


# Missio Dei's complexity prefaced in synergism

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**Dates:**

Received: 07 Mar. 2023

Accepted: 26 May 2023

Published: 20 July 2023

**How to cite this article:**

Thinane, J.S., 2023, 'Missio Dei's complexity prefaced in synergism', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79(2), a8611. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i2.8611>

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Augustine's thoughts on human salvation not only influenced early Protestant theology but also dominated the conceptualisation of the *missio Dei* from the perspective of the 1952 Willingen Conference. His doctrine of synergism arguably only manifested much later in the conception of the *missio Dei*, which anticipated human obedience or active participation in the mission to attain the goal of human salvation. The idea of synergism in this regard, or in the context of the *missio Dei*, is that while salvation remains an unmerited gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ, God prescribes human cooperative involvement in its attainment. In this way people do not become unresponsive recipients of God's grace, but active and willing participants in a mission of salvation. With this in mind, this article examined the available literature on the topic of synergism in order to provide further insights into the conceptualisation of the *missio Dei*. The account of Noah in Genesis 5:32–10:1 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 were used to redefine the doctrine of synergism or its relevance in the context of the *missio Dei*.

**Contribution:** This article recalled the doctrine of synergism in order to enrich the complex understanding of the *missio Dei*, essentially adding new knowledge in the field of missiology.

**Keywords:** triune God; *missio Dei*; synergism; Augustine; salvation; complexity.

## Introduction

After the convening of the International Missionary Council (IMC) conference in Willingen, Germany, in 1952, the *missio Dei* has for a considerable period to date remained a central theme in the broad field of theology, and in missiology in particular (Arthur 2013; Engelsviken 2003:481–497; Laing 2009:89–99). Despite the emergence of a vast body of literature devoted to understanding the *missio Dei*, most efforts have understandably concentrated on describing its evolution rather than understanding its dynamic complexities. The seminal work of scholars such as Daugherty (2007) and Flett (2010) examined the workings of the Trinity in the *missio Dei*, while Konz (2018) sought to explain its divine–human relations in the light of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20. In a similar and perhaps more comprehensive way, Thinane (2022) has used the project management model to explain how the triune God functionally collaborates with humanity in the project to achieve the *missio Dei* objectives. Consequently, despite such laudable works, *missio Dei* remains a complex missiological phenomenon that must be conceived in accordance with other Christian orthodox teachings, including but not limited to the doctrine of synergism.

Augustine of Hippo, also known as Saint Augustine (AD 354–430), is popularly known for his influential views on free will and predestination, which, among other doctrines, shaped and continue to define the unique identity of Christianity (Peterson 2006; Rist 1969). At the risk of oversimplifying, the doctrine of free will and predestination broadly underscores the belief that while God has predetermined human destiny (Augustine 1887, 2015), all human beings have free will, or free choice in their actions, just as the original sin was committed by free will (Augustin 1964; Craig 1984:41–63). Augustine believed or taught that while salvation was freely available through the grace of God, faith in Christ was a prerequisite for believers in the quest for such salvation (Sharp 1980:87). In other words, although he believed that salvation could not be obtained through human effort, he equally believed that faith in Christ was a response or a form of cooperation with the grace of God (Baker 2003:460). The emphasis on faith in Jesus Christ in response to the grace of God is somewhat reminiscent of his unique thoughts on the doctrine of synergism. Although Augustine and Karl Barth may have argued this point differently, Barth's *Actio Dei* similarly meant human virtual participation in the attainment of full salvation. Barth also placed great value on faith and believed that through obedience believers are called to participate in God's work [*Actio Dei*]. Thus, in this regard, the doctrine of synergism largely encompassed the

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belief that the full attainment of salvation requires some form of cooperation between human freedom and divine grace. Although this doctrine has caused a little more controversy as with any other Christian doctrine, the foundations of synergism can be arbitrarily derived from both Old and New Testament scriptures, particularly scriptures in which God is presented as uttering some form of invitation or imploring some form of human cooperation in effecting salvation. From the Old Testament perspective, the Genesis flood narrative involving Noah who obeyed God's request to build an ark to save his household comes to mind almost immediately (Gn 6–9). Similarly, as illustrated more starkly in the Great Commission, Jesus Christ in the New Testament directed his disciples to spread the gospel to effect the salvation of all the nations of the world (Mt 28:16–20). Accordingly, the two accounts of Noah's obedience and the Great Commission are used here to exhibit biblical foundations of synergism in *missio Dei*, which merely involves human non-meritorious cooperation with divine grace. This is more in line with what Hastings (2012) would see as God's human partnering wherein human beings are taking part in the service of God's mission (Hastings 2012:1198–1199).

