

**EVIL AND SUFFERING IN THE LIGHT OF CREATION,
RECONCILIATION, RENEWAL AND CONSUMMATION –
MULTICULTURAL / MULTI-RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF
THE HIV/AIDS PROBLEM**

by

LOUISA JACOBA HEARN

submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF E VAN NIEKERK

JULY 2009

I declare that

**EVIL AND SUFFERING IN THE LIGHT OF CREATION,
RECONCILIATION, RENEWAL AND CONSUMMATION –
MULTICULTURAL / MULTI-RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF THE
HIV/AIDS PROBLEM**

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

Louisa Jacoba Hearn

date: *26 July 2009*

433-712-3

Summary/Abstract

Evil and suffering are a constant reality of this world and major catastrophes and issues such as swine flu and bird flu gain enormous relief funding, media coverage and frantic government action, yet HIV/AIDS, a cause of immeasurable suffering after years of being in the public spotlight receded into the background. This study grapples with evil and suffering in the light of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation from the viewpoint of a diversity of cultures and religions, with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS. The cluster of sin, evil and suffering are reflected upon and this revolves around five angles: *firstly*, multicultural and multi-religious sense making God-human-world approaches; *secondly*, the mystery of the simultaneity of the close connection and radical otherness of: God, being human and the natural world; *thirdly*, the full Gospel of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation; *fourthly*, different approaches towards texts, theories, natural processes and human doings; and *fifthly*, the multidimensionality of God, human beings and the natural world.

In the thesis the origin of evil and suffering is discussed, which leads to a discussion of dualist views, amongst others, Zoroastrianism and its influence on modern monotheistic religions. Moreover, the response of the major faith groups towards evil and suffering are discussed and sensibly negotiated with the purpose of achieving better co-operation between faith groups in their tackling of HIV/AIDS. An attempt at establishing the outlines of a theology of HIV/AIDS is considered as well as the role, value and enhancement of faith counseling. Modern and postmodern views of evil and suffering are touched upon especially regarding the close proximity of God, humanity and the natural world to the sufferer. Despite significant differences in the various faith systems, sufficient commonality around respect for human beings is found to exist. Finally, in terms of sensible negotiation of portions of the various scriptures a way forward is envisaged that undergirds the notion of solidarity in support of HIV/AIDS sufferers in various faith systems.

Key Terms

HIV/AIDS, AIDS, HIV, theology, sin, evil, suffering, theodicy, free will, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, African Religion, sensible negotiation, creation, consummation, renewal, reconciliation, counselling, stewardship, sense-making orientations, injustice, poverty, salvation, redemption, stigma, prejudice, liberation theology, fivesome awareness, Holistic care

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Erasmus van Niekerk for his valued guidance, support and challenge. Thanks also to my husband Ian for his support, patience and criticism.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my Ouma Huibrecht Susanna Cornelia Esterhuizen (born Otto) who is 100 years of age on the 6th of February 2010 who raised me, guided me, showed me the love of God and provided a driving force for the completion of this work through her continual encouragement and interest. She is blessed in reaching her 100th birthday.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	1
Quarter, Half, Three-quarter or Full Gospel?	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem and challenge	6
1.2.1 The first problem-setting of the thesis revolves around sense making God-human-and-world approaches towards dimensions and phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering in the light of the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in the current inter- and multi- worlds of cultures, religions and faiths.	8
1.2.2 The second problem-setting approaches the underlying question of where sin and pain, evil and suffering fit into the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and nature (the natural cosmic world).	10
1.2.3 The third problem-setting or angle of the study intersecting with the other two is being expressed as the full Gospel of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation interwoven with the main theme of sin and pain, evil and suffering and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.	16
1.2.4 The fourth problem-setting or angle of the study revolves around the sense making approaches of human beings towards texts, theories, natural processes and human doings in regard to HIV/AIDS	21
1.2.5 The fifth problem-setting or angle of the study revolves around a God-human-nature view and approach in which God, human beings and nature in their own way espouse through the mystery of their togetherness and difference a wholesome multi-coloured and multi-layered multidimensionality in regards to HIV/AIDS	30
1.3 Overview of the Thesis	37
1.3.1 Chapter 1	37
1.3.2 Chapter 2	39
1.3.3 Chapter 3	40
1.3.4 Chapter 4	41
1.3.5 Chapter 5	41
1.3.6 Chapter 6	42

