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THE 'FEAR OF THE LORD/GOD'[1] IN CONTEXT OF *THE SOUTH AFRICA WE PRAY FOR* CAMPAIGN

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Abstract

In the third year of my theological training I had lectures in wisdom literature by Professor Hendrik Bosman. Teaching the Book of Job, he lamented that communities mainly use this book at funerals to console families of deceased. This practice focuses on the prose section of the book; ignoring the poetry section which comprises thirty-nine chapters of the forty-two-chapter book. This may not be doing justice to the purpose of the book and wisdom literature in general. Therefore, if poetry occupies such an extent of the book, the message definitely lies therein and more attention needs to be paid thereto. In accordance with this spirit, he pointed out that the "fear of the Lord" is a key concept in wisdom. Against this background and in honour of Professor Bosman, this article would like to discuss the concept of the "fear of the Lord" in wisdom literature and how communities in South Africa can use the concept in dealing with their socio-economic challenges. Specifically, the paper would like to discuss the concept in the context of "The South Africa We Pray For" campaign in South Africa.

Key Words: 'Fear of the Lord'; Honour and Shame; Retribution; State Capture; Wisdom

Introduction

In honour of Professor Bosman, I would like to discuss the concept of the "fear of the Lord" in Old Testament (OT) wisdom literature and how the concept can be used by communities to engage with socio-economic challenges. Particularly, I respond to the campaign by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) to pray for South Africa in the face of the capture of the state. To achieve this goal, I will first discuss the "fear of the Lord" and the doctrine of retribution in the books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes to conceptualise the concept of the "fear of the Lord" as expressed in OT wisdom in general and to use it as an analytical tool. The subsequent sections will follow the SACC's SEE-JUDGE-ACT approach. 'SEE' is research of the reality of what is going on. 'JUDGE' is to evaluate through the eyes of the Gospel. And the 'ACT' is to take a resolution in accordance with the Gospel values. I will present the SACC's *The South Africa We Pray For* campaign as the SEE part. I will proceed to evaluate state capture according to the "fear of the Lord" as the JUDGE part. I will conclude by suggesting action to be taken within the framework of the "fear of the Lord" as the ACT part. The reader therefore, should not expect the SEE-JUDGE-ACT part until the "fear of the Lord" concept has been interpreted.

The 'Fear of the Lord' in Wisdom Literature

To utilise the concept of the "fear of the Lord" as a lens to evaluate behaviour prevailing in our communities, I need to clarify two things. Firstly, what does the "fear of the Lord" involve? Secondly, what is the relationship between retribution and the "fear of the

Lord/God"? Such clarification will provide a framework for presuppositions about the "fear of the Lord". Therefore, I will examine the use of this concept in the three OT wisdom books and then examine retribution in all three.

The Meaning of the Concept of the 'Fear of the Lord'

This section responds to the question "what does the 'fear of the Lord' involve?"[2] In his recent book, discussing the appearances of Abraham in the biblical books, Joseph Blenkinsopp alludes to the fact that the combination of *emet* and *ḥesed* "as an abiding characteristic of Israel's God is of frequent incidence … and is presented as an ethical ideal, an *imitatio dei*, in Proverbs".[3] Taking cue from Blenkinsopp's remark, this article argues that Proverbs persuades its readers to seek faithfulness and steadfast love. The "fear of the Lord" in Proverbs is presented within this context. Having said that, the issue of whether the "fear of the Lord" is ethical/moral behaviour or emotion of terror is a contentious one. For me, the fact that this concept is many a time linked to virtue points towards ethical/moral behaviour.[4] However, the debate on whether one must first fear the Lord in order to be wise or be wise first in order to fear the Lord might shed some light on this question.

Zoltán Schwáb presents a debate between Michael V. Fox and Stuart Weeks on Proverbs 1:7.[5] I present this debate because the relationship between the "fear of the Lord" and wisdom has implications for the question whether the "fear of the Lord" is ethical/moral behaviour or emotion of terror. Without providing details because of spatial constraints, Fox argues that wisdom stems from piety and Weeks argues that piety stems from wisdom. In his conclusion, Schwáb argues as follows:

> Therefore, a certain vagueness characterises the verses that describe the relationship between wisdom and the fear of the LORD. Fear of the LORD is the first manifestation of wisdom, as Weeks claims, but it is also the prerequisite of wisdom and, in certain contexts, it is basically identified with wisdom. Which of these nuances are emphasised depends on how the context of a particular saying is interpreted. In many cases the best solution might be to join those interpreters who use words like "first principle of wisdom" or "essence of wisdom" to identify the role of the fear of the LORD.[6]

