historical setting (in this study); now conflict must be explored in other biblical settings, and those results must be synthesized with the results of Philemon, tracing the theme from one setting to another. Then, the question of its contribution to an overall unifying theme can be assessed. The very fact of the ubiquitous presence of conflict should motivate further exploration.⁵⁰ While the end of biblical theology is not in sight, the journey can be very fruitful.

It is for these reasons that accepting biblical theology’s dual role rather than attempting one comprehensive definition is suggested. Recognizing the enormity of the task, might be an advantageous step in continuing to move the development of biblical theology forward.⁵¹ Without beginning to discuss the role of conflict in that development, biblical theology will be lacking an essential component.

5.2.3 Deficiency of Biblical Theology

Biblical theology, up to the present time, has largely overlooked the consideration of conflict. For example, one of the biggest problems for those in ministry is the lack of adequate preparation of leaders in being fortified to address the conflicts of ministry specifically and the Christian life in general. An astute observation is made by Poirier (2006:9) where he laments: “Christ is the reason many enter the pastorate. Conflict is the reason many leave”. Even in missions, this observation holds true as many join in the lamentation over the attrition of missionaries due to conflict with other missionaries.⁵² Why is this true? There are two main reasons: 1) misunderstanding the nature of conflict, and 2) overlooking the problem. While these are distinct, they are at the same time related: preparation for conflict is overlooked because it is deemed to be sinful. *If sin is properly addressed then conflict will be properly addressed* becomes the conclusion. And, in New Testament studies this reluctance is also seen. The testimony of Patterson (2012:2) laments his misunderstanding of this truth, and his awareness of the need to rectify it with these words:

This first real taste of church conflict drove me to start re-examining the Bible, and I came to the conclusion that, even amongst those who claim to be biblical Christians (and that included me), there is often little serious attention given to what the New Testament says about responding to conflict. Thus began a journey of discovery in which I gradually realised how much my own life has been based on unhelpful avoidance of conflict.⁵³

Therefore, these two notions of misunderstanding and overlooking will be explored further as part of the deficiency of biblical theology.

5.2.3.1 Conflict misunderstood⁵⁴

Conflict is largely misunderstood in Christendom. As an example, Sande (2008:29) defines conflict as “a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires” and stresses the breadth of the definition in order to encompass what he calls “innocuous variations in taste”. He promotes four leading causes of conflict (only one of which is sinful)⁵⁵ and emphasizes that conflict “is not necessarily bad”, explaining that it can be a result of differences and diversity that when treated appropriately can bring helpful results (p. 30). His focus is *interpersonal* conflict, and he provides sound advice, and, while narrow in scope, it is aligned with this research. However, Poirier (2006:51) builds on Sande’s work by focusing solely on our desires in a negative fashion. Citing the ἡδονή⁵⁶ of James 4:1, he states: “Our desires are not just desires, but they are demanding desires” (p. 53). He continues by naming damning desires, distorting desires, deceived by ‘good’ desires, and idolatrous desires (p. 54-59). The dilemma in

what he promotes is that while these sinful desires all may occur, it is just as possible for them not to occur – especially in the life of a godly individual. The point is not that someone has these desires, but the point is how does one respond to these desires or how does one act upon them. What arises from this imprecise instruction is further misconceptions and negative outlooks while ignoring the positive opportunities that arise from the conflict with our desires.

Why conflict is often viewed as sinful is speculative. In light of the context of biblical theology, it could be because of an adopted metanarrative that positions conflict in a sinful role.⁵⁷ It could be from assumptions based upon the latest fad or author.⁵⁸ It could be from misinformation,⁵⁹ or it could simply be from lack of exploration. Regardless, the norm for believers today is portrayed by Jones (2012:35) as he emphatically states: “Realize that conflicts are sinful; therefore resolve them!”,⁶⁰ and adds that “God calls us to resolve our conflicts actively, diligently, and immediately” (p. 36). While it is laudable to pursue resolution (see Mt 5 and 18) and should be pursued, the reality is that not all conflict can be resolved. In fact, Jesus Himself left some conflicts unresolved.⁶¹ If conflict is regarded as sinful then the onus is on the believer to get rid of it as soon as possible; alternatively, if conflict is viewed as an opportunity,⁶² then the onus is on the believer to respond to it biblically regardless of whether or not it gets resolved.⁶³

Besides misunderstanding the nature of conflict itself, the discussion of conflict in biblical theology has been limited to an actual discussion of examples of conflicting theories and not the topic of conflict itself. For example, Hafemann (2002:19), in his book *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, encourages the conversation to move beyond the dichotomies created by the discussion of opposing theological realities. He, and the other contributors, advocate the development of a *unity paradigm* where, in light of the growing advocacy of the Bible’s unified message, theological discussion moves beyond sublimation of one theological position to the other.⁶⁴ While this goal is commendable, without a basic discussion of the nature of conflict, how can this task be seriously considered? The results will continue to be an alienation of those with whom one disagrees – there will just be a new reason to justify that action. Thus, there is the necessity to begin developing a biblical theology of conflict.

5.2.3.2 Conflict overlooked

Despite the reality that conflict management is listed by pastors as the greatest deficiency in their biblical preparation for ministry (Poirier, 2006:10), there remains a dearth of provision of that biblical instruction as Poirier laments: “It is evident, then, that there is still a need for greater development of Christian conflict resolution theory and practice that is biblically rooted and theologically integrated within the larger corpus of Christian thought and teaching” (p. 12). In fact, Patterson (1997:39) remarks: “My Old Testament seminary professor once suggested that someone should attempt to write a theology of conflict. At the time his suggestion sounded

foolish and superfluous to me. But not now.” It seems that for a long time, maybe in the recesses of the mind, conflict has been viewed as a potential theme to explore, but unfortunately it has not happened, or at least not to the same degree as the secular world.⁶⁵

For example, in the 35 volume series, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, edited by D.A. Carson, there is not one book on a biblical theology of conflict.⁶⁶ Two other biblical theology series⁶⁷ are the latest contributions to biblical theology, and there is little to nothing about conflict. In the seminal work of Alexander and Rosner’s *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Harris’ (2000:337) article on Philemon doesn’t contain one reference to *conflict* nor is the topic of *conflict* found in the thematic discussion section. Neither does Scobie’s tome, *The Ways of Our God*, where he sketches four thematic elements⁶⁸ throughout the Bible, contain any discussion of the role and value of conflict.

Why is this? After all, as Rosner (2000:3) astutely observes: “[A]ll Christians have an intensely personal interest, or more accurately stake, in the subject of biblical theology, i.e. what the Bible teaches about God and his dealings with the human race. And biblical theology of one sort or another, whether acknowledged as such or not, is usually what is going on when the Bible is preached effectively, studied rigorously or read intently by Christian believers”. Why is conflict left out of this discussion? Perhaps these words by Patterson (2012:3) say it best: “As far as I can see, the New Testament recounts conflict between Christians in a way that is neither overstated nor under-stated. It’s just there, waiting to be examined.”

However, those who see the value in conflict have a different impression as is seen in Shawchuck’s (1983:8) comments: “The theology you hold about conflict (your assumptions regarding how God thinks and acts in the midst of conflict) influences the way you will think and act when confronted by a conflict situation.” It is a necessity for Christendom to begin to explore a biblical theology of conflict. Only when conflict is seen for what it really is, is there the possibility of exploring conflict as it should be done.

5.3 Contributions to Biblical Theology from Philemon

With an overall understanding of the multi-faceted field of biblical theology, and with a desire to begin the development of a biblical theology of conflict, the contributions from this study of the conflict dynamics and themes in the book of Philemon are now discussed. Osborne’s (2017:loc. 2545-2546) analysis is appropriate at this point: “This letter should be used in every discussion of conflict resolution, as it shows Paul’s masterful handling of a potentially explosive situation”. And in conveying the contributions of Philemon, it is the hope that the aspired outcome (of refreshment) of Wendland (2010:111) occurs:

It remains for contemporary communicators to transmit the religious matter of this book (and the others of Scripture) in the most relevant manner – one that is best suited for or most appropriate in the sociocultural setting at hand – a proclamation that perhaps even physically (i.e., audibly) as well as emotionally ‘refreshes the hearts of the saints’ (τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων ἀναπέπται [Phlm 7]).

5.3.1 Working definition of conflict

Probably the principal benefit from this study is the presentation of a working definition for conflict: **Conflict is when something is encountered, creating a struggle over how to respond to that encounter.** What this provides is an informed base line for further exploration. Since, as has been shown, much of the theological studies have laboured under an assumed definition of conflict, it is vital to challenge that assumption and to do so in a way that benefits from the years of study by other disciplines outside of theology. It doesn’t purport that their observations are embraced without scrutiny, but it indicates that there is material to work with and engage in biblically. For this reason, an expanded working definition is provided that begins to engage the biblical propositions coherently.

Expanded working definition: Conflict is when something is encountered (real or imagined), creating a struggle (within and/or without) over how to respond (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally) to that encounter leading to the possibility of growth (via conflict resolution or conflict management).

And, as a reminder, section 2.5 onwards demonstrated the viability of the working definition of conflict as conflict occurs in Scripture. A brief example from Philemon (referencing 3.5) is provided to illustrate how this working definition enhances the understanding of the theology of Philemon. Paul, who is in prison (another conflict in and of itself), encounters this unbelieving slave (another conflict) and leads him to faith in Christ. Now, with the regeneration of this former unbelieving slave, Paul must figure out a way (his conflict) to return him to and reconcile him with his misinformed master (another conflict). In order to do so, Paul must discern a means by which he can move Philemon to listen, in lieu of Paul’s absence, rather than react as he might normally do in the presence of a returning runaway slave. So far, in Paul’s interaction with this conflict, he has committed no sin, he has communicated no sinful information, nor has he asked Philemon to do anything sinful.⁶⁹ At this juncture, why must a sinful slant be brought into the discussion? It only enters when conflict is wrongly assumed to be sinful. However, if conflict is viewed as an opportunity (see the expanded working definition), then another perspective is provided – one that fits much better with the inclusion of the letter to Philemon in the canon of Scripture – Paul presents a worthy way to biblically respond to conflict.

5.3.2 Biblical understanding of conflict

What results from this working definition is a redefining of conflict that impacts how the conflicts of the Bible are perceived. Rather than immediately constructing interpretation on a sinful foundation, each conflict can be scrutinised on its own merits. While, definitely, some conflicts arise from sinful actions (likely how Paul came into contact with Onesimus – sinful action on his part), the context provides that determination; it is not foisted upon the text due to presumption. For example, Ehorn (2011) states: “Paul was interested in making Philemon into a theologian of sorts. Equipped with Paul’s guidance with regard to theological thinking, Philemon was then entrusted to do what he thought was right in the situation. This is, we think, a profoundly interesting and helpful model for discipleship.” Based on the text of Philemon, in the experience of this researcher, this is the first commentator to find *discipleship* in the discussion of Philemon. The vast majority want to discuss slavery and how to work around Paul’s missing (or at least oblique) condemnation of this institution. When Philemon is viewed from Ehorn’s perspective, not only is discipleship seen in regards to Philemon but also in regards to Onesimus. That is why, included in 3.5, an aspect of understanding the lessons from Philemon must contain what Onesimus was to learn from his experience.

It is the hope and prayer of this researcher that armed with an improved understanding of conflict, theologians will re-examine the conflicts of the Bible and gain new insights that translate into the better equipping of the saints in conflict matters. Additionally, it is hoped that biblical theologians will re-explore proposed metanarratives or retrace thematic elements in light of the insights of a biblical understanding of conflict. Finally, it is desirous that all believers re-explore the message of Philemon and benefit from Paul’s discipleship of an older, well-established believer as well as a new believer who finds himself in a very difficult situation.

5.3.3 Historical perspective

The chief historical contributions of this research lie in two areas. First is recognition that more could be gained by the subversive work of Paul’s advice to Philemon in verse 17 (see 3.3.4) than by attacking head on a vital cog in Roman society (as abhorrent as slavery is). Why this notion is fundamental is in recognising that some conflicts call for direct confrontation and others for indirect confrontation. Conflict needs to be confronted, but a gentle touch is sometimes needed (cp. Pr 15:1; Ja 1:19; Rm 12:20; and 3 Jn 9-11). More importantly, a godly life is destabilising for the world, in and of itself (1 Pt 3:15), and that subversive characterisation was lived out in the person of Jesus (Jn 1:10-12). God calls His children to emulate that same thinking and lifestyle (Phlp 2:5-11; Heb 12:1-3).⁷⁰ Paul, too, takes up that mantle in the narrative of Philemon as he writes what he could do (command) but chooses not to do (see 4.3.4.1). Therefore, the subversive aspect should not be disregarded, but should be embraced.

The second area is that of ambiguities which are uncomfortable to live with sometimes but nevertheless are a part of life and conflict. As Wright noted (in 3.4), ambiguities are often seen because what is expected is absent from the discussion, and that creates uncertainty. Rather than trying to make certain what is uncertain, which often creates issues of its own, the question should be asked as to what is to be learned from this vagueness.⁷¹ In regards to the book of Philemon, this comfortableness with ambiguity frees the interpreter from having to micromanage Paul's communication to Philemon in order to rectify his non-committal attitude to manumission. Or, it liberates the interpreter from creating a narrative where Onesimus' return would not involve his restoration to slavery.

Instead, of focusing on issues peripheral to the narrative, the focus can be on how to respond to the conflict faced by the character. As that is seen and understood, then exploration of the implication for believers today can be discussed and implemented. Instead, of teaching on slavery from the book of Philemon, an example of how to reconcile two believers can be explored. While it would be nice for God to address all of man's concerns (from man's perspective), the fact is that He does address them, but from His perspective (2 Pt 1:3-11). Man's responsibility is to bring himself in line with God's perspective, and that includes being content with the ambiguities and subversive approach of God.⁷²

5.3.4 Identity-based conflict

From the study of the dynamics and themes of the book of Philemon, a framework emerges that lends itself to what is called today, *identity-based conflict*.⁷³ As this concept is discussed, it is essential to express the caution of Jamir (2011:27): "It is important to remain aware that the meaning of the term 'identity' in modern vocabulary cannot be readily related to its meaning in antiquity". Since, at this point, the discussion is about contributions to biblical theology, to this researcher, it is acceptable to use modern terminology even though that would not have been in the mind of Paul as he wrote Philemon, but it may represent the concept of what he wrote. And, what he did communicate in that letter has value for believers today (especially in their discussion of conflict), and one of the conflicts being explored in modern times is the concept of identity-based conflict. In order to understand this contemporary theory, a brief overview of identity,⁷⁴ and the conflict that springs from it, is provided.

5.3.4.1 What is identity?

Identity has been briefly defined, in 4.3.3.1, in both an individual and a group level, however, since the discussion now moves to a more in-depth level, identity's definition will be explored further. Simply expressed by Maalouf (2003:10), "My identity is what prevents me from being identical to anybody else", and yet that identity consists of many elements – official or unofficial.

In fact, he portrays it as “the sum of all our allegiances” (p. 100).⁷⁵ As such, it gives us meaning and understanding.⁷⁶ The process of building an identity is based upon the selection of some cultural feature or associated features that are “given priority over other sources of meaning” (Castells, 2010:6). The process takes features from various cultural sources, arranges their meaning within a context of relationships – some of which are very strong and influential (p. 7).⁷⁷ As a result, an individual’s understanding of the world is impacted by their identity (Shrestha, 2014:7).

As has been mentioned previously (4.3.6), individuals can have multiple identities,⁷⁸ and those identities assist in functioning at different social levels. They are classified by Castells (2010:xxvi) as collective identities, and he enumerates three of them: legitimizing, resistance, and project (see Table 5-4).⁷⁹ He posits the Jews as an example who have a “religious identity, ethnic identity (the Jewish people), and territorial identity in support of historical identity” (p. xx). As a practical, scriptural example, Paul’s response to the Philippian jailer differs from his response to the injustice of the system (Ac 16:16-39). For the jailer, Paul responds as a believer, seeking to reach him with the Gospel message. For society, he responds as a Roman citizen, expecting the justice due to him as granted by the law of the land. In actuality, Paul demonstrated dual identities.