Chapter 2	44
God, Human Beings and Nature - Sin, Evil and Suffering	44
2.1 Introduction	44
2.2 Evil and suffering and a wholesome multidimensional God	46
2.2.1 God as one wholesome multidimensional God	46
2.2.1.1. The Influence of Zoroastrianism on various world views	48
2.2.1.2. Worldviews and evil and suffering	53
2.2.2 God outside (transcendent) and inside (immanent) reality	55
2.2.3 Divine determination or/and human free will	58
2.2.4 Theodicy?	63
2.2.5 God, change and suffering	68
2.2.6 God's involvement through the Kingdom (Commonwealth) of God	73
2.2.7 Supernatural theologism – God breaking into his own handiwork after being set outside creation by the theologian's scheme	74
2.2.8 God and Satan on par regarding evil and suffering?	77
2.3 Evil and suffering and a wholesome multidimensional human being	86
2.3.1 Evil and suffering and a dualistic or triadic human being	86
2.3.2 Relevance of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures	89
2.3.4.1 The duality and triadic problem	96
2.3.5 Is the Judaeo-Christian Bible underscoring dualist and triadic views?	102
2.3.6 A wholesome differential and integral approach to human beings	105
2.3.7 Implications of the wholesome differential and integral approach to human beings on the theodicies of Stoeber and Hick	109
2.4 Evil and suffering and the wholesome multidimensional world	111
2.4.1 Evil and suffering and a dualistic and tripartite world	111
2.4.2 Evil and Suffering and a wholesome multidimensional worldview	115
2.5 God, humanity and nature in the process of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment	117

2.5.1	The importance of a dynamic approach in which the interconnectedness and otherness of God, human beings and nature are processed through creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment	117
2.5.2	Creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation as shadowed and realised in the self-creation (actualisation), self-denial (awareness of sin), self-empowerment and liberation (resurrection) and self-purposing with regards to the problem of evil and suffering in the pastoral counselling ambience.	122
2.5.3	Modernity (1600-2000) and different tendencies of God, humanity and nature with regard to sin, evil and suffering.	126
2.6	conclusion	131
Chapter 3		134
The Problem-Setting Evil/Suffering....Goodness/Blessings Multireligiously and Multiculturally Viewed		134
3.1	Introduction	134
3.1.1	The discussion of evil/suffering and goodness/blessings together in various views.	137
3.1.2	Level and degree of stewardship in the various views: responsibility and accountability of human beings in the face of evil and suffering	141
3.2	Various religions, churches and cultures as sense making orientations	150
3.2.1	Judaism as sense-making orientation	152
3.2.2	Islam as sense-making orientation	158
3.2.2.1	Fundamental(ist) Islam	163
3.2.3	Buddhism	165
3.2.4	Christianity as sense making orientation	167
3.2.5	Hinduism as sense making orientation	171
3.2.6	Traditional African religion as sense making orientation	173
3.2.7	The religious effects of culture: nationalism	176
3.3	Evil and suffering in the holy books of the various religions	179
3.3.1	The Qur'an	179
3.3.2	Hinduism	184
3.3.3	Buddhism	187

3.3.4 Judaism	188
3.3.5 Christianity	193
3.4 conclusion	195
Chapter 4	200
Modern and Postmodern views of Evil and Suffering within the Triad of God, Humanity and Nature.	200
4.1 Introduction	200
4.2 Modern and postmodern tendencies – the perennial question of truth	201
4.3 Main modern and postmodern tendencies in philosophies, religions, cultures and church theology	206
4.3.1 God’s acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation as revelation	217
4.3.2 Overlapping and otherness	220
4.4 The radical position of Ecclesiastes 3	222
4.5 Towards a theology of suffering in 2 Corinthians	227
4.5.1 How suffering is experienced	229
4.5.2. Suffering in Paul’s apostolic ministry	232
4.4.3. Suffering as believers/church	235
4.5.4. Coherence of God’s works by means of suffering: creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation	237
4.6 conclusion	240
Chapter 5	242
Nearer To God, To Oneself and To the Natural World	242
5.1 Introduction	242
5.2 The problem-setting of cause and effect and the triad of God, human beings and nature	243
5.2.1 Viruses, bacteria and the triad	245
5.2.2 Viruses and religions	252

5.3 The problem of evil and suffering with regards to HIV in the faith and pastoral counselling ambience.	258
5.3.1 Faith counselling as a wholesome and multidimensional approach	260
5.3.1.1 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of the four grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment	261
5.3.1.2 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of the foursome experiential pattern of believing God, oneself, others and the physical-organic natural world	263
5.3.1.3 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of the management of change between fields of experience and social roles in daily life	266
5.3.1.4 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of different types and levels of sickness and illness and wellness and wellbeing	268
5.3.2 Alleviation of suffering in HIV-infected human beings whilst bringing them closer to themselves, other human beings, nature and God.	269
5.3.3 Faith counselling in the light of the four foci	272
5.4 conclusion	275
Chapter 6	277
HIV/AIDS as a Multifunctional Problem	277
6.1 Introduction	277
6.2 Theology of HIV/AIDS	280
6.3 Scripture and HIV/AIDS: an interface	289
6.4 Ministry as social and cultural response	292
6.5 Spirituality and suffering	295
6.6 The importance of the dynamics of the process and pattern of 'faith is faith is faith is faith' as: believing God, believing yourself, believing other human beings and believing the physical-organic environment.	298
6.7 Conclusion	304
Bibliography	312

Chapter 1

Quarter, Half, Three-quarter or Full Gospel?