Significant for me in Schwáb's conclusion is that in certain contexts, the fear of the Lord is basically identified with wisdom. I cannot help but think of Proverbs 15:33a that says: יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוּסַר חָכְמָה (Fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom). The nominal phrases "fear of the Lord" and instruction of wisdom stand in an appositional relationship. The second expression identifies with or is equivalent to the first one. The "fear of the Lord" is equivalent to the instruction of wisdom. This has implications for whether the fear of the Lord means ethical/moral behaviour or an emotion of terror as I will show below. As for the beginning of wisdom as the "fear of the Lord" as expressed in Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10, to me it is in the frame of 15:33a. I view the relationship between the "fear of the Lord" and wisdom as more logical than temporal. The seeming difference of meaning between 1:7 and 9:10 on the one hand and 15:33a on the other is the result of a thematic development in the progression of Proverbs' teaching. This thematic development is also discernible in Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) in 1:11,[7] 1:14,[8] 1:20[9] and 1:27[10]. An intelligible explanation of this thematic development is artiiculated by Bernard J Bamberger when he says, "the Biblical writers were not systematic theologians [so they][11] made no attempt at rigid definition of terms." [12]

In Job 28:28 the "fear of the Lord" is wisdom (יִרְאַת אֲדֹנָי הִיא חָכְמָה: The fear of the Lord, [she] is wisdom). Above I stated that the equivalence of the "fear of the Lord" and wisdom

has implications for whether the fear of the Lord implies ethical/moral behaviour or an emotion of terror. If the "fear of the Lord" is wisdom, what does wisdom entail? The essence of wisdom is expressed by Lawrence Boadt, who says it does "not value the quantity of knowledge by itself, but the ethical and moral dimensions of how we evaluate human experience and act on it".[13] In the same vein, Mark R. Sneed argues that "often when the wisdom writers in the Hebrew Bible refer to 'the wise' or 'the righteous' or 'the fool' or 'the wicked', they are referring to a lifestyle that reflects a certain moral disposition rather than a specific talent".[14] This is corroborated by the frequent linking of wisdom to virtue.[15] If wisdom is about moral/ethical behaviour, so is the "fear of the Lord".[16] Let us now examine the relationship between the "fear of the Lord" and retribution.

The Relationship between the 'Fear of the Lord' and Retribution

Proverbs has gained itself a reputation of notoriety through the doctrine of retribution and Job and Ecclesiastes a celebrity status by exposing prevailing injustice. A clear description of a general perception of Proverbs is by Raymond C. Van Leeuwen. He states that Proverbs is perceived in some scholarly quarters as containing a retribution 'doctrine' that does not correspond to reality and which has collapsed under the weight of reality in the books of Job and Qoheleth.[17] An even harsher remark is by William McKane saying: "This is not old wisdom but the theory of a kind of Yahwistic piety which is condemned to emptiness because it has disengaged itself from the realities of life and has left all problems behind".[18] Contrarily, Job and Qoheleth "are presumably the more 'practical' books insofar as they deal more explicitly in the contingencies of daily life, according to many commentators."[19] However, Crenshaw still grades Ecclesiastes more pragmatic than Job when he says: "…but even Job himself assumes a causal connection between deed and consequence. The prose ending to the story endorses this view by restoring Job's fortune."[20] This article agrees with Crenshaw because in Job 42:10-17 Job is rewarded for his righteousness. This is a return to the old wisdom of retribution. For this reason, I view Job as a polyphonic text, as Carol A Newsom describes the book. Newsom finds the notion of polyphony "heuristically fruitful for thinking about the relation of the various parts of the book of Job to one another. She describes a polyphonic text as "one in which the author of the work does not impose ultimate ideological control over the various characters and voices of the text but rather allows each character or 'voice-idea' to speak freely and independently, engaging the other characters or 'voice-ideas' in a dialogic fashion."[21] In this sense, Job is viewed in this article as not dismissing retribution but acknowledging it while at the same time emphasising the presence of injustice. Crenshaw continues to say Qohelet (*sic*) … shows no such conservatism."[22] In this regard I tend to differ with Crenshaw on the basis of Ecclesiastes 11:9[23] and 12:13-14.[24] On Ecclesiastes 12:13, Bosman remarks that "this phrase invokes other parts of the wisdom literature (Proverbs 1:7; Job 28:28 etc.)." This article unambiguously views both texts, i.e., Ecclesiastes 11:9 and 12:13-14, as connoting retribution, albeit delayed but inevitable. Ecclesiastes 12:13 is even crucial because it is the final conclusion and the very last verse that leaves the last impression. These retributive sentiments might be later additions to soothe the book but the matter is that the final edition of the book is the one that provides the reader with theological orientation. My conclusion therefore is that Ecclesiastes emphasises the prevalence of injustice but also warns that at some stage people will have to account for their actions.

