

**THE ONGOING COHERENCE AND OTHERNESS OF GOD'S
WORKS OF CREATION, RECONCILIATION, RENEWAL AND
CONSUMMATION OF HUMAN BEINGS AND THE COSMIC
UNIVERSE**

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I declare that

**THE ONGOING COHERENCE AND OTHERNESS OF
GOD'S WORKS OF CREATION, RECONCILIATION,
RENEWAL AND CONSUMMATION OF HUMAN
BEINGS AND THE COSMIC UNIVERSE**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have
been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

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Summary/Abstract

In this dissertation we explore the concept that the works of God continue in a creative and coherent continuum from the portrayal in Genesis 1 to the description of their consummation in Revelation through the dynamic broad movement of the Kingdom of God that moved through Israel and the other nations of the world and through the churches and other institutions as well as in the Bible, in the experiences of humanity and in the vast non-human creation. Therefore creation, redemption, renewal and consummation are seen to be linked in a process which is not confined to the usual theological pointers of the Church and the Bible. Churches and the Bible are signs and instruments of the Kingdom of God amongst and in the many universes and **not the only** signs and instruments of the Kingdom of God in and amongst the many universes.

The importance of the coherence between each work of God, the otherness of each work and the ongoing character of God's works demonstrates itself in the impact of faith on human experience and on the very existence of human beings. The concept of developing a wholesome person with a *fivesome awareness* is developed, this being an awareness of a human beings *creatureliness*, an awareness of their *sinful tendencies* of doing damage to God, the self as being created by God and all other creatures of God, an awareness of the *salvific and reconciliatory* power of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and an awareness of the *renovating and renewal* power of the Spirit of Pentecost which is carrying and guiding the process of the fivesome awareness in our minds, our experiences and our living into afterlife towards the *consummation of all things* in the new heaven and the new earth. The ongoing experience of anticipatory fragments and moments of meaning and significance breaking in from the future into our current life, bridges God's Kingdom works in the future through reflective understanding of faith experience with our everyday experience as human beings.

The basic point and the thrust of this dissertation is that of a 'both...and' and not an 'either...or' relationship between human beings and their experience of God as Creator, their own falling into sin, God as Reconciliator in Christ, God the Holy Spirit as the Renewer and Renovator of all things unto afterlife and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth – the whole ongoing process of God's works is attested in the Biblical texts and attested in the foursome and inclusive experiential awareness of God's works in our daily experience by the Holy Spirit.

Key Terms

Continuous creation; Regeneration and renewal; Reconciliation; Consummation; Works of God; Word and Spirit; Human Beings; Experience; Faith; Sin; Five-some awareness;

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1 The Ongoing Coherence And Otherness Of God's Works

1.1 *Introduction*

The problem of how God's work of creation - which comprises of human beings, animals, plants and things as well as the many cosmic universes - is *coherently* in its *otherness* connected with God's work of redemption and reconciliation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and God's renewal and renovation work through the Holy Spirit in an *ongoing* process until the dawn of the new heaven and the new earth, is really mind-boggling and is one of the real mysteries of life. This mystery demonstrates itself in our everyday experience of faith, our theological and faith reflection about the impact and the awareness of how we as human beings are involved and engaged in our daily experience in God's works that spans the process from the beginning of time till the end of time. The mystery of the coherence and the interconnectedness, the difference and otherness, and the ongoing and continuing features of God's works cannot be solved through theology and deep mystical reflection of the human mind. Strong claims from our side that God has revealed the solution of the mystery to us through God's Word, the Bible or through a personal revelation somewhere someday, help us no further with the problem with which we are really faced and that is that the meaningful ongoing coherence and otherness of God's works does not seem to have an impact on people's everyday experience. A radical and ongoing daily awareness and experience of the wholesome and healing coherence of God's works of creation, reconciliation and renewal of human beings, animals, plants, things and the myriad of cosmic universes should and could have a significant impact on our levels of depression and addiction, our experience of meaninglessness, insecurity and hopelessness that many of us are not only confronted with in our daily rhythm of life but also in our communities of faith and our churches.

1.2 *The basic problem and the basic idea (thesis) of the study*

The importance of the coherence between each work, the otherness of each work and the ongoing character of God's works demonstrates itself in the evangelisation of people, pastoral situations and the helping profession of faith counselling in interactive encounters

with people. In evangelisation and in the processes of hunting, gathering and building of a community of faith and a church as well as in faith counselling people in this day and age should be guided interactively with faith clues, cues and hues in becoming a wholesome person with a *fivesome awareness*, namely an awareness of his/her *creatureliness*, an awareness of his/her *sinful tendencies* of doing damage to God, oneself as being created by God and all other creatures of God, an awareness of the *salvific and reconciliatory* power of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and an awareness of the *renovating and renewal* power of the Spirit of Pentecost which is carrying and guiding the process of the *fivesome awareness* in our minds, our experiences and our living into afterlife towards the *consummation of all things* in the new heaven and the new earth of which we experience anticipatory fragments and moments of meaning and significance already in our current life.

The foursome awareness that we carry with us in our pilgrimage through life is experienced within the ambience of the Kingdom (Reign) of God that is there from the beginning of time as big as God's created six billion universes - according to modern physics - and as small as the smallest particle in matter – detected by modern physics, as wide as our life worlds and as deep as the human heart in ongoing experience of a foursome awareness in every field of our experience, that is in believing, loving, justice, socialising, imagining, thinking, feeling, speaking, physical and evolving processes, training, empowering, etc. The foursome awareness embraces every part of our lives and all four of the dimensions of awareness are created, activated and carried by the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit even in the most material, bodily and thing-like part of our lives because we are living in the era of the Spirit of God before the end times.

1.3 *The Bible, Faith experience and Theological reflection as avenues and sources for the process of God's works*

Many books on theological and faith reflection as well as many evangelisation, pastoral and faith counselling approaches are one-sidedly engaged in the coherence, otherness and ongoing process of God's works by accessing and emphasising only one of God's grand works. The experiential engagement and involvement with the ongoing process of God's works is reductionistically accessed and opened up through either a Creation-centric, Hamartia-centric (=Sin-centric), Christo-centric, Pneuma-centric, Eschata-centric (=End-

centred), Biblio-centric (=Bible-centred) or Ecclesio-centric (=church-centred) avenue. The basic point and thesis of this dissertation can be captured therein that one should not work and operate with a reductionist one-sided avenue for accessing the ongoing grand works of God. We are intrinsically interconnected and involved as human beings in everyone of the ongoing works of God that span and stretch over life and eternity in a compressed and summarised way in our daily lives by way of the foursome awareness of being created human beings by God, sinning beings through ourselves and redeemed/reconciled and human beings under renovation and renewal through God. This may somewhat sound still abstract like high and mighty doctrines and dogmas of which divine and theological truth must be adhered and attested to but what is very concrete and practical is when the coherence, otherness and ongoing practicality and realness of God's works are experienced as a life-giving, life-sustaining and life-embracing energies, as sense providing, hope and meaning inducing and the real bringer of snippets of the future of the new heaven and the new earth into our daily experience and lives.

The basic point and the thrust of this dissertation is that of a 'both...and' and not an 'either...or' relationship between human beings and their experience of God as Creator, their own falling into sin, God as Reconciliator in Christ, God the Holy Spirit as the Renewer and Renovator of all things unto afterlife and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth – the whole ongoing process of God's works is attested in the Biblical texts and attested in the foursome and inclusive experiential awareness of God's works in our daily experience by the Holy Spirit.

Let me say it a bit differently: The Holy Spirit or God as Spirit is embracing every atom and molecule in the physical-chemical world, every cell and organism in the biotic world, every emotion and feeling, every thought and belief, every love action, etc. Sin and evil, however, derailed human beings and the whole of creation in a serious sense, although in what sense we do not always know. However through the inclusive process of the works of God, God is actually working 'intra-natural' - from within God's creation where the Spirit is everywhere at work - the Spirit makes us aware that we are created human beings within a very broad and wide creation where we are through sin on a course that is damaging to God, ourselves as human beings and the physical-organic environmental universes, simultaneously the Spirit makes us aware of the power of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, the cross as the restorative and redemptive power and the resurrection as

the liberation and life giving power of new life in the broad and deep realm of the Kingdom of God which is furthermore enacted in our lives through the grand work and power of the Spirit of God in Pentecost which we experience daily and in every area of our lives as the renewal and renovation work of the Spirit in our experience.

It seems that for many church people and theologians who work in the tradition of the Reformation of the 16th century the experience and awareness for life of the coherence, otherness and ongoing process of God's works of creation, reconciliation and renewal are stuck between the covers of the Bible, in the handbooks of the doctrines and dogmas of their churches and their theologies as well as stuck in the minds of church bureaucrats, leaders and resident theologians.

1.3.1 The Bible as the Word of God

The Judaeo-Christian Bible of which the Canon formation had been concluded in the fourth century AD starts with a rendering of the beginning of all things in Genesis with God's creation of the heavens and the earth and everything therein and thereof and the Bible ends with the book of Revelation which present us with a complicated portrayal of the events at the end of the whole process that started with creation in the beginning. But - and this 'but' is the million dollar catchword for thousands of Christians – the conclusion of the Canon of the Bible in 387 AD through which we have the composition of the process of the great works and acts of God of *creation*, the great work of human beings of falling into sin, the *cross and the resurrection* of Jesus Christ, the permeating and outpouring, the affirmation and vindication of all of God's works in the events and acts of *Pentecost* and the moving and awaiting for the end of time of which a partial description is given in the book of Revelation, is mainly not to be experienced as historical events in the same way as human beings act out and make their history. Two broad approaches seem to have emerged from the varied and diversified experiences of people influenced in some or other way by the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, namely a 'mirroring' approach of the Bible as the Word(s) of God and an 'interpretation' approach of the Bible as the Word of God. Both approaches emerged in the 17th century within Reformed and Lutheran Orthodoxy. In the diversified global world of our age the two broad approaches on many an occasion are locking horns and are opposing each other vehemently.

The **basic tendency of the first approach** is to view the Bible as a collection of imitated and mirrored words and notions of God that are in their totality encapsulated as the inerrant and infallible Words of God that has to be imitated and mirrored in people's present lives and hereafter.

The experience of the Bible as a divine book which is inerrant and infallible has a total disregard for 'the radical human character of the Bible' as the Reformed GC Berkouwer indicated in his two volumes on the Bible *Holy Scriptures I and II* (Berkouwer 1975). Precisely in the sense making approach of the Bible as a non-human or a-human divine book that has fallen somewhere from the divine skies lurks the biggest problem. If at least the Bible was reckoned and acknowledged as simultaneously a divine and human book in a similar sense as the divine and human natures of Jesus the problem would not have been so immense. Interestingly in a similar sense as Jesus Christ has lost his humanity in the modern churches by being solely and singularly declared 'the Son (=divine Son) of God on the right hand side of the Father' on the pulpits, the Bible has lost its radical human character by being declared and treated as the divine Word of God in the churches.

The real problem with the Bible as the exclusive divine Word of God with no real human words as input, starts when we treat the Bible as an historical account sanctioned by God as divine history revealed to us as to how events and processes happen during God's creation of the heavens and the earth in the beginning up to the end of times with the creation of the new heaven and the new earth. When one objects that no human person was present in the whole process of creation because Adam and Eve were called into being as human beings in the creation process according to Genesis 1-3, the short and abrupt answer is given that God has revealed to someone how the whole creation process happened, thereby simultaneously God's Spirit *dictating* to someone to write down the whole creation process or *inspiring* as God's Spirit inspires someone orally to tell the sequence of the creation process to others and to pass it orally down the centuries until it was written down into the Hebrew text.

A few things happen with this sort of approach in which every letter and word of the Bible is declared a micro letter or word of God in the big scheme of the Bible as the Word of God. One thing that happens for sure and which is quite common amongst many Bible loving Christians is that by accepting every letter and every word of the Bible as letters and words of God, the whole process - from the creation of the heavens and the earth in the

beginning of Genesis to the creation of the new heaven and the new earth at the end of Revelation – is set up as a divine historical cinematographic film in front of which one is allowed to move from left to right and up and down to get as a first step access to the whole divine ‘historical’ process from beginning to end and secondly to get access to specific and particular parts of the whole divine historical process which play itself out in the words of the Bible. The second step in the whole approach is thus that one can have access to the whole divine historical process from Genesis to Revelation - which is acted out in a parallel sense in one’s mind - by stepping into any stage of the divine historical cinematographic process through the opening of any book and any chapter or even the reading or quoting of any verse in the Bible.

The **basic tendency of the second approach** is to view the Bible as a collection of books – composed, written and compiled by human beings under the guidance of the Spirit of God – with a central message, religious motive, basic scope or tendency accepted, seen and experienced as the Word of God and which has to be applied in various ways in people’s lives. The central message or basic religious motive of the Bible, the Word of God as the guiding light for life and hereafter has to be applied in the interpretation of the Bible that is, application of the central message in the understanding and explication of a particular book, chapter, paragraph or verse of the Bible. This procedure is inherently ongoing and circular in character: the central message, basic scope or Word of God, has to be extracted and evoked through interpretational understanding and explication of the text of the Bible under the guidance of the Spirit of God and then has to be applied as sense making message or scope for ongoing understanding and explication of the Word of God in the text of the Bible. Every church tradition and every theologian of name supported and advocated a specific and particular emphasis and formulation of the central message, basic scope or Word of God. Luther (d.1546) did it with the idea of ‘the interplay of the two realms of Law (OT) and Gospel (NT), Calvin (d.1564) did it with ‘the process of two covenantal stages of promise (OT) and fulfilment (NT)’, the Reformed theologians, the Swiss Karl Barth (d.1968) and the Dutch GC Berkouwer espoused in the 20th century ‘Jesus Christ as the revelational epicentre and midpoint of the total process of God’s works’ from Creation to the Eschatological end of times in which the consummation of the whole process is taking place. Barth went to an actualistic extreme with regard to the Bible with the idea that the Word of God happens in and through the Bible. The Reformed philosopher H Dooyeweerd (d.1978) formulated what he called the religious ground motive or religious

scope of the Bible as the Creation by God, the subsequent falling into sin by human beings, and the provision of salvation through Jesus Christ in communion and fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

The 16th century Reformers, Luther and Calvin leaned towards the interpretational approach of the basic message, scope or Word-of-God in the Bible but increasingly the fundamentalist mirroring approach of the infallible and inerrant Word(s) of God became the dominating approach in a very large portion of churches around the world.

Some believe that God can only be found in the Christo-centric revelation process of Jesus Christ the Word of God in the cross of which the resurrection is the revelatory witness of the cross event →Jesus Christ as the Word of God in the preaching of the Church →and the Word of God through the revelatory witness of Scripture. An adherent to this idea is Karl Barth and such a viewpoint is highly problematic because firstly God did not create only on behalf and with Jesus Christ as the messianic goal of creation or as the midpoint and centre of creation and history. Secondly God is not less revelationally present as Creator in nature and the rest of creation than in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the approach followed by the author, in line with the emphasis of the tradition of the Reformation that starts in the 16th century with Luther and Calvin, is that of the interpretation or interpretative hermeneutical approach which operates on the one hand with the interpretative gathering and extracting of the central message or religious scope of the Bible from the Bible and from a human beings experience and reflection of faith and theology, while on the other hand the central message or religious scope of the Bible as the Word of God radiates and throw light on human beings interpretation of the texts of the Bible as well as their interpretation of our experience and reflection of faith under guidance of the Holy Spirit in the unwrapping and development of the basic statement and process of this dissertation.

1.3.2 Faith experience as divine supernatural or creaturely human experience?

One cannot identify with either a totally Scripturally bound or naturally creational revealed message of the coherence, otherness and ongoing process of God's works. The distortion and confusion in people's religious experience caused by either an exclusive Bible bound

or a natural experiential approach around the access and our human involvement in the whole process of God's works is one of the basic reasons why this study was tackled. If the witness to the Lord through creation alone is used as the basis for religious experience then there are few guidelines (which are open to misinterpretation and false deification) and a major part of God's witness regarding Himself is lost, yet a focus on Scripture to the exclusion of external witness leaves the experient without the emotional linkage that the experience of creation as God's work gives. When Scripture is taken as the only witness of the Lord then the work of the Spirit with individual believers today becomes relegated to interpreter status i.e. the Spirit in experience is restricted largely to the opening of Scripture to the believer. Yet the Spirit has a much wider role as the ongoing life-giving renovator and renewer of all works of God and human beings as well as the physical-organic environmental nature. The vast list of gifts and fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Paul's letters in the NT is a very good example of some of the tools the Spirit is making use of and which is at the disposal of any person to live a meaningful daily life in the broad ambience of the Kingdom of God. The outworking of these are often seen in the current non Scripturally based religious experiences of people, such as a feeling of peace gained through prayer over an area of concern, or an experience of the love of God gained in the act of worship.

Faith, belief or trust does not have a higher and more important embracing position than thinking, feelings, producing, loving, speaking, etc. Faith and belief experience is no more religious or divine than other fields of human experience and is not a religious dimension beyond any comparison. In fact there is in the author's view no special religious dimension because God is directly involved in every field of experience as the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. Saying it clearly metaphorically in terms of the engine of a motor car, every field of experience has its own sparkplug, the nucleus or core of the field of experience where the Spirit of God is continually sparking and fusing, connecting God, being human and the physical-organic environment in a pattern of experience. The idea of a religious dimension amongst various human dimensions of experience in the lives of human beings, creates the impression that God squats outside the non-religious ordinary human dimensions and that God is actually only allowed to enter in their lives through the so called religious or religious faith dimension which operates amongst the multiplicity of fields and modes of our created existence but does not form part of them through God's

creation.

God is also directly involved in experiential fields outside the field of experience of faith. The highly problematic traditional view of faith is that religious or Christian faith is added to the various other created - by God - fields of experience through 'God's grace of salvation and renewal' so as if all the other created fields of our experience are not in need of 'God's salvific grace' and direct 'involvement'. In this dissertation the author is strongly convinced that faith or belief is not the only field or dimension in which God is directly experienced or in which God is directly involved. Faith is not to be chopped into a *religious or Christian faith* realm which is reserved for faith and belief in God and experience of God, and an *ordinary human faith* realm in which human beings and the natural physical-organic world is experienced. The modern American Catholic theologian Brennan Hill (1990:32) in describing his own view on the nature of faith speaks for the majority of people who operates in terms of the traditional double position:

Human faith is a trusting attitude toward others and toward reality. Similarly, religious faith is a trusting response to ultimate reality, to Mystery, to God.

In a theology that really operates within the field of the experience of faith and belief, faith is an integrated field which cannot be divided into two double-sided fields, realms, levels or dimensions as asserted by the majority of religious people and a great section of Christianity. In this regard the symbol of the cross of Jesus is used to explain the divine and human dimensions of faith, the horizontal wooden pole is then the human dimension of faith and the vertical pole is the divine or Godly dimension of faith. Without realisation these theologians and Christians use the cross in a highly problematic sense, that is, dualistically in which God is removed from the horizontal dimension and human experience in turn disappears from the vertical dimension.

When a human being reads Scripture he brings to the act of reading a background faith experience and experience from all other fields of experience which enables the reader interpretatively to enter into an existential relationship with the Word. Further, when a believer reads the Bible he has both the believer's experiential base and the contribution of the Spirit in interpreting the Word. This existential relationship between Scripture, Spirit and believer is an essential part of the ongoing renewing and sanctifying process in the believer which is part of God's coherent Kingdom steered process and plan.

The world is not God-less. The author's view is that God reveals coherently and diversified senses in God's different works in contradiction with Barth's extreme christocentric (equivalent to churchcentric and bibliocentric) views of revelation that everything regarding God's disclosure to human beings is revelatory in Christ. God reveals creationally in creation, redemptively and reconciliatory in the cross and the resurrection, renovatingly and renewally through the Spirit of Pentecost, and consummatingly, that is new heavenly and new earthly fragments and moments break in from God's future work of the new earth and new heaven into our current daily lives. On what basis are fragments and moments of the new earth and the new heaven irrupting into and taking place in our lives? The only answer is that of the existence of Jesus Christ being resurrected by God's Spirit to a pneumatic new heavenly and new earthly bodily existence. The new heaven and the new earth happened in anticipation and as precursor in the resurrection of Jesus by the Spirit of God.

God in an ongoing sense unfolds and reveals God's self in human beings and the natural cosmic universe - creationally in creation, redemptively in the reconciliation events of Jesus, renovatingly in the renewing events of Pentecost through the Spirit and in a fulfilling sense consummates everything in the transcending of the old heaven and the old earth into the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth. What Paul is portraying in Romans 1:19 is to say that in God's ongoing creation process, God is unfolding and revealing himself creationally and that no one can be excused from an awareness that God is creator of everything; and human beings are thus responsible and accountable concerning the ways human beings deal with and treat themselves as God's creation as well as everyone and everything else as God's creatures.

From Barth's viewpoint (Van Niekerk, 1983, 139 and 194)¹ God is not predominantly presented and represented in the secular world but primarily through Jesus Christ in the Church and the Bible. With this view Barth really de-emphasised creation on behalf of Jesus Christ as the midpoint in history and was thus fully expressing a Church-centred secularisation approach and a Bible-centred approach within the process of God's works from beginning to end. The Author differs strongly from the overall thrust of Barth's view because of the character of coherence between and the otherness of each of God's

¹ van Niekerk, E, 1983. *Study Guide for THA301 (Christology) Systematic Theology*, South Africa: UNISA. pp 139 & 194

works which is actually carried amongst human beings and the rest of creation through the coherent and diversified process of God's Kingdom. One has to admit that Barth did not specifically work with the completion of creation at the end of Genesis 2 because rightfully Barth did not view Genesis 1-3 as history as we usually interpret and make use of it. Barth uses the term *saga* because no human person was present when God created and we actually do not know how God created. The basic we have to know is that God created everything and that it was intrinsically good and that we must be utterly aware that we as human beings are creatures of God.

In Genesis 2:4 the composer of the book of Genesis makes the following conclusive statement: God created everything and everything was good. This radical undergirding and carrier statement of Genesis 1-3 is made against the background of the portrayal in Genesis of creation in mostly Mosaic-priestly views and terms because of the role of the seven day week and the Sabbath in Genesis 1 version of God's creation. One thing we at least can say of Barth's view of creation is that he was not a fundamentalist mirrorist and imitator of Genesis 1-3 as divine revelation which supposedly has fell from heaven as the true blueprint and as a historical portrayal of how God actually created the heavens and the earth.

Through this dissertation we see that the works of God continue in a creative and coherent continuum from the portrayal in Genesis 1 to the description of their consummation in Revelation through the dynamic broad movement of the Kingdom of God that moved through Israel and the other nations of the world and through the churches and other institutions as well as in the Bible, in the experiences of humanity and in the vast non-human creation. This therefore links creation, redemption, renewal and consummation in a process which is not confined to the usual theological pointers of the Church and the Bible. Churches and the Bible are signs and instruments of the Kingdom of God amongst and in the many universes and **not the only** signs and instruments of the Kingdom of God in and amongst the many universes. The limitations of a church-centred secularisation hypothesis and a Bible bound mirroring fundamentalism in which the church and the Bible are the only signs and instruments of the process of God's coherent but differently done and processed works are clear in many theologies which either start with a creation-centric, christo-centric, pneuma-centric, ecclesio-centric or biblio-centric

sense making approach in their lives, their theological and faith reflection and their view of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

1.3.3 Theological Reflection as avenue and source for the coherence and otherness of God's works and human works

The creation, redemption, renewal and consummation of humanity and the cosmic natural universes emerge in the mysterious movement of the Kingdom of God amongst us from the beginning of the history of which we are aware as human beings through all sorts of means we have access to such as

- the Bible which is composition of a selection of books framed as authoritative canon and selection from hundred's of writings which did the round in the fourth century AD,
- the palaeontological records of human, animal and plant deposits of antiquity
- the macro stellar and universe investigation of modern physics, and
- the God, life and world experiences and patterns of faith in daily life
- theoretical reflection of theology, philosophy and other sciences.

In the dissertation the focus will be on the coherence and otherness of the ongoing process of God's works taking primarily the Biblical record and faith experiences as well as the faith and theological reflection of many people as possible into the reflection process we are busy with into account.

The way the Bible makes sense to people and the way their experiences make sense in their lives about the coherence and otherness of God's works as a foursome awareness within the time continuum of past, present and future demonstrate and display the unique, particular and specific character of a person's views of the ongoing process of the coherence and otherness of God's works.

The prophet Isaiah linked the past, present and future of the process from creation to the future with inclusion of the new creation together in a holistic viewpoint. Isaiah's view is however Isaiah's unique, particular and specific viewpoint in his time and age. Isaiah has therefore a one-sided emphasis on the otherness of one of the foursome works of God

which he gained from his particular perspective, determined by the cultural and sociological belief influences which prevailed at that time.

God spoke through the Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah and like Isaiah in the Old Testament, the writers of the books in the New Testament did not fully understand the revelations communicated through them as the meanings were to unfold from age to age. Like so many other prophecies, Isaiah's prophecy sets events together which are remote from each other in time, i.e. Isaiah 9:6 and 9:7. In Isaiah 9:6 Isaiah wrote about the child who was going to be born and Isaiah 9:7 displaced the reign of the child's kingdom. Events of the near and distant future as well as the "past" and "present" are all brought together as one big picture. What exactly the intervals contain between these periods and how long the intervals between different periods will be remains a secret to the Prophet or book writer.

The Prophets addressed themselves to their fellow human beings from within a certain situation and timeframe and when Isaiah speaks for instance he saw judgement (Isaiah 21:5-12) and destruction on Babylon and Edom or consummation (Isaiah 52:8 and 62:6, 7) when the Lord returns and establishes Jerusalem. But he stays a person just like all the other prophets and displays individual characteristics, as did the other prophets: for example Amos still conveys a shepherd from the countryside with the experience of a shepherd as is reflected in the examples which he uses i.e. the lion which roars in the thicket and the bird who falls into a trap on the ground (Amos 3:4-6); while Ezekiel, as a priest, displays his priestly service when he describes the future priestly service. As a priest he described the final perfect kingdom of God in words that his contemporaries could understand, (Ezekiel Chapters 40 - 48). The Prophets temperaments are displayed as well, i.e. the mourning style of Jeremiah. These prophets often used the colours and shapes from their surroundings when they gave their message. Their message is therefore conditioned and human although it was also divine in the sense that it was inspired.

As Professor E van Niekerk rightly stated: The Old Testament is therefore an expression of the views of the nation of Israel on the grand works of God as a process of past, present and future. It does not give us the "correct" view of the process from beginning to end. If it did it would be unnecessary for us to have the NT times and the ST times (our times as the Spirit Testament times).

JS Whale in his work *Victor and Victim* (1960:13) expressed his unique, particular and specific view of the coherence and otherness of the ongoing work of God with his equation of ‘goal and end, Τέλος and finis of the past, present and future process of God’s works’ in their description in the Bible as follows:

“In the Bible . . . goal and end, Τέλος and finis, are equated. It is the end of history, rather than a timeless eternity beyond history, which expresses the complete and perfect will of God. Thus the redeeming activity of the Eternal within time is promissory evidence of that end. Exodus and Sinai . . . prefigure the final consummation of the redemptive process – the coming of the Messiah, the day of the Lord, the ending of the old world order, and the new creation of the new order, which is the Kingdom of God.” (Whale, 1960, 13)²

Whale’s rendition has a holistic tendency for sure but is unfortunately one-sided in the sense that the work and the times of the Spirit of God before the end of history fell at the wayside of his description. Whale’s theological basis for the pre-figuration of the final consummation in the events of Exodus and Sinai is a bit thin and the placing of the Kingdom of God at the end of everything is nonsensical. The thrust of the theological approach of the author is the emphasis on the coherence and the otherness of the ongoing works of God as a process and it is a strong conviction of the author that we should not emphasise one of the grand works of God at the expense of any of the others. In order for the author to succeed fully in this dissertation with what is set out to achieve, the full emphasis should be on:

- God’s work of the creation of all things and an ongoing creation as part of God’s work of creation, and
- human beings and creation as continuously demonstrating the falling into sin in an inexplicable and mysterious way, and
- God’s ongoing work of redemption and reconciliation which has been finally effectuated in the cross and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and
- God’s ongoing work of renewal and renovation of all things which is performed and executed through God as Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and

² Whale, JS, 1960, *Victor and Victim*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 13

- on God's ongoing work of the consummation of all things into a new heaven and new earth which is already irrupting and breaking in from the future into the current times of the Spirit of God as resurrected reborn fragments and moments of the new heaven and new earth in our lives on the basis of the resurrection and raising of Jesus by the Spirit of God to the level of a pneumatic new heavenly and earthly existence as the beginning and end of God's work of reconciliation and God's work of creation.

The Scriptures as a reliable witness attesting to this central message or religious ground motive and our five-some awareness and experience in every part of our lives are directly attributing and contributing to the way the coherence and otherness of God's works are spelt out in this dissertation.

1.4 Overview of the dissertation

Chapter 1: The coherence, otherness and ongoing process of God's works

In chapter 1 the scene is set around the basic problem and the basic thesis or story of the dissertation. The basic thesis and the thrust of this dissertation is that of a 'both...and' and not an 'either...or' relationship between the coherent, otherness and ongoing process of which the Bible attests of the foursome ongoing process of God as Creator,(Human beings and their falling into sin), God as Redeemer and Reconciliator in Christ, God the Holy Spirit as the Renewer and Renovator of all things and God the Consummator and fulfiller of the process through the new and fulfilling creation and establishment of the new heaven and the new earth in which human beings are involved and engaged in the experience of a fivesome experience of human beings as being created by God, as have fallen into sin, as being redeemed and liberated to the Kingdom of God in the cross and the resurrection and as being under constant renovation and renewal through the Spirit of God encapsulated in the approaching new heaven and new earth that is provisionally but real irrupting in human beings lives from the future.

Chapter 2: The process of the works of God and the works of human beings

In chapter 2 the synergism, concomitance, coterminous and correspondence between God's works of Creation, Reconciliation/Redemption in Christ, Renewal/Renovation through the Spirit, and God's Consummation and fulfilling of the whole process in the creation and establishment of the new heavens and the new earth which are synergistically, concomitantly, coterminously and correspondingly expressed and engaged as process in a fivesome awareness of human beings as being created, as continuously falling into sin, as being saved/redeemed/reconciled, as being under renovation and renewal through the Holy Spirit and as being encapsulated in the consummation and fulfilling of all things in the new heaven and new earth through the awareness of the irruption of fragments and moments from the future into human beings' present lives.

Chapter 3: God's work of creation: human beings and the created cosmic universe (nature)

Chapter 3 focuses on God's work of creation as *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*, how human beings experience God through His creative work as revealed by the Holy Spirit as well as through Scripture, how all of creation is actually linked together and linked to God as Creator. Everything that has been created is also different from each other but function together as can be deduced from Scripture and experience, especially when we deal with it from various disciplines i.e. Zoomorphologically, Astronomically etc. Principles and regularities are set in place but sin intervened and a redemptive process to regenerate the creation of God forms part of the *creatio continua* process until the consummation.

Chapter 4: Sin and evil: God, human beings and the created cosmic universe (nature)

Human beings have sinful tendencies with relation to damage they do to God, themselves and other creatures of God as well as God's creation. Various viewpoints on sin have been held by human beings which is scrutinised within the framework of the author's interpretation of the Bible on sin and evil and the consequences as well as place of sin in the fivesome awareness process.

Chapter 5: God's work of redemption and reconciliation through Jesus Christ: human beings and the created cosmic universe

Jesus, as part of the salvific and reconciliatory power of the cross and resurrection opened the way of eternal life to human beings in order for them to be part of the new heaven and new earth in the consummation as well as the other creatures in creation. The works of Jesus have been viewed from different perspectives by considering them from a scriptural base and with the works of Jesus on the cross as well as the resurrection we find the beginning of a new stage in the *creatio continua* process.

Chapter 6: God's work of renovation and renewal through the Holy Spirit: human beings and the created cosmic universe

In chapter 6, the discussion circles around the 2000 years after Christ's birth as the time and era of the Holy Spirit and why the Spirit-centeredness of people's experience through this period gave way for church-centeredness and Jesus-centeredness.

This chapter highlights the power of the Spirit of Pentecost which guides the renewal of human beings especially believers as well as the involvement of the Spirit in all other creation of God in the universe. Different viewpoints on the work and person of the Holy Spirit are discussed as the Spirit is the main agent in the regeneration process.

Chapter 7: God's work of consummation and fulfilment: the transcending of the old heavens and old earth into the new heavens and the new earth

Different viewpoints on the consummation have their own strengths and weaknesses respectively. The author, however, focuses on the works of God as part of the continuous creation and redemption process and aspects like resurrection, the Second Advent, judgment, consummation as well as the establishing of a new kingdom together with eternal punishment form integral aspects of God's work.

Chapter 8: Conclusive comments on the coherence and otherness of God's works in relationship to the works of human beings and the created cosmic universe

The ongoing coherence and otherness of God's works of creation, reconciliation and renewal of human beings and the created universe can be seen with the involvement of God through *creatio continua*, the salvific and redemptive work of Jesus as well as the

regenerative work of the Holy Spirit on a continual basis. The works of God could be experienced within human beings as well as externally i.e. outside of human beings in the renewal of plant life etc.

Chapter eight links the fivesome process into a coherent whole where all the major interrelated works of God are linked together so as to see the whole redemptive and reconciliatory plan of God whereby each God ordained aspect worked together to bring to culmination the events in the consummation so that God will become all in all.

2 The Synergistic, Concomitant, Coterminous and Corresponding Relationship of God's Works in the Works of Human Beings

In this chapter we describe the works of human beings and humanity in terms of the fivesome awareness in their life processes as:

- being created,
- as being sinners,
- being redeemed and reconciled,
- as being under renovation and renewal
- as human beings through the Holy Spirit in this life

and furthermore provisionally encapsulated through anticipatory fragments and moments of afterlife which already are breaking into this life from the future. To say it poignantly: in the fivesome awareness of a human being's life process or pilgrimage the works of God is coming to its own and is really touching base in the material character of God's creation. This is the basic reason why the heading of the chapter is the relationship of God's works with the works of human beings. The works of human beings should follow the grand works of God. God created everything including human beings and therefore human beings created in the image of God should create and actualise themselves on the basis of being created by God, human beings did and still do damage God, themselves and the physical organic environment through sin and evil. Therefore they must deny their own sinful damaging attitude towards God, themselves and nature on the basis of God's redemption in the cross of Jesus and God's liberating empowerment to a new life in the resurrection of Jesus as the Christ. They must be renovated and renewed through themselves in and with the Holy Spirit and they have to be aware of their encapsulation in the consummation and fulfilment process that is approaching their lives as well as the natural cosmic universe from the future.

2.1 Introduction

One can only deal with the works of humanity as a fivesome awareness and experiential process within the depth and width of the Kingdom of God that swerves, moves and

embraces natural history and human history since their establishment, instalment and creation in the beginning of time until the consummation of all things in the new heavens and the new earth. Human works, to be meaningful and significant for this life and afterlife, must follow God's works while being intrinsically taken up, involved and engaged in the works of God in a synergistic, concomitant, coterminous and corresponding way.

In what follows different sense making faith and theological reflective approaches of the works of God and the synergistic, concomitant, coterminous and corresponding experiential works of human beings are discussed. It is done through the discussion of (a) the basic storyline, message and notion of each of these approaches about the relationship of God's works and human works, (b) the view and use of the Bible and (c) their views and use of faith experience in daily life and theological reflection, (d) the view of the relationship of church and Kingdom of God.

The following approaches are discussed:

- (i) the orthodox Reformed/Presbyterian theological notion of a covenant manifesting itself in a diversification of covenants in the history of revelation that covers the whole process of God's engagement and involvement with human beings and nature from beginning till the end (2.1.1 below);
- (ii) Karl Barth's evangelical reformed sense making approach of the Christocentric revelation of the whole process of God's works in Jesus Christ (2.1.2 below);
- (iii) a fundamentalist mirroring Biblical sense making approach which imitates the Bible as inerrant and infallible historical record of God's words about his works from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Book of Revelation (2.1.3 below)
- (iv) The author's attempt to describe the coherence and otherness of God's works as a synergistic, concomitant, coterminous and corresponding fivesome awareness in the experiential works of human beings (2.1.4 below).

