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The Justification of the Israelite Transition to Monarchy: An Ethical
Perspective

By

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the justification given for the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy, which was a consequential political event. This monarchy was requested by the people who premised their request on morality in one aspect and military concerns in another aspect. This dissertation is interested in the morality aspect. As it happens, ethics, the philosophy branch that deals with morality, lends us a further branch, meta-ethics, to aid us in the exposition of moral judgements undergirding the said request. To many, this political event's consequential nature simply centres on sin, that the people, alongside their human king, later suffered the consequences of going against the divine in requesting for a human king and whose "ways" they were warned about. But this sin is a curious one given that it was possession of lucre, acceptance of bribes that the people sought to terminate – it was justice, something that is godly, that the people overtly sought to preserve. When we take the military aspect, it was their ethno-cultural enclave & polity that the people sought to protect.

It amazes, however, that although scholars have committed much ink to paper on this subject matter, concluding that the people were simply sinful, no one seems to care much about what the people's assumptions and beliefs about the divine were when they requested for a human king. This dissertation, therefore, takes seriously the people's assumptions and beliefs about the divine to understand ancient Israel's religion better. As such, this will help us see that the divine attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, benevolence, eternity, impassibility, etc.) we think were understood as we do by the people of ancient Israel may not have been. One need not be surprised to find in our exposition that the Lord himself acted in line with the people's assumptions about divine properties. Furthermore, this will tell us much about how such assumptions made it possible for the people to think that they were justified in going to Ramah for a human king.

Key Terms

Assume; assumed; assumption; implications; presuppose; moral; realism; relativism; divine command; omniscience; people; human, kingship, Samuel; the LORD, the divine.

Dedication.

Makhulu Matshabangu.

Tatomkhulu Manqanqa Dubulirhamba.

Dadobawo Nokuzola Mazoe.

Siyabulela Siya Phopho.

Mama (Ses, S'thashi, Miss J), Sindiso M-M-M Sira (7/23), Nkosana Asisipho Siphosi.

Zameka NomZet Ntuli.

Oyama kaSiya.

Godfrey Tini.

Gcobani Jucwa

Sincede, Nkosi, usilondoloze nagalemmini singabina sono

Nkosi, Zusiphathe ngetarhu, Zusiphathe ngetarhu

Nkosi, itarhu lakho malihle phezu kwethu

Njengokuba ithemba lethu likuwe

Nkosi, ndithembe wena

Mandingaze ndidaniswe.

A Clergyman, we think, ought to give up his job if he does not believe in God. It almost seems that a philosopher ought to give up his if he does. – H. H. Price.

Chapter 1.

Background.

1.1. Introduction.

The people's request for a king in the book of 1 Samuel and the subsequent transition from judgeship to monarchy is a political event. It is but one aspect of the Hebrew Bible (HB hereafter) that is political but has theological implications. It also has philosophical implications, but it is theological implications that have garnered much interest to a point even those who recognise the philosophy in the proposed transition from judgeship to monarchy as being of equal value, if not more, pay little attention to and/or elide it for the theological. Obviously, this is owed, in part, to the fact that the HB itself is generally understood to be a treatise on theology. What makes things even more challenging for the study of the transition from judgeship to monarchy is that it contains an adversarial posture to the divine figure of Scripture.

In recognising the equal value of the philosophical vis-a-vis the theological, we are faced with the challenge of putting at the centre the theological in our exposition task or remembering to make disclaimers that we have not left the theological out of the package, or the promise that we will tie everything up with a proverbial theological bow. This, even though in our show of interest in the philosophical we may be the first to point to the equal value of the theological vis-à-vis the philosophical in the transition from judgeship to monarchy and may be prepared to jump right into political theology or proclaim fidelity to the medieval dictum of *Philosophia theologiae ancilla* (Henrichs 1968:437; Egeh 2020:14-22). This equal value will be organically demonstrated in this dissertation. George Farr (1955:55) already gave us a philosophical opening here about political institutions in their form as contemplated by Israelites, although he erroneously confined this to theocracy.

Gericke (2020:1-2-19) has noted how philosophy has been designated as a form of leprosy in the exposition of the HB by biblical scholars, so, utilising philosophy to reflect on the politics found in 1 Samuel 8 intensifies one's trepidation of failing to be theological, especially when there is a special interest in the radicalized people (led by their elders) who went to Ramah. Time and again, the people (led by their elders) have been castigated as lacking good judgement for asking for a human king instead of being content with divine kingship. This

begins in Scripture with Gideon in Judges 8:22-29, then the prophet Samuel's resistance in 1 Samuel 8 and, outside Scriptures, biblical scholars have pointed to the negative view of monarchy from the redacting author of 1 Samuel (White 2000:271-292), we also find scholars such as Walton (2015:195-200) arguing that the people were intent on exercising their inherent manipulation on their God and Birch (1991:212) has pointed to "the king born out of their sin".

Gunn (1980:59-78) elucidates that king Saul, as much as he got his kingship with the contribution of the divine, he very much was the king of the people for it is written in 1 Samuel 8:22 that "make *them* a (their) king", of which, following the inevitable fall of this king who bears the seeds of his own destruction, the Lord has sought out "a man after *his own heart*", as we see in 1 Samuel 13:14, God's king of choice. While this still might be an additional way of marking the people out as the ultimate losers for their daring act, it can also be read as the downplaying of their triumph at the beginning. The people managed to move kingship from the attic of Yahweh's house to the floor occupied by the people, ushering in the monarchic dispensation on earth, that even Yahweh's subsequent chosen leaders would now operate as monarchs rather than judges.

Thus, in studying the monarchic politics of the Israelite people, Saul becomes a key figure of study, especially as a baseline for the subsequent actions of kings following him. Indeed, what comes forth as an interest of study are the ideal inherent qualities of a future king in the Israelite's ideal form of government, ranging from piety to judiciousness. Moreover, how these qualities would align with the contents of the charter set forth as a paragon of excellence in carrying the hopes and aspirations of the people. As such, King Saul would later be certified as having ideal inherent qualities enabling him to embody the political interests of the people, if we take at face value that Saul was elected by popular choice. This certification was by the people as the revolting group in their search for a perfect (if not merely more perfect) form of government and political leader. But Yahweh appears to have also assessed and concluded that Saul was going to be a perfect figure for the demonstration of the consequences of the *sinful* petition for a king by the people.

The people at no point ever overtly reject the divine, however, and that they petitioned for change, which is permission seeking, albeit steadfast, by itself tells us that much. They

recognized that the divine was very much authoritatively in charge, but their disenchantment laid in their disagreement with the moral contents of the form of government that ran their public affairs and military concerns. In fact, what seems like mindless zealotry happens to have been concerned with the apparent perversion of what would be in harmony with what is godly, i.e., justice, not taking bribes, et al, as found in Deuteronomy 16:18-20.

Consequently, it becomes difficult not to belabour the point that an exposition of 1 Samuel 8, which is the text that presents us with the account of the call for a transition from judgeship to monarchy, should not preclude indulgence in the philosophical. But this indulgence in the philosophical requires a special tool in ethics to reflect on their moral judgements. Let alone that this is a political event, wherein political philosophy stands out as an undisputed candidate in this regard as a “normative study of politics”, to quote Weithman (2004:598). Some of the traits of politics are disagreement, debate, and compromise, understood to be a “political solution”. Questions such as “what is the best form of government?” or “what is the best way to live?” or “when, if at all, can a legitimate government be toppled”, et cetera, constitute political philosophy. Hence a philosopher who reads the afore writing; “disagreement, debate, and compromise” in his/her mind the thesis-antithesis-synthesis formulation is evoked, a triad first used by J.G. Fichte and generally credited to G.W.F. Hegel (Williams 1992:46).

There is no reading of 1 Samuel 8, especially at the culmination point of the petition - the joint confirmation of Saul as king by God and by the people – as not being patterned along this formulation. But right before we can even proceed to the point of devolving into the synthesis, which finds expression in the first king of Israel, we are faced with the challenge of the question of what factors led to the rise of the antithesis - which is to say, what was the disagreement about in Ramah? The disagreement was premised on morality in one aspect and military concern in another aspect. We must be attentive, though, to this point of disagreement, which implies a robustly hyper cognitive activity. 1 Samuel 8, in its depiction of the resolve of the people, suggests that the people had reached a level of clarity in their minds. It is the cognitive process that had led to this resolve-boosting clarity that drives our curiosity and we think we have detected this process, although not all of it but a substantial part of it.

Jaco Gericke (2012:199-222), writing about the first step of his then newly found philosophical criticism methodology, ripped a page from Tinseltown, writing the following:

Inception is a 2010 film directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Leonardo DiCaprio. The main character makes a living from extracting information from the subconscious mind of his subjects while they dream. The aim is to explore dream space and to share a dream. Yet to do so one must first have the ability to access the unconscious mind and be fully aware of the difficulties involved in navigating not only the first-level dream world but also dreams within dreams, and all the way down to “limbo”—the sea of the subconscious popularly expressed as primordial chaos in mythical cosmogonies.

He continued thus:

In this section I would like us to explore something analogous to what can be called the “subconscious” levels of ancient Yahwism(s)—the invisible building blocks from which the worlds in the texts were created and that hold it all together. Philosophical-religious exegesis of the Hebrew Bible will have to begin with regressive analysis aimed at identifying and reconstructing ancient Israelite religion’s most general and fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality and human life—insofar as these are implicit in the biblical text.

This is then followed by 2 other steps to complete the methodology, which are the (2) provision of conceptual clarity and (3) philosophical interpretive analysis. We will expand on this in the methodology section of this dissertation. Of course, scholarship of the HB has not fallen short of approaches to it. We have seen historical criticism, literary criticism, feminist criticism, postcolonial criticism, et cetera. But we have seen philosophy come in, but indirectly through some of its subdisciplines and philosophical trends, this is a fact illustrated at length by Gericke (2012:5). Either way, without further ado, this dissertation’s interest lies in the HB/Ethics nexus which jumps out as our most striking feature of scholarly concern. It is easy to see why this is the case, the HB has moral injunctions against a swath of Israelite conduct. We will note the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 which have a series of *shall not* orders, as with the sixth injunction *Thou shall not murder* –

murder, as we understand it, being an unjustified killing of another human being, to point to one example.

As such, we have come to see writings about ethics in the HB and these have been around for some time now, with titles such as *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, ethics, and Christian life* (1991) by Bruce C. Birch; *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (1994) by Waldemar Janzen; *Ethics and the Old Testament* (1998, 2002) by John Barton; *Biblical Morality: Moral perspectives in Old Testament narratives* (2001) by Mary E. Mills; *The Old Testament and Ethics: A Book-by-Book Survey* (2011 & 2013) [a collation of essays] edited by Joel B. Green and Jacqueline E. Lapsley. Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list.

Barton (2002:3) highlights the difficulty faced by someone who sees the Old Testament (OT hereafter) as a source for ethics, he writes that:

King Saul, the first king of Israel, loses divine approval because he is not sufficiently zealous in carrying out God's command to annihilate everything that breathes when he defeats the Amalekites. Samuel, God's prophet, takes over and before he slays Agag says: "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women."

Barton (2002:17-18) thus is of the view that the OT, as a possible source for ethics, requires us to appreciate that it is of a certain context for it was not carefully worked out to be valid for all time, although we can still draw comparisons to other contexts, it has some inconsistencies, and has some alien assumptions to us from the societies which formed these texts as we now possess them. Barton (2002:16) sees OT ethics as beginning with particulars then going to the universals, and then vice versa. Mills (2001: vii) on her part, in her tribute to John Barton, and writing in the preface that her book "starts from the OT story and focuses on the moral vision which is part of the narrative."

Before we move any further, let us look at philosophical definitions. While Philosophy literally means "love of wisdom" in Greek, we defer to our preferred second category of definitions in The American Heritage Dictionary (1994:54552), for it speaks more to the discipline or practice of Philosophy, that it is "the investigation of the causes and laws

underlying reality.” One of the main branches of philosophy is ethics. We must note that our interest is on the descriptive side of the ethics branch divide, which is meta-ethics, different from normative and applied ethics.

One thing that is usually stressed by those who participate in moral philosophy is the need to distinguish between ethics and morality, which are used interchangeably by some. Hence the definition of both is necessary. Well, morality, as Peter Baelz (1977:2) has put it, concerns practical problems of right and wrong, such that the question “How do I get from Khayelitsha to Pinelands by train?” is a practical problem but without a moral problem. But if one asks the question “How do I get from Khayelitsha to Pinelands by train without buying a ticket?” is a moral problem [the original writing says “ticket from Waterloo to Paddington”]. These can range from private to personal and expand further still to public and political.

Ethics, on the other hand, is a philosophical reflection on these practical, moral problems. It is concerned with the theoretical. Baelz (1977:2) writes the following about ethics, “It aims, in the first instance, to understand rather than decide. It takes stock of the moral scene. It steps back from the immediately practical and attempts to discover some underlying pattern or order in the immense variety of moral decisions and practices of individuals and societies.” Ethics can either be normative (attempts some sort of adjudication) or descriptive (not evaluative).

Let us now turn to the foundation of kingship as it relates to morality and ethics. The books of 1 and 2 Samuel are intriguing in that they posit how human kingship was founded and how it initially functioned in Israel, therefore, shedding the unique character of Israel as a nation with a transcendental king in a world ubiquitously led by human kings, as Eslinger (1988:257) has written. Indeed, in 1 Samuel 8:5, the people (led by the elders) make a moral judgement which is fodder for a move to another form of government:

Your sons do not walk in your ways [which we take to mean what the author in v.3 says: “They turned aside after dishonest gain [lucre], and accepted bribes, and perverted justice”]

Appoint us a king to lead us, such as all other nations have.

Consequently, the LORD, their God, saw the petition for what it was, a rejection of himself. Of course, there have been quibbles about what exactly was meant by the rejection of the God of Israel, as we have seen with Gordon (1986:110) who, after looking at the people's petition, wrote that: "the people of Israel are chafing at God's exercise of his sovereign rights over them just as they have been inclined to do since the time of the Exodus". The LORD's invocation of the exodus in 1 Samuel 8:8 takes us back to when the people opted for their own god(s) instead of the God of Moses and Aaron in Exodus 32. But this was just the culmination of events because the Israelites in Exodus 16 complain that this God has failed to live up to the promise of a land of "milk and honey" after uprooting them from the land of oppression which, at least, guaranteed "pots of meat". Although the manna was the result, it still did not prevent the golden calf event.

Walton (2015:179) goes against the notions that the "rejection" is that of Yahweh personally, or judgeship as an institution, or the then current national identity. For Walton (2015:179), the elders were simply looking for a God whom they could manipulate through a king, one whom they had attempted to drag into war as a palladium with the Ark of the Covenant in chapter 4 of 1 Samuel. Walton (2015:179-200) was responding to scholars such as Lyle Eslinger, R. P. Gordon, R. Polzin, etc., who had written mainly in the 1980s, who saw socio-political and theological constructs as the prevailing problems to the Israelites in the narrative and had now rejected the institution of judgeship. Walton (2015:181) rails against the "anachronistic Western ideology" with emphasis on liberty, freedom, and the "disdain for monarchy as an institution." Walton (2015:184) points out at the beginning of his writing that his is a synchronic reading of the Deuteronomic History in its final redacted form.

However, it is hard to ignore the compelling writings of redaction critics such as Marsha White (2020:271-292) who has written about the impact of the redaction activity on the stories of Saul and David. She has shown that it is not a benign editorial but had ramifications then as a Davidic hagiography and a polemic against Saul and has many ramifications now for how we understand Israelite monarchy and the leaders in it. These ramifications extend to whether the king was inaugurated by public request and tentatively granted or if it was by popular election. It also furnishes us with how we understand a model human king quality, i.e., piety.

While Birch (1976:22) questioned the historical value of 1 Samuel 8, he nonetheless acknowledged that central to the narrative is a call for kingship that is clearly prompted by the “breakdown in the administration of justice due to the corruption of Samuel’s sons.” The people’s petition is based on the flawed character of Samuel’s sons who are their leaders. They are perturbed by their dishonest gains (lucre) taking of bribes and perversion of justice. Miscall (1986:43) and Eslinger (1985:255) noticed that this premise of protest is taken from the conventional God commandments to the judges of Israel in Deuteronomy 16: 18-20 wherein God is reported to have said:

You must not pervert justice; you must not show impartiality; you must not take a bribe for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you must follow, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you.

We must note that the moral judgement about lucre, bribery and the perversion of justice is not done by the prophet Samuel either (prophets usually put-up guard rails for the people) but by the people themselves. Eslinger (1985:252) points out that Eli was punished together with his sons who had done “wrong” with impunity in the temple that their father presided over, making Eli complicit. This is unlike Samuel who was placed geographically apart from his sons who were in Beersheba and him in Ramah about 80 kilometres away. Eslinger (1985:252) concludes that this set Samuel up as the “standard of upright behaviour” that his sons failed to live up to.

In his consideration of the ethics of the OT’s historical books, Birch (2013:74) summarises the question at the centre of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, that it is “who is going to lead Israel?” and God, with the birth of Samuel to Hannah, is working to answer that question. This is at the back of a moral crisis that is demonstrated in the corrupt house of Eli (1 Samuel 2:11-17) and the leadership that exacerbates this moral crisis. Birch (2013:74) adds that the Philistine belligerent military, which had already shown its power by its invasion and capture of the Ark of the Covenant, is an external imminent military threat that could render Israel extinct. This is more of an urgent, concrete problem. This external concrete problem need not be elided in our study.

Janzen (1994:144) places the germane nature of Israelite kingship in the Christian’s current ethical living, he says that this is not just a matter of Israelite history, but it can provide the

“possibility of obedient living under God. It must, therefore, inquire concerning the biblical paradigm of obedient kingship, marred, and embattled as it may have been.”

As we can see, the concise rationale given in 1 Samuel 8 for a move from judgeship to monarchy has been shown to be loaded. 1 Samuel 8 asks us to ponder about the provided justification of the putting down of the decidedly theocratic judgeship and its replacement with the opted for human-based monarchy. The people, after pointing to Samuel’s old age as aggravating a moral crisis, charge that Joel and Abijah do not follow his ways and for this, they not only want the replacement of these leaders within the same institution but problematise the institution itself and call for its jettisoning.

Eslinger (1985:254) is of the view that this basis does not suffice to bring about the displacement of something as mammoth as a form of government. He asserts that this deficiency is due to the narrator’s contempt for the request. But is the basis of this request thin? We cannot ignore the implications of Eslinger’s (1985:254) claim, that the monarchy came at the back of deficient, therefore, dubious ethical grounds. Marsha White (2020:280) notes what she calls a negative Deuteronomistic commentary on Saul and kingship, which shares the essence of this deficiency view as the people are warned in 1 Samuel 8:18 that they will “cry” because of the king they “have chosen”, or “a king born out of their sin”, as Birch (1991:212) has put it.

It can be frustrating for one to be pulverized for failing to justify one’s deeply held beliefs. This is so because such beliefs tend to be the basis of the meaning of one’s life and conduct. This understanding of the compulsion to justify one’s beliefs and resultant conduct appears not to be lost in 1 Samuel 8. The narration points to the people of Israel (led by their elders) providing rationale for their petition for human kingship, thus marking the moribund stages of the institution of judgeship. Surely, the people’s rationale was deemed to be enough justification in the narrative by the people (led by the elders), or the final redactor of the text thought that he had given the gist of the justification for a move from judgeship to monarchy. It thus emerges that we must determine the weight of each (or a sum) of the apparent reasons given for the jettisoning of judges (judgeship) to make way for a king (monarchy).

It is truism that the military threat on the horizon, which the people (led by the elders) clearly highlighted, was a reason to move to a monarchy. We can see that the books of Samuel contain the capture of the Ark of the Covenant and the defeat of the Philistines after Saul assumes the reign as the first Israelite king. Hence it makes sense to fixate on the study of the

military angle. But the text does have moral reasons which it ascribes to the people (led by the elders) as being part of the reasons provided for the move to human kingship. It is why Birch (1991:207) says that: “for the most part we are asked in this chapter to consider kingship first as a theological-ethical matter and as a political-military expediency”. Samuel’s age, as referenced, is relevant to both the military angle and moral angle. Although age concerns are more apt for military leadership, when the apparently frail Samuel is retired as a leader those who succeed him allow for lucre, bribery, and the perversion of justice to be the order of the day. Again, Birch (1976:26), on this score says: “Samuel’s age and the corruption of his sons render the present system unworkable”. It makes sense, therefore, to thoroughly probe this morality angle from an ethics perspective.

In fact, an argument will be made that the people’s request, on its own, for a king has serious implications for the nature of God as understood by the people who went to Ramah to request for a king. These implications multiply when this request is premised on morality. This would include the providence of God and all its ramifications for human agency. Could the God of Israel be said to be liable to change and could he have been assumed to be temporal if he recalls past instances of being forsaken in the time of the exodus, and if he partakes in mutual concessions human life consists in when he grants kingship he clearly disagrees with or is intolerant of? This also allows us to reflect not just on the military threat to Israel which could render it extinct, but what it means morally for an ethno-cultural nation to exist and sustain itself.

These implications lie dormant awaiting the day they are given life. But these implications are not just there to be brought to life; they are there for us to make sense of what made the moral reasons not just possible but sufficient for the justification of the jettisoning of the theocratic institution of judgeship for monarchy in ancient Israel.

What makes this a challenge, indeed academically sensitive, is how we get there. This concerns what the academy understands as methodology, especially given that this dissertation sees *prima-facie* meta-ethical points of study in the text of 1 Samuel 8. This is drawn from the discernible moral judgements made in the text as premises for the jettisoning of the institution of the theocratic judgeship for human kingship. We charge forth, nonetheless, because the same academy has given us probing tools and we deal with this in the current chapter and expand on it in the second chapter of this dissertation.

1.2. Research Question.

What do the *prima-facie* meta-ethical points of study tell us about the discernible moral judgement(s) undergirding the justification for a transition from judgeship to monarchy?

1.3. Aim.

This study aims to utilise philosophical criticism as an exegetical method to scrutinize the discernible moral judgements in the justification for the jettisoning of the theocratic institution of judgeship for human king kingship.

1.4. Objectives.

- 1.4.1 It is to introduce the study and give a survey of the literature concerning this study.
- 1.4.2. This dissertation seeks to give a short survey of the previous methodological approaches to 1 Samuel 8, then explain and defend the proposed philosophical criticism method.
- 1.4.3. Seeing that the characters of Samuel's sons were at fault, compromising a god founded institution, we want to bring to bear what 1 Samuel 8 assumes about God's omniscience, free will, and moral responsibility.
- 1.4.4. Given that the leaders of a god sustained form of government are rejected, and the LORD claims to be rejected, for the purposes of securing justice, it becomes critical to determine just what was the assumed valid source of morality in the text.
- 1.4.5. This chapter investigates if the people assumed that they were epistemically justified in their request for a king.
- 1.4.6. Here we study closely the meta-ethical political implications of the transition from judgeship to monarchy.
- 1.4.7. To provide a summary of results and overall conclusion of this dissertation.

1.5. Hypothesis.

As moral concerns have been observed to be a reality in the HB and that the request for a transition from judgeship to monarchy also concerns moral values and moral judgement(s), it follows that the foundations, meaning, and nature of moral judgement(s) are assumed or implied and can be brought to bear to show how the petition for a king was not ethically deficient and had political implications.

1.6. Methodology.

Jaco Gericke (2012:199-222) in chapter 7 of his book *The Hebrew Bible and Philosophy of Religion*, proposes that “currents in descriptive philosophical exegesis can be employed fruitfully as a new type of biblical criticism.” He hopes to mirror these in their status as an interpretative methodology with the aims of being both philosophical and historical and with its interest in mere clarification of meaning, thus bringing about a hermeneutically legitimate way of bringing the philosophy of religion to the reading of ancient texts without distorting their contents. This is what Gericke (2012:199) calls philosophical criticism.

This builds upon what is already independent and officially accepted linguistic criticism, historical criticism, literary criticism, and social-scientific criticism perspectives. Gericke (2012:199) describes his philosophical criticism as an auxiliary to the study of the HB.

Philosophical criticism is concerned more with the philosophy of religion than it is with broader philosophy. This differs from philosophical criticism that has been in use in philosophy proper using philosophy as it concerns “philosophical critique of epistemological or moral assumptions or critical evaluation of truth, et cetera.” Gericke (2012:200) writes. Adding that it also must not be confused with metacommentary, which attempts to discredit an author’s viewpoints about his shaky philosophical assumptions in the discourse, nor is it pure biblical theology. Nor is it just to bring about philosophical ideas in the text or read the text as though it is philosophy.

