Refusing Change Invites Failure: The Most Stubborn Figures in Biblical History and Their Implications for Contemporary Christian Thought and Practice

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Abstract

The scholarly scrutinisation of stubbornness in biblical narratives offers profound perspectives into the intricacies of human nature and its intersection with religious faith and spirituality. This article explores the subject of stubbornness as (re)produced by the biblical experiences of Pharaoh and King Nebuchadnezzar. Psychoanalytical and cognitive dissonance theories are applied to these two biblical figures. As a result, three notable findings emerge. First, a spectrum of stubbornness within biblical narratives is uncovered, ranging from defiant resistance to unwavering commitment. Second, the enduring relevance of these biblical narratives for contemporary Christianity is underscored, buttressing the ongoing tensions between conviction and openness, and their implications for ethical decision-making, social justice advocacy, and interfaith dialogues. Third, this article suggests that the scrutinisation of stubbornness in biblical history could inform contemporary understandings of subtle church dynamics, particularly regarding leadership, conflict resolution, and community cohesion. In addition, this article underlines the significance of humility, discernment, and sensitivity in addressing challenges of spiritual obstinacy within Christian communities, promoting a balanced approach to contextualisation and application of biblical dogmas.

Keywords: biblical narratives; contemporary Christianity; divinity; leadership; stubbornness

Contextual Background and Introduction

The biblical saga of Adam and Eve in Genesis serves as a foundational voice, illuminating the consequences of human insubordination and the enduring allure of inducement. Despite receiving clear ground rules from their Creator, Adam and Eve succumb to the serpent's deceit, partaking of the forbidden fruit and thus introducing sin into the world.[1] Their act of rebellion exemplifies a stubbornness of will as they prioritise their desires over the supernatural decree, ultimately facing expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This biblical episode reverberates across the generations, serving as a cautionary reminder of the consequences of yielding to stubborn impulses. Throughout the Bible, one finds figures whose stubborn tenacity serves as a driving force behind their actions, propelling them to stand firm in their convictions despite irresistible odds. These individuals find themselves at odds with the prevailing ethical codes of their time, refusing to conform to societal expectations and supernatural orders, or sabotaging their principles in the face of adversity. At times, this stubbornness manifests as a virtue, empowering certain individuals to defy injustice, uphold morality, and champion the cause of the marginalised. For example, the prophet Elijah demonstrates a stubbornness that manifests as a virtue. This is based on the fact that when confronted with the corruption and idolatry rampant in the kingdom of Israel under King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, Elijah daringly speaks truth to power (1 Kings 18:16–40). He challenges the prophets of the false god Baal to a dramatic showdown on Mount Carmel, where he boldly proclaims the supremacy of the Lord. Despite facing opposition and threats to his life, Elijah remains resolute in his commitment to God and the cause of morality. His unwavering determination to confront injustice and uphold the true faith inspires admiration among the Israelites who have been led astray. Through his brave actions, Elijah becomes a champion for the subjugated, restoring optimism and faith in the midst of darkness. On the grounds of this biblical episode, it stands to reason to contend that Elijah's stubbornness in the face of adversity serves as a beacon of courage for those who dare to challenge the status quo and stand up for what is right. His example reminds one that sometimes it takes a steadfast spirit to defy injustice and champion the cause of the marginalised, even in the most daunting circumstances (Allison 1984; Goldingay 1985).

Nevertheless, in the face of their stubbornness, certain biblical figures remain complex and multifaceted owing to their biblical stories offering profound perspectives into the intricacies of human nature and the ever-present tension between *free will* and *divine*

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1   In biblical terms, a serpent is used symbolically to represent cunning, deception, and evil. The most well-known instance of a serpent in the Bible is found in Genesis, where the serpent tempts Eve in the Garden of Eden, leading to Adam and Eve's disobedience and their expulsion from paradise (Genesis 3:1–6). This serpent is traditionally understood as Satan or the devil, who deceives Eve by questioning God's order and suggesting that eating the forbidden fruit will not lead to death but rather enlightenment. Throughout the Bible, serpents are associated with other negative qualities such as wickedness, danger, and destruction. For example, God sends fiery serpents to punish the Israelites for their disobedience (Numbers 21:6), and Moses's staff is famously transformed into a serpent during his confrontation with Pharaoh (Exodus 7:8–13).

sovereignty. As believers reflect on these biblical narratives, they are challenged to examine their own lives, discerning when stubbornness serves as a moral pursuit of truth and justice and when it veers into the arena of arrogance and defiance. This means that the stubbornness exhibited by biblical figures adds layers of intricacy to the moral lessons derived from their realities. While stubbornness could be considered a virtue in certain contexts, such as when it is used to contest injustice or defend the oppressed, the Bible, as established during the course of the discussions, presents instances where stubbornness leads to downfall and calamity. This nuanced depiction prompts believers, especially contemporary Christians, to consider the broader implications of their actions and the potential consequences of unregulated stubbornness in their own lives. Over and above this assertion, despite the flaws and shortcomings associated with the spirit of the stubbornness of certain biblical "characters," many undergo moments of redemption and growth through their encounters with God. For instance, biblical figures like King David and the apostle Peter demonstrate how stubbornness could be transformed into humility and obedience through supernatural intervention strategies and spiritual maturation (see 2 Samuel 12:13; Matthew 26:69–75; John 21:15–19). These biblical narratives encourage believers to regard stubbornness not as a fixed psychological and cognitive trait, but as a dynamic component of human nature that can be reconstructed and refined through faith and spiritual growth.

By the same token, stubbornness, when unregulated or misdirected, may pose significant challenges and lead to various adverse consequences (Snow and Marshall 2002, 487). In expounding this claim, Lockwood (2015) contends that stubborn individuals may become closed off to new ideas, perspectives, or constructive feedback. This closed-mindedness may obstruct personal growth, limit opportunities for learning, and stifle innovation. No wonder, therefore, that Hunter and Zaman (2022) proclaim that stubbornness fuels resistance to compromise or collaboration, leading to interpersonal conflicts and strained relationships. This suggests that when individuals, with particular reference to contemporary Christians, refuse to consider alternative viewpoints or adapt to changing circumstances, it may create tension and discord in both personal and professional settings. In the same breath, stubborn adherence to one's own belief systems or ways of doing things could blind individuals to alternative paths or opportunities for development. This rigidity, according to Goldingay (1985), can cause individuals to miss out on valuable experiences, relationships, or career advancements. That is why I put forward that stubbornness may lead to inflexibility in decision-making, preventing individuals and Christian leaders from adapting to changing circumstances or seizing new opportunities. This is based on the premise that this inflexibility tends to deter problem-solving abilities and limit the capacity to navigate complex situations effectively. In biblical and theological terms, I contend that stubborn biblical individuals struggle to acknowledge their own shortcomings or mistakes, preferring to justify their actions rather than reflect on areas for improvement. This lack of self-consciousness impedes personal and spiritual development and encumbers progress towards personal or professional goals. It is for these reasons that stubbornness should be regarded as a psychological and cognitive trait that alienates individuals from others, as repeated

displays of inflexibility or refusal to compromise erode trust and strain relationships within the Christian and supernatural kingdom.