Returning to Proverbs, Stewart has a different view about Proverbs' simplicity saying:

> Indeed, the pervasiveness of this view in much scholarship on biblical wisdom may give one the false impression that the sages suffered from a severe lack of imagination. Yet this view does not give sufficient credit to the way in which the book cultivates a kind of reasoning that is far from rigid or doctrinaire.[25]

According to her, these scholars make a mistake of thinking the literary form of Proverbs corresponds to a simplified moral worldview. She argues that "in both its literary form and in its pedagogical function, the book suggests a keen awareness of the complexity of moral reasoning". The book demonstrates that reality does not always function on causality terms.[26] Van Leeuwen also disputes that Proverbs is simplistic. He isolated proverbs on poverty and categorised them into four categories: those that combine (1) righteousness and wealth, (2) poverty and righteousness, (3) wealth and wickedness and (4) poverty and wickedness.[27] 1 and 4 depict righteousness leading to wealth and wickedness leading to poverty, respectively, and thus "embody the character-consequence schema: good leads to good and bad to bad."[28] These are the proverbs that give Proverbs the simplistic character. 3 and 4 assert that the wicked prosper and the innocent suffer respecttively, contradicting the character-consequence schema. These give Proverbs a complex character, however, a character to which many scholars are indifferent. The point being made by Van Leeuwen is that the final form of Proverbs is not oblivious of the prevailing injustice and is not silent about it. However, the presence of injustice does not preclude emphasis of righteousness. On this basis, he remarks as follows:

> The sages' stance is to maintain faith in God's justice, even when they personally cannot see it or touch it, even when the recorded past does not verify it. Here religion provides no escape from the pain or absurdities of existence. The book of Job was inevitable, not because Proverbs was too simplistic, but because life's inequities, as reflected in Proverbs, drive faith to argue with the Deity…[29]

For me, the fact that all three books somehow subscribe to the notion of the "fear of the Lord/God" makes them complement rather than negate one another. The Book of Proverbs alludes to prevailing injustice but emphasises retribution while the other two allude to retribution but emphasise prevailing injustice, as already indicated above. Stuart Weeks expresses this state of affairs satisfactorily when he says:

> Although Proverbs in particular, is more confident about how one should behave, there is no reason to assume any of the wisdom literature is very different in this respect: it recognises that certain consequences may flow predictably from certain actions or phenomena (that there are, we might say, laws of nature), but also that there are deeper principles or influences at work, potentially linked to divine activity. If there were no cause and effect, and if the world behaved in entirely random and unpredictable way, then there would be no possibility of human wisdom – and human survival, indeed, would be a tricky proposition. To the extent that it resists such a notion, wisdom literature correspondingly asserts the existence of order in the world, but this remains subject to the interference of other forces…[30]

With Weeks' remarks this discussion on retribution comes to a conclusion. The foregoing discussion has been conceptualising the "fear of the Lord" in the OT wisdom tradition. According to this article's analysis, it has become apparent that the "fear of the Lord" concerns ethical/moral behaviour. Furthermore, it applies to the whole of humanity or rather, it is the whole duty of humanity, as Ecclesiastes 12:13 declares. The latter becomes even more significant in the light of comments once made by a certain cabinet minister saying: "We don't listen to the Ten Commandments, and we don't have to listen when Christians tell us adultery is wrong…"[31] Concerning the relationship between the "fear of