2.1.1 The Orthodox Reformed/Presbyterian Notion Of A Covenant As Link Between God's Works And Human Works

Orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian theology of the 17th and of later times expressed the

engagement and involvement of human beings and the natural cosmic universe with the works of God through the notion of a one-sided divine covenant or contract of which there were many through what they term the *history of revelation* from Genesis to Revelation. According to this Orthodox Reformed/Presbyterian theological construction, God concluded one-sidedly different covenants from the beginning of the history of revelation up to the highpoint and final point of these covenants, namely the covenant of grace in Christ. The following covenants in revelatory history had been concluded by God:

- a covenant or contract with Adam – which was theologically termed a *covenant of works* or *covenant of nature* with Adam as head of the whole human race and thus with created nature and the natural processes that had to be cultivated by human beings;

- a further *covenant of nature* with Noah (Noahic covenant) regarding natural processes and God's involvement – in the covenant with Noah the assurance was given that he will be delivered and saved from the approaching catastrophe of the flood which was called the covenant of nature. The rainbow sign is given as an assurance that God will be God for all human beings in whatever happens in and through nature after the flood (Gen 6 and 9);

- a *covenant of abundance* as a covenant of grace with Abraham – everyone coming from the loins of Abraham will be blessed to be abundant in numbers and everything within the households of such human beings will be blessed with abundance in the ongoing generations. The sign of the contractual promise of abundance with Abraham was the circumcision of everyone and everything male and this “covered” everyone and everything non-male associated to the circumcised male (Genesis 15 and 17);

- a *covenant of the law* or a covenant of the gracefulness of the law with Moses and Israel, the so called Sinaitic covenant which was a covenant of the blessing through obedience to the law of God which covered every aspect of the conduct of the nation of Israel. The law of God for Israel was thus a blessing when the covenantee was obedient to the law in the smallest aspect of the law and the law was a punishment when the precept of the law in the smallest aspect was disobeyed and transgressed (Exodus 24; 20-25;)

- a *covenant of grace* is concluded in the sacrifice of Jesus in which He is the highpoint and the final mediator of the covenant of grace in the history of revelation – a covenant regarding God’s righteousness demonstrated in His redemptive and reconciliatory dealings with human beings and the rest of creation in the sacrifice of the cross of Jesus.

It is worth noting that in spite of many Reformed theologians insistence that Calvin was a theologian of the Holy Spirit especially in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a contrary view is closer to reality; and that is the lack of a covenant of Pentecost and a covenant concerning the resurrection of Jesus by the Spirit of God, this may be the main reason why the Holy Spirit plays the role of an appendix to the ascended Jesus Christ as the King and Lord in Reformed people’s lives. Furthermore, the stoppage and embargo that Calvin put on the experience of the gifts of the Spirit diminished the role of the Holy Spirit in people’s daily experience. In the Reformed scheme of Word → Spirit, the Word has two meanings and senses, namely Jesus Christ as King and Ruler as incarnated Word of God and the Bible as inscripturation of the Word of God. And the Spirit in this scheme of Word and Spirit? The Spirit’s role in the majority of Reformed/Presbyterian people’s sense making approaches is been reduced to being only the divine authenticator of the Bible as the divine Word of God. Is this not the reason why Reformed and Presbyterian people become more and more mirroring fundamentalists of the Bible?

Although we are justified by faith, faith in itself is nothing according to Calvin as faith acquires its value only through Jesus and His works. Faith is merely an instrument. If we insist too much on the part which faith plays in justification then we might run the risk of diminishing the work of Christ. Faith is a matter of living by the promises of God, through the written word the Incarnate Word becomes understandable and capable of trust and commitment. Only when there is *fides* of belief and *fiducia* or trust in combination with each other is there real faith. For the reformers faith is a relationship to Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

In the Reformer’s view God makes use of the Church in order to sanctify His people and apart from the Church there is no salvation. The Church in the author’s viewpoint however, cannot mediate between God and man since Jesus is the only mediator. The Kingdom of God is everywhere where human beings submit themselves to God and although the Church is not the Kingdom of God it is within the Kingdom of God.

There is only one foundation of the Church and that is Jesus Christ. Jesus dispenses His grace to His Church by means of the people who are entrusted with certain offices within the Church. This Church is invisible and comprises of all the elect, living or dead, throughout the world. The election of some people implies the non election of others.

When human beings are rejected, injured etc. within the Church by those within the Church, then those within the church responsible for the action are actually offending Jesus. Although the Church may remain imperfect on earth it must continue to work towards its own sanctification and that of its members.

The Church cannot overrule the written word of Scripture as Scripture alone is infallible with regards to doctrine.

2.1.2 Karl Barth's Theological Notion Of God's Revelation In Christ As The Link Between God's Works And Human Works

“Evangelicals regard the Bible as the Word of God, spoken through different men and now written down collected together. Liberals see it as a collection of documents, often fallible but which nevertheless contain profound insights. At first glance Karl Barth seems to stand somewhere between the two . . . But . . . his mind began to change. His new starting point . . . was the fact that God today still speaks through the Bible . . . The key to Barth's understanding of the Bible is the fact that God reveals Himself in a unique way through these writing.” (Brown, 1967, 144)³

Barth's viewpoint can be succinctly stated in that God reveals himself in His word in Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is all done by God's free grace. This Word of God is actually Jesus Christ which acts as mediator of both revelation and salvation.

Revelation in itself is encounter with the living God. The prophets, although sinful in their action and capable of error in their writing still revealed the Word of God albeit in their erring human words. It seems that for Barth, revelation is a dynamic, personal process which can only happen from God's side.

³ Brown, C, 1967, *Karl Barth*, London: Tyndale Press, pp144

All God's dealings with men happen through the person of Jesus Christ.

Although Barth acknowledges that there is a revelation of God in nature, human beings do not use it to honour God but to make gods of their own choosing. Apart from this fact, an awareness of God through nature does not lead human beings to be united with Christ and have new life which therefore does not set out a complete theology.

God has entered into a relation with human beings through the person of Jesus Christ, which is very God but also very man and representative of human beings. This implies that we can know God and His works through Jesus. The goal of everything is the history of this covenant.

This covenant's core concept is the partnership of God and man through the union of the Son of God, with Jesus of Nazareth. All of the works of God as well as God's dealings with human beings takes place through this person of Jesus.

Although the first form of the Word of God is Jesus Christ, the second form is the Bible which consists of witnesses which look forward (OT) to Christ or backward (NT) to Christ.

In essence the Bible is actually the word of human beings but becomes God's Word in the event of an encounter with God – when and where this revelation occurs is determined by God. This Bible could become the means through which God speaks to human beings although it remains human words. Barth warns people not to let the Bible become some sort of Paper Pope. For another group of human beings the words of the Bible only remain words of human beings. God, however, also speaks through the writers and speakers who are not canonical.

Barth is of the opinion that prophets and apostles were real sinful human beings and were capable of error and, based on this logic, the biblical documents therefore could contain error. Having said this human beings should still treat the Scriptures with respect and all of the Scriptures as equally inspired.

The Word of God cannot be judged but only be appreciated in faith and obedience.

In terms of faith experience in daily life it was Barth's view that Jesus makes faith into experience because He gives Himself to it as object. Faith actually is a trust in the promise of mercy. Barth's doctrine is an *analogia fidei* because it can only be perceived

through faith as there is no way of knowing God except He Himself reveals Himself in His Word through faith. Faith is more than what happened in the past, faith is faith in the resurrected Lord which gives human beings an anticipation of His second coming.

Barth's view of the relationship of Church and Kingdom of God can be summarised as follows: - the encounters with the risen Christ are a foretaste of what it will be like in the end time at the second coming of Jesus. Jesus Christ is the one who brings about reconciliation between God and man. Jesus Himself is the relation from which God can not retract without being God. We know God in Jesus and everything which comes from God takes place in Jesus.

This relationship is a "covenant" between God and Israel as well as between God and the Church. The covenant consists of the idea that God would be their God and they should be His people – which includes human beings in general. This covenant is a union or partnership between God and human beings which has the incarnation of Jesus at its centre.

Because of the man Jesus all human beings are elected as Jesus is the one who elects and who is elected. It seems that Barth believes in a universal salvation of everybody through Christ. The people who conform enjoy the benefits where as the non conformers are not necessarily precluded. Although Barth treats the work of Christ as a justification of all human beings, he did also say that some people might live unreconciled.

2.1.3 The Fundamentalist Mirroring Notion Of The Bible As The Divine Inerrant, Infallible And Mirrored Historical Record Of The Nature Of God's Works And The Nature Human Works From Genesis To The End Of The Book Of Revelation

The programme of God is divided into seven dispensations with the seventh dispensation as the Millennium following the rapture of the Church. Each dispensation had a system of testing of obedience. The dispensation in which we are in at the present time is the Church period where Jesus Christ by His meritorious work (the cross) procured for us the righteousness of God. In this previous dispensation salvation was by legal obedience. This then seems to represent two types of salvation.

Fundamentalists teach a strict view on the inerrancy of the Bible and have the belief that God directly inspired its authors like a secretary taking dictation. Not just the thought comes from God but every word, every line, every punctuation etc. The Bible cannot be understood by the “natural” person and the Pentateuch was written by Moses. Dispensationalists teach a literal interpretation of the Bible i.e. our Lord will stand on two mountains when he comes again (Zech 14:4). His one leg will be on one mountain and His other leg on another mountain which would be impossible if He is still intact in human bodily form. A better understanding of this perhaps could be that as the two mountains represent curses and blessings respectively that His return represents curses for some and blessings for others.

The dispensationalist / fundamentalist view and use of faith experience in daily life and theological reflection is simply that faith is the sole basis of acceptance with God.

Obedience is valued highly yet is not a condition on which acceptance is based as this would imply salvation by works and the fundamentalists accept no room for works in salvation. They have a once saved, always saved approach.

According to the dispensationalists God works with Israel and the Church and the Kingdom of God was postponed until the second coming of Christ because Israel rejected God’s offer of the Kingdom. They also make a distinction between the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God.

2.1.4 The Author’s View Of Coherence And Otherness Of The Works Of God In Relationship With The Works Of Human Beings.

Several arguments can be put forward:- firstly, it may be the most difficult element of faith reflection to speak about God as creator from our position of being designed, created and given the life giving Spirit by God – all we have is our awareness of our creatureliness opened up not by ourselves but by God as Spirit. Secondly, to speak about our sinful attitude of declaring ourselves as gods who burst of pride and self-importance – all we have is our awareness of our bossy and wiseacre attitude towards God, other human beings and the natural cosmic environment and we must therefore be redeemed and liberated through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ to fit into the Kingdom scheme of things of being

real people of the Kingdom of God. Thus we have to thirdly be aware and live out our daily dynamic experience of the cross as the redemption and reconciliation and the resurrection, raised and reborn from the death of Jesus by the Holy Spirit as the empowerment and liberation to a daily new life in the process of the Kingdom of God in this world – all we have in ourselves is the self-induced attempts to crucify ourselves and to liberate and empower ourselves from our own natural resources while we are desperately in need of redemption and reconciliation by God. Fourthly, the empowerment and liberation to a new life is a daily renovating and renewing process which, maintained, affirmed and vindicated through the continuous baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit is the life-giving and life-renewing Spirit of Pentecost – all we have is our continuous superficial renewal processes in which we still do damage to God, ourselves as human beings and the physical natural cosmic environment. Fifthly, the irruption of fragments and moments as rain droplets from the future consummation and fulfilment of all things in the new heavens and the new earth are already raining and pouring down on us as snippets of experiential meaning and significance in our present and current lives.

The author describes the works of human beings and humanity in terms of the fivesome awareness in their life processes as being created, as being sinners, being redeemed and reconciled and as being under renovation, renewal as human beings through the Holy Spirit in this life on their way to afterlife and consummation and fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth. Let me say it poignantly: in the fivesome awareness of a human being life process or pilgrimage the works of God is coming to its own and is touching base. This is the basic reason why the heading of the chapter is the relationship of God's works with the works of human beings. The works of human beings should follow the grand works of God. God created everything including human beings therefore human beings created in the image of God should create and actualise themselves on the basis of being created by God. Human beings do damage to God, themselves and the physical organic environment through sin and evil therefore they have to deny their own sinful damaging attitude towards God, themselves and nature on the basis of God's redemption in the cross of Jesus and God's reconciliatory and liberating empowerment to a new life in the resurrection of Jesus as the Christ and they have to renovate and renew themselves through the Holy Spirit and experience fragments and moments of the consummation and fulfilment in the new heavens and the earth.

The author of this thesis affirms the entire truthfulness of scripture without depending on every exact detail i.e. punctuation marks, every word with every inflection does not come from God but the concepts come through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures were written by very human and capable individuals who were inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. God so guided these writers that they embodied the message He intended.

The Holy Spirit exercised His influence on the writings of New and Old Testaments. The Bible contains the revealed truths which the Holy Spirit wishes to be transmitted in writing. However, not all revealed truths are contained in the Bible as the Holy Spirit still reveals truths to people. The primary author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit; who used human writers who wrote under divine inspiration. However, divine inspiration was not dictation and the writers wrote with the influence of their personalities and cultural environments, i.e. the prophets were written under the influence of God but this influence was not the cause of every jot and tittle although the divine origin of the prophets was fully accepted. Even Jesus referred to passages in the Old Testament as the Words of God.

According to Paul Tillich “The Bible . . . is the original document about the events on which the Christian Church is founded. . . it contains the original witness of those who participated in the revealing events. Their participation was their response to the happenings which became revealing events through this response. The inspiration of the Biblical writers is their receptive and creative response to the potentially revelatory facts. The inspiration of the writers of the New Testament is their acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, and with him, of the new being, of which they became witnesses. Since there is no revelation unless there is someone who receives it as revelation, the act of reception is a part of the event itself. The Bible is both original document; it witnesses to that of which it is part.” (Tillich, 1979, 191)⁴

It has been argued that if the Bible was inspired in terms of concepts but not word for word, then it leaves room for error. However, it is the belief of this author that the Holy Spirit did not give a message and leave it with the writer to do with it as he wished, but inspired the writer to convey the message that the Spirit wanted conveyed. Surely if it is within the power of the Holy Spirit to inspire, it is within His power to inspire accurately?

⁴ Tillich, P, 1979, *Modern Theology*, London: Epworth Press, pp 191-192

The Bible has been transcribed during many centuries by various types of copyists, some of whom were inaccurate for various reasons – and thus we find textual errors and variations between manuscripts. All said and done, the Bible is still inspired of God and as such is “profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice” (advice given by Paul to Timothy in Paul’s epistle to Timothy). (2 Tim 3:16).

The Bible is a representation of the Word of God because it was written by human beings that were under divine inspiration. Although the Bible is representative of the Word of God, some might read this Bible and for them it carries little coherent meaning, whereas others read the Bible and because of the dialectic process between the reader and the message under the divine influence of the Holy Spirit that message then imparts the Word of God to that particular reader. This is a critical issue; the originator of the message (the Holy Spirit) is still part of the process of reading and understanding the Word today. We can be confident that we have sufficiently accurate manuscripts of the Scriptures for conceptual accuracy to be accessible due to the very wide range of ancient manuscripts from diverse sources and other ancient writings which refer to the Scriptures and serve to increase the confidence. We therefore can see that Scripture (The Word) has not undergone fundamental change, and the Holy Spirit remains involved in the interpretation of that Word to the believer who reads, therefore two of the three parties involved in fruitful reading of the Scriptures are unchanged, the third party, the modern reader, therefore must seek enlightenment through the Spirit inspired interpretation of the text.

As such the author of this thesis depends on the Bible as the authority in determining what to believe and how to behave although people might criticize this view as a mixture of conservatism with religious liberalism. The author dare not look at human experience, science, scholarship etc. as they are fallible and only the Bible stands as the ultimate authority. Having said this the author is also in agreement with James DG Dunn: “So long as this world lasts, the revelation of God will always be expressed in the inadequacy and historical conditionedness of a human language which constantly requires interpretation and re-expression. Those who think they live by scripture alone, and that they can wholly dispense with tradition, simply confess their blindness to their own particular traditions which effectively govern their reading of scripture. To recognise this basic fact of our own historical conditionedness is both a bulwark against all fundamentalisms which make the

written word into an idol, and a further cause for hope in Jewish / Christian traditions.”
(Dunn, 1996, 252-253)⁵

Faith is a submission of the mind to what a person believes to be the truth. Faith leads to the emotions of trust and commitment. On these the author is in complete alignment with the Reformers. This faith leads to a personal relationship with God as the author believes in the person and work of Jesus as well as the Bible as the Word of God, and the reconciliation and redemption plan of God. Faith manifests itself differently in different people depending on their personality, experiences in life, belief system, exposure to God etc. The level of faith also varies between human beings; some people have more faith than others and there are also varying levels of faith from time to time within a believer’s life.

Faith grows when believers read scripture, hear the Gospel, experience answered prayer, look at nature and see how majestic God’s works are, how the Spirit is moving in people lives etc. Faith in God through Jesus Christ in itself is a gift from the Holy Spirit as it can not be created by human effort. The Spirit renews the heart and in so doing evokes faith.

The Kingdom of God formed the central theme in the ministry of Jesus, and we find the concept in both the Old and New Testaments. The Kingdom of God is the realm in which God reigns and is all around us. The citizens of this Kingdom are not just the people found in churches who are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Whilst this Kingdom is eternal and not visible to the human eye, it is always at work.

The Kingdom of God has an already/not yet facet to it as it is prevalent in the world wherever the Spirit is made manifest – wherever there is such a manifestation the Kingdom of God breaks forth. On the other hand, this Kingdom is also not yet complete, and will not be so until the return of Christ. The essence of the Kingdom of God is in the believers heart (within) as well as without (around us) but it also is a future Kingdom which will come when Jesus returns.

The Kingdom implies subjection of everything to God and is centred in God. This Kingdom is being established by the Holy Spirit and includes the regeneration of human beings. The Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers and non-believers to liberate and renew them.

⁵ Dunn, JDG, 1996, *The Partings of the Ways*, London: SCM Press, pp 252-253

Apart from the Church which is one manifestation of the Kingdom of God we see another manifestation when non believing human beings are involved in the Kingdom of God in their endeavour to alleviate the problems of poverty, oppression, injustice, disaster relief etc. e.g. the G8 summit for debt relief, the righting of social injustices etc.

This Kingdom of God is also a present spiritual reality because of the fact that the redeemed are already in the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom is present and at work in the world like the leaven which will permeate the dough. (Luke 13:18-21) Jesus teaches about this kingdom of God being present in the world in the analogy of the yeast that the woman mixed into flour until it worked through the dough.

In order to clarify the author's viewpoint a closer look at the fivesome process is needed.

2.2 *Fivesome Process*

As believers we experience a fivesome process as we are becoming aware of our creatureliness, our continual falling into sin, being reconciled to God daily through the cross and renewal through the outworking of the Holy Spirit until we finally are reconciled to God in the consummation when God becomes all in all. A brief summary of this fivesome process is given after which each of these aspects is discussed, each in a different chapter based not on experience of human beings but with the focus on the works of God seen from a human perspective.

2.2.1 Being Created

In Genesis we are told that on the sixth day of creation human beings were created in God's image, in His likeness and were given dominion over the earth, live stock, fish, birds and creatures that move along the ground. This "image of God" could be defined as God's moral and spiritual attributes according to the Reformers or it could be defined as abilities such as relational, creativity, sensitivity to beauty etc.

But although human beings have been given these attributes they used them to their own detriment by becoming rebellious. The rebellion within human beings to the Creator is the source of the Curse in their world. When we read Genesis 3-4 we are astounded by God's care when He deals with sin i.e. "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9, NIV), "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" (Gen

3:11, NIV), “What is this you have done?” (Gen 3:13, NIV), “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?” (Gen 4:6, NIV) and His grief “The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth and His heart was filled with pain” (Gen 6:6, NIV).

In spite of the extent of sin on the side of human beings, God cares for humankind as is evidenced in His acts i.e. when He put enmity between evil and human beings in order to protect them (Gen 3:15), when God provided an escape for Noah and his family, renewed His blessing to them and even made a covenant in which He guarantees His continual blessing (Gen 9:11).

Why does God still bless human beings? Is it because human beings are made in His image?

As human beings we cannot really define ourselves. The best that the author can say on this point is that as the human race we were designated to represent God’s rule on the earth and therefore receive their meaning from God. Human beings stand in relation to God and by giving them His own breath God gave them something of His own being.

The Story of Adam and Eve is not a myth, Adam is even included in Biblical genealogies. The story of a human being falling into sin is not just a past event as it is something that happens continually. The pattern of temptation, sin and guilt replays itself each and every day across the globe as human beings wilfully disobey God.

Sin brings about separation and alienation from God as is seen in the first chapter of Genesis as well as in the lives of all human beings where their fellowship with God is hindered. But God had a plan to restore this communion and make reconciliation possible through the work of Jesus on the cross and continual reconciliatory process of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Christ.

Just as the wind blows where it wills and no-one knows from where it comes so no-one knows exactly how the Spirit of God works. We can take a daisy and strip leaf after leaf from the daisy but we will not come to the secret of life of the daisy. We can say we have new convictions, new desires, new spiritual feelings but how and exactly when it started we cannot really pinpoint – all this is invisible. This new life in the soul can never result apart from Christ’s atoning death. This life comes from Christ but the Spirit is the one who

quickens and brings a human being into union with Christ.

Believers are even given eternal life, which in essence is new life, and is the highest experience of which humanity is capable. As part of the opening gambit of His high priestly prayer, which Jesus prayed in front of his closest group, Jesus said: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3, NIV). Life is not just animal vitality or mere human existence; it involves a kind of new consciousness, a fellowship with God, an interaction with the environment and constant development. Jesus Christ is the example of this new life which is God’s gift to the believer as well as God’s goal for the believer.

2.2.2 Continuously Falling Into Sin

As sinners living in a sinful world human beings are estranged from God because of their continual sinfulness – their sins of commission as well as omission and these sins make them guilty in the sight of a Holy God. They are also estranged from fellow human beings because of deceitfulness, violence, prejudice, hatred etc.

There can be no life without a life-force i.e. potatoes can’t grow without water and sunlight, people cannot be spiritually alive without union with Christ their life bearer. What light and soil is to potatoes, Christ is to the spiritual life of human beings.

Just as a person who is drowning can’t save himself unless there is external help, so human beings cannot save themselves in the presence of all these sins. They have improved their technologies, agriculture, medicine etc but are still morally depraved and need a Saviour to atone for their sins and the Holy Spirit to renew their minds and create within them a clean heart and spirit.

2.2.3 Being Saved / Redeemed / Reconciled

When a human being is willing to change it is God who has made them willing to change because, of themselves, they are spiritually dead and incapable of accepting regeneration because they are in their natural state unwilling. God, observing the problem, works salvation by grace for human beings through Jesus Christ and keeps on working as the Holy Spirit in the renewal process of those human beings who are willing to receive grace.

Human beings are called to eternal life and they attain it as response to this call in Spirit endowed willing obedience to its law (Eph 4:1-4). In these verses Paul challenges believers to live a life which displays that they have eternal life and that they are representatives of Jesus Christ on earth – a life which reflects their reconciliation with God. This eternal life is bound up with the eternal Word of God. A believer's eternal life is actually a participation in the eternal life and sonship of Christ. human beings are raised above their own life and given eternal life by a communication of the life of the Word or Son of God through the working of the Holy Spirit within them and thus become adopted into the Sonship of Jesus and become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). Paul explicitly states that as believers are reconciled to God, they belong to God, receive eternal life and get an inheritance from their Father.

Human beings become willing because God has come in contact with their will and made them willing through the Spirit of God. God made the will and through His Spirit remakes it so that human beings become willing to believe. God is actually working out their salvation because it is administrated by the Father, accomplished by Jesus on the cross and applied in their lives by the Holy Spirit.

This salvation or redemption starts with God the Father as part of His works in conformity with His will and everything God does He does in Christ by the outworking of the Spirit in the life of the believer. This reconciliation is God's idea of dealing with the problem of alienation. This alienation is the result of the transgressions of human beings and by themselves they cannot reconcile themselves to God but can only be reconciled to God by His grace. God is the one who does the reconciliation and removes the barrier between human beings and God. This reconciliation can take place after Jesus Christ's work on the cross as well as the resurrection. The Spirit applies what Jesus Christ completed and purchased.

This new life begins as an experience of the Holy Spirit, as it did at Pentecost. He enters into a new life governed by faith and nourished by the Word of God. This Christian life is life through death, death to self and life through the Holy Spirit.

When human beings enter into union with Jesus Christ they receive new life, they become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) because of Christ's work. Paul speaks here about a re-creation of human beings by the Holy Spirit where believers then live in union with Christ. This

union consists of a burial of the old life as is reflected in Rom 6:3-11 where Paul describes Baptism as the death and burial of the old life, resurrection as coming up out of the water would symbolise resurrection to new life with Christ and ascension as is reflected in Ephesians 2:6 where Paul states that because of Christ's resurrection and ascension believers will also be resurrected and ascend where they will be seated together with Jesus in the heavenly realms which even happens in the present time frame. When they receive faith, the life of Christ is born within them and they grow from spiritual darkness, into which Adam's sin cast their human nature, into a new life in Christ. This new life grows from mere acceptance into spiritual understanding (Phil 1:9) until there will be perfect vision when they see God face to face. In this verse Paul wishes the Philippians to be unified in love and to mature in their knowledge and insight. As a human being walks in a close relationship with God and feeds on Scripture an increase in knowledge and insight is inevitable.

In the conversion of a non-believer the blood of the cross is first applied and then the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the heart. In Paul's letter to Titus where Paul speaks of the motives for the provision of salvation we read "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5, NIV). We read in 1 John 5:7-8 that in Heaven, the Father, the Spirit and Word agree and on earth there is also an inner working between Christ's blood and the Spirit of God. The blood gives authority to the Spirit and the Spirit gives life to the blood. This forms an example of the otherness of God's works as there is complete union within the triune God and Jesus and the Spirit both fulfill different roles in the reconciliation process as part of God's works.

Jesus made a relationship available to human beings through birth from above. Without His work a relationship would have been out of bounds because things from above are irreconcilable from earthly things apart from God's work.

The birth from above presupposes that human beings is a relational being and is capable of being in relationship to the supernatural. This relationship, created from above is compared to friendship by John: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:13-14, NIV), in this situation Jesus states that He his laying down His life for His friends, and we know that Jesus laid down His life so that all who believe in Him may be saved. Therefore, we see

that there is a documented relationship expectation in Jesus with his followers to come in all times. Conversion allows the supernatural power to enter the individual. With this the Jewish theory according to which “all Israelites have a share in the world to come” (Mishna Sanhedrin 10, 1) are denied. The Holy Spirit enters and stays (dwells) in the baptized human being and make a union possible.

There is also a new relationship between the believer and God – a relationship of sonship whereby the believer can address the Father as “Abba”. Converted human beings are enabled by the Holy Spirit within them to participate in:

1) the knowledge wherein the Son knows the Father as is seen in the words of Jesus when He denounced the cities in which His miracles had been performed. The people in those cities did not repent – only those who shared in the knowledge of the Father accepted His words as revealed to them by the Holy Spirit (Matt 11:27) and

2) in the love of the Father and the Son towards each other and towards mankind as they obey God’s commandments and love each other and God. When believers do this they form part of God’s kingdom as is seen in this parable where Jesus teaches about the vine and the branches (John 15:9-10).

The effect of this new life upon the emotional life of the believer is a life of love towards the brethren and towards the lost. There is also an effect of the new life upon the mental faculties of believers because of a new understanding opened through the new love that permeates the experience of the believer. We see that the first thing the Lord did for his disciples after they recognised Him was to give them a new understanding: “Then he opened their minds to understand these many scriptures” (Luke 24:45, Tyndale New Living Translation). This event happened after the resurrection and after Jesus had met with those on the road to Emmaus, when those who had met with Jesus on the Road to Emmaus had returned to the eleven in Jerusalem. Belief in the resurrection gives believers freedom and boldness even in the face of death. The sting has been taken out of suffering and death and there is no ground for anxiety in life or death.

The Spirit reproves and convinces both Jew and gentile, in every age and in every place – of sin in order to enact their conversion to the faith of Christ. We must remember that it is

not just to inform but to convict i.e. to lead them to acknowledge their sinfulness and to take responsibility for it. To show them the fault of sin, the wrong of it, the filth of it as well as the end result of it i.e. death. The Spirit focuses especially on the sin of unbelief in Christ, because this sin results in human beings not entering into rest, human beings not being able to escape the wrath of God by their sinning against the remedy – Jesus Christ.

Although it is hard to convince human beings of their own self-righteousness the Spirit will do it through putting the words in the mouths of His witnesses and making the spoken and written word effectual and living. The Word of God is life changing as it works in human beings and penetrates the core of their moral and spiritual life and through interaction with their cognitive and emotional processes requires decisions from them.

God Himself provided believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit who comes alongside them and acts from below to meet God's revelation in Jesus Christ. This is yet another way in which God is developing human beings in order to achieve their highest goal when everything is formed in the likeness of God and God is all in all.

2.2.4 Renewal and Renovation Through the Holy Spirit

After the reconciliatory work that Christ wrought on the cross for human beings, the Holy Spirit brings about spiritual change in the heart of the human being so that the inherently sinful nature is changed and the human being can respond to God in faith and progressively come to live in accordance with His will. The fleshly sinner is thus born-again and is enabled to receive and respond to the saving revelation of God.

The enlightening work of the Holy Spirit enables the born again new human being to hear and understand Biblical truths as the Spirit opens and unveils their hearts. This illumination process often starts before conversion with a gradual increase in spiritual knowledge, understanding and experience. Regeneration is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit as He leads a human being from death to life.

The author is in opposition to the Pelagian view of regeneration which holds that regeneration is actually a reformation of life and habit and a human being can choose to obey the law whereas previously he transgressed the law. The author's convictions are based upon the argument that because of the sinful bent of human beings they will fall back

into the same sin or even if they do not, which is difficult to believe, they will fall prey to other sins such as pride, because they overcame one sin by their own will.

Renovation /renewal of the old life is a progressive living where human beings experience moments of Christ breaking into their being and into their life. There are experiences in which a human being feels the strong presence of God and therefore it can even be concluded that heaven begins for believers here and now as they experience a glimpse of the glory to come breaking in from the future as God is within them as well as all around them.

Whenever believers are in the Spirit worshiping and praising God, they are led by the Spirit and taste something of the inheritance which will be theirs in the new heaven and new earth.

When human beings are drawn to God a struggle takes place within them between the old self and the new self. This is the conflict of which Paul speaks in Romans 7. This life is a process of conversion and transformation as our darkness gives way to His light and our earthliness is leavened by His heavenliness until the whole is leavened. This concept is reflected in a parable when Jesus talked about the yeast (Math 13:33). When believers live the life (freely of their own will) of Christ in obedience of the Father they will then become participants in His life of redemption. God gave human beings intelligence and free will so that they can choose. He does not want puppets. “. . . God’s will waits upon our human will for the effectiveness of His redeeming grace within us, just as His creative will waits upon our human will for the realization of His divine purpose in our creation. Man was indeed created by a pure act of God’s own will; and by a pure act of His redeeming love has the life of our redemption been willed by Him.” (Cuthbert, 1939: 145)⁶

Faith, being implanted within believers by the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be produced by rational speculation – we can only experience it and then try to analyse and clarify such experience. But neither faith nor hope can save human beings because faith and hope pass away with their mortal life. However, when faith and hope meet in charity/love (1 Cor 13:1-13) then life is being created as these attributes could be seen as external evidence of a re-created human being. In this divine love is the substance of eternal life in God. This

⁶ Cuthbert, F, 1939, *The Mystery of the Redemption*, London: Burns Oatse and Wasbourne Ltd, pp 145

divine love – the love of God for who He is and of our fellow men for God’s sake – is beyond the natural man; it is from the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). According to Paul no human being can have this type of love unless it is given by the Holy Spirit. Just like the work of salvation which no human being can perform no human being can have this love without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. This love enables believers to withstand temptations and to count the gain of this world as nothing in comparison with the glory that will be revealed in them (Rom 8:18).

The Christ-life of redemption (won on the Cross) is given to believers on earth in the virtues of faith, hope and love. But whilst alive they are still learning and in the process of formation and they learn obedience by the things they suffer when they do not conform to the evil desires of the world (1 Peter 1:14). Peter tells us here to be holy and live in accordance to God’s moral standards.

Human beings share in Christ’s sufferings when they are in conflict with evil powers or being persecuted for His sake. This in itself forms a visible sign of the new life – the unworldliness of the Gospel and the worldliness of the natural human, the self seeking of the unbeliever and the unselfishness of human beings that have gained a new life. This conflict separates human beings with new life from those who are still unbelieving. This suffering is a suffering which Christ feels with human beings and it changes lives and brings them into the Kingdom. Only when believers try to overcome the evil within themselves and around them can they say that Christ is operating within them for their redemption and that they are growing into the life of Christ. In a human beings mortal flesh the consequences of Adam’s sin cannot be escaped, and freedom is hampered by attractions to the earthly life even if they have the will to attain the higher things and this is happening until the redemption is accomplished within them as is seen in Paul’s discussion on struggling with sin (Rom 7:14-25).

In the New Testament there is a constant appeal to conform to Christ because the unification process in human beings involves their minds as well as human responsibility and they are made perfect in infirmity; this conformity is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. The new life in a human being is born in His suffering and now is reborn in them as they suffer with Him.

Regeneration shows itself in changed lives (Titus 3:1-7). Paul wrote to Titus that believers should live regenerated lives as this regeneration was accomplished for them by the Triune God and the only thing they must do is to reflect this “changed lives”. In regeneration all three persons of the Trinity are involved, through the redemptive work of His Son, the Father gives forgiveness and the Holy Spirit is sent to wash away the sins of human beings and renew them continually.

The transforming blood of Jesus has a continuous action in it because Christ has saved believers through His shed blood; He is saving them and will continue to save them. This redemption and regeneration of believers resembles what happens with human blood which is regenerated within the self, i.e. a speck of blood contains 5’500’000 living cells that are replaced every 110 to 120 days – a continual regeneration so to speak.

The Holy Spirit which enters into the body of human beings transforms the human being. A believer is able to have contact with the Holy Spirit and arrive at their own identity through the union with the Spirit of Christ. This concept is presented succinctly by Paul in Galatians when he opposed Peter on the basis of salvation: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20, NIV). A new being who lives in union with Christ – not a human who lives in adherence to The Law.

God’s holiness is physical and psychically all pervasive in man. A believer can find himself in the presence of God in his own body (*sōma*) because his body is the temple of God and human beings can offer their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him.

The Spirit is constantly at work in the believer in order to bring about the complete union of Christ and His people. In 2 Cor 3:18 Paul teaches that believers reflect the Lord’s glory and this is the work of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit sets believers free from the bondage of the law and flesh and they are renewed through the destruction of the outer man and the putting on of a new nature (Eph 4:22-24). This is a continual work of the Holy Spirit Paul tells the Ephesians believers when he admonishes them to live as children of light.

This Spirit comes from the Father as well as from the Son and convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and in so doing the Spirit keeps believers from the world and prepares them for the glory awaiting them. Because of this Spirit, the believer’s desire for

worldly satisfaction goes through a process of reduction because Jesus and the Spirit can satisfy their needs and as a result their behaviour displays an attitude of love.

Through the Spirit of Renewal the spiritual birth of a believer can take place and people can be renewed in the image of God's Son. John makes it very clear that the new birth is from God and that the believer is re-created/renewed. The Spirit brought about this new life and allows them to partake in the new creation. Through the Spirit, believers move towards spiritual maturity as they partake in a continual renewing process incorporating thoughts, language, attitudes and actions where it is evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit and when they share with others as each believer has a responsibility to take care of each others needs so that no-one would be found lacking (2 Cor 8:14). This is the outworking of God's image in us because He is love and we must love and care for each other as is evidenced in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Those people who come to salvation are transformed by the renewing of their souls. This work of grace makes a human being a new creature with new thoughts, desires and affections. This work of regeneration is an inward and spiritual work with an outward sign and seal of salvation. And all this is the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, believers can say that they are born by the Spirit, led, strengthened, helped and guided by the Spirit. This Spirit seals them by His renewing and sanctifying action by His witness to them. Jesus purchased with His blood the release of the Spirit and His gifts and this Spirit continually renews them. Because believers are sons of God – sons of the one Kingdom of God they receive a privilege to be led by the Spirit when they receive new life by the Spirit. As Paul points out in Romans 8:5-11 those who are saved are those who are in the Spirit and are indwelled by Him and therefore their affections, will and reasoning are in Christ; whereas one who's mind is set on flesh is spiritually dead. The mind that is set on the Spirit has been given spiritual life and peace with God by God's grace working through the believer's faith. This believer is joined to the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), is a member of His body and shares in Christ's work as is evidenced in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

The Holy Spirit prepares human beings for service and then uses them. Each gift a believer has is given by the Holy Spirit and is not given for show but for service and edification. This same Spirit makes them members of Christ's body and sustains them by communion.