With special reference to contemporary contexts, it is perceptive to acknowledge that stubbornness is particularly problematic because of the fast-paced and interconnected nature of modern society. This implies that in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, globalisation, and societal shifts, flexibility and adaptability are fundamental for navigating change. Owing to this reality, stubbornness hinders individuals' ability to embrace new ideas, technologies, or ways of thinking, leaving them ill-equipped to thrive in evolving environments (Langer and Vlahakes 2021, 627). Beyond this concern, in many professional settings success hinges on collaboration and effective teamwork. Given this fact, stubbornness undermines collaborative efforts by creating resistance to sabotage, stifling creativity, and impeding the flow of ideas. For this reason, Drake and Chen (2023) argue that in today's interconnected workplaces, the ability to work and collaborate with multiple stakeholders is essential for attaining collective goals and driving innovation. This is based on the reality that contemporary society values multiplicity and inclusion, recognising the significance of embracing different perspectives, voices, backgrounds, and experiences. Despite this, stubbornness could pose a barrier to adopting inclusive environments by propagating narrow-mindedness, prejudice, and resistance to change. It stands to reason, therefore, to argue that embracing multiplicity requires openness, empathy, and a willingness to engage with perspectives that may differ from one's own. In complex and dynamic environments such as contemporary Christianity, effective problem-solving and decision-making require flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to consider multiple viewpoints. Nonetheless, stubbornness has the potential to obstruct these processes by leading individuals and Christian leaders to adhere rigidly to their own belief systems or preferences, even in the face of evidence or input suggesting alternative approaches. In the end, this could result in suboptimal outcomes and missed opportunities for innovation and growth. This is the reason Ron (2009, 288) claims that the significance of innovation and growth for contemporary Christian thought and practice lies in its ability to adapt to evolving societal contexts, engage with diverse populations, and remain applicable in addressing the spiritual demands and social challenges of the modern world.

Bearing this contextual background in mind, this article has two aims to address. The first aim is to scrutinise the role of stubbornness in the lives of key biblical figures. This aim explores how stubbornness is depicted in the biblical narratives of Pharaoh of Egypt and King Nebuchadnezzar, examining the consequences of their stubborn actions and identifying any patterns or lessons that emerge for individuals and contemporary Christians. This suggests that by unmasking the lives of these two biblical figures, this aim seeks to uncover an understanding of the complexities of human nature and the implications of stubbornness in relation to faith, morality, and divine intervention. The second aim is to reflect on the relevance of biblical narratives of stubbornness in contemporary contexts within Christianity. This aim seeks to bridge the gap between

ancient biblical narratives and contemporary experiences within the Christian faith by considering the enduring relevance of biblical stories depicting stubbornness in the lives of believers and broader social contexts. This implies that by drawing parallels between the struggles faced by biblical figures and those encountered in contemporary society, particularly within the context of the Christian life, this aim seeks to facilitate evocative reflection and scholarly dialogues on subjects such as moral decision-making, the pursuit of justice, and the challenges of obedience in the face of difficulty. In the end, through this scholarly exposition, believers are encouraged to apply perspectives gleaned from biblical narratives to their own lives and communities, buttressing spiritual growth and profound engagement with Christian dogmas. As outlined above, the biblical figures and their associated incidents that this article concentrates on are the Pharaoh of Egypt and King Nebuchadnezzar.

The rationale for selecting these two biblical figures and their associated incidents to explore stubbornness lies in their significance within the biblical narrative and their compelling representations of the theme of stubbornness in various contexts. For instance, Pharaoh's stubbornness is prominently featured in the biblical narrative of the exodus, where he repeatedly refuses to heed Moses's demands, as ordered by God, to release the Israelites from slavery and subjugation. His refusal despite witnessing miraculous signs and plagues demonstrates the destructive consequences of stubbornness and pride. King Nebuchadnezzar's stubbornness is depicted in the book of Daniel, particularly in his refusal to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Despite witnessing miraculous signs and receiving warnings from Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar persists in his arrogance until he experiences a humbling transformation through divine intervention. In essence, by concentrating on these biblical figures and incidents, this article aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of stubbornness within the biblical narrative, underscoring its various manifestations and consequences for contemporary contexts. In the process, these biblical experiences offer valuable perspectives into human nature, the dynamic forces of power and authority, and the relationship between faith and conformity. In any event, it is prudent to acknowledge that this article relies on two theories to extensively unmask these biblical figures and the associated incidents. These are the psychoanalytical and cognitive dissonance theories which are explained in the next section.

Psychoanalytical and Cognitive Dissonance Theories

In this section, I explain two influential psychological theories that have significantly contributed to the understanding of human behaviour, namely psychoanalytical theory and cognitive dissonance theory. These theories, while distinct in their approaches, offer valuable frameworks for comprehending the intricacies of the human mind and its manifestations in behaviour.

Psychoanalytic theory, developed by Sigmund Freud, is a comprehensive framework for understanding human behaviour, personality development, and mental processes

(Freud 1989, 2015). At its core, psychoanalytic theory emphasises the role of unconscious desires, conflicts, and childhood experiences in configuring individual behaviour and psychological functioning. In addition to this, Freud (1989, 11) suggests that a significant portion of mental activity occurs outside conscious awareness, in the realm of the unconscious mind. This implies that unconscious desires, fears, and memories influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. In the process, this theory describes the human psyche as consisting of three main structures, namely the id, ego, and superego (the distinction is drawn later). These psychological structures interact dynamically to regulate behaviour and arbitrate internal conflicts. Beyond this explanation, the psychoanalytic theory posits that individuals employ various defence mechanisms, such as repression, denial, and projection, to cope with hostile or anxiety-provoking thoughts and sensibilities. In a nutshell, psychoanalytic theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricacies of human behaviour, underlining the role of unconscious processes and childhood experiences in configuring personality. Central to it, exploring the dynamic forces of the id, ego, and superego provides intuitions into the fundamental motivations and conflicts driving individual behaviour. Importantly, psychoanalytic theory's focus on defence mechanisms offers a valuable understanding of how individuals cope with psychological agony and maintain psychological equilibrium.