This article consists of six parts, which are firstly preceded by the introduction of the complexity theory as preferred framework underscoring complexities to characterise the *missio Dei*. Secondly, the term synergism and its broad application are briefly introduced. Thirdly, elements of synergism are derived from the story of Noah in the Old Testament and the Great Commission in the New Testament. Fourthly, the issue of justification is discussed as a central theme in Synergism and *missio Dei*. Fifthly, the theme of justification is then carried into the doctrinal transition from monergism to synergism, particularly in the context of the *missio Dei*. Sixthly, the doctrine of synergism is placed in the broader context of the *missio Dei*. Last and conclusively, while debates about the doctrine of synergism remain unresolved, this article will cautiously conclude that synergism has the potential to be developed in a way that helps to unravel the complexity of the *missio Dei*.

## Complexity theory

The underpinnings of synergism can be arbitrarily derived from an understanding of complexity theory, which similarly seeks to outline the interactions or collaboration of components towards a unified goal or production. In other words, it can be easy to find some form of correlations or similarities between the conceptual foundations of synergism and complexity theory. Complexity theory has emerged as a flexible method for studying complexity systems in several areas of social science, particularly in strategy and organisational studies (Anderson 1999; Byrne 2002). According to Anderson (1999), the usefulness of this theory is underscored by its ability to model what might superficially appear to be non-linear interactions of elements within a coordinated system (Anderson 1999:216). Similarly, in exploring complexity from Nicolis' (1995) principle of holism in non-linear science, Byrne (2002) speaks of the emergence

of non-linear causal elements that interact towards the goal of the system as a whole (Byrne 2002:14–15; Nicolis 1995).

Although complexity theory, strictly speaking, has never achieved any form of popularity in the field of theology, Thinane (2022) has recently outlined its importance and likely applicability in exploring the complexity inherent in the workings of the *missio Dei* (Thinane 2022:1–8). His application of this theory to the *missio Dei* can perhaps be deferred to a much later section because in this section it is more important merely to show some similarities in the conceptualisation of complexity theory and synergy, which essentially opens the context for the Augustinian doctrine of synergism. The term synergy comes from the Attic Greek word *συνεργία* *synergia* [interaction of elements or cooperation] giving rise to synergism to operationalise the combination of collaboration and energy. Thus, generally speaking, as in complexity theory, synergy refers to the interplay of elements that, when combined, produce a unified overall effect that far outweighs the importance of the individual elements or contributions in a holistic system (Geary 2013; Latash 2008; Maslow 1964). As an operative term, synergism in Christian theology is attributed to the teachings of St Augustine, who attempted to argue that salvation, or the attainment thereof, involves some form of human cooperation with divine grace. Perhaps Bosch (2011) wished to underscore this when he acknowledged that while God's grace alone secures human salvation, humanity has the responsibility to cooperate with or appropriate it in faith (Bosch 2011:245). Accordingly, accepting this superficial definition of synergy, the Augustinian doctrine of synergism presented below will express the non-linear importance of the human element in the context of attaining salvation as the primary objective of the *missio Dei*.

## Synergism

The term synergism comes from a combination of two Greek terms, where *συνεργία* [*synergía*] is for 'cooperation' and *ἔργον* [*érgon*] for 'work' or 'energy', which, when operationalised in Christian theology, or at least in the Augustinian understanding, suggest that human salvation as effected wholly by God requires human cooperation or compliance, so to speak. At the outset of introducing this doctrine, it is perhaps safe to mention that Synergism in Christian theology expresses the position that the attainment of salvation requires some cooperation between human freedom and divine grace. This doctrine, perhaps underscored by discussions on predestination and free will, has been hotly debated in Church history for centuries because it raises the question of attaining human salvation. An in-depth study of the synergism doctrine, from the perspective of Augustine rather than Jacob Arminius (the Latinised name of Jakob Hermanszoon) (1560–1609), places it in harmony with Calvinism. While Arminius bluntly held that salvation was the result of the joint efforts involving God and human beings, Augustine had, on the contrary, taught that if human salvation is to be attained, human freedom must comply with the grace of God. Although human salvation remains entirely the work of God, for Augustine this can never be interpreted

to mean that there is no need for human cooperation in accepting God's working grace.