“Its aim is to look at the biblical discourse from the perspective of loci on the agenda of philosophy of religion, with an interest in discovering what, if anything, a given passage assumes or implies on these matters and in translating the findings of the analyses into philosophical terms. In this way the folk philosophies of ancient Yahwism can be identified, reconstructed, and elucidated” wrote Gericke (2012:201).

Philosophical Criticism will be employed as an exegetical methodology for this study. Philosophical criticism achieves its mission by being descriptive in its analysis. The biblical text itself is the centrepiece of exposition, but it is “sometimes left for a “smoke and chat” with philosophers” as Gericke (2012:203) put it. This method seeks to “discover what, if anything, a text assumes or implies” regarding matters of philosophy of religion and then translate these implications or assumptions into philosophical terms. This is also carried out with the understanding that interest in the historical and the philosophical are not mutually exclusive (Gericke 2012:216).

Three steps are followed in this methodology, although these are “steps” it does not mean that they are strictly sequential and/or mutually exclusive during the process of interpretation. We list these steps as follows:

1. The first step is the regressive conceptions of analysis, which translates the study of the worlds under the worlds in the text (presuppositions) walking/working backwards, into the cognitive space, to what one is looking for and understands to be assumed in the text (Gericke 2012:204-211).
2. Decompositional conceptions analysis: which can be understood as the breaking down into smaller pieces the concepts found in the worlds inside the worlds in the text so as to clarify the concepts therein. It is a descriptive analysis that approaches the text from the philosophical angle (Gericke 2012:211-214).
3. Transformative/interpretative type of analysis: this leads to an analysis of translating the statements in the text and placing them in their logical form. This deals with the worlds above the worlds in the texts (implications). This is the translation of non-philosophical terms of the Hebrew Bible into philosophical terms (Gericke 2012:215-219).

The use of this methodology will further be defended in the following chapter 2.

1.7. Expected Results.

- We expect to find that there were some underlying assumptions about determinism and free will, the LORD’s impassibility and time by the people reported to have found fault with not just Samuel’s sons but the God founded institution of judgeship and travelled to Ramah to request its obsolescence.
- That there are two strands of moral grounding observable in the text.
- We expect to find that the accusations of lucre, bribery and the perversion of justice were undergirded by an assumed moral-epistemic justification.
- This will most likely show that the ensuing political actions in the text were informed by the people’s assumed valid source of morality.

Chapter 2.

Philosophical Criticism.

2. 1. Introduction.

It is generally difficult to work on assimilating into a community whose language, the very carrier of that community's culture, you know little to nothing about. But it can bring shame to one when trying to speak on some subject matter with an interlocutor who has mastered the national *de jure* official language, while one is still stuck on the pidgin side of the aisle. One is thus left less deft, which may lead to anxiety due to, even if slight, inability to communicate exactly what one means. The current chapter attempts to get over this hurdle and claim that there is relevant value to what one is trying to communicate. Not only is this attempt at communication being written by a novice on the subject matter, but the methodology employed is also largely novel.

The subject matter at hand is the end of judgeship and the foundation of the Israelite monarchy as written about in 1 Samuel 8. There are various studies that have been conducted on this subject matter, in fact, various methods of picking it apart have long been founded and are linchpins. Even a survey of these methods is indispensable if one is to be taken seriously in presenting a view or purported study on such. This survey will be done below, the hope is that it will be competent enough. But we must note that what we plan to do with the text in terms of methodology will also feature, but at the end of this chapter. The planned use of this method is by no means an attempt to supplant what are established methodologies, instead, it seeks to complement these. However, the incoming manner of the approach itself might only somewhat resemble already established methods for reasons that will become clear.

It must also be noted that this dissertation takes seriously, and almost has an exclusive interest in, the moral aspect of the foundation of Israelite monarchy and, almost naturally, this leads us to ethics which is a major branch of philosophy. We also note that 1 Samuel 8 presents us with a political event with its thick theological flavour, it is only when we can also philosophically account for this that we understand what is at play in this text. We accept that the Philistine military threat to ancient Israel also precipitated the foundations of the Israelite monarchy. Thus, ours is not to deny nor explicate that military aspect, but we hold that, indirectly, our method will also furnish some fundamental understanding of this military aspect. A more direct philosophical approach can be done in the future as a form of treatise in this regard. This chapter is ultimately designed to defend philosophical criticism, not just as

another legitimate complementary method in the study of the HB, but as an apt method in the study of the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy. We begin with the survey of earlier approaches to our text of interest and end with a narrowed-down focus on the development of philosophical criticism and meta-ethics regarding the HB.

2.2. Diachronic Approaches to the Study of the Hebrew Bible.

Historical approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible have a substantial influence. But literary analysis, too, has its influence, establishing the “synchronic/diachronic question” highlighted by Eslinger (1985:11-42). The synchronic approach concerns the literary, and the diachronic approach concerns the historical. Romer (2011:25) writes that diachronic exegesis revolves around the process of the formation of a specific book – and how it came to be, taking time of writing into consideration. Barton (2009:525) says of synchronic approaches that “a synchronic (contemporaneous) reading looks at the text just as it meets us in the present.”

2.3. Historical Criticism.

Historical criticism leads the pack in diachronic approaches to the HB and has given rise to other biblical criticism types. Dozeman (2010:237) writes that historical criticism’s aim is to engage in interpretive work regarding the development of the text(s) in its original contexts. We pick up from Carr (2010:270) as well as Dozeman (2010:239) that one of the leading divisions in the family of diachronic approaches is source criticism. The interest and practice of this is to identify the preceding source(s) that came to make up the final composition of the text as we now possess it. The source(s) are thus reconstructed, even though the source is lost, by those writing the available biblical text, Carr (2010:270) writes. Put differently, source critics are of the view that the books of Samuel are a collation of various pieces of writings or ancient sources that preceded their final form.

Form criticism is one of the diachronic approaches that, according to Dozeman (2010:236), classifies the form or structure of traditions that are picked up from the bible as determined by their mood, form, and setting. Frolov (2004:11) writes that even the Hebrew Bible historical books have an aura of similarity in content and form making them eligible for them to be described as historical accounts. They can be categorized, instead, into different genres of oral folk tradition that became clear when dealing with characters, locales, and phenomena. Regarding redaction criticism, Carr (2010:269) writes that it is an attempt to extract how authors or “redactors” of the book in its final form brought forth the complete

versions through means of arranging, transforming, and extending the original, earlier sources.

2.4. Diachronic Approaches to 1 Samuel 8.

On this part, we will rely on Lyle M. Eslinger (1985) for translation of some of the works written in German, but we list these in the bibliography for they are the primary sources. These diachronic approaches have been extremely influential in the study of 1 Samuel 8 as a historical account of the rise of the Israelite monarchy. Chapters 9:1-10:6 narrate that Saul is anointed king; Chapters 10:17-27 narrates that Saul is elected by lot; Chapter 11:1-15 narrates that Saul attains kingship after proving himself in a battle in Gilgal, notes Weiser (1961:159). This apparent inconsistency elicited charges that these narrative accounts came from contributions of various traditions, or redactors, during the process of development of the writing of the narrative of the foundation of monarchy, notes Eslinger (1985:12).

Eslinger (1985:12) goes on to note that this is not the only issue that faces the reader of 1 Samuel. The second issue is that of the attitudes displayed in these distinct accounts or traditions as directed to the institution of monarchy, as well as Saul as an individual. Not only is the people's request for a king seen as a rejection of Yahweh it is also regarded as an act of idolatry. This negative attitude is further apparent in 10:17-19, as well as 12:1-25.

There is a contrast that is positive, however, to the rejection of Yahweh and idolatry sentiment in the same narrative, because it is God who sends Samuel to find Saul and anoint him king. Saul is the man designated in 9:16 to save Israel from the Philistine military threat. King Saul receives praise in 9:2 and 10:23-24 but is denigrated in 10:27, Eslinger (1985:12) writes – adding that historical criticism has established means of accounting for these disparate and contrasting sentiments, with assertions of what is true in the account of what indeed happened. One of these is the working hypothesis of multiple authorship in the literary development of different Israelite periods.

Julian Wellhausen (1973:253) entered the picture, building from what he had learned about 1 Samuel. He went on to identify just two disparate literary sources in 1 Samuel 8 of “two different ages”. Eslinger (1985:13) tells us that one version that Wellhausen (1899:240) discerned is that of an antimonarchy stance in 8; 10:17-27; and 12. While there are three varying accounts, as noted above, Wellhausen (1973:251) cites the inconclusiveness of chapter 9:1-10:6 and needs to unfold into chapter 11 for its events to reach a conclusive end.

For Wellhausen (1973:250-255), these two competing versions have their context in Israelite history and Israelite literature. Considering this, it is the pro-monarchic version that is earlier in terms of composition, and it is an expression of the gratitude that ancient Israel had to the men and institutions that brought an end to anarchy and oppression that has elements of the judges. As for the anti-monarchic version, its context is that of the exilic or pro-exilic religious community. This positive sentiment is credited to the people who knew nothing of government or statehood, thus projecting backwards theocratic concerns they held to the early history of the monarchy. The negative, anti-monarchic version is late in composition and is dependent on the earlier pro-monarchic version, it is unhistorical in character, while the pro-monarchic version is genuine tradition. As such, how one reads 1 Samuel 8-12 for the purposes of interpretation, one's understanding has to be based on the context of its author rather than in its literary context. What one can only achieve is a comparison of the two versions but their explanation as to their differences is constantly traced to their distinct historical context.

Wellhausen's (1973) hypothesis enjoyed a hefty influence on the interpretation of 1 Samuel 8-12, such that source criticism saw varied source material that would have made up these 1 Samuel chapters. Karl Budde (1920:xvii) led in this fashion, Eslinger (1985:15) highlights this, but employing source criticism, agreeing with Wellhausen's (1973) bi-division but added that there are other socio-historical settings that are feasible other than post-exilic Judaism in trying to account for the anti-monarchic view of a source referred to as E. He charged that a Deuteronomistic redactor compiled these sources into one, but these sources are not visible enough to be divided according to their respective factual distinctions and pre-exilic traditions. But the Deuteronomistic redactor's hand can be traced in 1 Samuel:13-17; 14:47-51; and 2 Samuel 8.

These sources that Budde (1920:xviii-xix) identifies are Hexateuchal sources J and E. J has contents and tendencies that are pro-monarchic, while the latter source has the anti-monarchy contents and tendencies (Eslinger 1985:15). This link to these sources had an impact on the dating of the anti-monarchic version to an earlier time than that which Wellhausen (1973) had placed it. This version has a prophetic character that is dependent on Hosea. By contrast, the pro-monarchic version corresponds with the J narratives that had come before in Joshua and Judges, its agreement with the outlook and choice of words in J (Eslinger 1985:15).

Otto Eissfeldt (1965:275) further divided these sources, adding an L source to the mix. Thus, L and J form a parallel flow and relate with one another in the Pentateuch. However, these other sources stand against E, and L comes in with older, rawer, and credible historical narratives. Given this, Essfeldt (1965:1965) dedicates his work and time trying to point to the validity that is confirmed by pinning the narratives on the divisions of their sources in the Pentateuchal sources (Eslinger 1985:17).

Martin Noth (1960) agrees in many ways with the Wellhausen's (1973) hypothesis. Firstly, that the narrative literary division is in line with multiple authorship, the anti and pro-monarchic attitudes. Noth (1960:172-73) does not explicitly state that the pro-monarchy view is older in dating and holds that the negative attitude may have been one that existed from the very beginning and even before the rise of the Israelite monarchy. Noth's (1963) theory holds that the Hebrew Bible books from Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings are products of a single hand, that of a Deuteronomist, owing to the books' apparent content coherence in historical development. The phrase "Deuteronomic history" is proof of the influence of Noth's (1963) theory. It is no wonder then that, due to its influence, the intellectual impulse from some was to modify this theory rather than negate it (Eslinger 1985:22).

2.5. Synchronic Approaches

Eslinger (1985) is said, by Frolov (2004:19), to have been the first scholar to examine 1 Samuel in a synchronic manner and would be followed by Moshe Garsiel's (1985) synchronic examination of 1 Samuel. This approach did produce certain reading results of the text, including the conclusion that 1 Samuel 1-12 is a unitary literary narrative that progresses clearly as a logical plot.

Garsiel (1985:15-16) contends that while source criticism and/or redaction criticism may be acknowledged as using various sources of all types, they were, nonetheless, adapted and shaped in the pattern of a historiosophical and literary conception which were the basis of the compiling final author.

Later, Miscall (1986:67) also broke away from "historical criticism's presuppositions, modes of analysis, types of questions asked, or kinds of answers or meaning sought." Although Miscall (1986) does not defend the literary unity of 1 Samuel, it is rather presupposed from his commentary, Frolov (2001:20) wrote.

2.6. Philosophical Analysis.

By 2003 Jaco Gericke had put the final touches to his Doctor of Philosophy dissertation (PhD) which had a jolting title. Jolting in that it asked, “Does Yahweh Exist?”, the subtitle that followed next did little to assuage the fears that that PhD was veering off the guardrails of the study of the OT. Whatever the contents of this subtitle were, he put philosophical-critical, realism, and OT, in the same sentence. The daring move was that of asking about the ontological status of Yahweh, which is a question readily expected from atheists. Asking if God exists is generic enough and a subject that can be entertained in the philosophy of religion, but even in this field, the focus has largely been on the rationality of belief in God, even if he does exist. But, having questioned whether Yahweh exists or not, Gericke (2003) directed and confined this question to the OT. He thus had the burden of justifying why he would *smuggle* in a question that easily could be regarded as a nonstarter in the OT.

Gericke (2003:8) pointed out in the hypothesis of his work that this research question was “almost unheard of”. He pointed this out as he enumerated OT scholars’ explicit endorsement of realism in the OT as well as those who explicitly reject it as “problematic if not absurd” regarding Yahweh’s ontological status (Gericke 2003:3-7). Opposition to questions pertaining to Yahweh’s ontological status could well be coming from the professional rather than the personal proclivities of OT scholars, added Gericke (2003:7).

A couple of pages in, beginning with the table of contents, Gericke (2003) proved himself to be up to the task of justifying his inquiry. But it is his then proposed methodology to tackle the problem at hand that calls for special attention for it proves itself to be designed for application generally, and to specific texts, in the OT.

At first, Gericke (2003:8) borrows from Warburton (1966:42-43) the elucidation of the duty of the devil’s advocate who:

is someone who puts the strongest possible case against a position for the sake of argument rather than because of the real disagreement with the position. The devil’s advocate intends to test its own beliefs to the limit through the presentation of a case against those beliefs it cherishes (or wants to cherish; or once cherished) most sincerely.

Now, let us tease out the substance relevant to our own study and steadily remove ourselves from that which was only relevant to Gericke’s (2003) PhD as well as inquisition into the ontological status of Yahweh.

Initially, the current chapter will begin with what is written under the objectives that Gericke's (2003) dissertation sought to achieve, of which he writes about a "variety of complimentary ways" the aim can be articulated: We will pick three that are relevant to our current study, and we quote these below.

- To utilize the format and methodology of the philosophy of religion in order to deal with the problem of realism in Old Testament theology.
- To supplement historical-, literary-, and ideological-critical perspectives on the problem of realism with a comprehensive and almost exhaustive "philosophical-critical" view on the same issue.
- To pioneer philosophical-critical analysis (philosophical criticism / philosophy of Old Testament religion) as a novel yet functional interpretive approach to be utilized in the reading of Old Testament texts.

Thus, under the topic of methodology, Gericke (2003:10) tells us of the absence of an independent and officially recognized interpretive methodology that employs the philosophy of religion as the primary auxiliary discipline. Hence the logical necessity of pioneering a method that deals with the ontological questions arising from the study of the OT, its potential viability, foundation flaws and hermeneutical legitimacy notwithstanding. Of the existing methods, ontological concerns are, by design, *bracketed or suppressed*. This is not to plead ignorance pertaining to the "pre-philosophical, pre-scientific, pluralist and religious nature" of the OT text, wrote Gericke (2003:11). This follows a desire to fill in the gap sparked in OT studies by the absence of an official avenue for tackling philosophical questions arising from OT textual interpretation. Channeling the conviction that philosophy is theology's handmaiden, Gericke (2003:12) added that philosophy was supposedly replaced by history and, later, by sociology, as well as literary criticism, as a handmaiden to OT theology, which has led to the great repression of philosophy in the modernist and post-modernist periods, respectively.

However, while it may be factual that the construction the metaphysical systems based on OT discourse collapsed in the face of the "rise of critical historical consciousness", philosophy has kept its grip of influence on OT studies, contrary to those scholars' writings on this interpretation history would like to impress upon us. In fact, it was developments in philosophy that birthed the now officially recognized auxiliary disciplines in the interpretation of OT, as opposed to these handmaids in OT interpretation just coming in as

independent superseding replacements of philosophy, as put forth by Brueggemann (1997:6-56). This has led to a heavy and almost exclusive inquiry premised on history or sociology, and when OT scholars are drawn to philosophy as a handmaiden, it is usually on “philosophy of science, hermeneutics, philosophy of history, epistemology, logic, ethics, etc.” but never philosophy of religion, highlights Gericke (2003:14).

To be noted is that some of the topics that belong to the philosophy of religion are also dealt with in OT theology but taken uncritically, but that misses the point as to the contrast in interest, domain assumptions, and perspectives of the two disciplines. Being cognizant of this will lead to the understanding that, even when there is an overlap on matters addressed in OT theology, a gap, if it is the only one, is left open with the neglecting of ontology, which is where the philosophy of religion can provide aid.

2.7. Philosophical-Critical Analysis.

One must note that this method was put forth as an argument to tackle the question of ontology regarding Yahweh specifically. But this methodology can be extended to other OT texts that are appealing to philosophy of religion as well, for clarity and meaning. In identifying this, we must note what Gericke (2003) calls “philosophical-critical analysis”, which is the umbrella term for other philosophical approaches, that fall under it, to the interpretation of OT texts. There are problems that would be apparent in the OT text but can ever truly be solved as issues in the analytic philosophy of religion. Philosophical-critical analysis thus becomes the auxiliary discipline in the fashion that other disciplines such as history and sociology are employed by OT scholars.

2.8. Philosophical Criticism.

There are two levels that fall under the overarching concept of philosophical-critical analysis: one being micro-analysis at the level of exegesis. This is “philosophical criticism” which deals with individual texts that, when read, concern, are relevant to, issues on the agenda of the philosophy of religion, Gericke (2012:199) writes.

2.9. Philosophy of Old Testament Religion.

The second level is at a macro-level, a larger scale in which philosophical-critical analysis concerns the philosophy of Old Testament religion. This runs parallel to Old Testament theology, wherein the Old Testament texts are considered in their entirety. Of course, the OT

is read from the perspective of relevant issues on the agenda of the analytic philosophy of religion.

It is prudent for us to pause here, even take a detour, to go into the relevance of all of this to our study at hand. Ours, indeed, concerns 1 Samuel 8 and as highlighted above, there have been various approaches to this text.

While the text being dealt with, 1 Samuel 8, is narrower, and studies conducted concerning this text are usually much broader, i.e., Deuteronomic history, dating, J, L and E divisions, than the interests of this current study, this does not mean that the broader concerns are ignored, at least in as far as these have any bearing on the said text. Whereas Gericke's (2003) interest is in the ontological status of Yahweh, arguing against realism in OT theology, the current study's interest is in meta-ethics concerning 1 Samuel 8. While Gericke (2003) was interested in the philosophy of the OT religion, therefore, interrogation at the macro-level, this study is concerned with philosophical criticism at a micro-level of analysis, with 1 Samuel 8 as the text of study.

It is common cause that historical criticism has a strong hold on the so-called Deuteronomic history which features the books of Samuel but, while this is the case, literary analysis of the same books has had a considerable influence. This necessitates scholars dealing with the books of Samuel to recap this scholarly development.

2.10. Philosophical Criticism and the Transition from Judgeship to Monarchy.

Gericke (2012:199-222) would come back about a decade later following his 2003 PhD to build upon it with a monograph. In chapter 7 of that book, he delved into philosophical criticism and how it could aid us in bringing clarity to the HB text and "accessing levels of meaning in the text that are not available to other traditional, non-philosophical exegetical methods" (Gericke 2012:203).

It should be readily clear that Gericke's (2003) methodology was necessitated by a research gap concerning the ontological status of Yahweh, which, until then, had been left to the assumptions and conclusions of some of the biblical scholars that this inquiry was not necessary, ours concerns the moral aspects of 1 Samuel 8 in the transition from judgeship to kingship. As our focus is on a specific text, we have employed philosophical criticism. However, our approach to the said text immediately hits a snag for this text has long been subjected to exegetical methods that are now the authority to its understanding.

Morality and ethics as subjects to be highlighted in the books of Samuel have not gone unnoticed; one can cite Birch (2013:22) and Barton (2002:17-18). Where research has taken place on ethics and the HB, it has been generic, but there is a branch of ethics that has been missing, at least it has not enjoyed extensive focus and resultant implications therein, this has been particularly true where ethics concern 1 Samuel 8. If meta-ethics is a branch concerned with the nature, properties, scope, and foundations of morality, then 1 Samuel 8 has plenty of assumptions about the nature, properties, scope, and foundations of morality in its religious context.

Firstly, we appreciate the scholarly work, ala Wellhausen (1973) and progeny regarding the development of the 1 Samuel 8 text, and its negative and positive monarchical attitudes. But whether there is a final redactor, pro- or anti-monarchical attitude, that these originate from a J, E or L source is not a major, if a concern at all, for our study. We also appreciate other observers and scholars such as Birch's (2013:74) highlighting the fact that there was an imminent Philistine threat that stood as a specter over Israelite land that pushed the people to call for a human king.

In fact, in verse 20 the military issue is cited by the people in their petition as needing a king to "fight our battles". Saul, as noted earlier, earns his kingship, according to one of the narrative strands highlighted above, in a battlefield in Gilgal. However, this is an additional factor in the rationale. This serves as proof that the foundation of kingship was a culmination of factors. But amongst these were the moral factors. This study can still welcome justification based on military threat for the need for monarchy or, as it has been argued, the final redactor aligning his work with a prevailing theological model, but still go on to dig deeper on justification based on morality. Not necessarily because any one of these reasons is least on the list. But the Israelite people who went to Ramah did make moral judgements when they cited the taking of bribes, the perversion of justice, as one of the reasons they wanted a king.

Secondly, indeed, our concerns are that of analytic philosophy of religion. Philosophers make a distinction between normative ethics, applied ethics, and meta-ethics. Our interest is on the latter, that is because (1) no research exists that deals comprehensively with meta-ethics in 1 Samuel 8, (2) we want to burrow into the minds of ancient Israelites, living in a heavily religious context, to understand how they understood the nature, extent, meaning, etc. of moral judgements. An uncovering of assumed meta-ethical points in 1 Samuel 8 helps with

the furnishing of a further clarification and understating of the moral aspect in the foundation of monarchy in ancient Israel. This understanding deepens its importance when we consider that it relates to correct human conduct in their relationship with the LORD, noting Birch (1991:212; 2013:22) and Gunn (1980:59-78) who emphasize that the request for a king was considered a “sin”.

Now we are going back into the context of when the text developed, to figure out what the assumptions of ancient Israelites were from the perspective of the loci on the agenda of analytic philosophy of religion. Thus, in our case, we are interested in meta-ethical questions on moral judgement(s) found in 1 Samuel 8. We want to join Gericke (2003 & 2012) in expanding on his pioneering philosophical-critical analysis as a functional interpretive approach to be employed in the reading of the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy.

2.11. Morality, Ancient Israel, and Meta-Ethical Inquiry.

Gericke (2012:405-446) dedicated a chapter on religion and morality in ancient Israel. This chapter began by quoting Barton (2003:54):

The study of the Hebrew Bible ethics has sometimes suffered from an unwillingness on the part of scholars to contemplate “philosophical” questions at all, on the grounds that people of ancient Israel simply were not interested in, or could not have understood, questions of such a kind.

We see Gericke (2012:405) applying his philosophical criticism immediately here, after pointing out the obvious that “the “word” ethics does not appear in biblical Hebrew.” but it does not follow “that there were no assumptions about the nature of morality in ancient Israel.” According to Gericke (2012:405) despite their recognition of this fact, HB scholars have mainly concerned themselves with substantive theories of morality as with descriptive ethics, which denotes an unbiased report of the HB’s moral beliefs and normative ethics. But it is meta-ethics that shine through as absent, but also most apt, especially when we consider that it is the analytic philosophy of religion that gives us avenues of probe. But because we are still at the current stage of this dissertation, we are expounding concepts in this chapter as a means of ultimately relating it to its area of concern.