Cognitive dissonance theory, developed by Leon Festinger, explores the psychological discomfort that emerges when individuals hold conflicting belief systems, attitudes, or values (Festinger 1954, 133; 1962). According to this theory, when people experience cognitive dissonance, they are motivated to reduce discomposure by altering their belief systems or behaviours to achieve consistency. One of the key features of this theory suggests that cognitive dissonance occurs when individuals experience psychological discomfort resulting from conflicting cognitions, such as holding two contradictory belief systems or engaging in behaviour that contradicts their values. This implies that individuals are motivated to reduce dissonance by changing their belief systems, attitudes, or behaviours to align with one another and restore *cognitive consistency*. That is the reason Heaton and Quan (2023) underline that people engage in various strategies, such as rationalisation or minimising the importance of conflicting information, to alleviate cognitive dissonance and maintain a sense of coherence. In a nutshell, cognitive dissonance theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the psychological discomfort that arises from conflicting belief systems or behaviours. Central to it, by unmasking the processes through which individuals endeavour to reduce cognitive dissonance, it offers intuitions into decision-making, attitude change, and behaviour modification. Importantly, cognitive dissonance theory has practical applications in various domains, including community and Christian leadership, persuasion, and conflict resolution, where understanding and addressing conflicting belief systems or attitudes is crucial. The question, therefore, is: How are these two theories applied to the interpretations and discussions of this article?

The answer is that by applying psychoanalytical theory, the stubbornness demonstrated by the two selected biblical figures can be understood in terms of unconscious psychological dynamic forces and internal conflicts. For instance, Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden mirrors unconscious desires and fears, such as the desire for autonomy and the fear of punishment. Their stubborn refusal to adhere to supernatural guidance can be regarded as a manifestation of the id's instinctual drives conflicting with the superego's moral dictates. Through the perspective of psychoanalytic theory, these narratives of stubbornness in the Bible offer discernments into the complexities of human psychology and the interplay of conscious and unconscious forces shaping behaviour. As previously outlined, psychoanalytic theory explicates that individuals employ defence mechanisms to cope with threatening or anxiety-provoking thoughts and emotions. In the context of biblical narratives, the stubbornness displayed by the Pharaoh of Egypt and King Nebuchadnezzar is a result of defence mechanisms such as repression or denial. Over and above this observation, and by means of another instance, King Saul's stubborn refusal to accept supernatural guidance and obey God's commandments, despite recurrent warnings from the prophet Samuel, is contextualised as a defence mechanism to protect his ego from sensibilities of inadequacy or insecurity. In the same vein, according to psychoanalytic theory, unresolved childhood experiences and traumatic experiences can influence adult behaviour and personality (Tummala-Narra 2022). Bearing this assertion in mind, the stubbornness exhibited by biblical figures like Moses, who initially resisted God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, stems from unsettled childhood trauma and internal conflicts. This is based on the fact that Moses's disinclination to confront Pharaoh and his own sensibilities of inadequacy may have been rooted in his early experiences of being raised as an adopted prince in the Egyptian royal household, leading to inner turmoil and defiance to embracing his true identity and purpose. For these reasons, by probing biblical narratives through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, one gains a profound comprehension of the psychological complexities underlying stubborn behaviour and the ways in which unconscious forces configure human actions and decisions. These insights, as outlined in the introduction to this article, offer an intricate perspective on biblical "characters" and their struggles, accentuating the universal dimensions of human psychology depicted in ancient biblical texts.

From a cognitive dissonance perspective, the stubbornness exhibited by biblical figures can be regarded as an attempt to alleviate cognitive dissonance resulting from conflicting belief systems or values. For instance, Jonah's reluctance to fulfil his prophetic mission in Nineveh stems from a desire to maintain consistency between his belief in God's judgement and his fear of the consequences of delivering a message of repentance. Similarly, Moses's initial resistance to God's call to confront Pharaoh represents cognitive dissonance between his sense of deficit and the magnitude of the task before him. This connotes that by examining these biblical narratives through the lens of cognitive dissonance theory, one can gain insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying stubbornness and the strategies individuals employ to reconcile conflicting belief systems or behaviours. Another observable example from the Bible is

that of Peter's denial of Jesus. From a cognitive dissonance perspective, Peter's threefold denial of Jesus during his trial can be construed as a venture to alleviate the discomfort arising from conflicting belief systems and terrors. This is based on the reality that despite his strong professed loyalty to Jesus, Peter succumbs to fear and denies knowing him when confronted by bystanders as outlined in Matthew 26:69–75. Therefore, this inconsistency between his proclaimed devotion to Jesus and his fear of persecution illustrates the psychological antagonism characteristic of cognitive dissonance theory. Another biblical example that can be scrutinised through the lens of cognitive dissonance theory is the transformation of the apostle Paul. Prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul, then known as Saul, vehemently persecuted early Christians, believing them to be heretics (Acts 8:3; 9:1–19). However, his encounter with the risen Jesus Christ causes a radical shift in his belief systems and behaviours, leading him to embrace faith in Jesus and become one of its most influential biblical proponents. This transformation mirrors the resolution of cognitive dissonance as Paul aligns his newfound faith with his previous zealotry, resulting in a profound displacement in his identity and mission. In essence, the psychoanalytic and cognitive dissonance theories offer complementary perspectives for understanding the phenomenon of stubbornness in biblical narratives. From unconscious conflicts and defence mechanisms to cognitive inconsistencies and dissonance reduction strategies, these theories unriddle the psychological complexities of intrinsic human behaviour, even in the context of ancient religious texts. Now that the theories of interpretation and discussion have been explained, the next section focuses on the thrust of this article.

Interpretation and Discussion

This section contains two subsections, namely Pharaoh of Egypt and King Nebuchadnezzar. The previously explained theories are applied to the interpretation and discussion of each section within the context of stubbornness, as outlined in the introductory section.