Table 5-4: Castell’s Collective Identities

Collective Identity	Explanation	Outcomes
Legitimizing	Used by dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination	Civil society
Resistance	Generated by those in positions/conditions devalued/stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches or resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions	Formation of communities
Project	The building of a new identity that redefines their position in society and the transformation of society	Subject: gives meaning to the whole realm of experiences of individual life

In Philemon, understanding identity is a key component as multiple identities are discussed, communicated, super-imposed, and highlighted. As introduced earlier, the introduction and development of the identities in Philemon are most significant as Paul assigns an identity to every character introduced in the narrative.⁸⁰ Philemon is the only character introduced with dual identities.⁸¹ Even Paul introduces himself with one identity; although he will reference others throughout the discourse. The focus of the discussion is upon the change in identity for Onesimus where he moves from unsaved (with its accompanying identities), to saved (with its accompanying identities), to a vital, personal relationship with Paul, to a hopeful relationship

with Philemon (see Table 5-5).⁸² That transition’s importance lies in the fact that Philemon didn’t know of the change in identity for Onesimus, and without that knowledge Philemon would naturally act in accordance with his slave-master identity. However, apprised of this transformation, Paul believed that Philemon would act in accordance with his godly character and spiritual brother identity. In essence, what has happened is that the narrative has moved from a conflict between one ungodly man and a godly man, to a godly man (Paul) interceding on behalf of a formerly ungodly man, who is now godly, informing a godly man of the change in character of his former ungodly slave, and now appealing to this godly man (on the basis of love), due to his godly character, **do the right thing** towards his former ungodly slave! And Paul is confident of the result! This is the spirit of the proclamation of identities in Philemon.

Table 5-5: Identities in the Book of Philemon

Person	Identity	Greek designation	Verse
Paul	prisoner of Christ Jesus	δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ	1, 9
	authority	πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι	8
	old man	πρεσβύτης	9
Timothy	brother	ὁ ἀδελφός	1
Philemon	beloved	τῷ ἀγαπητῷ	1
	co-worker	συνεργῷ	1
	debtor to Paul	σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις	19
	brother	ἀδελφέ	20
	slave-master ⁸³		
Apphia	sister	τῇ ἀδελφῇ	1
Archippus	fellow-soldier	τῷ συστρατιῶτῃ	1
Onesimus	my child (birthed in chains)	τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς	10
	once useless	ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον	11
	now useful (to you and me)	δὲ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον	11
	my own heart	τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα	12
	Philemon, the servant	ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ	13
	separated for a time	ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν	15
	returned forever	αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχρης	15
	no longer a servant	οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον	16
	more than a servant	ὑπὲρ δοῦλον	16
	beloved brother to me	ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί	16
	beloved brother to you in the flesh and in the Lord	πόσω δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ	16
Paul	προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ	17	
Epaphras	fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus	ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ	23
Mark	co-worker	οἱ συνεργοί	24
Aristarchus	co-worker	οἱ συνεργοί	24
Demas	co-worker	οἱ συνεργοί	24
Luke	co-worker	οἱ συνεργοί	24

5.3.4.2 What is identity-based conflict?

Identity-based conflict is designated by Rothman (2012a:vii) as the “deepest and often most destructive form of conflict” (see Figure 5-4).⁸⁴ Why is that? Because it is embedded in the past; it is “rooted in personal traumas and collective indignities born of the past that are engines of current confrontations” (p. viii).⁸⁵ He adds this salient point: “Such conflicts are passionate because they are about core concerns. The heart of the matter of identity-based conflict is the

heart of the matter” [his emphasis] (p. viii). Furthermore, it is the combination of forces (identity and conflict) that creates the volatility – it can be a “combustible mixture that can either destroy or create, depending on whether and how the mixture is handled” (1997:xi). The reason is due to its visceral nature: “It comes from – and hits us – in our gut. Our emotions, identities, and bodies are often on the line” (p. xii). In essence it is “about who we really are and what we care about most deeply” (p. xiii). Therefore, when someone cannot separate who he is, as an individual, from what he believes, and when another questions what he believes, then that one is questioning who he is, and that is viewed as a threat.⁸⁶ Depending on the assessment of the intensity of the threat determines the nature of the response to the threat. Those who are the object of the response will often depart from that encounter feeling like they’ve been beat up or smelling like their hair is singed and wondering ‘what just happened?’.⁸⁷

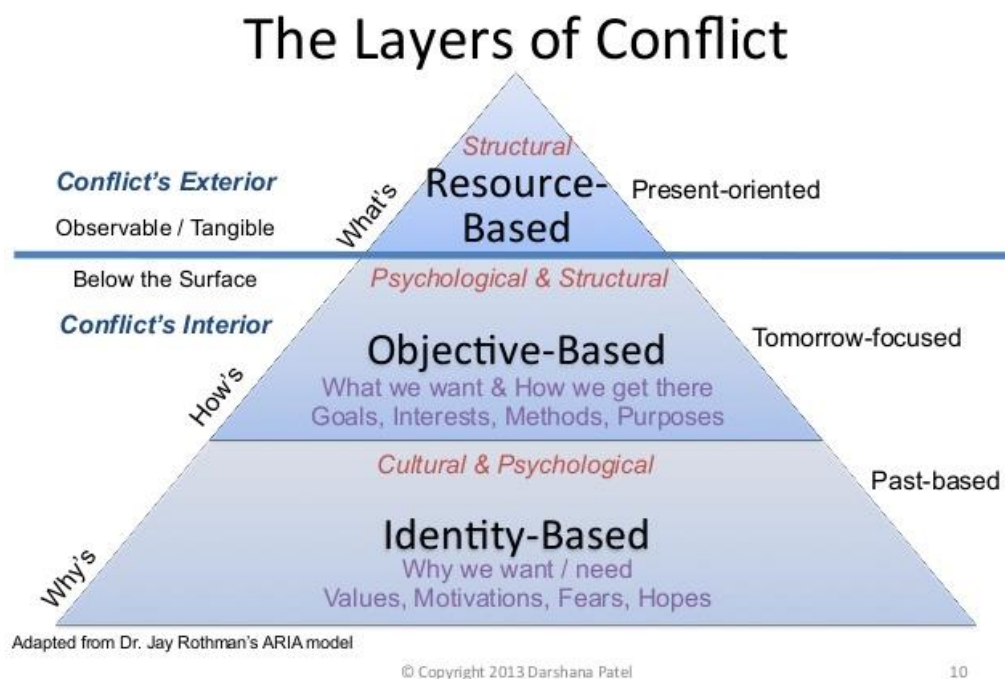


Figure 5-4: Patel’s Layers of Conflict

When this thinking is part of a group identification, the hazard increases. White (2004:104) provides this definition: “Identity-based conflicts can be understood as non-realistic conflicts which function to maintain group identity boundaries through the creation of a conflict narrative that define an enemy. These boundaries then become dependent on this enemy and the ongoing nature of conflict.” The result is summarized by Rothman (1997:6): “Their intensity often is destructive, as each side seeks to avoid or subdue the other. Collective identity conflicts are usually intransigent and resistant to resolution.” So identity-based conflict can be on an individual level, but more frequently, and more acutely, it is on a group level.⁸⁸

At this juncture a distinction must be drawn. Some view identity-based conflict differently; they view it as a form of conflict *within* the individual. The research of Shrestha (2014:6-8) sees the problem as between personal (*proprium*)⁸⁹ identity and social (looking-glass)⁹⁰ identity.⁹¹ From a theological perspective, Keyes (2017:loc. 170-171) has a similar outlook. He advocates for “a sense of internal coherence or integration of the self” where an individual can live at peace in the midst of the uncertainties of life and the contradictory message of the world. For him, it is about who a believer is in Christ. An example of this is provided by Breaux (2007:loc. 51-52) where he notes: “But when our appearance becomes our identity, we are in danger of succumbing to problems ranging from eating disorders to insecurity-driven physical alterations”. Identity-based conflict then is an individual’s struggle over their own identity issues.

While this perspective is important and likely biblical,⁹² it is not the point under discussion. This conversation is about an individual protecting his own identity from those who would seek to harm it (real or perceived). An example from Philemon will hopefully illustrate the distinction. Paul writes to Philemon about how he should view his returning, delinquent slave; information that was unknown to him. Paul’s concern was over how to convey this information to Philemon so that he would voluntarily accept this and act in accordance. As has been suggested, without this crucial information, Philemon was likely to act in accordance with his identity as a slave owner and respond harshly to this now believing slave who is seeking to make things right with his master. Thus, Paul intercedes on behalf of Onesimus.⁹³ If Paul wanted to deal with the identities *within* an individual, he would have written the letter to Onesimus as he was the one struggling with his *former* identity as an unbelieving, thieving slave, and his *present* identity as a brother in Christ to Paul and Philemon. This kind of letter is seen in Paul’s letter to Ephesus where they are instructed to live like who they really are – they were to walk in accordance to their position in Christ.⁹⁴ The book of Philemon doesn’t follow the pattern of Ephesians because it is not about Philemon struggling with his own identity; it is about how he views Onesimus and under what identity he will respond to Onesimus.

With this overview in mind, then the book of Philemon’s contribution to a biblical theology of conflict, in regards to specifically identity-based conflict, is this: When dealing with identity-based conflict between known parties, Paul’s approach of providing missing information and appealing to godly character on behalf of a godly man can bring resolution to the conflict.⁹⁵ Without three godly men involved, there would be no positive outcome to this conflict, but with godliness at the forefront, biblical resolution is possible. What it took was for Paul to appeal to a higher, more eternal identity in which to interact.

The reason why this identity-based conflict discussion is substantial is that in ministry people often have to work with other believers who have differing theological and practical beliefs – there is diversity in the Body of Christ. That truth is an acceptable aspect of ministry, but what is

unacceptable is when that person's belief calls into question another's belief – especially one with which their identity is closely tied. A pertinent illustration is the KJV only issue.⁹⁶ Two people minister together until one discovers that the other doesn't use the KJV, and now there is a problem which, more often than not, results in an unpleasant parting of ways. Previously, there may have been other disagreements, but that was chalked up to difference in taste (and there is liberty in Christ to do so). Not so with identity-based conflict; when someone ties their identity to an issue, it raises the stakes to another level – a do or die level.⁹⁷ Philemon provides a basis for discussing this type of conflict constructively from Scripture.

5.3.5 Managing conflict

From a conflict management perspective, this study meshes well with the six conflict management steps of Wise (1994:24).⁹⁸ First, *recognize that there is a problem*, and Paul does this on behalf of Onesimus. Second, *seek outside assistance if necessary*, and Onesimus engages Paul.⁹⁹ Third, *empower people in the process*, and Paul seeks the voluntary response of Philemon – not manipulation of him. Fourth, *identify/clarify the issues*, and Paul provides the missing information for Philemon. Fifth, *co-labour together for workable solution*, and Paul asks Philemon to treat Onesimus as if he were present, and then allows Philemon to take it where he'd like to go – do more than he's asked. Finally, *covenant together for solutions*. This is the only aspect not directly involved in the record of Philemon. Certainly, some have referenced the possibility of this by speaking of Paul's hopeful visit or the public nature of the letter, but these are speculative. And so, the process chosen by Paul in the letter to Philemon provides a visual of the modern process of conflict management steps.¹⁰⁰

In addressing the likelihood of successful resolution to the conflict, Wise (1994:25) adds these five basic conditions necessary for success. First, *provide a personal base*, and Paul does exactly this by addressing the refreshing work of Philemon in the lives of so many believers. Second, *provide a relational base*, and Paul seeks that same refreshment from Philemon. Third, *establish constructive communication*, and as attested by many commentators, Paul does an exemplary job of this throughout the letter. Fourth, *co-labour together*, and Paul attests to the knowledge that Onesimus was doing for Paul what Philemon would have done for Paul if he had been present. And fifth, *personal agreement to the solution*, and Paul states in his own handwriting that he will repay Philemon if that is a necessary step in the resolution process. Again, a wonderful example of the implementation of sound principles of conflict management is visualised in the testimony of Paul's letter to Philemon even though they were not intentionally done by Paul.

5.4 Evaluation of alternatives for identity-based conflict

Finally, a brief overview and analysis of contemporary models for engaging in identity-based conflict is provided in order to highlight the value of this research’s identity-based conflict contribution to biblical theology. If this type of conflict is indeed the most volatile and destructive form, then it is incumbent upon pastors and teachers to provide biblical answers for how to respond to this kind of conflict. Unfortunately, as will be demonstrated, up until recently, little help has been provided within a biblical framework.¹⁰¹

5.4.1 Rothman’s ARIA

The guru of identity-based conflict is Jay Rothman, and his seminal work¹⁰² has impacted numerous groups since its publishing in 1997. He followed that up with kind of historical record of how this work has been implemented and augmented over the years.¹⁰³ Even in the midst of adjustments, his basic framework, called ARIA (after the musical connotation), has remained intact¹⁰⁴ (see Figure 5-5) and the goal unchanged: “[T]o foster harmony and resonance from adversaries’ full and honest expression of the deeply felt human motivations that lie beneath their conflict” (p. 18). This four step process involves first the “surfacing of antagonism”, followed by the “narrative excursion in to the resonance of peoples’ hopes, fears, needs and values”, followed by the “invention process of seeking creative ways to foster and promote greater resonance through concrete fulfilment of needs, values and goals”, and concludes with “action planning” (Rothman, 2012:15).

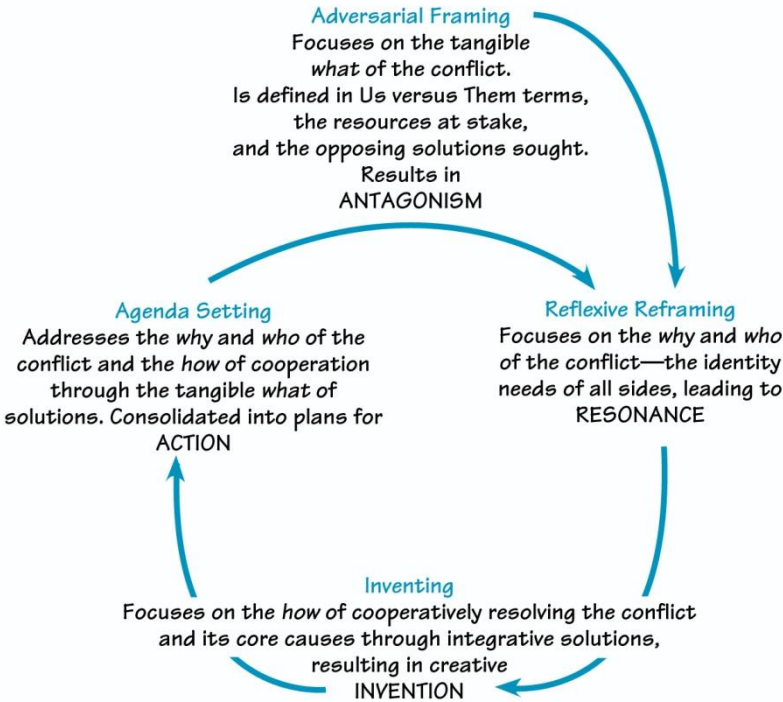


Figure 5-5: Rothman’s ARIA Framework

The difficulty with this process for believers is two-fold. First, the goal isn't to discover what is right or the truth; the goal is harmony.¹⁰⁵ Such a position belittles the importance and impact of truth (Jn 8:32; 1 Tm 3:15), and it opposes the pattern demonstrated by Paul's approach to Philemon, where he was missing the truth about the Onesimus' changed identity. In Rothman's scenario, Paul would have engaged the feelings of Onesimus and the feelings of Philemon in order to find a harmonious commonality and way forward. Instead, Paul provided unknown truth and appealed to Philemon's godly character and challenged him to demonstrate that character towards Onesimus. The second problem is with *antagonism surfacing* where anger and frustration are vocalized in a way that the other party can feel the emotions. While certainly it is true that hurts need to be communicated, how they are communicated is of as much concern to God as the hurt itself (Eph 4:29, 31-32; Col 4:6). It is instructive that Paul didn't communicate any of the likely hurts to either party in the book of Philemon; his concern was at a higher level. Biblically, the goal in conflict is restoration¹⁰⁶ and not creative engagement – seeking to lessen the negative effects of conflict. For these reasons, Rothman's concept is not beneficial to a biblical theology of conflict.¹⁰⁷

5.4.2 White's meaning-narrative framework

At the outset, it is important to note the basis in which White (2004:31) constructs her framework; she embraces a post-modern outlook where she states that identity-based conflict "is by nature concerned with how human beings experience and construct conflict which in turn requires a holistic, relational and experiential view of the world". She builds upon her experience under Apartheid and seeks to engage embedded and entrenched conflict. In essence, her approach, concerns providing a means with which the parties can make sense of or bring meaning to their lives, in the midst of an entrenched conflict. She presents this framework via four hypotheses, each containing a theory, story, and proposition.¹⁰⁸ Her four hypotheses are contrasted with other approaches that she has characterised under conflict *resolution*, conflict *management*, and conflict *transformation*,¹⁰⁹ and her approach is contextualised in Table 5-6.