In giving a background, Gericke (2012:405-406) would later point out that, to the best of his knowledge, “no one had ever written a descriptive meta-ethics of the HB...” of which there is

a lot of material to work with in ancient Israelite religion when it comes to philosophy. But he first highlighted how frustration has long been expressed by Knight (1982:55) that biblical scholarship had been limited to “rather specific, narrow topics, for instance social justice, the status of women, war, vengeance, property rights, ecological concern for nature, and the like.” Worse, meta-ethical inquiry has always barely come up in secondary literature, as Otto (1994:21) would later highlight. Lack of interest in philosophical inquiry in biblical scholarship has been pinned on the Biblical Theology Movement (Barton 2003:54).

The abstract nature of meta-ethics in relation to the other two branches of ethics, i.e., normative, and applied ethics, is one possible explanation of why meta-ethical issues are bracketed Gericke (2012:405-406) confirms this by quoting Sayre-McCord (2007):

The range of issues, puzzles, and questions that fall within meta-ethics’ purview are moreover consistently abstract, inviting an attempt to analyze the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological presuppositions and commitments of moral thought, talk, and practice. As such, a descriptive meta-ethics proper counts within its domain a broad range of questions and puzzles, including: Is morally assumed to be a matter more of taste than truth? Are moral standards held to be culturally relative? Are there assumed to be moral facts? If there are moral facts, what is assumed to be their origin, and how is it that they set an appropriate standard for behaviour? How are moral facts assumed to be related to other facts (about psychology, happiness, human conventions, etc.)? These questions lead naturally to puzzles about meaning of moral claims as well as about moral truth and the justification of our moral commitments.

Gericke (2012:406) writes that the interest is in historical meta-ethics, and the aim is to discover what the HB presupposes in the range of meta-ethical questions. It is not to discover final answers. Three components arise as areas of inquiry: the first is the semantic component, within which questions of whether the HB assumptions presuppose descriptivism and/or non-descriptivism. The second component is epistemological and is concerned with meta-ethical assumptions, asking about the possible presuppositions of cognitivism and/or non-cognitivism. Finally, the third component concerns ontology as to whether meta-ethical assumptions of moral realism and/or non-realism are presupposed. This dissertation has additional components.

2.12. Synthesis.

We pointed out that the exercise required of us in this chapter was going to be difficult. Even at this end, we can pick up loose ends that still need to be tied up. However, we also highlighted from the onset that this is a novel approach to the subject matter at hand. Having tried to lay out the rationale behind our approach to the study of the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy, we tried to do a survey of general approaches to the HB, then we narrowed this down to the transition from judgeship to monarchy. But this is also not an attempt to supplant approaches or methods that have so far been indispensable to the said subject matter.

We started off with diachronic approaches, highlighting their marked influence. The synchronic approaches also rival diachronic approaches in terms of influence. Historical criticism falls under diachronic approaches, next to it is source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism. We followed this by showing how these methods of critique have been employed in the exegesis of 1 Samuel 8. What these managed to do was notice that there are two opposing sentiments to monarchy, one being positive and the other being negative about monarchy. These sentiments have been accounted for as a result. The negative version is regarded as a late account of monarchy, building on, or reacting to an earlier pro-monarchy version that is genuine. The combining of these two accounts is said to be of a redactor who brought together two disparate sources.

Various spinoffs soon followed from this. The sources that were thought to be identifiable were isolated and named, L and J sources. Still, we also noted that the grouping of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings were said to be products of a single hand, that of what we have come to know as the Deuteronomist. Synchronic approaches have also been highlighted but we did not delve deeper into it.

We then went on to review the doctoral thesis that has come to inform our manner of approach to the transition from judgeship to monarchy. We first highlighted its title and how it seemed to veer off the standard practice of studying the OT. The question was on the ontology of Yahweh and a philosophical-critical approach to its examination. What was clear was that the relationship between philosophy and the OT is historically an adversarial one. But this was as far as OT scholars had been barred by their discipline and not their personal, natural inclination to ask and probe philosophical questions.

We noted how this PhD's objectives had had great potential to meet the task at hand, and these deepened the defence of the proposed methodological approach. The research gap was

that there was no independent and officially recognized OT interpretive methodology that employs the philosophy of religion as the primary auxiliary discipline. There was some lamentation of the bracketing or suppression of such a method. This suppression also missed the historical role that philosophy has always played even with the development of now recognized methods of exegesis. In fact, philosophy was always understood as a handmaiden of theology. But other disciplines have now been seen as the handmaidens of theology to the exclusion of philosophy. Even when philosophical questions having been said to have been covered in OT theology, this misses the point of questions that are unique to the (analytic) philosophy of religion.

The proposed methodology was then shown to be relevant to the current dissertation. However, this was solidified by subsequent work that expanded on the same topic of methodology. We noted that philosophical-critical analysis is an umbrella term to refer to philosophy-based approaches to the OT. Philosophical criticism, which operates at a micro-level, thus showed itself to be apt in the philosophical study of the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy as it focuses on a particular text. We also noted the possibility of Philosophy of Old Testament Religion which operates at a macro-level and focuses its analysis on the general books of OT.

When we got to the application of philosophical criticism vis-à-vis the transition from judgeship to monarchy in this dissertation. We noted that this does not mean that we throw away the earlier findings of earlier methods, rather, this approach has new questions and findings. But where these questions are not new, they seek to offer philosophical answers. Where this becomes clear is when we get to the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy, in which morality is detected by biblical scholars, but the scholarly focus is on substantive theories of morality. This is not a problem on its own, but it is exclusion of, or ignorance, regarding meta-ethics which is a branch of ethics that is more abstract than the other two branches (normative and applied ethics). We pointed out that it is on meta-ethical questions that this dissertation will largely hinge.

Chapter 3.

What does 1 Samuel 8 Assume about God's Omniscience, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility?

3.1. Introduction.

Governance is at the centre of the request for a transition from judgeship to monarchy. The people point to a failure of those at the helm, that of Abijah and Joel. Birch (1976:22) wrote that the people's request was premised on "the breakdown in the administration of justice due to the corruption of Samuel's sons." But this seems to run counter to the notion that the people were prompted by sinful inclinations to request for a move from judgeship leading to a king that "was born out of their sin", as highlighted by Birch (1991:212), let alone that there was a military threat to Israel. That the request for a king is a sinful act is based on the understanding that it is the LORD who had founded judgeship – and

that the people had now rejected him, directly or indirectly. If not just going against judgeship, it is seeking to replace the LORD as king and if the LORD had planned to have a king, the people had jumped the gun.

In a religiously pluralistic world, it makes sense why the LORD could be forsaken for other gods – at least there are other gods to run to. Also, in a world where human kingship is common, and especially being in a state of military frailty, adopting this form of government seems to make sense – at least the consensus, generally, was that this was an attractive form of government. If the LORD had already planned to install a human king but the people committed sin by jumping the gun and asking for a king, it seems that the LORD was caught off guard, which seems to mean that there are things the LORD did not know. If the LORD had planned to bring about kingship and knew that the people would sin by jumping the gun, does it follow that the LORD's benevolence did not allow him to inform them ahead of time of the pending sin. He did inform them but after the supposed sinful act of requesting for a king that they would cry out without pity from him if they went on with the sinful act of seeking and getting a king of their choice. If the LORD already knew that the request for a king was sinful and had dire consequences, and if the LORD is all loving, is it that the LORD willed that the people act sinfully or is it that there are things he could not do, as with averting the people's sinful action, therefore, dire consequences ahead of time? Consider the following from O'Keefe (2010:46) who was writing on Epicurean philosophy:

Either God (i) wishes to eliminate evil but cannot, or (ii) can eliminate evil but does not wish it, or (iii) neither can nor wishes to prevent evil, or (iv) both can and wishes to prevent evil. But on (i) God is weak, on (ii) God is spiteful and on (iii) God is both

weak and spiteful. So the only option left that is fitting for God is (iv), but this is inconsistent with the existence of evil, since, if God both wishes to and can eliminate evil, there would be no evil.

We might not be able to answer all these questions and/or respond adequately to some of these concerns. However, we will attempt to do this in this chapter. Initially, we want to understand the implications of the LORD's commands that the Israelite polity must establish judgeship by appointing judges and officials; to judge fairly and follow justice. Could this mean that human governance was going on under the tight control of the LORD? Here we think that answers to providence, which affords us an opportunity to explicate issues of the LORD's omniscience, omnibenevolence, and omnipotence, will aid us in our probe. It follows that this will mean that the people's actions, no matter how evil, were pre-determined, or the people had free-will from which follows responsibility for one's actions. It could be that their actions were both pre-determined as much as they were exercising free-will. We also notice that the LORD's foreknowledge of what could befall humanity is in the realm of time. We also notice that he seems liable to change but how does this comport with his attribute of eternity?

We must also note that this will seem to have little or nothing to do with the HB, but we have tried to lay the ground in the preceding chapters as to its relevance. This chapter, however, will generally have its focus in a Deuteronomy text for it seems to be an existing national constitution that the people are drawing from in their moral judgements in 1 Samuel 8 text.

3.2. Providence and Human Governance.

Divine providence is the notion that God did not just create the world and creatures in it and leave these very creatures to their own devices, but all of what is happening in this world, no matter how minuscule in significance, chaotic, or traumatic, unfolds in accordance with God's eternal plan. Flint (2004:329-30) points out that we see Psalms 33:13-15 positing that nothing is outside of the parameters of God's gaze and, as if seeing is not enough, Jeremiah 18:1-6 tells us that, much like a potter with clay, all nations are in God's hands. It is from this that although the word "providence" is not in the HB, what we regard as providence we find in the HB.

The traditional notion of providence takes from perfect being theology that has behind it figures such as (Aquinas 1265-1274:46-50; Descartes 1984:1-62; Scotus 1982:2-44; Leibniz 1981:167 – 168). This notion holds that there is a perfect being (God) and this being has perfect knowledge or omniscience, detailed knowledge of the unfolding history, the present, and the future. This perfect being also has perfect power, an attribute known as omnipotence, he thus has total and specific control over his created world, a world that will still evolve per his sovereign and steadfast will. God utilises his omniscience and omnipotence to carve out a plan and executes it for the world and this is, in turn, an expression of God's omnibenevolence for his creation. God, therefore, is in the process of directing every event that concerns every creature to an end that God has ordained with love for them (Flint 2010:329-330). Broken down further, there are two types of providence: general and particular providence.

(1) God's general providence means that God sets up firm basic principles and dynamics from which the history of the created world gradually advances. These are the particles of the universe, the laws that govern their interactions, and "their potential to enter into complex structures that make possible higher-level entities and properties" (Flint 2010:329-30). God's provident design thus arranges the world in such a way that various natural goods can be realized, the thriving of human beings on earth being one of those natural goods (Tracy 2010:309).

(2) If God goes beyond this general providence, he engages in particular providence. This means that he does not just stop at the establishment of principles and basic dynamics from which history unfolds, but he acts at particular times in the course of history so as to bring to fruition particular aims. The HB is rich in this type of providence for we see God rescuing the Israelites from Egypt and other similar acts (Tracy 2010:309). Piper (2020:76) writes that "it would be good to remind ourselves that the story of Israel's history really is a story of God's providential action. The Bible is radically oriented on God as the decisive actor in the history of Israel."

Nihan (2013:316) has noted that "parallels with Deuteronomy can be virtually found in every book in the HB." Thus, although our text is 1 Samuel 8, we use the following command as one example of particular providence in Deuteronomy 16:18-20 to launch us into our inquiry:

Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Thus, the LORD's command that ancient Israelites must appoint judges and officials appears to point to the notion that God has not created creatures and left them to their own devices. Yahweh only gave the general outline, however, of the government they must formulate – “appoint judges and officials for each tribe.” He appears to have withdrawn following this, as maybe he trusted humans to be able to conduct a just appointment process of judges and officials. He also appears to have trusted them to know who the perfect candidates would be. The “judge the people fairly” phrase is without detail as to what judging fairly meant, or if there was an opposite of judging fairly and what its opposite entailed. Does this mean that the people had the capacity to make the distinction between fairly and unfairly and had the option of judging unfairly? – otherwise, what was the point of instructing them to judge fairly? As the people were commanded to judge fairly, does that mean they did not have free-will in which judging unfairly was an option? The LORD seems to have left the general outlines of human governance to humans for them to fill out however they willed. But could the LORD have already known each, and every detail of what humans would decide on regarding the filling out of these general outlines?

Traditional notions of providence have been dogged by two problems: one is God's omniscience, in which he knows, beforehand, each detail of the events that unfold in this world vis-à-vis human freedom. This is a perennial problem which has seen responses from such figures as Aquinas (1265-1274) and Molina (1988:71-72).

Flint (2010:330) explains these two problems and we will adapt this explanation in the following manner: providence, when looked at from the perspective of perfect knowledge, presupposes foreknowledge, such that the LORD already knew all the details of who the people were going to appoint as their judges, the just or unjust process by which they would elect these judges and officials, as well as that the judges would veer off his commandments and judge unfairly, be partial, turn aside after dishonest gains, take bribes, and pervert justice at specific times in history – this is known as hard determinism, and it rules out human

freedom. When the LORD commanded ancient Israelites to appoint judges and officials, one can see that he intervened in the course of history. The second problem faced by providence is that of the existence of evil, that God's providence presupposes his knowledge of the evil, especially grave and perennial evil, which will befall humanity, but he does not employ his omnipotence to prevent it. This also seems to not comport with God's benevolence.

Let us, however, start with the first problem posed by divine providence. Could the people have assumed that, due to the LORD's omniscience, God was not blindsided by the perversion of justice being the catalyst for the petition for a human king? The understanding being that the LORD had foreknowledge with which he already knew that the people would petition for and get a human king and at which location and time in history, as well as what the exact catalyst for the petition would be. A moderate understanding of God's omniscience would be that he comes to know at the same time as humans. But God's synchronized knowledge acquisition with humans is ruled out in 1 Samuel 8 as the LORD appears to rely on Samuel's petitionary prayer, the prophet's conduit activity, to know what the people want and react to it. The omniscience attribute seems to only to make sense if it rules out human free-will, wherein hard determinism is granted as a driver of human action. Flint (2004:331) paints this picture for us:

- (1) All human actions are ultimately determined externally, outside of the causal control of the agents,
- (2) And this determination is incompatible with human freedom.

Did the ancient Israelites in 1 Samuel 8 assume that the LORD already pre-determined their travel to Ramah to petition for a king? Alternatively, did they assume that proposition (1) was true of their human life and that (2) was not true in that they still had the freedom of choice not to go to Ramah, unless compelled to do so? Thus, their going to Ramah and their petition for a king were actions chosen by them, although the LORD externally determined their actions. This is a compatibilist argument held by thinkers in the Thomist tradition (which follows Thomas Aquinas) and John Calvin (1845:70-185) in the reformed tradition.

Both compatibilism and hard determinism stand in contrast to libertarianism. The latter, as formidably defended by Molina (1988:71-72) which, if presupposed by the people and their

elders, would have them holding that their travel to Ramah and petition were not externally determined, rather, they were free actions that happened under their causal control. The latter position seems to be the one assumed in 1 Samuel 8 for the LORD points out in v.8 that they are “rejecting me as they have done since the exodus”. It would seem absurd for the LORD to claim that the people are rejecting him and yet be the one who is (ultimately) rejecting himself. Whatever the answer may be to these, it no doubt has serious implications for human moral responsibility.

The people in 1 Samuel 8 appear to cite Deuteronomy 16:19-20 divine commands from the LORD about bribe and perverting justice, a citation which Eslinger (1985:255) notes as one that gives legitimacy to their complaint. It is at this juncture, however, that the people upend that which the LORD had caused – judgeship. The people initiate a different form of government for the people supplanting the one God initiated, making the proposed ancient Israelite human led monarchy an antithesis to God’s judgeship thesis which had the LORD as king, as highlighted by Gideon in Judges 8:22. Here an assumption of human free-will seems apparent. But they still depended on the divine to accede to their steadfast request. This evinces their assumption that the LORD engages in particular providence. The difference here is that the LORD was called upon to act, rather than God exercising his divine agency to act in history.

Calling on the LORD to act presupposes his passibility: impassibility being God’s inability to be affected by anything, the notion that God is not liable to causation. Arguments for divine impassibility flow from one of God’s attributes: eternity. The question of eternity will be dealt with later in this chapter. That which is passible means that it has a limitation that allows for it to be affected by another thing, i.e., the squeezing of a water bottle with one’s hands that it changes shape or tossing it in a furnace where it burns in the fire. This is different from God who, because he is eternal, has no limitation of being affected by crushing hands, burning fire, or any other thing, as Creel (2010:323) has points out. God lacks this limitation, therefore is impassible.

A second argument runs thus, God is a pure act – and that the existence of all there is, came through God’s initiative. God, thus, must exist – as a pure act being, causally before all else. Other things do not have this quality, thus, God cannot be passive because he precedes everything else. God is his own essence, the creator of everything that exists, it is impossible for God to be moved by anything to exist, act, change, etc. God is, therefore, impassible,

writes Creel (2010:324). The final argument charges that a perfect being must be perfectly blissful by its very nature. It is impossible to reconcile being unhappy, miserable, et cetera, with a perfect being (Creel 2010:324). God is perfect in all these, he is therefore, impassible.

These arguments for divine impassibility do have their counterparts, however. The first goes thus, the perfect being must be a person, and must therefore, be able to enter a personal relationship of mutual concessions. For communication with and response to persons with whom mutual concessions happen, God must be affected by what the people have to say. Also, God, as a perfect being, must be perfect in love. This will mean that God must be moved by the joys and sorrows of those he loves. A being that is not affected by the joys and sorrows of others has no capacity to love and is unworthy to be a “God” (Creel 2010:324).

The third argument for God’s passibility is based on his omniscience. God’s knowledge of the world is the knowledge that must be caused by the world, otherwise he will be ignorant of the world. If God did not know the world directly, there would be no being or thing that could mediate on his behalf knowledge of the world. Another way to look at it is to say that God already knows the world by knowing his eternal will, but this is rebutted as deficient because God would only know his eternal will rather than what his eternal will created. God’s indirect knowledge of the world would also mean that God has no noetic contact with the world. Thirdly, because God would only know his eternal will regarding human existence, he would not know humanity, making him religiously inadequate as humans could not think of themselves as having a personal relationship with him (Creel 2010:324).

Let us apply what we have just covered – by going to Samuel, the people were going to a man of God so as to inform God of their grievances and conviction. Effectively asking Yahweh’s prophet to get into a petitionary prayer. This posed a challenge to a divinely established system of governance. The assumption seems to be, therefore, in 1 Samuel 8, that the LORD is not impassible. The assumption that Yahweh is not aware of what is going on in human affairs, that the people had to inform him, underscores the assumption that he is not impassible, as noted above. Argued from the position of the lack of the LORD’s impassibility, the LORD being informed of the developments in his created world, therefore, does not take away from his omniscience for lack of foreknowledge, instead it completes it. Such that when he is informed of the people’s petition for a king his knowledge of the world is caused by the world. In v.8, the LORD seems to be affected by the fact that he is rejected

once more and, for this reason, according to Samuel in v.18, he is not going to answer future petitionary prayers even as the people cry in agony-induced regret for choosing a human king. The LORD enters into mutual concessions with humans when the king petitioned for by the people is granted and anointed by Yahweh. This also grants a presupposition of divine corporeality, given that the LORD enters relations with people for the give-and-take human life consists of.

3.3.1. God’s Omniscience, Free-Will, and Moral Responsibility.

Free-will, as a likely assumption from the people, as opposed to hard determinism, deserves a stand-alone discussion. How could Joel and Abijah be morally responsible for actions that were out of their control? If the LORD already knew that they would be taking lucre, bribes, and perverting justice, does that mean he withheld his omnipotence that could prevent the *blinding of the eyes of the wise and twisting of the innocents*, and his people not to *live and possess the land the Lord their God was giving them*, as Deuteronomy 16:19 suggests happens for committing these moral wrongs? Fischer (1998:24) in his “Responsibility and Control” and Hunt’s (2000:195-227) “Moral Responsibility and Unavoidable Action” have made this logical connection between responsibility and control over one’s actions, giving nuanced takes that we cannot get into here.

This brings us squarely to the fold of the second problem faced by providence, that of the existence of evil touched on above, that God’s providence would mean that he already knows the evil, especially grave and perennial evil, which will befall humanity, but with his omnipotence, does not prevent it. This also seems not to comport with one of his salient attributes: benevolence. How can a benevolent God be the source of evil, worse, not prevent it in his loving directing of human history if he is omnipotent? O’Keefe (2010:60-69) writes that Epicurus originally asked if God’s omnipotence and goodness, or both, ought to be renounced given the reality of the existence of evil or if God is worth the title “God” considering this.

The atheist J. L. Mackie (1955:200-201) would later argue that the propositions...

- (1) God is omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good.

Does not comport with

(2) Evil exists.

Mackie (1955:200-1) added that (2) is true; therefore, (1) is false. For Mackie (1955), the existence of (1) is a fact and that:

(3) A good thing always eliminates evil insofar as it can.

(4) An omnipotent being has no limits to what it can do, thus it can eliminate (2) to make it...

(-2) Evil does not exist.

This, then, completes the ridiculous state of theism, due to its proven irrationality, according to Mackie (1955:200-201). Alvin Plantinga has widely been credited as the one person who has given the most laudable response to Mackie (1955:200-201), such that Daniel Howard-Snyder (2013) titled chapter 2 of a book he'd helped edit: *The Logical Problem of Evil: Mackie and Plantinga*. Plantinga (1967:131-155) has given a free will defence to the problem at hand, wherein he attempts to prove the compatibility of (1) and (2). This he does by challenging Mackie's (1955:200-201) auxiliary propositions to meet the conditions of being "necessarily true, essential to theism, or logical consequence of such propositions". His criticism being that the propositions put forth are not essential to theism and that the propositions that are essential to theism have been caricatured with meanings that theists do not need to accept. Plantinga's (1967:131-155) formulaic challenge to Mackie (1955), et al., according to Peterson (2010:492), is...

(3) If evil exists, then it is unjustified and that is a necessary truth.
and because

(4) has been shown not to be a necessary truth, (1) and (2) are thus consistent.

To prove the consistency of two propositions **p** and **q**, one must find a third proposition, an **r** that is consistent with **p** and, conjoined with **p**, entails **q**. As such,

(4) Every possible person goes wrong in every possible world in which that person exists.

(5) It was not within God's power to create a world containing moral good but not moral evil.

The latter proposition is the nerve centre of the free will defence and (5) does not even need to be claimed to be true as a matter of fact; it only needs to be claimed as a probability if it achieves a rebuttal against the logical argument from evil.

Plantinga (1967:132) had this to say:

A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but He cannot cause or determine them to do only what is right. For if He does so, then they are not significantly free after all; they do not do what is right freely. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, He must create creatures capable of moral evil, and He cannot give these creatures the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. As it turned out, sadly, enough, some of the free creatures God created went wrong in the exercise of their freedom; this is the source of moral evil. The fact that free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against his goodness; for He could have forestalled the occurrence of evil by removing the possibility of moral good.

But this was met with a rebuttal from Mackie (1982:174) in which he said:

How could there be a logically contingent state of affairs, prior to the creation and existence of any created beings with free will, which an omnipotent god would have to accept and put up with? This suggestion is simply incoherent. Indeed, by bringing in the notion of individual essences which determine – presumably non-causally – how Curly Smith Satan, and the rest of us would choose freely or would act in each hypothetical situation, Plantinga has not rescued the free will defence but made its weaknesses all too clear.

Within theism and Deuteronomy 16:18-20, hard determinism does not seem to hold water when we consider that the LORD had given the commandments on lucre, bribe, justice, and partiality, which inherently have options of dutiful following and consequence for not falling in line. This evinces the ancient Israelite assumption of moral agency. When the people go to Ramah, it appears as if they understood themselves to be moral agents. Moral agents, of course, can independently discern right and wrong, hence they make moral judgements (Cherkowski, et al. 2015:3). Is it the case that the people, therefore, assumed that human actions happen within their causal control in the libertarian sense? This obviously makes utter moral responsibility possible for Joel and Abijah.

The enduring libertarian defence of the traditional concept of providence came from Luis Molina (who lived in 1535-1600) and Molinists who argue that God possesses middle knowledge. Molina's (1988:71-72) account of libertarian defence of the traditional notion of divine providence and foreknowledge on the basis that (1) God has natural knowledge wherein he metaphysically knows necessary truths, which he has no control over, (2) God has pre-volitional middle knowledge of future contingents, and (3) God has post-volitional knowledge that he himself has control over and with which he wills for the created world. With (1) his knowledge is that of the possible spatio-temporal arrangements of secondary causes and the possible contingent effects that might come from each arrangement. (2) he has total knowledge of what contingent effects would come from any of the arrangements. (3) God has knowledge of which one of the secondary causes he wills to create and exactly how he wills to work with them through his "natural cooperating grace and general occurrence".