1.1 Introduction

Evil and suffering are part of the day to day reality of this world i.e. in the first few years of this millennium we have seen the atrocity of 9/11 (November 2001 in the USA, the Tsunami in Asia in December 2005, atrocities by the Janjuide in Somalia in the past decade, violence instigated through authoritarian rule in Zimbabwe (1995-2009) and the indiscriminate murder of civilians in Iraq (2003-2009) all making headline news. Currently, 'bird flu' and 'swine flu' make the headlines, while HIV/AIDS, a truly huge cause of suffering and a mass killer, after years of being in the public spotlight is receding into the background. Moreover, HIV/AIDS sufferers are ostracised and poor countries are left with growing problems of how to tackle the pandemic amidst the scarcity of resources. Keenan is of the opinion that:

“the number of lives lost to the tsunami approached 300,000. This tragedy generated billions of dollars of supported response within weeks. Although HIV/AIDS causes the same number of deaths every thirty seven days, the will to commit concomitant resources to prevent such loss of life simply does not exist” (Ammicht-Quinn 2007:69).

The worsening HIV/AIDS situation in some societies is downplayed by people in these societies who are not existentially involved in the suffering of people living with HIV and AIDS. A distancing attitude from the outcomes of the HIV/AIDS pandemic by some layers of the population is therefore on the increase. The number of people who are allowed to suffer and die in silence is also on the increase. A greater effort to strive for macrojustice, macro-compassion and caring from all institutions and layers of a society has to be given the highest priority rating. This study attempts to make sense of the attitudes and views of the major faith groups towards evil and suffering while striving for an enhanced dialogue

about the notions of macrojustice, macro-compassion and caring in tackling HIV/AIDS.

Human beings working with a two pronged notion of 'in-group' (those believed to be un-infected by HIV) and 'out-group' (HIV-infected human beings) sometimes encounter views regarding HIV infected human beings of being unclean, wasted and deserving of their suffering. In some instances they even deserve the wrath of God. Currently, a hard-line view of HIV infected human beings as unclean and deserving of their suffering, receives support from views operating with the idea that God's blessing is awarded to human beings who are clean, holy and thus obedient to God's commandments. God's wrath is particularly directed to unclean and unholy human beings who have been disobedient to God's commandments. Many fundamentalist and even middle-of-the-road religious groupings reverts the sole responsibility exclusively in the lap of humans infected and suffering from HIV/AIDS. Various versions of the latter view abound in the global world and in Africa and are not restricted to Christian fundamentalist groupings but are also found in Islamic and Hindu groupings.

It would be meaningful and worthwhile for theologies and theories of faith to open up and to operate more fully on the perceived unholy sub-levels, the unclean and wasted corners of people's experience and societies where God, human beings and the natural world may be closer to each other than in the sacred and holy spheres of churches and the circles of holy people such as priests, pastors and ministers. The separate existence of sacred and holy spheres is an indictment of the unholy and wasted corners of the world as being devoid of holiness and sacredness. Paul Tillich (1973:188-9), links the notion of holy waste with Jesus the messiah, the anointed one who in wasting himself becomes the Christ whose cross while affirming any waste has not disavowed its sacredness. In a similar sense, van Niekerk connects holy and unholy, health and illness by asserting that holiness and sacredness could emerge and be established anytime and anywhere through the Holy Spirit in the most unholy and most wasted corners of the world as the holy at-one-ment (closely together) and at-other-ment (really differing) of the Godness of God, the humanness of human beings and the naturalness of the

natural environment, foremostly expressed and encapsulated in the cross, the tearing of the veil of the temple and the resurrection of Jesus (2006:374).

Cahill (in Ammicht-Quinn 2007:92) provides some important facts about HIV/AIDS:

“The AIDS pandemic has already caused over 25 million deaths, and almost another 40 million are currently living with HIV/AIDS, including 2.3 million children....Girls and young women are the most rapidly growing AIDS population.....HIV/AIDS has an impact on virtually every sector of national and cultural life.”

With statistics such as these, condescending efforts of reaching out and declarations from political ivory towers and holy and sacred designed spaces of churches, religions and theologies in the struggle against HIV/AIDS serve no purpose. What we should do is to tackle and wrestle with dualist God-human-and-worldviews still doing the rounds in our world and attempt to convince and guide them to change into views which are able to observe wholesome holiness and sacredness in the most unholy and most holy, ill and healthy, depressed and joyful, and wasted and fruitful corner of our world. Conventional theological wisdom has the tendency to substantiate the importance and self-evidence of a study like this one with the notion of the Christian Scriptural concept of the sacredness of human life in which HIV/AIDS is viewed as a threat to humanity. The notion of ‘the sacredness of human life’ is rather a one-sided interpretational inference from the Biblical texts falling back into the trap of dividing human life and the natural world into sacred and non-sacred, holy and unholy areas, events, happenings and doings.