Table 5-6: White's Meaning-Narrative in Context

Terminology	<i>Resolution</i>	<i>Management</i>	<i>Transformation</i>	<i>Transformation</i>
Founding Disciplines	Structural Sociological	Utility Psychological	Relational Social Constructionist	Relational Generative Constructionist
Examples	Analytical Problem solving	Interest-Based Negotiation	Narrative Mediation	Meaning-Narrative Intervention
Nature/Source of Conflict	Frustration of basic human needs	Two or more parties have an interest in an object	Clash of perspectives which are role and context determined	Creation of meaning in an overriding context of conflict
Location of Conflict	Structures, systems and institutions	Individual needs and interests	Relationships and how they are interpreted	Conflict narratives that construct identity and meaning

Terminology	Resolution	Management	Transformation	Transformation
Intervention Strategies	Identification of needs and the joint-creation of appropriate satisfiers	Compromise, seeking common ground, negotiation & mediation	Restructuring the narrative of the relationship through discourse exploration	Creating social, political and cultural space for narratives of meaning to change

[from White (2004:79-80)]

The problem with her approach is illustrated in the following comment: “What is liberating about this perspective is the agency within humans to construct and create meaning, allowing us to proactively inhabit a world rather than be prisoners in an existing legacy” (p. 84). Biblically, mankind’s legacy was created at the Fall and without trusting in the intervening sacrifice of Christ on the cross, that legacy is irrevocable. No amount of reframing can alter man’s sinful bent (Jn 3:3). Also, by employing a post-modern outlook, propositional truth is forsaken, and all voices are equally considered. However, Paul is more concerned with God’s voice than anyone else’s (Phlm 15-16). Finally, her perspective of man’s purpose in life is to find meaning or as she employs the term, “pathways to heroism” – “the path of the hero can be understood as a life path which offers individuals a way to ensure some contribution and value to the world beyond their limited lifespan” (p. 137). Again, biblically, God is not so concerned with man’s heroism as much as man’s godliness (1 Pt 1:14-16).

If her approach were employed in Philemon, then Paul’s letter would contain the necessity of a meeting where both Onesimus and Philemon could explore a narrative that would provide ultimate meaning for their existence – a pathway to heroism. Obviously, this would necessitate the freedom of Onesimus and likely would be confronted by the reluctance of Philemon to divest of his investment. How they could both participate in a church service in this scenario would be interesting at the very least. However, Paul’s letter is only secondarily concerned with their individual needs or desires. His primary concern is with their restoration and reconciliation at the level of brotherhood. The metanarrative that he desires to be embraced by both parties is godliness. Therefore, White’s framework is not beneficial to a biblical theology of conflict.

5.4.3 Meyers’ cross-cultural approach

The approach of Meyers is based upon a cross-cultural approach often used in missions where the missionary accepts the fact that he will always be considered an outsider to another culture – despite his best efforts at assimilation. The goal of sharing biblical truth with another culture necessitates approaching that culture not as a teacher where instruction is given on what is wrong with their culture (sharing the Gospel) and experiencing them defending their culture (conflict) even if they don’t particularly like their culture – but it is what they identify with as an individual (see Figure 5-6). Instead, the goal is to approach another culture as a learner where discussion can take place as one studies this culture. In essence, what happens is that a sub-

culture is formed – one in which no one feels threatened nor senses the need to defend their culture. That discussion leads to the presentation of the Gospel, in a non-attacking manner, and may result in non-acceptance, but it is less likely to be perceived as an attack on someone’s identity (see Figure 5-7).

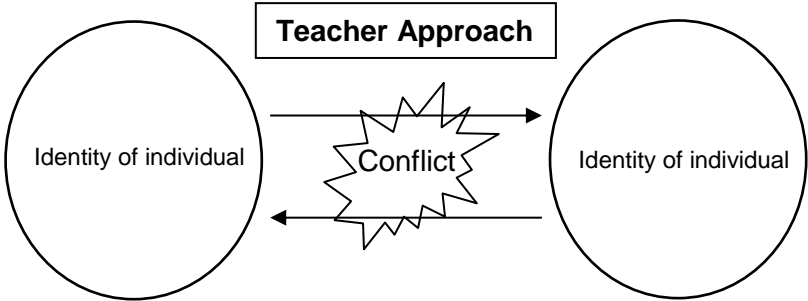


Figure 5-6: Teacher Approach to Identity Issues

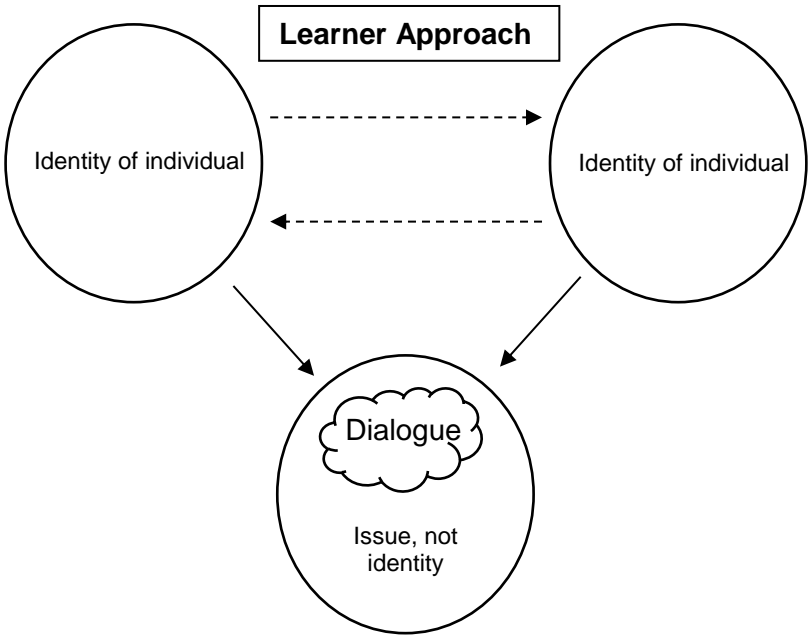


Figure 5-7: Learner Approach to Identity Issues

This approach then is transposed upon an identity-based conflict situation where the goal is to approach the conflict as a learner (tell me about your what you believe) rather than as an instructor – explaining what is wrong with the differing position and experiencing the ‘wrath of God’ as the individual defends their position in protection of their identity. Instead, real discussion can take place as learning is undertaken. The results may be simply to agree to disagree over the conflict, but what has happened is the opportunity to separate the conflict from the identity and have fruitful discussion.¹¹⁰

The difficulty with this approach is not the biblical nature of the methodology (in contrast to the previous two approaches), but the fact that it doesn't fit with the approach in the book of Philemon. The Philemon narrative is between *known* individuals; the cross-cultural approach is more beneficial for *unknown* participants. It is more in line with Paul's approach to the men of Athens at the Aeropagus in Acts 17.¹¹¹ In other words, Paul didn't need to approach the situation with Philemon from an outsider position – he knew each man personally – nor did he need to approach as a learner. He could provide informed instruction that was pertinent to the situation, and due to the known character of Philemon, be confident of how he would respond to this instruction. In Acts 17, while the information was pertinent to their situation, Paul had the added challenge of being an outsider and possibly being perceived as attacking their identity, and so he took a different tact – I'm learning about your beliefs; let me tell you about one you haven't met yet. Therefore, the approach of these two interactions of Paul differs from one another based on the level of relationship. This study has explored the identity-based conflict between *known* individuals, and so the cross-cultural approach is not effective.

What is demonstrated by referencing these three models of responding to identity-based conflict is that none of them contributes to biblical theology what this research provides. Rothman and White both provide models that may have useful elements in them for a biblical theology of conflict, but their model is not demonstrated in scripture – in fact, in intent, they are unbiblical. Meyers' approach could be very beneficial to biblical theology, but only as it is explored further in regards to Acts 17 and other potential passages.¹¹² Instead, the contribution of this study in Philemon to biblical theology, while embryonic, is shown to be essential.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter began with a condensing of the vast material that composes biblical theology. Its purpose was to provide a somewhat arbitrary positioning of this research within that corpus of information.¹¹³ In order to do so, six perspectives were furnished so that the scope could be managed and context provided. As a result, while the conclusions of this research were not conducive to the development of a metanarrative, they certainly impact those possible narratives by demonstrating the necessity to incorporate the influence of conflict upon that narrative. In reality, this research is more a thematic element that needs to be traced throughout Scripture.

Once this context for biblical theology was provided, five aspects on conflict, from this research on Philemon, were proffered as contributing to a foundational development of a biblical theology of conflict. They are informative and provide a perception of the conflict in Philemon that aids in understanding the message of the book. But they are also descriptive of how Paul acted under those circumstances which, in turn, is prescriptive for how other believers should act under

similar situations and circumstances. Finally, the modern application is seen in its relevance to identity-based conflict: Paul, who had a connection with both Philemon and Onesimus, chooses to provide missing information – the changed identity to Onesimus – to Philemon and call him to act accordingly rather than see him respond to the return of Onesimus as a slave owner would do. Without this transformative information, why would Philemon respond differently than the identity which he had embraced (right or wrong in modernity)? Paul understood this and interceded on behalf of Onesimus. He could do so, because of the godly people with which he was interacting. Why would Onesimus return to slavery? Because he was a godly man who had wronged another! Why would Philemon not punish his runaway slave? Because he was his brother in Christ – in fact he was the incarnation of Paul himself. Rather than try to augment the scenario of the book of Philemon, an understanding of conflict allows it to be presented at face value, and the message to naturally flow from the text – the essence of biblical theology.

Conflict is an indispensable aspect of life, and biblical theology is an essential component in how a believer views life. Developing a biblical view of conflict is a requisite aspect of biblical theology that, as has been demonstrated, is largely missing from the equipping of believers for the work of the ministry. This chapter has sought to correct that deficiency via the contributions of the study of the book of Philemon. In reality, Philemon's contribution is small, but hopefully it has exhibited the value of such a contribution and prompted enthusiasm for further study and contributions.

The words of Schultz (2002:98-99) summarise the heartbeat of this study:

It is time for biblical theologians to intensify their efforts to equip church members to nourish themselves with meaty but succulent chunks of canonical text rather than snacking on tidbits. Biblical theologians need to help them attain a strategic understanding of the theological teaching and contemporary message of biblical books as a whole rather than the mere chronology of events and moral lessons that can be derived from individual texts.

This goal has been the undertaking of the contribution of Philemon to a biblical theology of conflict where the church members can benefit from Paul's method of dealing with identity-based conflict in the book of Philemon. It remains to be seen if Adam's (2000:104) assessment will be true of this contribution to biblical theology: "A good pragmatic test of any theology is whether or not those who believe it want to pass on what they have learnt".

5.6 Endnotes

¹ In fact, Crawford Loritts (2017) unequivocally states: “There are no meaningful relationships apart from conflict”. If this is indeed the case, then it behoves believers to comprehend its value and significance, and most importantly, to learn how to work with conflict.

² Many others have provided that necessary insight and many will continue to do so until there is a general consensus of what is biblical theology. The following are some examples of that valuable work: 1) Scobie (2003), *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*; 2) Hafemann (2002), *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect*; 3) Zuck (ed), *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (1991) and *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (1994); and Klink and Lockett (2012), *Understanding Biblical Theology*.

³ Childs (1970:95) famously stated: “The real question is not whether to do Biblical Theology, but rather what kind of Biblical Theology does one have”.

⁴ “If progress is to be made in the study of Biblical Theology, the question of definition is clearly crucial,” is a pertinent point of Scobie (2003:3) that leads to the following overview of biblical theology. Otherwise, people can be talking past one another. In fact, Köstenberger (2012:459) sees an urgency in reassessing the definition of biblical theology.

⁵ Additional cautionary advice is offered by Köstenberger (2012:445) where he provides three urgent needs for biblical theology as evidenced in the last decade: “(1) ground biblical theology in careful historical work, (2) conceive of the discipline as essentially inductive and descriptive, and (3) distinguish biblical from systematic theology”.

⁶ A cautionary remark, in this regard, is made by House (2002:274): “Difficulties have arisen in biblical theology in the past because some parts of the canon have not yet fit into authors’ chosen patterns of analysis”. While it is understood that people are working through issues and biblical conclusions are a work in progress, the student of God’s Word should be alert to overlooking parts of God’s Word.

⁷ Clearly, as Rosner (2000:5) states it: “The task of biblical theology is to present the teaching of the Bible about God and his relations to the world in a way that lets the biblical texts set the agenda”.

⁸ In echoing that sentiment, Klink and Lockett (2012:13) use some interesting terminology to describe the assorted views: “Biblical theology has become a catchphrase, a wax nose that can mean anything from the historical-critical method applied to the Bible to a theological interpretation of Scripture that in practice appears to leave history out of the equation altogether”.

⁹ In the opinion of this researcher, most of those strides are made in recognizing the distinctions between varying opinions and not in coming to a consensus of how to move forward. Definitely, some groups are more vocal than others and give the appearance of consensus, but, especially in academia, there is still a great disparity, and this will be perceived in the material to follow.

¹⁰ Adam (2000:108) accurately expresses the value of biblical theology: “Only biblical theology can save us from misusing the Bible, as we read each text in the context of the progressive revelation of God’s saving work in Christ”.

¹¹ Goldsworthy (2002:286) adds this observation on the value of biblical theology: “Biblical theology is the key to sound interpretation, the source of a reliable topical analysis of the Scriptures and the heartbeat of effective ministry”.

¹² A salient perspective of historical theology is provided by House (2002:277): “[H]istory is vital to biblical theology, yet the canon was not ordered to give later readers a detailed report on the exact historical order in which the theology arose. Thus, as important as historical analysis is, it cannot dominate every facet of biblical theology. It must be a vital part of making theology relevant and understandable.” Thus Rosner (2000:5) emphasizes that Scripture cannot be viewed only from a distance, as ancient sources; they are integral to the faith of the Church throughout history. And Balla (2000:26) adds: “Biblical theology is essentially historical, and may be justified as such, though the biblical theologian may also adopt frames of reference drawn from literary theory or the social sciences”.

¹³ The significant point of Carson (2000:91) is appropriate here as well: “True, biblical theology must be differentiated from other disciplines, but the fact that it can be is precisely what gives it its distinctiveness, while the fact that it must be is precisely what makes it such an excellent bridge discipline, building links among the associated disciplines and in certain respects holding them together”.

¹⁴ Rosner (2000:3) defines it similarly as “biblical theology may be defined as the cooperation of various disciplines, and with reference to its various processes or methods and its intended product”.

¹⁵ Yarbrough (1996:61) distinguishes the disciplines in this way: “Practical theology focuses on pastoral application of biblical truths in modern life. Systematic theology articulates the biblical outlook in a current doctrinal or philosophical system. Historical theology investigates the development of Christian thought in

its growth through the centuries since biblical times. Biblical theology is an attempt to articulate the theology that the Bible contains as its writers addressed their particular settings.”

¹⁶ This would fall under the umbrella of *integrated biblical theology* as delineated by Scobie (2003:46) and characterized the church up until the eighteenth century (p. 7). He adds this wise observation: “Dogmatic theology is the final stage in the movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the interpreter. Professional theologians ought to be the servants of the church, continually aiding it in its thought and reflection on how biblical norms are to be applied in the contemporary situation” (p. 48).

¹⁷ In fact, Köstenberger (2012:462) cites this specific necessity: “The need remains for definitional clarity and methodological vigilance lest biblical theology becomes systematic theology in disguise, the lines between biblical and systematic theology become unduly blurred, or the disciplines illegitimately collapse into one”.

¹⁸ More will be said about the viability of discovering this overarching, unifying thematic element.

¹⁹ Another helpful summative comparison is made by Carson (2000:103): “Systematic theology seeks to rearticulate what the Bible says in self-conscious engagement with (including confrontation with) the culture; biblical theology, though it cannot escape cultural influences, aims to be first and foremost inductive and descriptive, earning its normative power by the credibility of its results”. In essence, this is one of the goals of this study – for the biblical study of conflict to become normative as demonstrated in the credible results of this research.

²⁰ An excellent observation is made by House (2002:270) on the role of exegesis: “Exegesis should keep biblical theology biblical in the sense that it will keep scholars from imposing theological systems on texts that cannot bear their weight”.

²¹ Biblical theology is described by Hafemann (2002:16) as an attempt “to ascertain the inner points of coherence and development within the biblical narrative and exposition”.

²² Enns (1989:24) adds: “Biblical theology is important in that it prevents the study of doctrine apart from its historical context.

²³ A much deeper analysis of this process is discussed by Köstenberger (2012:463) as he interacts with the thoughts of Carson and Graham, discussing “four levels of biblical and theological scholarship”.

²⁴ In distinguishing context from perspective (two categories used in this chapter), Childs (1970:97) remarks are still pertinent: “By ‘context’ more is meant than simply ‘perspective’ which focuses on the angle of vision of the interpreter. Rather, context refers to the environment of that which is being interpreted. As a literary term, context denotes the parts of a composition that constitute the texture of the narrative. To interpret a sentence ‘out of context’ is to disregard its place in its larger literary design.”

²⁵ The adage, attributed to D.A. Carson and adapted by many, is pertinent here: “A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text”.

²⁶ Again, recognizing the bridging quality of biblical theology, Enns (1989:20) conjoins with the historical perspective: “Biblical theology pays attention to the important historical circumstances in which the biblical doctrines were given”.