2.2.5 Encapsulated In The Consummation And Fulfilling Of All Things In The New Heaven And New Earth Through The Awareness Of Fragments Of The Future In Human Beings Present Lives.

God reveals creationally in creation, redemptively and reconciliatorily in the cross and the resurrection, renovatingly and renewally through the Spirit of Pentecost, and consummatingly, that is new heavenly and new earthly through the breaking in from the future of snippets of the new earth and new heaven into our daily lives on the basis of Jesus Christ's pneumatic resurrected new heavenly and new earthly existence. The new heaven and the new earth happened in anticipation and as precursor in the resurrection of Jesus.

In the present time frame believers groan together with the natural creation for deliverance. "Because of our divinely bestowed sensitivity to sin, we ourselves groan within ourselves over the dreadful curse of sin that is still manifested by our remaining humanness." (MacArthur, 1991, 459)⁷

The Holy Spirit comes alongside believers and all of creation in groaning for God's day of restoration. Paul in his discourse on redemption in Romans said: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (Rom 8:26-27, NIV). Groaning can be seen to be the enactment of an induced longing for conformity with Christ within the believer; even when we are unable to formulate that longing into coherent desires.

Because believers are new creatures indwelt by God's Spirit, their souls are fit for heaven. "They love God, hate sin, and have holy longings for obedience to the word. But while on earth they are kept in bondage by their mortal bodies, which are still corrupted by sin and its consequences. Christians are holy seeds as it were, encased in an unholy shell. Incarcerated in a prison of flesh and subjected to its weaknesses and imperfections,

⁷ MacArthur, JF, 1991, *New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8*, Chicago: Moody Press, pp 459

we therefore eagerly await an event that is divinely guaranteed but is yet to transpire – the redemption of our body.” (MacArthur, 1991, 462)⁸

The blood of Jesus and the indwelling of the Spirit gives believers an inner witness that they are children of God according to Paul in his letter to the Romans (Rom 8:16). This same blood also confirms their kingship (1 Peter 2:9) as is evidenced when Peter discussed the chosen people as well as their priesthood as being discussed in John’s vision of believers during the thousand years (Rev 20:6).

To the Colossians, Paul further explains that Christ not only is presently the head of the body, the Church, but is also the beginning, the first born from the dead; so that He himself might come to have first place in everything. (Col 1:18). God acts, reveals Himself and speaks through His Spirit, so that spiritual darkness is dispelled by the giving of His Spirit who illuminates and instructs the mind and soul of everyone who subjects themselves to Him.

Human beings sometimes have experiences of this revelation of God through the Holy Spirit such as an overwhelming joy in the presence of God. Believers know that there awaits glory far beyond all comparison for them and Paul admonishes the Corinthian believers that their light and momentary troubles are achieving an eternal glory which outweighs everything (2 Cor 4:17). Paul anticipated a marvellous day when “. . . the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom 8:21, NIV). In these verses to the Romans Paul is looking forward to the day when all creation will be liberated and transformed. As Human beings we cannot fully visualise the wonder and marvel of that perfected state when all creation is transformed and all believers are glorified. Even in his letter to the Thessalonians Paul is underlying this concept that believers will share in Christ’s glorification. Believer’s glorification is the purpose of redemption “He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thess 2:14, NIV)

“. . . eternal life and fellowship with Christ are already present in the believer. The full realization of this life and fellowship (i.e., the full “experience” of it) comes at the return of

⁸ MacArthur, JF, 1991, *New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8*, Chicago: Moody Press, pp 462

Christ, which precedes the ultimate resurrection of the believer. . .” (Christian, 2003: 172)⁹. When Jesus talked about the nobleman who went to a far country (Luke 19:11-27) He stated to His disciples that His coming would be delayed for some time, in Matt 25:5 – the bridegroom was delayed and the same concept is related in Matt 25:19. The Great Commission given by Jesus prior to His ascension, (Matt 28:18) with its worldwide scope, needs a considerable lapse of time in order for the task to be performed. His tarrying is the exercise of His mercy and love in extending the days of grace in which more human beings can receive His peace and eternal life.

This eternal life is attained by baptism in the Spirit for in Luke 3:16, Luke recounting John the Baptist’s renunciation of Messiahship and his prophesy of Jesus wrote “John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." ” (Luke 3:16 NIV). This eternal life is gained through baptism and sealing by the Holy Spirit and the whole human being is granted eternal life through a relationship with God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all believers. In John 7:39 John recounts Jesus’ words when Jesus on the last day of the feast said that believes were to receive the Holy Spirit after His glorification. This Spirit, however, works both in the lives of believers as well as unbelievers. The Holy Spirit rests upon Christ and also rests upon Christ’s people who are one with Him, who are His body. Through the self same Spirit, believers are redeemed and transferred from the old age of sin and death into the new Messianic age of righteousness and life. Even unbelievers may experience moments of contact with the Spirit.

The Spirit glorifies Jesus by educating the people (John 16:14), as is evidence in the words of Jesus when He taught of the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit advances and establishes the Kingdom that Jesus Christ had erected. Jesus entrusts the Spirit to convey to human beings spiritual blessings in heavenly things and to help them to grow through the sanctifying process so that they can become like Christ (2 Thess 2:13). Paul admonishes the Thessalonians in these verses to stand firm as they have been chosen by God from the

⁹ Christian, CW, 2003, *A Theological argument for the unity of the human being - an issue in evangelical theology*, South Africa: UNISA, pp 172

beginning to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. All three members of the Trinity work together to bring about salvation and renewal. The Father chose human beings Jesus died for human beings and the Holy Spirit sanctifies them for God's service. He convicts believers when they sin, shows them God's righteousness and guides them into truth. He teaches them, plants truth in their mind, convinces them of God's will and leads them to repentance and love, even people which are not part of the visible Church.

The Holy Spirit within the believer is the guarantee that they belong to God as is evidenced in the letter of Paul to the Ephesians when he admonished them to live holy lives (Eph 4:30) and that God will do what He has promised. The presence of the Holy Spirit in them witnesses to the genuineness of their faith and that they are truly God's children and have eternal life. He transforms them and what they experience in this life is a foretaste of the change they will experience on entering into eternity and as such represents a fragment from the future breaking in to the present in a believer's life.

God gives human beings ample time and opportunity to put off the old life and put on the new life in order for them not to perish. God desires to give all human beings an opportunity to repent before He fulfils the promise of the complete renewal of heaven and earth. In his letter Peter tells the believers that although it may look like God is slow in keeping His promise He is not slow but patient and merciful and does not want people to perish but wants to give them time to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). If human beings continue resisting then He will let them exercise their own free will by choosing against Him thereby bearing the consequences of there own rebellious decision.

Although Adam received kingship, he misused his power – causing the fall – in order to satisfy his own greed for self glorification and in so doing became a rebel instead of a co-worker with God. The final result of all this ends up as a total catastrophe when the armies of the antichrist are slain and the fowls filled with their flesh as is seen in John's vision (Rev 19:21).

The children of God however, are developed by God through the works of Christ on the Cross and the outworking of the Holy Spirit in the everyday life of the believer.

Believers have a hope. For Paul New creation or re-creation began with Christ's resurrection and believers have been rescued from the powers of evil. The salvation process

is completed when believers are settled in a new home; the Kingdom of Christ. The victory over death as enemy began at Christ's resurrection and will be consummated at the Parousia when the dead believers will be raised to eternal life.

Yet will death reign for the believer who dies before the return of Christ when the general resurrection and judgment occur? Or does scripture lead us to an understanding of the process experienced by believers as they are moved along the process of redemption and given new heavenliness and new earthliness in their encapsulation in the consummation and fulfilment process which happens in their lives as well as to the natural cosmic universe from the future?

Paul experienced his life to be in Christ and death to be gain as when he is dead he would be removed from worldly problems and be with Christ. Therefore death can only be a gain. With these words Paul endeavoured to encourage the Philippians in their struggle (Phil 1:21). "Death is a great loss to a carnal worldly man; for he loses all his comforts and all his hopes: but to a good Christian it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery and the perfection of his comforts and accomplishment of his hopes; it delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to the possession of the Chief good" (Henry, 2000: 2322)¹⁰. For Paul, to be with the Lord means to be fully with Him and therefore he could say in Philippians 1:23: "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." We see that his inclination was for death and being a Jew, he would not describe a disembodied state as 'far better'. So we can accept that it must not be taken as implying an intermediate state for the believer after death. "As soon as ever the soul departs, it is immediately with Christ. 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise', Lu. 23:43, 'Absent from the body and present with the Lord' (2 Co. 5:8), without any interval between. Which is far better, pollō gar mallon kreisson – very much exceedingly, or vastly preferable." (Henry, 2000: 2323)¹¹

The Lord Jesus said from the cross to one of the criminals when He was crucified: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). To be in paradise is to be with the King, Jesus Christ, and it is immediate upon death. Lazarus died and is comforted immediately in the account which Jesus gave about the rich man and the beggar

¹⁰ Henry, M, 2000, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, pp 2322

¹¹ Henry, M, 2000, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, pp 2323

named Lazarus (Luke 16:22). Paul departs and is immediately with Christ as he stated clearly to the Philippians that when he departs he will be with Christ (Phil 1:23), Stephen was stoned and cried out “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59) indicating his knowledge that his spirit would immediately be with the Lord. Paradise is far better than here in the words of Paul to the Philippians (Phil 1:23) and to die is gain (Phil 1:21). The completion of this process is resurrection, either of life or of judgement (John 5:29). These are the words of Jesus when He stated His claim to be God’s Son.

The hope for the believer, the Church and nature, who still groans in bondage, is that we are surrounded by this love of God and that our mortal bodies will be transformed in the likeness of Christ. “. . . no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Cor 2:9 TNLT) And nothing can even conquer the church “. . . I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” (Math 16:18 TNLT) So, there is hope for the believer, nature and the Church. ‘On this final point Dr, Mascall has an opposite quotation from a Russian theologian the Archpriest Bulgakov: “The glorified state inherent in the body of the risen Christ, will be communicated to the whole of creation; a new heaven and a new earth will appear, a transfigured earth, resurrected with the Christ and his humanity.’ On this Dr, Mascall remarks: ‘Thus the resurrection of the body is not only the resurrection of the mystical body; it is also the resurrection of the world’ (op. cit., p. 148)” (Hooke, 1976: 117)¹²

Our hope is that all will be raised and restored yet transformed. The Kingdom of heaven and union with Christ are available to all who believe.

¹² Hooke, SH , 1976, *The Resurrection of Christ: as History and Experience*, London: Darton Longman & Todd, pp 117

3 God's Work Of Creation: Human Beings And The Created Cosmic Universe (Nature)

3.1 Introduction

We find God's self manifestation in *creatio ex nihilo* and throughout His ongoing developmental process or *creatio continua*. He has an ongoing relationship with His creation as He sustains it and rules it by creative acts through His Word and Spirit.

God spoke to human beings in successive stages. In his original state of innocence, Adam walked and talked with God (Gen 3:8) but subsequently he walked and talked with God to a lesser degree. Fallen human beings could not bear to hear the immediate Word of God (Ex 20:19) thus the Israelites asked Moses to speak to them instead of letting God speak to them. In the Old Testament times God spoke by the Prophets etc. but when the Lord Jesus came, God spoke through His Son according to the writer of Hebrew's when he made a case for Christ's superiority (Heb 1:1-2). Yet Jesus did not reveal everything and still more was and is being revealed in the time of the Spirit who ". . . not speaking from Himself" would take of the things of Jesus and show them to human beings as they are being renewed.

As human beings we have access to the viewpoint of the writer(s) of Genesis, as it was inspired of God, and the Holy Spirit within us to make sense of the Creation process. And even so we can only speak from our creatureliness about God as Creator. We do not really know; we do not really understand completely. Sometimes we experience glimpses of the Glory of God's work and the Holy Spirit enables us to make sense of what we "see". With our finite minds we cannot comprehend an infinite God and so we end up speaking anthropomorphically, zoomorphically, ontomorphically as we try to make sense of God's otherness.

In this chapter the focus will be on the author's understanding of God's work of creation i.e. *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*. It will include an overview of creation as is seen from Scripture, reveal how different parts in creation integrate based on Scripture as well as the principles and regulations on which they function as set by a Creator God.

All of these should enable us to get a better idea of our creatureliness as we endeavour to

view creation through our “faith glasses” assisted by the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3.2 *Creatio ex Nihilo and/or Creatio Continua*

“God created the entire universe out of nothing; it was originally very good; and he created it to glorify himself” (Grudem, 1994, 262)¹³ The creation of the Universe is one of the acts of God and He created it out of nothing and therefore the matter is not co-eternal with God but has a beginning and an end. When we read in Genesis 1 that God created the Hebrew verb “*bara*” in the Qal stem is used and it implies creation without pre-existing material. This is also declared formally by the Fourth Lateran Council of AD 1215. God is therefore “before” all creation as its originator.

In the discourse on faith in Hebrews 11:3 we read “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” (NASB) This verse states clearly that God did not make the universe out of equally visible material which was pre-existent but called it into being by divine power and the writer of Hebrews is advocating that this fact should be accepted in faith.

It is the belief of this author that God created everything out of nothing i.e. God did not use any previously existing materials when He created the universe. This is also implied by Romans 4:17 “. . . calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” (NKJV) - the visible coming out of the invisible. In his discourse on justification by faith to the Romans Paul, by implication, states clearly that God creates or brings things into being which do not exist and this is in line with the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*.

3.2.1 Early Christian Position on *Creatio ex nihilo*

Creatio ex nihilo has not been universally accepted. Plato developed the idea that the world was made out of pre-existent matter. According to the Greeks the cosmos always existed and there was always matter; this universe came out of that matter because something cannot come out of nothing. This belief was also prevalent with Stoic and Epicurean thinking. Most Gnostic writers as well as many Christian theologians, such as Justin Martyr and Theophilus of Antioch, professed a belief in pre-existent matter. Their reasoning being:

“God’s options in creating the world were limited by the poor quality of the material available. The presence of evil or defects within the world are thus not to be ascribed to God, but to deficiencies in the material from which the world was constructed.” (McGrath, 2001, 297)¹⁴ Christian Gnostics even went so far as to say that human beings are eternal and trapped in a corrupt material world. The only way out is through “gnosis” which liberates the spirit from matter.

By the second and third centuries major Christian writers argued that everything had to have been created by God. By the end of the fourth century it is found that most theologians argued in favour of God being the creator of both the spiritual and material worlds.

Theophilus of Antioch is the first that we know of who stated explicitly that God created the universe from non-being to being. Irenaeus of Lyons followed this up by stating against the Gnostics that God created the world in a free decision of will, and his Biblical-theological arguments contributed much to the general acceptance of *creatio ex nihilo* which is one of the fundamental presuppositions of Christian thought. Augustine of Hippo declared that God creates all things out of nothing as He does not create it out of Himself or any other thing.

God created the universe by His Word which has awesome power. The Alpha in Alpha and Omega in John’s vision (Rev 1:8) means that God is the originator or beginning of all things. Before God created there was nothing else beside the Triune God, this precludes pre-existent matter. Although Jewish thought was more preoccupied with the Creator than with the cosmos we still find that *creatio ex nihilo* was not alien to early Jewish thinking.

3.2.2 Extra Biblical Jewish and Christian Writings

In 2 Maccabees 7:23 we read for instance that God made all things out of nothing and that human beings comes into being in the same way. This is compatible with Christian reasoning as God made the earth and took from the earth to make man. The same concept is found in “Shepherd of Hermas” where it is stated that God brought all things into existence out of non existence. This could be seen as a reference to *creatio ex nihilo*. The

¹³ Grudem, W, 1994, *Systematic Theology: An introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Leicester: IVP, pp 262

Jewish book “Joseph and Aseneth” also contains references which imply *creatio ex nihilo*. When Aseneth threw out her idols she said to God that He created all things and gave life to all things. She continued to expand on this concept by saying that God brought the invisible things into the light. The book 2 Baruch also implies *creatio ex nihilo* as we read that God called from the beginning of the world that which did not exist (21:4). We can deduce from these extra biblical Jewish and Christian writings that there is enough evidence to counter the commonly held opinion that *creatio ex nihilo* is only a late second century concept.

3.2.3 *Creatio ex Nihilo* According to Scripture

This universe was not “made out of what was visible” (Heb 11:3) (cited above) which is in accordance with the non-visibility of electrons, protons and neutrons. Man is only now discovering that the sub particles of the atom can be expressed as pure energy and it is the author’s opinion that this energy is established by the power of God’s Word. This “energy” is used as the building material for the world as is seen in the Hebrew *bara* (Gen 1). All energy comes from God and if He was to withhold it, atomic disintegration and the destruction of the world will be the immediate consequence.

Creation exists continuously as it is upheld by the sustaining power of God which is the work of the Word and Holy Spirit. God is continually present in creation, He continually governs creation. He is everywhere present – within us and around us, busy accomplishing His regenerating process. This highlights His complete “otherness” from His creation.

He called everything into being and told all living things to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:22; 1:28) and it still obediently responds over time in a continuous process of each bringing into existence after its own kind, although this is not new action it is a continuation of an action as God acts creatively in upholding His creation. This is God’s will and His creation is still dependent on Him for its very existence. God also guides the whole process according to His will and herein we can cite multiple examples in the lives of people where they experience the power of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴ McGrath, A E , 2001, *Christian Theology: An introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp 297

In all His work God is being revealed as we can detect something of Him through observing His work. The whole creation is natural and not divine because it has been created as such by God. And God has an intimate relationship with His creation as is seen in Genesis 2 where God created man and woman with “His own hands” and walked with them in the cool of the evening. This creator God is always involved, always making things, sustaining things, renewing things in a continuous creatory process. We see the transforming work of the Spirit through all creation. Things exist and continue by the Spirit of God: the beauty and precision of the flowers of the field, the dewdrops, sweeping of the seas etc. are created by the working of the Spirit continuously.

God rules everything and everything coheres through Him. John shows clearly that God is the Creator as well as Sustainer of all life in the beginning verses of his book (John 1:3). The only law that governs God is His own Self.

The Word of God as revelation sees both the visible and invisible as one; Elisha’s servant’s eyes were opened and he saw the invisible – the mountain filled with “horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17). Because everything visible and invisible is one and changeability’s of elements is not a problem, it is much easier to understand how God can create ex-nihilo.

The constituents of matter are protons, neutrons and electrons. Depending on their number in the atom we know with which element we are dealing. If there are 7 protons and neutrons in the nucleus and seven electrons orbit around this we are dealing with Nitrogen. If the atomic nucleus loses a proton, then it will automatically lose an electron to retain a balanced charge with the nucleus and we are then dealing with a form of Carbon.

In the beginning God Himself called all atomic energies into being and united them in accordance with His will, which physicists now regard as the “laws of atomic science”. As this was God’s will, He can at any time determine their composition. He has placed energy in creation through His Word and energy can continually be added or taken away according to His Word.

The first miracle in the Bible is the creation of the Universe out of nothing. The last miracle will be when there is world perfection at the consummation when God becomes

all in all. In between these two miracles lies a whole developmental plan, a plan of continuous creation, reconciliation and renewal.

The Biblical writers were not scientists and they were not inspired to give scientific descriptions but messages that suggest that God created and sustains the universe. Therefore the Bible – as the Word of God needs to be read with this in mind. If we don't we will find ourselves clearly in error as we will believe that the heaven (firmament) is upheld by “pillars” (high mountains on the edge of the earth) as is seen from the book of Job (Job 26:11). We will also believe that the firmament contains openings through which rain falls from the fountains of the upper seas when the flood occurred (Gen 7:11-12) which burst open when it rained for forty days and forty nights. We should therefore read Scripture in its context and focus on the works of God, the eternal plan of God. The Hebrews cosmological model is not the same as ours. Genesis, however is not figurative but portrays works of God which occurred in space and time as will be discussed throughout this thesis.

In Genesis 1:2 we are told: “The Earth was without form (Tōhū) and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” Tōhū comes from an un-used Hebrew root. It means desolation, desert, emptiness, unreality, nothingness, waste. “Matter itself, the writer emphasises, is completely devoid of life. Even light itself, which makes life possible, is in itself also lifeless. It is the creation of God. Since all matter, as such, is inanimate it must, like light, be the product of God's creative word. All matter and life originate in the spirit of God which hovered over the face of the waters. The Bible does not speak of God as hovering over the face of the waters but of His Spirit (Ruach), through which life and motion are imparted to all beings.”(Gordis, 1973, 7)¹⁵

“ ‘In the beginning . . . ’ , is an absolute clause which testifies that there was no physical element prior to God's creation; that is to say, God created the universe ex nihilo Four basic arguments fully support the traditional translation:

1. Nothing in the text mentions pre-existent matter.
2. The construction, “In the beginning” is found in every ancient translation without exception.

¹⁵ Gordis, R, 1973, *Faith and Reason*, New York: KTAV Publishing, pp 7

3. “When God began to create” is a linguistically possible translation, but it does not reflect or represent common Hebrew usage.

4. The verb “to create” (Hebrew *Bārā*) confirms the absolute sense of verse 1.

..... clearly then, the ancient Hebrews believed that at the starting-point of time, God created the heavens and earth out of nothing,” (Currid, 2003, 58-59)¹⁶

Modern science also offers further evidence that the universe had a beginning. They determine the atomic weight and proportion of uranium present to the residue (uranium-lead) and then calculate how long the process of radioactive decay of a sample of uranium has lasted and when it began. This makes it possible to determine the approximate age of the geological strata in which the uranium under investigation was found. By means of further calculations a date for the beginning of the universe can be found. The very fact that scientist can calculate the beginning means that modern science believes that the universe had a beginning.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to look widely at other beliefs on creation as we look at the interrelationships between different concepts from the viewpoint of creation *ex nihilo* and God’s ongoing work or *creatio continua*. We will however, discuss two other theories in summarised form.

3.2.4 Babylonian Myth

In stark contrast to Biblical Creation stands the Babylonian myth which explains the creation of the world as a battle between Marduk (god of light) and Tiamat (god of chaos).

Seven tablets were found and recovered from the library of the Assyrian Emperor Ashurbanipal (669 – 626 B.C.) at Nineveh. The following story is written in cuneiform characters on these seven tablets. Apsu (The primeval fresh water ocean) and Tiamat (The primeval salt water ocean) gave birth to a lot of ill behaved gods. Apsu wanted to kill them but Ea the father of Marduk the city god of Babylon instead kills Apsu. Marduk defeats Tiamat (Chaos) and divided her corps into pieces out of which the ordered universe was created. Man is formed out of the blood of Tiamat’s commander in chief

and Marduk is elevated to the head of the Babylonian Pantheon because of his role in creation.

This can only be viewed as pure myth as there is no demonstrable evidence that supports any aspect of this creation story. The Babylonian myth is a corrupted version of the original account given to Moses. There are, however, several similarities between this myth and the Genesis account i.e. both deal with Chaos, both have a similar order in the events e.g. light, firmament, dry land, luminaries, man, and an ordained period of rest of the gods as well as both accounts handle the number seven – seven days, seven cantos.

3.2.5 Primal Gas and the Formation of Heavenly Bodies

Quite a few theories hold that the universe started as a hot (many thousand degrees Kelvin) gaseous mass which cooled, contracted and started to rotate. Out of this mass through centrifugal force and conglomeration the universe was gradually formed, and the earth was just one of the many planets, stars, asteroids etc. formed in the cosmic universe.

This argument, however, cannot hold any truth as it is in direct opposition to Dalton's law which states that gases have no quality that makes them group into a denser mass as their particles actually repel each other and they continually expand to occupy a larger space.

The first law of thermodynamics states that the total energy in a closed system is constant (i.e. energy cannot be created or destroyed); if the whole universe is regarded as the closed system then the energy to start it must have come from an external source. Therefore there must be a source of energy, and the "Big Bang" cannot be the source because the "Big Bang" is within the system and is an expression of energy. Therefore the First Law of Thermodynamics leaves the hot gas theory as woefully incomplete.

The Second law of Thermodynamics states that systems always tend to chaos. Gasses are by their nature more chaotic than solids and therefore the concept of unrestrained gasses contracting and cooling to form solids is contrary to the second law of thermodynamics which would support the continuous expansion and cooling of the gasses into the

¹⁶ Currid, JD, 2003, Genesis: Volume 1 , Darlington: Evangelical Press, pp 58-59

nothingness of the continuum, with a final result of maximising the distance between gas particles and leaving a widespread low universal energy level.

It would appear then that well established modern scientific principles defeat these “primal gas” theories.

3.3 Scriptural Account of Creation

3.3.1 An Overview

Having looked at various theories regarding creation and seen how these can be refuted the only option for the author of this thesis is to believe in the account of creation as given in Genesis.

The six days of creation divide into two triplets. The first triplet conveys the division of the matter after being created *ex nihilo* – the light from the darkness, the upper and lower waters and the dry land from the sea. In the second triplet we find quickening and adorning of the Sun, Moon and stars; the fishes and birds; the land animals and man.

God upholds the order of the universe by setting up the relationships in creation and designating their functions, i.e.:

- the Sun, Moon and stars will regulate day, night and seasons (Gen 1:14)
- plants and animals propagate according to species (Gen 1:11-13; 24-25)
- humans are created in the image of God and have dominion over creation (Gen 1:26-30)

Through His work we see a rational God who made an orderly universe. This concept of order is frequently referred to in both Old and New Testaments. The predictability of the set order is reflected in Solomon’s personal experience recounted in Ecclesiastes 1:5-6. “⁵The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. ⁶The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.” (NIV). Even in relationships God’s seems to prefer order “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Cor 14:33, NIV). In these verses Paul tries to move the believers in Corinth to become more orderly in their services. Worship needs to have harmony and order and the exercising of the gifts of the Holy Spirit must also happen orderly. Jesus,

Himself in Matt 16:2-4 affirms the orderliness and dependability of nature when He quotes the Pharisees as saying it will be fair weather when the sky is red in the evening.

The Creator–God, the God of order, allowed us to share in the glory of His creation, He created out of His own free will and not out of necessity and although He has the power to do away with the decrees of nature or people, He promised not to and used an analogy to explain it. As it is an impossibility to measure the heavens and the foundations of the earth, it is just as much impossible for God to cast the descendents of Israel off because of what they have done (Jer 31:35-36). These words of the prophet Jeremiah were a great comfort for the Israelites as well as for believers today. God established the order of creation and even after the fall He maintained it (Gen 8:22). God is personally involved with His creation. And although God is involved with His creation He chose to give Human beings free will and in so doing place Himself at risk in as much as they can accept or reject Him. This in itself is an expression of love which is further demonstrated by the Incarnation as well as the cross.

God created the universe and human kind and is waiting for their response in love. But this is not a passive waiting because the Spirit is at work in prompting people. The Word, as is seen in history, is at work as well as the works of God in nature in order to point people in the right direction.

In the centre of this stands Jesus Christ and through Him believers are transfigured until they are in the likeness of God's own Son. Through His cross believers are redeemed and through His resurrection believers experience new life. This "dying and resurrection" happens in the life of the believer on a daily basis through the outworking of the Holy Spirit.

The goal of creation is to be found in a new creation as Paul boldly tells the Galatians (Gal 6:15) and while the renewal process develops, God will be impartial and will take care of His children's needs. He will look after their physical needs as Jesus taught them when He discussed the concept of worry (Mat 6:25-32) and they from their side must seek His kingdom and righteousness until God becomes all in all.

God makes the rules for all existence and the focus is on the relationship between God and believers. It is only believers who know God and is created to live purposefully for God. Human beings being subjected to God rule over the whole of the material universe.

Jesus, as well as the Holy Spirit, is the agent of creation but also the agent of salvation and regeneration who works to restore relationships. As already stated, the incarnation speaks of His love and His resurrection gives us, and the rest of creation, hope. The outworking of His love in the life of believers looks forward to a “perfected” state in the consummation.

A recurring creation motif is found throughout Scripture. In Isaiah 40 we read that God is the creator of the ends of the earth, He stretched out the heavens like a curtain. He provides for His people as He makes the wilderness a pool of water when His people are thirsty (Isaiah 41), plants the cypress plane and pine together in the desert so that people may know that God is the Creator and is always creating. He is the creator of Israel (Isaiah 43:15) and He will pour streams in dry ground and His Spirit on the descendents of Israel to bless them and regenerate them.

Luttikhuizen said “. . . the role of the creation theme was not limited to the two first chapters of Genesis But various traditions concerning creation appear in different parts of the Hebrew Bible as well. Creation is present in a most important way in Isa 40-45 in hymns, in the Psalms of Lament, and in the book of Job as well . . . (Job 10:8-9)” (Luttikhuizen (ED), 2001, 2)¹⁷ In Job 10:8-12 we read that Job gave recognition to the fact that God fashioned and made Him and that God is involved in His whole life as God clothed him with skin, and knit him together with bones and sinews and gave him life. The creation motif is present in many books of the Bible as part of God’s process of renewal.

3.3.2 Experience of God through His Creative Work

The Biblical writers prove that their belief in God was the product of their personal experience of God. When we look at the creative acts in Genesis we see a systematic orderliness distributed over seven days: six days of labour and a seventh day of rest – a Sabbath. Our experience of God as an orderly God is echoed by the Biblical writers throughout the Bible.

A numerical symmetry is found in the book of Genesis which is an indication of God’s systematic approach.

¹⁷ Luttikhuizen, GP (ED), 2001, *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Leiden: Brill, pp 2

“After the introductory verse the section is divided into seven paragraphs, each of which appertains to one of the seven days. . . . Each of the three nouns that occur in the first verse and express the basic concepts of the section, viz God [אלהים *Elōhim*] heavens [שמים *šāmayim*], earth [ארץ *'eres*], are repeated in the section a given number of times that is a multiple of seven: thus the name of God occurs thirty five times, that is five times seven. . . .; earth is found twenty one times, that is, three times seven; similarly heavens (or firmament רָקִיעַ *rāqīa'*) appears twenty one times. . . . the ten utterances of God beginning with the words and . . . said – are clearly divisible into two groups: the first group contains seven divine fiats enjoining the creation of the creatures, to wit, ‘Let there be light’, ‘let there be a firmament’, ‘Let the waters be gathered together’, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation’, ‘let there be lights’, ‘let the waters bring forth swarms’, ‘Let the earth bring forth’; The second group comprises three pronouncements that emphasise God’s concern for man’s welfare (three being the number of emphasis), namely, ‘Let us make man’ (not a command but an expression of the will to create man), ‘Be fruitful and multiply’, ‘Behold I have given unto you every plant yielding seeds.’ Thus we have here, too, a series of seven corresponding dicta . . . the terms light and day are found, in all, seven times in the first paragraph, and there are seven references to light in the fourth paragraph. Water is mentioned seven times in the course of paragraphs two and three. In the fifth and sixth paragraphs forms of the word חַיָּה *hayyā* (rendered ‘living’ or ‘beasts’) occur seven times. The expression *it was good* appears seven times (the seventh time – *very good*). The first verse has seven words. The second verse contains fourteen words – twice seven. In the seventh paragraph, which deals with the seventh day, there occur the following three consecutive sentences (three for emphasis), each of which consists of seven words and contains in the middle the expression *the seventh day*: And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all his work which He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. The words in the seventh paragraph total thirty five – five times seven.” (Cassuto, 1961, 12-15)¹⁸ The orderliness and systematic approach is clearly evident.

We may ask ourselves why is this complex system of numerical relationships created in this section of Genesis? Quite clearly such intricacies and perfect balance of numbers was developed in this work to show that this work was not the writing of a human being but a

¹⁸ Cassuto, U, 1961, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, pp 12-15

detailed transcription (in the original Hebrew) of the Word of God. This helps human beings to see that the creation story in Genesis is not a myth created by man to refute other creation myths such as the Babylonian myth discussed above; but is a recount of the work of God given through the revelation of God.

Although according to Genesis, God the Father was the primary agent in creation, we also find the Son and the Holy Spirit being active in the process. Charles Davis gives a neat summary: “There is a close relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and that of creation. The Father is God as the transcendent creator, the Logos or Son is the Word of God expressed and immanent in creation as objectified meaning and the Spirit is the responsive love of God expressed and immanent in conscious subjects. Just as the Word and the Spirit are one, yet distinct, so also subject and object are one, yet distinct. Just as Word and Spirit are together one with the Father, yet distinct from him, so also the self-in-the-world is one with the transcendent creator, yet distinct from him. The relationships at the level of creation are a participation in the relationships of the Trinity itself. The eternity of the relationships and of the distinctions they bring in the Trinity itself is reflected in the irrevocability of relationships and distinctions at the level of creation.

In brief, it is because God is a Trinity that his self manifestation in creation is not in the form of a cosmos, but in the form of a history. History is an affair of what is concrete, particular, individual. We are present to God, not indeed as isolated egos, but as individual selves.” (Davis, 1976, 86)¹⁹ and the redemptive process is in line with His mercy for human beings. The redemptive process at first glance looks like a reflection of Israel’s history which points forward to the time when God will be all in all at the consummation of the ages.

God sets the divine Spirit in the hearts of those who love God, to renew and re-create them. The Spirit reconciles creation to the Father. Jesus being the mediator between creator and creation becomes the “matrix from whom the Spirit works to unite the world to God and the goal towards which it helps the world to strive. One might say that Christ is the form of the reconciled world, the pattern on which it is to be shaped. . . . The Spirit is the shaper, the

¹⁹ Davis, C, 1976, *Body as Spirit: The nature of Religious feeling*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp 86

reconciler. The Father is the persuasive power, and cosmos flow, and to whom all return.” (Ward, 1996, 54)²⁰

God did not create out of matter but brought matter and form into being from nothing. Because God is the source of everything He transcends everything and God as Creator has an ongoing relationship with His creation. He sustains His creation, yet also works out His will, for we read: “He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures” (Psalm 135:7, KJV). The Psalmist in this hymn of praise contrasts God with idols by focussing on the works of God – how God works continuously by making clouds rise, sending lightning and wind etc. God also feeds the animals for we read: “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them.” (Matt 6:26, KJV). Here Jesus teaches human beings not to worry as God is a God of providence and will care for His creatures on a continual basis.

God also controls people and nations: ²³“He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them *again*.” (Job 12:23, KJV) as is seen from Job’s reply in the book of Job. After Nebuchadnezzar repented he said: “. . . I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation: ³⁵And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth . . .” (Daniel 4:34-35, KJV) But even though God controls individuals and nations He does not rule by dictatorship. God created human beings with a free will. God wanted them to choose Him. He did not create robots who would praise and serve Him involuntarily. God wanted an obedient people who would praise and serve Him for who He is, making the step towards God on their own and not by force. God continues to work unity in all who follow Him in the path of righteousness. He is building one Kingdom comprised of those who accept Him in faith through Jesus Christ and they come from various cultures and peoples – the real Israel which is not an earthly nation but a heavenly creation (John 18:36). Jesus when standing trial before Pilate clearly stated the boundaries of His kingdom and that it is not worldly but a heavenly creation. God is desirous of a close relationship full of love with people.

²⁰ Ward, K, 1996, Religion and Creation, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 54

And yet this God comes and shares in our sufferings for we read:- “Both as Creator and as providential Lord of history, God limits God’s self in relation to a dependent yet real creation . . . God ‘comes’ to an alienated and desolate world; God “appears” in and through finitude, weakness, vulnerability, and suffering – and God even shares in the final negations of anxiety, lostness and death, in order precisely to refashion and transform God’s creatures to what is neither pure being nor pure nonbeing but the divine unity of both.” (Burrel, 1990, 240)²¹

God rules the universe and history by His creative acts. He is the King of Israel as well as of the world because He judges, saves and owns it as its Creator. The “Instruments by which God rules over the world are his word and his Spirit. God acts in human history through his word and his Spirit.”(Baum, 1979, 56)²²

Jesus Christ is the one through whom God created the world and therefore we see Jesus portrayed in scripture as the active agent carrying out the plans and directions of the Father. The Holy Spirit is also reflected as Creator and intensely involved in the creation process as is evidenced in the book of beginnings when He hovered over the waters.