When all has been said and done God, human beings and the physical-organic natural world are close together (at-one-ment) and really differ (at-other-ment) in every pocket and package, context and situation commonly regarded as unholy and holy, slime and manure, waste, sacred and perfect, desecrated, filth, illness and wellness. In this all, whether we like it or not, turn up our noses or not, or close our eyes to the real world, the Holy Spirit in amazing multidimensional ways incorporates and embeds every atom and molecule in the physical-chemical world, every cell and organism, bacterium and virus in the biotic world, every emotion

and feeling, every thought and belief, every love action, every snippet of imagination and every bit of justice in human experience. As people we do not know how and in what sense the Spirit of God incorporates and embeds thing after thing and being after being in the many universes in the most micro- as well as in the most macro- of senses. What increasingly makes sense is to accept that God, human beings and nature demonstrates each respectively a multidimensionality of in its own way (van Niekerk 2006:375).

In accepting the mystery of the simultaneity of the togetherness and difference of God, human beings and nature we do not have to be pantheistic, panentheistic or whatever other problematic type of “-istic” to accept that the closest we can get to the multidimensional closeness and difference of the Godness of the living God, the humanness of actual human beings and the naturalness of real nature is through daily experience of a continuous awareness of God’s Commonwealth (Kingdom, Priesthood and Prophetdom, etc.) fully intertwined with the events and processes of “the creation and creatureliness of the many universes”, “the reconciliation events of the cross, the tearing of the veil of the temple and the resurrection of Jesus”, “the renewal through God’s life-giving Spirit of the whole of reality”, and the “processes of pulling, drawing and fulfilling of everything towards a future directed fulfilment and consummation” (van Niekerk 2006:316).

One of the foci of this study is the relationship between evil and suffering and particularly HIV/AIDS, which causes major suffering worldwide, primarily to those who are already marginalised and on the edge of society. In the light of this observation it seems crucial that various religious groups, without compromising their various doctrinal beliefs, work together for the enhancement of life, especially on the continent of Africa where intense pain and suffering is experienced already. Another aim of this study is to explore the responses of various religions to evil and suffering in order to collate better understanding of various God-human-world views and thereby enhancing and fostering the inter-religious dialogue for better co-operation between the various faith groups. This may lead to the developing of a more comprehensive approach to the alleviation of suffering due to HIV/AIDS globally and in Africa.

In this study an attempt is made to work towards a Theology (or a theory of faith) of HIV/AIDS in the African context. The aim is to work at the breaking down of barriers caused by prejudice and discrimination which stand in the way of promoting greater efficacy and more wholesome approaches towards the HIV/AIDS challenge. The grand acts of God of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment act as embracing scheme in an attempt of moving Christians in the direction of their vocation of wholesome engagement and involvement with other people's suffering and pain.

One of the main points of this study is an attempt to promote an awareness of the mystery of the connectedness and difference between God, human beings and the natural cosmic environment in every field of experience, in every context and situation and in every sphere and ambience of this planet earth which as a micro part of the universe is surrounded by millions of universes. In addition, this study is also an attempt to raise people's awareness about the mystery of sin, evil and suffering fused into every context and situation and thus, is intrinsically and mysteriously intertwined with God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. A continuous emphasis regarding the fusion of the two mysteries brings about a considerable turn around from the traditional view of sanctification which is carried by the word-pair 'purity and perfection' to a view espousing the word-pair of 'excellence in uniqueness'. God's acts of reconciliation in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the renewal of everything through the Spirit, embraces a human being to be aware of his or her 'excellence in uniqueness' before the countenance of God, oneself, other people and the natural cosmic environment (van Niekerk 2009:46). Whatever fragments and moments of sin, evil and suffering reside and play a role within the life of someone who is either extremely healthy or terminally ill with full blown AIDS, the emphasis of someone's 'excellence in uniqueness' of his or her being and doing before the countenance of God, him or herself, other people and the physical-organic environment defines and determines the quality of the traditional word-pair of 'pure and perfect' (purity and perfection).

Mysteriously, through and in what is regarded as unholy and sinful, holy and meaningful nooks of people's experience and unclean and evil, clean and healthy crannies of society, God's Spirit embodies and participates in new pockets and packages, new contexts and localisations of close togetherness and real differences of God, humanity and the natural environment in the world. God is in multidimensionality involved and engaged with multidimensional human beings and multidimensional natural cosmic worlds.