the Lord" and the doctrine of retribution, there is correlation between the two. As Weeks put it, "there is a connection between how one lives and how one fares except that the rules of the game are different than the perspective of traditional wisdom." This is clearly expressed in Ecclesiastes' combining of the "fear of the Lord" and coming judgement in 12:13-14. All three books acknowledge retribution but also indicate that reality does not always conform to the rule. What needs to be understood is that the reward or punishment may be delayed but it surely will come. Also, this factor is important given that we do have some people who listen to their consciences. For example, a former deputy minister of finance refused a R600 000 000 bribe.[32] The doctrine of retribution can be useful in encouraging such people to continue to listen to their consciences while also discouraging those who engage in corrupt practices. The conclusion of all that has been discussed above, is that the concept of the "fear of the Lord" presupposes moral/ethical behaviour, it applies to all humanity and implies retribution. This is the conceptualisation that informs the coming discussion of the concept in the context of "The South Africa We Pray For" campaign in South Africa. Having answered both questions that were asked, let us proceed to present the *#The South Africa We Pray For* campaign.

The South Africa We Pray For Campaign

To introduce the *#The South Africa We Pray For* campaign, a quotation from the SACC report document may place us at a right wavelength with the prevailing atmosphere. It goes as follows:

> In 1996, President Nelson Mandela… said: 'Our experience had made us acutely aware of the possible dangers of a government that is neither transparent nor accountable'… We have come to the conclusion that the danger that Mandela warned of, and that we now have "a government that is neither transparent nor accountable". (sic)'… What we are able to do is take on the latter part of Madiba's statement, the call for 'Public awareness and participation in maintaining efficiency in government within the context of human rights'… We come here seeking to ensure that our communities are aware of the challenges we face, in order to reflect from an informed position when we meet at the SACC National Conference in June. What is patently clear is that South Africa is in desperate need of divine intervention! We need prayer and action – to kneel and pray dutifully, and "gird up our loins" to work and reverse the national [hurdle] to mis-governance and chaos."[33]

The SACC affiliated churches "have been meeting each year during March/April to reflect on the "State of the Nation" and ultimately came to the following commitment:

> We committed to pray and work for the promise of the post-apartheid South Africa in sync with the values of the Kingdom of God (Psalm 12:5; Isaiah 11:1-9; Amos 5:24; Luke 4:18-19; John 10:10), the promise of a just, reconciled, sustainable and equitable society; free of racial, tribal, ethnic, xenophobic and gender prejudices; free of corruption and deprivation; and with enough food and shelter for every citizen; and for each child born to grow to its God-given potential. That is the South Africa We Pray For![34]

The aim is to identify, pray and act together on critical socio-economic issues that make a marked difference in the quality of life in South African society. They declared that they would pray and act for healing and reconciliation,[35] pray and act for the restoration of the family fabric,[36] pray and act for the destruction of poverty and inequality,[37] pray and act for economic transformation[38] and pray and act toward anchoring democracy.[39] Describing this last pledge, the SACC states that "Anchoring Democracy is our campaign pillar that has huge crosscutting impacts on everything else in the land. It is here that our prophetic

ministry coincides with our civic responsibility at its thickest and most profound".[40] It is also a pillar on which this article intends to focus, specifically in relation to the issue of what is called state capture. Describing corruption and state capture, the State Capacity Research Project (SCRP)[41] avers as follows:

> Corruption normally refers to a condition where public officials pursue private ends using public means. While corruption is widespread at all levels and is undermining development, state capture is a far greater, systemic threat. It is akin to a silent coup and must, therefore, be understood as a political project that is given a cover of legitimacy by the vision of radical economic transformation… Corruption tends to be an individual action that occurs in exceptional cases, facilitated by a loose network of corrupt players. It is somewhat informally organised, fragmented and opportunistic. State capture is systemic and well-organised by people with established relations. It involves repeated transactions, often on an increasing scale. The focus is not on small-scale looting, but on accessing and redirecting rents away from their intended targets into private hands (SCRP 2017:4-5).

Against this background, let us proceed to find out about this investigation that ensued which is also the SEE part of the campaign. That is, it "is going deep into the situation and seeking to understand through research, what exactly is the reality of what is going on".