Obviously, the people (led by the elders) do not say that their leaders' possession of lucre, acceptance of bribery and the perversion of justice are "morally wrong" – these we logically infer. As we have noted, the commandments "judge fairly", "do not pervert justice or show partiality", "do not accept a bribe", are consequentialist, consequentialism as written about by Sandel (2011:23). The moral judgement could, therefore, be that Joel and Abijah are morally "wrong" for not maximizing utility for the body politic. The "judge fairly", "not show partiality", "take bribes", "pervert justice" commandments and their said consequences for their contravention is assumed to be suffered by the contraveners and the polity, but the polity also suffers the infliction of unfairness, partiality, and injustice by their rulers. If not that, the people were taking a deontological stance that judging unfairly, partiality, dishonest gains,

accepting bribes, perverting justice are never right, no matter the circumstances, for they were divinely commanded, see (Beauchamp 1982:112; Barcalow 2007:41) for divine command theory.

The idea of the existence of moral agents in the HB who, by virtue of this agency, are responsible for their actions may seem contrary to the ordinary understanding of ancient Near East's heavy reliance on the divine. But the book of 1 Samuel 3 tells the story of Eli and his sons. Eli was expected to rein in his sons – he failed at this and was punished for it.

In the LORD's reported words, he also recalls the serving of other gods, which seems to evince assumptions that their actions were not pre-determined by the LORD. We also see something like this in the warning regarding the king's claim as his rights, an action Polzin (1989:86) regards as "interceptive" when coming from Samuel. In dejection, he spells out a grim future for the people under the rule of their chosen king, a future in which the LORD swears he will not respond to their petitionary prayers delivered in tears of regret. The people were not dissuaded, we might add, "No! they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like other nations, with a king to go before us and fight our battles." This points us to an assumption of free actions of moral agents and responsibility for those actions.

3.3.2. Compatibilist Tradition.

Compatibilism also needs some attention as a tradition that is straddled by both hard determinism and libertarianism. For a compatibilist, God as a pure act, is ultimately the causal determiner of all that happens in the world. That this is the case is compatible with human freedom for God goes beyond just what takes place in the world but the mode of such, whether that which takes place in the world will be free or unfree. Thus, God is the determiner of free action, for nothing can happen without God's accord. Even when an agent acts freely God simultaneously determines that act. With this, he grants human freedom and exercises divine control (Flint 2010:329-31).

There have been challenges faced by compatibilism as it pertains to freedom and the traditional notion of providence, and there has not been a shortage of responses to these. Providence has seen arguments from foreknowledge, from which denial of human freedom is the case if God already knows the just or unjust process by which the people will appoint their judges and officials, who the people will appoint, or that they will pervert justice. This means that all that unfolds is pre-determined. Compatibilist theorists argue that this should

not concern us for, to be free, an act needs to be under one's immediate control. This control is compatible with God as the initiating determiner of the act (Flint 2010:331).

Another argument, in response to divine foreknowledge and human freedom, from compatibilist circles comes from eternity as God's property, thus God exists out of time. It goes thus, God's existence out of time means that his foreknowledge should not be taken literally as him knowing beforehand what will happen in time; but we can think of God as having timeless knowledge of what occurs in time (Flint 2010:331). It thus would not make sense to appeal to God's foreknowledge with regards to what just or unjust process the people would follow, which judges they would appoint, if they would pervert justice, or the people's travel to, and petition in, Ramah since this happens in time and God exists out of time. It makes it our duty to expand on this appeal to timelessness from compatibilists.

Brian Leftow (2010:291) has written that theists in the West are all in agreement that God is eternal. Where they differ is on what that phrase asserts. The Old Testament seems to hold that "God is eternal" asserts that...

(BE) God exists without beginning or end, through everlasting time.

Owing to the Platonic philosophy influence, Christian thinkers later treated "God is eternal as asserting that God is timeless (GT)...

(GT) God's existence does not endure through, and has no location in, time.

(GT) profoundly alters one's concept of God.

Leftow (2010:291) writes that:

A timeless God does not remember, forget, regret, feel relief, or cease to do anything. For a timeless God has no past, and one can remember, forget, etc., only what is past. A timeless God does not wait, anticipate, hope, foreknow, predict, or deliberate. For a timeless God has no future, and one can anticipate, etc., only what is in one's future. A timeless God does not begin to do anything, if one can begin to do only what one then continues to do.

Adding that the (GT) concept was embraced by Augustine, Aquinas and those who fell in between the dispensation that existed between the two. It was the Scottish priest Duns Scotus (1982) who broke ranks with (GT) and took the majority with him, Leftow (2010:291) points out.

Following Scotus, some say that it is “metrically amorphous”, i.e., that even if it is admitted that God is in time, there are no coordinates to it. Others accept this amorphous claim, but charge that God eventually entered normal time when he created. That one need not say how much of his life it took God to wait before creating the universe. Some aspect of (GT) is retained in each claim (Leftow 2010:291).

Stump & Kretzmann (1981:431) wrote a paper whose aim was to elucidate the doctrine held by ancient and medieval philosophers and theologians that God is eternal. This was a reaction to a definition of “eternity” offered by Boethius (1973:422;5-424.31) that it “*is the complete possession all at once of illimitable life*”. For Stump & Kretzmann (1981:431) whatever is eternal has life. The second element is illimitability, which is to say that the life of that which is eternal cannot be limited; that an eternal being’s life has no beginning nor end to it. The third element is that that an eternal being must have duration. But this duration is unique in that it is beginningless, endless, and infinite. The fourth ingredient is the “complete possession all at once”, this is due to the atemporality of that which is eternal.

What those who are proponents of (GT) have had to respond to as the arch challenge posed by the concept of timelessness is that of the relation of an atemporal God with that which is temporal. The idea being that God is aware of two incidents that are happening at different times: e.g., the perverting of justice by Joel and Abijah did not occur at the same time as and preceded the people and their elders’ travel to Ramah to petition for a king. Stump & Kretzmann (1981:439) proposed eternal-temporal simultaneity or, for short, **ET**-simultaneity and formulated it this way...

(**ET**) For every **x** and for every **y**, **x** and **y** are ET-simultaneous if...

(1) either **x** is eternal, and **y** is temporal, or vice versa and

(2) for some observer, **A**, in the unique eternal reference frame, **x** and **y** are both present i.e., either **x** is eternally present, and **y** is observed as temporally present, or vice versa; and

(3) for some observer, **B**, in one of the infinitely many temporal reference frames, **x** and **y** are both present- i.e., either **x** is observed as eternally present and **y** is temporally present, or vice versa.

ET-simultaneity, too, has faced challenges from other observers. With Lewis (1984:73-79) arguing for the rigid divide between that which is temporal and that which is timeless. That only a temporal being can observe what is temporal, and only a timeless being can observe that which is timeless.

Fitzgerald (1985:260-269) has argued against atemporal duration, that it is incoherent. That in order to admit the duration of the life of God, these need the same or different duration amounts. These have forced various responses from Stump & Kretzmann (1987;1992) that have failed to satisfy Padgett (1992:2) who argued that God is relatively timeless, against absolute timelessness and has seen Leftow (1991:117-120) proposing a Quasi-Temporal Eternity (**QTE**) in which the life of a timeless being is lived all at once. Not a moment in its life passes by and no moment has not been lived. Rodgers (1994:1-16; 2000:54-70) would enter the fray and challenge Leftow (1991:117-120) and Stump & Kretzmann (1981:431) on the point of duration, arguing against the claim that Boethius (1973:422;5-424.31)) and other medieval theologians and philosophers had duration as part of their timelessness elucidation. That even if they did, one is still faced with the challenge of the correct way to go about it.

It is argued that Scriptures do not have a definite view on God and his relation to time, but certain limits have been created within which such can be argued. Such include the Scriptures' teaching that God has no beginning nor end in existence. He interacts with humanity, knows the earthly occurrences and acts, all of this happens in time, see Padgett (2001:92-110) and Craig (2001:97-98).

Given the foregoing paragraph, our question follows: what view of time, in relation to God, is presupposed in 1 Samuel 8? Taking from the apparent assumption from ancient Israelites who went to Ramah to petition for human kingship, that the LORD is not impassible, then it

follows that the arguments for God's temporality logically befit this passibility assumption. Firstly, God acts in the world. After creating the universe God continues to sustain it from moment to moment for its existence. Any lost moment to sustain the universe, it would come to its demise. God's various actions in his sustenance of the universe happen at different moments, and this means that God changes from moment to moment. If God changes, that renders him temporal (Ganssle:2001:9-27).

There have been arguments on the part of God's interaction with humans. Such interaction is clearly demonstrated 1 Samuel 8. Yahweh responds to Samuel's petitionary prayer. The LORD has a history of rescuing humanity from their hard times, as Yahweh points to a long history of this and being rejected, beginning with the time of the exodus.

Ganssle (2001:9-27) writes that although it can be shown that a request for something does not necessarily need to follow a request, in the cause-effect relation. If I already know that my friend will ask for money at the end of the month, such that I set aside a bit of the money ahead of time, this, in some sense, is a response to his request. Thus, a timeless LORD could have answered a petitionary prayer ahead of time. It is a possibility that the LORD's actions are not located in time, but the effects of his actions are successively located in time. At an eternal level, the LORD wills the travel of his people to Ramah to petition for a king at one time and the anointing of king Saul at another time. Then the people do travel to Ramah and petition for a king once there and Saul is anointed king at another time. But these are not sequential in the LORD's life for he wills timelessly both the travel, petition, and the anointing of Saul. Therefore, this removes the implication that God's acts are temporal.

The temporality argument is bolstered, additionally, by God's knowledge of the present, of which God's foreknowledge is claimed in arguments for timelessness. In order for God to be omniscient, he must also know what day it is today. Arguments for God's timelessness thus fail on the grounds that he could not know what today is if he is timeless. If God is timeless, he, therefore, is immutable and it is possible to know if God is omniscient. If God knows what day it is today, tomorrow he is guaranteed to know something else, given that the calendar date has changed. Given the changes in God's knowledge, he changes. This change evinces his temporality, as argued variously by Kretzmann (1966:409-421), Padgett (1992:122-146), Craig 2001 (97-88), etc.

In 1 Samuel 8, the people go to Ramah to petition for a king, effectively to ask Samuel to engage in petitionary prayer. These have implications for the LORD's providence, mutability/immutability, impassibility/passibility, timelessness/temporality as assumed in 1 Samuel 8. It seems as though there is an assumption that the LORD is temporal given the arguments for temporality that seem to dovetail with the narrative in 1 Samuel 8. Firstly, the LORD responds to a petitionary prayer, participates in the give-and-take human life consist of. In v.8 The LORD makes a reference to a past he knows, the day of the exodus, and compares it to the present day of the petition. This has implications that the LORD's knowledge changes, therefore, that the LORD changes. As such, this evinces his temporality.

Therefore, if compatibilism holds that if God exists out of time, due to his eternity, his foreknowledge should not be taken literally as him knowing beforehand what will occur in time – but that, given this, we can think of God as having timeless knowledge of what happens in time. If the ancient Israelite's assumption was that the LORD is temporal, then the LORD's foreknowledge ought to be taken literally.

3.4. Synthesis.

We began this chapter by pointing out that the problems in human governance that precipitated the request for and subsequent kingship. We could pick up various implications for the LORD's attributes from this request and its granting. If the LORD was assumed to be omniscient, it means that he would have known beforehand the sinful request of his people, and if he did and was assumed to be omnibenevolent, then he could not have planned an inception of kingship that involved his people acting in a sinful manner. But this also presupposes that there is nothing the LORD could not do, he could plan and bring to life a future event. If he was omnipotent and he did not plan the inception of Israelite kingship, but only knew about it, he could avert his people's sinful request because he was all-loving.

Looking at providence vis-à-vis human governance, we went back to Deuteronomy 16:18-19 which seems to be the text divinely commanding the foundation judgeship. The aim was to see what the assumptions surrounding this foundation were. Now, we first made note that there is general and particular providence that the LORD engaged in. It seems that there was an assumption that the LORD went beyond general providence, and that the establishment of judgeship was the product of particular providence.

We noted that providence has always faced its problems and that they persist. One of these is the problem of human freedom, wherein God has foreknowledge of every one of the actions I am about to take. The second problem which providence faces is that of the existence of evil, here, the LORD knows ahead of time the evil that will befall his creatures but does not use his omnipotence to prevent it as a benevolent LORD.

Responses to these problems have long been offered and these included free-will which goes against hard-determinism. Free-will proponents hold that the people's actions determined by them and not God. This also means that Samuel's sons were totally responsible for their corrupt actions. The people's actions also operate in the same vein. Others, worried by the divorce from his creation and the running of the world, hold that human action is both free and determined by God. We went down the rabbit hole of trying to relate this to the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy.

What perhaps seems to fall out of the HB completely, we find that time becomes relevant when we consider that the LORD proves himself to be liable to change. This goes against what could easily be regarded as his attributes, impassibility, and eternity. Not only is the LORD lobbied, as in the request for a king, react to and is informed through petitionary prayer, but he also recalls past events which negatively affect him. Thus, we dug deep into time and eternity as dealt with in philosophy but ended up bringing it home to the transition from judgeship to monarchy.

Ultimately, we found that the people went against the divine attributes that seem to be associated with the God of Israel and this seems to have allowed the people to act the way they did based on assumptions that are largely foreign to us.

Chapter 4.

What does 1 Samuel 8 Assume is the Valid Source of Morality?

4.1. Introduction.

We come here at the back of the chapter on providence. As a recap, we noted that providence, which holds that all that unfolds in this world, no matter what the nature of that event, does so in the manner that God established in his eternal plan (Flint 2004:329). However, this notion faces its challenges, for it is also a logical consequence of perfect being theology, wherein God has perfect knowledge and perfect power but does not prevent evil, evil he knows beforehand, from tormenting his creatures. Without going in depth, we must place it here that, relevant to what we are about to deal with are, amongst other things, questions of the LORD's omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence as objection points to divine command theory. Morally objectionable actions are in the HB writ large, the books of Samuel are not an exception on this score. But what gets our antennas up is that these are clearly commanded or required by the LORD, and Barton (2003:3) highlights one chilling incident, writing:

King Saul, the first king of Israel, loses divine approval because he is not sufficiently zealous in carrying out God's command to annihilate everything that breathes when he defeats the Amalekites. Samuel, God's prophet, takes over and before he slays Agag says: "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women."

Barton (2003:3) drew this from 1 Samuel 15:33 and, in narrowing this down to our 1 Samuel 8 chapter, we pick this up in v.9, wherein the LORD says:

Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.

These divine words were directed at Samuel for him to share with the people (led by the elders). Samuel dutifully did this, telling the people of the morally objectionable ways of the king, but the elders were steadfast in their conviction that the depravity (amongst other things) of their judges warranted a move to a monarchical regime.

Taking into consideration the contention between the people (led by the elders) and Samuel, it becomes a matter of concern just what exactly is the assumed valid source of morality in 1

Samuel 8. If we allow ourselves to indulge in dramatic irony, it is important to note that king Saul's downfall is predicated on this contention, as he will later be accused of impiety for not following the LORD's commands, as highlighted above. We recognize that this valid source of morality concern is not given a treatise treatment in 1 Samuel 8, but it is presupposed. The question, therefore, becomes: is it moral realism or moral relativism that is presupposed? Let us dig in.

4.2. Are there Assumptions of Moral Realism in the Justification for a Transition to Monarchy?

Moore (1903:1-36), Ross (1930:29-30), Hudson (1967:3-90) and Shafer-Landau (2003:13-38) have come to let us know that the notion that moral values are real, objective, universal, that they exist regardless of what we think about them, or if there is or no evidence about them, is moral realism. But are there implicit assumptions of moral realism in the 1 Samuel 8 text?

1 Samuel 8 opens with a commentary introducing the petition of the elders for a king. The author brings to our attention that the judges in place had not followed Samuel's ways, who had now grown old, perhaps perilously for his nation's sustenance; instead, they turned aside after dishonest gains, took bribes, and perverted justice. The people come to purportedly be quoted verbatim in v.5 that they said that Samuel's sons "do not walk in your ways". With this, we infer from the author's introductory commentary that by "your ways" the elders meant not "turning aside after dishonest gains, taking bribes, and perverting justice" as seen in v.3. Nihan (2013:323) notes that various authors, and this is true of Miscall (1986:43) and Eslinger (1985:255), have ventured that this standard of behaviour seems to be taken from the Deuteronomy 16:18-20 text:

Do not pervert justice or show impartiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

In the foregoing text, much like "fairly", "justice" seems to exist as a universal and is instantiated in human interactions. It exists out there in the universe in its pristine form and humans, owing to their imperfect nature in their earthly state of existence, are liable to distort

or corrupt its original state through actions that run contrary to just actions. Logical sense dictates that perversion of something good can only be into something not good.

So, when the elders declare that Samuel's sons have perverted justice, they seem to be doing so on the assumption that justice exists as a universal, is transcendental, thus it does not matter what culture or anyone thinks about it, thus justice is objective. The LORD's command that justice must be followed has implications that will soon become clear. We also notice that each divine command on moral action (bribe and justice) is followed by its benefits as a motivator when we read the Deuteronomy 16:19-20 text. This is interesting in that, looking at this text from the normative branch of moral philosophy, presenting us with consequentialism which holds that that an action is morally right depends on whether a good outcome ensues from that action. This is opposed to deontology which basis morally right action on the action itself and not the outcome thereof (Sandel 2010).

Dishonest gains, taking of bribes, and the perversion of justice as moral premises for the jettisoning of the institution of judgeship from the elders is met with a set of moral objections to kingship to get the elders to reconsider their stance, as to whether they still want a king who, amongst other objectionable things:

...will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots... v.13. and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and be bakers v.14. and he will take your fields, and vineyards, even the best of the land, and give them to his servants...

Sayre-McCord (2007) adds that moral realists maintain that there are moral facts. Such that the moral utterances of both the elders and Samuel could be anchored on the belief that their utterances are truth-apt; that their utterances can be claimed to be true (their being false also being a possibility). The question of moral facts, as dealt with in cognitivism, will be further tackled in chapter 6 of this dissertation. Moral truths are constituted by human signs' matching of the world. Certainly, it can be argued that Samuel was appealing to the minds of the elders, challenging them to think about the moral judgements at hand, judgements they seem to assume are mental states as with $1 + 1 = 2$. The following formulation from Kim (2006:2) will suffice for our purpose here:

- (1) Moral sentences are sometimes true.
- (2) A sentence is true if the truth-making relation holds between it and the thing that makes it true.
- (3) Thus, true moral sentences are true only because there holds the truth-making relation between them and the things that makes them true.

Therefore,

- (4) The things that make some moral sentences true must exist.

If, in 1 Samuel 8, moral statements were assumed to be truth-apt, that sometimes people can get some moral facts wrong, then the elders' steadfastness in their request for a human king to rule over them would have been seen as being premised on moral truth and an understanding that Samuel was mistaken or had gotten moral facts wrong about the moral attractiveness of monarchy.

In verse 19, after Samuel had laid out the "ways of the king", it is stated that, nevertheless, the people refused to obey the cautionary utterances from Samuel who was a conduit of the LORD's words; and they said, "Nay; but we will have a king over us..." and verse 21 reports that "Samuel heard all the words of the people and rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord."

Moral realists such as Wiggins (1976:87-138) and Lovibond (1983:28) have written on the role of language and context in understanding morality. The moral utterances in 1 Samuel 8, ones we now have as written statements, fall in the realm of language. In the HB, moral language is widespread and is generally used with common understanding across cultures. This moral language shares the same logic rules that govern descriptive language. It thus follows that saying that someone is corrupt that person cannot, at one and the same time, be honest. This sentence describes a moral aspect. Secondly, moral language and descriptive language can be noun-like and, thirdly, they can form compound sentences. The sentences in the 1 Samuel 8 text can be assumed to infer that there are entities such as "justice" and

“obligation” that the moral language employed refers to the world. What these could be referring to in the world are the possession of lucre and the fiduciary duty to abide by the wanton instructions of a king. What could give credibility to a thought of this nature is the fact that the almost non-existent separating line between moral and descriptive language could also be proof that there are moral facts.

Horgan & Timmons (2000:124) note that the cognitivist view is that moral language describes the world. Both the elders and Samuel seem to think that their moral language describes the world accurately or that, at least, it is intended to describe the world accurately. It is a zero-sum contest for the elders and Samuel in that one of them either has the moral facts right or wrong in their description of the world, in the sense that Sturgeon (1986:116) puts it, that moral statements have the capability of expressing truth or falsity. Thus, it can be argued that the assumption on the part of the people and Samuel is that moral language is truth-apt.

(1S8) Descriptivism dictates that the elders and Samuel are moral realists if and only if the elders and Samuel are moral descriptivists.

The foregoing formulation sentence (1S8) can further be demonstrated considering anti-realists who hold a non-cognitive view that there are no moral facts. Thus, if it is refuted that there are moral facts, the elders and Samuel may not at the same time hold that moral language describes, or is intended to describe, the world.

Samuel, when he utters words regarding a human king, he is apparently descriptively pointing to moral facts, that the pending practices of the would-be king are morally wrong, that the elders should have the same sense or knowledge of this pending injustice as much as they have been able to detect the same regarding Joel and Abijah’s moral wrongs. Samuel could be asking for the elders to think about these moral facts, to look up into the realm of the abstract.

Sayre-McCord (1988) writes on a “New Wave of Moral Realism”, wherein non-moral scientific models of property reductionism are borrowed to furnish an explication of moral realism. These would include gravity or mass which are real entities. While these are non-moral properties, we can reduce moral properties to them as defended variously by

Sturgeon (1988:69-78), Boyd (1988), Brink (1989), etc. If Samuel and the elders assume that there are moral facts, is it that they assume that an analogy (or equivalence) can be drawn between moral properties and the scientific properties of gravity or mass, etc., which are understood to exist regardless of what beliefs about them, or evidence is there or lack thereof, are? This would make moral facts more concrete than purely abstract in 1 Samuel 8.

This attention on the more concrete moral fact assumption is sparked for observation in 1 Samuel 8:10-18 by the purported objective facts that some future actions of a would be king are judged to be morally objectionable and these purported objective facts are expected to have an impact on the minds of the people. This shows a supposed force comparable to the expected free fall of a brick (a king's exercise of his objectively *immoral* rights), when left unsupported in the air, due to gravity (if the people do not heed the warning). Could moral properties be real without total independence on human sensibility to create a situation where the people and/or Samuel could have been appealing to human sensibility? McDowell (1985:132), writing in response to Mackie (1977:40) who rejected the existence of *objective good*, said:

It seems impossible – at least on reflection – to take seriously the idea of something that is like a primary quality in being simply there, independently of human sensibility, but is nevertheless intrinsically (not conditionally on contingencies about human sensibility) such as to elicit some “attitude” or state of will from someone who becomes aware of it.

McDowell (1985:146) added that:

Shifting to a secondary-quality analogy renders irrelevant any worry about how something that is brutally *there* could nevertheless stand in an internal relation to some exercise of human sensibilities. Values are not brutally there – not there independently of our sensibility – any more than colours are – though, as with colours, this does not prevent us from supposing that they are there independently of any particular apparent experience of them.

There are other considerations that play out in meta-ethics proper, but these do not arise as a concern here. The people are shown in v.8 to have a propensity to go against the LORD's commands, and this propensity in 1 Samuel 8 is on the account of the concept of justice as a hill to die on. Samuel leans on divine commands, however, in determining justice. What is clear is that the elders are basing their moral conviction on the assumption that it does not matter what one thinks or which culture one belongs to when it comes to justice, for justice is objective.

4.3. Are there Assumptions of Divine Command Theory in the Justification for a Transition to Monarchy?

As noted earlier, in 1 Samuel 8: 9, the LORD says:

Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.

This is clearly a commandment from the LORD. The elders' petition is understood by Samuel to run counter to the LORD's commands. The LORD himself points out in 1 Samuel 8:8 that:

As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

Divine command theory, by definition, is the claim that morality has its source in the commands or character of God, thus, morality and moral obligation depend on what God commands or prohibits (Beauchamp 1982:112; Barcalow 2007:41). Divine command theory is a form of moral realism where ethics are grounded in God, as defended by Augustine (Kent 2001:205-233), Kant (2002:131-157) and Craig (1979:63), although Kant was not a divine command theorist for he believed in reason, as we see in Kant's (1992:1-7) *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?* written in 1784 (translated by Ted Humphrey), giving a firm reason to be moral. We must consider that, the LORD, Yahweh, was a god of an ethno-cultural nation, we will deal with this ethno-cultural nation in chapter 6. Hence to speak of the LORD, Yahweh, is *ipso facto* to reference a particular culture, making moral relativism possible even though morality is traced to God. But the enduring problem from 399 BCE that divine command theorists have had to respond to is the *Euthyphro Dilemma* (Woods & Pack

2007:8) which asks: “Is the pious loved by the gods because it’s pious, or it is pious because it is loved [by the gods]?” For our purposes here we will pose this question in this manner: Was following justice morally right action because it was commanded by the LORD or did the LORD command that justice be followed because that was morally right action?