²⁷ Rosner (2000:10) provides this summative definition: “[B]iblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus”.

²⁸ Adam (2000:106) offers an excellent example of this in Jesus’ teaching on the Old Testament as introducing Himself to the world.

²⁹ Furthermore, Rosner (2000:3) adds this relevant point about all Christians: “[B]iblical theology of one sort or another, whether acknowledged as such or not, is usually what is going on when the Bible is preached effectively, studied rigorously or read intently by Christian believers”.

³⁰ Goldsworthy (2002:285-286) provides practical examples of the fruit that comes when a church incorporates biblical theology in their preaching and teaching: 1) a coherent message creates enthusiasm for Bible study, 2) sees Jesus throughout the Bible, 3) moors people to the ministry and person of Christ in the OT, 4) questions quick-fix theories, and 5) helps believers to understand their vital role in the Body of Christ.

³¹ An important observation in this regard is made by Adam (2000:107-108): “We need biblical theology for appropriate application. This is not because the Bible is an ancient book, because although it was written long ago, it is also a contemporary book. It is contemporary because it is God’s message for those who live in the last days. In the Bible God speaks today. The difficulty in application does not lie primarily in the pastness of the past, but in the progressive and diverse nature of the revelation itself.”

³² In agreement with Köstenberger’s assessment are scholars like Klink and Lockett (2012) and Bock (1994), while Goldsworthy (2008) sees him more as the one who made the concept famous.

³³ For an extended explanation of why he sees the early church employing this concept, see Scobie (2003:4-16). In addition, Carson (1995:18) notes that it would be arrogant to assume that prior to the

modern era, biblical theology was unknown. In fact, he notes that prior to a few centuries ago, such unification was normative, but that was not because biblical theology was unknown as much as it was about the embryonic stage of biblical theology at that point. In fact, he adds that “[i]t is altogether appropriate, then, that we acknowledge that biblical theology has been with us as long as reflection on Scripture has been with us” (p. 19).

³⁴ It refers simply to the theological teachings of NT authors.

³⁵ It refers simply to universal truths, applicable to all, at all times.

³⁶ This is typically how biblical theology is understood according to Erickson (1998).

³⁷ An in-depth treatment of the history of biblical theology is provided by Scobie (2003) and Childs (1970).

³⁸ See notes 7 and 10 in 1.2.1 for previous examples of definitions.

³⁹ The idea of *confessional* development is an important addition in Osborne’s (1988:343) methodology, but the overall schemata were not distinct enough to warrant its inclusion.

⁴⁰ Those elements are as follows: 1) OT connection to NT, 2) historical diversity vs. theological unity, 3) scope and sources of biblical theology, 4) subject matter of biblical theology, and 5) academic vs. church discipline (Klink & Lockett, 2012:17-20).

⁴¹ Additional comments for each approximation are made within the figure in bold and italics.

⁴² The significance of this point is depicted by Klink and Lockett (2012:20): “If biblical theology is merely descriptive, the pastor would have little time for it, and it would likely only be of interest to the historian; but if biblical theology is prescriptive, church leaders would properly take it up as a churchly task”. For this reason “the responsible interpreter must start with the historical or descriptive task and then establish a bridge to the theological or prescriptive task” (p. 128). That is what this study seeks to do and this chapter in particular.

⁴³ An example of this concept of a narrative that transverses the entire Bible is provided by Menn (2016:4) where he states: “Biblical Theology (BT) is the study of the unfolding story-line of the Bible from beginning (Genesis) to end (Revelation)...Although BT is a descriptive and historical discipline, the Bible is selective in the historical details it describes. That selectivity is based on the overall theology that the Bible unfolds”. Goldsworthy (2002:282) believes that the provision of a metanarrative is what allows the integration of the disciplines.

⁴⁴ A great discussion on this idea is presented by House (2002:276): “Biblical theologians can agree on a lengthy enough list of major themes to do justice to the theological breadth of the Bible, yet short enough to give the discipline some recognizable continuity. We should give up arguing that one theme and one theme only is the central theme of the Bible and highlight major themes that allow other ideas as subpoints. Of course, we should never fail to assert that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are at the center of any unitary biblical theology. Nor should we ever fail to assert that the Bible unfolds God’s redemptive history, and the necessity of human response to God’s gracious acts. At the same time, we must acknowledge that salvation history, covenant, creation and messiah are necessarily broad themes that require elaboration and schematization. *Any* theme that links much of the Bible must be broad and must not be rejected for being broad. A broad theme is not the canon’s only theme; it is a centering theme. As long as the major theme is clearly discernible in several parts of the canon, as long as it is charted alongside other major themes, as long as it is treated as an important part of a whole instead of being the whole, then it should be welcomed, used and critiqued.”

⁴⁵ Specifically, Bird addresses NT issues but the application can be made for the entire corpus of the Bible.

⁴⁶ This *accurate perception* is earlier described by Köstenberger (2012:460) as listening “to the OT and NT writers and documents in order to understand the message of the Bible on its own terms, in its own language, and in its original cultural, historical, and ecclesial contexts”.

⁴⁷ This point is aptly presented and discussed by Osborne (1991:367): “The simple fact is that all of us read a text on the basis of our own background and proclivities. It is not only impossible but dangerous to put our knowledge and theological tradition aside as we study a biblical text. That very knowledge provides categories for understanding the text itself. At the same time, however, these traditions have potential for controlling the text and determining its meaning. This constitutes reader-response interpretation – meaning produced by the reader rather than by the text.”

⁴⁸ This point is echoed by Klink and Lockett (2012:25): “This book is not an answer to the problem of defining biblical theology; rather, it is the initiation of a dialogue that hopes to clarify the notion of biblical theology and to encourage its practice in the life of both the academy and the church”. Clarity will certainly aid in the application process.

⁴⁹ Merrill (1991:3-4) describes this duality of characterization in defining biblical theology as “having a common theological core or center that is sufficiently narrow to serve as a single statement of divine intention and sufficiently broad to encompass the great variety of its expression in Scripture”.

⁵⁰ As Patterson aptly notes (2012:4): “Paul touches upon conflict between Christians in all of his letters”.

⁵¹ At least the development of a biblical theology of conflict can move forward.

⁵² Where conflict falls on the list of causes for missionary attrition varies, but it is well attested to be one of the main causes. For example, Akin, as cited by both the Baptist Press (2017a) and the Gospel Coalition (2017b), lists conflict as the number one reason for missionary attrition. Even Thompson (2017), who continues to assess the findings of ReMAP (the Reducing Missionary Attrition Project) has drawn the following conclusion: “The most important non-acceptable reason as perceived by leaders of mission agencies (and some sending churches) for why missionaries from the US stopped working with their agencies 20 years ago is problems with peer missionaries” and not a lot has changed since this in-depth analysis.

⁵³ It is for a similar reason that this researcher chose New Testament studies as opposed to Practical Theology.

⁵⁴ Note 18 of 1.2.2 begins the discussion of authors who view conflict as sinful and thus calls into question their conclusions which have aided in overlooking the necessity of preparation for conflict within ministry.

⁵⁵ They are misunderstandings, differences in values, goals, etc., competition over resources, and sinful attitudes and habits.

⁵⁶ This word is defined by Zodhiates (2000:708) as “sensual or physical pleasure” and is listed by Louw-Nida (1996:291), as one of thirty-two words under the semantic domain of desire and is defined as a “desire for physical pleasure, often sexual – ‘desire, passion, desire for pleasure.’” It is incorrect to take one particular desire and make it an umbrella for all desires.

⁵⁷ By illustration, Jones (2012:30-41) has three components to a biblical view of conflict – he calls them biblical glasses – which provide a hopeful perspective: 1) Realize that Conflicts Are Inevitable; Therefore Expect Them, 2) Realize that Conflicts Are Sinful; Therefore Resolve Them!, and 3) Realize that Conflicts Are Opportunities; Therefore Seize Them. Two of these are excellent observations, but where does the idea of conflict being sinful come from? He cites Matthew 5 and 18. Out of all the passages on conflict (including Philemon) why is it that those two are what determine the nature of conflict? Is it because they represent a larger narrative – a narrative of God being a peacemaking God? While that is understandable, the question is does that single narrative capture all the aspects of conflict in the Bible – including Philemon. Another example of this is seen in Akin’s (2017a or b) view of conflict as he writes, “Sinful people + sinful colleagues + sinful people they are trying to reach = lots of sinful people and potential for conflict”. No one argues the sinfulness, but the way that this is cast indicates that if there were godly people, then there wouldn’t be conflict, and that is just not true. As a result of Akin’s conceptual idea, when godly people encounter conflict, then either someone is hiding sin or conflict must be redefined.

⁵⁸ An example of this was podcast series by James MacDonald called *Always Resolve Everything Now: The Key to Lasting Relationships*. This researcher remembers listening to that series and wondering how that is possible if I cannot control the other person? I can control myself, and so a biblical response is always possible even when resolution may not be possible, but this idea springs from the notion that conflict is sinful.

⁵⁹ The previous illustration of Poirier is an example.

⁶⁰ Despite his negative view of conflict, Jones (2012:13) does recognize that benefits do arise from conflict as seen in the following statement: “Conflicts are inevitable and sinful, but they also provide rich opportunities for spiritual growth for us and others”.

⁶¹ Many examples come to mind but these will suffice. Luke 17 tells the story of ten lepers – only one of whom returns to thank Jesus. What happened to the other nine? Did they ever make their way back to Jesus? Luke 18 describes the sorrow of the rich, young ruler who is conflicted over Jesus’ response. Did he ever give up everything and follow Jesus? John 4 relates the sad tale of the woman at the well. Through her, many Samaritans come to faith in Christ but there is no record of her decision, only her amazement. John 8, the woman caught in adultery is sent away with no condemnation by Jesus. Does she ever come to the place of believing in the Messiah? And finally, the very narrative of Philemon leaves us without a known resolution. Based on the fact that it is a part of the canon, it is assumed that their conflict was resolved, but how it was resolved is unknown. Unresolved conflict is an aspect of life, and should not be discounted. For further examples, see Meyers and Wessels (2017:9) article: *Resolving Identity-based Conflict for Believers*.

⁶² A wonderful point in this regard is made by Rothman (2012a:v): “Nothing is created without some kind of friction”.

⁶³ An example of misunderstanding this point is seen in Poirier (2006:12), as he states: “Unresolved conflicts between Christians have less to do with people being skillful than with them being sinful”.

⁶⁴ In this regard, three projects are advocated, by Hafemann (2002:19-20), for the future of biblical theology. First is “mapping out the content of the biblical witness”. Second is the “working on the

development of this content throughout the biblical canon”, and third, the development of “a pan-biblical theology” that integrates both the OT and NT without wiping out their distinction.

⁶⁵ This point is the theological experience of this researcher, and, even though the non-theological world has greatly exceeded Christendom, Rothman (2012:ix) still laments the current status of secular conflict studies. He writes: “Few and far between are the schools that teach tots to engage in conflicts. Instead, they tell them more often than not to ‘stop, duck, and roll.’ In other words, be afraid of conflict, avoid it if possible, and dispense with it if necessary; but most of all view it with a wary and defensive eye. In short, biologically conditioned fight or flight responses to conflict are culturally perpetuated.”

⁶⁶ One book by Cole addresses the idea of God as a peacemaker through the atonement, but nothing on how to biblically respond to conflict.

⁶⁷ *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (BTNT) by Zondervan and *Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation* (BTCP) by B&H Academic are new, incomplete series. At this point, BTNT has no plans for discussing the book of Philemon’s contribution to biblical theology, and BTCP has a book coming out that will explore Philemon in conjunction with Colossians.

⁶⁸ These thematic elements are traced throughout the Bible, and they are as follows: 1) God’s order, 2) God’s servant, 3) God’s people, and 4) God’s way.

⁶⁹ Definitely sin is involved, as Onesimus was saved from his sins. Those sins may have included his stealing from his master as well as his running away, but that is only speculation based on hints in the text. Philemon may be thinking sinful thoughts about his runaway slave, but that also is only conjecture as there is no hint of this in the text (in fact his godliness is lauded), but the reality is that believers often struggle with sinful thoughts that are unexpressed. However, with reference to Paul, there is no sin involved (as recorded in Philemon).

⁷⁰ A wonderful depiction of this is presented by Stetzer (2012): “Think of Christ, the conquering King, appearing as a baby in a Bethlehem manger, born in obscurity to humble parents, raised as the son of a poor carpenter in the backwaters of the Roman Empire. Think of his first thirty years spent without unusual notice or public attention, with only one or two events recorded from his early life. Think of forty days spent fasting and praying in a darkened wilderness, quietly and carefully setting the stage for his ministry to begin. Think of his riding into Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey rather than on a royal steed with a phalanx of soldiers by his side.

This is not open warfare. Jesus did not march on Rome. He never called together a zealot army. He never wrote a political manifesto. He simply announced that *because* he had come, the *kingdom* had come – and it would move out from Jerusalem in surprising ways. Not by might but by the subterfuge of lives lived for King Jesus.

And what he visibly displayed through his own unexpected, unconventional emergence into human history, we can now see happening in miniature in our own lives when we – his people, his kingdom agents – act under his orders in the everyday places we’re called to serve as ambassadors for this kingdom.

Like Jesus we are enemies of the world’s broken system, those who stand against the injustice of a broken world. But as we will see later, the world is ruled (falsely and temporarily) by Satan – yet we live in allegiance to King Jesus. So the way we show our allegiance to God and to his kingdom is primarily under radar and out of sight, composed of small measures that mask their enormous significance. Instead of overwhelming the world with the might of our arsenals and arguments – a “shock and awe” approach designed to undermine the enemy’s will or ability to resist – God leads us to a different way of living and thinking.

More creative.

More persuasive.

More subversive.”

⁷¹ See notes 157 and 159 of chapter 3 and note 58 of chapter 4 for more discussion on the topic.

⁷² The narrative on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24) comes to mind, as Jesus addresses their differing conceptual view of the Messiah.

⁷³ See 2.2.1.2.2, 4.3.6, 4.4, and 4.5 for more introductory comments on identity-based conflict.

⁷⁴ See 4.3.1.1, 4.3.1.2, and 4.3.3.1 for previous discussion on identity in Philemon.

⁷⁵ Oxford English Dictionary (2017) also defines *identity* as “The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness”, and Keyes (2017:loc 125-130) echoes this conceptual notion in his description of identity: “The word ‘identity’ literally means absolute sameness. It comes from the same root as ‘identical.’ When it is used psychologically, ‘identity’ refers more to a self-sameness, internal cohesion, and self-respect. Finding your identity is therefore not like finding a lost shoe or glove, nor is it coming up with a perfect character description or definition of your-self. It is found rather in living in the midst of a constantly changing inner and outer world and growing in a sense of peace with oneself, with

God, and with other people. As such, it is a continual process of housecleaning, consolidation, and reorganization.” However, when referenced in this research, it is viewed as defined in 4.3.3.1 and 5.3.4.1.

⁷⁶ Castells (2010:6-7) also distinguishes *identity* from *roles* which are defined by society whereas identity is a “source of meaning”, and adds that “identities organize the meaning, while roles organize the functions”.

⁷⁷ For example, a child’s identity is formed throughout their childhood by the influence of the parents, society, religion, and nation. It is very difficult to break away from this influence, and yet it is what happens during the teen years as the young person struggles with seeking their own way within their identity or by choosing a different identity. In struggling so, they are often considered to be rebellious.

⁷⁸ This is not a reference to schizophrenia.

⁷⁹ He elaborates more on these three categories in pages 8-12.

⁸⁰ See 3.1.5 for the beginning of the discussion and note 48 in 4.3.1.1 for the significance of this discussion.

⁸¹ See note 53 in 3.1.5 for further details.

⁸² While there is a progression of revelation in regards to the identities of Paul and Philemon, only Onesimus experiences a change in identity. Paul hopes to see a prioritization of identities in Philemon’s life, but his identity doesn’t change. Paul could have acted upon his authoritative identity but chose not to do so, and instead acted as a brother to Philemon.

⁸³ This is not explicitly stated in the text, but assumed as part of the narrative based on a number of clues, and this point has been discussed and demonstrated in chapter 3.

⁸⁴ Experience has brought Rothman (2012a:viii) to this conclusion: “Identity-based conflict is arguably the most important and challenging problem of our increasingly global world in which similarities and interdependencies across groups and nations compete against polarizing differences and antagonisms”. He employs the use of questions to illustrate the difference in levels of conflict where *what* questions are about resources, *what for* questions are about goals, and *why* questions are about identity (p. 13). This links the purposes of chapters four and five. Chapter four explored *why* Paul went about communicating with Philemon in the way that he did, and chapter five is about the contributions to biblical theology which include material on identity-based conflict which demands answers to the *why* question. Rothman’s book (2012) dedicates chapter 2 to the *why* question where Friedman *et al.* (2012:27) explains the significance of the *why* question in identity-based conflict: “[W]e believe that the power of ‘why’ stems, at least in part, from a fundamental change it encourages about the way one thinks about oneself and about ones’ relationship with others – that is, identity”.