The SEE Part of the Campaign

The SACC established what they call the Unburdening Panel,[42] the work of which is part of the "Anchoring Democracy" pledge. On 18 May 2017 the Unburdening Panel report was presented at a public meeting at Regina Mundi, Soweto. This report confirmed the reality of corruption and state capture. This reality had been confirmed previously by the Public Protector's (PP) *State of Capture* report[43] on 14 October 2016 and subsequently by the State Capacity Research Project's (SCRP) *Betrayal of the Promise* report on 25 May 2017. According to the Unburdening Panel, state capture is implemented as follows:

1. Securing control over state wealth, through the capture of state-owned companies by chronically weakening their governance and operational structures.
2. Securing control over the public service by weeding out skilled professionals.
3. Securing access to rent-seeking opportunities by shaking down regulations to their advantage, and to the disadvantage of South Africans.
4. Securing control over the country's fiscal sovereignty.
5. Securing control over strategic procurement opportunities by intentionally weakening key technical institutions and formal executive processes.
6. Securing a loyal intelligence and security apparatus.
7. Securing parallel governance and decision-making structures that undermine the executive.[44]

The task of this section is to distinguish characteristic aspects of state capture which must be evaluated on the basis of the values discernible in the OT wisdom literature. Without much ado, three things become apparent, namely, dishonesty, unfairness and betrayal. According to Section 41 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, under the sub-heading Principles of Co-operative Government and Intergovernmental Relations:

> All spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must: … (b) secure the well-being of the people of the Republic; (c) provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole; (d) be loyal to the Constitution, the Republic and its people…[45]

A juxtaposition of these stipulations on the one hand and the 'chronic weakening' of governance and operational structures of state-owned companies, control over the country's fiscal sovereignty, 'intentional weakening' of key technical institutions and formal executive processes, securing of loyalty of intelligence and security apparatus and undermining the executive, on the other hand, exhibits a discrepancy. By posing to be doing the former while doing the latter, the government is being *dishonest*. Furthermore, by 'weeding' of skilled professionals and 'shaking down'[46] of regulations to the advantage of the power-elite at the expense of broader South African population, the government is being *unfair*. Remarking on the 'shaking down' of regulations, the Unburdening Panel notices that "instead of prioritising job creation and economic growth, decisions are taken for the benefit of a particular company, faction or group".[47] This is the *betrayal* of the voters and the country's constitution. Dishonesty, unfairness and betrayal are therefore the three characteristic aspects of state capture deduced from the report of the Unburdening Panel and which will be evaluated according to the values discernible in the OT wisdom literature.

The JUDGE Part of the Approach

The SACC engaged with the phenomenon of state capture in South Africa and found it wanting in terms of moral legitimacy. It has engaged with this phenomenon within the tradition of the biblical prophets. In the pastoral letter to the congregations, it is stated that "we should apply all three prophetic modes – truth to power in honesty; engender hope through positive action that builds; and in a spirit of penitence own the sinfulness that we see".[48] According to Blenkinsopp, "the prophets … have little to say about aspects of personal morality…"[49] Sneed depicts Hermann Gunkel as having contrasted the Hebrew wisdom writers with the prophets. He says Gunkel noticed that sages emphasise the individual, whereas the prophets appeal to the nation[50]. By talking "truth to power", the prophetic tradition demands responsibility and accountability of institutions and structures. For example, the 2017 Triennial National Conference of the SACC from 6 – 8 June in Benoni rightfully "concluded that the President has caused Parliament, the country's representatives, and therefore the people of South Africa to sin. (1 Kings 14:16)".[51] The responsibility of individuals participating in these institutions and structures is understandably and legitimately derogated. However, I further opine that to encourage individuals also to respond positively to their consciences is not a futile exercise. Such an undertaking, if it can persuade some, can help reduce efforts necessary to counter state capture. It is against this background that I argue that the wisdom tradition complements prophetic tradition. Let us now judge dishonesty, unfairness and betrayal in terms of the "fear of the Lord".

Dishonesty generally refers to a situation where one hides his or her real intention and projects a different intention to mislead. Words like lying, deceiving, cheating etc. depict dishonesty. Proverbs 4:24 instructs readers to remove from themselves deceitful speech and abolish devious talk from themselves. According to Proverbs 6:16-19, God hates a lying tongue (17), a devising heart, plans of deception and feet that hurry to run to evil (18), and a false witness who breathes lies and sends out discord between brothers. There are many more proverbs that denounce dishonesty, e.g., Proverbs 11:18, 12:5, 17:4, 24:28, 27:6 &

28:24. In Job 13:4, falsehood is associated with worthlessness. Taking the above verses into account, it becomes apparent that dishonesty is unethical behaviour. As has been indicated, the "fear of the Lord" is ethical/moral behaviour so, dishonesty, as unethical behaviour, is rejected in accordance with the concept of the "fear of the Lord".