The Deuteronomy 16:18-20 text, from any angle, suggests the latter part of the dilemma. In this text, justice is a powerful entity that the LORD can confer utter trust upon. Not only is justice a pedestal of objective adjudication, but from justice fundamental benefits such as land accrue. The elders, too, do not seem to be pointing to justice as having its source in divine command, rather, they point to the actions of Samuel’s sons as objectively wrong, per justice’s ontological independence. It is Samuel who relies on the LORD’s commands for direction, when in verses 9-10 he is commanded to listen to and tell the elders and the people about “the ways of the king”.

Conceptually, therefore, by requesting for a human king the people are rejecting divine command theory. It is Samuel who embraces divine commanded theory. Therefore, in Samuel 8, there are two apparently contrasting views regarding the source of justice or morality.

- (1) The elders seem to endorse the view that what is just is loved by the LORD because it is just. Therefore,
- (2) That which is just is not just because the LORD loves it.

As a preliminary matter in our writing here, Harman (1975:3-22) vigorously defended moral relativism as a view that moral values are the result of human constructions for human purposes. These constructions may sometimes lack a common standard of measurement. If this is the people’s view of morality, then it would relegate the status of justice in 1 Samuel 8 from its trans-human realm and make it an anthropocentric matter. This because moral values will now find their origins in human perspectives and needs. As it is common cause, that these perspectives and needs differ on individual basis or various cultures, they can be referred to as subjectivism or relativism meta-ethical theories.

Divine command theory can fall under the banner of moral relativism because its theory makes moral values arbitrary constructions of divine commands, as Murphy (2019) noted.

Murray & Rea (2008:246-247) noted how divine commands put into question the genuineness of morality's objectivity. We note that the reason why we are focusing on divine command theory is that:

- (a) Divine command theory runs contrary to the people's apparent assumption that moral values are real and not constructions of human belief or culture, making the people moral realists.
- (b) Samuel assumes divine commands to be the valid source of morality in 1 Samuel 8, therefore,
- (c) this shows that 1 Samuel 8 also assumes that moral values are constructions of divine commands, which is a moral relativism position.

Moral relativism, of course, contrasts with moral realism, and this might help explain the varying theses about the preferred form of government. Additionally, that the ancient Near East had a plurality of gods whose authority only fell on certain ethno-cultural nationalist enclaves is common cause. In 1 Samuel 8:8 we notice that the LORD recognises that he once was forsaken for "other gods" by the people. This points us to a god who has a duty to an ethno-cultural nation, allowing for relativism to come in as a matter of his commands being relative to his ethno-cultural context. With this in hand, it is safe to say that 1 Samuel 8 has a strand of moral realism and a strand of moral relativism in the form of divine commands. The former is observable in the people (led by the elders) and the latter is observable in Samuel.

Indeed, there are other concerns that moral relativism addresses, but what is immediately apparent is divine command theory that we must first address. As to the first strand regarding moral values, the elders are at loggerheads with the LORD, directly or indirectly, in the name of preserving justice (amongst other things) as a sign of an assumption that justice or moral values are ontologically independent of the LORD. While we do make the observation that there is a revelation that exists in Deuteronomy that comes from the LORD about justice, and it has been argued above that this is clearly being referenced, but it does not follow that, in the minds of the elders, justice owes its ontological status to the LORD whom they seem to assume was commanding just actions because they were just (against the notion that actions the LORD had commanded were just because he had commanded them).

The frustration with this moral realism is palpable in the text. Launderville (2021:127), although not concerned with moral realism himself, says that “the elders’ vision for political authority struck Samuel as “bad””. Samuel is taken aback, he gets into petitionary prayer with the LORD who, in turn, shows the same indignation and remembers that it is not the first time that something of this nature has happened. In 1 Samuel 8:8 the LORD points out that after rescuing the Israelites from Egypt, the very people rejected him. But what could have led the Israelites to rejecting the notion that moral values are constructions of divine commands?

In a heavily theistic ancient near-East, we have no systematic reflection on this, but our educated bet lies on the fact that there are presuppositions on what the LORD’s role is when it comes to moral actions. Long after that ancient world, anachronistically, critique of divine command theory has since arisen, and it is directed at its stance that an action is morally right because God commands it, a definition we have already established. The implication of this is that if it is the LORD’s command or requirement that Joe and Abijah “turn aside after dishonest gains, take bribes and pervert justice” then it was morally right. Thus, Joel and Abijah were obligated to possess lucre, accept bribes, and pervert justice”.

This would also apply to the would-be king’s morally dubious actions, pointed out by Samuel. It would also bring us to a point of realizing that, if the LORD’s providence were assumed, the LORD did not employ his omniscience and omnipotence to prevent the would-be king’s morally dubious actions. But more to the critique of divine command theory, that if morality depends on the whims of God that leaves the basis of morality shaky, because of its arbitrariness and this allows morally objectionable actions to be compulsory (Sayre-McCord 2013). It seems as if that this shaky foundation was acceptable to Samuel, this is evinced by the fact that the LORD, in 1 Samuel 8:22, proves to be amenable and Samuel was prepared to change his stance in line with the changes of the LORD.

That God could command evil acts for its own sake is dealt with in various ways, and divine command theory advocates respond to the possibility of evil actions being morally right and the arbitrariness of morality’s foundations. They put forth, as defense, that God’s commands are commanded because they are morally right action. This defense solidifies the basis of

morality, but it breaks the hinge of ethics on God, making God someone who merely discerns right from wrong. Arthur (2005:20) would write that:

If God approves kindness because it is a virtue and hates the Nazis because they were evil, then it seems that God discovers morality rather than inventing it.

Nielsen (1973) and Moreland & Nielson (1990) have entertained and enunciated the case of a morality without God. With God removed as a foundation of ethics, a further concern arises that God is stripped of his sovereignty and is subjected to an external moral law. Curiously, for 1 Samuel 8, as noted by Nihan (2013:345) the people's request is regarded "as disloyalty towards the LORD, as in 8:7b – 8", yet kingship is still acknowledged as an institution created by the LORD. Why would the request for a king be sinful or be an act of disloyalty if it is the same LORD whose idea it is that kingship be established? If he is omniscient, it follows that he knew that the people would be the ones requesting for a morally repugnant kingship. Nihan (2013:345) adds that the tracing of this foundation of kingship back to the LORD can be credited to the redactor's inability to ignore earlier narratives in 8-11 or general traditions that credited the LORD with the origins of kingship, such as in Hosea 13:11.

It arises, however, that rather than twisting one's mind about the possibility that God does command evil actions thus making them morally obligatory, we must just accept this to be so, as suggested by William of Ockham (c.1287 – 10 April 1347) who is quoted by Dee (2019:126) as saying:

I say although hatred, stealing, committing adultery and similar [acts] have an evil circumstance attached because of the common law, insofar as they are done by someone who is obligated by divine command to the opposite, yet as for every absolute thing in those actions, they can be done by God without any evil circumstance attached.

This, then, means that having lucre and accepting bribes is morally obligatory if the LORD has commanded it. *Prima facie* evidence of this assumption in 1 Samuel 8 is when Samuel unquestioningly delivers the raw word of the LORD to the people, effectively saying to the

people bite the bullet and endorse what you think is a morally dubious regime because the LORD commands it. The people held a different notion.

Samuel clung onto the LORD's commands. Perhaps this was on the grounds that the LORD "would not, and indeed, could not command that there be an institution that would pervert justice". But the LORD, having established the reprised judgeship, would not have been does not seem to signal an omnipotent LORD. But are there things the LORD supposedly could not do if he was assumed to be omnipotent? This question seems silly. But that the elders seem to have assumed justice had an ontological status independent of the LORD calls for us to ask this question. Indeed, Aquinas (c.1225-1274:315-317) held the view that the notion that "If God, then, were omnipotent, all things would be possible; nothing, therefore, is impossible." does not mean that God can also do impossible things. Thus, his omnipotence must mean that:

The possible reference to some power is named possible in reference to its proximate cause. Hence those things which it belongs to God alone to do immediately---as, for example, to create, to justify, and the like---are said to be possible in reference to a higher cause.

Alternatively, to act in a morally wrong manner is not perfect action, it is an action omnipotence finds abhorrent. This would suggest that the LORD's founding of a perfect form of government was impossible, perhaps owing to his granting of humans free-will, as Plantinga (1977:240) would likely suggest.

Quinn (1978:217) and others, take the notion that God is omnibenevolent to mean the same thing as "God can do whatever he wills" and, to them, this is a problem. If what is morally permitted is that which is commanded by God, then God acting as he is obligated to do is tantamount to him doing what he himself commands to do. But this is incoherent, it is argued. Additionally, God cannot be viewed as having moral virtues, this is because moral virtue is possessed to enable one to do actions in response to God's commands. This, so the argument goes, is incoherent. However, there is reason to believe that the LORD, in 1 Samuel 8, is understood in anthropomorphic terms. He remembers past events and engages in negotiations, as noted in chapter 3 of this dissertation, the LORD is also not assumed to be impassible by the people.

Some of those who have defended divine command theory have contended that the good traits that God possesses differ in kind to the morally obligatory. God's disposition to be gracious to human beings, being fair, are some of the examples. It thus goes that God's nature is infused with these good dispositions. This is why Wierenga (1989:222) writes that "whatever God were to do includes no actions for which God would not be praiseworthy".

The elders seem to think that they have freedom to decide which moral principles best govern their life interests. Divine command theory does not allow for this because it holds that moral lives are externally governed by ethics from God. This would have much in common with moral determinism. But Adams (1999:249-276) views moral responsibility as being compatible with divine command theory since one can choose if one will subject him or herself to God's commands, possess the correct understanding and apply them, and be self-critical in one's standing with God's commands. We must note that, in this regard, the LORD seems to hold that the people have a choice, either they abide by his divine commands or suffer the consequences of a despot king, when he says in v.8: "Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights." The people themselves show resoluteness in response to this dire warning.

This brings us to the pluralism objection to divine command theory, wherein a question is posed that: in a world populated by a variety of religions, how does one who is a divine command theorist putatively know which commands to follow? Bear in mind that various religions have various views as to the contents and nature of God's commands. Lauderville (2021:127), while not responding to this meta-ethical quandary, his writing has a bearing on this:

Samuel called by name a particular deity whom he acknowledged as having authority over Israel. The name of a deity was essential for navigating a polytheistic world.

Still, however, the people and Samuel may well have been of the belief that the LORD, in the plurality of deities, was the correct one. But even in that consensus, there is a plurality of understandings under one roof, as is common with religious traditions, as to what God commands his creatures to do. The disagreement between Samuel and the elders is proof of this. Samuel, though, would have been relying on the evidence at hand as someone in

prophetic contact with the LORD. This would enforce the individual's (Samuel) autonomy. However, if to be moral means following the correct God or religion and correct interpretation, a problem arises. Maybe the people would have come to know moral obligations despite revelation, tradition, and practices in their religion.

4.4. Considering Human Nature and Psychological Factors in the Justification for a Transition to Monarchy.

Let us take cue from Clark and Poortenga (2003) who had written a book on this, and say that the elders, therefore, may have assumed that they were justified in their stance regardless of the LORD's commands, that there is a possibility that it is not a matter of merely going against their God's commands, but are relying on their human nature that originates from their creator. This nature, already infused with their telestial bodies, has both character traits that fulfil the people and some traits that do not accomplish this fulfilment. This nature aids humanity to function properly for its fulfilment and, as such, against certain morally wrong actions i.e., possessing lucre and bribes do not aid proper functioning of humanity. While the LORD could have made a different choice in which he allowed possession of lucre and accepting bribes to aid in the proper functioning of humanity, the LORD, nonetheless, made the opposite choice. Thus, the dictates of this nature are those of the LORD which, through his infusion of certain character traits, allows the people to have a distaste for lucre, accepting bribes, and perverting justice.

Embedded in human nature is psyche. Perhaps what we should be looking at is the fact that the people were motivated to act against the perversion of justice, and they provided reasons for requesting for a king to rule over them like other nations. We notice that in 1 Samuel 8:1-5a the people (led by the elders) have observed, ruminated, and made the moral judgement that Samuel's sons were in possession of lucre, accepted bribes, perverted justice. As a low-ranking group in the hierarchical structure of the institution of judgeship, one that has at its helm God, the people (led by the elders) seem to have a psychological motivation to act in accordance with their moral judgement. We see in v.4 that the people go to Samuel in Ramah, acting in accordance with their moral judgement, and in v. 5b they demand: "Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."

DeLapp (2011) points out that there are camps that exist in the analytic meta-ethical considerations of psychological factors in moral actions. Firstly, there are motivational internalists who argue that there is a psychological motivation that is readily implied in the moral judgement that something is good. But some within this camp may hold that knowing right from wrong means that one will always choose what is right for no one would choose something that would defile their soul or character, for Socrates (2010:99) and later Hare (1952:1-67; 1963:67-70) therefore, doing wrong is involuntary. Those who argue this latter point form part of the strong motivational internalist wing in the internalist camp. Then there are those who think that moral judgements take a life of their own to act in the given manner, but the trajectory of this life can or is always overruled by countervailing motivational forces. As such, a person may know what is morally right, may also want to do, at some degree, what is morally right, but may be drawn or driven away from acting in this manner by something of a stronger temptation (DeLapp 2011).

The notion that one is motivated to act after making a moral judgement, also presupposes that there are moral facts. This because, making a claim that something is triangular may be true but whether one acts on that because of some reason is a happenstance. But if one judges that something is good, and if true, there appears to always be a reason to conserve, promote, pursue, or venerate it (Rosati 2016).

It does not stop here, McDowell & McFetridge (1978:13-29 & 21-42) and Shafer-Landau (2003:119-162) bring to our attention that moral judgements seem to provide reasons that are intrinsic for one to act in line with them. This would mean that the people's judgement that Samuel's sons possess lucre, accept bribes, pervert justice is morally wrong, self-activates reasons for the people making that judgement to justify the people's petition based on that judgement, reasons that are external to the people making that judgement's feelings or wants. That these reasons are independent of the people making the moral judgement does not necessarily mean that the justification is objectively adequate. What suffices is that the people could adequately respond to why they were petitioning for a king. The response being that they judged that the actions of Samuel's sons were morally wrong. Such as we see in v.5.

And you are old,
And your sons do not follow your ways.

As we have pointed out, “your sons do not follow your ways is the description in v.3 that Samuel’s sons had “turned aside after dishonest gains, accepted bribes, and perverted justice.”

For reason-internalists, as we see with Foot (1972:305-316) and Williams (1979:101-113), a distinction must be drawn between judging and justifying on conceptual basis. As such, it was possible for the people to legitimately make judgement that possessing lucre, accepting bribes, and perverting justice are being morally wrong actions, but still fall short of recognizing a single reason justifying why it was morally wrong not to possess lucre, be on the receiving end of bribes, and perversion of justice. The act of sufficiently justifying moral rationale thus must have independent existence and be internal to an agent’s psychological structure.

4.5. Synthesis.

We opened with a note that we were coming to this chapter at the back of a chapter on providence. The point was to alert one to anticipate objections to divine command theory. What would later become clear was that when dealing with sources of morality the question of God becomes relevant. We pointed out how the HB has divine commands from the LORD. Additionally, in the imminent death of judgeship and ushering in of kingship we noted that it was Samuel who seems to have totally adhered to divine commands as opposed to the people. We thus asked if it was the assumption of moral realism that made the people not completely adhere to divine commands of the LORD.

Under the question: “are there assumptions of moral realism in the justification for a transition to monarchy?” we began by giving the definition of moral realism, which is the notion that moral values are real, objective, universal, that they exist regardless of what we think about them, or if there is or no evidence about them. Firstly, we restated that it was morality that concerned the people who went to Ramah (we left out on purpose the military aspect). We pointed out that Deuteronomy 16:18-20 has implications for moral realism in the justification of the transition from judgeship to monarchy. We gave a little explication on how this text presupposes moral realism in how it treats concepts like “fairly” and “justice”. We further dealt with what could have been the assumptions of the people who went to Ramah on moral facts. This was necessitated by the fact that moral realists tend to be

cognitivist who believe that there are moral facts, that moral statements are truth-apt. This means that, either Samuel or the people were mistaken or had gotten moral facts wrong in their statements about the moral attractiveness of kingship.

The question of language and morality came up next. We noted the prevalence of moral language in the HB and related it to descriptive language and their sharing of the same logical rules that make the statement “you are corrupt” is a moral statement but is also descriptive. It is descriptive language’s sharing of logical rules with moral language that could evince that there are moral facts. It appears that the people and Samuel were referring to the reality of the world they were living in.

We also touched on moral properties as being comparative to scientific properties such as mass and gravity as proof of moral realism. The point here was that this could point to moral facts being more concrete in 1 Samuel 8. Additionally, there was a possibility that moral properties could be attached somewhat to human sensibility. Ultimately, we ended up with the finding that the people’s steadfastness on the account of the concept of justice in their call for kingship and against a theocratic judgeship gives us the impression that there was an assumption of moral realism. We noted that it was Samuel who leaned on divine commands in determining justice.

We then went to divine command theory as another strand of a source of morality. We noted that it may be that divine command theory is a special kind of realism, but we highlighted how some have placed it under the relativism banner for it makes moral values arbitrary constructions of divine commands. They also made moral values’ genuineness questionable. Additionally, the LORD was a god who belonged to one ethno-cultural enclave and his commands were only applicable only to that cultural enclave. We highlighted that Samuel was an ardent adherent of divine commands, different from the people, thus we said that there is a strand of moral realism and that of relativism. This helps explain the conflict about which form of government was morally attractive.

We also did an explication on objections against divine command as with God’s possible commanding of evil for its own sake and responses to that. We also noted omniscience,

omnipotence and plurality objections and responses to such. We related this to the people and Samuel.

Then we moved to how human nature and psychological factors in the justification for a transition to monarchy. We noted that it could be that the people's disposition to going against morally repugnant actions and form of government was made intrinsic in them by their creator. Psyche could possibly have been assumed to be one of them. We did an explication on psychological motivation wherein judging that something is morally repugnant pushes one to act accordingly. We also looked at psychological reasons which had implications that the people's moral judgements had legitimacy without needing to justify these judgements.

Chapter 5.

Did the People Assume that they Were Epistemically Justified in their Request for a Human King?

5.1. Introduction.

The dialogue between the elders and Samuel leaves us with the impression that whatever moral beliefs they held were justified. The elders laid out premises that led to their conclusion that they needed a king. While they cite Samuel's old age, and place in there their need for military prowess as rationale for petitioning for a king, we have stated that our interest is in their moral utterances wherein they point out in verse 5 that Samuel's sons do not *follow in your ways*, meaning (in our interpretation) that they had *turned aside after dishonest gains, taken bribes, and perverted justice*, in verse 3. In response, Samuel, following the LORD's command, laid out "the ways of the king" (vv10-17), a list that purports to demonstrate how a human king treats his subjects as it is his rights. These ways of the king are presented as being morally repugnant. To be borne in mind is that, until then, Israel would have been thinking of itself as having moral high ground in relation to other jurisdictions which had human kingships, in sharp contrast to their transcendental king. The people's petition, therefore, was an indictment on the Israelite leaders and was the portent of death for the form of government in place. Samuel's speech about the then impending king was designed to be a warning against human kingship, but the people proved to be staunch in their stance.

What really comes out of this is that the people and Samuel take seriously the business of justifying their moral beliefs. But what do they assume are the required mechanisms of justifying their moral beliefs? Generally, such questions have been the domain of moral-epistemic justification, and various versions within this domain have developed overtime, the most popular is foundationalism, which holds that moral beliefs are justified by referencing other moral beliefs, this goes on until the justificatory process reaches the foundational beliefs it lies upon that are *self-evident*. Counter to this is coherentism, which is the view that epistemic justification is a matter of launching a moral belief into a network of other consistent beliefs. Contextualism appeals to practices and norms in place or more basic beliefs. We are also interested in normative contextualism. As we are swimming in a religious text, we will finish off with a focus on religious epistemology. We will expand more on these below, including providing definitions of these latest concepts.

5.2. Foundationalism.

Manyeli (2021:438) points out that in our day-to-day lives we regard knowledge, as "an endeavour to understand or comprehend something." But says the following of epistemology:

In particular, epistemologies are primarily engaged in the search for the truth. Their task is to distinguish truth from falsity. What differentiates philosophy, or precisely epistemology, from other disciplines in pursuit of the truth is that epistemologists also attempt to *justify* the truth.

The latter, of course, can be traced back to 380 BCE in the *Meno* (2018:1-28), which was latent with the “true belief” phrase juxtaposed with knowledge and book V (Cooper 2015:141-233) and VI (Cooper 2015 234-279) of *Theaetetus*, likely written in the 360s BCE, in which the formulation of what constitutes knowledge takes root. Epistemologists have since settled on *justified true belief* to make the definition of knowledge commensurable (Manyeli 2021:438; Gericke 2015:3). This traditional standard has suffered under the strain of the onset of the Gettier problem (Gettier 1963:122) in “Is justified True Belief Knowledge?”, the first case of two in the paper went like this:

Case I:

Suppose that Smith and Jones have applied for a certain job. And suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following conjunctive proposition:

(d) Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.

Smith's evidence for (d) might be that the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Proposition (d) entails:

(e) The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. Let us suppose that Smith sees the entailment from (d) to (e) and accepts (e) on the grounds of (d), for which he has strong evidence. In this case, Smith is clearly justified in believing that (e) is true.

But imagine, further, that unknown to Smith, he himself, not Jones, will get the job. And, also, unknown to Smith, he himself has ten coins in his pocket. Proposition (e) is then true, though proposition (d), from which Smith inferred (e), is false. In our example, then, all of the following are true: (i) (e) is true, (ii) Smith believes that (e) is true, and (iii) Smith is justified in believing that (e) is true. But it is equally clear that Smith does not know that (e) is true; for (e) is true in virtue of the number of coins in Smith's pocket, while Smith does not know how many coins are in Smith's pocket,

and bases his belief in (e) on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.

This has necessitated other philosophical interventions. But it is critical to first look at the original stance on epistemology by looking at the arguments offered as the structure of knowledge in foundationalism as initially argued for in Aristotle's (1901:1-170) *Posterior Analytics* and later explicated by Descartes (2008) in *Meditations on First Philosophy* in 1641.

When one tries to justify his/her beliefs about something by appealing to other reliable, already-known claims as the basis for one's beliefs, three possibilities emerge: either regressive reasoning that ends with an ultimate premise (or premises), or regressive reasoning goes on infinitely, or circular reasoning that keeps coming back to the same point. The possibility is that regressive reasoning will ultimately land one on the most basic belief that is *self-evident* upon which other beliefs depend. This means that the premises offered for epistemic justification have ultimate premises upon which they rest, ultimate premises that end the regressive reasoning process because these premises do not require further argument. This is foundationalism.

Foundationalism seems plausible enough. But there are infinitists, as we see with Klein (1999:297-325), who have a problem with the foundationalist argument which terminates regressive reasoning at some *ultimate premises*. In fact, they reject that there are ultimate premises. There are also coherentists, as defended by Bonjour (1985:102-103), Coherentists hold that regressive reasoning finds its way back, in circular form, to the original claim. But coherentists are not skeptics, they do not deny the possibility of knowledge acquisition. Rather, they believe that the larger the circle of justification the more rationally acceptable the original claim is. These claims must be harmonious in a manner that will furnish an explanation of the claimed truth.

Infinitists differ from both foundationalists and coherentists and reject their construction of epistemological parameters. Firstly, according to infinitists, the so-called ultimate premises are arbitrary. This criticism is also shared by coherentists, but infinitists break away from coherentists on the part of their smug acceptance of a larger circle without establishing the

truthfulness of the original claim. As such, infinitists endorse the view that a good reason for a claim needs a support structure of an infinite string of reasons that are not repeated in the process of regressive reasoning.

When we come to our text, we realize that it seems to assume a foundationalist structure of knowledge. The epistemic foundation of moral beliefs in 1 Samuel 8 makes for an interesting probe. Indeed, in a heavily theistic ancient Near East where divine commands have been detected, one easily can take for granted that the epistemic bedrock of all moral beliefs in 1 Samuel 8 is the God of Israel, the LORD himself. This makes sense, but once we hold that there are also moral realism elements that seem to be assumed in 1 Samuel 8, a leeway is then given for us to explore if epistemic foundationalism in this chapter is assumed. Moral realism and divine command theory as topics of inquiry form part of this dissertation's chapter 4, which precedes the current chapter.