The Spirit of God moved over the waters and acted as an administrator of God’s will as expressed by the Word of God. “The will of God is that order should supersede disorder. The Word of God announces that will beginning with the first utterance: ‘Let there be light’ (Gen 1:3). By the brooding of the Spirit over the chaos the light came.”(Campbel Morgan, 1939, 48)²³

We experience the Spirit of God in creation speaking of a great variety of creatures on the earth and in the sea: “¹³By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.” as Job stated (Job 26:13, KJV) as well as “³⁰Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.” (Psalm 104:30, KJV) The Psalmist had no doubt in his mind about the role of the Spirit in creation as is evidenced by these words.

²¹ Burrel, DB, 1990, *God and Creation: An Ecumenical Symposium*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, (David B Burrel & Bernard McGinn (editors)), pp 240

²² Baum, G, 1979, *Man becoming: God in Secular Experience*, New York: Seabury Press, pp 56

²³ Campbel Morgan, G, 1939, *The Spirit Of God*, London: Westminster City Publishing Co. Ltd, pp 48

Plants, animals and human beings are all mortal. They are matter, and it is only the spirit of life that distinguishes them from inanimate matter. The source of this spirit in animate and vegetative creation and motion in the inanimate world is God whose Spirit infuses all creation and gives life and movement to everything that has it.

The Holy Spirit creates and regenerates people, animal and plant life which are waiting to be delivered from corruption. The creatures are waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. These creatures are part of the lower world. When human beings sinned these creatures became subject to corruption. By the fall of human beings they had contracted an impurity, deformity and infirmity. There is enmity between creature and creature, they are sometimes abused by human beings and involved in sin but not out of their own volition, and they are subject to God's judgment upon human beings. Through all of these we see the pain and hurt that they suffer and therefore they desire not only their own perfection and consummation but they wait to be set free from this bondage of sin and corruption. They themselves have a hope that it will not always be so and therefore they groan and travail in pain together under this corruption. In Scripture we find a general outcry of the whole creation against the sin of human beings. The stones cry out because of the injustices according to the prophet (Hab 2:11), and according to Job's understanding the land is able to cry out if he has abused it – devoured its yield without payment. If he has not been a good steward of God's creation etc. (Job 31:38). And while there is pain the creature waits for the renewal which is brought about by the Holy Spirit. The creature waits for the new heaven and earth when they shall receive their own glory.

The Spirit Himself “... maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26, KJV). A trinity of agony is here revealed,- nature groaning and travailling in pain; The child of God groaning and waiting for deliverance; And most wonderful of all, the Spirit of God making intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. Thus it is declared that the Spirit is present in creation, and all through creation as a regenerative force; and ere the work of the cross of Christ be completed on this planet, every inch of it will be renewed. The whole creation that to day groaneth and travailleth in pain together will feel the balm, the healing and the blessing of the work of Christ. Trees and flowers will again realize what they also in some sense have lost by the fall of man ‘...All the trees of the field shall clap their hands. ¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name. . .’ (Isaiah 55:12-13) the Spirit who created, preserves,

energizes, and moves through all nature, is in nature as an intercessory force – as a force administrating, by processes which are beyond analysis, the great work of the Christ Himself; and this ministry will eventuate in the removal of the curse from nature, and its consequent renewal, glorious and perfect.” (Campbel Morgan, 1939, 55-56)²⁴

The Spirit of God brings new forms into existence and dismisses some forms of life from existence.

““7The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it” (Isaiah 40:7 KJV) The Spirit brings death as a process and a necessity. . . . When the east wind blows, and the flowers are nipped, and the blade of grass is curled and shriveled almost as if by the blast heat, then the spirit of god is sweeping the ground and preparing for the springing of life in response to the kiss of His gentler wind. (Psalm 104:30) “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the ground.” That which follows the death wind of the spirit is his life wind. The first is winter; the second is spring. Nothing ever finds its way to spring save through winter. The budding of life and the flowers that blossom upon the sod in spring time are the result of the cold East wind that swept the hills and the valleys during winter days. These are not mere figures of speech. The cold east wind blows under the direction of the Spirit of God; and the wind which kisses the earth and makes it smile in flowers, is the messenger of the self same Spirit.” (Campbel Morgan, 1939, 52-53)²⁵ The same process is found in Human life: we need to die with Christ in baptism (Winter) in order to be re-created i.e. live with Christ as a believer (Spring) and finally move to eternity with Him (summer) and all of this is the transforming work of the Spirit.

We see the transforming work of the Spirit through all creation. Things exist and continue by the Spirit of God. The beauty and precision of the flowers of the field, the dewdrops, sweeping of the seas etc are created by the working of the Spirit.

And when we focus on Christ we see Christ being the *Prōtōtokos* (Firstborn – Col 1:18) holds the same relation to all creation as God the Father, because He is above all creation. He is the head of a creation of human beings who are free from Satan’s dominion and when a believer accepts Christ as Saviour and Lord such a person then passes from death into life.

²⁴ Campbel Morgan, G, 1939, *The Spirit Of God*, London: Westminster City Publishing Co. Ltd, pp 55-56

“During the earthly life of Jesus a new thing in the history of the world was coming into existence. In every act and word of Jesus the new man was being created. When the new creation had been consummated by the final act of obedience at the Cross, and Jesus had declared its completion in the words, ‘It is finished,’ he carried into the resurrection state the new thing that had thus been created.” (Hook, 1976, 151-152)²⁶ and this “new thing” breaks into the present from the future as believers gain a foretaste of their glorious end to come in the consummation.

Scripture is very clear on the two creations: “. . . the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (I Corinthians 15:45, KJV) Paul asserted in this letter to the Corinthians that the mode of life of Christ could be imparted to the believer who becomes part of the new creation.

We find that “. . . a new thing in the divine economy had come into existence as a result of the glorifying of Jesus. The eternal had entered into time, and in the order of time-experience it could be said that the Incarnate Word had assumed a new form of existence in becoming a life-giving Spirit, and that, correspondingly, the Spirit had a new form of existence in virtue of which he could become the life by which the whole of the new creation lived with the life of him who is the beginning of the creation of God”. (Hook, 1976, 152)²⁷

There is only one law in the new creation and that is the law of love. The new human being in Christ has a debt of love to pay to humanity: “⁸Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8, KJV). Paul in his letter to the Romans states that believers have a debt to pay which is the debt of continually loving each other because of the debt to Christ.

Love is a debt because the law of God makes it so. God is a god of love (1 John 4:16) as reflected in John’s letter and love is God’s image upon the soul of the believer. This love must work against prejudice, offence or grief of other human beings. It is a sin to do evil to human beings but it is an equal sin to withhold good from those to whom it is due (Prov 3:27-29). According to the writer of Proverbs it is not good to withhold doing good

²⁵ Campbel Morgan, G, 1939, *The Spirit Of God*, London: Westminster City Publishing Co. Ltd, pp 52-53

²⁶ Hooke, SH , 1976, *The Resurrection of Christ: as History and Experience*, London: Darton Longman & Todd, pp 151-152

²⁷ Hooke, SH , 1976, *The Resurrection of Christ: as History and Experience*, London: Darton Longman & Todd, pp 152

and this proves the fact that love is the fulfilling of the law. This love is a living principle of obedience to the whole law which is written in the hearts of believers.

“God is love.” and John in the Book of John clearly states that if a believer does not love, such a believer does not know God. (1 John 4:8, NKJ). The New Birth which makes a human being a new creation is the reception of the nature of God; it is the receiving of the love nature. When a believer receives this new nature Christ becomes their Master (*didaskalos* – their teacher revealing to them the will of God) and our Lord (*kyrios* – their ruler and owner). Because of this they need to be observant of Him and do what He tells them to do i.e. washing of each others feet which has the implication of being lowly in heart and work towards the glory of God and our brothers good. It implies a serviceableness to the sanctification of our fellow Christians i.e. to wash their polluted feet in tears as believers pray for each other, to reprove them, bringing them to repentance and caring for them. A believer’s whole life is their witness (2 Cor 3:2). Paul in his letter to the Corinthians compliments them by saying that their lives reflect the Spirit of the Living God and acts as a witness.

Love would let the world know that believers had become children of God as their lifestyle would be characterised by love as is evidenced in the words of Jesus when He predicts Peter’s denial: “³⁴A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34-35, KJV). Jesus says He is giving a new commandment – *entolen kainen* and then gave what looks like an old one (see Lev 19:18). Apart from this He already taught that the whole law of Moses was summed up in two great commandments as is seen when the religious leaders question Jesus about the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-33). So, obviously, this commandment is new in another way and we find an indication in the words of Jesus “. . . as I have loved you” – *agapao*. This new commandment reflects this new kind of love which is a self sacrificing love and distinguishes Jesus’ disciples from others in the world.

Jesus sets the standard for this new love and Paul exhorts the believers in Galatia to do good not just to all human beings but especially to our fellow believers (Gal 6:10). If believers don’t love like this they betray the Gospel of Christ for they are not following His example. The believers in Paul’s letter to Corinth are the “epistle of Christ . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of

the heart.” (2 Cor 3:3, NIV) and therefore should live a life which reflects the Spirit of God. As is seen in scripture Jesus and His disciples gave out of their little, a little to the poor. And although Jesus did much good to other human beings, curing so many ‘gratis’ (without cost) yet He also gave money and out of this believers learn to be bountiful to the poor. (Matt 26:9, John 13:29)²⁸ When a woman anoints Jesus with perfume and also when Jesus told Judas to do what he is about to do quickly the implication is that it was a normal occurrence for Jesus and His disciples to show love in action as is stated in the abovementioned verses. This is love in action and is a consequence of a regenerated heart.

3.4 The Integral Nature of God’s Creation of Human Beings and the Physical Organic Cosmos.

Everything integrally has to do with God in creation because it was created *ex nihilo* and is still being created, *creatio continua*, by God. Everything in creation links together and influences each other as part of a bigger holistic picture.

In this subsection we will first look at the linkage in Scripture, how things are linked to God by trying to understand why and how He created as we move on to see the relationship between His different creations and how they form one big picture which enables us to understand our creatureliness a little better. The integrally linked creation is also stated by Jürgen Moltmann: “Through the Spirit we are bound together with other people socially and culturally. This interlocking association is again an organised open system (i.e. Spirit) which can in this sense be described as the common spirit of the human community. Through the Spirit we are bound together with the natural environment. This association is a system comprising human beings and nature. We might describe it as a spiritual ecosystem. Through the Spirit, human societies as part-systems are bound up with the ecosystem “earth” (Gaia); for human societies live in and from the recurring cycles of earth and sun, air and water, day and night, summer and winter. So human beings are participants and subsystems of the cosmic life system, and of the divine Spirit that lives in it.” (Moltmann, 1985, 18)²⁹

²⁸ Note, both of these references imply that it was normal practice for Jesus and His disciples to distribute money to the poor because they reflect this action as a normality for them. This is also supported in events such as the feeding of the 5000 etc.

²⁹ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, 18

We also find a linkage between Genesis 1 and the Exodus story. There is a view that the Exodus brings about renewal of the world as found in the Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon where nature was refashioned for Israel: “For the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew [at the time of the exodus].” (Wis 19:6) They saw a new method of birth for birds when quails came out of the sea to satisfy their hunger etc. In this we see an integral linkage between human beings and animals as part of the cosmos. We find an interconnectedness between the different creatures of God’s creation as God moves His creation on towards its final consummation.

An elaboration on this same viewpoint is found in the work of Carmichael: “Yahweh’s work in Egypt constitutes wonders, miracles of nature and embraces all, or almost all, of the created order. . . . He is Yahweh of the ‘mighty hand and stretched out arm,’ involved with water, animals, insects, reptiles (Exod 7:9, 10, the tanninim of Genesis 1:21), land (in the form of dust), plants and fruit trees (Exod 10:15, the same distinction as in Gen 1:12), darkness (for the Egyptians), light (for the Israelites), and humankind (the firstborn). After the wonders of Egypt he produces a cloud by day and fire by night, and he makes the sea dry land. All in all these wonders represent ‘the great work [hand] of Yahweh’ (Exod 14:31)” (Carmichael, 1996, 17)³⁰

We find in the plague of darkness a reversion to a pre-creation state. And each plague affected the created order adversely. “At the time of the plagues the appearance of the infected water, the frogs, the dust and the gnats, the flies, the epidemic among cattle, the ashes and the boils, the weather phenomena, the locusts and darkness all constitute distortions of what had been created by God. Water is no longer simply water, light and darkness are no longer separated; the people are diseased, the animals run amok, the insects and amphibians swarm out of control. Fretheim implies that the plagues that are bad stand in sharp contrast to the good things that happened at creation . . . He speaks of these reversals as God’s re-creational activity. As a consequence of the first plague in Egypt the water could not be drunk (Exod 7:24).” (Carmichael, 1996, 43)³¹

In Exodus 15:23 the Israelites were confronted with bitter water that they could not drink, but God purified the water for them, making it sweet water; He even made the wilderness

³⁰ Carmichael, CM, 1996, *The Story of Creation: Its Origin and its Interpretation in Philo and the Fourth Gospel*, London: Cornell University Press, pp 17

³¹ Carmichael, CM, 1996, *The Story of Creation: Its Origin and its Interpretation in Philo and the Fourth Gospel*, London: Cornell University Press, pp 43

abound in springs of fresh water. The reversal of created orders is also found in Exodus 16:4 where God rained (mtr) bread from heaven to feed the Israelites. This act is the opposite from Exodus 19:18 & 23 where God rained (mtr) hail upon Egypt and destroyed their food. All created things are being used by God to accomplish His purposes.

God demonstrates in His Word that as the Creator God, He is able to create, renew and reverse creation at His will.

Renewal does not imply that God “scraps his earlier creation and in Jesus Christ makes a new one, but rather to suggest that he hangs onto his fallen original creation and salvages it. He refuses to abandon the work of his hands – in fact he sacrifices his own son to save his original project. Human kind, which has bodged its original mandate and the whole creation along with it, is given another chance in Christ; we are re-instated as God’s managers on earth. The original good creation is to be restored.” (Wolters, 1986, 58)³².

According to Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians when he gave instruction on food offered to idols Christ began the new creation although He was active in the first creation as well: “. . . yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” (1 Cor 8:6, NIV). Through the cross of Christ, believers are saved and through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit they are renewed through this *creatio continuo* process.

“Paul argues that in Christ the newness of eschatological recreation has already begun. Paul’s apocalyptic interpretation of the Christ event led him to regard the coming of Christ as the beginning of the final newness of life, the commencing of the new aeon. . . The creation of heaven and earth, man and woman, was the beginning of the old aeon. What really interested Paul was the beginning of the new.” (Luttikhuisen, 2001, 77)³³

Paul’s theology is rooted in the experience of a new redeeming power that had enabled him to triumph over sin. His interpretation of Christ was formed from the standpoint of

³² Wolters, AM, 1986, *Creation Regained*, Leicester: Intervarsity Press, pp 58

³³ Luttikhuisen, GP (ED), 2001, *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Leiden: Brill, pp77

man's redemption. Everything comes from Christ and believers exist through Him as He created a place for them after He has taken them out of darkness.

In Paul's experience God and Christ are so inseparable that his faith in no way perplexes his monotheism. Christ belongs to God and we belong to Christ. Christ came to accomplish God's work and when He has accomplished it, He will hand it over to God, that God may be all in all.

Paul perceived of Christ as laying aside His heavenly glory, submitting Himself to the evil conditions of human life, laying down His life in total obedience on the cross in order to draw men into the kingdom of God. This becomes for Paul the archetype of the Christian death and renewal.

No human being was with God when God created the universe but as human beings we have the creation account by divine revelation albeit in the words of human beings. When scripture made the statement "heaven and earth" (*hassamayim we' et ha'ares*) - it actually means "everything" i.e. matter, time, energy, light; as it is a merism where the two opposites are all inclusive. The text indicates that God created all things from nothing as verse two points forward before the world was: formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. God as Spirit was intensely involved in creation. Seemingly God then started to shape what He had created. Although there are other interpretations to the same verse this is the viewpoint from which this study is undertaken. Nobody was present when God started to create and we have only the writer(s) viewpoint(s) as inspired by God.

The original state of the newly created cosmos was desolation (*tohu*) and waste (*bahu*). It had not yet been given order, had not any light or a "body" as it seems to have had darkness over the waters.

So why did God create? According to the Bible the World was created for the manifestation of God's glory.

If God did not create it would not have altered or impoverished His nature. God is an all sufficient God and it would be "indifferent" to Him whether the world exists or not. He created out of His mercy and goodness. The world which is created is outside of God but is united with Him. It is destined for union with God but God does not force it. Outside of

God there is no life for creation but existence in death is possible and this death is not the end of existence but a separation from God. Man is granted the freedom of choice, but it is a responsive freedom – a freedom to accept or reject God’s will.

God created the earth to be inhabited by man so that man can live for His glory. We read in Genesis 1:14-19 that the earth is the reason for all the heavenly bodies.

The reason for creation was obviously the “communicative goodness of God, which brought numberless beings into existence to rejoice in them and make them blessed.” (Pope, 1875, 164)³⁴

God met every need of human beings. He filled the earth with diamonds, iron, copper, silver, gold, chemicals etc., fruits, vegetables, flowers, mountains, rivers etc. out of His goodness and for the pleasure of human beings’ experience. God created human beings for His own glory.

This creation is actually ongoing: “. . . divine creation . . . refers to an ongoing divine activity through which things and people have come to be and are still being created. If we can speak of the end of creation at all, then it must refer to the last day when humanity, having caught up with its destiny, is finally and definitely completed. To speak of the end of creation is eschatological language.” (Baum, 1979, 211)³⁵

When we ask the question ‘how did God create’ scripture provides an answer. In Genesis we read: “. . . and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2, KJV). “The Spirit of God” is pictured as hovering over the face of the waters just as it is in Deuteronomy 32:11 where it hovers over its young to protect and nurture them. Although some commentators disagree and argue that the term just means wind in this context, the writer of this thesis is of the opinion that *râchaph* is stated and by implication it means to brood, flutter, move or shake.

This Spirit of God hovering over the waters implies God’s personal and direct involvement with His creation as He works to shape the cosmos in a vibrant way.

³⁴ Pope WB, 1875, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, London: Wesleyan Conference Office, pp 164

³⁵ Baum G, 1979, *Man becoming: God in Secular Experience*, New York: Seabury Press, pp 211

The act of the Triune God in Creation started before time was created. “Augustine argued that God could not be considered to have brought creation into being at a certain definite moment in time, as if ‘time’ itself existed prior to creation. For Augustine, time itself must be seen as an aspect of the created order, to be contrasted with the ‘timelessness’ which he held to be the essential feature of eternity. . . .” (McGrath, 2001, 303)³⁶

For the Eternal God, there is no limit of time. All times are eternally present for Him – without a beginning and timeless. Time is God’s time and He is Sovereign Lord of it. God created time, space and matter. Human beings may do two things with time: they may misuse it or use it to God’s glory, “redeeming the time” making most out of every opportunity.

Time began with creation and there will be a time when time will be no more. There will be no time but creation will exist even not in time. God’s word proceeds but does not recede, in the words of Peter: “. . . the word of the Lord stands forever” (1 Peter 1:25, NIV). His word is eternal. God created the world not just for the time being but for eternity.

God – Himself being uncreated light – separates day and night on the first day in a cyclical mode so that there were periods of light and periods of darkness which could imply that the earth was rotating on its axis so that light shone on one side at a time and that photosynthesis could be in place for the vegetation on day three before the Sun was created on Day four. The sun being created on day four instead of Day one made it illogical for human beings to worship the sun as creator.

According to scripture the first time God spoke according to scripture – light appears which correlates with the statements that Jesus came to bring light in the world. This analogy is actually wonderful as only God, who is light, could bring light and speak light into darkness. According to scripture God “evaluated” His work and felt that it was according to His will, it was good.

According to PJ van Dyk “. . . God made everything good . . . At the end of each creation day, and after everything had been done, God paused for a moment to oversee His work and then declared it “good”. The Hebrew word *to*v has the meaning of “pleasant”, “friendly” or “beautiful”, but it is also used when something is declared morally or ethically good. It

³⁶ McGrath AE, 2001, *Christian Theology: An introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp 303

was therefore clearly the intention of P to introduce the creation, not as something hostile or negative, but as a place where humans could live in peace and in trust towards the Creator who set everything up in such a way that people and animals could sustain themselves.” (van Dyk, 2001, 89)³⁷

As has been stated, on the first day (*yom*) light was created, this was a normal twenty four hour day. When “*yom*” is accompanied by an ordinal or number it normally means the duration of a solar day, also in the same sentence the words “morning” and “evening” are used and again “*yom*” in this context is always associated with a normal solar “day”.

On the second day, seemingly a separation of the waters above the crust from the subterranean waters beneath took place.

On the third day another separation was accomplished and this was between the waters and the dry land. Vegetation was created which had the capacity to reproduce itself through its own kind i.e. those that are seed bearing producing seed and the fruit bearing vegetation produced fruit each after its own kind. In the order of things being created during “creation week” we perceive how things link together as certain things need to be in existence before other things could be created i.e. light is needed before vegetation etc. On this day God performed two works and twice He concluded that it was good – according to His will.

On day four God created the Sun, Moon and stars to separate day from night, to give light upon the earth and be for signs, seasons, days and years. This all was created for the benefit of human beings and according to Moltmann the Spirit bonds the human societies as part systems up with the ecosystem for human beings live in and from these recurring cycles of summer and winter, day and night etc.

Day five teemed with life in the seas and in the air by divine command and God blessed them. The first five days were in preparation for the climax of God’s creation on day six i.e. land animals and then human beings.

In Genesis the universe is described as a setting for human life. It is a place full of relationships and responsibilities where everything links together as they influence and

³⁷ van Dyk PJ, 2001, *A Brief History of Creation*, South Africa: UNISA, pp89

are being influenced by each other, i.e. tides of the sea are influenced by the sun and moon.

Everything is created by God according to its kind and all the different kinds of things are related to each other in an orderly way. Human beings for instance have a relationship with the dust of the earth because they come from that dust and we will return to the earth again. Animals also come from the earth and therefore because of this earthly origin humans and animals also share a relationship. The same argument can also be used in connection with plants.

“... the human being is not isolated, nor is he seen in confrontation with the world. He is viewed as belonging within the enduring cohesion of the whole creation. Creation has its meaning for human beings, and human beings have their meaning for the community of creation. If we are to understand what human existence is, and what human beings are destined or called to be, we must see these human beings as belonging within the all-embracing coherences of God’s history with the world, the history of creation and the history of redemption.” (Moltmann, 1985, 189)³⁸

When we turn to the second word, which is responsibilities, we see that it is closely linked to commandments and if God’s commands are not followed through i.e. Gen 2:17 where human beings were commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the act of disobedience or irresponsibility lead to a change in relationships i.e. The Fall. Human beings are what they are because of the shape their relationship takes with God, other human beings and the world.

“The doctrine of creation holds that the world and all it contains comes from the free creative act of God. . . . Our past, those parts of the world from which we are made and to which we relate, comes from God. We come from nothing, in the sense that but for our calling into being by the love of God, we should not be. . . . In other words, the doctrine of creation teaches a form of gracious ontological dependence coming from our past. . . . Creation was not simply the making of the world out of nothing, . . . but the making of a world destined for perfection, completeness. To be a creature means to be a being called and directed to a future perfection.” (Gunton, 1992, 44-45)³⁹

³⁸ Moltmann J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, pp 189

³⁹ Gunton CE, 1992, *Christ and Creation*, Grand Rapids Mich: The Paternoster Press, pp 44-45

Because God has given human beings spiritual abilities, which differentiate them from the animals and plants, they generally have the ability to interact more easily with each other and with God. They can have an inner awareness of the presence of God experienced for instance in worship and in prayer. Man can also communicate with their fellow creatures.

“As for the animals, man can communicate with them only in a limited fashion; and with the greatest difficulty. Human language is not suited for their level of intelligence. To be sure, it is possible that birds and beasts can converse with one and other as easily as man with his fellow. There may be some truth in the Midrashic statement that ‘each species of animals has its own language.’ Perhaps even plants have a language of their own. There are many legends in the folklore of various peoples – and they are common in Jewish folklore – about people who understand the language of animals and birds, and even of plants. But the gap between human and animal intelligence is too great for any measure of real communication.” (Gordis, 1973, 221)⁴⁰

Although the lower creation was also created by the Word of God, human beings being exalted above it can hear the Word through which it exists and can be God’s co-worker in His work of creation.

Human beings have also been created in the image of God and although sin has marred the image, it is not destroyed and in the ages to come their bodies will be conformed to the body of His glory as is stated in Paul’s letter to the Philippians when he wrote about pressing on towards the goal (Phil 3:20).

Birds and sea creatures were created on the fifth day. On the sixth day beasts, cattle, creeping things and humans were all created. In Genesis 1:27-28 we read that God made Human beings in His image and gave them the command to rule over the earth. God has absolute rule over the earth and He rules with loving care. God delegated some of His authority to the human race but He expected them to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures which He created.

We find a shift in the Bible from much being declared unclean in the Old Testament to a far more inclusive cleanness in the New Testament. Fixed rules are found in the Books of

⁴⁰ Gordis R, 1973, *Faith and Reason*, New York: KTAV Publishing, pp 221

Leviticus (11:2-23) and Deuteronomy (14:3-20) regarding which animals may or may not be eaten by Jews. The Jews were also commanded not to weave two types of cloth together, not plough using a donkey and an ox (Deut 22:10-11). Everything should be “according to its kind” as found in the orderliness of creation. The attitude towards nature is also an attitude towards society. This becomes clear when we look at Peter’s dream in Acts (Acts 10:9). The implication of this dream is that former rules of a closed society and closed religion are overcome and that the Christian religion opens up the way for all to come to God. God is working towards a redemption of the human world and creation.

God upholds His creation through the Holy Spirit and therefore a plundering of creation becomes an assault on God. As human beings we are stewards of God’s creation and as such there are four ecological principles which we need to adhere to, expressed here by AE McGrath:

- “1. The ‘earth keeping principle’: just as the creator keeps and sustains humanity, so humanity must keep and sustain the creator’s creation.
2. The ‘Sabbath principle’: the creation must be allowed to recover from human use of its resources.
3. The ‘Fruitfulness principle’: the fecundity of the creation is to be enjoyed, not destroyed.
4. The ‘Fulfillment and limits principle’: there are limits set to humanity’s role within creation, with boundaries set in place which must be respected.” (McGrath, 2001, 304)⁴¹

In Genesis, God gave man dominion over the earth “God’s gift of dominion implies responsibility. God has given us authority over His creation; we are responsible to guard our environment. The Christian is to have an ecological concern. We are to exercise our dominion responsibly” (Richards, 1982, 30)⁴²

Between human beings and nature there is an interactive system because nature provides them with food, air, water, mineral resources, disease, storms, earthquakes etc and they as

⁴¹ McGrath, AE , 2001, *Christian Theology: An introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 304

⁴² Richards, LO, 1982, *Complete Bible Handbook*, Dallas: Word Publishing, pp 30

human beings influence nature in the forms of farming, mining, conservation, pollution etc.

Nature is not fixed – it does not have patterns which repeat themselves in endless cycles. Nature is a scene of action and it can be transformed, it is subject to life and death and has potential value to human beings as the life process goes on.

Lands with rivers are sometimes turned into a wilderness – dry and sandy ground – not so much from natural causes as from the judgment of God like the vale of Sodom which became a salt sea. “The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be, at this day, a fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, Deu 29:23” (Henry, 2000, 900)⁴³

Once humanity is finally redeemed from sin there will again be harmony between human beings and nature. Presently when Human beings are wicked, and the consequence of this can be linked to Hosea’s description of the effect of the wicked behaviour of the Israelites in his charge against them, we see that nature mourns: “. . . because of this the land mourns. . .” (Hosea 4:3, NIV). Presently when a human being is wicked the whole land mourns under God’s judgements, the whole land is stripped from its wealth and beauty and while they are wicked and at enmity with their Maker; the inferior creatures are at war with them as is implied in Hosea 2:18, but when there is reconciliation a reconciled God will reconcile all things. And when a human being is righteous there is a “. . . covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you.” according to Eliphaz in his dialogue with Job. (Job 5:23, NIV). Being at peace with God there shall be a covenant of friendship between human beings and the whole creation. Eliphaz stated that he experienced this as the truth.

We find allusions to justice and cosmic orders being inseparable i.e. when human beings are obedient to God’s laws and commandments the blessings of the earth and rains from heaven are mentioned.

Nature itself is subject to God’s redemptive action: it also will be and is being remade. This is attested by the Psalmist when he wrote to celebrate the return of the Jews from their

⁴³ Henry, M, 2000, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, pp 900

exile: “He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs” (Psalm 107:33-36, NIV). The sin of human beings has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil and made it unserviceable because of the judgement of God who punishes the wickedness of those that dwell there. The goodness of God has often changed the barrenness of the soil into water springs. As in Genesis 1:22 the blessing of God let the earth and all the creatures increase and multiply. Human beings depend on God for this increase. And although nature is part of being redeemed it also assists in changing the perspectives of human beings and their behavioural patterns, i.e. when famine occurs human beings readily cry out to God whereas in times of prosperity they tend to focus inward being self centred and greedy and forget their Creator.

Nature in itself is beneficial for men: “. . . experience slowly teaches us that by far the larger proportion of the suffering that man endures at the hands of Nature is not due to Nature at all, but to man. It is the result of neglect, of improvidence, of carelessness; it is due to the ten thousand causes which turn things preventable and innocent into things inevitable and injurious. Nature exists for man, not man for Nature; but if she exists for him it is to teach him to transcend her, to make him ever more of a man, raising each generation above its predecessor. . . . - we might never have had any dreadful tales of shipwreck or other disasters of the deep; but still more surely we would never have had the marvellous engineering and the brave enterprise which have built the big ships, bidden them traverse the mighty ocean, and turn its once dividing waters into the crowded highway of the nations across which they carry their wealth to the exchanges that enrich and federate mankind. We all know that there is nothing so fatal to the manhood of a people as the charity that pauperises.”(Fairbairn, 1902, 141)⁴⁴

Through natural disasters etc. human beings are enabled to use their creative powers to create and in doing so is developed themselves – with the aid of technology, human beings can now plan and carry out their own dehumanising. Human beings always want to control even if it means the destruction of other human beings, and the technical ability (missiles, bombs and computers) have empowered them to do just that. God gave human beings the ability to reason and thus to create machines, chemical systems and electronic devices, but generally speaking human beings have used these to place creation at risk

⁴⁴ Fairbairn, AM , 1902, *The Philosophy of Christian Religion*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp 141

instead of using them to undertake his responsibility of caring for creation. This can be attributed to the fallenness of human beings.

3.5 The Differential Nature Of God's Creation Of Human Beings And The Physical Organic Cosmos

Genesis One sets the scene for the relationships between human beings and their Creator as well as between human beings and creation. Although it sets the relationships it also shows that everything is different from other things but integrally linked by God in creation because it was created *ex nihilo* and is still being created and maintained in their otherness as will be seen in the discussion of different things being created by God during the six days of creation.

3.5.1 Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God, by His own free will and by His absolute power, created the heaven and earth. And He is still working today in the cosmos which is God's creative activity and it depicts a movement from chaos to cosmos.

The universe is experienced as vast. Isaiah described this vastness when he advised the Israelites to call on the Lord when He is near and showed the superiority of God's wisdom in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways' declares the Lord 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" (NIV). The metaphor shows that heaven is incomparably greater than the earth. The Bible teaches the vastness of the universe by comparing it to God's great steadfast love and the greatness of God's glorious deeds as is reflected on in this Psalm of David (Psalm 103:11). Science agrees with the Bible: according to man the earth is 7900 miles in diameter and 93 million miles away from the Sun which is 333'000 times as massive as our planet. Isaiah and modern science are correct – our universe is vast. Although this universe is so vast we find an order – there are laws, principle and relationships which govern everything and everything is integrally linked.

The vast galaxy we live in is spinning at the incredible speed of 490 000 miles an hour. But even at this incredible speed, our galaxy still would take 200 million years to make one

revolution. And there are over one billion other galaxies in the universe. It has been said that the number of stars in the heavens is equal to all the grains of sands on all the beaches of the world. Yet this complex array of stars and galaxies functions with remarkable orderliness.

God did not create heaven so that He could have a dwelling place – He did not need one prior to the foundation of heaven and earth. Neither heaven nor earth can contain God as is seen in Solomon’s prayer of dedication when he acknowledged the authority of God as the ultimate King (2 Chron 6:18). God, however, created heaven and earth so that He and human beings can draw together. This creation of the universe is an outworking of God’s love and in the sustaining and maintenance of it we find God’s faithfulness. The weather conditions and laws of physics demonstrate His providential care.

“We learn from the Bible about the creation of the universe. ‘God made it all (’âsâh). He created it (bârâ). It had never existed as such before. The material universe was made from the non-material, which in its turn was the product of the creative word of God (Heb 11:3). The work has a purpose (cun). It was prepared beforehand for the task its creator had planned and it was established so that it needed no constant alterations. It involved the careful forming and fashioning of the divine potter (yâtzar) to bring it to the form of that pattern of plan which arose, not in matter, but in the mind of God himself.” (Filby, 1964, 43)⁴⁵

Generations of Philosophers and Scientists found the creation of matter impossible. But matter can be expressed as energy. That which is visible has been made from that which is invisible by the God who created the universe of energy and matter.

God didn’t just create in Genesis. We experience daily as believers, that we are part of a new creation. The old creation is already decaying but the new creation – admittedly of a different order – has already commenced when Christ rose from the dead and became the Head of the new creation.

In order to understand the differences between the different creations or creative acts of God we need to go back to scripture.

⁴⁵ Filby, FA, 1964, *Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter 1 in the Light of Modern Science*, London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd, pp 43

3.5.2 Genesis 1:2

God created the Deep, which is of cardinal importance to all living beings. Great ocean trenches that exceed 10 000 metres in depth have been found and the total volume of the oceans has been estimated at 1.38×10^{18} cubic metres. This is all necessary to supply the moisture to provide rain to give life to plants and the millions of creatures that live on the earth.

Filby acknowledges the importance: “Water is just H₂O. Such a substance ought to be a gas requiring special liquefaction plant to reduce it to a liquid. Why then is ordinary water a liquid? Because it is not adequately represented by the simple formula H₂O. The Creator who linked all the Bible together by the little Hebrew hook *vâw* has linked all the molecules of water together by a force, only discovered in our own lifetimes, called the ‘hydrogen bond’. It is the force which makes water so different . . . Its ability to dissolve oxygen from the air keeps the fishes alive. The God who designed life, designed water for it and supplied the earth with a vast store of it.” (Filby, 64, 59)⁴⁶ This clearly demonstrates the “otherness” of God’s works and how different things are actually linked together in the creation of God and are important in the functioning of the whole.

3.5.3 Genesis 1:6-8

The word firmament (*râqîya`*) implies something very thin. In outer space the firmament’s density drops to 10^{-19} that of water.

Our atmosphere is unique in the solar system in as much that it was especially created to sustain vegetation, animal life and human life. This complex system of living things needs carbon dioxide, oxygen and water. The air provides all of these. Oxygen is distributed in the human body by means of blood. The atmosphere also contains nitrogen which dilutes the oxygen to the right level for humans and animals – without this dilution the reactivity of oxygen is so great that the earth would be scorched in a fireball. Nitrogen in the atmosphere also provides nitrates and other nitrogen compounds through lightning, which act as fertilisers in the soil. The atmosphere also provides a shield from the

⁴⁶ Filby, FA, 1964, *Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter 1 in the Light of Modern Science*, London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd, pp 59

harmful rays of the Sun which would be fatal without the screening provided by the ozone gas (O₃) in the upper atmosphere.

The atmosphere enhances the development of plant life in as much as it is the carrier of pollen and seeds. It enables birds and many insects to fly and permits sound to travel. The atmosphere also provides a “warm blanket” without which the earth’s temperature would sink so low that it would plunge us into another ice age. And when we consider the provision of God in this finely balanced system we can only exclaim that surely God is good and all powerful to have created and sustained all this in such a fine balance.