The issue of fairness is a fundamental theme in the books of wisdom. Fairness refers to behaviour of treating people equally, impartially and according to what they deserve. The very doctrine of retribution is motivated by a yearning for fairness. That people should receive as they give is the desire of wisdom literature in the face of indiscriminate suffering. The question of fairness is expressed explicitly in Job 21:7 asking: "Why do *the* wicked live, grow old, even grow mighty *in* power?" "This question dominates the dialogue of the Book of Job (chapters 3-27)".[52] An assertion that provides a fitting response to this question is communicated in Ecclesiastes 9:3 stating: "This *is* the injustice that is done under the sun: the same fate *comes* to everyone". God's attitude towards this state of affairs is depicted in Proverbs 20:10: "Stone and stone, measure and measure, both of them are an abomination to the Lord". This proverb means to use two different measures for one item in order to cheat is disgusting to the Lord. According to Van Leeuwen, this proverb and other related ones "reinforces God's deep concern for integrity and fair play in matters of money and commerce. Often the use of money and material goods is the best indicator of the operative beliefs of a culture or a person".[53] In all, unfairness is rejected by the concept of the "fear of the Lord" and based on that, this article rejects the unfairness of the South African government.

Betrayal is a theme that is not so conspicuous. The word בֹּגְדִים (the treacherous) appears at least twice in the Book of Proverbs in Proverbs 11:6 and 13:2. בֹּגְדִים refers to the treacherous and treachery is the betrayal of trust. Proverbs 11:6 says: צְדָקַת יְשָׁרִים תַּצִּילֵם וּבְהַוַּת בֹּגְדִים יִלָּכֵדוּ (The righteousness of the upright shall save them, and by the desires of the treacherous they shall be caught). The contrast here is between being *rescued* and being *captured*. Both the righteous and the treacherous do land in conditions of adversity. And when that happens, the righteous will be saved by their righteousness and the treacherous will be caught because of their treachery. Righteousness frees and treachery enslaves. This is a condemnation of treachery. On the other hand, Proverbs 13:2 says: מִפְּרִי פִי־אִישׁ יֹאכַל טּוֹב וְנֶפֶשׁ בֹּגְדִים חָמָס (From the fruit of the mouth of a man he shall eat good, but the appetite of the treacherous is violence). The contrast is between the good and violence. William McKane interprets this proverb very intelligibly. According to him, "a good man's speech is socially fruitful and that he himself shares in the benefits which it creates, whereas the [treacherous][54] have an appetite for disruption and violence".[55] This proverb condemns treachery or betrayal as a moral evil. The two proverbs denounce betrayal. A more precise denunciation of betrayal is in Lechion Peter Kimilike's interpretation of Proverbs 28:3:

> …in one sense, the message is that the poor should remind and warn their leaders always to realise their humble beginnings in mutual responsibility; otherwise, they risk losing their authority and positions. In another sense, the proverb expresses a message from the poor regarding the betrayal of mutual trust by their corrupted leaders that has resulted in their impoverishment. The implication is that the proverb criticises and calls to account the authority of those in power.[56]

In short, betrayal is condemned as a moral evil. Above we demonstrated that the actions of the state capturer are dishonest, unfair and treacherous. The "fear of the Lord" concept thus rebukes dishonesty, unfairness and betrayal. Basing judgement on the "fear of the Lord" as discussed above, I judge state capturers as having no moral legitimacy. Under such

circumstances, what should be done? Let us now proceed to the last phase: taking action. This is the section that also concludes our discussion.

Conclusion: The Act Part of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT Approach

In order for a concept to be applicable in people's lived experiences, a cultural condition conducive to it needs to be created. The concept of the "fear of the Lord" is no exception. In order for it to gain strength, it needs a cultural condition conducive to it. Since this concept originated from an honour and shame community, such a value needs to be evoked. Fortunately, this value is not strange to African societies. For that reason, a fitting response to state capture is to evoke the values of honour and shame. According to Sneed, honour societies pressure their members to observe important values. Saul M Olyan strikingly describes the merit of honour saying:

> It is a commodity of value, actively sought both by deities and by human beings… Loss of honor (*sic*) or diminishment results in shame; diminishment communicates a loss of social status.[57]