To reiterate, epistemic foundationalism seeks to properly structure a person's justified beliefs. As a result, it recognises that there are some beliefs that are justifiably believed. I can know that I am writing in English right now, for example, only if I reliably know other claims about what constitutes writing in English. The reliable claim being that up to 26 letters of the English alphabet are used and diacritics are largely not used. It is on these reliable claims that my belief that I am writing in English epistemically rests for support. Thus, the claim about what constitutes writing in English becomes basic beliefs that provide epistemic status to the rest of the other beliefs I may hold about my writing in English.

Consider this:

Behold, you are old,

And your sons do not walk in your ways.

Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

How then should we treat the premises offered for the petition for a king in 1 Samuel 8? It seems that when the elders make their first utterance in verses 5 "Behold, you are old..." they assume that Samuel's old age is self-evident. Yes, a case may be made that this warrants a probe into whether knowledge acquisition in 1 Samuel 8 is empirical. But when we consider the internalist/externalist debate, the people seem to also meet both doxastic and propositional

justification for they point to not just good reasons, but observable facts about age and immoral acts, per Pollock & Cruz's (1999:22-23) explication of basic beliefs being self-justified. Nonetheless, if granted that Samuel's old age is self-evident, it would satisfy the theory of non-inferential justification (which means that what is foundational does not need inference).

Verse 5 continues after the "and" conjunction... "your sons do not walk in your ways." This second part of the sentence seems to speak of ongoing observable actions that provoke a reaction. One can quibble about whether this second part of the sentence is still non-inferential justification and serves to buttress the other non-inferential justification. The following sentence of verse 5 goes like this: "Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." This is clearly inferred justification (this means that this is dependent on a reliable known basic claim).

As we have already stated, justification of one's beliefs is spread across 1 Samuel 8. We see additional justificatory statements and this time from the LORD.

Verse 7a: Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you.

Verse 7b: for they have not rejected you,

Verse 7c: but they have rejected me from being king over them.

This is a statement of justified belief. But what reliable knowledge is there for the LORD's statement to be justified true belief? This question comes up because the elders do not explicitly say to Samuel that they reject the LORD, rather, they cite Samuel's old age and the corrupt practices of his sons. Their utterances, of course, come at the back of Judges 8, wherein Gideon tells them that they already have the LORD as king to be asking any human to be their king, the act of asking for a human king is a rejection of the LORD as king. The LORD, nonetheless, seems to see the inadequacy of his statement or sees the need to buttress his statement. As a result, in verse 8 he adds:

According to all the deeds that they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

By adding this last piece, he makes an epistemic justification that demonstrates that there is indubitable evidence (that is non-inferential) that the people have always been prone to reject him as they are currently doing. As we have noted that the people point to observable facts (age and immoral acts), the LORD's citation of a historical fact suggests strong foundationalism led by Descartes (2008) and as advanced by Lewis (1952:168-175) for we see a compulsion to ground arguments in certainty on that which is infallible, is incorrigible.

Samuel, acting under the divine commands of the LORD, shows the people the ways of the king. But this is a last-ditch effort from him, from the time he entered a petitionary prayer, to dissuade the people from calling for a human king. He lists the morally objectionable rights of human monarchy from vv.11-18.

The initial statements about what the would-be king would do to his Israelite subjects proves to be non-inferential justification for they point to sensory observable monarchical norms. From this, Samuel infers that the people "...will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves..." and this is what Samuel wants to drive home as inferential justification. However, as something that should be absolutely borne in mind by the people and gut-wrenching is what finishes this v.18 compound sentence that: "...the Lord will not answer you in that day."

But it is not until we reach verse 18 that we get to see a full picture as to which one of these statements from the elders operates as non-inferential and which are inferential.

Verse 5a: Behold, you are old,

Verse 5b: and your sons do not walk in your ways.

Verse 5c: Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Verse 5a and verse 5b are clearly non-inferential, therefore, foundational statements.

Verse 18 No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations,

Verse 20 and that king may judge us and go before us and fight our battles.

From the frailty of Samuel, the elders make an inference that they need a capable man, like other nations, in the form of a human king, to lead them in battle. So far, we have tried to

demonstrate the assumed structure of justified belief in our text. But if we look at what would be specifically the structure of justified moral belief present in 1 Samuel 8, perhaps as an explication of what is meant by “your sons do not walk in your ways”, it can be put this way:

Verse 3a: Behold you are old,

Verse 3b: Your sons do not walk in your ways,

Verse 3c: But turned aside after dishonest gain,

Verse 3d: Took bribes,

Verse 3e: And perverted justice.

It makes sense to say that, as far as morality is concerned, we must only look at verse 3c, verse 3d and verse 3e. Verse 3b seems to be assumed to be non-inferential. We include 3b, which stands for the moral uprightness of Samuel. Having lucre and accepting bribes is to pervert justice, which is to say, wronging someone – in this case, the body politic. Thus, perverting justice encapsulates all these moral wrongdoings, making, therefore, 3a and 3b the ultimate premises, for they are observable, are the bedrock for the main claim, that Samuel’s sons have perverted justice. Being too old is not a moral concern but, as a practical matter, frailty due to old age means an inability to stem the tide of moral erosion in the Israelite body politic. This is clear even to biblical scholars, Birch (1976:26) writes that:

The issue over which the need for a king arose is here clearly identified as the administration of justice. Samuel’s age and the corruption of his sons render the present system unworkable. Thus, the justified moral belief undergirds the knowledge claim for a need for a king.

Thus, the justified moral belief undergirds the knowledge claim for a need for a king:

Verse 3f: Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Based on Samuel’s sons’ immorality, the elders make an inference that a king is needed to preserve justice. With what we have done, though, to this end, we make it appear as if the assumption in 1 Samuel 8 is that knowledge needed justification. Indeed, where philosophy is

descriptive of reality, it may be that we merely need to observe and describe how arguments have generally always been made for knowledge purposes, in this case, in ancient Israel.

Foundationalism firms its dominant position in epistemic justification with an appeal to human natural judgement about presented cases. It is apparently evident that some beliefs are basic. Some claims do not “involve any work of proving”, the mind perceives these “as immediately as the eyes see light”, Leibniz (1916:122) avers, offering as examples, that:

White is not black.

A circle is not a triangle.

Three is one and two.

It is hard to think that the elders, Samuel, too, thought that they had not reached ultimate premises in their structure of knowledge. Thus, a plausible case can be made that an assumption of foundationalism is traceable as being their mechanism in the epistemic justificatory process. Notice how the people simply reiterate their position in v.18, after being warned about the ways of the king, “No!... We want a king over us”. What is left, therefore is a question of whether their foundationalism was the strong, moderate, or weak version; and it seems to be the strong version.

5.3. Contextualism.

It is always put to us that we live in a different context than that of the ancient Near East Israelites (Barton 2002:17-18). This is true, maybe we need to accord to that context its dues when it comes to what they understood to constitute justification of moral beliefs. It could be that our expectations of the context in which the elders and Samuel lived required low epistemic standards, wherein there may not have been a need to seriously workout some theoretical considerations of knowledge skepticism, which would fit the frame made by Timmons (1998:178-246). Contextualism and its advocates, contextualists, have made a case for this.

Contextualism holds that if one knows or doesn't is dependent on a given context. This means that knowing is incommensurable and, rather, whatever the corners of a given context may be, they will form the standard that must be met for a belief that is held to constitute

knowledge. As such, epistemological standards are dependent on different contexts, which is something that contextualists constantly hold as fact. The barometer is higher, lower, or anywhere in between, depending on a given context and one's epistemic standards may fail to reach, surpass, or match the level of some barometer of another context.

Take this scenario which was originally developed by Gilbert Harman (1973) and utilized to give a facelift to Descartes's (2008) malevolent demon in his 1941 *Meditations on First Philosophy* by Putnam (1981) in his *Reason, Truth and History*, and, albeit lengthy, Black (2003) adapts it this way for us:

1. I know that I have hands.
2. But I don't know that I have hands if I don't know that I'm not a brain-in-a-vat.
3. I don't know that I'm not a brain-in-a-vat.

Taken separately, these make for plausible statements, but taken together, they are inconsistent. The plausibility of (1) appears to not require explanation. As for (3) it appears that its plausibility depends on my ruling out the possibility that I am a *brain-in-a-vat* in order for one to know that that I am not a *brain-in-a-vat*. However, the *brain-in-a-vat* and one seems to share the same experiences as the *brain-in-a-vat*, it seems that both me and the *brain-in-a-vat* have hands, and other similar experiences. In as far as my perceptual experiences are concerned, I have no reason to hold the belief that I am not a *brain-in-a-vat* vis-à-vis the belief that I am. Based on my perceptual experiences alone, I cannot rule out the possibility of my being a *brain-in-a-vat*. Thus, this makes (3) plausible. As it also appears that I can't have knowledge that I have hands, by extension, I can't have knowledge that I have a body at all, owing to my failure to rule out the possibility that I am a *brain-in-a-vat* without a body. This consideration matters for the plausibility of (2). The plausibility of (2) seems to hold regardless of epistemic standards.

Either (1), (2), or (3) must be jettisoned for not all of these can be true. Which one is it then that must be jettisoned, and why?

For contextualists, "know" either is or is indexical in its function (much like here, you, me, that one, etc., words which depend on their contexts for their meaning). Contextualists add that some contexts have high epistemic standards, and in other contexts these standards are

low. In the instance of a context with high epistemic standards, some skeptical hypotheses are taken seriously and considered. The question of whether I am a *brain-in-a-vat*, the possibility that we are dreaming as we read this right now, or that we may be in the throes of being deceived by an omnipotent malevolent demon. Our perceptual experiences, however, fail to give us the necessary evidence required to rule out the skeptical possibilities presented by such a context, for we still have the same perceptual experiences as a *brain-in-a-vat*. This presents the failure to meet these high epistemic standards on the question of belief that I have hands and on the belief that I am not a *brain-in-a-vat*. This makes (1) false and (3) is true in the context where epistemic standards are high. As such, (1) should be jettisoned in this high epistemic standard context. Thus, once this happens the conflict that is presented by the requirement that (1), (2), and (3) be true goes away. The skeptic gets his/her dues, when (1) is jettisoned in high epistemic standard contexts, by considering her skeptical arguments that are compelling (Black 2003).

The contrast, of course, are contexts that are of low epistemic standards. The obvious marker being the absence of skeptical hypotheses considerations. This is where the possibility of (3) does not need to be jettisoned for knowledge to be attained. If (1), for me to know this I only need to jettison the possibility that I have no hands, including instances of having claws or paws instead of hands. My perceptual experiences provide me with evidence that I can observe my hands or hear them clap together and rule out the brain-in-a-vat possibility. This allows me to meet the low epistemic standards contexts requirements. This makes (1) true in such contexts while (3) is false. (3) is thus jettisoned in low epistemic standard contexts. The jettisoning of (3) keeps the conflict between (1), (2), and (3) intact. The jettisoning of (3) in low epistemic standard contexts allows for the retention of ordinary knowledge – the type of knowledge of things that we ordinarily understand to know (Black 2003).

Let us take 1 Samuel 8:5 in which the elders of Israel judge that Samuel's sons are judged to be morally bereft in that they "do not walk in your ways", they turned aside after dishonest gains, accepted bribes and perverted justice, and regard this as an indictment on the institution of judgeship in place, and judge that monarchy is the panacea, saying: "Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all nations". This precipitates an argument for justification on the grounds of a contextualists' theme of normative contextualism.

This means that justification is determined by the social practices and norms of the communities of those gathering knowledge. Community may mean “Israel” in our case but given that there is a comparative statement in v.6 “like all nations” means that we expand the circle to include the entire ancient Near East when we speak of community. This is the environment from which the Israelites are justified in holding their belief(s). Timmons (1999:185) makes this formulation in relation to epistemic norms accepted by a society at a certain time:

NC A person **S** is justified at time **t** in believing some proposition **p** in context **C** if, and only if, **S**'s holding **p** at **t** conforms to the relevant set of epistemic practices and operative in **C**.

This formulation is the egocentric normative contextualism version. Sociocentric normative contextualism is another version where the talk is about the epistemic norms accepted by **S**'s society, rather than just epistemic norms accepted by **S**. Both are comparable to ethical relativism and moral truth. The second version can be formulated this way:

ENC A person **S** is justified at time **t** in believing some proposition **p** if, and only if, holding **p** at **t** conforms to those epistemic norms accepted by **S** at **t** that govern the class of beliefs which **p** is a member.

In verse 6, we are told that Samuel was displeased by this expressed desire to have a human king. Following his petitionary prayer, he did as the LORD commanded him. Samuel poured scorn on the rights of the (human) king so desired. Every practice that kings in neighbouring nations thought fit were presented as morally objectionable. Thus, it seems Samuel assumed that Israel, through her transcendental king, had the moral high ground in relation to other nations. For Samuel, foreign practices were acceptable so long as they remained in their contexts. We have already shown this in the previous chapter 4 as being the result of relativism.

The elders seem to think of themselves justified in believing that kingship better safeguards morality. After Samuel lays out the rights of the king as a warning to the people, the people in vv.19–20 defiantly said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all

nations...” One thing that seems to not be in dispute is that the people have evidence of structural weaknesses that make judgeship less desirable as a form of government for morality and bulwark against military conquest.

What we must note well is that the elders do not see the need to rebut the skepticism averred by Samuel about kingship, instead, they double-down on their petition. The evidence underpinning the moral indictment levelled against the institution of judgeship is not repeated in vv.19 – 20, just the desired solution (monarchy) is reiterated. The elders seem to have assumed that their perceptual experiences, looking at their status quo in relation to other nations in the ancient Near East, was enough evidence that allowed them to not share the epistemic skeptical possibilities about kingship which would supposedly result in them crying “out because of your king, whom you have chosen yourselves...” and in which “the Lord will not answer you in that day.”

The elders’ stance points to their context’s epistemic standards, at the time and in the society they lived in, to being low, if we take the *brain-in-a-vat* thought experiment and Timmons (1999:178-246) to have a point. Samuel’s attempt to raise their sights to skeptical conjecture, as with a *brain-in-a-vat* hypotheses, about a malevolent king fall flat. In fact, he is compelled to accept their petition as presented and he is the one who sets the modalities to bring into existence a human king. But could Samuel’s skepticism be significant in pointing us to a context that had high epistemic standards? This question needs a project of its own and seems applicable in the larger biblical corpus than our text of concern here.

What is at play here? The proposition put forth by the elders as knowledge appeals to practices and norms of its context. They are faced with moral decay in their own backyard, they also live in a war prone environment, and they seem to think that they are militarily brittle as a nation, thus, they assume that kingship will be the panacea to these issues. Thus, the knowledge or justified true belief the elders assume to possess is not only immediately informed by their “internal” (psychological) features of the circumstances in the form of type of evidence. For the people (led by the elders), knowledge takes shape based on their physical environment.

5.4. Religious Epistemology.

The assumption of the existence of God in the context that saw the petition for a king as recorded in 1 Samuel 8 is a given. This is clear in that the people regard Samuel as a legitimate man of God. They recognize his authority over them. Although Samuel is not recorded as saying that he is stepping aside to consult the LORD, nor does he say to the people “the LORD just told me to obey your voices”, there appears to be a belief that he is a man of God. He reveals this general assumption of the rationality of belief in God in v.18 when he says “” ...but the LORD will not answer you in that day.””

Evidentialist objection to the belief in God is based on the expectation and assertion that rational belief in God requires evidential support. Rowe & Trakakis (2007:105) observed that theists and non-theists alike are “evidentialists”, thus they rely on enough evidence to hold that belief in God is rational. Manyeli (2012:438) notes that moderate skeptics are of the view that we will always fail to fully justify what we claim to know.

The LORD, however, gives us a window into the minds of the Israelites when he, in verse 8, says:

According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking and serving other gods...

This sends us back to the Exodus narrative. When we look at Exodus 3, we find a Moses whose life is fundamentally changed by an epiphany. God appears to him through a burning bush. He hears God’s voice and gets into a dialogue with him, this is mysticism, a religious experience par excellence that Alston (1991:184–254) wrote extensively on as epistemology of religious experience. The LORD tells Moses that he appears to him because of the rescue mission he has for the Israelites from the enslaving Egypt under Pharaoh. But it is what Moses asks that is telling, where the word “believe” and “the LORD” are used in one sentence:

What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, “The LORD did not appear to you?””

The LORD appears to have anticipated this question for he responds swiftly to Moses that, if the people’s reaction is as he expects it to be (and it later was) he just needs to throw his stick to the floor, and it shall turn into a snake and back into a stick when he picks it up. There are

other acts, such as turning the Nile water into blood when Egypt under the Pharaoh also suffers 10 plagues. What comes to mind immediately is that there is an assumption that, for whatever is divine to matter in the epistemic realm, it needs evidence. We now see the word “know” (lack of knowledge in this case) used in the same sentence as “the LORD” The Pharaoh says in Exodus 5:

Who is this LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.

Through the 10 plagues to rescue his people, the LORD provides proof of his existence to a skeptical Pharaoh who, initially, truly does not know such a God exists. But he also demonstrates why it is rational to believe in him, through his demonstration of might in the competition of superiority against other gods, Fredman (1982:333) noted that the plagues are a fulfilment of a divine promise, wherein the LORD would “wreak judgement against... all the gods of Egypt”.

In a world where theism was ubiquitous, we do see some doubt seep into the minds of ancient Israelites in the book of Exodus. We see the people following Moses and Aaron who were adhering to the LORD’s commands, but they now seem to question their decision. In Exodus we see utterances like:

“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? (14:11).

“If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death. (16:3).

Come make us gods who will go before us. (32:1).

Kessler’s (2013:70) assertion that God’s existence was assumed and did not need evidence in the OT may generally hold true, but Moses and the Pharaoh thought incorrigible evidence was necessary to either prove his existence or rationality in believing in the LORD, and the LORD readily satiated this evidentiary necessity. The LORD, indeed, was a unique God in at least one way. He did not have a statue and in the ancient Near Eastern religions physical

representation of a nation's god or gods seems to have been necessary. If it was not the Egyptians with their pantheon of gods you could point to, with the Pharaoh as the physical symbol of the sun god Ra, as Westermarck (1926:23) alerts us, then it is the statue of Marduk that Cole & Machinist (1998) write about, to cite a couple of examples.

Let us consider the evidentialist objection to the rationality of belief in God:

1. Belief in God is rational only if there is sufficient evidence for the existence of God.
2. There is not sufficient evidence for the existence of God.
3. Therefore, belief in God is irrational.

Upon a cursory look, this appears to disprove the existence of God, but it does not, nor does it attempt to do so. Rather, it concludes that belief in God is irrational and that, even if he did exist, it would be irrational to believe in God. As such, evidentialists put the onus on theists to present an argument for why it is rational to believe in God (Clark 2024).

Reformed epistemologists such as Plantinga & Wolferstorff (1983:17-39) have rejected this requirement, saying that there is a limitation to things we can provide evidence for. These may include proofs for belief that other people exist, and the reality of the past. This dictates, therefore, that we must trust our own cognitive faculties, lest we end up in regressive proving trying to prove everything. Reformed epistemologists doubt that the foundationalists' assertion that the self-evident, non-inferential, claims which depend on our senses is properly the starting point for inference.

Plantinga (1983:53) adds that classical foundationalism is self-referentially inconsistent. As such, foundationalism ought to be rejected on its own account.

A proposition p is properly basic for person S if and only if p is either self-evident to S or is incorrigible for S or evident to the senses for S evident.

From this formulation, classical foundationalism is clearly not self-evident. This will follow when one has a full grasp of this and will reject classical foundationalism as false. It is also not a proposition that is sensory for it is not evident to affect the 5 senses. Thus, classical

foundationalism is not incorrigible, given that anyone who relies on it could be wrong. It thus would need to be inferred from other sensory self-evident propositions. Many other criticisms have been levelled against classical foundationalism. Hence it might be rational for one to believe in God despite the lack of evidential support of an argument for such (Plantinga 1983:53).

Plantinga (1983:59) argues against the expectation of propositional evidence for belief in God to be rational, he does not, at the same time hold that belief in God does not have grounding (Plantinga 1983:74-91) and Alston (1991:286-308) writes in endorsement of the same grounding. Religious experience is one such grounding, and in his book *Perceiving God* Alston (1991) dedicated chapters sub-divided according to the various points of the subject. This grounding also includes psychological factors such as feelings of guilt, mysticism, and recognition of divinity in natural aesthetics. These experiences are not based on some propositional arguments, but the belief in having an encounter with God overwhelms those who experience this. This religious experience is self-authenticating. Trusting the evidence one's cognitive faculties provide when it comes to such experience is not bad. As such, an outsider to this religious experience is compelled to trust the evidence of someone who has this experience.

Effectively, for 1 Samuel 8, two things are at play. (1) In the dialogue between the elders and Samuel, it is Samuel who seriously cares about straying from the Lord's command. That he can talk to and receive commands from the LORD is a religious experience, a mysticism that makes belief in the LORD and his commands rational. (2) The people seem to assume that belief in the LORD is rational in that they recognize his authority through Samuel. However, what seems to permeate all of 1 Samuel 8 is the assumed passibility of the LORD and this is something we covered in chapter 3 of this dissertation, where we cited Creel (2010:324). Not only does Samuel call upon the LORD to act, but the LORD proves amenable when he gives the people their last chance via a warning to change their stance on kingship. The assumption may be that the LORD, if he be a perfect being, must also be a person to be able to enter into a personal relationship with his people, and engage in mutual concessions that human life consists of. The LORD must also be perfect in love so he can be affected by the joys and sorrows of the people, i.e., the immoral acts of its leaders as a point of sorrow for the people, and hear what they have to say, i.e., hear what their proposed solution to their sorrow is. The

LORD's knowledge of the world must be caused by the world, otherwise he will be ignorant of the world, including what immoral actions are taking place in the world and what other morally attractive institutions are there.

5.5. Synthesis.

The foregoing chapter opened with an introduction which tried to point out that a cursory observation of 1 Samuel 8 gives us a world where what one put forth as truth had to be given reasons as to why that was so, or a justification of what one believed to be the truth. This was not different in defending their moral judgements. The people prefaced their request for a king by highlighting Samuel's old age, then the immoral practices of his sons. For them, this sufficed as justification for a move to monarchy. Later, they add that this king will also, one presumes competently, lead them in the battlefield. What is fascinating, however, is that even Samuel (the LORD by extension) also objects on moral grounds about a move to kingship. Given this, we thought that epistemic foundationalism could help us make sense of what the people assumed grounded their beliefs in the justificatory process to make their request for a king epistemically justified. As foundationalism requires that the foundations of belief be self-evident, evident to the senses, and/or incorrigible, it follows that the people met this requirement in the form of observable immoral actions, Samuel's frailty due to old age, and templates of monarchical practices in neighbouring nations. Alternatively, infinitists would argue that their argument needed to go on without any terminal point, and coherentism which wanted coherent beliefs fitting together to make up the structure of knowledge. Both these approaches can be argued but so far, foundationalism seems most apt. The people thought that their reasoning had reached ultimate premises to base their beliefs as required by foundationalism. See their response to the warning about the ways of the king, where they simply reiterate that they want a king. Given this, the people thought that they were epistemically justified in their justification for a move from judgeship to monarchy. Contextualism entertains the idea that epistemic standards could be relative to context. As such, it follows that the people could be epistemically justified in their justification for a move to kingship if we can judge as observers that their moral standards were either high or low. Our observation, therefore, is that the people relied on empirical evidence for their justification, one that was self-evident, evident to the senses, and incorrigible. This makes their epistemic standard low for they relied on their perceptual senses and physical

environment for one to claim to know than working out skeptical hypotheses to rule out skeptical possibilities to claim to know.

When we consider religious epistemology as it relates to the justification for a move to kingship, what it shows is that it rejects the expectations of classical foundationalism that requires self-evident basis for belief in God to be rational. In classical foundationalism, propositional arguments which terminate at ultimate premises is how knowledge is structured, but the grounding for a belief in God, this grounding is religious experience, and these can be found in appreciation of natural aesthetics, mysticism and feelings of guilt. One thing is clear in the tussle for a move to monarchy is that Samuel has a religious experience of encountering the LORD. The people seem to also recognize the LORD, evinced by their recognition of his authority through Samuel who references the LORD with his divine commands, even when they waited for him to enter petitionary prayers. However, where they what allows them to challenge the theocratic status quo is on their view on the LORD's impassibility, given this they think that they can inform him of their morally induced sorrows and persuade him accordingly. The people, therefore, were epistemically justified in their request for a king.

Chapter 6.

What Were the Political Implications of these Meta-Ethical Positions?

6.1. Introduction.

Having come this far and as we take a critical distance it becomes clear that the picture is as kaleidoscope as its numerous points of interest. The elders' petition for a king is premised on

morality and military concern. It is the aspect of morality that is the nucleus of our interest here, however. This petition for a king is met with a strong opposition from Samuel, but he is commanded by the LORD to stand down and yield to the people's petition.