Pharaoh of Egypt

The phenomenon of the most stubborn spirits or figures in biblical history and its implications on contemporary Christian thought and practice suggests an exploration of characters who demonstrate significant resistance to change or challenges. Pharaoh of Egypt, particularly in the context of the exodus, offers rich material for scholarly inquiry through both psychoanalytic and cognitive dissonance theories. As previously stated, psychoanalytic theory illuminates the unconscious mind, probing how early experiences and unconscious desires shape human behaviour. In light of this theory, I argue that Pharaoh's actions in the Bible can be understood through the interplay of the Freudian concepts of id, ego, and superego.[2] Thus, Pharaoh's initial refusal to release the

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2   The id, ego, and superego are three distinct components of the human psyche, according to Freudian psychoanalytic theory. The id operates on the pleasure principle, representing innate, primitive desires, and impulses seeking immediate gratification without regard for consequences. In contrast

Israelites is viewed as a manifestation of the id, the primal instinctual drive seeking immediate gratification. The ego, trying to mediate between the id and superego, struggles as Pharaoh's pride and power (ego) clash with his conscience and societal expectations (superego). This means that the conflict between Pharaoh's ego, representing his pride and sense of authority, and his superego, reflecting societal expectations and moral conscience, illustrates his internal struggle as he grapples with his decision. Over and above this assertion, Pharaoh's relentless pursuit of dominance and control, particularly over the Hebrew people, is an expression of unsettled childhood conflicts, including rivalry with his father figure and desire for power and authority. In fact, throughout the Exodus narrative, Pharaoh employs defence mechanisms such as denial (refusing to acknowledge the power of Moses and the Israelite God) and rationalisation (justifying his actions as necessary for the stability of Egypt). Inevitably, the implications of Pharaoh employing defence mechanisms such as denial and rationalisation throughout the Exodus narrative highlight his unwillingness to confront excruciating truths and his tendency to justify oppressive actions for the preservation of his power and the stability of Egypt. Beyond this scholarly exposition, throughout the Exodus narrative, his use of defence mechanisms like denial and rationalisation not only illustrates his resistance to acknowledging the power of Moses and the Israelite God, but also underscores his fear of losing control over his subjects and the economic implications of releasing the Hebrew slaves, buttressing the complexities of leadership under pressure and the consequences of unregulated pride and arrogance (see Exodus 1:9, 10; 5:2, 5). These biblical verses elucidate Pharaoh's disinclination to acknowledge the power of Moses and the Israelite God, his justification of oppressive actions for the preservation of his power, and his fear of losing control over his subjects and the economic implications of releasing the Hebrew slaves.

Another defence mechanism that Pharaoh employs is projection, where he attributes his own negative traits or motives to others. In the Exodus narrative, he projects his own fears of loss of power or control onto Moses and the Israelites, viewing them as a threat to his authority and justifying his actions as a means of self-preservation. Therefore, it stands to reason to contend that Pharaoh's stubbornness symbolises opposition to change, fear of losing power, and even fear of confronting his vulnerabilities and insecurities. In the process, his hardened heart can be regarded as a metaphorical expression of emotional rigidity and an unwillingness to empathise with others. In the main and relying on psychoanalytical theory, I put forward that Pharaoh's stubbornness is attributable to his hubris and arrogance, as he perceives himself as a god-like figure

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to this, the ego functions on the reality principle, mediating between the id's impulses and the external world by employing rationality and problem-solving to satisfy desires in socially acceptable ways. Last, the superego acts as the moral conscience, internalising societal ethical codes, values, and parental expectations, striving for perfection and moral righteousness while exerting control over the id's impulses. In essence, the id is the instinctual, impulsive aspect, the ego is the rational mediator, and the superego represents the moralising influence within the human psyche.

with absolute authority over his subjects, if not the entire universe.[3] This sense of superiority blinds him to the suffering of the Israelites and buttresses his belief in his invincibility, leading him to resist any challenges to his power. By the same token, Pharaoh's stubbornness stems from loss aversion, as he fears the potential consequences of releasing the Israelites, such as economic loss or social instability. This means that his reluctance to let go of the Israelite labour force mirrors a desire to maintain the status quo and circumvent any perceived threats to his kingdom's prosperity and solidity. This is in addition to the fact that his reluctance to let go of the Israelite labour force mirrors a broader pattern of exploitation and dehumanisation, propagating social injustice and imbalance within Egyptian society while intensifying the suffering of the oppressed Israelites. Similarly, Pharaoh's fixation on maintaining control and preserving his own power at all costs highlights the toxic effects of unchecked authoritarianism, leading to a disregard for ethical considerations and a failure to prioritise the security of his subjects.

Inevitably, the exploration of Pharaoh's stubbornness within contemporary contexts illuminates psychological dynamic forces that reverberate in modern society, especially within the context of Christian leadership. This suggests that Pharaoh's actions exemplify resistance to change and a fear of losing power, themes that are relevant in various spheres of contemporary life, including politics, business, and personal relationships. His relentless pursuit of dominance and control mirrors power struggles seen in modern leadership, while his use of defence mechanisms such as denial and rationalisation reflects common strategies employed to justify one's actions or maintain a sense of control in the face of uncertainty. By the same token, Pharaoh's projection of his own fears onto others underscores the tendency in contemporary society to attribute negative traits to perceived threats, continuing conflict, and division. Ultimately, his stubbornness serves as a cautionary narrative, highlighting the dangers of unregulated pride and resistance to change, and inviting reflection on the psychological complexities constitutive of human behaviour in both ancient and modern contexts. For example, in contemporary politics, certain leaders or regimes exhibit stubbornness akin to Pharaoh's resistance to change and fear of losing power. This denotes that authoritarian leaders who refuse to relinquish control or implement democratic reforms despite internal or external pressure demonstrate a similar reluctance to change and a desire to maintain dominance.[4] In the same vein, in the business world, executives who cling to outdated

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3   It must also be appreciated that there may be conflicting and varying interpretations of this situation, especially when one considers Exodus 4:21 and 9:12. These verses denote that Pharaoh's hardened heart was not solely of his own volition but was also influenced by divine intervention. Nonetheless, this divine hardening of his heart could still be interpreted metaphorically as representing emotional rigidity and an unwillingness to empathise with others. Above all, in this interpretation, Pharaoh's emotional rigidity and lack of empathy are underscored. By the same token, despite the external influence, the metaphorical understanding suggests that Pharaoh's own stubbornness and refusal to empathise with others played a significant role in his actions.