⁸⁵ His perspective is based on seeking to resolve this kind of conflict on multi-national levels. Conversely, the perspective of this research is on biblical theology which is no less volatile but certainly different in scope.

⁸⁶ Context is provided by Meyers and Wessels (2017:5): “My person – my individuality – is at risk and I cannot lose...It is a volatile kind of conflict that cannot be ignored, nor is it willing to be left unresolved. Since the identity is at stake, the individual will take whatever steps are necessary to secure his identity. While achieving that security may not resolve the issue in its entirety, it will resolve the issue for that individual.” And Rothman (1997:9) adds this important aspect: “Compromise in particular is commonly viewed as a primary goal of negotiation or problem solving. In identity conflicts, trying to compromise at the outset may be counter-productive, or impossible, because what is at stake are people’s existential needs and values. Compromising over such essential concerns as safety, dignity, control over destiny, or ultimately over identity, is out of the question. These things are not up for bargaining.”

⁸⁷ For more discussion on the nature of identity-based conflict, see Meyers and Wessels (2017:5-7).

⁸⁸ For perspective, here are some theological positions that often become identity-based conflicts: KJV only position, Calvinism, Reformed vs. Dispensational, Eschatology, Lordship salvation vs. Free Grace, etc. The inclusion of these doesn’t mean that the discussion on these always is identity-based, but it often becomes so and frequently when someone is least prepared to respond properly.

⁸⁹ She explains this as “personal value systems” and “describes those aspects of an individual that he or she considers important, has control over, and that can be used to enhance the self. These thoughts form the essence of an individual’s self-concept, attitudes, and beliefs” (p. 6, 7).

⁹⁰ She explains this as “an individual’s ability to perceive him- or herself in the way that others perceive him or her” (p. 7). She distinguishes this from personal identity by stating that “personal identity demands the ‘sameness’ of a person, whereas social identity focuses on identifying ourselves with others based on social affiliations, religion, and nationalities” (p. 8). She summarizes her idea by noting that “if there is confusion and conflict between these two ‘selves,’ then an individual faces conflict (p. 52).

⁹¹ Her study is on how *dialogue* can resolve the conflict between these identities of an individual.

⁹² This statement is in reference to the work of Keyes and Breaux. Shrestha makes no such intimation.

⁹³ Paul does so because Onesimus has no forum to do so.

⁹⁴ Ephesians 4:1-3 reads: “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.

⁹⁵ The crux of the issue is that spiritual character matters, but even a person of great spiritual character will act in accordance with what they identify, unless pertinent information is obtained and considered. In the case of Philemon, how can he be expected to act differently than a slave owner would unless he had different information that impacted his actions?

⁹⁶ For a great overview of this issue, see White’s (1995) book: *The King James Only Controversy*. For an opposing viewpoint, see Fuller’s (1975) book: *Which Bible?* And for more amicable discussion, see Williams’ (1999) book: *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Men*.

⁹⁷ For a more in-depth exploration of this issue, see Meyers and Wessels’ (2017:10-12) article: *Resolving Identity-based Conflict for Believers*.

⁹⁸ Management is the reference point, rather than resolution, for resolution is beyond the control of the person implementing the principles (see notes 12, 22, and 23 in 1.2.1). The goal is to see resolution, but that is unknown at this point. In the case of Philemon, Paul put forward all that he could for Philemon, on behalf of Onesimus, but how it ended is unknown in truth, although its inclusion in the canon lends credibility to the notion that it was resolved.

⁹⁹ Onesimus’ engagement of Paul for this task may have been unintentional or intentional, but that is unknown from the Scriptures. However, it happened, as Paul intercedes with Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.

¹⁰⁰ For a modern example, see Kimbro’s (s.a.) essay on *When Conflict Comes to Your Church*.

¹⁰¹ White’s (2004:33) statement is typical of the thinking available at present: “Identity-based conflict is a very complex phenomenon requiring a flexibility of approaches”. The question that has been ignored or at least not investigated is: “What does the Bible have to say about this kind of conflict?”

¹⁰² Its title is *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict in Nations, Organizations, and Communities*.

¹⁰³ Published in 2012, it is called *From Identity-Based Conflict to Identity-Based Cooperation: The ARIA Approach in Theory and Practice*.

¹⁰⁴ In his newest book, Rothman (2012b:3-19) adds to variations called ARIA-CE (conflict engagement) and ARIA-AE (action evaluation).

¹⁰⁵ See Meyers and Wessels (p. 13) for more information.

¹⁰⁶ As Matthew 5 and 18 demonstrate, the ultimate goal is restoration, but the reality is that the other person cannot be manipulated into responding in kind, and so if that person doesn’t want to resolve the conflict, then managing the conflict comes into play.

¹⁰⁷ It is beyond the mandate of this study to explore further Rothman’s model, but this overview is included to demonstrate the difficulty for a believer to implement it. There needs to be other models for believers to use that are grounded in the Word of God. That is not to suggest that nothing in Rothman’s model is beneficial to believers, but only that the model as a whole is unworkable for believers.

¹⁰⁸ For a greater explanation of her approach, see Annexure.

¹⁰⁹ This term is a newer one that both recognizes the failure of methods to actually bring resolution to conflict, and also notes that engagement begins the process of transforming the conflict into acceptable levels.

¹¹⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of this approach to identity-based conflict see Meyers and Wessels (2017).

¹¹¹ The application of this cross-cultural approach to Acts 17 needs to be further explored.

¹¹² Some other potential passages to explore are John 4; Acts 2, 25; 1 Corinthians 3 and 9.

¹¹³ It is considered *arbitrary* because there is no previous discussion on conflict’s place within biblical theology.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This research began with a discussion about the significance of conflict in relationships¹ – it surfaces the depth of that relationship. In that regard, the observed difficulty was that very little has been written on conflict from a theological or biblical perspective, and what has been written is often from a skewed perspective – one in which conflict is viewed as solely sinful. What would be advantageous then is a biblical theology of conflict which addresses this topic, perspective, and thematic element from the text of Scripture. In seeking to rectify that missing component, the book of Philemon was presented as a beginning point, for it provides an illustration of how Paul responded to a very significant conflict. There are varying opinions about the content and narrative of Philemon, so in order to provide clarity to the discussion, an exploration of the key conflict dynamics and themes was posed as a way to see the content of the narrative more objectively. The goal, then, was to gain a better understanding of conflict, a better understanding of the narrative of Philemon, and to see if there are aspects that contribute to the development of a biblical theology of conflict through the text of Philemon.

6.1 Critical observations

In order to have an informed discussion on conflict, it must first be defined. Unfortunately, theologians have largely ignored this undertaking and have frequently built theological structures and teachings based upon an assumed definition of conflict. Hence, a working definition of conflict was provided in order to facilitate that definitional discussion: *conflict is when something is encountered, creating a struggle over how to respond to that encounter*. It was not a subjective enterprise – forming what works for this research – but it was based upon the work of other disciplines,² and then filtered through the grid of the Word of God. Besides demonstrating the feasibility of the proposed definition, that grid demonstrated that conflict began prior to the fall of man. Furthermore, Jesus used conflict to accomplish His purposes – sometimes creating conflict, sometimes resolving conflict, and sometimes even avoiding conflict. The point is that while someone’s sin can certainly create conflict, what is vital to understand is that it is not sinful to experience conflict. What, in fact, may be sinful is the response to conflict.

Before considering the conflict dynamics and themes of Philemon,³ an historical overview of the interpretation of the book of Philemon was presented. This was not done to defend nor condemn certain explanations of the meaning of the narrative. Instead, this was undertaken to validate the necessity of the narrative perspective in truly understanding the conflict expressed in the letter. Speculation was rendered as regards to the likelihood that some of the various interpretations of Philemon had been provided in an effort to remove the ambiguities of the

letter. The removal of such ambiguities is neither needed nor necessarily beneficial to the understanding of the conflict. In fact, the ambiguities aid an understanding of the book in two ways. First, it gets people thinking about and creates a subversive mentality in regards to the current narrative – maybe things ought to be different. Second, it lays the groundwork for exploring the conflict dynamics and themes used in the letter – it gets the reader thinking in terms of *why*. Why did Paul approach the conflict via his chosen path? However, what was clearly established was the viability of the working definition in meshing with the narrative of Philemon, whether using a modern or ancient interpretative construct.⁴

Normally, when someone thinks about the book of Philemon or reads some material on the content of Philemon, the focal point becomes some sort of view of slavery.⁵ However, as has been demonstrated via the exploration of the dynamics and themes, the fundamental conflict varies from that perception in that Paul could have addressed slavery, if that was his focus. Instead, he didn't, because his focus was upon the identities of the main characters and particularly of the change in identity of Onesimus. Philemon was unaware of that change in identity, and Paul's concern was that without such knowledge, when Onesimus showed up at Philemon's door, Philemon would simply act in accordance with his identity as a slave owner,⁶ while remaining a godly man. Those two identities are not contradictory as some might suppose. Paul has several times addressed the actions and attitude required for a godly master (or a godly slave),⁷ and the reason for this is that the question of slavery is not the most important issue – it is simply the occasion. The more significant issue is godliness in the midst of someone's circumstances – vexing as they may be.⁸ Since Philemon had consistently demonstrated godliness, and since Onesimus had demonstrated to Paul his godliness, Paul wanted to see the reconciliation of these two brothers in Christ. In order for this goal to be accomplished, Paul had to find a way to open Philemon's eyes to the changed identity of Onesimus without attacking the identity of Philemon as a slave master (as repugnant as that may be to the modern sensibility).⁹ If Paul attacked Philemon's slave master identity, he would be running counter to the accepted practice of the world in that day as well as to question what the Word of God never questions.¹⁰ Moreover, the superior issue was reconciliation and not manumission. Therefore, Paul employed the chosen dynamics and themes¹¹ in order to circumvent any likely identity issues for Philemon. In modern jargon, this action was a viable means of confronting identity-based conflict. Apart from the book's inclusion in the canon of Scripture, it is unknown how the conflict was resolved, but the ending leaves no doubt in the mind of Paul – Philemon would act in accordance with his spiritual familial identity and refresh the heart of Paul by treating Onesimus as a brother in Christ (as if Paul were standing there – v. 17).

This is a different outlook on the narrative of the book; one where conflict is not automatically viewed as negative nor sinful – it is an opportunity for a godly response rather than a sinful condition in need of immediate excise. What follows then is determining how a person can respond in godliness to their circumstances, even if those circumstances never change. Whether or not Philemon manumitted Onesimus, Philemon could still respond with godliness to the previous wrongs of Onesimus, and Onesimus could humbly and obediently serve his master. The church that met in Philemon's home, sister churches, and even the universal church could all benefit from this beautiful narrative of intercession on behalf of brothers in Christ who were deeply entrenched in an identity-robbing enterprise that was beyond their singular ability to change. However, it was one that could be impacted by acting in accordance with their identity in Christ. While it is axiomatic that godly people do godly things, yet without the correct information, they may act in a way that a modern perspective condemns, but would be entirely natural in those circumstances. And yet, Paul understood that Philemon could rise above his circumstances, if he understood the facts about his former slave.¹²

This interplay within Paul's letter provides foundational items for believers today to begin the discussion of a biblical theology of conflict; one where conflict is seen as normal, inescapable, and beneficial. Without this information, believers today will continue to act in a way that is routine to them but lacking in a correct perception. The goal is to provide a biblical understanding of conflict that enlightens all actions in light of man's accountability to God. This truth may demand a complete re-thinking of orthodox theology as it touches upon conflict. It may result in simply augmenting of conclusions, but it will hopefully occasion the re-evaluating of theology's understanding of conflict and its implications, moving from an assumed definition to an informed definition.

The following challenges indicate the results of this study that specifically contribute to a discussion of a biblical theology of conflict. They also describe how gaps in current research have been addressed, as well as what further steps need to be taken to utilise this research.

6.2 Challenge of definition

Christendom can no longer operate under an assumed definition of conflict, especially one that often automatically defines it negatively. A working definition has been provided that hopefully others will consider, challenge, improve upon, and most importantly consider its ramifications. An enhanced definition has also been supplied to demonstrate how the discussions can move forward in an informed manner.¹³ If this challenge is not accepted, then a vital aspect of biblical relationships within the Body of Christ is ignored, misunderstood, and misrepresented, impacting countless passages of Scripture.

6.3 Challenge for understanding Philemon

Slavery can no longer have a stranglehold on the book of Philemon and its understanding. It is obviously a factor, but not the only factor, nor the foremost one. The conflict dynamics and themes demonstrate a more significant issue – one of identity. That understanding provides a simple correspondence with the narrative and doesn't require any sort of manipulation of facts, intentions, or explanations in order to gain understanding from the text. However, this perspective justifiably doesn't address the slavery issue that many are wont to tackle. To do so would be to say more than the text says. If this challenge is ignored, then an extensive text on resolving conflict is squandered.

6.4 Challenge for Biblical Theology

An entire book of the Bible is dedicated to discussing conflict; that idea has to be considered in the examination of biblical theology. Otherwise, biblical theology is operating at a disadvantage and drawing incomplete conclusions. This research has contributed a working definition of conflict that can be used to explore and inform other conflicts in Scripture. It has augmented the normal understanding of conflict to view it in a much more positive light. It has demonstrated that the book of Philemon can be understood in a different way that highlights the central issue of conflict and informs believers on how to respond to conflict in a better way. Finally, it has generated a discussion of a modern paradigm – identity-based conflict – that needs to be considered by biblical theologians and scholars; otherwise, the world will provide that information and influence. As was demonstrated in chapter 5, there are not many options for believers at present in the discussion. While one of them does fall within the biblical parameters and also contributes to the discussion of biblical theology, the cross-cultural approach has not sprung from the text, and more exploration needs to be done in that regard. If this challenge to develop a biblical theology of conflict is discounted, then a misunderstanding of conflict will be perpetuated, its impact upon the metanarratives of Scripture are missed, and prescriptive instruction from the Word of God is not in the hands of believers.

This contrast in how one views conflict is aptly summarised by Patterson (2003:3): “So it seems to me that the fundamental question for churches is not, ‘How can we be free of conflict?’ but rather, ‘How can we handle conflict, as soon as it arises, in the right way?’”. That, in essence, is what this research has sought to provide from the text of Scripture itself. When one looks at the conflict dynamics and themes in the book of Philemon, it is the contention of this researcher that such an answer is furnished – this is an appropriate way to respond to this kind of conflict. We ignore the information that the Bible provides at our own peril! So let us use the example in Philemon to pursue the right way to respond to the conflicts of life.

6.5 Endnotes

¹ Relationships are at the core of the Body of Christ, since man is made in the image of God

² Much more has been discussed about these disciplines and their contributions, but that significance lies in providing a framework for this research and not so much in the conclusions attained.

³ This methodology was chosen because it springs from the narrative of the text and is not imposed upon the text.

⁴ The only one that doesn't match is Knox's view where he adds Archippus to the equation.

⁵ Some provide an excuse as to why Paul didn't address the issue; some provide an explanation of how Paul did provide that oblique recrimination; others alter the narrative in order to adequately address the issue.

⁶ In doing so, Philemon would miss out on the larger picture and the opportunity to experience the brotherhood (and fellowship) of Onesimus.

⁷ Those passages are Ephesians 6:5–9, Colossians 3:22–4:1, 1 Timothy 6:1–2, and 1 Peter 2:18–25.

⁸ In this narrative instance, Onesimus might be vexed as a slave, and Philemon might be vexed as an injured slave owner.

⁹ If Paul had attacked Philemon's identity, he likely would have gained his compliance but not necessarily from the heart, but rather, by manipulation. As seen in verses 8-10, Paul preferred to gain Philemon's willing submission (v. 14). This creates a higher level of motivation and relationship.

¹⁰ In fact, throughout the OT, God uses many slaves to impact the lives of others in significant and eternal ways. Joseph, in Potiphar's house, is an example. While modern sensibilities are offended with this status, and rightly so, what cannot be lost in the discomfort is that fact that many other circumstances are offensive and humiliating – a modern example is the persecute believer who is disparaged (and even endangered) at the hand of his kinsman. God still asks of that persecuted believer to live a godly life in the midst of those circumstances (2 Ti 3:12), sometimes with no prospect of relief or change in circumstances.

¹¹ Much more has been discussed about these dynamics and themes, but their significance lies in their use to circumvent the potential identity-based issues. Paul could have precisely specified what action Philemon was to discharge, but he didn't. Why? The dynamics and themes used demonstrate that Paul had a bigger issue at hand.