According to Proverbs 3:16 honour is awarded to those who achieve by wisdom.[58] Wisdom is the "fear of the Lord" (Job 28:28b/Proverbs 1:7) and is the duty of all humanity (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The "fear of the Lord" is about ethical/moral behaviour (Job 28:28c; Proverbs 3:7b). Those who are involved in dishonesty, unfairness and betrayal need to be shamed. Honest, fair and faithful people need to be honoured. In the "fear of the Lord" the church has an instrument to guide the process of honouring or shaming public representtatives. Likewise, the church can monitor the awarding of National Orders[59] and communicate to the public its affirmation or negation in accordance with the "fear of the Lord". The refusal of Nehemiah to enjoy the לֶחֶם הַפֶּחָה (the bread/food of the governor) because it laid burdens on the people is a commendable example of a public representative.[60] This he did because of the "fear of the Lord". While Nehemiah adhered to a discriminatory, exclusive ethnic theology, his "fear of the Lord", taken out of its discriminatory context, can be an inspiration for our public representatives. The church can contribute positively by intensely preaching the "fear of the Lord". It fosters a lifestyle of a positive moral disposition.

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Endnotes

[1] In this article, the "fear of the Lord" and the "fear of God" are used synonymously.

[2] A history of the study of this concept is provided by Hendrik Bosman. Hendrik Bosman, "Being Wise betwixt Order and Mystery: Keeping the Commandments and Fearing the Lord," *Scriptura* 111 (2012:3):433-439 (434-435).

[3] Prov. 3:3; 14:22; 16:6; 20:28. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Essays on Judaism in the Pre-Hellenistic Period* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 5.

[4] 8:13, 10:27, 14:27, 15:33, 19:23, 22:4 & 31:30, to name a few.

[5] Zoltán Schwáb, Is Fear of the LORD the Source of Wisdom or Vice Versa? Vetus Testamentum 63 (2013), 652-662.

[6] Schwáb, "Is Fear of the LORD the Source", 662.

[7] The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of rejoicing.

[8] To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom…

[9] The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord…

[10] For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and instruction…

[11] My insertion.

[12] Bernard J Bamberger, Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament. ." *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. 6 (1929), 39-53 (51).

[13] Lawrence Boadt, "Wisdom Literature," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible,* eds. DN Freedman, AC Myers & AB Beck (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1380-1381 (1380).

[14] Mark R Sneed, *The Social World of the Sages: An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Augsburg: Fortress Publishers, 2015), 19.

[15] Proverbs 8:13, 10:27, 14:27, 15:33, 19:23, 22:4 & 31:30; Job.

[16] Carol A Newsom, "Dialogue and Allegorical Hermeneutics in Job 28:28," in *Job 28: Cognition in Context,* ed. E van Wolde, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003, 299-305 & David JA Clines, "The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom (Job 28:28)" in *Job 28: Cognition in Context,* ed. E van Wolde, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003, 57-92.

[17] Raymond C Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty: System and Contradiction in Proverbs" *Hebrew Studies, vol. 33 no. 1* (1992):25-36 (29).

[18] William McKane, *Proverbs* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 459- 460 (16).

[19] Anne W Stewart, "Wisdom's Imagination: Moral Reasoning and the Book of Proverbs," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 40 (2016):353.

[20] Crenshaw, '*Ecclesiastes*', 25.

[21] Carol A Newsom, "Dialogue and Allegorical Hermeneutics in Job 28:28" in Job 28: Cognition in Context (ed. E van Wolde, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 300.

[22] Crenshaw, '*Ecclesiastes*', 25.

[23] Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth! Follow the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes – but know that God will bring you into judgment for all these things.

[24] Now that all has been heard, here is the final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commandments, for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

[25] Stewart, "Wisdom's Imagination", 353.

[26] Stewart, "Wisdom's Imagination", 357.

[27] Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty", 28.

[28] *Ibid*. cf. 10:4-5; 18:9; 6:6; 24:30; 26:12, 16 (Single sentences) & 6:6-11; 24:30-34; (Trio or long poems) and 26:13-16 (Non-Solomonic).

[29] Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty", 34.

[30] Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 113.

[31] Matuma Letsoalo, "The SACP's New Handlers." *Mail & Guardian* (Online), 27 Jul 2012. Accessed on 13/10/2017. https://mg.co.za/article/2012-07-27-the-leadership-of-the-sacp

[32] Grootes, Stephen. "Mcebisi Jonas Sticks to his Version in Gupta Bribery Claims." *Eye Witness News* (Online), October 22, 2017. Accessed October 13, 2017.http://ewn.co.za/2017/02/17/ mcebisi-jonas-sticks-to-his-version-in-gupta-bribery-claims.