3.5.4 Gen 1:14-19

In Genesis 1:16 God made “. . . two great lights; the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night . . .” (KJV) The lesser light is very insignificant compared to the Sun as its light giving power is only 1:700 000 that of the Sun (and the light it provides is merely a reflection of the Sun’s emission).

The functions of the light is to regulate our days and years; and for humans this is very important for the survival of human beings: “The length of the year is determined by the fact that we are travelling at an average speed of about 18.5 miles per second around an elliptical orbit with a mean distance from the Sun of about 93 million miles. If these figures were altered many things on earth would alter as well. If our planet was at the distance of mars we should be ice-bound. If we lived on Pluto we should have but one new year’s day every 250 years! . . . if the planet’s axis (i.e. Pluto) was inclined like the earth’s we should have only one summer and one harvest every 250 years, and that summer on Pluto would not be warm enough to give any harvest anyway. The length of the year and the distance of the earth from the Sun are not arbitrary functions of a purposeless universe, they fit into a plan. The length of time between harvests is of supreme importance to the population of the world. The intensity of the Sun’s light and the rate of plant growth are both regulated to give that bountiful supply of food which God provides and man could enjoy if he distributed it wisely” (Filby, 94, 91)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Filby, FA, 1964, *Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter 1 in the Light of Modern Science*, London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd, pp 91

The light of the sun is also the source of almost all of the energy used by human beings (with exceptions such as nuclear and some chemical energy). Whether human beings burn fossil fuels, generate hydroelectric power, use wind turbines or solar electricity, the original source of that energy is the “great light” the sun. Also if we use wave energy, it comes from the wind – which is driven by the sun, or tidal energy – which is powered primarily by the moon and to a lesser extent the sun, we are actually accessing the cosmic energy systems created by God for the benefit of His creation.

And although the heavens declare the glory of God, they also are used for signs by God, i.e. in the times of Hezekiah, Amos, the birth of Jesus, and the three hours of darkness when Jesus completed His task. And then there are the signs (astronomical upheavals) of the last days when the Creator God will physically intervene in a world which He created but has largely ignored Him.

3.5.5 Genesis 1:20-22

God planned and formed creatures each suited to their own environment. We are not given an explanation of how birds arose on the earth but their tasks are many:-

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica the thrushes of the British Isles consume 3 000 000 000 insects and grubs in three months. This is wonderful because if left unchecked these insects could ruin the world. Some of the birds became God’s gardeners because they carry seeds. The birds themselves even have different purposes in creation.

These birds and insects multiply rapidly but even that is provided for in God’s plan:- “Once a race of creatures has the power to multiply by giving birth to numerous offspring then death must inevitably be introduced to maintain the balance. What is true of birds is true of all animal and vegetable life. . . . given birth, death is inevitable. Only to man, made in the image of God, was a different story possible. Yet even he rejected the way of life and brought death upon himself ‘till One Greater Man, through death itself, restored the way to that life which death can never end. We are to Him of more value than many sparrows” (Filby, 94, 106)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Filby, FA, 1964, *Creation Revealed: A Study of Genesis Chapter 1 in the Light of Modern Science*, London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd, pp 106

3.5.6 Genesis 1:26-28

God now takes council with himself and said “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . .” (Gen 1:26, KJV). And in the rest of the Bible, Father, Son and Spirit work together for the redemption or regeneration of this race of Adam.

The body of a human being is made from atoms, tiny particles of matter from the earth which the Potter formed into a “pot”. Into this pot He breathed life and the human being became a living soul. The “breath of life” was personally communicated to the human being and it sets human kind above all creation.

In Genesis 1 God gave human beings dominion over everything and man was unique among living things on the earth because unlike any other living creature in the earthly realm, God communicated with them. Adam became a living soul with the capability and capacity to commune with God and yet had a body to have contact with the material world.

When God “. . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen 3:7, NIV) he had a God given life which was both physical and spiritual and his relationship with God was characterised by complete obedience. A human being is a created being and is dependent for existence upon God; who created them in His own likeness. If a human being takes God out of the picture then they have no ground for existence. Throughout Scripture we find that God puts in place the process for human beings to be restored to “Sonship”; which is “a human being in the image of Christ.”

Adam was created perfect, without imperfections but not yet perfected. In Adam, God was moving towards the fulfilment of His purpose in creating human beings – the securing of His rights through human beings’ instrumentality. God wanted to create a race of man of one blood upon the earth with His life within them. God created Adam with a free will, with power of choice. Adam’s choice determined the lines of his development. By eating the forbidden fruit Adam gained possession of an internal power (the knowledge of good and evil) to decide and act, a power independent of God. A believer on the other hand gives up this power and lives a life dependent on God and thus in the reconciliation of the believer with God, the believer begins the process of reinstatement into the relational position of Adam.

The original righteousness (*justitia originalis*) which was given to Adam and Eve was a neutral sinlessness. Hypothetically speaking we could say that if they had not eaten from the forbidden fruit they could have acquired a knowledge of good and evil through the way God had intended. The argument that it was called the tree of good and evil because human beings gained his knowledge from this tree doesn't hold water because God named it before the fall (Gen 2:17). By eating this fruit human beings learned what evil is and what good could have been as well as *visa versa*. Through the tree of knowledge of good and evil Adam was given a partial possession whereby he could have increased his partial knowledge to a full possession by obedience to God's Word.

Adam, however, fell and his original righteousness disappeared. He was now like a red rose that lost its colour and scent and could only regain these by redemption. For human beings to be brought back to their previous state and appointed goal, from now on will mean a gradual transformation until they are in the likeness of the Son. God wants to place His nature in human beings and thereby glorify Himself in them and have fellowship with them in order for the creator to be linked to His creature so that human beings can escape from the corruption of the world and become partakers of the Divine nature. This is reflected when Peter wrote about making one's election sure indicating that human beings may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Peter 1:4). This is free grace and not unconditional grace as human beings themselves must play their own personal part.

Human beings have been called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ and this fact alone exalts them above all other creatures. His Kingdom is Himself and is in them as well as around them. They will share His splendour and will reign with Him for ever and ever as this is the value that God places on human kind.

3.5.7 Genesis 2:1-3

The seventh day had been consecrated by God. Neither creation nor human beings have been called holy – only the seventh day – *q^edhusa* (holiness). When human beings are consecrated they can enter into the rest (seventh day) and they can cease from their labours as did God from His as is seen from the writings of the Hebrew writer when he discusses a Sabbath rest for God's people (Heb 4:6-11). Creation ends with a day of worship which points to the ultimate purpose of creation. God declared this day to be

holy for the benefit of human beings so that they can have fellowship with Him which was the very reason for their creation.

3.6 The Regularities and Principles Given in God's Creation That Human Beings and Physical and Organic Universes Are, and Have to Function and Work Accordingly

Certain regularities and principles are put in place by God in order for the different things being created to function properly. In this subsection we will start with the human being and how they thwarted some principles by falling into sin, the effect of all this on nature as it groans under the bondage to sin and how things unfolded as they formed part of the *creatio continuo* process put in place by God in order to restore things to their original destiny.

On day six all the living creatures of the earth were made, including human beings. When God created human beings God entered into consultation with Himself as he said “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:26) which has the implication that spiritually human beings are created in God's image making fellowship with God possible as well as relationally with other human beings.

To be created in God's image does not relate to the physical body of human beings. There were times when God revealed himself to human beings in the form of a human being i.e. Gen 18 etc. Jesus was also made in the likeness of a human being, but God per se does not have a physical body as God is Spirit. Human beings – unlike animals which were created after their kind – have been created in the image of God reflecting His attributes but can and could never be God.

It could be possible that human beings gained dominion over creation because they were created in God's image. It seems that human beings are God's representatives to maintain, cultivate and care for God's works. Human beings were also prohibited from eating animals. God's creation was without bloodshed – it was peaceful and good and formed within the principles of God's creation.

Scripture demonstrated a relationship between God, Adam and Eve as it states that God

spoke with them and gave them divine instructions i.e. they and the beasts and birds as well as creatures on the ground should eat green plants. This relationship was damaged by the fall which affected the destiny of human beings and nature.

The destiny of believers is closely bound up with the destiny of the world. Paul in his letter to the Roman's where he considers the future glory of believers, speaks of the creation as being caught up in a process of decay. "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption to wit, the redemption of our body." (Romans 8:21-23, KJV)

Creation is ongoing since it moves human beings towards their gracious destiny, the Father, and it takes place through God's presence to human beings as Word and Spirit, "... it includes forgiveness of sins and the new life. In the strict sense therefore, creation is always new creation. The order of creation is not the closed reality that traditional theology has imagined: there is no finished natural order. The seven days of creation are still going on. We may not think of God as acting in two distinct gestures, first creating man and his universe and then, reaching over the abyss produced by human sin, initiating him into redemption. God's ongoing creation is the redemption of mankind." (Baum, 1979, 214)⁴⁹

God initially created human beings as is seen in the Genesis account (Gen 1:26-29). He gave them the vocation to rule "... let them have dominion" (Gen 1:26) and to develop "... subdue it" (Gen 1:28). They had to develop in order to subdue the earth. We can deduce that inventions and discoveries are part of God's will for human kind, they form part of "taking possession of the earth". The advancement of civilization is a regulation within God's creation.

In the beginning Adam and Eve were like a "clean slate". They had the potential to become everything that God planned them to be, but they had to work at it, they had to "dress it" (the gardens) "keep it" (Gen 2:15). They did not receive everything at once, but gradually had to replenish the earth and subdue it. They had to gradually extend their dominion over

⁴⁹ Baum, G, 1979, *Man becoming: God in Secular Experience*, New York: Seabury Press, pp 214

the earth until it was completely under their rule. God's plan was from the beginning a plan of development.

God revealed Himself to human beings long before His chosen people, the Hebrews, appeared on earth. God entered into relationships to ancestral man when He conferred with Himself to create them as is seen from the Genesis account from the story of Adam and Eve (Gen 1:26-30; Gen 2:1-17). In spite of God's love and provision, Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of Satan and disobeyed God. This resulted in the judgment of expulsion (Gen 3:23-24). Their sin spread by inheritance of the knowledge of good and evil to the whole human race. Paul in his letter to the Romans on the topic death through Adam and life through Christ discussed this concept (Romans 5:12-13).

The Old Testament is the story of how God worked out His purposes. Although God was grieved by the fall, He spoke to Adam and Eve about His plan to restore human beings to the place of greatness and to fellowship with Himself which had existed before their disobedience as is evidenced by the fall in the Genesis account (Gen 3:15). God is full of mercy and promised a Redeemer who would bring reconciliation about.

God in His mercy furnished Adam and Eve with garments of skin. Whenever human beings sins, God's responses are intended to guide them and prepare them for the future. This portrays God as caring and as a protector who offers protection to transgressors when it is needed. In clothing them God also equipped them for their departure. The harmony between humans and their environment that had sheltered them was broken by their own choice. For God the freedom of life and of the will of human beings is sacred and therefore man was sent on a long and painful path of self experience in order to develop them.

When human beings fell the whole earth fell with them. Adam had to learn by experience that sin always affects others as this is a life principle – nothing exists in isolation, there is always a cause and effect relationship. In his case it affected all of Creation. To restore the whole of creation, God works through his Son, who became a human being in order to restore human beings to their right relationship with God.

The eating of the forbidden fruit meant that Adam and Eve came to know good and evil (Gen 3:22). They chose to reject good and to become evil and no longer accept God's word as self evident truth but rebel against his authority by taking final authority themselves; and thus they became like God in this regard. They were dissatisfied with their humanness and

lusted after the throne which was not theirs. We see that crooked thinking always leads to crooked relationships. Every action has a reaction.

Pain is introduced with the judgement on Eve as she will bring forth children but will experience pains in childbearing there will also be another type of pain when a husband rules over her and she is subjected to him. (Gen 3:16). There was no misunderstanding of God's decree. Eve was able to repeat God's words. She however, changed them by eliminating certain words. Adam rebelled against God's rule and therefore earth rebels against Adam's rule. The earth itself became difficult. Weeds flourished and food yielding plants grew only with difficulty. From hence onwards the earth will function in "disharmony" with human beings as it will produce weeds and thistles and give rise to natural disasters such as earth quakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and tornados. These life lessons formed part of Adam and Eve's experiential learning process.

"Before the fall, no weeds or poisonous plants, no thorns or thistles or anything else existed that could cause man misery or harm. But after the fall, the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but because of him who subjected it. *Mataiotēs* (futility) carries the idea of being without success, of being unable to achieve a goal or purpose. Because of man's sin, no part of nature now exists as God intended it to be and as it originally was. The verb was subjected indicates by its form that nature did not curse itself but was cursed by something or someone else. Paul goes on to reveal that the curse on nature was executed by its creator. God himself subjected it to futility." (MacArthur, 1991, 454)⁵⁰

Sin is separation from God and because God is the source of life it implies that sin is separation from life which means death in spirit, soul and body. Paul discussed this principle in his letter to the Romans when he dealt with slaves to righteousness. Isaiah conveyed the same principle when he discussed sin, confession and redemption. (Rom 6:23). Isaiah 59:2 – "But your iniquities have separated you from your God" (NIV). Sin offends God and separates us from Him. Human beings who die with unforgiven sin separate themselves eternally from God. The Bible never speaks of God being reconciled to human beings because God has never been at enmity with them. The sin of human beings separated them from God.

"... all life is lived in relationship to God. The meaning of human life lies in the ability to praise and serve God. Conversely, the tragedy of death is the loss of the ability to praise

and have fellowship with God.” (Christian, 2003, 47)⁵¹. With the fall, Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God and death was introduced. From the fall on human beings nourished the earth by returning to the dust from whence they came.

With this disobedience of Adam and Eve, all of human kind, the earth and the rest of the world was cursed and corrupted.

“As in the story of man’s redemption the setting apart of the Jewish race as God’s chosen people depended on the unquestioning obedience of Abraham . . . so did the fate of the human race hang upon the unquestioning obedience of the first man to the divine law. . . But unlike Abraham, Adam failed in His obedience; and mankind cast out of the Eden of its original innocence and estranged from the life which is the light of men, went wandering in its own spiritual darkness until God sent His only begotten Son into the world, the light shining in darkness, that all who believe in Him may have eternal life.” (Cuthbert, 1939, 8)⁵²

Because of the destructive sin of Adam and Eve, decay, disease, pain, death, pollution and natural disaster have been brought on the earth and its inhabitants until God removes the curse and creates a new heaven and a new earth. God’s purpose for human beings is not destruction but re-creation. God will obliterate the heavens and the earth with fire; then he will create them anew for we read: “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13, NIV). Here Peter discusses the new heaven and new earth when he gives his readers hope in his discussion on the Day of the Lord. We also read in John’s vision when he discusses the New Jerusalem the same concept: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Rev 21:1, NIV).

The instrument of temptation during the fall comes from the animal kingdom and the object of temptation from the vegetable kingdom. Therefore, because of human beings, both these kingdom remain under the curse. However, God’s mercy was greater than the fall of Adam and Eve. This concept of grace is discussed by Paul in his letter to the Romans when he discussed death through Adam and life through Christ (Romans 5:20) Human beings remained an object of the love of God as evidenced in John’s gospel when Nicodemus

⁵⁰ MacArthur, JF, 1991, *New Testament Commentary*, Romans 1-8, Chicago: Moody Press, pp 454

⁵¹ Christian, CW, 2003, *A Theological argument for the unity of the human being - an issue in evangelical theology*, South Africa: UNISA, pp 47

⁵² Cuthbert, F, 1939, *The Mystery of the Redemption*, London: Burns Oatse and Wasbourne Ltd, pp 8

visited Jesus at night (John 3:16). In His love God even sent His son to save the world though Him. This forms part of God's mercy – judgement is thus countered by mercy.

At this present age the animal world lives in fear and dread of human beings. The peace which prevailed in the beginning among all the creatures has been breached with the fall and the whole creation has begun to groan in travail. Human beings are even under threat from their fellow human beings and we experience violence like the London bomb blasts of seven July 2005 - atrocities done to human beings by human beings.

Believers and non-believers very much look alike with regards to their walk, dress and talk because some believers, unfortunately, give little evidence of their salvation. But at the revealing of the sons of God, believers will be eternally separated from sin and their unredeemed humanness. Despite the curse the fallen world is still beautiful, the flowers, mountains, forests etc. are still reflecting the glory of God as is seen in God's creation although it is in travail or pain. This is reflected upon by Paul in his letter to the Romans when he discussed God's wrath on human beings (Rom 1:20).

After the initial act of creation God did not leave the universe and His creatures in it to their own devices, but maintained His relationship and His development of them through the process of continuous creation and redemption after the fall. This forms part of the regularity within which God continues to act towards the process of restoration which is seen in the various works of God in the Old and New Testaments, this will be discussed briefly under the headings of; nature groans, the flood, Babel, Abram, Sinai, Babylon and the Word; in order to show God's perseverance and continual sustaining acts towards His goal of restoration and regeneration until He becomes all in all.

After the fall of Adam and Eve in the Genesis account (Gen 3:15) the process of salvation and reconciliation began. Man's likeness to God has been scarred and the consequences are far reaching for redemptive history. In order to have fellowship with God human beings need to be in harmony with the Kingdom of God; and Jesus came to establish a path by which this could be done. Jesus acted both creationally and consummationally in this obedience unto death. The process, triumph and effect of salvation is seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Christ comes to undo the effects of the fall of the first Adam. He came to remove the sin of the curse and inaugurate a new eternal order, a new heaven and earth in which God's

original purposes for his creation will find their realisation. God's purpose for people is not destruction but re-conciliation and renewal.

3.6.1 All of Nature Groans

With the fall in the Book of Genesis the whole earth falls with human beings and therefore the whole of creation waits for the redeemed people of God to be revealed because it will be at that point that creation will be released from its bondage under the curse and will give birth to a new heaven and a new earth.

Because of sin, creation fell from the perfect state in which God created it. But one day it will be liberated and transformed and until such time it waits for the resurrection of God's children:

“Apokaradokia (anxious longing) is an especially vivid word that literally refers to watching with outstretched head, and suggests standing on tiptoes with the eyes looking ahead with intent expectancy. The prefix *apo* adds the idea of fixed absorption and concentration on that which is anticipated. The creation is standing on tiptoes as it were, as it waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.” (MacArthur, 1991, 452)⁵³

Creation refers to animals, plants and inanimate things such as mountains, rivers, plains, seas and heavenly bodies - angels, demons etc being excluded from this consideration.

Because human beings sinned the whole of creation was corrupted, but there is hope for creation for when human beings will finally be restored, creation itself will be restored and set free from its slavery to corruption. Despite corruption there is redemption, renewal and reconciliation – indicating that nature will be restored by God.

“The groaning and suffering of the creation will one day cease, because God will deliver it from its corruption and futility. In the meanwhile, it endures the pains of childbirth. Like Eve, who's sin brought the curse of painful human childbirth (Gen 3:16), nature endures its own kind of labor pains. But also like Eve and her descendants, nature's pains of childbirth presage new life.” (MacArthur, 1991, 457)⁵⁴

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote: “I wonder whether the phenomenon of the Spring supplies us with a part answer. Nature every year, as it were, makes an effort to renew itself, to produce something permanent; it has come out of the death and the darkness of all that is

⁵³ MacArthur, JF, 1991, *New Testament Commentary*; Romans 1-8, Chicago: Moody Press, pp 452

so true of the winter. In the spring it seems to be trying to produce a perfect creation, to be going through some kind of birth pangs year by year. But unfortunately it does not succeed, for spring leads only to summer, where as summer leads to autumn, and autumn to winter. Poor old nature tries every year to defeat the ‘vanity,’ the principle of death and decay and disintegration that is in it. But it cannot do so. It fails every time. It still goes on trying, as if it feels things should be different and better; but it never succeeds. So it goes on ‘groaning and travailing in pain together until now’ it has been doing so for a very long time . . . but nature still repeats the effort annually.” (Lloyd-Jones, 1980, 59-60)⁵⁵

3.6.2 The Flood – *Creatio Continuo* and Covenant

During the paradise period, Adam and Eve lived under prohibition and command. (Gen 2:16-17) God gave Adam responsibility for the garden and told him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead of preventing him from eating, God gave Adam a choice and thus the option to choose wrongly. God wanted Adam to obey, but God gave Adam the freedom to choose. Without choice, Adam would have been like a prisoner, and his obedience would have been meaningless.

After the expulsion from the garden between Adam and Noah’s time, human beings had freedom to do what they would. They had unrestricted opportunity to show what they could accomplish. This time was the testing of their freedom. The end of it, however, was the flood.

During this time human beings became increasingly sinful.

The flood did not show the withdrawing of God’s grace, because Noah found grace before God. The flood did not solve the problem of the wickedness of human beings either, because there was wickedness after the flood. The flood was just one of many judgements which foreshadow the final destiny of rebellious people. Throughout Scripture we find the same principle of salvation and judgement bringing to completion the Kingdom of God.

Before the flood, God in His mercy, sent witnesses to the world to repent. No one listened in the days of Enosh (Gen 4:26) or in the days of Enoch (Gen 5:21-24) or in the days of Lamech (Gen 5:29) or in the days of Noah who testified (Gen 6:3) for a period of approximately 120 years to the “sons of God” before punishment came.

⁵⁴ MacArthur, JF, 1991, *New Testament Commentary*; Romans 1-8, Chicago: Moody Press, pp 457

⁵⁵ Lloyd-Jones, M, 1980, *Romans*, Grand Rapids Mich: Zondevan, pp 6:59-60

After more than one thousand five hundred years of patience, the flood destroyed the sinful human race, but all inside the Ark were kept both alive and fed. The Ark was literally a lifeboat carrying the recipients of God's grace from an old creation, under the judgment of God to a renewal of creation and covenant.

In the days of old names of children had great significance. "Methuselah" for example meant "at his death the sending forth of waters". It is interesting to note that he died in the year of the flood, 1656 years after creation.

In the days before the flood the people were wicked and an appropriate punishment, the flood, resulted; which was a virtual reversal of Genesis 1. The catastrophe of the flood was so great that the two halves of the primordial waters which God separated were in danger of uniting. The distinction between heaven and earth, effected by Gen 1:6-8 was completely destroyed in the sixth hundredth year of Noah's life when God opened the floodgates of heaven (Gen 7:11). The deluge was of such magnitude that it engulfed the earth and destroyed all creatures and all human beings except Noah and his family. By this the original creation was substantially reversed and the world was effectively put back into a Genesis 1:1 situation.

The new beginning (Gen 9:1 ff) occurs. Human beings are again commissioned to be fruitful and multiply and he is again assured of his role and status. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Gen 9:6, NIV).

God also made a covenant, not just with Noah, but also with his descendents and with creation. "Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you--the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you--every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." (Gen 9:8-11, NIV)

Although Noah was chosen because of his righteousness his righteousness did not change anything in the planned destruction (Flood). God established a covenant with Noah out of His own free will and because of His goodness, not because of any commitment on Noah's part (Gen 6:18; 9:9). This covenant was not only with Noah but also with the descendents of Noah, all the birds, livestock, wild animals and every living creature on earth as the

flood affected all of these.

Noah resembles the second Adam and is armed with Adam's mandate. The world in which he was to operate, however, is a fallen world. The relationships are broken and the peace among the creatures breached.

In Gen 9:12 God gave an assurance in the form of a sign to human beings and all the living creatures which had been threatened by the flood. The rainbow testifies to the covenant between Creator and creation and with its seven fold radiance it is the sum and union of both God and human beings (the number of God is three; the number of the world is four and seven is the sum of both).

The rainbow became the nature symbol of our eternal deliverance as the little flock of God:

- the seven colours are the number of covenant and the number seven holds great significance as it was also prescribed to Aaron that he should sprinkle seven times with his finger before the atonement cover. (Lev 16:14)
- predominance of green which is the colour of life as is seen in vegetation as well as in Revelation when the throne in heaven is discussed where the rainbow resembling an emerald encircled the throne (Rev 4:3)
- the bow (bridge shape) illustrates the union between Creator and creation (Gen 9:12-17) as God intended the rainbow to be a sign of the covenant between Him and the earth
- it shines as the transfiguring of the darkness by the light as the rainbow brings colour and light in the dark sky and the rainbow reminds God of His covenant (Gen 9:14)
- and the heavenly circle becomes a type of the Divine perfection. Ezekiel described the Glory of the Lord (the radiance) as looking like a rainbow on a rainy day and as such it becomes a type of Divine Perfection. Even in the Book of Revelation John describes a rainbow encircling the throne of God (Ez 1:28; Rev 4:3)

The next significant event in the process of salvation is the blessing concerning Japheth and Shem and the curse upon Canaan, the son of Ham.

For Japheth God is Elohim, the Creator, maintainer and universal ruler; but for Shem, God is Yahweh, the covenant God and redeemer. The redemption is brought about by Christ, son of David, descendent through Abraham from Shem (Luke 3:36). In Christ the blessing of Shem becomes the gospel for the world as Shem saw Him as the Covenant God and Redeemer.

The racial structure of humankind began with Shem, Ham and Japheth but in the end it is not a judgment because on the new earth we still will find nations, there will be a family of peoples as is seen in John's vision when he spoke of the multitude of peoples (Rev 21:24; 22:27) but they will be God's people united together.

After the flood the earth was becoming replenished and God continued to speak with individuals such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and the period of divine patience (Acts 14:15-17) began. Paul and Barnabas reminded the people of Lystra that the rain and crops, are examples of God's goodness and confirm the fact that He is at work in the world. We also find in Paul's speech to the Athenians the forgiveness of sins for condemned people before the time of Jesus as God forgave people their ignorance in the past (Acts 17:30).

With the flood people were afforded a new beginning yet we find no resultant marked awareness of God, but rather pride in achievement and pleasure in licentiousness e.g. the Tower of Babel and Sodom and Gomorrah respectively (Gen 11 & 19).

3.6.3 Babel –*Creatio Continua* and Covenant

When we compare the Word of God "Let us make man" (Gen 1:26) with the words of man: "Come, let us build ourselves a city . . . so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:4, NIV) then we find a sharp contrast. God's Word is geared towards goodness; the word of human beings is selfish and filled with rebellion. The unity that the people wanted to achieve is in direct opposition to God's command to fill the earth to Adam and Eve as well as to Noah and his sons (Gen 1:28; 9:1,7). And instead of seeking communion with God they wanted to establish their own kingdom on earth with the building of the Tower of Babel.

The events of the Tower of Babel in Gen 11:1-9 represent an effort by human beings to build God out of His world. This resembles an arrogant human assertion in a God directed world and therefore an appropriate divine response was needed. The effects of Babel have a

wider influence than the flood. The racial, social, economic and geographic divisions are still with us and the consequences of this act of human beings still causes heartache and division.

God in His mercy to protect human beings from their own sin and folly i.e. pride and for the benefit of the renewal and *creatio continuo* process confused their language and the human beings scattered abroad and therefore could replenish the earth.

Genesis 1 to 11 is an account of the rebellion of human beings and the seriousness of sin. We first find the rebellion of Adam and Eve, leading to a further corruption with Cain and Abel and then the corruption which lead to the flood. After the flood corruption started again and built up to a climax in Babel. God, however, renews His blessing each time with Seth, Noah, Shem, Terah and Abraham. This demonstrates God's royal grace, justness and goodness.

We can summarise the consequences of the three great rebellions of early human beings as follows: Adam and Eve were prevented from repossessing Eden, the antediluvians who entered into mass disbelief were drowned by the flood and the bold power hungry people at the Tower of Babel had their tongues confounded. The punishment decreed by God for these rebellions was however, a mixture of blessing and punishment each time i.e. "the thorns and thistles" allotted to Adam and Eve kept them and all of mankind busy with honest labour. The punishment of the flood changed the face of the entire earth and all weather conditions. The flood buried tremendous amounts of organic matter from both plant and animal sources which serves as a boon to modern man who benefits from the oil and coal deposits. The dispersion at the tower of Babel meant the re-population of the entire earth which God decreed from the beginning and with the sin at Babel God turned human beings sinful action into a blessing to fulfil His purpose for His creation.

3.6.4 Abram: *Creatio Continua*

With the elective call of Abram we are not just dealing with the election of an individual, but of a seed 'yet to be' – an embryo of a nation, Israel, and the seed that will proceed from that nation, namely Christ as is gathered from Paul's speech on the law and the Promise to the Galatians (Gal 3:16). With Christ's sacrificial action the promise of reconciliation to God is extended to the Gentiles in accordance with God's promise to Abraham when God called Abram and Abram set out from Haran (Gen 12:1-4).

We find similarities between Gen 12:1 “The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you” (NIV) and Gen 1:3 “And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” (NIV). Both are divine speech which includes a virtual imperative, calling a new period of history or existence into being.

The promise of God to Abram “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (Gen 12:2, NIV) seems to be a reference to the tower builders who wanted to make a name for themselves. Abram by his obedience, however, made a name for himself. The redemptive purposes which are being expressed through the call of Abram are couched in the language of continuous creation.

Abram’s call is a call into existence of a new creation, a new nation after Babel, in which God began again. Abram is therefore a new creature, summoned into being by the Word.

God begins again with Abram as He will again later begin with Israel in Egypt by an exodus. Abram was moved out from a pagan environment just as Israel from Egypt. Both Abram and Israel had been blessed and placed in a promised land. Gen 1 to 11 thus shows us that God’s purposes for creation will be sustained and that there seems to be a kind of “cyclic nature” in the *creatio continua* process as certain “events” repeat themselves which resembles the cyclical nature of the seasons.

God made yet another covenant – the Abrahamic covenant of promise (Gen 12:1-4; 15:1-21). With this covenant a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces as a sign to Abram of the covenant. It is a gracious covenant because if the people wanted to receive all the promised blessings they only had to remain faithful to Yahweh in their land of Canaan. After Abram received the covenant of circumcision from God, he became Abraham, Father of many nations when he was ninety nine years old (Gen 17:5).

With Abraham’s family the continuous creation proceeds as the family becomes a nation and God fulfilled His part of the covenant.

3.6.5 Sinai – Creation of a Nation

With Sinai another *creatio* occurred but this time a creation of a nation.

We find God’s grace in the choosing of a nation “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he

swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deu 7:7-8 NIV). God chose the insignificant to be the significant. But Israel did not receive a preference. God was and is just, because with the higher privileges there were greater responsibility. There is a balancing out principle between the blessing and the curse as Amos prophesied against Israel when they were judged by God and when Israel broke the covenant with God, Hosea also gave a similar message (Amos 3:2; Hos 8:1-3).

Israel was the receiver of the Word and Redeemer, and birthplace for the Christian Church. And although the nation of Israel is God’s firstborn son all the nations will become ‘sons’ of God.

But Israel, this covenant people of God, set apart to spread the message of salvation among all the nations of the world fell and committed a threefold sin:

- They rejected the message. Jesus grieved over Jerusalem as they killed the prophets and thereby rejected the message (Matt 23:37).
- They murdered the Messiah on Golgotha. This is clearly stated in Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin before they stoned Stephen (Acts 7:52).
- They rejected the testimony of the resurrection and the priests and Sadducees were greatly disturbed when Peter and John were teaching the people about the resurrection of the dead and by this action they tried to nullify one of the works of God (Acts 4:2,3,21).

and therefore stand under divine judgement, but God in His grace saved a remnant.

There is always a remnant saved throughout Scripture, out of the judgements. There is always a ‘little flock’ and the history of the little flock is the only history. In Genesis for instance we find the genealogies of the chosen line i.e. Seth to Noah and Shem to Abram. We do not find historical numbers in the tables of the non chosen lines i.e. Cain, Ishmael, Esau etc. The world ripens for judgement and the little flock are being prepared throughout scripture for deliverance. God always chooses the “nothings” i.e. not Cain but Abel, not Esau but Jacob, not Aaron but Moses, not Israel but His bride

God does all this so that no one may boast before Him and whoever boasts must boast in the Lord.

And although Israel is the elect nation there is also an inner election because not all Israel are Israel. Even elect people are sinners needing redemption as seen in Noah's deliverance from the judgement of the whole world. Election is a free gift but it is conditional on our response of acceptance. Election does not mean that one has either earned or deserved it.

Creatio continuo is a supernatural act of salvation to help people who can't help themselves where a human being is regenerated by the power of God's Spirit.

The idea of the exodus is a pattern of redemption i.e. the first exodus from Egypt, the second exodus from Babylon in the sixth century before Christ and then the exodus in which Jesus takes his people out of the captivity of sin and death to eternal life. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden it signified a removal from God's presence. With the Exodus we find an act of reconciliation as God has prepared a new "garden" – the land Canaan – for them.

With the escape from Egypt a rebirth of the nation of Israel started. Moses served as the intermediary between the Israelites and God from whom he was to be given the great covenant of the law which governed their conduct for the next 1400 years until the promised seed, Jesus, came. This mosaic covenant of the law, spoken by God on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:25 ff), expresses the will, judgement and ordinances of God. This covenant spans the period from the Exodus to the Cross (~1400 years).

God marvellously rescued the people out of Egypt. Through God's provision of water, manna and quails, as well as the "revelation" at Mount Sinai, God revealed Himself as their God and prepared them to become holy and dedicated to Him. In these laws God revealed His nature and His plan to them.

God in His dealings with the Israelites was full of generosity and kindness, i.e. when He multiplied them. Even the Egyptians became afraid as they became so numerous (Exodus 1:7), raising up a leader (Moses) for them (Exodus 2) heard their groans (Exodus 2:23-25) and God remembered His covenant with them and became concerned about them. He therefore liberated them by sending the ten plagues (Exodus 2:8 – 12) redeeming them from Egypt and giving them a sign in the consecration of every first born of both human being and animal (Exodus 13:16). Yet Israel repeatedly sinned and rebelled against God.

Through His great love, God chose Israel in spite of all the wrong they did, to represent His way of life, to teach His word and be an agent of salvation to the world so that one day the

whole world could be blessed. The people, however, corrupted God's plan. God then established Aaron's descendents from the tribe of Levi as priests, representing what the entire nation should have been. (Lev 8 and 9). But with the coming of Jesus Christ, God has once again extended His plan to all believers who are to become holy, "a royal priesthood" as is reflected in the letter of Peter on holiness (1 Pet 2:9, NIV) with the resultant regeneration of human beings to fit them for this goal.

God in His mercy sustained His people and judged the enemies of His people and redeemed and reconciled His people to himself. This act of God still applies today and if the people of God show that they have an inner redemption (obey God's word) they shall be His people under His rule and exist in a special relationship to God whilst representing God to the whole world.

This nation, Israel, is saved by grace alone in a restoration to fellowship with God. There is always a choice in front of God's people: the way of life or the way of death, covenant blessings or covenant curses. Only those people who respond to God live in grace whereas sinners will perish; this concept is proclaimed by God Himself when He spoke to Moses (Exodus 33:19; 34:5-6).

3.6.6 Babylon – *Creatio Continua*

With Babylon another facet of *creatio continua* is reflected.

Ezekiel chapters 8 – 11 record Ezekiel being taken in a vision from Babylon to the temple in Jerusalem to see the wickedness practiced there. It depicts God's glory departing the temple. God's holiness demands judgment for sin and this meant destruction of all the human beings who sinned and refused to repent (i.e. destruction of Jerusalem by fire). The Babylonian exile was just punishment as the people behaved treacherously against the Lord. The post exilic period was also part of God's plan for the renewal of the earth. However, God promised the exiles in Babylonia that He would continue to be with them even though they were not in Jerusalem. They were the faithful ones and those in Jerusalem were wicked. This was the opposite of the people's perception. And herein the Lord reveals His Fatherly care for His people. Despite what they have done they still will receive God's blessings and covenants and will be restored to the land as well as being spiritually transformed. This Fatherly care is for everyone whom God called as is stated by Peter when he addressed the crowd of the Pentecostal event (Acts 2:39; 3:24-36).

God again gave a remnant an opportunity for restoration. The remnant responded in confession and repentance and through the fire of judgment they experienced a renewal.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 deals with the inauguration of the new covenant which rests upon divine pardon which permits a new beginning. Through the promise to Jeremiah the Lord showed that His Word stands for ever – His promises will be fulfilled as He promised long ago through Moses even if they have been banished to a distant land He will still bring them back and fulfil His promises as He said in Deuteronomy 30:4-6.

The exile lasted some 70 years. The Babylonians granted religious freedom and self government to their captives. Ezra and Nehemiah were sent back to Judah to exert leadership. Returnees from the exile and the people who were left in Jerusalem had rebuilt the temple by 516 B.C. In ~ 457 B.C. Ezra – who believed in Yahweh – led a large group of Israelites from Babylon back to Jerusalem.