¹² This truth has historical implications as numerous godly individuals, under Apartheid and in the Deep South, treated those, who some considered beneath their station, with respect, love, and familial attitude. Yet, when they were out from under these oppressive powers, only then did they realize the horror of what was actually happening. Like Philemon, their poverty was knowledge. Armed with the right knowledge, they might have acted differently. This is not in any way to excuse wrongs done, but as in the case with Philemon, once he had the correct information, he now had a conflict over how he should respond to the return of Onesimus. Without this information, he was operating under a wrong assumption because he didn't know any differently. And if Paul had confronted his identity as a slave owner, Philemon would have defended himself because that is all he knew – he would protect what is known over what is unknown. Even though, when his knowledge was expanded, he could no longer defend such actions.

¹³ The expanded definition demonstrates how context can be provided to the definition in various situations: Conflict is when something is encountered (real or imagined), creating a struggle (within and/or without) over how to respond (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally) to that encounter leading to the possibility of growth (via conflict resolution or conflict management).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abshire, J. 2009. *Forgiveness: a commentary on Philemon*. Houston, TX: Lucid Books.

Abu-Nimer, M. 2003. Foreword. (*In* LeBaron, M. *Bridging cultural conflicts: a new approach for a changing world*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p. xi-xiv).

Adam, P.J.H. 2000. Preaching and biblical theology. (*In* Alexander, T.D. & Rosner, B.S., eds. *New dictionary of biblical theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Akin, P. 2017a. The number one reason missionaries leave the field. <https://christianindex.org/number-one-reason-missionaries-leave-field/> Date of access: 11 Sept. 2017.

Akin, P. 2017b. The number one reason missionaries go home. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-number-one-reason-missionaries-go-home> Date of access: 11 Sept. 2017b.

Alexander, T.D., Köstenberger, A.J., & Schreiner, T.R., eds. 2015-?????. *Biblical theology for Christian proclamation*. [40 volume series]. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.

Alban Institute. 2012. Unconventional wisdom: is conflict a bad thing? <https://alban.org/archive/unconventional-wisdom-is-conflict-a-bad-thing/> Date of access: 06 Oct. 2016.

Allison, G.R. 2011. *Historical theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Aminu, D. & Marfo, C. 2010. Managing workplace conflict in the school environment: Challenges, rewards and the way forward. *Journal of language, technology & entrepreneurship in Africa*, 2(2):31-48.

Anderson, S.R., Anderson, S.A., Palmer, K.L., Mutchler, M.S. & Baker, L.K. 2011. Defining high conflict. *The American journal of family therapy*, 39:11–27.

Anderton, C.H. & Carter, J.R. 2011. Conflict datasets: A primer for academics, policymakers, and practitioners. *Defence and peace economics*, 22(1):21-42.

Arndt, W., Gingrich, F.W., Danker, F.W. & Bauer, W. 1979. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature: A translation and adaption of the fourth revised and augmented edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Arzt-Grabner, P. 2010. How to deal with Onesimus?: Paul's solution within the frame of ancient legal and documentary sources. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 113-142).

Augsberger, D.W. 1992. *Conflict mediation across cultures: Pathways and patterns*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Avruch, K., Black, P.W. & Scimecca, J.A. 1991. *Conflict resolution: Cross-cultural perspectives*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Avruch, K. 1998. *Culture & conflict resolution*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

Bailey, R.A. 2012. Introduction to Philemon. <https://www.inthebeginning.org/structure/philemon.pdf> Date of access: 14 Jun. 2017.

Baker, J.C. 2013. *Paul and slavery: A conflict of metaphor and reality*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas. (Thesis – MA).

Balla, P. 2000. Challenges to biblical theology. (*In* Alexander, T.D. & Rosner, B.S., eds. *New dictionary of biblical theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Barclay, J.M.G. 1991. Paul, Philemon and the dilemma of Christian slave-ownership. *New Testament studies*, 37(2):161-186.

Barth, M. & Blanke, H. 2000. *The letter to Philemon: a new translation with notes and commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Basson, J.L. 2007. *Interpersonal conflict within the blended family: a pastoral study*. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Dissertation – MA).

Bird, M.F. 2009a. Colossians and Philemon. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books. (New Covenant Commentary, Vol.12).

Bird, M.F. 2009b. New Testament theology re-loaded: integrating biblical theology and Christian origin. *Tyndale bulletin*, 60(2):265-291.

Black, D.A. 1995. Linguistics for students of New Testament Greek: a survey of basic components and applications. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Blanco, M. 2014. Seventh-day Adventist pioneers and the epistle to Philemon: an abolitionist perspective. *Davar Logos*, 13(1):77-86.

Blomberg, C. 1992. Matthew. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. (The New American Commentary, Vol. 22).

Bock, D.L. 1994. Introduction. (In Zuck, R.B., ed. A biblical theology of the New Testament. Chicago: Moody Press. p. 11-17).

Bohlander, K.M.H. 2010. Workplace conflict behavior: predictor variables, connection to socialization and structural theories, and distinction from conflict styles. Minneapolis, MN: Walden University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Bookman, D. 1994. The scriptures and biblical counseling. (In MacArther, J.F. & Mack, W.A., eds. Introduction to biblical counseling: a basic guide to the principles and practice of counseling. Dallas, TX: Word. p. 63-97).

Botha, P.J.J. 2010. Hierarchy and Obedience: the legacy of the letter to Philemon. (In Tolmie, D.F., ed. Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 251-272).

Bratcher, R.G. & Nida, E.A. 1977. A handbook on Paul's letters to the Colossians and to Philemon. New York: United Bible Societies.

Breaux, M. 2007. Identity theft: reclaiming who God created you to be [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Brooks, J.A. 1991. Mark. Nashville: Broadman & Holman. (The New American Commentary, Vol. 23).

- Burer, M.H. 2006. Narrative genre: studying the story. (In Bock, D.L. & Fanning, B.M., eds. *Interpreting the New Testament text: introduction to the art and science of exegesis*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. p. 197-219).
- Burse, E. 2015. The puzzling plurals in Philemon. *The journal of applied Christian leadership*, 9(1):10-13.
- Burton, J. 1998. History of conflict resolution. <http://www.natsoc.org.au/resources/news-publications/papers/6.-history-of-conflict-resolution> Date of access: 12 Sept. 2016.
- Burton, J. 2001. Conflict prevention as a political system. *The international journal of peace studies*, 6(1). http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol6_1/Burton2.htm Date of access: 07 Oct. 2016.
- Byron, J. 2009. The epistle to Philemon: Paul's strategy for forging the ties of kinship. (In Oropeza, B.J., Robertson, C.K. & Mohrmann, D.C., eds. *Jesus and Paul: global perspectives in honor of James D. G. Dunn for his 70th birthday*. London: T & T Clark. p. 207-216).
- Callahan, A.D. 1997. *Embassy of Onesimus: the letter of Paul to Philemon*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International.
- Callahan, A.D. 2009. The letter to Philemon. (In Segovia, F.F. & Sugirtharajah, R.S., eds. *A postcolonial commentary on the New Testament writings*. London: T & T Clark. p. 329-337).
- Calvin, J. & Pringle, W. 2010. *Commentaries on the epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]
- Campbell-Lane, Y. 2003. *Inner change: a pastoral-theological study*. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Dissertation – PhD).
- Capobianco, S., Davis, M.H. & Kraus, L.A. 2008. *Conflict Dynamics Profile technical guide*. St. Petersburg, FL: Eckerd College.
- Carson, D.A. 1995a. Current issues in biblical theology: a New Testament perspective. *Bulletin for biblical research*, 5:17-41.
- Carson, D.A., ed. 1995b-?????. *New studies in biblical theology*. [35 volume series]. Leicester: Apollos.

Carson, D.A. 2000. Systematic theology and biblical theology. (In Alexander, T.D. & Rosner, B.S., eds. New dictionary of biblical theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Caspersen, D. 2015. Changing the conversation: the 17 principles of conflict resolution. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Castells, M. 2010. The power of identity: the information age: economy, society, and culture (Vol. 2). 2nd ed: with a new preface. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

Chand, S. 2015. 5 basic types of conflict situations found in an organisation – explained! <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/management/5-basic-types-of-conflict-situations-found-in-an-organisation-explained/3445/> Date of access: 23 Aug 2016.

Childs, B.S. 1970. Biblical theology in crisis. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

Cho, B. 2014. Subverting slavery: Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul's gospel of reconciliation. *Evangelical quarterly*, 86(2):99-115.

Chrysostom, J. 1889. Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the epistle of St. Paul the apostle to Philemon. (In Schaff, P. ed., Tweed, J. & Schaff, P. trans., Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, vol. 13). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Clarke, A.D. & Tucker, J.B. 2014. Social history and social therapy in the study of social identity. (In Tucker, J.B. & Baker, C.A., eds. T&T Clark handbook to social identity in the New Testament. London: Bloomsbury. p. 41-58).

Conway, C.M. 2009. Supplying the missing body of Onesimus: readings of Paul's letter to Philemon. (In Sabbath, R.S. ed., Sacred tropes: Tanakh, New Testament, and Qur'an as literature and culture. Boston: Brill. p. 475-484).

Coser, L.A. 1956. The functions of social conflict: an examination of the concept of social conflict and its use in empirical sociological research. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Cotter, W.J. 2010. "Welcome him as you would welcome me" (Philemon 17): does Paul call for virtue or the actualization of a vision? (In Walters, P., ed. From Judaism to Christianity –

tradition and transition: a *estschrift* for Thomas H. Tobin, S.J., on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. Boston: Brill. p. 185-206).

Crabb, L. 1987. Understanding people. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Dana, D. 2001. Conflict resolution (Briefcase Book Series). McGraw-Hill.

Dana, H.E. & Mantey, J.R. 1955. A manual grammar of the Greek New Testament. Toronto, ON: The Macmillan Company.

De Beer, A. 2008. Confrontation and conflict. (*In* Nieuwenhuizen, C. ed. Entrepreneurial Skills. 2nd ed. Cape Town, SA: Juta and Co., Ltd. p. 209-231).

De Dreu, C.K.W. 2008. The virtue and vice of workplace conflict: food for (pessimistic) thought. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 29(1):5-18.

De Klerk, B. & Van Rensburg, F.J. 2005. Making a sermon: a guide for Reformed exegesis and preaching. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom Theological Publications.

De Villiers, P.G.R. 2010. Moral language in Philemon. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 181-203).

De Vos, C.S. 2001. Once a slave, always a slave?: slavery, manumission and relational patterns in Paul's letter to Philemon. *Journal for the study of the New Testament*, 82:80-105.

De Wet, C.L. 2010. Honour discourse in John Chrysostom's exegesis of the letter to Philemon. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 317-331).

De Wet, C.L. 2016. The punishment of slaves in early Christianity: the views of some selected church fathers. *Acta theologica*, Suppl 23:263-282.

Decock, P.B. 2010. The reception of the letter of Philemon in the early church: Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 273-287).

Dempsey, C.J. & Shapiro, E.J. 2011. Reading the Bible, transforming conflict. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Dictionary.com. 2016. Conflict [online]. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/conflict?s=t> Date of access: 19 Aug. 2016.

Diehl, P.F. 2006. Just a phase?: integrating conflict dynamics over time. *Conflict management and peace science*, 23:199–210.

Doob, L.W. 1998. Foreword. (In Avruch, K., Black, P.W. & Scimecca, J.A., eds. *Conflict resolution: cross-cultural perspectives*. Westport, CT: Praeger. p. ix-x).

Downs, T. & Downs, J. 2010. *Fight fair!: winning at conflict without losing at love*. Chicago, IL: Moody.

Du Plessis, I.J. 2006. How Christians can survive in a hostile social-economic environment: Paul's mind concerning difficult social conditions in the letter to Philemon. (In Van Der Watt, J.G., ed. *Identity, ethics, and ethos in the New Testament*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 387-413).

Dunn, J.D.G. 1996. The epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: a commentary on the Greek text. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. (The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Vol. 12).

Duvall, J. & Hays, J. 2005. *Grasping God's word*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Ehorn, S.M. 2011. Philemon. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. (Evangelical Exegetical Commentary). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Elliott, S.S. 2011. 'Thanks, but no thanks': tact, persuasion, and the negotiation of power in Paul's letter to Philemon. *New Testament studies*, 57(1), p. 51-64.

Elmer, D. 1993. *Cross-cultural conflict: building relationships for effective ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Enns, P.P. 1989. *The Moody handbook of theology*. Chicago, IL: Moody.

Erickson, M.J. 1998. *Christian theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Evans, T. 2011. *Oneness embraced: through the eyes of Tony Evans*. Chicago, IL: Moody.

Fanning, B.M. 2006. Theological analysis: building biblical theology. (*In* Bock, D.L. & Fanning, B.M., eds. *Interpreting the New Testament text: introduction to the art and science of exegesis*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. p. 277-291).

Fee, G.D. 1987. *The first epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Fee, G. & Stuart, D. 1993. *How to read the Bible for all its worth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Fitzgerald, J.T. 2010. Theodore of Mopsuestia on Paul's letter to Philemon. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 333-363).

Fitzmyer, J.A. 2000. *The letter to Philemon: a new translation with introduction and commentary*. New York, NY: Doubleday. (The Anchor Bible Commentaries).

France, R.T. 2002. *The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the Greek text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press. (The New International Greek Testament Commentary).

France, R.T. 2007. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. (New International Commentary on the New Testament).

Friedl, A. 2010. St. Jerome's dissertation on the Letter to Philemon. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 289-316).

Friedman, V.J., Rothman, J. & Withers, B. 2012. The power of why. (*In* Rothman, J., ed. *From identity-based conflict to identity-based cooperation: the ARIA approach in theory and practice*. New York, NY: Springer. p. 21-33).

Frilingos, C. 2000. "For my child, Onesimus": Paul and domestic power in Philemon. *Journal of biblical literature*, 119(1):91-104.

Fuller, D.O., ed. 1975. *Which Bible?* 5th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International Publications.

Furlong, G.T. 2005. *The conflict resolution toolbox: models & maps for analyzing, diagnosing, and resolving conflict*. Mississauga, Ont, CA: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd.

Furnish, V.P. 2013. Philemon. (*In Green, J.B., ed. The New Testament and ethics: a book by book survey.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. p. 76-78).

Gaebelein, F. 1939. Philemon: the gospel of emancipation. Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press.

Gallagher, J.J. & Aschner, M.J. 1963. A preliminary report on analyses of classroom interaction. *Merrill-Palmer quarterly of behavior and development*, 9(3), p. 183-194.

Galtung, J. 2002. Toward peaceful worlds: a guide to peace. *CPS Working Papers*, 3:1-74.

Gangel, K.O. & Canine, S.L. 1992. Communication and Conflict Management. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Ganz, M. 2008. What is public narrative? <http://chutzpahportfolio.yolasite.com/resources/WhatIsPublicNarrative08.pdf> Date of access: 13 Sept. 2017.

Gardoski, K.M. 2007. The *Imago Dei* revisited. *The journal of ministry & theology*, 11(2):5-37.

Gatlin, J., Wysocki, A., Kepner, K., Farnsworth, D. & Clark, J.L. 2015. Understanding conflict in the workplace. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/HR/HR02400.pdf> Date of access: 28 Sept. 2016.

Gerety, C. 2007. The “two book” theory of knowledge. <https://godshammer.wordpress.com/2007/09/24/the-two-book-theory-of-knowledge/> Date of access: 10 Oct. 2016.

Gloer, W.H. & Stepp, P.L. 2008. Reading Paul’s letters to individuals: a literary and theological commentary on Paul’s letters to Philemon, Titus, and Timothy. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Goede, H. 2010. The exhortations to slave-owners in the New Testament: a philological study. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Thesis – PhD).

Goldingay, J. 2000. Biblical narrative and systematic theology. (*In Green, J.B. & Turner, M., eds. Between two horizons: spanning New Testament studies & systematic theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. p. 123-142).

Goldsworthy, G. 2000. Preaching the whole Bible as Christian scripture: the application of biblical theology to expository preaching. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Goldsworthy, G. 2002. Biblical theology as the heartbeat of effective ministry. (*In Hafemann, S.F., ed. Biblical theology: retrospect and prospect. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. p. 280-286*).

Goldsworthy, G. 2008. What is the discipline of biblical theology?
http://sites.silaspartners.com/cc/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598016_CIID2031516,00.html
Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.

Google Sites. 2017. Working definition. <https://sites.google.com/site/narswang/EBook/topic-list/working-definition> Date of access: 21 Feb. 2017.

Grassmick, J.D. 2006. Epistolary Genre. (*In Bock, D.L. & Fanning, B.M., eds. Interpreting the New Testament text: introduction to the art and science of exegesis. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. p. 221-239*).

Greenway, W. 2000. Dynamic beginnings: Getting your story off to a great start.
<http://www.writing-world.com/fiction/greenway1.shtml> Date of access: 06 Oct. 2016.