From the preceding chapter 4 of this dissertation, we noticed that there is an apparent assumption of moral realism from the part of the elders and the people and there was a moral relativism from the part of Samuel. Thus, there are two strands regarding the source of morality in 1 Samuel 8. What shines through, though, is that there is tolerance of each other's viewpoints in this text. "Obey their voice and make them a king", says the LORD in v.22, showing that the people's requested king is going to be hand-picked by Samuel.

All of this is philosophically interesting. Fiala (2004) notes that toleration is shown in the elenchus (Vlastos 1982:711-714) in ancient Greece, especially in the *Euthyphro* where interlocutors are allowed to state their case before one refutes it, or letting one's interlocutors go on with what one judges to be questionable. We also see the Stoics arguing that we should only be concerned with that which is within our control, such as what we think and how we conduct ourselves – this in contrast to things we have no control over as with what other people think or how they conduct themselves, and Wiegardt (2010:5) highlights how stoicism is still alive more than 2300 years from its inception and this is due to its "universal adaptability". With the onset of Jesus' missionary circa 2000 years ago, Christianity also exhorts its believers to love their enemies.

In 1 Samuel 8, where the petition for a king is premised on moral concern, it is also rebutted on moral grounds. Where the people are frustrated by the failure of Samuel's sons to follow "his ways" (which are morally attractive) in governing and, with Samuel's disqualifying old age as leader, judgeship thus has run its course and kingship is deemed to be the recourse. Samuel disagrees with this moral recourse and is frustrated that the people seem ignorant of "the ways of the king" (which are morally repugnant) in governing, thus pursuance of a monarchy as a form of government must stop, but the people are adamant. Here we notice opposing moral convictions. These have political implications. Both moral realists and moral relativists have accounts on why such disagreements exist and which moral theory exclusively handles well such disagreements. Given this, we can possibly account for the political disposition of the Israelite people who petitioned for a king, as well as that of Samuel. We expand on this and more below.

6.2. Israelite Political Disposition.

To reiterate, we have noted in chapter 4 of this dissertation that there are two apparent strands of what constitutes a valid source of morality in 1 Samuel 8, one is realism as apparently assumed by the people and the elders, and the other is relativism in the form of divine commands as taken seriously by Samuel. This contest opens an avenue for us to understand what the political disposition of the Israelites was. For this, though, we must understand what makes disagreements emerge or, more narrowly, understand what makes moral disagreement about a move to a monarchal epoch exists between the people and Samuel. As somewhat of a recap, neither the people (led by the elders) nor Samuel (reverent of the LORD's commands) dispute that the institution of judgeship is immersed in a cesspool of moral decay. It is the fact that the people think that human kingship, whose blueprint is in neighbouring nations, is the moral recourse that is contested. We would have stated earlier that the people do use the comparative word "like" constantly when they speak of human kingship. Samuel, under divine command, is responding to this comparison and attempts to demonstrate that Israelite theocratic judgeship is peerless when it comes to things moral. The argument from the people, therefore, was that, apart from military leadership, human kingship was a morally attractive institution than theocratic judgeship. This was disputed by Samuel who thought that the opposite was the case.

For realists and relativists alike, that there are moral disagreements is as obvious as the fact that the sun will set in the West on this sunny day. John Mackie (1977:36) looked at these obvious disagreements and wrote:

The argument from relativity has as its premises the well-known variation in the moral codes from one society to another and from one period to another, and the difference in moral beliefs between different groups and classes within a complex community.

This lends weight behind the nihilist metaphysical proposition of there being no moral facts, this is known as an *argument from relativity* and is one instructive argument in the discussion of moral disagreements and this has seen many espouse it, McGrath (2008:90) and Joyce (2010:46) are examples of this. Obviously, this has its shortcomings, such as the fact that

there is no direct link of there being disagreements to there being no moral facts, a point readily accepted by Mackie (1977:36). But we need not get into that here.

If the people and the elders assumed moral realism, it would also follow that they were cognitivists. Cognitivism concerns itself with semantic questions of what, in fact, is happening when, for example, people say that “taking bribes is morally wrong”, as we see in v.3 or that “it is never morally justified for a king to take the best of people’s fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants”, as v.14 supposes a would-be king would do to his Israelite subjects. As we have pointed out in chapter 4 of this dissertation, Samuel and the people seem to think that their utterances are truth-apt.

We notice with DeLapp (2011) that across literature on the matter, cognitivism is concerned with whether moral statements are truth-apt, not whether they are true or false per se, and interrogates what makes these statements true if they are. Thus, for cognitivists, moral convictions make up beliefs that appear to be representative of aspects of reality. For realists, therefore, moral disagreements are a clash of beliefs about things that are factual. Therefore, the verdicts vary about the same truth-evaluable proposition.

Additionally, moral realism regards truth conditions, the contents of statements, and moral convictions to be constant regardless of the cultural or social contexts people making moral utterances find themselves in. Take, for instance, Boyd’s (1988:312) notion that there is a “single objective property which we are all talking about when we use the term ‘good’ in “moral contexts””. However, Harman (1978:99) is one of the few examples of exceptions of cognitivists who are relativists – who hold that truth conditions for moral statements are subject to contexts or culture that one who utters them belongs. Such that that which Samuel uttered about kingship was the truth relative to his vantage point of divine commands. Indeed, the people’s request for a king had gotten the LORD to venture that this was a rejection of him in v.8, this would mean that the people’s context, where human kings were abound allowed them to reject as false the purported truth about human kingship.

If the Israelites assumed moral realism, with realism’s take that moral values are objective and universal, why is it then that there was disagreement between them and Samuel about the moral attractiveness of kingship? It would seem we cannot glean their presupposed answer to this, but if we begin with relativist accounts for such disagreements, we might manage to get

what we need for our inquiry, we will follow Tersman's (2021) sequence, begin with subjectivism and end with fruitless disagreements.

Subjectivism, the most basic relativist version, holds that right or wrong action is dependent on the attitudes of individuals, therefore, the people's petition for a king was a matter of an expressed belief of approval for kingship and Samuel's expressed belief of disapproval for kingship. This means that both their statements can both be true, given this, therefore, their statements are not incompatible. One permeating objection to subjectivism came from Moore (1912:79-129), who held that it makes implausible model cases of moral disagreement as being merely apparent and this demonstrates how facts related to moral disagreement can help moral realists.

Another relativist point is that disagreements, particularly when looking at the work of Harman (1978:6-112) and López de Sa (2015:153-165), may be a matter of an expression of belief that kingship is right or wrong based on the moral standards of the individuals expressing that belief. The people's moral standards can be said to be different to those of Samuel given their disregard of divine commands and Samuel's embracing of divine commands. What relativists still need to account for, however, is the situation where disagreement exists despite the counterparts shared moral standards. In this instance, both the people and Samuel are members of the same polity and have the same God, the LORD, so, by all accounts, it appears as if they share the same moral standards.

The likes of Dreier (1999:558-572), Björnsson & Finlay (2010:7-36) and Marques (2014:121-142) are relativists who seek refuge in the non-cognitivist notion that moral disagreements are not a matter of clash of belief but a matter of clash of conative attitudes. Such that the people's petition for a king is mere desire for monarchy on moral grounds as a form of government and Samuel's rejection of it is a mere attitude of dislike of monarchy on moral grounds. Thus, the clash itself is that of attitudes but it is, nonetheless, a genuinely moral one. The people's and Samuel's moral statements about the proposed form of government can be true, each one of them. If both statements can both be true, therefore, this squeezes out reasons for a relativist to stay on as a cognitivist.

In addition to these, relativists engage in the debate known as fruitless disagreements. Relativists bring to the fore “assessor relativism” wherein the propositions that shape moral belief contents are the same regardless of who the believer is, behind this is Kölbel (2003:53-73) and McFarlane (2014:118-136) amongst others. However, it is the content’s truth-values that vary, owing to the standards of those who assess them. As such, this affords relativists an opening to cling onto their relativist propensities and be able to view the people and Samuel’s disagreement as being about the same proposition approved by the people and rejected by Samuel. This also gives leeway to relativists to view much of the people and Samuel’s statements as true. This means that much of the statements of the moral attractiveness of monarchy are true, just as much as much of Samuel’s statements of the moral abhorrence of human kingship are true. These cannot both be true on account of relative standards. Dreier (1999:558-572) would point out that this relativist account has similarity with realists’ conception of moral disagreement.

If, as it seems apparent, the Israelites who had gone to Ramah to petition for a king can generally be pigeonholed as moral realists (take their apparent view on the ontological status of justice in chapter 4 of this dissertation), then we can make pronouncements on what their political disposition was.

Already, we see that the people do not engage in a coup d’état but speak to Samuel in supplication. This, even though their request for a king emanates from pressing political matters, institutional moral decay, and military threat to the nation. Indeed, the people are steadfast in their stance because of the seriousness of their governance issues. This allows us to talk about their level of self-control. In meta-ethics proper the subject matter of self-control in the face of moral disagreement is known as toleration. In fact, the reason why it counts here as a window into the Israelite political disposition is that the individual meta-ethical theories (realism and relativism) claim to logically lead to toleration in the face of moral disagreement. In a word, if the people (led by the elders) are realists, one can tell if they carried the solitary asset to tolerance or not.

6.3. Ridding of Lucre and Conserving Justice.

That there are moral values that are objective and universal seems to obtain in the minds of the people for they think that the moral golden standard on justice lies in human kingship,

regardless of culture. Therefore, the Israelite nation is lagging on this score, hence they must move to human kingship to be “like all the other nations”. Remember, we saw the moral crisis in the house of Eli and now it is followed by another in Samuel’s sons in the institution of judgeship, as noted by Eslinger (1985:252). What matters to the people is getting rid of lucre and bribery and conserving justice. This, they seem to think, can only happen in a monarchy as with other neighbouring nations. But they are faced with expected opposition, we can say that because the approach to this latest meeting matches the approaches other meetings of this magnitude enjoyed.

Eslinger (1985:253) has noted that in 1 Samuel 7:6 that a public assembly had taken place before – the people had gone to express sorrow and make right by their LORD. The most recent assembly had been about the Ark of the Covenant. This had been a common undertaking by the elders who would act in this manner whenever there was a covenantal matter between their God and Israelite polity.

For meta-ethical relativists, only when we appreciate that the basis of the nature of morality is subjective will we be able to make sense of why we should not pass moral judgement on others for their values or practices. This is because, they hold, there is no culture-transcendent standard with which we can measure our judgement, as earlier defined and defended by Harman (1975:3-22). In this argument, it follows that Samuel, owing to his relativist outlook, was morally content knowing that the Israel polity was living under the moral prescripts of the LORD. Samuel’s moral contentment extended to neighbouring nations who had their own gods (from whom flowed divine commands) and values or practices. He could tolerate their values or practices, but only if such remained within their enclaves. In a word, to each his own. Levy (2002:56) points out that “The perception that relativism promotes, or is the expression of, tolerance of difference is almost certainly the single most important factor in explaining its attraction.” Meta-ethical realists notice the fact of relativists’ fear-induced reticence when it comes to condemning cultural practices foreign to their own, as Shafer-Landau (2004:30-31) remarks.

But we see that what disturbs Samuel’s moral contentment is that foreign practices are being adopted from external enclaves by his own people. Because of this, Samuel morally judges the practices of neighbouring nations and now finds them intolerable. He finds it difficult to tolerate foreign practices of human kingship which he finds morally dubious but only if they

will be adopted by his Israelite polity. This appears to be a sign that relativism does not fully comport with toleration. For realists, as they look from outside into realism, if one cannot point to anything that is morally wrong objectively or universally, then intolerant practices cannot objectively or universally be morally wrong, too, Graham (1996:44-59) notes.

Realists observe that meta-ethical relativism fails by its very argumentation when it claims that there is no objective, universal moral standard, as Shafer-Landau (2004:30-33) notes, it thus follows that only realism can claim fidelity to toleration. For it is realism alone that appreciates the existence of objective, universal moral values, this fact allows intolerance to be morally condemned. Thus, if they be moral realists, the people could impeach their own culture for moral wrongs and could afford to look outside their own culture and aspire to emulate practices external to their own culture on the grounds of these cultures meeting (or not) the morally objective, universal standard, as with human kingship.

Either way, both the people (led by the elders) and Samuel (the LORD, too) seem tolerant of each other. But it is what belies this toleration that is of interest to us. If we have picked up an assumption of moral realism on the part of the people, it would explain the people's supplication when engaging Samuel (as they held toleration as a principle) as well as their appreciation of cultural practices foreign to their own and seeking to emulate them, as doing so is a vote of confidence that such practices meet objective, universal standards. Notice how Samuel does not condemn nor, at least, acknowledge moral wrongs happening within the institution of judgeship as brought to his attention by the people but is able to find fault in neighbouring nations' form of government practices. This makes sense for a divine command adherent who holds that action is morally right because God commands it. This makes it a near impossibility for Samuel to impeach judgeship, which was founded by the LORD, especially where a comparative assessment with other nations is made.

We do not get to hear what the people's take is on the accusatory conjecture about the *ways of the king*. Their resoluteness speaks volumes, however, even though they do not offer a direct rebuttal of the points made and presented as warning. We are left to speculate that either the people think that Samuel is mis-characterizing the rights and practices of a human king – or the people do not think that the *ways of the king*, as presented by Samuel, are morally wrong – or that the *ways of the king* are tolerable, counteracting *lucre*, *accepting of bribes* and *perverting justice*, especially when sweetened with military prowess. The first or third point of speculation can still obtain, but, if it is the second point that obtains, and our observation

of moral realism on the part of the people holds, then it seems rational to accept that the assumption was that the ways of the king were not morally wrong, therefore, toleration of human kingship's rights was not necessary.

Cohen (2004:80) has noted that on the basis that toleration involves evaluating and finding fault with a practice and designating it as intolerable (but tolerating it nonetheless), it follows that Samuel's moral judgement of human kingship is not (in itself) a problem, but it is a question of him being able to tolerate such. The answer appears to be in the affirmative, per the evidence made available, first, by the LORD's command to Samuel in v.9 "Now then, obey their voice; only shall you solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." Secondly, this divine commandment is reiterated again in v.22 "Obey their voice and make them king." For Samuel was an absolute adherent to the LORD's commands he now had to tolerate the intolerable.

However, this toleration is undermined by the fact that it is not only begrudgingly espoused, but it also appears to be espoused only as a strategy to, later, punish the people severely for opting for a foreign practice as a means of ridding lucre, bribery, and conserving justice. We need not look far for evidence in this regard, v.18 "on that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day." If the LORD is omniscient, therefore, knew that the people would ask for the king and later cry out for his help in their despair under an immoral regime, it seems cruel, especially for a benevolent LORD, that he would not utilize his omnipotence to prevent them encountering this tragic epoch of being enslaved by a ruthless king. In chapter 2 of this dissertation, we discussed what the people assumed their LORD's properties were, particularly the ones we have just mentioned here. Given this dubious tolerance, one can imagine how the people's chosen king will fare, he is likely to be morally sensitive (maybe owing to moral realism espoused by those who chose him) and reject, even if partly, a divine commandment that requires him to mortally wipe out a whole tribe of people and its livestock; he is likely to aggrrieve the LORD for not following this divine command (1 Samuel 15) and be condemned to death for this (1 Chronicles 9) and his bloodline is likely to reach its terminal point. This lack of toleration of a king chosen by the people does not even sympathize with the fact that the precipitating factor, no matter how a cynic may look at it, was the ridding of lucre, bribery, and conserving justice.

6.4. Nationalism.

“...Now make us a king to judge us like all nations” charge the people, ostensibly through the elders, in verse 5.

The foregoing statement still jolts the reader as much as it apparently did Samuel. Collins (2004:205) writes that judgeship had been ad hoc government instituted by the God of Israel in times of crisis, the people (led by the elders) make judgeship moribund in the initial verses of 1 Samuel 8 and it dies in this passages’ last verses. Gordon (1984:40) writes that the emergence of Israelite monarchy marks the line from which we can begin to “truly speak of Israel as a nation.”

Miščević (2023:5) notes that “A nation is a politicized and mobilized ethnic group rather than a state.” A distinction must be made as well between the ethnic-cultural and the civic. The latter concerns a town or city, mainly its administration. The former concerns membership on the grounds of accidental birth and bloodline and is involuntary as it is with the acquisition of citizenship of another nation, as Harrison & Boyd (2003:157) highlight for us.

But let us pick apart the phrase “like all nations” or “such as other nations have” for it is apparent that what sparks contention is the presupposed philosophy this statement is predicated on; this allows us to speak of nationalism. Miščević (2023:2) points us to nationalism as denoting:

1. the attitude that members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation and
2. the actions that the members of a nation take in seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty.

Here we will concern ourselves with (1) wherein we can talk about common origins, cultural ties, ethnicity, and the involuntary membership, as is applicable in 1 Samuel 8. But it is the moral questions regarding nationalism that is the crux of the matter here. We rely on Miščević (2023) again by adapting his writing this way:

- (a) Is it that Samuel assumed that Israelites had a right to have a unique enclave revolving around an ethno-nation culture – or was the assumption that it was a moral obligation or, in addition to the moral obligation, a political, and legal obligation for this to be the case?
- (b) Would the people and Samuel have assumed that Israelite ethnic–nationalism, including that of their neighbours in their unique forms, was morally permissible or justified?

The proposed migration to or assimilation into the foreign practice of human kingship perturbed Samuel. We must also highlight that while presented in theocratic terms, it is the ethnic-cultural type of nationalism that seems to be of concern to Samuel. Samuel (the LORD by extension) seems offended mainly by the “like other nations” part of the pronouncement of the elders leading the people. It is why the LORD goes back in time to say that the people had forsaken him to serve other gods.

What seems to be at the centre of Samuel’s objection to the people’s request for a king is Israelite nationalism. If Israel loses the LORD as its king, divine kingship easily defended by Gideon, it loses its uniqueness, in fact, the very covenant struck in Mount Sinai is severely undercut. Although Eslinger (1985:255) commented that the people’s (led by the elders) insistence on human kingship, despite this being consequential, points to the legitimacy of the request in the Sinai covenant, but Birch (1991:212) noted that the king “was born out of their sin”.

Joshua Mark (2016) describes the theft of the statue of Marduk from the Babylonians by the Assyrian King Tukulti-Ninurta and how the absence of this statue halted religious ritual performances and frustrated political function. Israel would not have been an exception in this regard. Commenting on the capture of the Ark of the Covenant, Collins (2004:221) notes that:

The capture of a people’s god or gods was not unusual in the ancient Near East. When one people captured the city of another, they typically carried off the gods, represented by statues, as booty. Even the god of Babylon, Marduk, was carried off in this manner. This was meant to show the superior power of the victor’s gods.

This capture, an account in 1 Samuel 4, by the Philistines presents us with one example of the thick divisions of ancient Near Eastern nations. For Samuel, “a king like all other nations” collapses the walls that make the theocratic enclaves possible. The divine commands of the LORD were directed to Israelite members of an ethno-nation and in a particular enclave. Hence there are “other gods” that belong to other ethnic-national enclaves. Adopting a form of government of other neighbouring ethnic-nations, with a king who has rights flowing from his throne, with its gods, would undermine the LORD’s commands. Thus, it becomes easy and justifiable for the God of Israel to afflict with plagues other human beings in the territory of other nations, as is described in 1 Samuel 5:6 and highlighted by Leithart (2003:56-57). The two-time prostrate posture of Dagon in front of the Ark of the Covenant points us to an ethereal battle between the LORD and the Philistine God.

As such, to the moral question of whether it was assumed that it was a moral obligation and, in addition to moral obligation, was a political and legal obligation for Israelites to have a unique ethno-nation culture, the answer is that, for Samuel, yes, this is the case. It is why v.9, a divine command from the LORD says that “let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights” and vv.11 – 17 are the details of the rights of the king enumerated to the people by Samuel, this shows that political promotion and legal regulations follow immediately after securing an ethno-cultural enclave. The second question concerned the assumption of the moral permissibility of other nations to have ethnic enclaves. The answer is also yes for Samuel. These we can draw from the relativism we pick up from his response to the people’s request for a king. The people likely assumed the same, but always with a view that moral values objectivity apply universally across the ethno-cultural enclaves.

6.5. Synthesis.

This chapter’s introduction highlighted how far we have come and recapped that the interest has been on the moral aspect in the justification of a move from judgeship to monarchy. We did note the military angle. What this chapter promised to specifically focus on, therefore, are the political implications of what we uncovered on the preceding chapters. This is after we noticed the tolerance that seems to permeate the moral disagreement that exists at this inception point of Israelite kingship.

Firstly, we wanted to interrogate what would inform the political disposition of the people who had gone to Ramah to request for a king. What became clear was that this disposition is informed by what we covered in chapter 4, the people and Samuel's presupposed sources of morality, moral realism, and moral relativism. Moral disagreements have been accounted for by meta-ethical realists and relativists alike. That these disagreements exist have been seized on by relativist to argue that this is proof that there are no moral facts in support of the non-cognitivist view. We also pointed out that moral realists are also cognitivists, not only do they hold that moral values are real, objective, and universal, existing despite what we think or if there is evidence about them but are also cognitivists who hold that there are moral truths. We highlighted two exceptions on the latter.

We then tried to figure out what the realists and relativists attribute moral disagreements to. That is because for one to be able come up with solutions, it is important to first diagnose where the problem lies. Various accounts were covered from the perspective of relativists and the response to these accounts from realists was offered. Given these accounts, one can almost tell what the solution would be regarding these accounts. As moral disagreements are guaranteed their eternal existence, it follows that self-control must be exercised when confronted with someone with an opposing belief. This is a good predictor of Israelite political disposition.

In the next part of this chapter what came out was toleration as an ethical value to be pursued given the reality of moral disagreements. Relativism has been shown as being mainly, if not only, morally attractive because of its anxiety about condemning foreign cultural practices or values. As such, it is seen as promoting or expressing tolerance. When this was applied to the case of the people and Samuel, we noticed that Samuel was content with cultural practices within his own ethno-national enclave and tolerated other nations' practices or values. It is only when the people impeach this ethno-cultural enclave of their own and request to adopt foreign form of government as a template to be followed in their own nation that Samuel condemns foreign practices, but only if they intrude into his enclave. We highlighted that what made it possible for the people to impeach their own ethno-cultural practices was that their moral realism assumptions in that they could look at truth conditions and moral values' standards that were objective and universal, transcending all cultures and subjective beliefs and judge whether they were at par with, or it was the neighbouring cultures that met these

truth conditions and moral standards. As to why this is the case, we noted that realists are of the view that only realism can claim fidelity to tolerance because it claims that moral values are objective, therefore, tolerant behaviour is objective or universally right. The fact that relativism rejects moral objectivity, it follows that intolerant behaviour cannot be objectively or universally wrong. Samuel seems tolerant but this tolerance is undermined by the promise of revenge on the part of the LORD in v.18 that: “on that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

We noted that the “like all other nations have” comments in the request for a king by the people threatened to collapse the wall of separation between neighbouring foreign nations and Israel, it threatened its unique identity. Given that Samuel sought to preserve his theocratically anchored ethno-nation in every facet, we saw the need to cover the moral questions that concern nationalism. Both the moral questions about nationalism posed above, based on this, would be in the affirmative. (a) the assumption of moral obligation in having a unique ethno-cultural enclave and, in addition to moral obligation, a political, and legal obligation to maintain this nation, seems to obtain. This means that when the moral obligation of securing an ethno-nation, political promotion and legal enforcement set in. The relativist posture of Samuel makes (b), that of maintaining an Israelite ethno-cultural nationalism and the neighbouring ethno-cultural nations maintaining the same was morally permissible. The people’s request for a human king were going against this grain, even if it was merely blurring the ethnic–nationalism division lines with their moral realism.

Chapter 7.

Findings and Overall Synthesis.

7.1 Summary of Findings.

As something that will assist the reader of this dissertation who has come this far and going to its final part, let us report here that our findings on these *prima-facie* ethical points of study tell us that the discernible moral judgements in 1 Samuel 8 tell us that the people’s

assumptions were that they were free agents (had free-will), that the LORD's omniscience, where it concerns the world, was constituted by knowledge given to him by the world, as such he had a mediator, Samuel, he knew humanity directly and this made it possible to develop a personal relationship with him, he was not assumed to be impassible, he was assumed to be temporal, thus making it possible for them to approach him in Ramah through his mediator. Additionally, the people assumed that justice was objective, universal and that the LORD commanded that justice be followed because it was morally right, thus morality did not depend on the LORD – even if this wasn't so, given that they were the LORD's creatures he did infuse them with a distaste for immorality so as to aid proper functioning of humanity, making it automatic for moral judgements to come with motivation to act accordingly, and also made it that there be intrinsic reasons in moral judgements. The people also assumed that they had reached an epistemic foundation, the ultimate premises that gave epistemic status to their request for a king, but their epistemic standards were low given their context. Even when considering the objective, universally applicable standards about the moral attractiveness of their own form of government in relation to that of neighbouring nations, they settled on the latter, while they may have had religious epistemic knowledge as can be observed in their recognition of Samuel as a man who had prophetic contact with the LORD, their assumptions of his passibility, temporality, worldly informed omniscience, made them epistemically justified in their request. The people's moral realism allowed them to be tolerant and enabled them to impeach the moral wrongs of their own ethno-cultural enclave and even accept an adoption of a foreign practice from a neighbouring ethno-cultural enclave.