After the exile the people of Israel, however, were far from holiness as they didn't give freely to the priests and failed to give the best sacrifices to the Lord (Hag 1 and Mal 1). The priests themselves did not teach the full implications of the Law (Mal 2:1).

Even though this redemption was not complete it was still a beginning of the restoration as found expression in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, i.e.

- from Abraham to David
- From David to the Exile
- From the Exile to Jesus (Matt 1:1-16)

from hence the history of redemption will rush toward the restoration of the whole world.

The submission of nations as a result of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, where God himself rules from a reconstituted centre of Zion, is also prevalent.

3.6.7 Word – Reconciliation and Pinnacle of Redemption

The redemption was to be brought about in a co-operation of the will of human beings with divine will and in Jesus this could be accomplished as He was fully man and fully God.

Yet, salvation is entirely from God. In order for people to be saved from Sin:

- a blood sacrifice was needed. Even in exodus a blood sacrifice was needed as a

sin offering to make atonement. (Ex 29:36-37)

- the sacrifice must be perfect, without defect of blemish to be acceptable as a sacrifice. The Lord does not want discarded offerings or offerings with defects i.e. blind, injured or maimed i.e. the offering must be perfect. (Lev 22:21)

These Jesus fulfilled in His own body. God Himself provided the sacrifice. This is in line with Abraham's answer to his son Isaac when he said that God will provide a lamb for the burned offering when he was about to offer his son. This paralleled Christ being offered on the cross for the sin of human beings (Gen 22:8).

“God's original purpose in creation was to make a people in His divine image who would give Him honor and glory by serving and obeying Him in all things. But when Adam and Eve rebelled, alienating themselves from God and bringing damnation upon themselves and all subsequent humanity, God had to provide a way of bringing fallen mankind back to Himself. Through Christ, he provided that way by placing the sins of all mankind upon His sinless Son, causing ‘the iniquity of us all to fall on Him’ (Isaiah 53:6). Those who trust in that gracious sacrifice on their behalf are saved from their sins and given God's own glory.” (MacArthur, 1991, 493)⁵⁶

Since the coming of Christ the focus shifted from “a great nation” to human beings “from every tribe and language and people and nation”. With the commission of Christ all the peoples of the earth will be blessed as they all will be disciplined and hear the Good News.

With the incarnation, God restored the true relationship between Himself and the human race. Jesus is the agent and purpose of creation: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.” (Col 1:16, NIV) The meaning of the universe is thus found in creation. All things are created with a view to their redemption in Christ. His saving work in the world was the eternal purpose of God before creation and from all eternity for the ultimate purpose of God becoming all in all at the consummation of the ages.

The ultimate reason for Christ's first coming was to redeem those under law, that they might become sons of God. The second coming is also linked with God's purpose to redeem people from wickedness and unite and consecrate those who belong to Christ.

⁵⁶ MacArthur, JF, *New Testament Commentary; Romans 1-8*, 1991, Chicago: Moody Press, pp 493

Christ's first coming began the redemption process through the purchase of blood. His second coming will complete the redemption process by restoring human beings to fellowship with the Father which was interrupted by sin in Eden.

Jesus ushers in a new age through a battle against, and a victory over, destructive powers. The Kingdom of God comes when Jesus enters the house of the strong man and lays it to waste. But the creation (redemption) is linked with the first creation, the deliverance from Egypt, from Babylon etc. The same God worked in all these events. With this creation Israel becomes a new Israel which embraces all peoples. Christ created everything and therefore He did not come into a strange world but He came to a world which is His own as is seen from the book the apostle John wrote (John 1:11). The work of creation has not ceased and man has become a co-worker in creation.

Before the foundation of the world Jesus had been appointed to be the mediator of salvation as Peter wrote in his letter to encourage the believers when they faced persecution under the Emperor Nero (1 Peter 1:20) He is also the mediator of the creation of the world as is seen from John's letter where he described the birth of Jesus (John 1:3). He preserves the world and holds things together as Paul wrote to the church in Colosse (Col 1:17) and is the Lord of world judgment (John 5:22). He is the divine redeemer who became man (tabernacled amongst us) and redeemed the human race, united them in eternal oneness and effected the redemption of the earth. With this act the vocation of the first Adam (ruler of the earth) remains but is filled with new content. With the last Adam (Jesus), human kind as such attains the purpose of its appointment and although this sounds Christocentric it is also pneumacentric as will become clear in this thesis as there is not an either or approach.

Because of the grace of God (which is an expression of God's love), God did not set human beings aside when they were proven unworthy of their vocation with the sin and fall. "In the perfect offering of himself to the Father through the eternal Spirit we witness one sample – and Irving can even speak of this as a *random* sample – of the creation in its integrity. By virtue of its fallenness, the rest of creation has lost its integrity, lost its directedness to perfection before God the Father. Though directed to an end which is perfection for the glory of God, the creation has, unaccountably but undoubtedly fallen into disorder: that is to say, misdirection, disorientation, and dissolution. One chief metaphor through which the misdirection can be understood is that of a deep-seated pollution, as a result of which everything participates in a unfittedness to go into the presence of the holy God. The metaphors of dirt and pollution enable us to speak concretely of a disorientation

of relations both vertical - in relation to God - and horizontal - in relation to the network of created reality.¹⁷ At the center of the disorientation of relations is the human creature, which, because of the personal and culpable form of its sin involves all other reality in its fallenness. Both literally and metaphorically to be fallen is to pollute and to be polluted.¹⁸ It is therefore appropriate that the firstfruits of redemption should be the free, obedient and loving self-offering of this true human life to God the Father.” (Gunton, 1992, 58)⁵⁷

The final purpose remains and human beings shall be the channel of blessing for the creation after the redemption of humankind on a new heaven and new earth when the devil will be cast into the lake of fire as is seen in John’s vision (Rev 20:21; 20:11-15).

As the Son of God, Jesus can draw people into the covenantal relationship with God. Jesus Himself said that He alone knows the Father and therefore He can draw and reveal the Father to whomever He pleases. This was said when He denounced Korazin and Bethsaida. Jesus thus has the Power to bring human beings into a covenantal relationship with God (Matt 11:27). Jesus extends this privilege of adoption to anyone who receives Him. Even John attested to this fact in his gospel when he wrote of how God became a human being. (John 1:11-12).

According to John 1:14 Jesus was the coming of the Word in the tabernacle of human flesh to dwell among us: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14, NIV). Jesus is the focal point of the new creation and embodies that creation; indirectly reference to this is being made by linking the new creation with the redemption of our bodies as seen in the following two examples:

- “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:19-23, NIV) The new creation

⁵⁷ Gunton, CE, 1992, *Christ and Creation*, Edinburgh: The Paternoster Press, pp 58

and redemption are linked here in the letter of Paul to the Romans when Paul spoke of the future glory; and,

- “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:11-13, NIV) Peter also links here the new creation and redemption in his letter to the believers when he dealt with the Day of the Lord.

Jesus, the Word, is actually God’s strategy of salvation whereby God restores the Kingdom through His work and in His person. Christ is thus the regeneration of all things. He is true God, true man and true created order. “The history of Jesus Christ is rooted deeply in the history of Israel . . . it speaks of the realised unity of true God and true man, of the God who descends to community with man, gracious in His freedom, and of man who is exalted to community with Him, thankful in his freedom. . . God’s Word which was fully spoken in the history of Jesus Christ when it became flesh in Him, remains first and foremost his concluding word to Israel . . . Israel was sent precisely as God’s mediator to the nations; and this remains the meaning of the covenant made with it . . . His word remains a comforting announcement to all fellow men of the one Son of God, an announcement calling for repentance and faith. It is God’s good word about His good work in the midst, and for the good, of all creation. It is a word directed to all peoples and nations of all times and places.”(Barth, 1965, 26)⁵⁸

Jesus is the builder of His own Church as the Triune God cares for and maintains this Church: God the Father elects, the Son redeems and the Holy Spirit sanctifies. These three work in every saved soul. Jesus quickens the called of Christ. John explicitly states in his gospel that Jesus gives life to whom he pleases when he dealt with Jesus’ claims to be God’s Son, Jesus washes away their sins as is deduced from John’s vision in the letters to the churches which formed part of the doxology (Rev 1:5). This self same Jesus gives peace as He himself said when He promised the Holy Spirit (John 14:27), as well as eternal life. This eternal life was promised by Jesus at the feast of dedication at Jerusalem when Jesus was walking in Solomon’s Colonnade (John 10:28) and enables human beings to become children as is seen in the first chapter of John’s gospel where John discusses the

birth and preparation of Jesus (John 1:12). Jesus, the author of life, is also the author and finisher of faith and the head of His Church. He preserves His Church and keeps them from falling. He, Himself builds His followers and often uses the most ungodly to become precious stones in the “Church building”. He will accomplish His work although visible Churches might fail. For six thousand years the “Church of God” has experienced warfare i.e. the misery of the Israelites in Egypt and how the Egyptians oppressed them (Ex 3:2). This warfare is also predicted by John in his vision when he discussed the woman who fled into the desert to place prepared for her in a desert by God to protect her against the dragon (Rev 12:6; 16) and warfare is also prevalent in the lives of Paul, James, Peter, Polycarp, Luther, Calvin etc. However, the gates of Hell shall not prevail and nothing shall overthrow this Church because it is built on a rock and the Spirit enables members of the Church to overcome.

This Spirit is also, on a micro level, a regenerative power in the lives of all God’s people as will be shown clearly in chapter six.

3.6.8 Creation and Redemption

Although traditional theology made a clear distinction between creation and redemption, we do not always find it in scripture. In this thesis we will discuss the ongoing creational process as part of the redemptive process.

In Isaiah we find that the creation of Israel is used as a sign that God is the redeemer of Israel. “But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.” (Isaiah 43:1, KJV). We see that the God that offers redemption is the same Divine Word that creates the world. We also read when Isaiah discussed the servant of the Lord that the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer are linked together: “Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: ⁶I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;” (Isaiah 42:5-6, KJV)

⁵⁸ Barth, K, 1965, *Evangelical Theology, an introduction*, London: Collins Fontana, pp 26

Genesis reflects creation as a past process but we find an ongoing work of creation in the history of Israel and the nations. Even seasons are the present work of God according to an anonymous Psalmist where the creation of God is discussed:

- ¹⁵He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly.
¹⁶He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.
¹⁷He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?
¹⁸He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

(Psalm 147: 15-18, KJV)

Redemption is also an ongoing process. Although divine creation includes the redemptive work of God available in Jesus, it is still possible and necessary to distinguish between them: “But this distinction is taken wholly *ex parte hominis*, from the effects in human life. It is possible to say that creation is God’s gift of himself, or his self-communication, in a process where man is a passive recipient, while redemption is the same divine self-communication in a process that implies the active partition of faith, hope, and love. . . . Since man’s cooperation with the divine summons and grace of freedom is not always conscious to him since it may take place on deep levels of his personality which are partially hidden from him, he is unable to distinguish in himself which is of creation and which is of redemption. . . But it makes sense, and is in keeping with traditional religious language, to speak of creation when we think of the world in which we find ourselves as such and such persons, and to speak of redemption when we think of the newness that is being offered to us, the freedom to leave the destructive past behind and move forward into greater truth and love. Our environment, our history, ourselves – this is God’s creation wounded by sin; and Jesus is God’s redemption coming upon us. This distinction is useful and necessary, but we must always remember that it is based on a difference in human life and not on a difference in God’s self-communication. From the viewpoint of the revealed mystery itself, creation is a new creation, and the ongoing self-gift of God is the creation that redeems the world.” (Baum, 1979, 214-215)⁵⁹

We are told in Scripture that if a person is in Christ then he is a new creation, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. So redemption is a new creation because our Creator said that He makes all things new.

⁵⁹ Baum, G, 1979, *Man becoming: God in Secular Experience*, New York: Seabury Press, pp 214-215

4 Sin

4.1 *Origin of Sin*

There is great confusion about sin, the origin of sin, and the extent of sin. In this chapter various viewpoints including the author's will be put in the spotlight as sin is causal in the formation of the redemptive plan of God. Through sin the relationship between God and His creation has been marred and God through a redemptive process which involves the work on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit until the consummation when everything will be reconciled to God – has worked continually on this restorative plan. It is however important to look at this concept of sin as in the absence of sin the redemptive process would not have been necessary.

4.1.1 Definition of Sin

The root of sin is found in human beings themselves. Reinhold Niebuhr is of the opinion that: “Man is a sinner. His sin is defined as rebellion against God. The Christian estimate of human evil is so serious precisely because it places evil at the very centre of human personality - in the will. This evil cannot be regarded complacently as the inevitable consequence of his finiteness or the fruit of his involvements in the contingencies and necessities of nature. Sin is occasioned precisely by the fact that man refuses to admit his ‘creatureliness’ and to acknowledge himself as merely a member of a total unity of life. He pretend to be more than he is . . . Man contradicts himself within the terms of his true essence. His essence is free self determination. His sin is the wrong use of his freedom and its consequent destruction. . . Sin can therefore not be attributed to a defect in his essence. It can only be understood as a self-contradiction, made possible by the fact of his freedom but not following necessarily from it.” (Niebuhr, 1941, 1-18)⁶⁰

This sin, spoken of by Niebuhr is the self surrender of the creature to nothingness, that which is opposed to God and His work. Karl Barth saw it in this way: “Sin is that which is absurd, man's absurd choice and decision for that which is not . . .” (Barth, 1931, 410)⁶¹ Both these theologians hold to the concept that sin reside in the will of human beings.

⁶⁰ Niebuhr, R, 1941, *The Nature and Destiny of Man Vol 1*, London: Nisbet, pp 1-18

⁶¹ Barth, K, 1931, *Church Dogmatics iv*, Edinburgh: T & T Clarke , pp410

Everyone has been affected by sin to a greater or lesser extent. In the New Testament various words are being used for sin according to John Stott as has been stated by Timothy Dudley-Smith “The commonest is *hamartia*, which depicts sin as a missing of the target, the failure to attain a goal. *Adikia* is ‘unrighteousness’ or ‘iniquity’, and *ponēria* is evil of a vicious or degenerate kind. Both these terms seem to speak of an inward corruption or perversion of character. The more active words are *parabasis* (with which we may associate the similar *paraptōma*), a ‘trespass’ or ‘transgression’, the stepping over a known boundary, and *anomi*, ‘lawlessness’, the disregard or violation of a known law. In each case an objective criterion is implied, either a standard we fail to reach or a line we deliberately cross.” (Dudley-Smith, 1996, 148)⁶²

In the light of this definition various viewpoints will be considered in order to reach an understanding of sin and the place of sin in the lives of human beings and its place in the redemptive process.

4.1.2 Doctrine of Sin According to Some Church Fathers and Reformed Position.

4.1.2.1 The Early Church Fathers

According to Origen demons belonged to the race of giants fallen through rebellion towards God. All beings were created good – even the devil who fell from grace. All beings were created equal but as they decline they became earthly beings, demons or angels.

There was a general tendency to believe that demons might lead human beings to sin but could not force them to sin. Tertullian acknowledged that the devil had rights over human beings but not over the elect of God.

The early fathers seem to battle with the problem of evil in light of the goodness of God’s creation. They dealt with it in different ways, i.e.

- i. for Origen Christ was the leader of human beings in combat. Christ, having superior power was the victor and human beings share in this victory.

⁶² Dudley-Smith, T, *Authentic Christianity*, 1996, Leicester: Intervarsity Press, pp148

- ii. Justis believed that God set His word as a power to overcome demons and people used prayers and formulas to expel demons.
- iii. The Cross was also used as a sign against demons.

According to Plato (not a church father) the world was made out of pre-existent matter which was fashioned into the world. Theophilus of Antioch and Justine Martyr took this idea and used it to describe the evil in the world. God was limited in creating the world as He used a poor quality of material and evil in the world could thus be linked to deficiencies in the material from which the world was formed.

4.1.2.2 Pelagian Viewpoint

Pelagian, a British monk, moved to Carthage in North Africa and came into conflict with St Augustine.

Pelagian believed that any imperfection in human beings would reflect poorly on God and God created Adam neither good nor bad but neutral in order for him to exercise his free will by either choosing right or wrong. Adam chose to sin but was able to come back from evil and do good. His fall affected him alone as his descendents remained neutral. There is no excuse for sin as human beings are born sinless and sin through deliberate actions. Human beings could choose for themselves whether they would be saved or not and therefore does not need God's grace. Only those human beings who were morally upright could become part of the fellowship or church. Perfection is possible for human beings and human beings are fully capable of obeying God's commands. Grace is God's gift of human reason and human will. Human beings are therefore justified by their merits.

Pelagius believed that God provided enough information for human beings to decide what is right and wrong and then withdrew himself until the day of judgement. God is therefore not continually involved with His creation.

4.1.2.3 St Augustine's Viewpoint

According to St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, God has given human beings a free will that has been weakened by sin. God's grace is necessary to restore this weakened free will as human beings have no control over their sinfulness which contaminates their lives from birth. He understands human beings to be born with a sinful

disposition and regarded the church as a sort of hospital where human beings could recover and grow in holiness through grace.

Sin is divided into individual sin and original sin, with individual sin being the sin of turning away from God. As a consequence of the fall human beings are born with a disposition to sin which they cannot overcome but by the grace of God.

Although Adam was created good he was able to sin. When God placed a test before Adam, Adam chose evil, sinned and gained mortality as the wages of sin is death. He became sinful, dead in sin and could not become good all by himself. With Adam his descendents fell also and became totally dependent on God's grace which in so doing is an acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. Only those predestined by God receive salvation.

Because of fallen humanity God in His mercy and grace came to rescue humans from their sin and is continually working within them to restore them by means of healing, empowering, strengthening, enlightening etc.

4.1.3 Reformed Viewpoint on Sin and Evil

Although God created human beings good, they become corrupt and therefore all are conceived and born in sin which is distinctly Augustinian. Greek writers on the other hand insisted that sin comes from an abuse of the human free will. According to Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa infants are born without sin which stands in stark contrast with Augustine's universal sinfulness and fallen humanity.

Righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ as all human beings sinned against all God's commandments and are inclined to evil. As a dead person can do or will nothing, faith cannot be a choice of human beings. Human beings are therefore totally dependent on God's grace. Human beings cannot decide to be saved as God is God and His salvation is not limited by the decision of human beings.

Reformed Doctrine of Sin in the Thought of G Berkouwer

Although Berkouwer was of the opinion that an explanation of sin is impossible – *sui generis* – sin is found in the Bible and therefore he wrote a voluminous book on sin.

God is not the cause of sin and Berkouwer's viewpoint is quite evident in the following words: "This biblical *a priori* is seen in all its absoluteness already in the Old Testament. There the message is very radically proclaimed that it is 'far. . . from God that he should do wickedness, and from the almighty that he should do wrong' (Job 34:10)" (Berkouwer, 1971, 36)⁶³

The Biblical *a priori* is the holiness of God. For Berkouwer there exists a level at which there is no reason for sin as well as a level where God is sovereignly in control in the daily lives of His creatures and therefore in Creation. In the chapter on Biblical *a priori* he goes to great effort to show that God cannot be the cause of sin directly or indirectly as the entire Bible makes this clear.

Metanoia (repentance) has to do with both the Law and Gospel and Berkouwer tries to restore the Law in Biblical soteriology as knowledge of sin is given in the Law of God. Sin is always against God and the essence of sin is that it eliminates every alibi. "The riddle of sin is the motivelessness and senselessness of our own estrangement from God and his glory and fellowship. It is the riddle of our sinning. It is the riddle of turning our backs on the Father of lights, and rebelling against the good Lord of all life; of breaking our fellowship with him, and distrusting the only trustworthy One, and resisting his love and righteousness." (Berkouwer, 1971, 149)⁶⁴

This reminds us that sin is personal. The fall shows the nature of sin. Temptation, disobedience and rebellion against the commandment of God shows it clearly. There is however, gradation as the Bible distinguishes motives from passages in Leviticus. After the cross of Jesus, human beings are without an excuse and their sin is viewed as a deliberate act against the light which has arisen and the cross of Jesus' atonement. This does not imply that sin was less significant before the cross.

⁶³ Berkouwer, GC, 1971, *Sin*, Michigan: Eerdmans, pp36

⁶⁴ Berkouwer, GC, 1971, *Sin*, Michigan: Eerdmans, pp149

Against all this we find God's wrath which is a personal reaction on the part of God against all this sin. Jesus alone can save from God's wrath to come. This salvation is set against the background of the guilt of human beings. Scripture repeatedly warns against remaining in lostness. Even in God's wrath God does not leave human beings to their own fate as God is not indifferent like His creatures. His mercy, however, does not imply toleration of sin in human beings; sin is utterly condemned but completely absolved when the sinful human being is reconciled to God. This is where justice and mercy meet.

Berkouwer came to the conclusion that the doctrine of original sin is first a confession of guilt. There would also be an immediate end of sin when human beings who are converted depart from this life to be with Christ.

4.1.4 The Author's Interpretation of the Bible on Sin and Evil

In the Old Testament sin was viewed as a transgression of the Law and break in the relationship between God and Israel.

Sin is sometimes seen as rebellion against God according to Isaiah when he discusses God's mercy and Israel's unfaithfulness (Isaiah 43:27) but sometimes also as a rebellion against other people for instance when Israel rebelled against the house of David (1 Kings 12:19). God hates such wickedness as he cares about human beings as well as the rest of His creation and does not like it to be hurt and therefore commands righteousness. David thought that he only harmed a human being and his sin was not serious until he realise that God had identified with Uriah and the punishment for his sin was metered out (2 Samuel 12), therefore sin against other human beings does affect God. Sin therefore could be i. against God ii. against self or other human beings or iii. against creation. This concept will be discussed further below.

In the New Testament Jesus confronted demons but apart from this there is not a great deal of information about demons. The author of this thesis is therefore of the opinion that we should not be too preoccupied with demons as the responsibility for the sin of a human being cannot be placed on the devil.

The Gnostic or dualist idea that the world is an evil place can not be accepted. Although the world is fallen through sin it remains good, and will be redeemed by God as He is working

towards complete reconciliation in a *creatio continuo* fashion.

This world has departed from how it was intended to be as could be gathered from the existence of evil, death and human sin. This does not form part of God's design although it forms part of His redemptive process.

As Jesus addressed all human beings as He summoned them to repentance the deduction could be made that Jesus viewed all human beings as sinful and far from God. In Matthew 15:18-19 sin is depicted by Jesus when he taught about inner purity as coming from the heart and defiling human beings. This concept is further expanded on in the doctrine of Paul as he regards sin as external i.e. behavioural and internal i.e. motives.

Paul has the fullest theology of sin in the New Testament and views sin as universal and a state of human nature from where sinful behaviour or acts come which can enslave human beings. This sin did not just happen to the first human being but to every human being.

Sin is not just restricted to religious failures but to all forms of selfishness, as well as exploitation as is depicted in Amos 8:4-6 where the poor and needy are being exploited because of deceit and selfishness. This sin against other human beings or even insensitiveness to nature, which is also sin, happens because of the uncircumcised or stony heart so that people become insensitive to the needs of other human beings, animals or nature in general. External deeds are sin but they are sinful because they come from a stony or wicked heart. Jesus in Matthew 15:19 lists such evil things when He taught about inner purity.

The first two human beings sinned against God and this sin is even extended when human beings sin against human beings in the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) which inaugurates hatred and murder and the life of human beings became shorter as sin increased until the flood when life ceased except those who were saved by an act of God. Sin, however, continued and the Tower of Babel became a repetition of the rebellion in the Garden of Eden.

And so on and so forth until we find the same problem in this day and age where millions of children die of malnutrition, where human beings are callous towards other creatures and the environment and are responsible for destruction and misery, pollution of the seas and rivers etc. There is an increasing number of human beings who become apathetic towards

the slow death of nature and instead of being stewards of God's creation they use and abuse the environment in order to satisfy their lusts for self aggrandisement and herein lies the sin against nature.

4.2 Sin and Evil: Inherited or Based Upon Individual Action?

4.2.1 Inherited Sin

Some people are of the opinion that Adam was created by God, all men descended from Adam and therefore all men have been created by God and share in the sin of Adam. This transference of sin is however non biblical and is based on an Augustinian belief.

Adherents to this viewpoint quote Romans 5 which described the nature of sin. Romans 5 can also be read completely differently and could mean the exact opposite i.e. all human beings become sinners by their own acts and are therefore united in sin and when they are redeemed they will be united in redemption. This then underlines the universality of sin.

In Paul's position on the sinfulness of human beings – as given in Romans 5, and again in part in 1 Corinthians 14, we see that Paul saw that all have fallen short of the glory of God – all have sinned. This implies that the nature of human beings tends towards sin and therefore it seems that human beings inherit both the knowledge of good and evil and the tendency towards sinfulness.

Before Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, human beings and creation were "very good" and had no knowledge of sin. When Adam sinned, he gained the knowledge of good and evil and this knowledge was inherited by Adam's descendents. We see then that Adams sin was not inherited but that knowledge of good and evil was inherited.

It would seem that there is no reference to the sin of Adam being imputed on his descendents but because of Adam's sin, creation was cursed and man was to eat of the ground in toil.

Human beings are faced with a choice because of the knowledge of good and evil, Cain and Abel were faced with the choice and whilst Abel was termed righteous Cain committed the first murder. Cain was cursed because he chose sin, chose to kill Abel, not because his father was Adam. We see several characters in the Bible – Methuselah, Noah, Enoch, to

name but a few, who were deemed righteous by the Biblical writers i.e. they made right choices. It would seem therefore that human beings have to repeatedly make a personal choice between sin and righteousness and that each individual is judged on his or her response.

In Psalm 51:5 David said that he was sinful at birth, from the time his mother conceived him. This clearly indicates that he was born within this state. Some human beings call this original sin, inherited depravity, a fallen nature etc. From the viewpoint of this thesis, however, we will adopt the view that human beings have the ability to choose and have a tendency to choose wrongly based on what happened in Genesis 3. Babies have the death principle (sin principle) in them although Adam's sin is not imputed to them and they therefore will not burn in Hell or be eternally separated from God should they die before they are able to make their own choice.

Before salvation all unregenerate human beings are in a state of sin which makes them unfit for heaven. No human being has any excuse according to Jesus in the Gospel of John because Jesus came and showed the way (John 15:22) and therefore each one will be judged by God according to the light and knowledge that they have. When Human beings know to do good and do not practice it, it is sin. There is also actual sin which surfaces as unbelief, rebellion, selfishness, idolatry etc.

Sin can be avoided. If human beings have limited knowledge about the 'wrongness' they do, it cannot be considered as rebellion if they do it in ignorance. God knows the heart of human beings and knows their intention and will punish them according to their acts of sin. The fallen nature of man, (state of sin) is met by the offer of grace to which human beings must respond and therefore human beings are personally and individually accountable.

After Adam and Eve's sin God immediately procured a substitute for their sins and thus rescued them from this situation. This grace is passed on to all human beings and human beings are therefore not condemned for the act of another person but for their own sinful acts.

4.2.2 Sin as Individual Action

Seemingly in the Old Testament people were responsible for their own sin and bore the consequences for their own sin. In Deuteronomy 24:16 Judges for instance are commanded

to be just and to make sure that the children do not suffer for the sins of their fathers and vice versa. A further example of this principle is when Amaziah spared the children when the fathers were put to death for killing the King (2 Kings 14:6). Even in Ezekiel 18:20 Ezekiel quoted the Lord and wrote that the human being who sins shall die. God will reward or punish according to the actions of the human beings.

God did not create man inherently evil. While the act of disobedience in Genesis 3 brought exterior punishment there is no suggestion that this included a bias to evil in Adam's descendents.

One interpretation of the fall is based on the assumption that the first human beings (Adam and Eve) had un-fallen righteousness until their act of disobedience brought sin and death into the world as a heritage. This interpretation had Paul as an adherent and specifically with regards to Romans 5ff and 1 Corinthians 15: 21-22 where Paul explicitly talks about the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus himself did not seem to represent human beings as utterly corrupt although He stated clearly that they had fallen short of the original purpose of creation and thus of the glory of God. It seems to the author, in agreement with Barth and Niebuhr (as cited in 4.1.1 above) that sin resides in the will and not the matter.

In Deuteronomy 30:10-14 Moses admonishes the people and suggests that human beings possessed an ability to remain faithful to God and therefore could not be utterly depraved. God therefore did enable human beings to be holy and even after Pentecost human beings are further enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Human Beings have inherited a wrong "social tradition" and therefore could never fulfill their true vocation if it were not for Jesus who revealed to human beings what they essentially are and what they may become.

Human beings have a natural aversion to God and prefer self to God when they are not born again. Jesus started a "new race" in order to enable human beings to realise their true purpose as creatures in creation. He became one of us to make us what He is.

Human beings eating from the tree became conscious of good and evil and thus incurred moral responsibility. Sin could even be very subtle i.e. some human beings watch a

television programme showing millions of people starving and feel no compassion because they value other human beings not as fellow creatures from a creator God. They lose their true humanity as they do not care for fellow human beings. This in itself is a sin against God as Creator as well as against their fellow human beings.

Another facet of sin in human beings could be seen in them not acting responsibly in their stewardship over nature as was given to them by God. For the sake of profit human beings become sinful and practice bad ecology which is a sin against fellow human beings, the natural world and God as Creator.

Contrary to the author's viewpoint we find adherents to the fundamentalist viewpoint on sin being only against God which actually boils down to a turning away from the origin which God established. It is a turning away from God or against God like the lost son. This falling away is seen as a sort of blasphemy as it is seen as a defiance or rebellion, a sort of disobedience resulting from distrust. Human beings want to be independent from God, live their lives as they see fit and be on a level with God. Self comes against God. The deepest sin is this independence being displayed by human beings and self deification.

According to this author human beings were created according to the purpose and plan of God, in the image of God and therefore are in a special relationship to God. This relationship and image had been marred by the human beings falling into sin. By means of God's continual involvement with His creatures, the image which has been distorted is being progressively renewed for believers. At the consummation this image will be restored completely for believers.

The believer is justified through faith and has peace with God but sometimes this peace or fellowship with God will be disrupted by sin which will bring punishment. The majority of times this punishment is self imposed as it is the consequence of the choice made by the human being. Punishment however, could be avoided in the majority of cases by confession of sin and restitution.

Consequences of sin are experienced in this life as well as the life to come. Some of which includes spiritual death, physical death and eternal destruction or separation from God. The immediate consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve was loss of innocence and loss of their relationship with God. Their quality of life also suffered as Eve experienced increased pain in childbearing, her husband will rule over her and for Adam it will be toil and sweat as he

will battle to provide for his family because of the curse on the ground. The ultimate penalty which incurred human death was incurred and Adam and Eve began the gradual process of dying which leads to their ultimate physical death.

Death does not mean the abolition of a human being being a creature but the consequence is not being able to live before God but to stand before Him as one being lost and damned. After the fall Adam and Eve lived between a curse and a promise in a world that is not completely God forsaken but which is blessed and preserved.

God's new work in this fallen world is the resurrection, the new creation for Christ in a reconciliatory work which repairs the breach between God and human beings caused by sin. Through Jesus the gift of life i.e. the relationship with God, quality of life and eternal life is won back. This life taken from human beings in Genesis is restored to human beings in Revelation.

5 God's Work of Redemption and Reconciliation Through Jesus Christ: Human Beings and the Cosmic Universe.

Scripture deals with a new life principle which is divine and all penetrating. God, through Christ, is the giver of all gifts. The cross and resurrection motif is of paramount importance. Christ is our redeemer as well as our redemption as is stated by Paul when he discussed the wisdom and power of God in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:30) and therefore it is necessary to pause and take a closer look at Jesus in order to gain more clarity on the redemption and reconciliatory work of God. Although Christ does not dwell in us directly the Cross and resurrection are made real in the daily lives of human beings by the Spirit of God. The Baptism of the Spirit is an expressing and affirmation of the power of the Resurrection of Jesus. One of the reconciliatory works of God is the work through the cross of Jesus which we would need to scrutinise.

5.1 *Jesus in His Relationships and Works*

God through His Word is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the world as it is expressed by Isaiah in the latter part of his writings where he brings a message of consolation and hope for Israel "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11, NIV).

The living word of God, Christ, is the centre of all life. Jesus Christ is the creator of life, and His life and death on the cross forms part of the redemptive work for human kind. Through His word believers can come to an understanding and may see themselves as sinners in need of a saviour.

Jesus is involved throughout the creation as well as the redemptive plan of God. He is the Word through whom God created all things in the beginning. Christ created everything and everything was created for Him. He is the Lord of history and is involved in a *creatio continua*.

Creation and redemption are intertwined and God brings His creative work in man to its realisation through man's death and resurrection with Jesus Christ. Deliverance requires a deliverer – and Jesus “the horn of salvation” (Luke 1:69) is that deliverer.

When the split (the fall) occurred in Genesis, God responded to this evil in the cross of Jesus whereby the broken unity is restored and His people are delivered. Jesus, however, according to Tillich made sure that people didn't idolise even Himself. “He who himself embodies the fullness of the divine's presence sacrifices himself in order not to become an idol, another god beside God, a god into whom the disciples wanted to make him. And therefore the decisive story is the story in which he accepts the title 'Christ' when Peter offers it to him. He accepts it under the one condition that he has to go to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, which means to deny the idolatrous tendency even with respect to himself.” (Tillich, 1964, 53-67)⁶⁵

The act whereby Jesus delivered His people has achieved, as a result, the justification of men as discussed in his letter to the church of Galatia when Paul dealt with the superiority of the Gospel (Gal 3:8-11); the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the same letter of Paul (Gal 3:14) and the setting free of people to become the free sons of God when Paul handled the “sons of God” in his letter to the Church of Galatia (Gal 4:5-7).

Although Christ had to accomplish two works i.e. the removal of the curse for human beings because of sin (redemptive work) as well as reconciliation to God, Theologians held various theories of which some will be briefly discussed in order to gain a better understanding of these two works of God.

5.2 Theories of Atonement

5.2.1 Fundamentalist or Orthodox View

According to this viewpoint God does for human beings that which they are unable to do for themselves. He paid the penalty on their behalf with the result that they are reconciled to God, receiving His Spirit and became partakers in the life of Christ.

⁶⁵ Tillich, P, 1964, *Theology of Culture*, London: Galaxy Books, pp53-67

5.2.2 Some Church Fathers

Some Church Fathers held the opinion that human beings are in bondage to Satan and the redemption of human beings should be viewed as a deliverance from this bondage which has been effected through the cross and resurrection of Christ. Church Fathers like Augustine, Irenaeus and Origen held this viewpoint. Some Church fathers held to a mysterious union of God and man brought about by the incarnation. The work of Christ produces a change within human beings as it overcomes the evil in human nature and replaces it with holiness. According to the Fathers there was a distinction between redemption and reconciliation. Both these works are the works of Jesus Christ. The redemptive work is made possible by Christ delivering human beings from the curse of the law as well as from the bondage to Satan. The reconciliation was made possible by the union of the divine nature with human nature brought about by the incarnation. The incarnation is the saving work by which Christ redeemed human beings by what He is and not by what He does. This reconciliatory work as viewed from the viewpoint of the church fathers stands in stark contrast with the scriptures which teach that it is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. The change in a human being was thus ascribed to the incarnation and not the Holy Spirit. By obedience Christ fulfilled the will of God for His life and human beings are called to follow this example.

5.2.3 Luther's Theology of the Cross.

Luther distinguishes between the alien work of God (God sending pain) and the proper work of God (benefit of pain). God's work according to Luther on the lives of believers is hidden in the cross they carry and the work of salvation is hidden in the cross of Christ.

God came to human beings through the Cross and human beings, in turn, come to God through the Cross. Believers know that beneath the shame of the cross lies the power and glory of God. The believer knows and understands that the crucified and hidden God is present in human suffering and works through human suffering. The believer faces a life long series of *Anfechtungen* and is forced to the foot of the cross. Resurrection is the solution as suffering is a function of God's love as God disciplines through *Anfechtungen*. The Father disciplines not to seek vengeance but correction – gold is put in the fire for refinement not destruction. The same principle is applied to vines which are pruned not for punishment but to increase the yield of the vine.

The same concept is seen in the fact that Christ dies for the sins and not the physical sickness of human beings. Sometimes it is not His will to heal and afflictions continue whilst human beings enjoy spiritual health. All this, together with persecution, works towards God's glory.