Augustine was a proponent of synergism as it encompasses the belief that believers must act in harmony with the grace of God to attain full salvation. In this way, or at least according to the Augustinian version of synergism, salvation comes as a result of the cooperative effort between the grace of God and human response to it. He consistently argued that people, especially Christian believers, should be aware of their free choice to accept the grace of God and live in that awareness towards the attainment of full salvation. Understood in this way, synergism in no way denies God's sufficiency in effecting salvation, but primarily advocates for human passive cooperation with God's active grace in effecting human salvation. It cannot be denied, at least as far as Augustine's understanding of synergism is concerned, that God Almighty is wholly and solely responsible for human salvation. Augustinian synergism places no value on human merit or ability for their own salvation, but only moderately encourages human passive cooperation with God's grace in the process of attaining full salvation. Still taking a firm stock of the fact that God is sufficient for human salvation, Paul acknowledges this form of cooperation in his letter to the Corinthians saying: 'We are fellow-workers [*synergoi*] with God' (1 Cor 3:9). Any denial of the need for any form of cooperation with the grace of God risks making humanity an uncooperative stumbling block in the attainment of salvation. In fact, the history of faith in the Old Testament, evangelisation in the New Testament, or the proclamation of the gospel, were clear appeals to humanity to obediently follow the grace of God into total salvation. Perhaps this will become clearer in the next section, which puts into context the story of Noah and the great commission of Matthew 28, both of which make human salvation a cooperative enterprise without invalidating God's omnipotence.

## Noah to the Great Commission

The foundations of synergism can be arbitrarily derived from both Old and New Testament scriptures, particularly scriptures in which God is presented as issuing some form of invitation or requiring human obedience or a form of cooperation within the broader scope of achieving human salvation. Among these writings, the Old Testament account of Noah and the New Testament Great Commission, each retrospectively incorporates elements of synergism, particularly as conceptualised from Augustine's perspective.

### Noah and synergism

Considering human obedience to God's saving mission, the story of Noah is perhaps one of the finest unforgettable examples in the Old Testament book. The world of Noah was constantly caught in utter wickedness, hence it is written: 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually' (Gn 6:5). At this point, God was so saddened that he had ever created humankind that he

decided to wipe them off the planet, but with the exception of Noah, who is said to have found grace in the eyes of the Lord, conceivably prefacing Luther's doctrine of justification by grace alone – *sola gracia* (Genesis 6:8). This qualifies Noah in the category of people that Bosch (2011) might have in mind when writing: 'The world was evil, and individuals had to be snatched from it like a brand from the fire' (Bosch 2011:246). Notwithstanding Noah being a righteous man who obediently walked with God even before the task at hand, it is consequently written that he consistently did whatever God commanded him to do (Gn 6:22). The fact that God predetermined Noah's salvation and gave him specific instructions to execute lest his salvation and that of his household be jeopardised, for all intents and purposes reinforces the need for some form of synergy wherein human beings cooperate with God's grace to effect salvation. While the eternal grace of God was sufficient for the purpose of salvation, at the same time Noah had to work synergistically with God's grace-oriented plan until the full spectrum of salvation was fulfilled. This apparent synergy was not the case with the rest of the human population, who consequently drowned in floods because of their failure to obediently cooperate with God's saving grace.

### The Great Commission and synergy

The importance of Matthew 26:19–20, or, as it were, the commission outlining the missionaries' marching orders, cannot be overestimated or dissuaded from being the blueprint of the *missio Dei* (Arthur 2013; Konz 2018:33–349). It is called the Great Commission precisely because it contains the ultimate and great instruction in which the resurrected Jesus Christ commissioned his followers to spread the gospel of salvation to all the peoples of the world. The Great Commission establishes the apostolic responsibility to unite nations to cooperate with God's grace in effecting total human salvation. The fact that issuing of instructions is somehow preceded by Christ saying: 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth' and succeeded by an assurance: 'And remember I am with you always to the end of the age', especially when viewed in the light of the Second Coming, indicates in great detail that the power to save is wholly of God. At the same time, it can perhaps be said that analogous to the story of Noah, the Lord's followers are instructed to build the Great Ark, which will ensure the fulfilment of total redemption at the Second Coming. In particular the instruction contained in verse 20: 'teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you', sanctioning synergy that will exponentially produce far more than the human salvation partially witnessed during Christ's mortal ministry and to be fully witnessed at the second coming.