In the context of the discussion, we need to carefully take stock of the notion of multidimensionality colouring and underlying this study which is directed at the multicultural and multi-religious dimensions of the HIV/AIDS problem against the backdrop of five angles and problem-settings which outline the problem and the challenge of the thesis.

1.2 Problem and challenge

The problem and challenge of the thesis under construction is covered and permeated by five sub problem-settings or angles espoused in the theological and faith reflection undertaken in the study. These problem-settings permeate the chapters of the thesis and are not discursively treated in separate chapters. The main problem-setting or hypothesis is constructively set out by way of these sub-problem-settings.

The first problem-setting or angle revolves around the multicultural and multi-religious dimensions and phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering in the light of the pandemic of HIV/AIDS as part of the global world of the past three decades. From the start the underlying question being asked is: where do sin and pain, evil and suffering fit into the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and the physical-organic natural world which in turn is interwoven with God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation (fulfilment)?

The second problem-setting or angle is focussing and linking the mystery of the close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and the natural physical-organic environment with the phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering.

The third problem-setting or angle revolves around the comprehensive character of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation (fulfilment) in people's experience in the natural cosmic world. Again the dimensions and phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering are radically intertwined and interwoven with all four grand acts of God and not as a historical paradisiacal event that happened shortly after God's act of creation thousands of years before God's grand act of reconciliation in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The fourth problem-setting or angle of the thesis revolves around current sense making approaches as to how texts, theories, natural processes and human doings are approached, read, viewed and made use of. In our day and age, the challenge of how texts, theories, natural processes and human doings are used and employed in people's life-worlds is of critical importance in regard to evil and suffering in the multi-cultural and multi-religious world we live.

The fifth problem-setting or angle of the study revolves around a God-human-nature view in which it makes increasingly sense to accept that God, human beings and nature each in their own way espouse in their togetherness and difference a multi-coloured and multi-layered multidimensionality.

1.2.1 The first problem-setting of the thesis revolves around sense making God-human-and-world approaches towards dimensions and phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering in the light of the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in the current inter- and multi- worlds of cultures, religions and faiths.

The first problem-setting of the thesis revolves around the multicultural and multi-religious dimensions and phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering in the light of the pandemic of HIV/AIDS as part of the events in the global world of the past three decades. One of the underlying questions to be asked is: where do sin and pain, evil and suffering fit into the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and the physical-organic natural world? Especially theologies and theories of faith tackling existing beliefs of HIV/AIDS as God's wrath for sexual sins committed has to be aware of the magnitude of responsibilities to counter such beliefs. In addition, these theologies and theories of faith need to deal with, on the one hand, with conflicting prejudices of sexuality, death, gender, culture, faith, belief and religion, and on the other hand, ecclesial and socio-political climates rife with conflicting one-sided sense making approaches contributing to and sometimes directly causing suffering of HIV/AIDS, crime, malnutrition, and political and economic oppression. Theologies and theories of people's experience of faith have to submerge themselves not only into the official ecclesial theologies offered by the myriad of African churches but into the experience of faith of people in contexts of ground level and daily life experience. Decisions of life and death are taken in these contexts sometimes by young teenagers in a parenting role of their siblings where parents and grandparents had been lost due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Pain and suffering caused by sin and evil have been said to be common experiences shared by all humanity. With this assumption as backdrop, the following questions have not lost their relevancy: from where do all evil doings, processes and events originate? From where did the HIV/AIDS virus originate or out of which set of factors did the virus emerge? Can natural cosmic events and disasters be related to evil in the world? Are the majority of religions demonic

delusions or do they sprout from human beings trying to make sense of their universe and are they reaching out for God as a 'big brother' whose perceived otherness and absoluteness protect them from evil forces? Are human beings prone to sin or to evil? How do human beings with different sense making approaches from different cultures, religions and societies make sense of the evil and suffering experienced in the world? If there is a God why did he create evil or if he co-exists with evil why does he allow it? Can God suffer on the cross of Jesus as some of the theological fathers asserted or does the whole of reality have a cruciform nature?

In this study, views of sin and pain, evil and suffering from various sense making God-human-and-world approaches will be discussed. Thus various Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu views are being discussed and negotiated with from the Christian sense making God-human-world approach summarised in the five angles of this study.

Van Niekerk asserts that it is meaningful to use the extended notion of a sense making God-human-world view, pattern, system, network or orientation as an indication of a human being's or group's embracing and pre-scientific sense making views and experiences. In such a sense making orientation many theoretical snippets of knowledge from philosophies, the sciences and technology are in operation. Sense making views are also influenced by scientific and theoretical patterns and theories through scattered insertions and injections from many philosophies, sciences and technologies.