5.2.4 Author's Viewpoint on the Works of Jesus – the Cross and Resurrection.

Jesus Christ has been given for the redemption of human kind in order to reconcile human beings to God. He alone had the qualifications necessary for the work as He was sinless although He was capable of sinning. He did not sin when He was tempted. He was also a human being and therefore could sympathise with other human beings. Apart from this humanity He also had a divinity as He possessed the eternal Spirit and could destroy the power of Satan. Without His divinity this would have been impossible and He would not have been able to reconcile human beings to God. Christ was both God and human being and some of His acts confirmed the divinity, such as the creation, giving of eternal life, some acts were in combination of the work of the Spirit and that of the human being, such as raising from the dead and delivering human beings from Satan. Some acts were completely human such as His teaching.

In the Old Testament He was predicted to be Prophet, Priest and King and in the New Testament we see Him surface in all of these offices. As Prophet He instructed human beings, as Priest He interceded for them and as King He ruled and protected them – especially from the dominion of Satan.

His mission and work had an equal implication for all human beings. His work of the atonement lays the foundation for the offer of the Gospel for all human beings and human beings are justly condemned for the rejection of the offer.

“The death of Christ, which is both the judgement and the salvation of the world, inaugurates the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ (2 Cor 5:18ff). This word supplements the cross and makes its saving efficacy intelligible by demanding faith and confronting men with the question whether they are willing to understand themselves as men who are crucified and risen with Christ. Through the word of preaching the cross and the resurrection are made present: the eschatological ‘now’ is here, and the promise of Isaiah 49:8 is fulfilled:

‘behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 6:2). That is why the apostolic preaching brings judgment. For some the apostle is a ‘saviour’ from life unto life.’ (Bultmann, 1957, 43)⁶⁶

He came into the world with the mission to save His people which God, from eternity, gave Him. This salvation is open to all who accept it so that no one can say that they die because there was no atonement. He died to make reconciliation with God possible as well as the redemptive work which has reference to the removal of the curse for human beings.

Those human beings that do not have eternal life refuse to have Him reign over them. Their own conscience will condemn them as they refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The blood of Christ is the sign of a new covenant and a seal of redemption for those who are saved. This blood of Christ provides:

- redemption whereby believers are delivered from sin, bondage, degradation and death.
- reconciliation with God
- consecration whereby they are called and surrender themselves in obedience by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and
- communion whereby a close spiritual intimacy between human beings and God is possible through the blood of the covenant.

Jesus, in His own person, introduced a relationship between God and human beings, which is described as a new covenant and ratified with the blood of Jesus. God’s act of liberation and the price in terms of blood involves both God and Jesus in a costly experience with reference to the guilt of human beings.

Before redemption, human beings are completely unable to deal with their position created by their sin and therefore the Bible sometimes refers to their slavery to sin (John 8:34) because they cannot set themselves free. This slavery of sin is handled by Jesus when He spoke of God’s true children. They can only be set free if there is an external intervention – a person who pays the price which human beings cannot pay.

⁶⁶ Bultmann, R, 1957, *Kerygma and Myth*, London: Epworth Press, p43

Propitiation is the removal of God's punishment for sin through the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Rom 3:25). In Romans 3:25 Paul allies the word *hilastērion* to Christ. This term means 'mercy seat' and refers to the lid or cover of the Ark of the Covenant. On this lid the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the great Day of Atonement and this was where the Lord promised to meet His people. It is highly significant therefore that Paul uses this term for Jesus. Paul is in effect saying that Jesus Christ is both the place of expiation (i.e. complete atonement) and the sacrifice of complete atonement. As Jesus went to the cross willingly, He also gave himself which is in complete alignment to His role of Eternal High Priest.

In the Old Testament God's anger is upon people who sin.

The effects of God's wrath could be seen in:

1. general affliction; as seen in the Psalm composed by one of the sons of Korah (Psalm 88:7)
2. leprosy; when Miriam opposed Moses and was punished by God (Numb 12:10)
3. plague; which was chosen by David as his punishment after he counted the fighting men (2 Sam 24:11-15)
4. drought; in Deuteronomy the Lord said that if the Israelites obeyed His commands He would give them rain but if they were to worship idols they would experience drought (Deut 11:17)
5. desolation; in a prophesy against Babylon Isaiah saw that the Lord is going to make the land desolate (Isaiah 13:9)
6. destruction; in Lamentations Jeremiah described the destruction after the siege of Jerusalem which was God's punishment (Lament 4:11)
7. giving over to the enemy; in the words of the prophet Oded, God has given Judah over to their enemies because of sins committed by Judah's king (2 Chron 28:9)

There are other disasters as well that could be interpreted as the incurred wrath of God.

The Lord knows everything and is active throughout His creation. He brings sudden destruction upon the strong as Amos told Israel when he carried God's message and told Israel of her sins (Amos 5:9). There is a definite hostility on the part of God towards

everything that is evil.

The concept of wrath stresses the seriousness of sin. But by God's own appointment this wrath may be averted by propitiation. Because God would not leave human beings to suffer all the consequences of their sin, Christ suffered. This propitiation originates from the love of God. The gift which secures the propitiation is from God Himself. God provided the way by which sinners may come to Him and in which they could become 'new creatures' and form part of the new creation.

"The resurrection of Christ therefore is the beginning of the new creation of the world which has been interrupted for a certain time by the 'creative interval' in which we are still living at the moment, before it is entirely completed." (Heim, 1959, 166)⁶⁷

Reconciliation is always God's work and it is the Love of God that brings reconciliation about. This work was brought about on the cross when human beings were hostile to God. Romans 5:10 reflects the hostile attitude of human beings as well as the fact that although God sees human beings as enemies yet He reconciles them to Himself. There is, however, in these verses i.e. Romans 5:8-11 a Godward as well as manward aspects. The death of Christ removed God's enmity against human beings and human beings' enmity against God ceases as a consequence of faith which is in actual fact a gift of God Himself. God dealt with the barrier in the relationship and now offers reconciliation to human beings and therefore Paul can speak of receiving reconciliation. With this reconciliation human beings also need to co-operate as Paul said clearly that human beings are in need of reconciliation.

The message that human beings must be reconciled to God stresses that there is a need from the side of human beings to respond to the divine grace. And although reconciliation is a work of God, it is not something which is carried through independently of human beings' reaction. The important part of the reconciliation process, however, lies in the action of God and not in the sinner's response. God has made Christ sin for human beings and has not reckoned to human beings their trespasses and because of this reconciliation is possible.

⁶⁷ Heim K, 1959, *Jesus the Worlds Perfector*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, pp166

God brought about peace by letting human beings have a right standing with Him. In Hebrews (13:20) as part of the concluding exhortations we find this thought of God, as a God of peace in connection with the atoning work of Christ, who brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus. It is thus clear that the giving of peace is a divine activity and it is associated with the death of Christ. And although this passage does not say it directly, it can be inferred.

Ephesians 2:14ff to the Ephesians is reminiscent of the deeper enmity between God and sinful human beings. Paul writes to the Ephesians about this enmity between God and sin as well as the unity of believers in Christ. Jesus, by His death on the cross, has done away with this enmity and brought about peace which entails a right relationship between God and human beings. The work is God's and not that of human beings. Peace came about because God, in Christ, took the initiative.

The fault for the estrangement could be placed wholly on the side of human beings who sinned and thereby erected the barrier in the relationship. God's love for human beings, however, remained unchanged although His relationship to human beings changed and, through the atoning death of Christ, human beings have become friends rather than enemies. When this reconciliation is made by God, condemnation is removed.

The reconciliation could not be made possible unless the offence was eradicated. Thus sin could not be ignored but had to be overcome. Human beings could not remove the sin but through the death of Christ the offence was removed and a complete reconciliation was the result so that whenever a human being turns to God in repentance then God deals with them favourably.

Reconciliation is made possible through the cross of Christ.

New Creation or resurrection? “. . . under the cross, the human race dies. But Christ lives. The trunk of the cross becomes the wood of life . . . and now in the midst of the world, on the accursed ground itself, life is raised up anew. In the centre of the world, from the wood of the cross, the fountain of life springs up . . . What a strange tree of life, this trunk on which the very God had to suffer and die. Yet it is the very Kingdom of life and of resurrection, which by grace God grants us again . . . The tree of life, the cross of Christ, the centre of God's world that is fallen but upheld and preserved.” (Bonhoeffer,

1996, 146)⁶⁸

Christ came to serve and give His life in order to save those called by Him to repentance. And through accepting Christ they are incorporated into Him through a process of continuous incarnating of His nature in them – continuous redemption – His redeemed. The work of God is to call and convert human beings in order to bring human beings to glory and virtue. The redeemed are renewed in their mind, in knowledge and holiness, their hearts are set on service, they are translated into children of God.

With the cross the Levitical Priesthood is dissolved. Before the cross there was no access to God, human beings had no access to the Holy Place. With Judaism there was only a symbol of access. Only when Jesus died and ascended did He provide believers with access into God's presence. Jesus alone can take believers into God's presence because of His perfect sacrifice, perfect priesthood and perfect covenant.

When a human being is saved, Christ takes them up with Him into God's presence where believers live already with Him. In Judaism the priests cleaned up the outside but Christ cleanses the inside and replaces it with a new human being, these are not cleaned up "old human beings" but redeemed new creatures and all of the believers are now a kingdom of priests who can come into His presence without fear. When believers are united with Christ, they join in His priestly work of reconciling God and human beings.

The way to the kingdom of God is through the cross of Christ which reconciles human beings to God. In the cross, God was accepting in His own person, the result of the wrongdoing of human beings. Christ died on the cross so that release could be provided for them. This forms part of the judicial side of His death. Believers are, however, included in His death in as much as they are associated with the likeness of His death, believers are cross bearers, and this fact actually forms part of the basis of their redemption. Through the cross the world has been crucified to them and them to the world. They are dead to sin. This concept is explicitly stated by Paul in his letter to the church in Galatia when he discussed new creation instead of circumcision (Gal 6:14).

Whilst on earth Christ spoke of:

⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, D, 1996, *Creation and Fall*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, pp146

- His death,
- the necessity for it,
- that it was voluntary,
- and the significance, holiness and salvation of it.

Christ spoke frequently of His sufferings because it was through them that He enters into His glory. He suffered both of Jews and gentiles because He was to save both and reconcile both by His cross.

Christ spoke of the necessity of His death. He came to save human beings, by healing them, as the brazen serpent healed the Jews in the desert. These words of Jesus were written by John when he wrote about Nicodemus visiting Jesus at night (John 3:14). The brass serpent had no poison, which represents Christ that was made sin for human beings yet knew no sin. Jesus was as harmless as the brass serpent which was lifted up on a pole just as Jesus was lifted up on a cross for the healing of the nations.

He did all this voluntarily so that there could be worldwide salvation for lost sinners and a new covenant for the forgiveness of sins. Under the old covenant human beings could approach God only through a priest and animal sacrifice but through Christ's sacrificial death a new covenant is ushered in. This new covenant which is procured and ratified by the blood of Christ reconciles human beings to God. Through sin their fellowship with God was broken and through remission of sin their reconciliation is possible. Through His cross they are united with Him in His death and resurrection and by faith with Him in His resurrection life they have unbroken fellowship with God. As true believers, they are baptised into His death. They died with Him in order that they might have life through Him and live like Him. The purpose of bringing believers through death and resurrection was to enable them to walk in newness (*kairos*) of life which refers to newness of quality and character which is different from *neos*, which refers just to a newness in point of time. This new life is characterised by a new heart, a new spirit, a new song and a new name.

The Lord's death was for the showing of God's righteousness in which God takes sinful human beings, subject to His wrath and justifies them. This justification which is a divine action becomes operative when human beings exercise faith. Human beings are acceptable to God if they come in faith on the grounds of God's own work or action in Christ.

Jesus fulfils the vocation which Adam failed to fulfil and enables human beings to achieve a directedness to God of which their fallenness has deprived them. Jesus offers to the Father the first fruits of the redeemed creation – an obedience which consists of a sacrifice of both body and soul. Jesus, as the ascended Lord, opens up earth to heaven and heaven to earth. The incarnate Christ comes from the Father through the Spirit and gives that same Spirit to human beings as the way by which creation may through Him return to the Father.

5.3 Resurrection of Christ

The fact that Christ arose from the dead shows clearly that He is the Son of God. He still had the same body although it was different in as much as He could suddenly appear in a room of which the doors were shut.

In the Bible there are references to God raising Jesus up, Jesus raising Himself up, as well as the Holy Spirit raising Jesus up. This in itself is consistent with the three Persons of the Godhead as the act of one implied the act of the others.

His resurrection illustrates the resurrection of all believers and the completion of His mission of redemption and reconciliation. His resurrected body was seen during the forty days subsequent to His resurrection by various people and the next step after his resurrection was His ascension.

“. . . the New Testament is interested in the resurrection of Christ simply and solely because it is the eschatological even par excellence. By it Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim 1:10) . . . as in the death of Jesus all have died (2 Cor 5:14f), so through his resurrection all have been raised from the dead, though naturally this event is spread over a long period of time (1 Cor 15:21ff). But since St Paul does not only say: ‘In Christ shall all be made alive’; he can also speak of rising again with Christ in the present tense, just as he speaks of our dying with him. Through the sacrament of baptism Christians participate not only in the death of Christ but also in his resurrection (Rom 6:4f); we are doing so already here and now. ‘even so reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ (Rom 6:11).’” (Bultmann, 1957, 40)⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Bultmann, R, 1957, *Kerygma and Myth*, London: Epworth Press, pp40

Another facet of the resurrection of Christ was that He had to die in order for human beings to live – for the sake of the mortality of human beings. “The ultimate enemy of man was precisely death. Redemption was not just the forgiveness of sins, nor was it man’s reconciliation with God. It was the deliverance from sin and death . . . By death He destroyed death.” (Florovsky, 1976, 225-226)⁷⁰

5.4 Ascension of Christ

The ascension of Christ was of His whole person. His disciples witnessed the ascension and knew that He went away to prepare a place for human beings which form part of His kingdom.

This ascension was necessary as He could not live on a fallen earth in His state of exaltation but will live with believers in a new heavens and new earth when the process of regeneration is completed. The ascension was necessary for the full completion of His work.

⁷⁰ Florovsky, G, 1976, *Creation and Redemption*, Belmont Mass: Norland Publishing Co, pp 225-226

6 God's Work of Renovation and Renewal Through the Holy Spirit: Human Beings and the Created Cosmic Universe

Human beings experience the outworking of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit regenerates them and the world on a daily basis as is stated succinctly by Jürgen Moltmann: “God’s Spirit acts into and penetrates the world, effecting and fashioning the world’s coherence without himself becoming merged in it. The cosmic Spirit remains God’s Spirit and becomes our Spirit since he acts in us as the power that makes us live.” (Moltmann, 1985, 12)⁷¹

6.1 *Different Viewpoints On The Person And Work Of The Holy Spirit*

The precondition for the giving of the Holy Spirit is the work of Christ (death, resurrection and ascension). “The Holy Spirit comes . . . in Christ Jesus . . . and not as a second experience independent of or in addition to Jesus Christ.” (Bruner, 1970, 227)⁷²

Although there are distinct missions of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, there is only one God redeeming mankind. These two missions are equally important for the redemption and reconciliation of human beings as both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus are divine and each gift i.e. the gift of the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit of Jesus is the consequence of the other.

Throughout history there was a lot of erroneous teaching concerning the Holy Spirit and some of the teachings will be highlighted here.

In the second century the Montanists tried to bring new life into the church and declared that as they are in the age of the Holy Spirit there are new revelations and prophecies from God. They were characterised by disorder and fanaticism and Basil refuted their error as the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge cannot deprive human beings of their senses according to Basil. This trend has seen a revival in recent times.

⁷¹ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, p12

⁷² Bruner, FD, 1970, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit Witness*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp227

The third century saw Sabellianism which declared that God manifested himself in the form of Father in the Old Testament, Jesus in the New Testament and the Holy Spirit today. Such roles or functions denies the personal nature of the Holy Spirit by implication and denies the role of Jesus and the Spirit in creation as they had not yet appeared.

The Arians in the early fourth century believed that the Son created the Holy Spirit although the Son was not a deity, but generated by the Father. Athanasius in opposition to Arianism declared the deity of the Holy Spirit.

In 589 the Synod of Toledo was called to determine whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father or from the Father and the Son. With their decision that the Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son a church split occurred between the Western and Eastern Church as the Eastern Church believed that the Spirit proceeded only from the Father.

At the beginning of the fifth century Pelagianism surfaced which maintained that human beings can by their own powers, without assistance of the Holy Spirit, convert themselves to God. Although this was demolished by Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism soon presented itself which declared that human beings are able to take the first step towards conversion after which they will be assisted by the Holy Spirit to complete the conversion or regeneration process. This error was refuted at the Synod of Orange (AD 529) where it was stated that the whole person has been corrupted by sin and saving faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit and has nothing to do with human achievement.

With the Reformation the Person, deity and work of the Holy Spirit was confirmed. At the Augsburg Confession of AD 1530 it is clearly stated that the Holy Spirit is imparted through the Word and Sacraments which tied the Holy Spirit down to the church. The Spirit, however, according to the author cannot be controlled by human beings or even the church as He is an equal part of the Triune God and the agent of life.

6.1.1 Reformed Viewpoint

According to the Reformed viewpoint, Pentecost is more redemptive than experiential and is a present reality and not just for the future as the resurrected Christ is active in the Church in the resurrection power of the Spirit.

Jesus is with the Church in the power of the Spirit. With Pentecost the once for all

accomplishment of redemption kicked in. Without Pentecost salvation would be impossible as the task of Jesus comprises of the remission of sins and life in the Spirit as part of the reconciliatory process. Pentecost implies the sufficiency of Christ's work as He became the Life Giving Spirit and Pentecost is the seal of Christ to the Church as He secured it through His death, resurrection and ascension. The Spirit is therefore present and became the Spirit for both Jew and Gentile.

The whole Church is Spirit Baptised and share in the gift of Pentecost. This Spirit baptism takes place when believers are converted and come into the fellowship of the Church. Every believer is continually being filled by the Spirit which transforms their lives on an ongoing and all controlling basis.

According to Martin Luther, God justifies a human being for the sake of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity is thus actively involved although the Spirit is not always obtrusively present.

John Calvin focused more on the work of the Spirit than on the person of the Spirit. Karl Barth also focused more on the redeeming work of the Spirit than on the person of the Holy Spirit.

There are, however, reformed writers such as Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones who reject the once for all notion of the Spirit as they say that it is an experience which believers share again and again. The traditional Dispensationalists believe that the Spirit baptism is exclusively for the Church which is the new creation and it is only applicable in the present dispensation as it is not found in the future or the Old Testament. When the Elect of God are called out of the world the work of the Holy Spirit will cease as no baptizing work will need to be done any more.

6.1.2 Pentecostalism

In Pentecostalism the experience of the Holy Spirit is stressed although Jesus Christ remains the centre of the Christian message and thus Pentecostalism remains Jesus Centred and not pneumacentric.

Pentecostalism sees the Christian life as an experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Holy Spirit is a continuing event and is experienced daily in

the lives of Spirit baptized believers. This Spirit baptism is distinct from a conversion experience. It may occur simultaneously with conversion but with the majority of cases it happens sometime thereafter. With conversion regeneration or new birth occurs and the Holy Spirit dwells with the believer. However, when Spirit baptism occurs a different type of relationship occurs between the Holy Spirit and the believer as the Holy Spirit then lives within the believer and thus becomes the indwelling Spirit.

Pentecostals have a second experience which is called the ‘Baptism of the Holy Spirit’. According to Torrey regeneration by the Holy Spirit and Baptism with the Holy Spirit are not coterminous. Although this is very difficult to bring in line with Scripture, several people such as Andrew Murray, R A Torrey and F B Meyer are adherents to this thinking. According to John Stott such people have a “Jesus plus” doctrine as they need something else to complete their conversion experience. The Assemblies of God is of the opinion that Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent experience from salvation which is accompanied by speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. There is thus a second work of grace which is not a life giving experience but a power giving experience for witnessing and ministry. Before Baptism in the Spirit there is a taking away of sin and after the Baptism believers are empowered by the Spirit within to bear witness.

6.1.3 Viewpoint of the Author

The work of the Spirit in creation and redemption is not disparate because the Redeemer God and the Creator God are one, and therefore redemption means the redemption of creation.

“Through the powers and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator indwells the creatures he has made, animates them, holds them in life, and leads them into the future of his kingdom.” (Moltmann, 1985, 14)⁷³

The Holy Spirit was present in creation and right throughout Scripture i.e. David, Solomon, the Prophets etc were all recipients of the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, Balaam and Micah to name but a few were all moved to utterances by the Holy Spirit. In general the Spirit in the Old Testament is God at work.

⁷³ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, pp14

In the New Testament at Pentecost the prophesy of Joel is fulfilled when the Spirit is poured out on all flesh and became universal after the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

With Pentecost a new economy in the enterprise of God started. Pentecost is God's new work where the Spirit was "poured forth upon all flesh" to convict of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. For Paul the Spirit lives within the regenerated believer as all believers are given the one Spirit to drink. This concept is being discussed in Paul's letter to the church of Corinth when he wrote to them about Spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:13). New birth is a sovereign move of the Spirit as is seen in the words of Jesus to Nicodemus when Nicodemus visited Jesus at night (John 3:6) as well as when Jesus breathed on the Disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. This happened when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors (John 20:22). This Spirit does not dwell in the Bible or the church but in the heart of the believer.

This brings us to the work of God through the agent of the Holy Spirit and it demonstrates God's continuing involvement with His creation. God gave believers the gift of the Holy Spirit as He is a Father and He takes pleasure in giving good gifts to His children. He is continually involved in the life of His children as He gives out these gifts.

"The Spirit is God as he empowers the creation to reach its end. As man, Jesus is maintained in truth by the Spirit's direction. As God, he is enabled to take the human form in the womb of Mary by virtue of the eschatological action of the Spirit. As mediator between God and man, at once fully God and fully man, he is the channel of that same Spirit who enables the world through him to return to the freedom that is theirs who are children of the Father. The redemptive divine action that is the incarnation of Christ must therefore be understood in terms of power. But it is the power of the Spirit whose function is to perfect creation: that is, to direct the world to its end as creation in saving relation to God. That power has its motor in the self-emptying sacrifice of the Son, which is thus the power of God, but power exerted in a particular non-coercive way." (Gunton, 1992, 92)⁷⁴

We find that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son: "The Father spirates (breathes forth) the Spirit, and it is in or by the breath of the Spirit that the Father speaks his Word."³⁵ The Father speaks his eternal Word by the breath of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit

⁷⁴ Gunton, CE, 1992, *Christ and Creation*, Grand Rapids Mich: The Paternoster Press, pp 92

of Truth. It is this breath (this spirating of the Spirit), then, which conforms the Father as the Word/Truth-Speaker (the Father), and it is by this same breath that the Word is conformed into the true Word (the Son). The Son in turn breathes forth the Spirit as he cries out 'Abba!' Thus the Holy Spirit is the common breath (life) shared by the Father and Son." (Wienandy, 1995, 75)⁷⁵

While both the Son and the Holy Spirit come from the Father, all three reciprocally interact upon one another, fashioning one another to be who they are and becoming who they are in themselves.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, and Pentecost, the Spirit lives within believers who are regenerated. This new birth is a move of the Spirit as human beings cannot accomplish this or possess the Spirit because the Spirit possesses human beings and changes human beings and not vice versa. The Holy Spirit draws believers and indwells everyone who accepts the salvation which Christ offered as the Holy Spirit changes the heart of human beings and therefore their spiritual condition. Through the obedience of Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit comes to human beings; human beings do not go to the Spirit through obedience.

A new life, life in the Spirit, begins and ends in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Before the glorification of Jesus the believers who were with Jesus were saved. Jesus told the Disciples explicitly that their names were already written in heaven. This happened when the seventy two messengers returned to Jesus with joy as even demons submitted to them in Jesus' name (Luke 10:20). The Spirit was with the believers as the Spirit dwelled within Jesus but was not within believers yet. In John 20:22 when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors Jesus gave them Spiritual life so that He could be with them through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit although He was no longer with them physically. They therefore received eternal life as the Spirit now became within them and not just with them as was the case during the ministry of Jesus on earth. With this reception of eternal life their sins have been forgiven and they entered into a new life in Jesus Christ.

⁷⁵ Wienandy, TG, 1995, *The Fathers Spirit of Sonship: Receiving the Trinity*, Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, pp 75

Pentecost, however, gave them spiritual power – power for service as is stated by Jesus just before He was taken up into heaven in Acts 1:8. This power spoken of by Jesus is accompanied by gifts not fruit.

6.2 Nature and Office of the Holy Spirit

Spirit (rû(a)h) has other references from the reference to deity. “First, (rû(a)h) is used physically to refer to ‘wind’ or violent power in nature. . . . For example, ‘I would hasten to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest’ (Ps 55:8, RSV). A second usage of (rû(a)h) is ‘physiological’ . . . for example, ‘As long as my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils’ (Job 27:3). A third meaning is ‘physical’ ‘ . . . of Caleb it was said that he had a different spirit’ inasmuch as he had fully obeyed Yahweh (Num 14:24) The fourth meaning of (rû(a)h) is ‘supernatural’. It means, at least primarily, the life and strength of God in contrast to human weakness and mortality Representative usages include Gen 6:3, ‘Then the Lord said, ‘my Spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh. . . .’ and Isa. 31:3. ‘The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.’ It is the fourth meaning of (rû(a)h) that pertains especially to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.” (Garret, 1995, 131)⁷⁶

The writers of the Old Testament are careful not to identify God with the wind as it would lower God to the level of a mere natural force but through the instrumentality of the wind different aspects of God are conveyed i.e. the redemptive power of the wind when it divided the Red Sea in the Exodus account (Ex 14:21). The Spirit as wind is used on this occasion as instrumental in the creation of a nation.

We also find Spirit as breath when God created human beings. God breathed the breath of life into Adam and Adam became a living being in the Genesis account (Gen 2:7). The body is a shell without life until God brings it alive with his ‘breath of life.’ When God removes his life-giving breath, the bodies of human beings return to dust and therefore their life and worth comes from the Spirit. We find the same principle in the valley of the dry bones when Ezekiel prophesied to dry bones and they came alive as breath entered into them (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

⁷⁶ Garret, JL, 1995, Jr, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical (Vol 2)*, Grand Rapids Mich: William B Eerdman's Publishing Co., pp 131

The Holy Spirit is a person who can be pleased or offended by human beings as He can have communion with human beings when He governs and leads them. This Spirit searches, teaches, reproves, reveals and knows things. The works of the Holy Spirit are the works of God as God acts through His Spirit. The Spirit is the source of all life and is everywhere present even in vegetable and animal life. He turned chaos into order, causes the lilies and the grass to grow and garnished the heavens.

This selfsame Spirit gives gifts of understanding, wisdom, workmanship and knowledge as He qualifies human beings for work which God wants them to perform as is seen explicitly in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament the life of Jesus had its beginning by the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit whereby the Spirit was thus actively involved in a creative act of God's redemption. With the baptism of Jesus another manifestation of the Spirit was realized and Jesus was strengthened by the Holy Spirit during His temptation in the wilderness. The entire mission of Jesus was actually accomplished by the guidance and power of the Spirit as is explicitly seen in Jesus' reading of the scrolls in the synagogue at Nazareth when Jesus unrolled the scroll and read that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him thus proclaiming Himself as the one who brought the Good news and as having the Spirit of the Lord as an anointment (Luke 4:16-21). The exorcisms of Jesus are also carried out by the power of the Spirit and this underlined the claim of Jesus.

Both Jesus' death and resurrection are related to the Holy Spirit as Jesus offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit to God and has been declared the Son of God in power according to the Holy Spirit by His resurrection.

Biblical writers were also inspired by the Spirit, as is seen in 1 Corinthians 2:10 where Paul explicitly states in his letter to the Corinthians that the Spirit reveals the deep things of God. The mind of believers is also illuminated or enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is active everywhere as He convinces human beings of sin, regenerates human beings and indwells renewed human beings.

According to Paul in his letter to the Romans – especially in the doxology – God is being upheld as incomprehensible - no one can understand God (Romans 11:34), but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believers can be given insight into some of God's plans,

thoughts, and actions – believers, in fact, have the ‘mind of Christ’. Through the Holy Spirit human beings can begin to know God’s thoughts, talk with Him, and expect his answers to their prayers.

Repentance means that the Holy Spirit transforms the human spirit, recreates the intellect, will, feeling and values. This self same Spirit adds meaning and power to the human spirit and through the existential participation the human being can come to the understanding of this new meaning and power.

“The body becomes a temple in which God the Holy Ghost dwells and so chastity, sexual purity and continence are secured by his cooperation . . . the whole life of the Christian is now to be a replica of the earthly life of Jesus Christ and this is progressively realized in proportion as the Spirit of God is allowed to guide and direct the mind and will. For the Spirit is the ally enabling the co-operating soul to fight the good fight of faith and conquer all the lusts and desires of the flesh and the carnal mind. The Holy Spirit thus makes holy men and women, for all the Christian graces are ‘fruit of the Spirit’.” (Hoyle, 1927, 294-295)⁷⁷

The Spirit reminded and classified what Jesus had taught and therefore does not work independently from Christ but testifies to His work and makes the exalted Jesus present in the lives of believers as is emphasised in Matthew 28:20 where Jesus gives the great commission after the resurrection to His assembled followers.

6.2.1 Work of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration

Regeneration is a Spiritual resurrection where there is a change from Spiritual death to Spiritual life. All this is brought about by the Spirit of God. The human being is passive in this process as the change is wrought within the human being and not by the human being. In anything that proceeds or follows this regeneration the human being is active and not passive.

When regeneration occurs there is a new opinion on God, sin, the world, death and the Gospel and the human being is translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. This could be compared with the birth of a baby. When a baby is born it enters in

⁷⁷ Hoyle, RB, 1927, *The Holy Spirit in St Paul*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, pp 294 – 295

to a different life. The baby comes from darkness (the mothers womb) to light (the world) where he can experience (feel, see, hear, taste) new things.

God saves human beings who seek reconciliation with Him and regenerates them. The Spirit prepares and makes them for God. The absolute realization of forgiveness of sins of a human is the meaning of the gift of the Holy Spirit. God gives the Spirit to human beings because of the hearing of faith not because of their deeds. Luther affirmed this when he said “Believe and you have it”. When human beings have faith in Jesus it results in the gift of the Spirit. A simple faith in Jesus will receive everything God has to give because Jesus Christ is the way of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit baptises believers into Jesus as Jesus and the Holy Spirit are united and not divided.

Every human being who does not have eternal life ultimately knows that the responsibility rests upon themselves. When human beings become believers the Holy Spirit witnesses with their spirit in order to give them assurance of their relationship. The Spirit is actually very busy in the life of the believer as He inspires and helps people to pray, to resist sin and to give them an ability to become sensitive to sin and overcome sin. Believers experience daily the indwelling Holy Spirit: “. . . the living communion with God which can be experienced through the Spirit in faith gives the believer a special knowledge of *ta tou theou*, the spiritual or ‘heavenly’ things, a knowledge of God.” (Schillebeeckx, 1981, 474)⁸ A change in the character of human beings is brought about by the Holy Spirit as He produces within them the fruits of the Spirit and gives them the power to witness to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is actually God’s involvement in the human spirit in relation to the thoughts, feelings and actions of human beings.

The Holy Spirit is involved with believers and non believers alike, albeit that only believers are indwelled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prepares the hearts of human beings for the acceptance of the Gospel message. The author believes that the Holy Spirit also works within human beings to redress the violation which is committed against animals, fauna and flora, air, rivers etc. as the Spirit enlightens human beings about destruction and pollution and in so doing works towards a regeneration as it is not just redemption which is important but also creation as God is through *creatio continua* involved in the universe and His creatures. The Holy Spirit is involved continually through the whole history of the

created universe. The Holy Spirit is active in the final redemption of believers and seals believers for the day of redemption.

“Everything that is, exists and lives in the unceasing inflow of the energies and potentialities of the cosmic Spirit . . . Through the energies and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator is himself present in his creation.” (Moltmann, 1985, 9)⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Schillebeeckx, E, 1981, *Christ*, New York: Crossroad, pp474

⁷⁹ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, pp9

7 God's Work of Consummation and Fulfilment: The Transcendence of the Old Heavens and the Old Earth into the New Heavens and the New Earth.

In order to understand the coherence of God's works it is appropriate to look at different viewpoints concerning the consummation as each viewpoint has a scriptural foundation and have strengths and weaknesses in their arguments. The author does not claim with certainty that any of the opinions presented below are right or wrong but presents a personal understanding which reflects the author's current personal beliefs and focuses more on the works of God i.e. what He does rather than when He does certain things and the order of events i.e. whether it is Amillennial or Premillennial etc.

The Bible cannot be treated as a complete historical account revealed to us of how events and processes happen during the creation of the new heaven and earth as no one knows exactly how it is going to be and nor are we given much of the detail necessary for this. Rather an interpretative hermeneutical approach is being followed. A distortion in religious experience of human beings could be caused by either an exclusive Bible bound or a natural experiential approach and our human involvement in the whole process of God's works. The Holy Spirit cannot be restricted as He is opening up Scriptures but also is the renewer of all works of God, human beings as well as the physical-organic environmental nature. The Bible is only one of the instruments in which God reveals Himself through the process of creation, redemption, renewal and consummation. Sometimes believers experience snippets of a new heaven and a new earth in their daily lives as fragments and moments of the consummation break through from the future.

7.1 Millennialism

The word millennial comes from a Latin word "*chilioi*" which means a thousand and is based on Revelation 20:1-7 where John in his vision of things to come describes the thousand years and Christians are basically divided into three major categories based on this issue. Millennialism could be subdivided into three categories i.e. Premillennialism (Historical Premillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism) Post Millennialism, and Amillennialism. Each of these will be discussed briefly together with the covenantal

theology as well as with the author's own viewpoint.

7.1.1 Premillennialism

7.1.1.1 Historical Premillennialism

According to the viewpoint of the early Church the "*chiliad*" would begin with the coming of Jesus which would usher in an eternal state of human beings. This viewpoint was the most widely held and had adherents such as Barnabas, Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus etc. Justin Martyr for instance believed that Jesus will reign upon the earth – a thousand years in Jerusalem – where after the general and eternal resurrection and judgment of all human beings will take place.

Such Premillennialists base their doctrine on the Old Testament Covenants with Abraham and David where Israel is promised a kingdom ruled by the Son of David, when the Jewish people will be regenerated and Jerusalem will be restored as the principal city with the temple as the spiritual Centre of the world.

According to adherents of this doctrine the Church in the New Testament share in the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic, Davidic and new covenants. Various New Testament authors are also of the opinion that there is a future for national Israel and this restoration will take place at the second coming of Jesus as is seen in the book of Acts written by Luke which discusses the spread of the Church (Acts 1 and 3). An interim Kingdom (1 Cor 15) will be established after the return of Christ, prior to the eternal Kingdom, during which Jesus will reign. This period is the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

It would seem that the Old Testament promises are confirmed by the New Testament as the core of their doctrine is based upon the covenant keeping nature of God.

The Alexandrian School attacked the literal hermeneutic on which the doctrine was based and Augustine re-interpreted the concept and time of the millennium. During the Reformation Premillennialism was revived and is now present in several forms.

7.1.1.2 Dispensational Premillennialism

From Augustine the predominant view was Amillennial until the early nineteenth century when John Darby (father of Dispensational Premillennialism) divided the redemption and

reconciliation work of God into seven dispensations with each dispensation having its own system of salvation.

The Scofield Reference Bible gives the following divisions:

Creation to fall	Innocency
Fall to flood	Conscience
Flood to Abraham	Human government
Abraham to Moses	Promise
Moses to Christ	Law
Church Age	Grace
Millennium	Kingdom

These seven dispensations begin with a blessing from God and end with the failure of human beings to meet God's standards, resulting in a period of divine judgment.