4   An example to support this claim is the leadership of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Mugabe, who ruled the country for nearly four decades, exemplified stubbornness akin to Pharaoh's resistance to change and fear of losing power. Despite mounting internal and external pressure for democratic

strategies or resist innovative ideas out of fear of losing control or prestige exemplify Pharaoh's stubbornness. Their unwillingness to adapt to changing market conditions or embrace new technologies could lead to stagnation and missed opportunities for growth. Additionally, within personal relationships, individuals who refuse to acknowledge their own faults or weaknesses, projecting their insecurities onto others, display traits similar to Pharaoh's defence mechanisms. For example, someone who constantly blames their partner for challenges in the relationship while denying their own role in conflicts may be employing projection as a defence mechanism to avoid confronting their own vulnerabilities. In the arena of environmental policies, governments or industries that prioritise short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability, despite mounting evidence of environmental degradation and climate change, exhibit a form of stubbornness akin to Pharaoh's reluctance to heed warnings of impending disaster. These examples illustrate how the themes of stubbornness, fear of change, and resistance to acknowledging vulnerabilities and insecurities explored through the character of Pharaoh in the biblical narrative resonate in contemporary contexts across various domains of human activity.

In any event, it is prudent to now apply cognitive dissonance theory to the Pharaoh of Egypt. As already stated, cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals experience discomfort when their belief systems or actions are inconsistent. With this fact in mind, Pharaoh's behaviour in the Exodus story (re)produces several features of cognitive dissonance. In this context, Pharaoh's belief in his supernatural right to rule is contested by the plagues and the power of the Israelite God.[5] This disconfirmation creates cognitive dissonance as it contradicts his profoundly held belief systems about his invincibility, invulnerability, and authority. As the plagues escalate, Pharaoh becomes more entrenched in his position, rationalising his actions to justify the effort he has already invested in subjugating the Israelites. This denotes that releasing them would mean admitting defeat and acknowledging that his efforts were in vain. Although it is not evident in the biblical narrative, Pharaoh's disinclination to release the Israelites may have stemmed from cognitive dissonance arising from societal pressure and expectations. This is based on the reality that as a ruler, Pharaoh was surrounded by

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reforms and economic improvements, Mugabe clung to power, refusing to relinquish control and implement meaningful reforms. His regime was marked by authoritarianism, electoral fraud, and human rights abuses, demonstrating a similar reluctance to change and a desire to maintain dominance reminiscent of Pharaoh's stance in the biblical narrative (Asuelime and Simura 2013). Another example is the leadership of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Assad has maintained a strong grip on power despite widespread protests and international condemnation during the Syrian civil war. Similar to Pharaoh's resistance to change and fear of losing power, Assad's regime has been characterised by authoritarianism, repression of dissent, and brutal crackdowns on opposition forces. Despite calls for democratic reforms and efforts to negotiate a political transition, Assad has remained steadfast in his refusal to step down or implement meaningful reforms, preferring to cling to power at any cost. This demonstrates a similar reluctance to change and a desire to maintain dominance, reminiscent of Pharaoh's stance in the biblical narrative (Rais 2004).

5   Pharaoh was affected by the following plagues: water turned into blood, frogs, gnats or lice, flies, livestock disease, boils, hail and fire, locusts, darkness, and death of the firstborn.

advisors, officials, and subjects who advanced his sense of authority and power. Therefore, releasing the Israelites would mean going against the expectations of his social circle and admitting weakness or failure, contributing to the cognitive dissonance he experienced. In addition to this assertion, I contend that Pharaoh experienced cognitive dissonance by justifying his cruel treatment of the Israelites as necessary for maintaining hierarchy and stability in Egypt. This is based on the grounds that despite witnessing the devastating effects of the plagues on his people and land, he rationalised his actions by convincing himself that he was acting in the best interest of his kingdom, thereby reducing the psychological discomfort caused by the dissonance between his behaviour and his moral belief systems.

Over and above this exposition, Pharaoh selectively exposed himself to information that reinforced his existing belief systems and minimised the cognitive dissonance he experienced. This means that Pharaoh actively sought out information that aligned with his preconceived belief systems and minimised contradictory evidence, thereby reducing the cognitive dissonance he experienced. As a matter of fact, by selectively exposing himself to information that advanced his existing belief systems, he avoided confronting uncomfortable realities that challenged his sense of power and jurisdiction. It is for these reasons that I argue that this behaviour reflects a common tendency among individuals to engage in confirmation prejudice, seeking out information that confirms their existing belief systems while dismissing or downplaying conflicting evidence. For example, he ignores and dismisses evidence of the Israelite God's power while focusing on his own military might. Given this biblical reality, Pharaoh's stubbornness leads to behaviours that confirm his initial belief systems, buttressing his sense of identity and self-worth as a powerful ruler. This is because each refusal to release the Israelites strengthens his resolve, despite the mounting evidence against him. This behaviour serves to validate his perception of himself as an unyielding and dominant leader, despite mounting evidence suggesting otherwise. For instance, despite witnessing the water turning to blood, the infestation of frogs, and other plagues, he repeatedly refuses to release the Israelites from bondage (Exodus 7–10). On the grounds of this biblical incident, I suggest that each refusal serves to advance his belief in his own power and authority, as he maintains control over the Israelites despite the increasingly dire consequences for Egypt. Similarly, even when Pharaoh appears to relent and agrees to let the Israelites go after certain plagues, he quickly changes his mind once the immediate threat subsides (Exodus 8:8, 28; 10:8–11). This pattern of behaviour demonstrates his unwillingness to relinquish control and his determination to maintain his perceived superiority. Beyond this view, Pharaoh's response to the plagues involves doubling down on his oppression of the Israelites rather than considering their release. For example, after the plague of frogs ends, he increases the Israelites' workload (Exodus 8:8–15), indicating his refusal to yield to external pressure or acknowledge the legitimacy of their God's demands.