Consequently, it can then be said with some certainty that synergy, or at least from Augustine's perspective as presented next, characterised both Noah's and the apostolic cooperation anticipated in Matthew 26:19–20 with God's grace fulfilling human salvation. In other words, these two examples reinforce the case for a synergy that includes the human element merely

through cooperation with the missionary God to achieve human salvation. Both Noah and commissioned apostles can never claim authority over the task of mission or the distribution of salvation, but the missionary God, in whom the power of salvation resides, invites obedient cooperation in his wholly task of effecting human salvation.

## Sanctification and justification

Sanctification (or in its verb form – sanctify) and justification (verb – justify) are at the centre of God’s plan for human salvation while at the same time constituting the very essence of Christian witness. Consequently, because of such undeniable significance and centrality in God’s plan for salvation, these two themes have attracted hot debates for the most part of Church history. Although these two themes are theologically related and denote the divine process of qualifying human beings for righteousness, sanctification denotes the process of qualifying one for deliverance, while justification means deliverance from the penalty of sin. Put differently, sanctification is an ongoing process of righteousness or being made righteous, while justification refers to a declaration of righteousness or being declared righteous (Newsome 1964:32–53; Snider 2010:159–178). Precisely because of their close relationship, these two themes seem to have been fused as though to mean the same thing, at least up to their first detailed and distinct articulation during the early decades of Reformation, particularly the first 15 centuries of the church (Toon 2018). Among pre-Reformation thinkers, however, Augustine is perhaps the one who, through his formative writings, which largely formed the basis of Catholic orthodoxy, generally insisted on the necessity of human righteousness and essentially opened the discussion on sanctification and justification. In the 16th century, Martin Luther revolted against Catholic orthodoxy and disparagingly challenged the interpretation of justification in particular and sanctification in general. Consequently, Augustine’s and Luther’s conceptions of sanctification and justification give much expression to either the acceptability of synergism or its rejection. Accordingly, the next two subsections provide a brief analysis of their understanding and test their distinction, if any, before resorting to a discussion of synergism in the context of the *missio Dei*.

First of all, it should be recognised without a doubt that there is still no consensus about Augustine’s far-reaching views on salvation. What remains clear, however, is that his teachings emphasised some form of human responsibility to hold to the grace of God. Perhaps this is the main reason why Augustine’s thoughts on salvation continue to come under constant scrutiny. As a starting point, it is important to note that Augustine’s thoughts on salvation largely focus on the corrupt state of humankind after the Fall, which is in clear contradiction to the originally upright state (Bonaiuti 1917:159–175). According to him, human righteousness was severely disrupted by the fall in the form of Adam’s original sin, which has since resulted in a proclivity towards sinfulness and trapped humankind into perpetual corruption, or what he calls ‘the bond of original sin’. Consequently, it is from this

logical understanding of the fallen humanity that Augustine’s view of salvation flows. Given that humanity is now constantly prone to sinfulness without the will to do right, only Almighty God can restore (remaking) human free will towards righteousness and appropriately institute salvation. Restoration in this regard, or what he sees as God remaking his creatures, Augustine is fully aware that while this whole transformative process requires human obedience, the ultimate power of salvation rests with God alone. It was precisely in promoting obedience in harmony with God’s striving for salvation that Augustine was misunderstood to incite rejection of monergism in general and essentially dissociated with Luther’s monergistic thoughts in particular. To this end, the next subchapter begins with Luther’s monergism and streams retrospectively into Augustine’s synergism in order to calculatedly absolve him of accusations of absolute synergism. This means that the rest of this article will argue that the pre-Reformation Augustinians *sola fide* and justification remained consistently in harmony with monergism.