In Dispensational Premilennialism Christ will reign with His saints on earth for a thousand years but before Christ reigns He will come to earth and this will happen on two occasions, i.e. the rapture and the appearing. The rapture precedes the Great Tribulation and is the blessed hope for the Church which consists of believers who are saved between Pentecost and the Rapture. After the Rapture, which is discussed by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians when he deals with the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 4), and before the appearing the events of the last week of the prophesy of Daniel 9 and Revelation 4 to 19 will take place. During this time a Jewish remnant will act as God's representative on earth for the conversion of Israel and the Gentiles. The second occasion or Christ's return will be the end of Daniel's 7 weeks i.e. the end of the Great Tribulation when the millennial rule of Christ will begin. Only after the millennial Kingdom ends with the great battle in Revelation 20:7 where Satan and his minions are defeated and thrown into the lake of fire, does the general resurrection occur. The judgement of the dead follows this resurrection. The core difference to Classic or Historic Premilennialism in Dispensational Premilennialism is the pre-Tribulation rapture of the Church in Dispensational Premilennialism.

It would seem from this viewpoint that God favours the Jews which is contrary to the teaching of Paul where He explicitly states that there is neither Jew nor Greek but that all

believers are Abraham's seed. This is stated by Paul in his letter to the Galatians to show them that all believers are children of God and have the same position in Christ i.e. male believers are not superior to female believers etc. (Gal 3:28-29).

Adherents to the doctrine of Dispensational Premillennialism include the Seventh Day Adventists and the Plymouth Brethren.

Premillennialism has the strength that much of the eschatological passages of the Bible can be read in a literal sense and the account of the Great Tribulation can be taken very much as a recounted story line looked at from the past into the future. However the Premillennialist viewpoint suffers from the need to deal with the resulting conflicts between the orders of resurrection given in 1 Thess 4:15 (where Paul answers the Thessalonians and tells them what will happen to those who have died when Christ returns) and that of Revelation 20:4-13 (Where the thousand years are discussed in John's vision).

7.1.2 Post Millennialism

Before the second advent of Christ the Golden age of the Church will be ushered in where the earth is to be evangelised by the Church by the means of the Holy Spirit. The Post Millennialist viewpoint sees that this process has already begun, and that the Church age started with Pentecost. This glorious age will be followed by a brief apostasy. In the middle of this apostasy (after the Millennium) Jesus will come to raise the dead and pronounce His sentence.

Post Millennialists are of the opinion that Jesus is King based on John 18:37 where Jesus said "I am King" when Jesus stood trial before Pilate and argue that Jesus did not say He is going to be King in two thousand years. With His second advent the Church (His bride) will be complete and then the end will come when the world will be destroyed by fire and the believers and non-believers will be judged.

When there is a spiritual revival, periods of peace and lack of international conflict this doctrine seems to blossom.

Postmillennialists support their viewpoint by showing the significant growth in Christianity that has occurred – particularly over the last century, they say that this growing influence is a strong indicator that the Postmillennial viewpoint is observable and therefore correct.

This viewpoint can be countered simply by looking at the outcome of this rising proportion of Christianity, as the fruits of the Millennial Kingdom are not observable, there is no great period of peace, honesty and purity, but a drastic increase in immorality and anarchy.

7.1.3 Amillennialism

This Doctrine has been assigned to Augustine. Augustine, however, held the opinion that the church being in the Millennium was the Spiritual Kingdom of God upon the earth. Scripturally this is correct as the Church is the Israel of God and therefore must be in the Kingdom. This view is prevalent in Reformed theology as the viewpoint is that with Christ's second advent the end of the world will be in place as Christ will not set foot on earth but gather the elect with Him in the air (1 Thess 4:13-18). The concept put forward by Paul in his discussion on the Day of the Lord to the Thessalonians is that believers will be caught up in the clouds to be with the Lord and this concept is thus used in Reformed Theology. After this event Christ will return the Kingdom to God (1 Cor 15:20-28) and this is mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians when he discussed the bodily resurrection of the dead contrary to the belief held by the Greek philosophers.

The name Amillennial comes from the core belief that there will be no literal Millennial Kingdom, as the doctrine states that the current Church age will continue until the return of Christ. The doctrine also stated that there will be no literal one thousand years and that the Church age will continue until His bride is complete. Those who reign with Christ are said to be those believers who have died and who reign in heaven with Christ until the resurrection when they will gain new immortal bodies.

A problem with the Amillennial viewpoint is found in Rev 20:2-3 where John discusses in his vision the event when Satan is thrown into a pit which is even sealed i.e. he is completely removed. This does not fit easily the problems of the current age where demonic influences are very strong. Even Peter in his letter to encourage suffering Christians wrote that Satan is prowling around like a roaring lion to seek whom he can devour (1 Peter 5:8) which implies that Satan is still at work.

A positive aspect of the Amillennial viewpoint is that it requires only one resurrection whereas the Premillennialist approach requires two, one before the millennial kingdom and one after. Scripture only states that there will be two resurrections in one place: Revelation

20. All other references to the resurrection of the dead could be taken as implying only one resurrection.

7.2 Author's Own Viewpoint

In order to look at God's works in the consummation several concepts would need to be handled, such as the resurrection, the Second Advent, the consummation and the new heaven and new earth, as all of these concepts form an integral whole and is important for the discussion of the view point. An important point that must be kept in mind is that God's ongoing work of the consummation of all things into a new heaven and new earth is already erupting and breaking in from the future into the current times of the Spirit of God as resurrected, reborn fragments and moments of the new heaven and new earth in our lives on the basis of the resurrection and raising of Jesus by the Spirit of God to the level of a pneumatic new heavenly and earthly existence as the beginning and end of God's work of reconciliation and God's work of creation.

7.2.1 God's Work of Resurrection

A literal resurrection of the body is a Scriptural reality. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 where Paul wrote to the new believers in Thessalonica to stand firm even in the midst of persecution and answered questions in their mind about the coming of the Lord, it explicitly states that the dead in Christ will rise first. It is the body which is dead and is said to rise again. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 states a literal resurrection as "something" was dead and then will have a "restoration" of life. This must be the body as the soul does not die when the body dies and therefore cannot rise again because it was never dead. According to John 5:28-29, where Jesus claims to be God's Son and the following discussion on the resurrection; all human beings who are in the grave shall come out i.e. are resurrected. A Premilennialism advent cannot therefore suffice as Premilennialism doctrine teaches that only believers are to rise from the dead when Christ comes which is contradictory to Scripture which teaches that all who are in the graves will be resurrected and therefore there could only be one general resurrection. Within Classic Premilennialists an opinion exists that does however allow the Premilennial doctrine to be aligned to this quote from John 5:28-29. This is that the dead spoken of in Revelation 20:4, where John discusses the thousand years, are those who were martyred in the Great Tribulation for their faith in Jesus. These and the believers who survive the Great Tribulation are those who enter into the Millennial Kingdom with

Christ and the rest of the believers are then not resurrected until the final resurrection at Judgement (Revelation 20:12). After the Devil has been thrown into the lake of burning sulphur as is discussed in the John's vision.

After the resurrection the whole human being, body and soul, will be with Christ. The resurrection is a living again of the same thing which was dead. The identity of the human being will be intact. Sometimes when human beings die their body parts are completely "mushed up" or dismembered but even so this body will be restored in the resurrection and be complete - as with God everything is possible and He is the Creator of heaven and earth.

According to Scripture, the body will be the same after the resurrection as before the resurrection and we cannot go further than Scripture i.e. we do not know whether for instance Joni Erickson Tada will be maimed or not after the resurrection but can only state what the Bible states and that is that it would be the same, there is little guidance in Scripture except that Jesus after He was resurrected showed the scars in his hands, feet and side as evidence that it was He – indicating that His body still bore marks that were externally imposed during His earthly life. What the "sameness" consists of we do not know except that human beings would still be recognisable in their human form as Christ after the resurrection was still recognised in human form and we will be able to recognise for instance, human beings we have never met such as Moses, Peter etc by means of their distinguishing character traits. The author presumes this as the disciples immediately recognised Moses on the mountain with Jesus from reading about him.

After the resurrection the new bodies will be incorruptible with no decay and immortal with much power. Exactly what it entail we can only deduce but with uncertainty, for we do not know exactly but only have a few words which describe this new state of the body after the resurrection.

7.2.2 Second Advent as an Aspect of God's Work

The author is very wary of the fact that human beings have only finite knowledge and can interpret Scripture completely wrong as the Old Testament people interpreted the coming and reign of Christ completely wrong. They expected a different type of Prophet, Priest and King and based on their assumptions could not see "the wood for the trees" when Jesus

appeared.

Jesus will appear visibly the second time just as He came visibly to earth the first as could be deduced from Acts 1:11 where the angels said to the Disciples that He shall come in like manner. Luke in Luke 21:27 holds to the same idea when he stated that Jesus will be coming in the clouds. The disciples believed in the second coming, a general resurrection and a final judgment.

Before the second advent the gospel would be preached to all the nations and therefore Christ gave the commission to His followers before His advent, to teach human beings and baptise them (Matt 28:19-20). To empower them He bestowed gifts on them and gave His Spirit to bring all things to their memory etc. as human beings we are thus in the age or “dispensation” of the Holy Spirit as the time frame is called between the first and second advent. God is working through His Spirit in enabling human beings to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. A national conversion of the Jews (which does not imply each and every Jew) should also happen before the second advent as is seen in the writing of various old testament prophets such as Joel and Zechariah (Zec 12) and although the Jews have been broken off from the Olive tree (rejected from God) they again will be grafted in when Israel will be restored (Zec 12:10). And although this could be viewed as the pouring out at Pentecost, it may also be viewed as the time when Jesus will be revealed at His second coming.

The Antichrist will also appear before the second coming of Christ (as discussed by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians when he write about the man of lawlessness, Thess 2:1-3) as is stated explicitly in Scripture and the author believes that it would be in opposition to Christ in His person and work and could be an individual ruler or an organised power although it would seem that the odds in favour of an individual who has universal dominion, being opposed to Christians and Christ and trying to persecute them are predominant.

7.2.3 The Judgment as part of God’s Work

The judgement of human beings and angels is a definite future event with a limited period and does not carry on through centuries. The judgment will be carried out by Jesus Christ as Christ has been ordained to be the judge. Luke recorded this fact when he recorded

Paul's words in the meeting of the Areopagus (Acts 17:31). Paul in his letter to the Corinthians when he discussed the heavenly dwellings also said that each one will be judged by Christ (2 Cor 5:10). Christ is the only one who is qualified to be a judge as He is the Son of Man and therefore knows the circumstances of human beings and is thus fully equipped to judge human beings. He is able to judge because he was obedient unto death but also is God and is omniscient and full of mercy.

This judgement will happen at the Second Advent together with the general resurrection. When Jesus is revealed from heaven He will take vengeance on those who did not accept Him and will reward each one according to their works – on their acts, thoughts, feelings i.e. the character of human beings. Every human being, although condemned by God, will also be self condemned.

All human beings must appear before Jesus at His coming (believers as well as non believers). Believers will also face judgment, but the judgment will not put their salvation at stake. Paul deduced this fact when he wrote of life through the Spirit and said that believers have been offered freedom from sin and power to do God's will and therefore their salvation is not at stake because Jesus paid the price and believers are no longer condemned (Rom 8:1). God will judge the works i.e. stewardship of the gifts, talents, opportunities and responsibilities entrusted to believers. It will be a fatherly judgment with a father's compassion and understanding: "Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." (1 Peter 1:17, NIV) and Peter therefore exhorts the believers to live holy and self controlled lives in his letter.

However, a believer strives for a crown and their works will be judged accordingly. Paul intimated this fact when he wrote about life to the Spirit and said that believers have been offered freedom from sin and power to do God's will and therefore their salvation is not at risk (1 Cor 9:25). When James wrote to the Jewish Christians he encouraged them to put their faith into action and in James 2:20-26 it is stated that works are a natural result of faith and that faith without works is dead, thus the works of a believer will be acknowledged. Matthew 25:29 also supports this concept because in the parable of the talents those who are found worthy are rewarded when the king returns, "for to everyone who has, more will be given . . ." (Matt 25:29). Further support for this assertion comes

from Matthew 25:34-46 which recounts the judgment of the righteous and unrighteous. Here Jesus sites works “. . . I was hungry and you gave me food” (Matt 25:35) and follows with the same message in respect of drink, being a stranger, being naked and gaining clothing, being sick and being visited and, being in prison and visited. This section is a clear guidance that charitable works are expected of a believer. The general applicability of the need for charitable works is confirmed in Matthew 25:40 with the term “least of these”.

“The Bible teaches clearly that there will be a division at the final judgment between those who are variously described as the righteous and the wicked, or the elect and the non-elect, or those who’s names were found written in the book of life and those who were not (Daniel 12:1-3; Malachi 3:18; Matt 13:30, 39-43)” (Milner, 1979,112)⁸⁰

The sole basis of the judgment regarding the ultimate destiny of the human being is their relation to Jesus Christ. God’s judgment does not concern itself with what a human being has done, but with what they have been. According to several Bible passages, believers will be judged according to their works but the works are for instance the “work” of believing as Jesus taught before a miraculous sign was asked for by the onlookers in His discourse where he stated that He is the true bread from heaven (John 6:29). The judgment of works is according to the revelation of “men’s secrets through Jesus Christ” (Rom 2:16, NIV) as discussed by Paul in his letter to the Romans; and the “motives of men’s hearts” (1 Cor 4:5, NIV) as Paul tells the Corinthians when he said that God will expose the motives of men’s hearts.

With God’s judgment all evil will be rooted out as is seen in John’s vision when he discussed Satan’s doom (Rev 20:7-10) as well as in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians when he discussed the man of lawlessness (2 Thes 2:8). There will be no pain and the created order will be delivered from decay. The systems of the world will be confronted and only the Lord will be exalted as King, as is seen from Isaiah’s vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem when he discussed the last days (Isaiah 2:6-22). The day of the Lord is compared to a slaughter, war and earthquake, as is seen in the vision of Isaiah when he discussed God’s day of vengeance and redemption (Isaiah 63:1-6) and as prophesied by Zephaniah against Judah (Zeph 1:10-13).

⁸⁰ Milner, B, 1979, *The End of The World*, Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications , pp 112

Based in the abovementioned statement the judgment will be universal and based, for unbelievers, upon unbelief or a refusal to receive Jesus Christ. Believers will not face condemnation but they will be rewarded according to their works.

Some human beings have received more opportunities and knowledge of Jesus than others. Yet, each will be judged according to the light they have received so that no one will be found with an excuse. This word of God will be fairly and universally applied.

7.2.4 God's Work in Consummation

Paul, in answer to church questions that the Corinthians had sent, talks of the resurrection as well as Consummation when he talks of the passing away of this world: “. . . For this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31, NIV) and although it will pass away it will be transformed into a place which will be glorious for the children of God in the presence of the Father and the Son (Rev 22:3) according to John's vision when he describes the river of life, the throne of God and the Lamb.

According to 2 Peter 3:6-13 when he encouraged the believers and warned them of false teachers he wrote about the day of the Lord and the destruction by fire of the world. This destruction would not be complete as could be deduced from the destruction of the world by water which is a similar event as the destruction by fire and actually implies another work of God, i.e. regeneration as is stated clearly when Jesus answered His Disciples and told them that at the renewal of all things when He sits on His throne, they will reign with Him and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat 19:28). Just as the bodies of the believers will be new and glorified so will there be a new heaven and new earth. Things (human beings, heaven and earth) will not be annihilated but changed, renewed, regenerated.

“However, all but one of the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts do not have the final words “will be burned up” but instead have “will be found”, which makes quite a difference . . . The text therefore teaches that in spite of the passing away of the heavens and the dissolving of the elements, “the earth and the works that are upon it” will survive. And as for the passing away and the dissolving, this certainly does not refer to annihilation or complete destruction . . . The day of the Lord will bring the fires of judgment and a

cataclysmic convulsion of all creation, but what emerges from the crucible will be “a new heaven and a new earth”, the home of righteousness.” (Wolters, 1986, 41)⁸¹

The old creation will be cleansed from iniquity by fire. And Eden will once more become the meeting place of man with God, this time with His throne in the centre of the Holy City. God loved the world so much that He provided a way to eternal life through His Son (Word) and the indwelling Spirit. Adam and Eve surrounded by righteousness chose death. Subsequent generations have had the right way to life prepared by promise and fulfilment through the tree of the Cross. Whoever accepts the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is invited to partake of the tree of life on the new earth for eternity after the destruction of the old creation.

“When creation has been delivered from the bondage of decay then also the demoniacal devastation and ugly deformation of creation caused by sin and pain will cease. Creation will appear in pure beauty.” (Heim, 1959, 196)⁸²

The author does not believe that the old heaven and old earth which is to pass away includes the complete universe as only the earth was cursed for the sin of human beings and with the redemption of human beings the earth will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. This is completely in line with the teaching of Peter when he stated that the world which once was destroyed by water will be consumed by fire.

The new heaven and new earth will be Christ’s kingdom, the New Jerusalem with all the believers whose names are written in heaven.

The consummation is the fulfilment of the Old Testament hope. There is a new heaven and a new earth and a New Jerusalem where God lives among His people. In John 14:1-3 Jesus does not promise that He will take believers to mansions in the Father’s house but promises “I will come back and take you to be with me where I am” The New Jerusalem could be regarded as a millennial and eternal city which will descend from heaven after the tribulation. Jesus actually makes it clear that the abode of a disciple in the Father’s house will not be a mansion in the sky but a spiritual position in Christ. He comes down to be with believers, just as God became a human being in Jesus Christ and lived among human

⁸¹ Wolters, AM, 1986, *Creation Regained*, Leicester: Intervarsity Press, pp 41

⁸² Heim, K, 1959, *Jesus the World’s Perfecter*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, pp196

beings. In John's vision this is stated as: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." (Rev 21:1-2, NIV).

It is the time when God's firstborn sons and daughters, redeemed from sin, will be restored to their inheritance through the blood of Jesus and the outworking of the Holy Spirit.

The regeneration is now complete and John in his vision implies that everything will be concluded with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth which forms part of God's revealed plan "He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Rev 21:5, NIV) God is the Source of light and according to John's vision will dwell with the believers "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." (Rev 21:22-23, NIV).

7.2.5 God's Work in Establishing The New Kingdom

This new kingdom will be a kingdom of power which Jesus will deliver up to God and it will be everlasting. This kingdom is not in the distant future but already exists on earth since Jesus came the first time. It grew progressively just as the mustard seed and it will continue to grow until it fills the new heaven and new earth.

It is a kingdom which is different from earthly kingdoms as it is a kingdom of righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit and subjects of this kingdom are being regenerated until Christ comes again in which case it would be difficult to describe the glory and love which predominated this kingdom as no one could be able to describe the glory, as mentioned in Paul's letter to the Corinthians when he discussed what God had revealed by His Spirit (1 Cor 2:9).

Nature will also be renewed, instead of briars and thorns there will be fir trees and myrtle trees as in the vision of Isaiah when the Lord gave the invitation to those who are thirsty (Isai 55:12-13) for it enjoyed its Sabbaths and therefore it will be lush to the honour of God (as is discussed in Leviticus when God's blessing for obedience and punishment for disobedience are put forward; Lev 26:34). In Isaiah 11:6-9 the prophet discusses the

Golden age of peace when nature will be restored to balance and harmony and the enmity removed from among human beings and animals. The animals will have a new nature and their tempers will be changed i.e. the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb. The lion will not be ravenous anymore but eat straw like the ox as they did before the fall. Human beings and animals will live together as they did in the Ark and will not destroy each other.

This kingdom will be filled with the fullness of God. The regenerated human beings will be exempt from sin and sorrow and will rejoice in their fellowship with all the other redeemed human beings as well as angels.

In the Old Testament God is portrayed as the Creator-King. Throughout scripture He is reflected as the Redeemer-King and in the end His Kingdom will come in fullness. As Redeemer-King God acts consistently with His character and even saves those who rebel against Him. He restores His people and the creation to the Kingdom which means the regeneration of all things.

We find prophecies of a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth the present universe is created by God for His people, but He will destroy it (as is seen in the vision of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote about the everlasting salvation for Zion; Isaiah 51:6) in order to recreate it (Isaiah 51:3, 11). We see in this vision that God has performed many miracles and brought about changes in order to purge evil but He remains the same God who loves and cares and therefore regenerates and restores.

It will be a new Eden where there is fruitfulness and harmony between all living things as well as perfect healing. The saints will have perfect fellowship and communion with Christ in the age of glory.

There will be Spiritual fullness and it will be a life governed by love because that is the mark of the Holy Spirit. Earthly knowledge will disappear as it is empty, fleshly and not Spiritual but Spiritual things like faith, love and hope will remain as seen in the words of Paul when he exhorted the Corinthians to love more in order to become more Christ like as God is love (1 Cor 13:8-11). When human beings are redeemed, they will have complete cognitive experience because they shall see face to face and be complete when they are in the presence of God and are enabled to see with God's perspective (1 Cor 13:12) and live in a vision of God.

The saints will also be clothed in new immortal resurrected bodies which God will give them. As saints we will share in a social life as the Bible's picture of heaven is presented in social terms. It is for instance seen as a city, as a kingdom, and a wedding feast.

Human beings will be in relationship as God stated in Genesis that it was not good for man to be alone. Human Beings will not be idle but will have responsibilities i.e. service – as seen in John's vision of the Holy City: "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him." (Rev 22:3, NIV) and will help with judgment "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?" (1 Cor 6:2, NIV) as seen from Paul's letter to the Corinthians when he tells them explicitly of their future responsibility in the age to come when they will be judging the world.

In the "new heaven and new earth" human beings will see God and have a relationship with Him.

"God will be all in all indeed, but only in the Saints will He be present 'with grace'; in the reprobate He will be present 'without grace'. And the wicked will be estranged from God by their lack of a resolute purpose of good. . . . On the resurrection the whole of creation will be restored, i.e. brought to perfection and ultimate stability God never does any violence to man, and communion with God cannot be forced upon the obstinate." (Florovsky, 1976, 232-233)⁸³

The end of Scripture and beginning of Scripture correspond with each other. However, the reverse is also true in as much as the line of the murdered Abel will gain eternal life but the line of Cain will perish. The line ending in eternal life ends in the heavenly Jerusalem as is discussed by the author of Hebrews when he talks of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb 12:22-24) and the other line ends in the lake of fire, as seen from John's vision when he discussed the beast and prophet who were thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur (Rev 19:20).

People like Origen and Zinzendorf believed that all human beings will be saved; that all human beings will take part in the state of perfection of the world in the end. To this end they used passages like 1 Tim 2:4, Rom 11:32 and 1 Cor 15:22. In these passages Paul

wrote to Timothy in his instruction for the church that God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Paul also wrote to the Romans just before he gives the doxology, that God bound all men over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all (Romans 11:32) and in 1 Corinthians 15:22 where Paul discusses the resurrection of the dead he said that as in Adam all die even in Christ all will be made alive. But Jesus' words show a different picture and therefore it seems as if Scripture has been "stretched" to fit in with the beliefs as held by Origen and Zinzendorf i.e. Mark 9:42-50, where Jesus warns against temptation and in Matt 12:32 where the religious leaders accuse Jesus of being under Satan's power Jesus explicitly stated that sins against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. In John 3:36 when John the Baptist was baptising at Aenon near Salim he told his disciples more about Jesus and that rejection of Jesus will cause God's wrath. The same principle is alluded to when Jesus had the last supper with His disciples and spoke about the betrayer (Mat 26:34). When the author reflects on her personal experience when she came to salvation she can only endorse these words of Jesus.

Paul in his letter to Colosse taught that Christ has paid for sin and reconciled believers to God: Col 1:20 ". . .²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (NIV) does not mean salvation for everyone it only declares that God has brought peace. The human beings who surrender to the cross will be brought into His presence for all eternity and those who resisted the work of Christ's blood will be eternally separated from God. God will not tolerate a divided kingdom but will reconcile all things unto Himself and believers shall proclaim Him and then God will be 'all in all'

When God will be all in all, it does not mean that all forms cease and the world returns to an existence which is void and without form. As human beings our present experience of the world, however, cannot give us a picture of what will happen either because we only see ". . . but a poor reflection as in a mirror" (1 Cor 13:12, NIV) as is stated by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians when he wrote about love.

But it can be said that this whole pilgrimage is a pilgrimage to God when they that believe will rest in Him. Also that because Christ has brought all things into subjection to Him and filled every believer with His life it can be said that God then has become all in all.

⁸³ Florovsky, G, 1976, *Creation and Redemption*, Belmont Mass: Norland Publishing Co, pp232-233

Human Beings who spend their lives in fleshly desire will be unable to enjoy eternal blessings and will be punished, through their love of the flesh. God will be all in all – in the believers He will be present with grace and in the unbelievers he will be present without grace.

The eternal God, Creator of the world has called the ages into existence and in the words of the author of Hebrews God sent His Son and spoke through Him thus showing clearly the superiority of Christ to angels, Moses and the High Priests: “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Heb 1:2, NIV). It is by His decree that creation and redemption are brought forth, out of His free will He is the beginning and He is the end as well “. . . so that God may be all in all.” (1 Cor 15:28, NIV) as Paul stated to the Corinthians when he wrote of the resurrection of the dead at the end. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” (Rom 11:36, NIV) which forms part of Paul’s doxology in his letter to the Romans.

Through all eternity His final goal – to bring together all things –was hidden as is seen from Paul’s personal greeting in the end of his letter to the Romans (Rom 16:25) as well as in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians when he spoke of the wisdom from the Spirit and that God had hidden all these things before time began (1 Cor 2:7) and by a gradual revelation these things were unveiled. As human beings we are therefore fortunate to perceive it and we will be given heavenly glory when we pass out of the old world into the new after the judgment of fire, the consummation.

7.2.6 Eternal Punishment as an Aspect of God’s Work

God calls all human beings to salvation. He does not want any to perish. To partake in eternal damnation is a self inflicted penalty and the consequence of the rebellious opposition to God and His will. All human beings will be judged on the basis of their works. God is not a God of partiality – everybody was judged in Eden, The Flood and at Babel and so it will be in the end.

“Hell is a reality, and a reality of almost unspeakable solemnity. If we were to select one Biblical description in particular it would be a phrase from 2 Thessalonians 1:9 – ‘exclusion from the presence of the Lord’ the unjustified are shut out from God. Hell

means the permanent inaccessibility of God. It is the carrying through into eternity of the decisions taken by men in this life, the confirmation in the eternal order of a judgment already passed (John 3:18ff)” (Milner, 1979, 113)⁸⁴ Hell is to acknowledge the glory of God and yet be excluded from it.

The eternal fire does not seem to be a literal fire as human beings will be cast into this fire together with the Devil and his angels who do not have material bodies and thus cannot suffer in their bodies. It is the viewpoint of the author that there will, however, be different degrees of punishment based upon their degree of sin. Some of the sufferings according to Scripture include the exclusion from God’s presence, the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, dominion of sin etc. and this alienation from God and miserableness will continue for ever. The Lord Jesus never contradicted this belief and will reconcile all things to Himself which is the object of redemption i.e. all who are in Christ and therefore all non-believers, fallen angels will not be reconciled to Him. The Scriptural term “all things” cannot be taken to mean all that was ever created, but only to mean those things that are to be redeemed.

God, the author of life, gives eternal life as a favour and human beings through continual sin are separated from God and when that alienation is final there is eternal death. It does not refer to annihilation. Annihilation in itself could be viewed as a blessing whereas alienation from God in the company of the Devil and his angels is complete punishment as is seen from Old and New Testaments alike and Jesus Himself teaches about the everlasting blessedness of the saints and the everlasting punishment of the wicked which means that it is un-ending.

⁸⁴ Milner, B, 1979, *The End of The World*, Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications , pp 113

8 Conclusive Comments On The Coherence And Otherness Of God's Works In Relationship To The Works Of Human Beings And The Created Universe.

As seen throughout this thesis there is an ongoing coherence and otherness of God's works of creation, reconciliation and renewal of human beings, plants and animals which indicates the deep involvement and concern of God for His creation. As human beings we experience through the Holy Spirit some of God's work as it gives us life, sustains life and provides hope of a new heaven and a new earth. God is therefore working within His creation making human beings aware of their creatureliness, the redemptive and restorative power of the cross, regeneration by the Holy Spirit and a new life to come.

We can conclude that God reveals Himself through His creation, His reconciliatory act on the cross and redemption, His renewal through Pentecost and consummatingly when there will be a new heaven and new earth. As human beings we are interconnected and involved in each one of these ongoing works of God as we experience them as life giving, life sustaining energies on a daily basis. The abovementioned, together with the awareness of our sinful tendencies form part of the fivesome awareness process discussed throughout this thesis.

The Old Testament believers, New Testament believers and believers throughout all the ages share the common experience of receiving the grace of God through the regeneration process. We have a Creator-Redeemer King who works out His purpose of creating a new humanity from creation as seen from the Genesis account (Gen 1-2) and a more glorious new creation as seen from John's vision on the end or latter times (Rev 21-22) and in between lies regeneration.

“The goal of this history of creation is not the return to the paradisaal primordial condition. Its goal is the revelation of the glory of God. It is true that this end ‘corresponds’ to the beginning in the sense that it represents the fulfilment of the real promise implanted in

creation itself; but the new creation of heaven and earth in the kingdom of glory surpasses everything that can be told about creation in the beginning.” (Moltmann, 1985, 207)⁸⁵

Redemption involved three dimensions: the original creation which was declared good by God, the perversion of the creation through sin and the restoration of the creation through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Now these three dimensions already appear in the first three chapters of Genesis.

God first revealed the creation story to Israel and afterwards to the new Israel (body of Christ) and unveil His plan progressively to His own children. God’s creation is important to Him: “. . . the messianic mission of Christ and the Spirit lies in the glorifying of God and the liberation of the world, in the sense that God is glorified through the liberation and healing of creation, and that He does not desire to be glorified without His liberated creation.” (Moltmann, 1977, 60)⁸⁶

Isaiah 46:9-10 the prophet Isaiah when he discussed the gods of Babylon prophesied about God’s uniqueness and supremacy: “. . . I *am* God and there is none like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done. Saying ‘My counsel shall stand. . . Indeed I have Spoken it: I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.’” (Isaiah 46:9-11, NKJV). Here we read that God is foreknowing, He knows the future from the beginning. This is a crucial concept because as God is the same “yesterday, today and tomorrow”. The same concept is given in Isaiah 42:9 where Isaiah discusses the servant of the Lord. If we are to accept these statements in Isaiah then we can draw the conclusion that before God created He knew that the Fall would occur and that the redemption of man would be achieved according to His purpose through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the cry of God after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden to Adam “Where are you” in Genesis 3:9 was not a call through lack of knowledge but a call in anguish because before God cried out He already knew that the Fall had occurred.

If we follow this line of logic through then we can deduce that if God knew that His creation would be cursed at such an early stage and yet He put in place the environment which would allow this, then it was part of the will of God and part of His plan. God

⁸⁵ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, pp207

⁸⁶ Moltmann, J, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 1977, London: SCM Press Ltd, pp 60

seeks a people who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth and without the conscious choice against evil, in submission to God, man cannot be worshipping in spirit and in truth.

This is a fundamental issue in experience, without the conscious decision for God, man would not in truth be worshipping God for he would have made no choice at the spiritual level. As we have seen, Paul regarded the life of a believer as a war between good and evil within the believer (Romans 7), he experienced this war within himself and this led him to look forward to the day when he would be “with the Lord”, when he would “win the race” having held “steadfast to the end”.

This hope of Paul was based on his experiences which started on the Damascus road and occurred throughout his ministry.

If we are to consider the Fall, God’s work with Noah, Israel and ultimately the work of Jesus Christ at Calvary as part of the initial plan of God, then we cannot consider creation to have ceased until the final state is achieved and this final state is the New Heaven and New earth, which will only be created at the consummation of the ages. We therefore live in a period when creation is ongoing, and this ongoing creation is expressed in the redemption of mankind.

In Genesis 2:2 after the creation account we read that God ended His work that He had done and yet we find an ongoing work of creation in the history of Israel and the nations, in the work of Christ on the Cross, in the resurrection, in the redemptive work of the Spirit in human beings and in the New Heavens and New Earth. We therefore find that we must consider that this ending in Genesis 2:2 is a reflection of God having finished the physical creation of the first “phase” in His plan.

With this interrelation of creation and redemption it becomes possible to view the work of the Spirit in human beings within a “system” where they experience re-creation through the work of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit.

This view of the complete foreknowledge of God leads one to an understanding of the texts on election. This line of reasoning leads one to conclude that God foreknew all human beings and whilst He did not create some for good and some for judgment He foreknew those who would make a choice for Him and therefore was able to write their

names in the Book of Life.

Creation was achieved through the Word and the Spirit and the Word Incarnate together with the Spirit became the path for the regeneration of individuals. Thus redemption is experienced by human beings as their regeneration through the Word and Spirit.

This regeneration of man is sealed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and this will manifest the love of God the Father and Jesus as Son to the believer who is transformed into an adopted son or daughter and gains a true relationship with God as Father. This renewed human being has an outward working of this re-creation in the expression of love towards others. This regeneration re-unites human beings with God and unites human being with human being and brings them into the new covenant.

Redemptive revelation shows the regeneration or restoration of God's Kingdom until God is all in all. This in itself points to the fulfilment of Jesus' word when He prayed for His disciples just before he was betrayed and arrested: "That all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You" (John 17:21). This is the final issue of the redeemer's work. Jürgen Moltmann summarises it very well in the following words ". . . the creative acts of God in history are discerned in the unexpected 'new thing' of liberation and salvation (Isa 43,18f). Here God's historical activity is directed . . . towards the anticipation of the salvation in which creation will be consummated. It is not merely *creatio continua*. It is at the same time *creatio nova*. And as *creatio nova* it is also *creatio anticipative*. God's creative activity in history anticipates the consummation in time. The creation of liberty, righteousness and salvation in human history initiates the fulfilment of that promise which creation at the beginning represents in its very self." (Moltmann, 1985, 209)⁸⁷

God's revelation of Himself is for all of human beings and when any person, confronted with this revelation, becomes united with Christ then he is a new creation, with a new covenant within the fellowship of a new Israel (Church) which is in itself the microcosm of the Kingdom of God. Redemption will lead to the believer's experience of the new heaven and new earth which will be fully realised at the second coming. The death and resurrection of Christ forms the centre of the new creation together with the outpouring of

⁸⁷ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, pp 209

the Spirit. Jesus ushers in the new age with His victory over the powers of destruction and the Holy Spirit with the outworking in the lives of believers.

We live in a time of change, in fact we seem only to be certain of two things, change in the world and the steadfastness of God. Despite all that we see around us the sun still rises and sets, and the moon increases and decreases just as they did from the beginning, just as God ordained them to; just as God has shown His love for human beings through His interactions with them from the beginning. Things appear to run in cycles and that which has been is again now, things have always been as uncertain as they are today and that which is to be has already been. We therefore are inconsiderate when we say “things have never been so bad as now”; whether we refer to our personal circumstances, our nation or our biosphere. We cannot say “the times will never mend” because they may mend with us and after mourning will come a time to rejoice, but yet all is still liable to the common fate in that the world is consistent in its inconsistency. There is but one outlet to this situation of inconsistency and that is through the redeeming hand of the Lord. Whether it be by nature that “groaneth and travaileth” or man facing trials and disappointments, the solution lies still in the redemption of human beings and creation through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in His role in the redemption of human beings also groans and struggles in anticipation of the redemption which will bring God to be all in all at the consummation of the ages.

The interrelationships of Creation, Word, Spirit and human beings are complex and interwoven like a tapestry, and that tapestry is formed from the warp of redemption and the weft of regeneration.

Redemption begins with the cross as well as when the Spirit regenerates the human heart. “These works of God in creation, reconciliation and redemption also surround and mould the living character of created, reconciled and redeemed men and women. We shall therefore theologically understand being human as being part of this history of God with the world. What is human is not revealed in isolation from the history of God and the encirclement of His Spirit; it is manifested through integration, and through differentiated correspondence to these things we arrive at the theological perception of the truth of the

human being in the ark that reaches from his physical creation to the resurrection of the body.” (Moltmann, 1985, 246)⁸⁸

8.1 *Final Word*

In reviewing the interrelationships of creation, Word, Spirit and human beings in their place within the redemptive purpose of God, the issue of continuous creation has been evaluated from a Biblical perspective from Genesis to Revelation. A remarkable congruency has been found which clearly establishes that creation has continued through the process of redemption and will only be complete at the consummation of the age when God becomes all in all.

⁸⁸ Moltmann, J, 1985, *God in Creation*, London: SCM Press, pp 246

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