In contemporary contexts, Pharaoh's behaviour in the Exodus story reverberates with principles of cognitive dissonance theory. The principles of cognitive dissonance theory

elucidate various dimensions of human behaviour and decision-making. Individuals often experience discomfort when faced with conflicting belief systems or actions, leading them to rationalise their choices to minimise cognitive dissonance (Zhang and Pan 2023). This tendency can manifest in various ways, such as selective exposure to information that confirms existing belief systems, reluctance to acknowledge contrary evidence, and doubling down on current behaviours to maintain a sense of consistency and self-worth. Over and above this fact, it is perceptive to bear in mind that cognitive dissonance theory has significant implications for fields such as psychology, marketing, and public policy in contemporary contexts (Nilsson 2022). This means that understanding how individuals navigate cognitive dissonance may inform strategies for behavioural change, persuasion, and decision-making. For example, marketers may leverage cognitive dissonance by framing products or services in a way that aligns with consumers' existing belief systems and values, reducing the psychological discomfort associated with purchasing decisions. Similarly, policymakers may design intervention strategies that curtail cognitive dissonance and encourage positive behavioural changes by addressing individuals' primitive motivations and belief systems. To clarify this claim, imagine an individual who knows that smoking is detrimental to their health but continues to smoke because of addiction or social pressure. This person experiences cognitive dissonance because their behaviour (smoking) contradicts their belief in the importance of maintaining good health. Therefore, to reduce this discomfort, they may rationalise their behaviour by abating the risks of smoking or convincing themselves that quitting is too difficult, thereby maintaining consistency between their belief systems and actions. In the same breath, consider a person who strongly identifies with a particular political ideology but encounters information that challenges their views. This individual experiences cognitive dissonance as their existing belief systems are contradicted by new political evidence or perspectives. To alleviate this discomfort, they may selectively seek out news sources or social media content that reaffirms their belief systems while dismissing or downplaying contrary viewpoints, thus maintaining cognitive consistency within their political philosophy. In contrast to these scenarios, suppose someone purchases an expensive luxury item despite knowing it exceeds their budget or financial means. This person experiences cognitive dissonance because their behaviour (spending beyond their means) conflicts with their belief in responsible financial management. To justify their purchase and reduce discomfort, they may convince themselves that the item is a worthy investment or that they deserve the indulgence, thereby maintaining consistency between their actions and self-perception as a savvy consumer. In a nutshell, Pharaoh's character in the Exodus narrative exemplifies both psychoanalytic and cognitive dissonance theories. Through his stubbornness and resistance to change, Pharaoh represents the complexities of human psychology, illustrating how unconscious desires, childhood experiences, and cognitive prejudices can shape behaviour and belief systems.

King Nebuchadnezzar

Delineating King Nebuchadnezzar through psychoanalytic and cognitive dissonance theories provides enthralling perspectives into his character and actions, especially in

the context of stubbornness. According to psychoanalytic theory, human behaviour is influenced by unconscious motives and conflicts. Applying this theory to King Nebuchadnezzar, one can explicate the intricate layers of his personality and motivations. King Nebuchadnezzar's ego, driven by his desires for power and glory, dominated his decision-making processes. This is particularly because his id, representing primitive impulses, powered his ambition to expand his empire and assert dominance over other nations. Meanwhile, his superego, configured by societal and ethnological standards, justified his actions as necessary for maintaining his status and authority. In other words, King Nebuchadnezzar's ego may have been driven not only by desires for power and glory but also by salient sensibilities of insecurity and the desire for validation. Having said that, I argue that as a ruler, he sought to expand his empire and assert hegemony over other nations as a means of authenticating his worth and solidifying his legacy. This denotes that his ego-driven ambitions were advanced by an intrinsic anxiety of being perceived as weak or ineffective, prompting him to pursue conquest and territorial expansion to augment his sense of self-worth. In addition to this psychoanalytical interpretation, King Nebuchadnezzar's superego, wrought by societal and cultural norms, may have been heavily factored by the religious and political ideologies prevalent in ancient Babylonian society. As the ruler of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar was surrounded by advisors and religious leaders who espoused belief systems regarding the spiritual right of kingship and the superiority of Babylonian culture. Owing to this reality, his superego may have justified his aggressive policies and imperialistic endeavours as necessary for upholding these ideological tenets and maintaining the religious and ethnological identity of Babylon. Inevitably, this cultural and religious influence played a significant role in shaping King Nebuchadnezzar's moral compass and decision-making processes. As a matter of fact, I argue that his adherence to these societal and cultural norms reinforced his sense of duty and responsibility as a ruler, driving him to prioritise the interests of Babylon above all else, even at the expense of other nations or ethical considerations. In the process, the influence of religious and political ideologies on his superego underscores the interplay between power dynamic forces and belief systems in configuring the behaviour of leaders, highlighting the complex intersection of religion, politics, and morality in ancient civilisations.

Above all, King Nebuchadnezzar's use of defence mechanisms such as rationalisation and repression played a role in justifying his conquests and suppressing any feelings of guilt or remorse towards the nation he ruled over. Specifically, he rationalised his aggressive behaviour as necessary for the prosperity and security of his kingdom, thus alleviating any cognitive dissonance arising from his actions. This is the reason Telcs (1969) promulgates that King Nebuchadnezzar utilised the defence mechanism of projection to attribute any destructive qualities or motives to those he conquered or oppressed. Adding to this claim, Gruenthaner (1949, 411) put forward that by projecting his own aggression or desire for power onto his enemies, he justified his actions as defensive or necessary for self-preservation. Bearing these scholarly views in mind, I contend that this form of psychological projection allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to

maintain a sense of moral supremacy and decency, deflecting responsibility for any harm caused by his conquests. Albright (1956) is of the view that another defence mechanism that King Nebuchadnezzar might have employed is selective attention, wherein he focused only on information or perspectives that advanced his belief systems and justified his actions. This denotes that by selectively attending to information sources that glorified his conquests or downplayed their negative consequences, he maintained a distorted perception of reality that aligned with his ego-driven desires for power and glory. On the grounds of this view, I add that this cognitive prejudice served to buttress his self-image as a benevolent ruler and legitimate conqueror, shielding him from uncomfortable truths that contested his sense of righteousness. Beyond this contention, I underline that beneath his outward display of strength and authority, he harboured inherent insecurities and fears of inadequacy.