## Monergism to synergism

As a starting point, it is perhaps important to recognise that Luther’s thoughts, like Augustine’s thoughts, have remained the subject of theological debate for decades and may have been misused and perverted by some to accommodate their theological propositions (Bayer 2008; Marius 2009). The term monergism derives from a combination of two Greek terms where *μόνος* [*monos*] is for [one] or [single] and *ἔργον* [*érgon*] for [work] or [energy], which when applied in Christian theology express the belief that God is the only force [*monergon*] from which human salvation flows. Conceivably, scriptures such as Titus 3:5, Ephesians 1:4-4; 2:8-9, and Romans 9:16 are among important scriptures in support of monergism or the underscoring of God alone in the work of salvation. In addition to *sola scriptura* (Welker 2003:375–391), Luther’s respective treatments of *Justificatio sola fide* and *sola gratia* similarly encompasses the understanding that God effects human salvation through his grace alone, but this necessitates or calls for human yielding through faith (Baker 1985:115–133; O’Callaghan 2017). Consequently, as it shall be noticed, if there was one thing Luther firmly opposed it was unqualified synergism, wherein the impression was created by the Catholic teachings particularly during the middle ages, that the Church, as a visible society, possessed virtually the same authority as God, or in some sort of God’s proxy (hence *Vicarius Christi*, Bishop of Rome – Vicar of Jesus Christ), contributing to human salvation (Coulombe 2003; De Rosa 1988). It was precisely this claim that aroused papal supremacy and infallibility in his day, and consequently his monergism, which remained in harmony with Augustine, opposed this falsification of the doctrine of salvation manifesting in, but not limited to, the letters of indulgence. However, it is important to warn, in a similar vein to Bosch (2011), that it would be somewhat wrong to suggest that Luther, or the Reformation in general, broke completely with the Catholic theological paradigm. He accordingly stated: ‘Some elements of Protestantism

(possibly including synergism) were in fact a continuation, even if in a new form, of what typified the Catholic model also' (Bosch 2011:245).

Consequently, Luther intuitively reformed the church beginning with his tentative propositions (95 theses) nailed at the door of the Schlosskirche [Castle Church], in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517, which were primarily directed against this supposed authority [Bagchi 2006:331–355]. This is observed by Bosch (2011) writing that:

[I]n opposition to Rome the Reformers emphasized that all initiative unto salvation lay with God alone. This conviction lies at the root of Luther's teaching on justification through faith, by grace, and of Calvin's doctrine of predestination. (p.218).

As Bosch continues, Luther could not have emphasised God's action without upholding the obvious need for human responsibility or some form of compliance with God's action (Bosch 2011:255). In simple terms, Luther opposed the idea that humanity can in any way contribute to gaining their own salvation, and undoubtedly never rebuffed Augustine's thoughts on the obvious need for obedience or compliance with God's grace towards effecting human salvation, hence upon the exposition of 1 Peter 5:5 (Jones 1982) he could say:

God has surely promised His grace to the humbled, that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realizes that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends, absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure and works of Another – God alone. As long as he is persuaded that he can make even the smallest contribution to his salvation, he remains self-confident and does not utterly despair of himself, and so is not humbled before God. (pp. 463–472)

The aforementioned shows in many ways that Luther's monergism always left room for human spiritual discernment and the need for human compliance with God's redemptive work. Contrary to what has been said about Augustine's anti-monergistic impressions, it has been observed that Augustine's monergistic formulations largely impacted Luther's understanding of monergism (Paulsen 2000:191). This is underscored by Bosch (2011) by acknowledging that Luther encountered writings of Augustine, which included but was not limited to the understanding of synergy and used this effectively against other theologies (Bosch 2011:244). Consequently, both Augustine and Luther were undoubtedly monergists in relation to salvation effected entirely by God himself and at the same time synergists in relation to human obedience in harmony with the grace of God.

## Synergistic *missio Dei*

*Missio Dei* is perhaps for good reasons called God's salvific initiative (Bosch 2011:246), essentially encompassing the missionary Trinitarian God who, in anticipation of human cooperation, initiates the process of salvation with his gift of grace. This is put explicitly in Du Preez, Hendriks and Carl (2014) stating categorically that: 'The *missio Dei* as the work