[33] SACC, *SACC Report to the Church Public on the Unburdening Panel Process. Regina Mundi Church, Soweto. May 18, 2017*, 2017a, 1-2.

[34] SACC, "SACC Report", 2.

[35] Healing the past, and engaging the challenge of gender, ethnicity and race.

[36] Facing up to the tattered family fabric which has been caused by the impact of transition of especially the African family life, in order to foster a reconciled existence for future generations.

[37] Addressing the need to reverse poverty and inequality in order to reconcile the yearnings of marginalized poor people with the fortunes of the country.

[38] Dealing with the long-standing need for economic transformation and identifying the trade-offs necessary to address the fundamentals that result in a reconciled economic dispensation.

[39] Where corruption, maladministration and the decline of trust in public institutions, is interrogated to promote a transparent and functional democracy.

[40] *Ibid*., 3.

[41] The State Capacity Research Project is an interdisciplinary, interuniversity research partnership that aims to contribute to the public debate about 'state capture' in South Africa whose convener is Mark Swilling of Stellenbosch University.

[42] "A special panel of eminent persons led by the President of the SACC, Bishop Zipho Siwa. The panel is called the "Unburdening Panel", based on the bible text that says: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

[43] The Public Protector's report made 10 observations that there is a collaboration between the State President and some cabinet ministers on the one hand, and a business family called the Guptas on the other, to undermine the state authority and thus confirming state capture, 343-352. Among its eleven remedial actions, the report recommended that "The President [is] to appoint, within 30 days, a commission of inquiry headed by a judge solely selected by the Chief Justice who shall provide one name to the President." (8.4, p 353).

[44] SACC, *#The South Africa We Pray 4*, (2017d).

[45] *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Chapter 3: Co-operative Government: Principles of Co-operative Government and Intergovernmental Relations, 41 (1) a, b & c.

[46] This is pressuring of people at municipal and provincial levels to divert funds inappropriately to certain activities that had nothing to do with the work and purpose of the budget. Some were prevailed upon to rig tender processes in favour of certain companies and individuals, or bend and tailor regulations for a specific desired outcome. It is accessing money and opportunities through deceitful and illegal ways of pressuring vulnerable people or companies.

[47] SACC. *#The South Africa We Pray 4*, (2017d), 10.

[48] SACC. *A Pastoral Letter to the Congregations from the Leaders of SACC Member Churches Ascension – Eve of Pentecost 2017*, (2017c), online.

[49] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Essays on Judaism in the Pre-Hellenistic Period* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 1.

[50] Mark Sneed, "Is the 'Wisdom Tradition' a Tradition?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly 70*, (2011):50-71 (53).

[51] SACC, *SACC Calls for Dissolution of Parliament and Elections for Fresh Mandate*: *Statement of the 2017 Triennial National Conference of the South African Council of Churches, Benoni, June 6-8, 2017*, (2017), online.

[52] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 387.

[53] Raymond C Van Leeuwen, The Book of Proverbs: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections, in *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume V* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 19-264 (186).

[54] This is my translation of בֹּגְדִים He translates it as wrong-headed or perverse men.

[55] William McKane, *Proverbs* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 459-460.

[56] Lechion Peter Kimilike, *An African Perspective on Poverty Proverbs in the Book of Proverbs: An Analysis for Transformational Possibilities* (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 2009), 2002.

[57] Saul M Olyan, *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible. Vol. 4* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. 2011), 20.

[58] Mayer I Gruber *et al*., *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 9. 2nd ed*., eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, (Detroit: Macmillan, 2007), 519-520 (519). Other sayings that attach importance to honour and shame include Proverbs 3:35; 4:8; 13:18; 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; Ecclesiastes 6:2; 8:10; 10:1, to mention some.

[59] In South Africa there are "highest awards that a country, through its President, bestows on its citizens and eminent foreign nationals". They are the Order of Mapungubwe, the Order of the Baobab, the Order of the Companions of OR Tambo, the Order of Luthuli, the Order of Ikhamanga and the Mendi Decoration for Bravery (South African Department of Arts and Culture. National Identity: National Orders. http://www.dac.gov.za/national-orders, online).

[60] Nehemiah 5:14-15.