Inevitably, it stands to reason to maintain that his persistent pursuit of power stems from an unconscious desire to compensate for these sensibilities of inferiority. This is based on the premise that his dreams, as recounted in the book of Daniel, offer valuable intuitions into his psyche. His dream of the great statue, interpreted by Daniel, symbolises his own grandiosity and the fragility of his empire, reflecting his inner turmoil and fear of eventual downfall. King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue, with its head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay, is a powerful metaphor for his own grandiosity and the perceived strength and stability of his empire (see Daniel 2:31–35). The interpretation of the dream by Daniel, wherein each component of the statue represents a different kingdom or era of human history, suggests that King Nebuchadnezzar's reign is just one part of a larger historical narrative. Therefore, this interpretation challenged King Nebuchadnezzar's sense of omnipotence and invincibility, prompting feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. This is because the inclusion of materials like clay in the feet of the statue, which are susceptible to crumbling and decay, symbolises the fragility and impermanence of his empire, foreshadowing its eventual downfall. In this way, his dream serves as a reflection of his inner turmoil and fear of eventual decline, despite his outward displays of power and authority. It highlights the psychological complexities underlying his rule and offers valuable insights into the fragility of human power and the inevitability of change. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams may be regarded as a manifestation of his unconscious anxieties and desires, providing a profound comprehension of his motivations and behaviour as a ruler.

Certainly, contextualising King Nebuchadnezzar's actions through contemporary psychological frameworks offers valuable perspectives into his character and behaviour. This is based on the presumption that his relentless pursuit of power and overthrow may be inferred through modern concepts such as ego-driven motivation and the fear of vulnerability. This means that his use of defence mechanisms like rationalisation and projection (re)produces common psychological strategies individuals employ to justify their actions and maintain a sense of self-worth. As underlined previously, his dreams, as recounted in the book of Daniel, are symbolic representations of his inner turmoil

and insecurity in the face of uncertainty and change, mirroring the psychological intricacies individuals navigate in contemporary contexts. Through this contemporary lens, his biblical narrative serves as an everlasting exploration of human psychology and the intricacies of leadership and power subtleties. For example, in contemporary politics, certain leaders of authoritarian regimes continually exhibit stubbornness and a relentless pursuit of power similar to King Nebuchadnezzar (Goldingay 1987; Macatangay 2023; Mckee 2022). In consideration of this claim, I put forward that leaders who suppress discord and resist democratic reforms potentially do so out of a desire to maintain control and authority, compelled by ego-driven ambitions and fears of susceptibility. Therefore, defence mechanisms such as rationalisation and projection may be employed to justify their actions, portraying themselves as defenders of stability and national interests, while selectively attending to information that fortifies their narratives. Over and above this argument, contemporary social media influencers continue to exhibit traits of stubbornness and a relentless pursuit of fame and recognition, akin to King Nebuchadnezzar's quest for power and glory (Raschke 2018). These individuals prioritise building their personal brand and accumulating followers, obsessed with ego-driven ambitions and a fear of being downplayed or subjugated. It is for this reason I add that defence mechanisms like rationalisation and projection could be utilised to justify self-promotion and deflect criticism, maintaining a judiciously curated online persona while sidelining dissenting voices or adverse feedback. It is important to also add that the pursuit of fame and glory whether by social media influencers or historical figures like King Nebuchadnezzar, may be problematic for several reasons. For example, it may prioritise superficial values such as popularity and status over genuine personal growth or contribution to society. This can potentially lead to a culture of vanity and self-absorption, where individuals are more concerned with image management than meaningful relationships or substantive achievements. Adding to this assertion, Diko (2024) propounds that the unremitting pursuit of fame advances a climate of competition and comparison, where individuals feel pressured to constantly seek validation and approval from others. Ultimately, this leads to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and even mental health challenges as individuals measure their self-worth based on external metrics of success (Diko 2024, 8).

In addition to this psychoanalytical scrutinisation, it is perceptive to now focus on cognitive dissonance theory, which intimates that individuals experience discomfort when their belief systems or behaviours contradict one another, leading them to pursue harmony by either altering their attitudes or rationalising their actions. This being the case, King Nebuchadnezzar's stubbornness and refusal to heed warnings, as depicted in the biblical narrative, may be attributed to cognitive dissonance because despite witnessing transcendental episodes and receiving spiritual messages, he persisted in his idolatry and tyranny, unwilling to confront the inconsistency between his belief systems and his behaviour. On the grounds of this perspective, Waller (2020) is of the view that King Nebuchadnezzar selectively exposed himself to information that reaffirmed his philosophy while disregarding or dismissing contradictory evidence. As a result of this, I contend that this selective attention allowed him to maintain a sense of coherence and

stability in the face of cognitive dissonance because, after making decisions that resulted in negative consequences, such as the humiliation of Daniel's interpretation of his dream or the madness that befell him, he experienced post-decision dissonance. To alleviate this discomfort that emerged as a result of post-decision dissonance, he doubled down on his belief systems and actions, refusing to acknowledge any fault or weakness. Having said that, I propose that King Nebuchadnezzar's post-decision dissonance may have been exacerbated by confirmation prejudice, whereby he selectively sought out information or interpretations that supported his existing belief systems and actions. Considering this assertion, by focusing solely on the evidence that propagated his ego-driven convictions, he most likely maintained a distorted perception of reality and evaded confronting uncomfortable realities. With these scholarly interpretations concerning the Pharaoh of Egypt and King Nebuchadnezzar, it is important to now draw parallels with respect to contemporary Christian thought and practice, hence the next section.

Implications of Stubbornness on Contemporary Christian Thought and Practice

Stubbornness, continually perceived as a destructive trait, holds significant implications for contemporary Christian thought and practice. Within the context of faith, stubbornness manifests in various ways, impacting both individuals and church communities. For example, at the individual level, stubbornness obstructs spiritual growth and openness to new understandings of biblical scripture and doctrine (Kaplan 1994). This suggests that when individual Christians cling rigidly to their interpretations of religious dogmas, they may defy opportunities for personal and spiritual transformation and deeper perceptions of the spiritual kingdom. Over and above this challenge, Neumann (2023) posits that stubbornness may lead to division within the Christian community. This is true because, in an era epitomised by multiple theological perspectives and denominational differences, unwavering adherence to one's own belief systems may advance an atmosphere of intolerance and discord. Given this concern, instead of promoting unity and indulgence, stubbornness may fuel factionalism and strife, undermining the core principles of adoration and acceptance espoused by Christianity and its biblical dogmas. In addition to these implications on Christian thought and practice, I must underline that stubbornness is particularly problematic for women and young girls within contemporary Christian communities because this rigidity disproportionately affects women and young girls who continually face additional boundaries to questioning traditional religious teachings and asserting their own interpretations within male-orientated religious structures. As previously outlined, stubborn adherence to one's belief systems contributes to division within Christian communities, propagating an atmosphere of intolerance and discord. According to Diko (2023), this Christian division subjugates women and young girls, as they are often less empowered to challenge established norms and advocate for inclusivity and multiplicity within the church context. It is for this particular reason that I suggest that addressing stubbornness within Christian communities is central to promoting unity, acceptance,

and the comprehensive participation of women and young girls in spiritual life and religious discourse.