of the Trinitarian God is seen as being God's initiative'. They further argue that the church in particular and perhaps humankind in general, participate with God in his redemptive work by invitation (Du Preez et al. 2014:1–3). This is further explained by Engelsviken (2003) that the church may be a witness to or a participant in the realisation of the kingdom, but it is not the primary or sole actor [in *missio Dei*] (Engelsviken 2003:483). In addition, and somewhat similar to how this article attempted to trace elements of synergism in the account of Noah and the Great Commission, Anderson (2017) gave several examples including, but not limited to, the calling of Abraham, which demonstrated how the triune God anticipated human participation in or cooperation towards fulfilling the objective of the *missio Dei* (Anderson 2017:414). In this way, mission remains rooted as a result of the triune God's initiative anticipating human cooperation towards the realisation of complete salvation. As noticed by Bosch (2011), when viewed from the perspective of the Fall, humankind remains unable to do anything about its own depraved condition (Bosch 2011:246), but God alone is sufficient to effect salvation provided there is some degree of willingness or participation on the part of humanity. The fact that God invites people in general and believers in particular to participate in his mission does not suggest in any possible interpretation that he (the triune God) is in any way inadequate or incapable of mediating salvation, but speaks more to his relational nature sanctioning human obedient involvement in mission (synergism). Reflecting this understanding, Arthur (2009) acknowledges that while mission remains a divine activity in which the Son and Spirit are sent by the Father, the church in particular or humanity in general is called to obedient cooperation so as to allow the completion of the *missio Dei* (Arthur 2009:2). Similarly, or perhaps as if underscoring the synergistic character within the triune sending procession in *missio Dei*, Flett (2014) writes:

But insofar as God causes the covenant between himself and human beings to take place, there we participate in the history in partnership that is the triune life of God himself. (p. 72)

Consequently, the overall understanding of missionary theology from the perspective of the IMC Willingen Conference, albeit in fewer words, seems to show a high degree of agreement with the synergetic character of the *missio Dei*.

In interpreting the *missio Dei* through synergism, there seem to be two things that require clarity, firstly, that the triune God remains the sole initiator fully able to bear the *missio Dei* unaided, and secondly, that there is an expectation that humanity will cooperate with God's initiatives to realise the goals of the *missio Dei*. Consequently, it is precisely this expectation of human cooperation with divine initiatives that justifies the doctrine of synergism or its Augustinian definition over the Arminian definition within the framework of the *missio Dei*. A version of synergism, more acceptable for the context of *missio Dei*, involves human cooperation with the grace of God, but in an unmeritorious way (Habets 2008:352).

Even if the historical rejection of this teaching can never be completely dismissed, at the same time reference may perhaps be made to Bosch (2011), who acknowledges that the triune God sovereignly brings about the salvation of humankind, but warns against crippling missionary efforts, by excepting human cooperation from the fulfilment of the *missio Dei* (Bosch 2011:247). In the context of the *missio Dei*, therefore, the emphasis on synergism in relation to human non-meritorious cooperation with God's grace is extraordinary in every respect and superficially sustains the understanding that the triune God wholly and sovereignly effects human salvation. The synergetic *missio Dei* does not seek comparability between human involvement and the role of the triune God as though equal partners in the work of salvation, but advocates human cooperation with the grace of God, who in every respect remains the only source of human salvation. Viewing the dynamic of salvation from the perspective of Noah in the Old Testament, Christ's earthly ministry and the Great Commission in the New Testament, and many other instances where the triune God invites people to participate in the missionary course, all point to a version of the synergetic *missio Dei*. Consequently, and in keeping with the perspectives emerging from the 1952 IMC-Willingen Conference, mission remains essentially theocentric rather than ecclesiological or anthropocentric. The triune Godhead remains the sole source from which salvation flows, while humankind is invited merely to act cooperatively with the grace of God towards complete salvation.

## Conclusion

In this article's version, synergism can be conclusively interpreted in two opposing ways: largely reflecting the difference between the respective Augustinian and Arminian definitions. On the one hand, a version of synergism that has historically been correctly rejected is that which suggests that human cooperation with divine grace is meritorious. On the other hand, a version of synergism that fits well in the context of *missio Dei* is fully aware that human cooperation is not meritorious and retains God's full authority in achieving salvation while simultaneously inviting human cooperation. In many ways, this work has succeeded in placing the doctrine of synergism in the context of the *missio Dei*, or at least showing its potential to unravel the complexity of the *missio Dei*. Thus, on the face of this article's discussion, it can be concluded that synergism, especially when defined in a non-meritorious sense, expands the understanding of the *missio Dei* although without neglecting the centrality of the deity as the sole author of human salvation.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Author's contributions

J.S.T. is the sole author of this article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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