7.2. Synthesis.

We have already coursed through the contours of our dissertation; hence we are here for our overall conclusion. We also want to crystalize what we found in our endeavour to answer the question: “What do the *prima-facie* meta-ethical points of study tell us about the discernible moral judgement(s) underlying the justification for a transition from judgeship to monarchy?” This question was sparked by Eslinger's (1985:254) comment that the rationale for the jettisoning of judgeship was deficient and in which he says that this was due to the narrator's contempt for the request. But in looking at other scholars on the same subject matter, there is a recognition that the people premised their request for a king, therefore, a move from judgeship, on moral grounds (Birch 1976:22 & 2013:74; Miscall 1976:43; Eslinger 1985:252). This was not the only thing that the people were concerned about, military threat was also part of the basis (Birch 2013:74). However, it is the moral aspect that appears first in

the people's rationale for their request, it also got the most coverage in the narrative. It is also met with moral opposition from Samuel who seems to think that kingship is not morally attractive, and in 1 Samuel 8:11–17 elucidates this moral repugnance, counter to what the people think.

What baffles, though, is that biblical scholars have a consensus that the people had committed a sinful act by requesting for a king (Gunn 1989:73; Birch 1912:212), this is despite acknowledging that their rationale was morality based, coupled with military threat concerns. What came to matter, therefore, for this dissertation, was that this morality aspect needed some exposition. We pointed out that the people seem to have thought that they had made their case and provided sufficient justification for the jettisoning of judgeship for monarchy or, at least, the narrator thought that he had captured the gist of what the justification was. Given that there is a moral aspect to the people's rationale, we noticed that there are *prima-facie* meta-ethical points of study in the discernible moral judgements provided for the transition from judgeship to monarchy.

Taking from this, we thought that we had found the probing tool to our question: philosophical criticism is that tool. We, of course, had adopted philosophical criticism as a method to tackle the question at hand, there appeared to be a need to explain and defend the proposed method, hence we dedicated chapter two to this. The reason for this explanation and defence was that there are already established methods to tackle the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy. We ran through these as a means of survey. But when we got to philosophical analysis, we reviewed the doctoral thesis, Gericke (2003)' PhD, that had first proposed this methodology. We noted how this PhD managed to bring to the fore other nascent philosophical attendance to philosophical concerns that arise from the HB, and how these have long been bracketed or suppressed because they had been seen as problematic or absurd. This suppression was shown to be due to the academic rather than personal proclivities of biblical scholars.

Philosophical criticism proved to have the potential to not just get over the hurdle of these concerns but be a legitimate complementary exegetical method to other existing methods already on offer. Where philosophical criticism proved apt was on the 1 Samuel 8 text, for, unlike philosophy of Old Testament Religion which operates at a macro-level, being concerned about the OT oeuvre, philosophical criticism operates at a micro-level and

concerns itself with particular texts of the larger whole. From Gericke's (2012:204-214) subsequent work that sought to elucidate his philosophical criticism we noted the following:

- (1) The internal operations of philosophical criticism are interested in the worlds under the worlds in the text. This involved walking backwards to the presuppositions that the people in the text seem to have held in their cognitive mechanisms, the intention being to extract what was assumed in the text.
- (2) Then it gets into the worlds inside the worlds in the text, breaking down into smaller pieces the concepts therein as a means of clarifying these concepts.
- (3) This is where the focus is on the worlds above the worlds, where we look at the implications of the statements in the texts and placing them in their logical form. The non-philosophical terms of the HB are translated into philosophical terms.

When we got to our text, we realised that the people had a problem with the government. So, we investigated what would allow them to think that the government in place was a problem, especially when we come to know that it was God who had established this government. It is why we thought that providence was a necessary starting point. Perhaps if we could get to the cognitive space of the people and Samuel, we would get to understand what they assumed about divine providence, the notion that God controls each detail of what happens in the world to sustain and guide it (Flint 2010:329–330). But we found that providence had implications for salient properties of God.

Among these God properties, omniscience is one, which would mean that whatever the people do, including requesting for a king was known by the LORD before-hand. However, we found that not only does the text not presuppose the LORD's foreknowledge, so do the people. In Deuteronomy 16:18-20. the Israelite people were commanded to appoint judges and officials but did not get commandments about what the just process of appointing judges and officials would be. They were commanded to judge fairly, which also meant that there was a possibility of judging unfairly or showing partiality. The LORD, therefore, left out some of the details about the establishment of judgeship. If the LORD was assumed to be all knowing, then that the people would employ an unjust process to appoint judges and officials and pervert justice and be partial were known before-hand by the LORD as actions that would occur in future, which would be hard-determinism. The possibility of acting otherwise from the divine commands suggests presupposition of free-will – more-so when we consider the fact that, in the same Deuteronomy 16:18-20 text that contains the divine commands on

appointing judges and officials, following justice is predicated on the consequences that accrue from that act of following justice and justice alone. This suggests presupposition of free-agents and suffering of consequences for not following divine commands. Not only does this presupposition of free-will show itself in the people's actions later in the people's steadfastness in their request for a king in 1 Samuel 8:19-20 after being solemnly warned of dire consequences in 1 Samuel 8:11-18, but it also shows itself in the words of the LORD in 1 Samuel 8:8 that the people are "rejecting me as they have done since the exodus".

However, Creel (2010:324) shows us that there are critiques of God's omniscience, for it follows that the LORD's knowledge of the world is not caused by the world. But this means that the LORD is ignorant of the world. If God knows the world directly, there would be no being or thing that could mediate on his behalf his knowledge of the world. We found that the people's assumption is that the LORD's knowledge is caused by the world for they go to consult him through Samuel to inform him of their grievances about judgeship and convictions about the moral attractiveness of kingship. The people also assume that the LORD needs a mediator for his knowledge of the world by recognizing Samuel as the mediator of the LORD. Maybe the LORD knows the world through his eternal will, but if this is granted then the God only knows his eternal will and not what his eternal will created. This will also mean that he only knows his eternal will but not human existence, therefore, humanity; thus, making him an inadequate religious figure with whom humanity could have a personal relationship. We also established that, by virtue of the people going to inform the LORD through Samuel, the assumption was that the LORD knows what his eternal will created, and he was someone with whom they could have a personal relationship. This has implications for the LORD's impassibility, it evinces his passibility.

We then got to compatibilism which tries to reconcile hard-determinism and free-will. What compatibilism seeks to demonstrate is that divine foreknowledge does not rob humanity of its freedom (Flint 2010:331). It does this by arguing that to say that human action is pre-determined is true but for human action to be free it needs only to be under one's immediate control. But it is on God's property of eternity that compatibilists give a consequential response. The compatibilist argument goes thus, because God is eternal, it therefore should follow that his foreknowledge should not be taken literary as knowledge of what happens in time. So, holding that the LORD already knew that the people would travel to Ramah and request for a king does not make sense since this happened in time and the LORD exists out of time. We got into the various theories on the question of time and God, with Leftow

(2010:291); Stump & Kretzmann (1981:431); Fitzgerald (1985:260-269), etc., headlining this topic, and we reached the conclusion that the people assumed that the LORD was temporal for they knew that he could be engaged in and respond to petitionary prayer, participate in mutual concessions that characterises human life, the LORD's remembrance of the past which denotes that his knowledge changes. The people, therefore, counter to the prescripts of compatibilism that divine foreknowledge should not be taken literally because God exists out of time, took the LORD's foreknowledge literally. This makes firm the position of the ancient Israelites on free-will in 1 Samuel 8.

With the people's assumptions on the most salient attributes of the LORD having been established, we followed this by trying to establish what 1 Samuel 8 assumed was the valid source of morality. We had already been drawn to moral realism and 1 Samuel 8 by Deuteronomy 16:18-20's treatment of the concepts "fairly" and "justice" which seems to treat these concepts as objective universals. We first highlighted that there is a legitimate reason why this Deuteronomy text is relevant to our text of interest. When we got to the moral judgements in 1 Samuel 8, we had to establish if this obtains. We pointed out that there are plausible points of moral realism assumptions in the text. We tried to show that there is a plausible case of cognitivism, which holds that moral statements are truth-apt, being assumed. In this case, where Samuel holds the belief that kingship is morally unattractive, the people could claim, in response, that Samuel is mistaken, that he had gotten moral facts wrong. The case for moral realism would be reinforced by descriptive language which shares the same logic rules that govern moral language. This would also mean that the people and Samuel could well have thought that they were describing the world or intended to describe the world accurately.

The people's request for a king is coupled with the people's proclivity to go against the LORD's commands, as Gordon (1986:110) highlighted that "the people of Israel are chafing at God's exercise of his sovereign rights over them just as they have been incline to do since the time of the Exodus". However, this proclivity now earns a special status for it turns into an act based on the concept of justice, which we regard as suggesting that the people assumed moral realism. The people, therefore, based their moral conviction on the assumption that it does not matter what one thinks or which ethno-culture one belongs to, justice is objective and universal, a definition we see with More (1903:1-36), Ross (1930:29-20) and Hudson (1967:3-90). We see that Samuel is the one who is a staunch adherent of divine commands.

When we got to the exposition of the divine commands as they relate to the justification for the transition to monarchy, we noted that there are clear instances of divine commands in the text that contain this account of the request for a king. We noted that divine command theory is generally regarded as a special case of moral realism. But we pointed out that divine command theory has an enduring challenge, the *Euthyphro Dilemma* which asks: Is an action right because it is commanded by the gods, or do the gods command an action because it is right? We then adapted this to crystalize its relation to our purposes here: Was following justice morally right action because it was commanded by the LORD or did the LORD command that justice be followed because that morally right action? As with the Deuteronomy text, the people seem to have held an affirmative position on the latter question. We stated that on a conceptual level, the people, by requesting for a human king they were rejecting divine command theory. But it is Samuel who embraces divine command theory. Based on this, we concluded that there are two strands of the sources of morality in 1 Samuel 8: moral realism and divine commands.

As to whether both the people and Samuel were moral realists, we took seriously what Harman (1975:3-22) had to say about moral values being human constructions for human purposes. Such constructions are sometimes incommensurable. Murphy (2012) noted that divine command theory can be regarded as moral relativism for it make moral values a matter of arbitrary constructions of divine commands. We also highlighted Murray & Rea's (2008:246-247) concerns that divine commands make the genuineness of morality's objectivity questionable.

- (d) Divine command theory runs contrary to the people's apparent assumption that moral values are real and not constructions of human belief or culture, making the elders moral realists.
- (e) Samuel assumes divine commands to be the valid source of morality in 1 Samuel 8, therefore,
- (f) this shows that 1 Samuel 8 also assumes that moral values are constructions of divine commands, which is a moral relativism position.

We noted that the contrast in moral realism and moral relativism aids us in the explication of the varying theses regarding the preferred form of government. We noted that in a context where the plurality of gods was a reality, the authority of particular gods was recognised only in certain ethno-cultural nationalist jurisdictions. The LORD's acknowledgement of and

abandonment for other “other gods” evinces the LORD’s duty to an ethno-cultural nation and this allows moral relativism to claim divine commands to be relative to the LORD’s ethno-cultural enclave. We also highlighted the fact that the people’s fight for the preservation of justice, even against the LORD, evinces the people’s assumption that the ontology of justice is independent of the LORD. This is so even though there is a revelation in Deuteronomy 16:18-20 that the people are clearly referencing, it does not follow that the people assumed that justice owes its ontological status to the LORD whom they seem to have assumed was commanding moral actions because they were just.

The frustration with this moral realism which runs counter to divine commands is palpable in the text. The people’s request is regarded as bad or sinful, as we have already highlighted above, it also evinces the proclivities of the people to reject the LORD. But where divine command theory is objected to on various grounds, one being that if morality depends on the whims of God, then this leaves the basis of morality shaky and this allows morally objectionable actions to be compulsory. However, this shaky grounding was acceptable to Samuel. This shaky foundation is evinced by the LORD’s amenability and Samuel’s apparent preparedness to go wherever these leads.

On the question of whether the LORD could command evil for its own sake, one response goes back to the other leg of the *Euthyphro Dilemma* and says that God’s commands are commanded because they are morally right action. This defence solidifies the basis of morality, but the problem with this is that ethics now are no longer hinged on God, this then makes God someone who merely discerns right from wrong. Another response is that one must just bite the bullet and accept God’s commands as raw as they come. As such, possession of lucre, accepting bribes is morally obligatory if the LORD has commanded it and Samuel is beseeching the people to endorse what they think is an objectively morally wrong regime on the grounds that the LORD commands it. The people held a different notion, obviously.

The other defence of divine command theory runs thus: “the LORD would not, and indeed, could not command that an institution that perverts justice”, but that the LORD was behind the judgeship that was morally compromised means that the LORD is not omnipotent. The most compelling response to this came from Aquinas (1274:315-317) that that God is omnipotent does not mean that he can do impossible things. Thus, to act in a morally wrong

manner is not perfect action, it is repugnant to omnipotence. This means that the LORD's founding of a perfect form of judgeship was impossible.

The LORD's attribute of omnibenevolence is taken as one that is brought in as a point of objection to divine command theory. Firstly, because it means that "God can do whatever he wills". But if what is morally right is what is commanded by God, then that God acts per what is obligated is equivalent to God doing what God commands to be done. This is incoherent. There is also a problem with a God who has moral virtues for moral virtue is possessed to enable humans to do actions in response to God's commands. This, too, is incoherent. But that the LORD was understood in anthropomorphic terms gives an opening to him virtues. But some have leaped to divine command theory's defence contending that the moral virtues God possesses differ in kind to the morally obligatory. Good dispositions are infused in God's nature.

The people seem to have thought that they were free agents and could make independent decisions about the best moral principles that govern their own life interests. While divine command theory seems not to comport with moral responsibility, but if one considers that one can still choose if she will subject herself to God's commands, possess the correct understanding and apply such, and be self-critical in one's standing with God's commands. We found this to speak to 1 Samuel 8:8, where divine commands are shown to have consequences for straying from them, which illustrates that humanity was assumed to have choices: "Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."

In the pluralistic objection to divine commands, which seems to be skeptical of knowing which divine command to follow if there is a variety of Gods. But we noted that Launderville (2021:127) wrote that "Samul called by name a particular deity whom he acknowledged as having authority over Israel. The name of a deity was essential for navigating a polytheistic world". What gives rise to the disagreement between the people and Samuel is a plurality of understandings, even after identifying the God whose divine command they were to follow, of what God commands his creatures to do. The religious experience of Samuel as mediator would've given him a good sense of what he was being divinely commanded to do, a proximity the people did not have.

We considered the possibility that the people assumed that they were justified in their moral stance regardless of the LORD's commands, that this was not a matter of merely following

the LORD's commands but reliance on their human nature that has its origins in the creator. This nature would have been sewn into one with their bodies, and this nature has two-character traits: one that fulfils the people and the other that does not fulfil. This human nature aids in the proper functioning of humanity, and in this role helps delineate moral right and wrong action. Given this, possessing lucre, and accepting bribes does not aid proper functioning of humanity. The LORD could have allowed that possessing lucre, and accepting bribes be of aid in the proper functioning of humanity, but he made no such choice. As such, the people, due to their nature, find possessing lucre, and accepting bribes to be morally repugnant.

We thought that it makes sense to note that human nature also consists of psyche. We tried to dissect the implications of this on the moral judgements underpinning the justification for the Israelite transition from judgeship to monarchy. We noted that the people, after making moral judgements regarding possession of lucre, accepting of bribes, and perverting justice, seem to have gotten the motivation to act against possessing lucre, accepting bribes, and perverting justice. We pointed out that one is motivated to act after making moral judgement presupposes moral facts. Also, making moral judgements seems to also self-activate reasons justifying an ensuing act. This means that the rationale provided by the people in their justification for transition from judgeship to monarchy were self-activated by the moral judgements made in this regard. As such, the people had to act accordingly. The people may still fall short of pointing to reasons for their moral judgements such that the act of sufficiently justifying moral rationale must have independent existence and be internal to the psychological make-up of an agent.

We came to probe the possible underlying epistemological factors that could help us understand the moral judgements in the petition for a transition from judgeship to monarchy. We pointed out how foundationalism, which is of the view that, in the structure of knowledge, as a means of justifying a claim, the process of reasoning must regressively move to and terminate at ultimate premises which serve as the foundation from which other claims or beliefs draw their epistemic status. We highlighted that the other schools of thought in structuring knowledge are infinite regressive reasoning and coherent circular reasoning, both of which are counterparts to foundationalism and are deemed undesirable by foundationalism. We did say that our text seems to have foundationalism as the most applicable. On a cursory look, we picked up that "you are old" in verse 5 seems to assume that Samuel's old age is

self-evident and is thus foundational. Still, in verse 5, “And your sons do not walk in your ways” also seems to also have the same foundational status for it is self-evident, observable action. But it is “Now appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations.” That owes its epistemic status to the preceding lines of the compound sentence.

We highlighted that 1 Samuel 8 is replete with justificatory statements. We see the LORD saying: “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.” This statement seems to have nothing relevant to justification of belief. But the LORD seems to understand that he has made a serious claim that the people have rejected him, of which the people do not say this. The LORD adds that: “According to all the deeds that they have done from the day I brought them out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing so to you.” We noted that the LORD’s adding of this last statement he shows the indubitable evidence about his claim that the people are rejecting him and his belief that the people must be listened to.

We want to drive home what we wrote on chapter 5 of this very dissertation that:

It makes sense to say that, as far as morality is concerned, we must only look at 3c, 3d and 3e. 3b seems to be assumed to be non-inferential. We include 3b, which stands for the moral uprightness of Samuel. Having lucre and accepting bribes is to pervert justice, which is to say, wronging someone – in this case, the body politic. Thus, perverting justice encapsulates all these moral wrongdoings, making, therefore, 3a and 3b the ultimate premises, for they are observable, are the bedrock for the main claim, that Samuel’s sons have perverted justice. Being too old is not a moral concern but, as a practical matter, frailty due to old age means an inability to stem the tide of moral erosion in the Israelite body politic. Thus, the justified moral belief undergirds the knowledge claim for a need for a king:

3f. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Based on Samuel’s sons’ immorality, the elders make an inference that a king is needed to preserve justice.

When we dealt with contextualism we noted that it is possible that knowledge was assumed to be contextual, that if one knows or doesn’t is dependent on a given context, making knowing incommensurable. This means that epistemological standards are dependent on

different contexts. A person may meet or fail to reach the set standard of another context where the bar may be low or high compared to his/her own.

When the people petition for a king, they say: “Now appoint us a king to rule over us like all nations”, with this the people seem to base their charge on normative contextualism. When the people say this, they are observing practices of their ancient Near Eastern community, thus here, community is not just “Israel” but the larger area surrounding it. In this community within which epistemic standards are similar or the same but identically high or low.

We noted that Samuel’s rejection of monarchy as a form of government is likely predicated on the view that, because of their transcendental king, Israel was on high moral ground in relation to other nations. Such that foreign practices were acceptable so long as they remained in their contexts. This conclusion makes sense when we consider Samuel’s relativism.

The people having made their case, do not feel the need to add more points to the original rationale they had offered earlier. What seems to have anchored this was their assumption that perceptual experiences provided knowledge, this as they observed other nations that were led by human kings, as evidence that they, too, needed a king. They may have assumed that they did not wish to get into sceptical hypothetical possibilities of morally bereft practices of a would-be king. We drew the conclusion that the people assume that knowledge or justified true belief is not only immediately informed by their “internal” (psychological) features of circumstances in the form of type of evidence. For the people, knowledge is also shaped by their physical environment.

Concerning religious epistemology, we noted that the people’s recognition of Samuel the LORD’s mediator presupposes the existence of God. This even though there is not an explicit moment where the people ask him to inform the LORD of their grievances and conviction, nor does Samuel say that he will get into petitionary prayer to the LORD. This means that there is an assumption of the rationality in the belief in God.

What really gets us going in this regard is the LORD’s reference of the Exodus event, where the people had forsaken him for other gods. We decided to go into this event or events. There we first see mysticism with Moses, where the LORD shows himself through in a burning bush and speaks to Moses. This is religious epistemology of religious experience. But Moses is also concerned about the people not believing that the LORD appeared to him, and the LORD readily provided him means of providing empirical evidence to satiate their would-be disbelief.

The response from reformed epistemologists, especially Plantinga (1983:53) as the leading figure defending rationality in the belief in God. He rails against classical foundationalism which not only fails to satisfy its own standard of epistemological grounding that it is self-evident and is incorrigible, but this grounding is not necessary for one to believe in God. But this does not mean that belief in does not have grounding. Religious experience is one such grounding, guilt, and recognition of divinity in natural aesthetics. Such religious experience is self-authenticating; hence it does not need propositional arguments, but an overwhelming encounter with the divine.

We conclude that, effectively, for 1 Samuel 8, two things are at play. (1) In the dialogue between the elders and Samuel, it is Samuel who seriously cares about straying from the Lord's command. That he can talk to and receive commands from the LORD is a religious experience that makes belief in the LORD and his commands rational. (2) The people seem to assume that belief in the LORD is rational in that they recognize his authority through Samuel. However, what seems to permeate all of 1 Samuel 8 is the assumed passibility of the LORD and this is something we covered in chapter 3 of this dissertation, where we cited Creel (2010:324). Not only does Samuel call upon the LORD to act, but the LORD proves amenable when he gives the people their last chance via a warning to change their stance on kingship. The assumption may be that the LORD, if he be a perfect being, must also be a person to be able to enter a personal relationship with his people, and engage in mutual concessions that human life consists of in. The LORD must also be perfect in love so he can be affected by the joys and sorrows of the people, i.e., the immoral acts of its leaders as a point of sorrow for the people, and hear what they have to say, i.e., hear what their proposed solution to their sorrow is. The LORD's knowledge of the world must be caused by the world, otherwise he will be ignorant of the world, including what immoral actions are taking place in the world and what other morally attractive institutions are there.

We tried to establish what the political implications of moral realism on the part of the people and moral relativism on the part of Samuel. Firstly, we wanted to figure out the political disposition of the people and Samuel. We had asked the question in this dissertation's introduction: "What the disagreement was about in Ramah about?" In this chapter we highlighted the fact that Samuel did not explicitly dispute that judgeship was in a cesspool of moral decay, but it was the fact that human kingship, a form of government foreign to the Israelite ethno-cultural enclave, was seen as a moral recourse.

We tried to account for disagreements exist. That moral disagreements are an obvious reality is usually employed to argue that there are no moral facts. We demonstrated what moral relativists understand to be the cause of moral disagreements. We came to conclude that whether the people or Samuel are realists or relativists can help us make out their political dispositions. The people's choice of means to getting a king, where they could have gone the putsch route, but they went and request for a king. Taking the petition route is also curious given that the people were faced with pressing political matters, institutional moral decay, and existential military threat to the nation. Thus, they show toleration.

The question of which one of the meta-ethical theories between moral realism and relativism is a serious one, with both claiming that one the two logically leads to toleration in the face of moral disagreement. As we went down this path, we came to realise that moral relativism's attractiveness comes from its holding back from passing moral judgement on foreign cultures on the grounds that there is no objective standard that is universally applicable to all cultures. But the opposite is true for moral realists. Realists argue that if there is no objective standard that is universally applicable across cultures, as moral relativists hold, then moral relativism is a promoter of intolerance since there is no objective standard that is universally applicable across cultures then intolerance cannot be objectively and universally morally wrong. Thus, if they be realists, it makes sense for the people to judge that their own judgeship as a form of government is morally unattractive or less so compared to human kingship found in other nations. We did detect that Samuel and the LORD show tolerance towards the people and the elders, especially when the LORD grants the king. But there is a serious level of discomfort when they must consider other gods or cultures, such that tolerance is only begrudgingly espoused. This has implications for Israelite nationalism and the moral obligation to have an ethno-cultural nation, promote it politically and codified into laws and the moral permissibility of other nations to have ethnic nationalism.

The people's request for a king was not ethically deficient. If anything, they had compelling reasons to feel justified in their request for a human king and think that they win the Lord over to their cause.

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