By the same token, the implications of stubbornness extend far beyond the precincts of religious practice into the arena of social and political engagement (Gupta 2018). In contemporary society, Christians continue to grapple with pressing moral and ethical challenges, ranging from social justice to environmental stewardship (Gupta 2018, 93). With this view in mind, stubborn adherence to certain ideological positions may prevent believers from engaging in constructive dialogues and multiple collaborations with those holding conflicting ideologies. This aversion to engaging in multifaceted discourses may impede concerted efforts to address societal challenges effectively, thereby fading the constructive impact Christians might have on the world around them. With special reference to underdeveloped regions, the impact of stubbornness within Christian communities may be particularly problematic and challenging to address because, in such contexts, where resources and education are typically limited, entrenched belief systems and practices become acutely entrenched, encumbering progress and stifling innovation. In other words, this rigidity manifests in various dimensions of religious life, from interpretations of biblical scripture to cultural traditions, making it challenging to adapt to changing social and environmental realities. With these views in mind, I add that in underdeveloped regions, where challenges such as poverty, disparity, and environmental degradation are acute, Christians have a vital role to play in advocating for justice and sustainability. Nevertheless, stubborn adherence to certain ideological positions could deter their ability to engage constructively with diverse stakeholders and address these complex challenges effectively. In other words, by refusing to engage in nuanced dialogues and multiple collaborations with those holding conflicting ideologies, Christian communities in underdeveloped regions risk isolating themselves from broader societal conversations and potential solutions. This aversion to dialogues not only undermines their ability to influence positive change but also diminishes their credibility and relevance within their communities.

In contrast to the above deliberations, it is essential to recognise that not all forms of steadfastness are detrimental. In some instances, a principled commitment to core Christian values, such as consideration, justice, and mercy, could potentially serve as a bulwark against moral sabotage and societal pressures. In addition to this claim, perseverance in the face of adversity is a celebrated virtue within the Christian tradition, exemplified by the steadfast faith of martyrs and saints throughout history. Owing to this reality, it is important to accept that the implications of stubbornness on contemporary Christians are multifaceted and complex. This denotes that while the rigidity of belief could obstruct personal growth and community cohesion, it can also serve as a source of strength and moral clarity when grounded in affection and humility. Thus, Christians are reminded and called to navigate the complex tension between conviction and openness, striving for a balanced approach that honours the multiplicity of perspectives while remaining steadfast in their commitment to the teachings of Christ.

Ultimately, stubbornness, when routed constructively, can inspire courage and defiance in the face of oppression and injustice. This is on the grounds that throughout history, Christians have been at the forefront of movements for social change and liberation, daringly standing against systems of oppression and advocating for the rights and dignity of the marginalised. In this context, stubbornness is a catalyst for transformative action, driving believers to confront injustice and work towards a more just and equitable society. With these scholarly dialogues in mind, it is prudent to now focus on the concluding remarks in the final section.

Concluding Remarks

Examining the most stubborn figures in biblical history and their implications for contemporary Christian thoughts and practices offers valuable perspectives into the complexities of human nature and the dynamic forces of faith. Throughout the Bible, one encounters figures who represent various forms of stubbornness, from obstinate disobedience to unwavering fidelity to their belief systems. These biblical narratives serve as both cautionary tales and cradles of inspiration, reminding humanity of the potential consequences of stubbornness when it leads to rebellion and defiance against divine guidance, as well as its transformative power when grounded in unwavering commitment to God's principles. From the rebellious spirit of Pharaoh in the Exodus narrative to the steadfast faith of biblical figures like Abraham and Daniel, the Bible presents a rich tapestry of characters whose choices and actions mirror the enduring struggle between human wilfulness and supernatural sovereignty. These biblical stories invite one to reflect on one's attitudes towards obedience, resilience, and humility in the face of adversity. Ultimately, the most stubborn spirits or figures in biblical history prompt one to consider the complexities of faith and the significance of navigating the tension between conviction and openness. This suggests that by learning from the triumphs and failures of the earlier deliberated biblical figures, one is challenged to cultivate a steadfast commitment to God's purpose while remaining open to his guidance and the perspectives of others. In so doing, humanity and contemporary Christianity could strive to embody the balance of strength and humility exemplified by the heroes and heroines of biblical lore, as its journey towards a profound understanding of itself and its relationship with the spiritual empire.

This scholarly discourse evokes avenues for future scholarly inquiry into the psychological, cultural, and theological dimensions of stubbornness. Future scholarly critics should explore how different sociocultural contexts influence the manifestation and perception of stubbornness within religious communities, elucidating the interplay between individual agency and societal norms. In the process of this pursuit, future scholarly critics should delve into the implications of stubbornness on contemporary religious discourses and practices. This means that by analysing how biblical narratives of stubbornness are explicated and applied in contemporary contexts, scholars can contribute to a profound understanding of how faith traditions grapple with the challenges of obedience, autonomy, and moral conviction in an ever-changing world.

These scholarly inquiries could inform theological education, pastoral care, and interfaith dialogues, buttressing greater consciousness and empathy among believers of diverse backgrounds. In contrast to these potential scholarly avenues, by scrutinising how stubbornness is depicted in relation to male and female characters, as well as those in positions of authority set against those who are subjugated, scholarly critics could potentially uncover subterranean insights into the intersectionality of identity and resistance within biblical, theological, and Christian contexts. In particular, scholarly critics focusing on the reception history of these biblical narratives could illuminate how interpretations of stubbornness have evolved over time within different religious traditional structures and cultural contexts. In other words, by tracing the ways in which these biblical narratives have been interpreted, adapted, and applied in diverse theological and artistic expressions, scholars can elucidate the enduring pertinence and interpretive flexibility of biblical themes in shaping religious thought and practice across generations.

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