Pools of scientific, technological and philosophical knowledge are accumulated over many centuries from many cultures of the past and the present. These pools of knowledge coming about through a myriad of sense making approaches of people, including religions, ideologies and value-systems from global history, result in further pools of accumulative knowledge. On the one hand, these sense making orientations of people are embedded in multiple writings and sayings, activities and things that human beings encounter in modern life. On the other hand, the sense making orientations expressed in the accumulated pool of global knowledge, filter into philosophies, sciences and technologies which in their

applied and embodied forms are embedded in products from electric kettles and microwave ovens and flying aeroplanes to designer drugs and computers. Sense making orientations also are embedded in intangible products and skills from theories and approaches such as hypnosis and therapeutic strategies to meaningful patterns of faith, thinking, loving, socialising and speaking (van Niekerk 2009:51).

1.2.2 The second problem-setting approaches the underlying question of where sin and pain, evil and suffering fit into the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and nature (the natural cosmic world).

The second problem-setting has to do with the need of theologies and theories of faith which in their tackling of everyday experiential contexts of human beings in the global world and especially in Africa are utterly aware that the question who (or what) is responsible and accountable for the HIV/AIDS pandemic has to be answered in terms of the *mystery* of the *simultaneity* of the *close connection* and *radical otherness of God, human beings and the natural environment*. Many reductionist explanations and solutions were continuously on offer in the modern era (1600-2000) in which either God or humanity or the physical-natural environment is being seen and set as initiating agent not only solely responsible and accountable for all good events, happenings and processes but also for disasters, catastrophes and pandemics striking the world.

One of the facile solutions offered by traditional as well as black and liberation theologies during the South African struggle against apartheid is the notion of God's solidarity with the poor, marginalised and diseased. The notion of God's preferential option for the poor may sound liberative as a sermonising and prophetic idea but the jury is still out on whether as an operational driving force in the struggle against apartheid it has contributed something meaningful. The mystery of the connection and difference of God, human beings and the natural physical-organic environment underlying the 'co-responsibility and co-

accountability' of God, human beings and the natural physical-organic environment in any given context and situation has not been honoured in the notion of the preferential option of God for the poor. Any idea of reactivating the notion of God's preferential option for the HIV/AIDS sufferer and his/her suffering, endorses the nonsensical theologistic position that the responsibility and accountability in the HIV/AIDS struggle is solely in the hands of God.

The second angle of this study points to the sense making problem of the majority of churches with their theologies and philosophies in the past advocating the view that God, human beings and the natural physical-organic world are set apart either through sin and evil or just ontologically set apart. The bridge-building processes that out of consequence had to follow the setting apart strategies were constructed between God, human beings and the natural cosmic world and were symptomatic of the primordial problem of modern reductionisms in the theoretical and scientific world. Once something existentially difficult in ones everyday life is elevated to the level of a theoretical problem, the only way left is to solve the problem by theoretical and scientific means which in the modern era (1600-2000) nearly always meant that the problem has to be solved from and within a reductionist stance (van Niekerk 2006:368-371). Approaching the divides as a problem that set God, human beings and the natural cosmic world apart, traditional theology proceeds in the direction of either a theological bridge-building of an analogical nature such as is the case with Barth (1956) or metaphorical bridging process such as McFague (1982) attempted. In the modern era various of these approaches amount to a revelational bridge building process in which God Self is the graceful bridge builder through special revelation in the divinely inspired Scriptures and through general revelation in the thinking (reason and rationality) of human beings and in nature (the natural physical-organic cosmic processes).

The traditional theological bridge-building processes, whether philosophically or theologically constructed, bypass the nearly obvious existential assumption of the mystery of the simultaneity of the 'givenness' and 'being thereness' of the close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and the natural cosmic world. This mystery comes to expression in every field, mode and dimension of

human experience. Love as active and embodied love experience leads to an interactional pattern of love ranging from the pointer of love for God to that of love for one self, and from the pointer of love for the other human being to love for the physical-organic environment leads to an episode in time and context in space. Similarly, the foursome pointer pattern of God, one self, other human beings and the physical-natural environment takes turns to roll and evolve through believing (faith), thinking, feeling, apportioning justness, loving, imagining, verbalising, etc. as interactional series and patterns expressive of the mystery (van Niekerk 2006:368-371; 2009:42f).

What is to be regarded as a mystery, according to van Niekerk cannot be upgraded to the level of a problem in which the divides or the gaps between God, humanity and the natural cosmic world could out of philosophical and theological necessity be solved in a theoretical way through epistemological or divine revelational means. In terms of the notion of the mystery of the connection and difference between God, human beings and the natural world which cannot be solved by its elevation to that of a problem, van Niekerk views theological bridging efforts starting exclusively with God as theologism, bridging efforts starting exclusively with human beings as anthropocentrism or humanism and bridging efforts starting exclusively with the natural world as naturalism or cosmologism. Van Niekerk asserts:

“In our society many people do not regard the experience of the threesome, each in a separate avenue as a problem which has to be solved: either because the sense making procedure of experiencing the Godness of God in a separate divine and religious avenue, the humanness of being human in a separate human avenue and the naturalness of nature in a separate natural cosmic avenue is accepted as part of the sense making ‘logic’ of modern societies, or because the problem of three separate avenues of experience was solved long ago through a connection established by one of the partners in the threesome. In history the initiating and connecting agency between the three partners in many approaches was either God, or human beings, or the natural cosmos. The majority of these attempts foundered because the mystery of the simultaneous connection and otherness of God, human beings and cosmic nature was speculatively upgraded to the level of a problem that has to be solved through rationality and thinking, faith and believing or language and speaking. One cannot separate the experience of God, being human and nature into three distinct avenues with the aim of establishing the appropriate connection between

the avenues in a subsequent reflection procedure of rationality, faith or language. The acceptance of the mysterious connection and otherness of God, being human and nature in experiences of human beings militates against their separation.....In a sense the struggle since the Reformation of the 16th century between 'theologists', 'anthropocentrists' and 'cosmologists' clouded the issue of the mystery of the at-one-ment and at-other-ment of God, human beings and the natural world. The pre-eventuated setting apart of God, human beings and nature necessitates the bringing together through a bridging operation and process of either a theologistic neo-orthodoxy, or an anthropocentric humanising, or a natural cosmisation" (2006:368-9).

One has to make up one's mind whether the threesome of: God, humanity and the natural world, is to be approached in an exclusive or an inclusive sense:

Firstly, if a choice is made for the exclusivist approach of a pre-eventuated setting apart of God, human beings and nature, as centuries of theologians and philosophers actually did, the necessity is created of bringing them together through a bridging operation and process of either a theologistic neo-orthodox, or an anthropocentric humanising, or of natural cosmisation nature. In terms of the exclusivist approach, the dilemma referred to in the first sentence of this study is still forcibly emphasised.

Secondly, if one makes a choice for the inclusive acceptance of the mystery in which God, being human and nature are simultaneously connected and radically different in their realness in people's experience, one has taken the route in which the threesome of: God, human beings and the physical-organic environment, are experienced in each field, mode and dimension of experience. In this study done within the sphere of a perspective of faith as expression of people's awareness and theoretical experience of faith the threesome is taken up in the faith sense of the word.

Someone trying to clutch to the certainty of the traditional commitment of 'belief in God' in an exclusive sense has not received tuition in the school of life where a radical and all embracing commitment to God, oneself, other human beings and the natural physical world is being consistently maintained and sustained in daily life. The quadrilateral pattern of experience takes place continuously in our

everyday experience through the Holy Spirit in our experiential awareness of being continuously engaged in God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment towards the future (van Niekerk 2009:44). People adhering to the traditional doctrine of 'belief in God' express through such an exclusive partial commitment paradoxically an uncertainty, disclosing very few experiences of God in daily life. Exclusive experience of God in daily life amounts to the incarceration of the 'ism' of theologism (van Niekerk 2009:41f).

In our age, broadly speaking, the majority of people who call themselves theologians operate with the sense making approach of theologism. Though the main trajectories of Catholic and Orthodox churches through the ages have been operating with the main axiom of theologism, namely supernatural intervention of God in his own natural handiwork, the way theologism had been espoused in the **sola**-principles of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century which are also found in the theologies, philosophies and sense making approaches of various Catholics and Evangelicals.

The theologism of 16th century Calvinist Reformation can be captured through a listing of its main principles of **sola deo** - God alone is the *all-initiating agent* of everything in the world of human beings and nature; **sola fide** - faith alone is the organ through which and in which grace and the knowledge of God are *directly* received by human beings; **sola scriptura** – the Bible is the *only exploration area* where human beings meet God and where God's Word as God will for human beings is expressed in words; and **sola gratia** – only through the grace of God in Jesus Christ do human beings encounter God.

I am fully aware that the notions of **deo**, **fide**, **scriptura** and **gratia** qualified by the epithet **sola** derive from the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Though the composite phrase of **sola deo** has not been used in this specifically formulated way in the era of the Reformation, Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in both its 1536 and 1559 versions, page after page, could be underwritten with the well known saying **solī deo gloria** (to God alone the glory). Charles Partee (1977:6) asserts that Calvin's masterful manipulation of the usual procedures of logical analysis and reasoning gave rise to Calvin been often pictured as a strict

theo-logician. Though Partee is uncomfortable with the latter description of Calvin, his book on *Calvin and classical philosophy* (1977) is an apologetic exercise which actually emphasises and affirms the fact that Calvin is a theo-logician or theologian par excellence.