Gromacki, R. 2002. Stand perfect in wisdom: an exposition of Colossians and Philemon. The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications.

Groom, A.J.R. 1998. Foreword. (*In Tidwell, A., Conflict resolved?: a critical assessment of conflict resolution. New York, NY: Continuum. p. vii-ix*).

Grudem, W. 1994. Systematic theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Hafemann, S.J. 2002. Biblical theology. (*In Hafemann, S.F., ed. Biblical theology: retrospect and prospect. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. p. 15-21*).

Hale, F. 2008. Exploiting Philemon: observations on the captivity of New Testament interpretation. *The South African Baptist journal of theology*, 17(1):8-15.

Hannah, J.D. 2001. Our legacy: history of Christian doctrine. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress.

Harrill, J.A. 2006. Slaves in the New Testament: literary, social, and moral dimensions. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.

Harris, M.J. 2000. Philemon. (*In* Alexander, T.D. & Rosner, B.S., eds. *New dictionary of biblical theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Harris, M.J. 2010. *Exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament: Colossians and Philemon*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.

Harris, W.H., III, Ritzema, E., Brannan, R., Mangum, D., Dunham, J., Reimer, J.A. & Wierenga, M., eds. 2012. *The Lexham English Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Havenga, W. 2004. *Comparative analysis of conflict dynamics within private and public sector organizations*. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Thesis – PhD).

Hays, R.B. 2002. *The faith of Jesus Christ: the narrative substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Heil, J.P. 2001. The chiastic structure and meaning of Paul's letter to Philemon. *Biblica*, 82(2):178-206.

Heitler, S.M. 1990. *From conflict to resolution: skills and strategies for individuals, couples, and family therapy*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Hendricks, H.G. & Hendricks, W.D. 1991. *Living by the book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

Hesselgrave, D. 2005. *Paradigms in conflict: 10 key questions in Christian missions today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

Hoban, T.J. s.a. *Managing conflict: a guide for watershed partnerships*.
<http://www2.ctic.purdue.edu/KYW/Brochures/ManageConflict.html> Date of access: 03 Oct. 2016.

Hoehner, H.W., Comfort, P.W. & Davids, P.H. 2008. *Cornerstone biblical commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House.

House, P.R. 2002. *Biblical theology and the wholeness of scripture*. (*In* Hafemann, S.F., ed. *Biblical theology: retrospect and prospect*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. p. 267-279).

- Hutchinson, J.C. 1998. The design argument in scientific discourse: historical-theological perspective from the seventeenth century. *Journal of the evangelical theological society*, 41(1):84-105.
- Huttenlocker, K. 1988. *Conflict and caring*. Newburgh, IN: Trinity Press.
- Jaabosigo, M.H. 2012. A model for handling conflict among school teachers in Moses Kotane East. Mafikeng: NWU. (Mini-Dissertation – MEd).
- Jamir, T. 2011. Origen's rhetoric of identity formation: Origen's Paulinism in contrast to Hellenism. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Dissertation – PhD).
- Jeal, R.R. 2008. Blending two arts: Rhetorical words, rhetorical pictures, and social formation in the Letter to Philemon. *Sino-Christian studies*, 5:9-38.
- Johnson, M.V., Noel, J.A. & Williams, D.K., eds. 2012. *Onesimus our brother: reading religion, race, and culture in Philemon*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Johnson, P.C. 1966. *The epistles to Titus and Philemon: a study manual*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Jones, R.D. 2012. *Pursuing peace: a Christian guide to handling our conflicts*. [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>
- Jordaan, P.J. & Nolte, S.P. 2010. Reading Philemon as therapeutic narrative. *HTS teologiese studies/theological studies*, 66(1), Art. #307.
- Joubert, S. 2000. *Paul as benefactor: reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul's collection*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Joy, D.M. 2000. *Re-bonding: preventing and restoring damaged relationships*. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House.
- Jugenheimer, D.W. & Kelley, L.D. 2009. *Advertising Management*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Kaiser, W.C., Jr. 1981. *Toward an exegetical theology: biblical exegesis for preaching and teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Keazirian, E.M. 2014. Peace and peacemaking in Paul and the Greco-Roman world. New York, NY: Peter Lang. (Studies in biblical literature, 145).

Kennedy, K.A. 2010. Conflict spirals, bias perceptions, and recommended interventions. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Keyes, D. 2017. Beyond identity: finding your 'self' in the image and character of God [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Kidwell, J.H. 2009. Elucidating the image of God: an analysis of the *Imago Dei* in the theology of Colin E. Gunton and John (Jean) D. Zizioulas. Vancouver: Regent College (Dissertation – MCS).

Kilmann, R. 2015. Using the Thomas-Kilmann mode instrument. <http://www.kilmanniagnostics.com/using-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument> Date of access: 27 Nov. 2015.

Kimbro, D. s.a. When conflict comes to your church: and it will! [Essay]. (Unpublished).

Kimsey, W.D., Trobaugh, S.S., McKinney, B.C., Hoole, E.R., Thelk, A.D. & Davis, S.L. 2006. Seven-phase model of conflict: practical applications for conflict mediators and leaders. *Conflict resolution quarterly*, 23(4):487–499.

Kirk-Duggan, C.A. 2006. Conflict. (In Doob Sakenfeld, K., ed. The new interpreter's dictionary of the Bible. Volume 1: A-C. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. p. 716-717).

Kittel, G., Friedrich, G. & Bromiley, G.W. 1985. Theological dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

Klink, E.W. & Lockett, D.R. 2012. Understanding biblical theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Knight, M. 2010. *Wirkungsgeschichte*, reception history, reception theory. *Journal for the study of the New Testament*, 33(2):137–146.

Knox, J. 1960. Philemon among the letters of Paul. London: Collins.

Köstenberger, A.J., ed. 2009-?????. Biblical theology of the New Testament. [8 volume series]. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Köstenberger, A.J. 2012. The present and future of biblical theology. *Themelios*, 37(3):445-464.

Krathwohl, D.R. 2002. A revision of Bloom's taxonomy: an overview. *Theory into practice*, 41(4), p. 212-218.

Kraybill, R. 2008. Style matters: trainer's guide to the Kraybill conflict style inventory. Harrisonburg, VA: Riverhouse ePress.

Kreitzer, L.J. 2008. Philemon. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix Press.

Kriesberg, L. 2007. Constructive conflicts: From escalation to resolution. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Kriesberg, L. 2009. The evolution of conflict resolution. (*In* Bercovitch, J., Kremenjuk, V. & Zartman, I.W., eds. *The Sage handbook of conflict resolution*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 15-32).

Lacey, H. 2000. How to resolve conflict in the workplace. Burlington, VT: Gower.

Ladd, G.E. 1993. A theology of the New Testament. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

Lampe, P. 2010. Affects and emotions in the rhetoric of Paul's letter to Philemon: a rhetorical-psychological interpretation. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 61-77).

Larson, K. 2000. I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers. (Holman New Testament Commentary, Vol. 9).

LeBaron, M. 2003. Bridging cultural conflicts: a new approach for a changing world. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lea, T. & Black, D. 2003. *The New Testament: its background and message* [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Leadership Resources. 2014. Dig and discover hermeneutical principles: the core principles. Palos Heights, IL: Leadership Resources International.

Leas, S. 1992. The varieties of religious strife. (In Dobson, E.G., Shelly, M. & Leas, S., eds. Mastering conflict & controversy. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press p. 83-93).

Leas, S. & Kittlaus, P. 1973. Church fights: managing conflict in the local church. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.

Lederach, J.P. 1991. Of nets, nails, and problems: the folk language of conflict resolution in a Central American setting. (In Avruch, K., Black, P.W. & Scimecca, eds. Conflict resolution: cross-cultural perspectives. Westport, CT: Praeger p. 165-186).

Lederach, J.P. 2003. The little book of conflict transformation. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Lenski, R.C.H. 1998a. The interpretation of St. Mark's gospel. USA: Hendrickson Publishers. (Commentary on the New Testament).

Lenski, R.C.H. 1998b. The interpretation of St. Paul's epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon. USA: Hendrickson Publishers. (Commentary on the New Testament).

Lenski, R.C.H. 1998c. The interpretation of St. Paul's first and second epistle to the Corinthians. USA: Hendrickson Publishers. (Commentary on the New Testament).

Lewis, L.A. 1985. 'As a beloved brother': the function of family language in the letters of Paul. CT: Yale. (Dissertation – PhD).

Lim, S.U. 2016. The otherness of Onesimus: re-reading Paul's letter to Philemon from the margins. *Theology today*, 73(3):215-229.

Longenecker, B.W. 2002. Narrative interest in the study of Paul: retrospective and prospective. (In Longenecker, B.W., ed. Narrative dynamics in Paul. London: Westminster John Knox Press p. 3-16).

Lorritts, C.W. 2017. Conflict [email with Jim Jenks]. 23 May, Johannesburg.

- Louw, D. 2000. *A pastoral hermeneutics of care and encounter*. Wellington, SA: Lux Verbi.BM.
- Louw, J.P. & Nida, E.A. 1996. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]
- Lund, N.W. 1930. The presence of Chiasmus in the New Testament. *The journal of religion*, 10(1):74-93.
- Lyons, K.D. 2006. Paul's confrontation with class: the letter to Philemon as counter-hegemonic discourse. *Crosscurrents*, 56(1):116-132.
- Maalouf, A. 2003. *In the name of identity: violence and the need to belong*. New York: Penguin Books.
- MacDonald, J. 2005. *Always resolve everything now: the key to lasting relationships*. Elgin, IL: Walk in the Word. [3 CD Set].
- MacDonald, K.V., Bombard, Y., Deal, K., Trudeau, M., Leighl, N. & Marshall, D.A. 2016. The influence of gene expression profiling on decisional conflict in decision making for early-stage breast cancer chemotherapy. *European journal of cancer*, 61:85–93.
- Maier, G. 1994. *Biblical hermeneutics*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Mallappa, V. & Kumar, M. 2015. Conflict management in management library professionals. *Journal of library & information technology*, 35(3):200-206.
- Malphurs, A. 2003. *Being leaders: the nature of authentic Christian leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Manyedi, S.K. 2006. *Causes, effects, and management of conflict among educators in the Mafikeng district*. Mafikeng: NWU. (Dissertation – MA).
- Marchal, J.A. 2011. The usefulness of an Onesimus: the sexual use of slaves and Paul's letter to Philemon. *Journal of biblical literature*, 130(4):749-770.

- Marohl, M.J. 2014. Letter writing and social identity. (*In* Tucker, J.B. & Baker, C.A., eds. T&T Clark handbook to social identity in the New Testament. London: Bloomsbury. p. 93-104).
- Marr, H. 2016. 10 fascinating questions answered by biblical theology. <https://blog.logos.com/2016/07/10-fascinating-questions-answered-biblical-theology/> Date of access: 04 Oct 2017.
- Marsh, F.E. 1973. The structural principles of the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.
- Martens, E.A. 1977. Tackling Old Testament theology. *JETS*, 20(2):123-132.
- Mathews, K.A. 1996. Genesis 1-11:26. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman. (The New American Commentary, Vol. 1A).
- Mayer, B.S. 2012. The dynamics of conflict: a guide to engagement and intervention. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mazrui, A.A. 2008. Prologue – Conflict in Africa: an overview. (*In* Nhema, A. & Zeleza, P. T., eds. The roots of African conflicts. Pretoria: Unisa Press. p. 36-50).
- McCoy, B. 2003. Chiasmus: an important structural device commonly found in biblical literature. *Chafer theological seminary journal*, 9(2):18-34.
- McKenzie, J.L. 1974. A theology of the Old Testament. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
- Melick, R.R. 1991. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Nashville: Broadman & Holman. (The New American Commentary, 32).
- Menkel-Meadow, C. 2013. The historical contingencies of conflict resolution. *International journal of conflict engagement and resolution*, 1(1):32-55.
- Menn, J.M. 2016. Biblical theology. http://www.elea.net/books/bibl_theology.pdf Date of access: 18 Sept. 2017.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2015. Conflict [online]. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conflict> Date of Access: 19 Aug, 2016.

Merrill, E.H. 1991. Introduction. (*In* Zuck, R.B. ed. *A biblical theology of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press. p. 1-6).

Meyers, B.H. & Wessels, J.M. 2017. Resolving identity-based conflict for believers. <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxqb2hhbm5lc213ZXNzZWxzGd4OjdmMDk1YjViYmQzM2U2ZWI> Date of access: 25 Oct. 2017.

Metzger, B.M. 1994. *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. London: United Bible Societies.

Mickey, P., & Wilson, R. 1973. *Conflict resolution: a case-study approach to handling parish situations*. New York: Abingdon Press.

Migliore, D.L. 2014. *Philippians and Philemon*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. (*Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*).

Miller, M.D. 2013. *A program of ministry to manage conflict*. Chattanooga, TN: Temple Baptist Seminary. (Thesis – DMin).

Milton, D.R. 2014. *Assessing the dynamics of conflict among nurses in public hospitals*. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Dissertation – MCom).

Mintle, L. 2015. *We need to talk*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Mitchum, K.L. 2014. *A contextualized conflict resolution model for church leaders of Woodlawn Community Outreach Center*. Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University. (Dissertation – DMin).

Moo, D.J. 2008. *The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. (*The Pillar New Testament Commentary*).

Muller, R.A. 1991. *The study of theology: from biblical interpretation to contemporary formulation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Murphy, F.A. 2005. Thomas' commentaries on Philemon, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philippians. (*In* Weinandy, T.G., Keating, D.A. & Yocum, J.P., eds. *Aquinas on scripture: an introduction to his biblical commentaries*. London: T&T Clark International. p. 167-196).

Murphy, G.L. 2006. Reading God's two books. *Perspectives on science and Christian faith*, 58(1):64-67.

National Road Church of Christ. s.a. Relationship killers: #7 unresolved conflict. http://www.christ4today.com/news2.asp?news_id=206 Date of access: 31 Aug. 2016.

Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C.M. & Metzger, B.M. 1993. *The Greek New Testament*. 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Nguyen, V.H.T. 2012. Philemon. (*In* Burge, G. M. & Hill, A. E., ed. *The Baker illustrated Bible commentary* [Kindle ed.]). Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Nichol, M. 2014. 7 Types of Narrative Conflict. <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/7-types-of-narrative-conflict/> Date of access: 23 Aug. 2016.

Nish, M.A. 2011. *Realigning: a grounded theory of academic workplace conflict*. Washington, DC: Fielding Graduate University. (Dissertation – PEd).

Nordling, J.G. 2007. The gospel in Philemon. *Concordia theological quarterly*, 71:71-83.

Nordling, J.G. 2010a. Philemon in the context of Paul's travels. *Concordia theological quarterly*, 74:289-305.

Nordling, J.G. 2010b. Some matters favouring the runaway slave hypothesis in Philemon. *Neotestamentica*, 44(1):85-121.

OED Online. 2016. Conflict [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/38898?rskey=NHUReo&result=1> Date of access: 19 Aug. 2016.

OED Online. 2016. Culture [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/45746?rskey=leU4AI&result=1> Date of access: 05 Oct. 2016.

OED Online. 2017. Dynamics [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/58824?redirectedFrom=dynamics> Date of access: 13 June 2017.

OED Online. 2017. Identity [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/91004?redirectedFrom=identity> Date of access: 16 August 2017.

OED Online. 2017. Theme [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/200321?redirectedFrom=themes> Date of access: 13 June 2017.

OED Online. 2016. Metanarrative [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/245263?redirectedFrom=meta-narrative> Date of access: 16 May 2017.

OED Online. 2016. Organization [online]. <http://www.oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/132452?redirectedFrom=organization> Date of access: 05 Oct. 2016.

Osborne, G.R. 1988. Biblical theology. (*In* Elwell, W.A. & Beitzel, B.J., eds. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Osborne, G.R. 1991. *The hermeneutical spiral: a comprehensive introduction to biblical interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Osborne, G.R. 2016. *Colossians & Philemon: Verse by verse* [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Osiek, C. 2000. *Philippians, Philemon*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. (Abingdon New Testament commentaries)

Parrott, L. 1996. *High-maintenance relationships*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

Patterson, B. 1997. *Why I Expect Conflict*. (*In* Shelley, M., ed. *Leading your church through conflict and reconciliation: 30 strategies to transform your ministry*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers).

Patterson, C. 2012. *Dealing with conflict in the church: insight from the New Testament*. London: Bridge Builders.

Petersen, N.R. 1985. *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the sociology of Paul's narrative world*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.

Piper, J. 1971. *The image of God: an approach from biblical and systematic theology*. <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-image-of-god> Date of access: 27 Nov. 2015.

- Poirier, A. 2006. *The peace making pastor: a biblical guide to resolving church conflict*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Pondy, L.R. 1967. Organizational Conflict: concepts and models. *Administrative science quarterly*, 12(2):296–320.
- Pondy, L.R. 1992. Reflections on organizational conflict. *Journal of organizational behaviour*, 13(3):257-261.
- Portaro, S. 1996. *Conflict and a christian life*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.
- Punt, J. 2010. Paul, power and Philemon. “Knowing your place”: a postcolonial reading. (In Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 223-250).
- Punt, J. 2011. Eschatology in Philemon. *Mohr Siebeck*: 403-415.
- Punt, J. 2012. He is heavy...he’s my brother: unravelling fraternity in Paul (Galatians). *Neotestamentica*, 46(1):153-171.
- Punt, J. 2015. *Postcolonial biblical interpretation: reframing Paul*. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in Theology and Religion Series, 20).
- Rahim, M.A. 2002. Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. *The international journal of conflict management*, 13(3):206-235.
- Ramey, W. 2014. Chiasmus: Introduction. <https://www.inthebeginning.org/chiasmus/> Date of access: 14 June 2017.
- Ramey, W. 2017. *NT Greek in diagram: Prison epistles collection*. USA. (NTGreek In Diagram Series, 6).
- Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T. & Miall, H. 2011. *Contemporary conflict resolution*. 3rd ed. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Raubenheimer, J.E. 2008. Philemon’s structure as a ring composition and its implications for interpretation. *South African Baptist journal of theology*, 17:28–40.

Richards, E.R. 2004. Paul and first-century letter writing: secretaries, composition and collection. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Richards, E.R. & O'Brien, B.J. 2016. Paul behaving badly: was the apostle a racist, chauvinist jerk? [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Rienecker, F. 1980. A linguistic key to the Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Rivera, M.E. 1992. Facing unresolved conflicts. Green Forest, AK: New Life Press.

Roberts, D. 2007. Toward a feminist vision: a critical appraisal of conflict resolution theory and methodology. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Robbins, S.P. 1978. "Conflict management" and "Conflict resolution" are not synonymous terms. *California management review*, 21(2):67-75.

Robbins, S.P., Judge, T.A. & Campbell, T.T. 2010. Organizational Behaviour. 13th ed. Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.

Rodgers, T.R. 1995. The panorama of the Old Testament. Newburgh, IN: Trinity Press.

Rosner, B.S. 2000. Biblical theology. (*In* Alexander, T.D. & Rosner, B.S., eds. New dictionary of biblical theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Roth, U. 2014. Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus: a Christian design for mastery. *ZNW*, 105(1): 102-130.

Rothman, J. 1997. Resolving identity-based conflict in nations, organizations, and communities. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Rothman, J. 2012a. Preface. (*In* Rothman, J., ed. From identity-based conflict to identity-based cooperation: the ARIA approach in theory and practice. New York, NY: Springer. p. v-xi).

Rothman, J. 2012b. Engaging the painful past and forging a promising future. (*In* Rothman, J., ed. From identity-based conflict to identity-based cooperation: the ARIA approach in theory and practice. New York, NY: Springer. p. 3-19).

Runde, C. 2016. Leaders and conflict competence. <http://www.conflictdynamics.org/blog/>
Date of access: 03 Oct. 2016.

Runge, S.E. 2008a. The Lexham discourse Greek New Testament: Glossary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Runge, S.E. 2008b. The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament: Introduction, Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Runge, S.E. 2010a. Discourse grammar of the Greek New Testament: A practical introduction for teaching and exegesis. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Runge, S.E. 2010b. The Lexham discourse Greek New Testament: A practical introduction for teaching and exegesis. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Ryrie, C.C. 2005. Biblical theology of the New Testament [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Saarinen, R. 2008. The pastoral epistles with Philemon & Jude. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible).

Sande, K. 2008. The peacemaker: a biblical guide to resolving personal conflict. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Sande, K. & Johnson, K. 2011. Resolving everyday conflict. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Schaller, L.E. 1972. The change agent. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Schultz, R. 2002. What is "canonical" about a canonical biblical theology? (*In* Hafemann, S.F., ed. Biblical theology: retrospect and prospect. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. p. 83-99).

Scobie, C.H.H. 2003. *The ways of our God: an approach to biblical theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

Scudder, T., Patterson, M. & Mitchell, K. 2012. *Have a nice conflict*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shawchuck, N. 1986. *How to manage conflict in the church*. Irvine, CA: Spiritual Growth Resources.

Shrestha, L. 2014. *Dialogue in identity-based conflict (Study of intergroup-dialogue with university students)*. Oregon: Portland State University. (Dissertation – MA).

Snyman, A.H. 2009. Persuasion in Paul's letter to Philemon. *Acta patristica et Byzantina*, 20:178-193.

Song, W. 2015. *Conflict-solving orientation and goal management: effectiveness of opening messages in interpersonal conflict*. Ohio: Ohio State University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Squires, J. 2012. Unresolved conflict: what gives?. *Communication studies undergraduate publications, presentations and projects*. Paper 8.

Squires, J. 2015. Christian conflict: five ways to fight it. <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/christian-conflict> Date of access: 06 Oct 2016.

Staples, L. 2016. *Roots to power: a manual for grassroots organizing*. 3rd edition. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Steele, J.P. 2008. *Conflict efficacy: antecedents and consequences*. Kansas: Kansas State University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Stein, R.H. 1994. *Playing by the rules: a basic guide to interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Stetzer, E. 2012. *Subversive kingdom: living as agents of gospel transformation* [Kindle ed.]. Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Still, T.D. 2011. *Philippians & Philemon*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing. (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary).

Strauch, A. 2011. *If you bite & devour one another*. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth.

Stroup, G.W. 1981. *The promise of narrative theology: recovering the gospel in the church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Styles, E. 2012. Community development toolkit – dealing with conflicts in partnerships: topic summary. <https://cdresources.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/dealing-with-conflicts-in-partnerships-topic-summary-mar26.pdf> Date of access: 09 Sept. 2016.

Sullivan, J. 2016. Four types of conflict in organizations. <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/four-types-conflict-organizations-174.html> Date of access: 09 Sept. 2016.

Tarus, D. 2016. *Imago Dei* in christian theology: the various approaches. *Online international journal of arts and humanities*, 5:18-25.

Tawil, S. & Harley, A. 2004. Education and identity-based conflict: assessing curriculum policy for social and civic reconstruction. (In Braslavsky, C., Tawil, S., Harley, A., International Bureau of Education & Unesco, eds. *Education, conflict and social cohesion*. Geneva: Unesco International Bureau of Education. p. 1-33).

Taylor, N.H. 1995. The social nature of conversion in the early Christian world. (In Esler, P.F., ed. *Modelling early Christianity: social-scientific studies of the New Testament in its context*. London: Routledge. p. 128-136).

Taylor, N.H. 1996. Onesimus: a case study of slave conversion in early Christianity. *Religion & theology*, 3(3):259-281.

Thayer, J.H. 1889. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*. New York: Harper & Brothers. [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

The Foundation Coalition. s.a. *Understanding conflict and conflict management*. http://www.nrm.wa.gov.au/media/10646/understanding_conflict_and_conflict_management.pdf Date of access: 03 Oct. 2016.

The Well Community Church. 2012. *Life group guide: 1 Corinthians chapters 4-7*. <http://thewellcommunity.org/blogs/life-group-guide/1-corinthians-chapters-4-7> Date of access: 25 Oct. 2016.

- Third Millennium Ministries. 2012. Building Biblical theology: lesson one: what is Biblical theology? <http://thirdmill.org/seminary/lesson.asp/vs/BBT/ln/1> Date of access: 12 Oct. 2017.
- Thompson, C. 2017. Is conflict with teammates really the top reason for missionaries leaving the field? <http://www.alifeoverseas.com/is-conflict-with-teammates-really-the-top-reason-for-missionaries-leaving-the-field/> Date of Access: 11 Sept. 2017.
- Thurston, B.B. & Ryan, J.M. 2009. *Philippians and Philemon*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. (Sacra Pagina Series, 10).
- Tink, F.L. 2011. Conflict. (In Green, J.B., ed. *Dictionary of scripture and ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. p. 163-165).
- Tiroyabone, O. 2016. Reading Philemon with Onesimus in the postcolony: exploring a postcolonial runaway slave hypothesis. *Acta theologica*, Suppl 24:225-236.
- Tite, P.L. 2010. How to begin, and why?: diverse functions of the Pauline prescript within a Greco-Roman context. (In Porter, S.E. & Adams, S.A., eds. *Paul and the ancient letter form*. Leiden: Brill. p. 57-99).
- Tjosvold, D. 2006. Defining conflict and making choices about its management: lighting the dark side of organizational life. *International journal of conflict management*, 17(2), 87–95.
- Tolmie, D.F. 2004. *A rhetorical analysis of the letter to the Galatians*. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State. (Dissertation – PhD).
- Tolmie, D.F. 2010. Tendencies in the research on the letter to Philemon since 1980 (In Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 1-27).
- Tolmie, D.F. 2016. Paul's exercise of authority in the letter to Philemon: a perspective from the 4th and 5th centuries CE. *In die skriflig*, 50(2):1-7.
- Traina, R.A. 1985. *Methodical Bible study*. 1st Francis Asbury Press printing. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Trench, R. 1983. *Synonyms of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Tripp, P. 2002. Instruments in the redeemer's hands: people in need of change helping people in need of change. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R.

Tucker, J.B. 2014. Paul's particular problem – the continuation of existing identities in Philemon. (In Tucker, J.B. & Baker, C.A., eds. T&T Clark handbook to social identity in the New Testament. London: Bloomsbury. p. 407-424).

Turcotte, S., Guerrier, M., Labrecque, M., Robitaille, H., Rivest, L.P., Hess, B. & Légaré, F., 2015. Dyadic validity of the Decisional Conflict Scale: common patient/physician measures of patient uncertainty were identified. *Journal of clinical epidemiology*, 68:920–927.

Turner, G. 2013. The Christian life as slavery: Paul's subversive metaphor. *The Heythrop journal*, 54(1):1-12.

Turner, M. 2006. Human reconciliation in the New Testament with special reference to Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians. *European journal of theology*, 16(1):37-47.

Types of conflict.org. 2013. Types of conflict – four classifications. <http://www.typesofconflict.org/types-of-conflict/> Date of access: 09 Sept. 2016.

Types of conflict.org. 2013. Types of conflict – understanding conflict. <http://www.typesofconflict.org/what-is-conflict/> Date of access: 09 Sept. 2016.

Van Tonder, C., Havenga, W. & Visagie, J. 2008. The causes of conflict in public and private sector organizations in South Africa. *Managing global transitions*, 6(4):373-401.

Vilanculo, A. 2008. Reading Philemon through the eye of an African: a call to a theology of presence. *The South African Baptist journal of theology*, 17(1):49-60.

Walvoord, J.F. 2003. End times: understanding today's world events in Biblical prophecy. (In Swindoll, C.R. & Zuck, R.B., eds. Understanding Christian theology. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. p. 1245-1371).

Wallace, D.B. 1996. Greek grammar: Beyond the basics. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Ware, S.G. 2014. A plan-based model of conflict for narrative reasoning and generation. North Carolina: North Carolina State University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Warren, R. 1996? How a leader resolves conflict. <http://ahooz.com/isom/Resources%20>

English/SaddleBack%20Resources/Nehemiah/225007_HOW_A_LEADER_RESOLVES_CONFLICT.PDF Date of access: 02 Nov. 2016.

Webb, N. 2008. Paul's letter to Philemon: the demands of Christian love. *The South African Baptist journal of theology*, 17(1):1-7.

Webster, N. 1828. American dictionary of the English language. <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/conflict> Date of Access: 02 Sept 2016.

Weima, J.A.D. 2010. Paul's persuasive prose. (In Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 29-60).

Wendland, E. 2010. "You will do even more than I say": on the rhetorical function of stylistic form in the letter to Philemon. (In Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 79-111).

Wessels, G. F. 2010. The letter to Philemon in the context of slavery in early Christianity. (In Tolmie, D.F., ed. *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 143-168).

Wessels, J.M. 2005. Paul's approach to the cultural conflict in Corinth: a socio-historical study. NWU: Potchefstroom. (Dissertation – MA).

White, A.M. 2004. The search for meaning: toward a generative constructionist approach in transforming identity-based conflict. Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University. (Dissertation – PhD).

White, J.R. 1995. *The King James only controversy: can you trust the modern translations?* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers.

White, J. 2017. Philemon, game theory and the reconfiguration of household relationships. *European journal of theology*, 26(1):32-42.

Williams, J.B., ed. 1999. *From the mind of God to the mind of man: a layman's guide to how we got our Bible*. Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International.

Williams, D.K. 2012. No longer as a slave. (In Johnson, M.V., Noel, J.A. & Williams, D.K., eds. *Onesimus, our brother: reading religion, race, and culture in Philemon*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. p. 11-45).

Winter, S.C. 1987. Paul's letter to Philemon. *New Testament studies*, 33:1-15.

Wise, T. 1994. *Conflict in the church: practical help for understanding and dealing with conflict*. Newburgh, IN: Avalon Press.

Witherington, B. 2007. *The letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: a socio-rhetorical commentary on the captivity epistles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Wolter, M. 2010. Philemon as ethical counterpart of Paul's doctrine of justification. (*In* Tolmie, D.F., *ed.* *Philemon in perspective: interpreting a Pauline letter*. Berlin: De Gruyter. p. 169-179).

Wright, N.T. 1986. *The epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: an introduction and commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. (The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries)

Wright, N.T. 2013. *Paul and the faithfulness of God* [Kindle ed.] Available: <http://www.amazon.com>

Yarbrough, R.W. 1996. *Biblical theology*. (*In* Elwell, W.A., *ed.* *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology*). [Available: Logos Bible Software, version 6.]

Young, R.A. 1994. *Intermediate New Testament Greek: a linguistic and exegetical approach*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

Zacchilli, T.L. 2007. *The relationship between conflict and communication, sex, relationship satisfaction, and other relational variables in dating relationships*. Texas: Texas Tech University. (Dissertation – PhD).

Zodhiates, S., *ed.* 2000. *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

ANNEXURE

	Hypothesis	Proposition	Policy Implication
H1: The Nature of Conflict	Human beings are meaning-making creatures who socially construct their reality. Therefore: a) every person seeks a larger purpose to their lives within which to explain and make meaningful their experience; and b) when this is shattered an existential crisis ensues which must be resolved in order for life to be purposeful again.	Any peace process must account for the conflict narrative as a source of identity and existential meaning. The “issues” identified for negotiation must be seen as indicators of these deeper dynamics rather than being taken at face value as the actual cause or driver of the conflict.	To generate peaceful pathways to create value and legacy (hero) for participants within their specific cultural and historical context.
H2: The Source of Conflict	The all consuming nature of the conflict experience leads to the creation of a conflict narrative and its centrality as an organizing principle for the identity of participants. Therefore: a) these conflicts become an opportunity to experience and create self; and b) this identity is sustained by and dependent on the creation of an enemy.	Identity-based conflicts can be understood as non-realistic conflicts (per Simmel) which function to maintain group identity boundaries through the creation of a conflict narrative that define an enemy. These boundaries then become dependent on this enemy and the ongoing nature of conflict.	Focus of intervention is on relationship between identity and narrative with a view to finding new identity narratives that allow for a transformation of the other. Rational solutions are not necessarily adequate or sufficient to address or transform identity-based conflicts even though they may appear to have rational causes or drivers. Analyses or diagnoses of conflict should incorporate conflict narratives and non-realistic aspects of conflict to be able to more completely account for situations of conflict.
H3: Location of Conflict	Identity-based conflict can be understood as a field of practice where a recursive relationship exists between individual/group agency and institutions/structures. Therefore: a) conflicting becomes a set of social practices which bounds the acts of individual agents while in turn being reinforced by their practice; and b) the conflict becomes inter-generational in nature as new generations are born and inducted into the practice of the conflict narrative.	Conflicting is a practice, or game per Bourdieu, that takes place on a field with particular (socially constructed) rules and resources, where the players call on their human, social and cultural capital to win/play the game skillfully.	Efforts to transform conflict must recognize the recursive relationship between existing structures and agency. The focus of this process must be the transformation of the practice of conflict and those elements that support it. Just as conflicting is a practice so to [sic] is peace therefore the focus of intervention should be on finding, creating and nurturing the rules and resources required for peace.
H4: Intervention Strategies	Different levels of reality and their institutions create a framework or matrix for the conflict. Therefore: a) intervention strategies must be designed to leverage the “space” that exists within and/or between levels; and b) when conflict narratives are destabilized and re-written changes in the practice of conflict occur.	Role-models / moral leaders that articulate new or re-written narratives create possibilities and spaces for change within existing conflict dynamics	Crises of knowledge and cognitive dissonance are the indicators/catalyst for space and this should be sought at every level of the conflict system. Interventions are most effective if they leverage existing spaces in the conflict in ways that permit or catalyze changes in participant understandings and expressions of conflict practice.

[from White (2004:135, 139-140, 142)]