The sense making approach of theologism caught up in the highly problematic strategy of God's supernatural intervention in his own handiwork where God is already at work, demonstrates a similar reductionist tendency as humanism in which people are adhering to an exclusive human centred approach in their daily experience or cosmologism in which a nature centred approach in naturalistic, cosmologist and scientist ways is determining people's minds. An all-embracing sense making approach has no other way other than to operate with the conviction and confession of the mystery of the simultaneity of the close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and the natural world. No theological wiseacre attitude enables us to transcend the mystery through the construction of dogmas and doctrines as theological web designs which operate as the only constructs and schemes through which God is allowed to act as the living God in our daily experience.

A radical and all-embracing commitment has to do with the experience of the Godness of God, one's own and other people's humanness and the naturalness of the natural world in every nook and cranny, every corner and stretch of life through the mysterious workings of the Spirit of God (van Niekerk 2006:368). Setting and taking God, our humanity and nature apart is a superficial exercise and then trying to bring them together as churches and theologies attempted in many instances through analogies and metaphors is highly problematic.

1.2.3 The third problem-setting or angle of the study intersecting with the other two is being expressed as the full Gospel of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation interwoven with the main theme of sin and pain, evil and suffering and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The third problem-setting or angle revolves around the meandering events and processes of what van Niekerk terms the Commonwealth (Kingdom, Priesthood and Prophetdom, etc.) of God continuously expressed within the grand acts of God's *creation* and the creatureliness of the many universes, the *reconciliation* events of the cross, the tearing of the veil of the temple and the resurrection of Jesus, the *renewal* through God's life-giving Spirit of the whole of reality and the processes of pulling, drawing and fulfilling of everything towards the future *consummation and fulfilment* of the new heaven and the new earth (van Niekerk 2006:316).

Van Niekerk asserts modern human being's experiential awareness of the intrinsic multidimensional embeddedness of their humanness and the physical-organic environment in God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation is usually reductionist and one-sided or very vague. The grand acts of God are being rendered unworkable and impractical as sense making power and energy pointers in people's daily life-world by viewing them either as incarcerated doctrines in churches or by only focusing on one of the grand acts of God in their daily lives (2006:371).

The full story and full Gospel of the Commonwealth of God as intertwined and expressive of the four grand acts of God is not being served through a church, community of faith or fellowship group in which a quarter-, a half- or a three-quarter gospel is embodied and manifested. All in all the full gospel of the Commonwealth of God is not only directed to and embodied in communities of faith, but is also directed to and embodied in other societal institutions and organisations, thus every pocket and package, context and situation commonly regarded as unholy and holy, slime and manure, waste, sacred and perfect,

desecrated, filth, illness and wellness, mysteriously has to do with the Commonwealth of God and is mysteriously part of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment.

According to van Niekerk (2006:373):

“many churches and their theologistic spokespersons one-sidedly emphasise either a quarter, half, three-quarters or, rarely, a full gospel:

- a quarter-version of the foursome Gospel message amounts to an exclusive emphasising of either Jesus Christ (reconciliation) or the Holy Spirit (renewal) or God the creator (creation) or God the fulfiller of everything (consummation), or
- a half-version of the foursome Gospel message amounts to an exclusive emphasising of either creation (nature) and reconciliation (grace, re-creation), or reconciliation (Word = Jesus Christ) and renewal (Spirit), or renewal (Spirit) and reconciliation (Word = Jesus Christ), or reconciliation (Jesus Christ) and consummation (Apocalyptic/prophetic future events), or renewal (Spirit) and consummation (apocalyptic/prophetic future events), or
- a three-quarters version of the foursome Gospel message amounts to an exclusive emphasising of any three of the foursome grand acts of God, or
- a full gospel message is seldom encountered in church-centred divine or semidivine churches and the deliberations of their theologistic spokespersons.”

The mystery of the simultaneous connection and difference between God, human beings and the physical organic environment permeates our foursome awareness of being created (being thereness), being reconciled in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (being thus and thusness), being renewed through the Spirit (being active and actualness) and being involved in the processes and events directed to the future consummation and fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth (being this and whereteness) (van Niekerk 2006:371 – 373).

In line with this angle, words, concepts, beliefs and notions of emotions from different sense making approaches are gathered on sin and pain, evil and

suffering. The focus on the impact of sin and evil, stress and the idolising of various parts of life and their relational correspondence with sin and pain, evil and suffering is done at the hand of the third theoretical angle of the study namely the foursome processual framework of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation (redemption = cross and resurrection of Jesus), renewal (ongoing renewal of everything) and consummation and fulfilment towards the end (aim and goal) in which human beings and the physical-organic natural world are intrinsically and continuously involved.

The main point is that we make sense of these grand acts of God because of the involvement of human beings and the natural world in these grand acts. In our daily experience of our creatureliness, our involvement and engagement with sin, evil (the idolising of parts of creaturely reality) and stress, we have an inkling why reconciliation between God, being human and nature takes place, why there is an ongoing renewal process between God, being human and nature and where in a future directed process of fulfilment, God, being human and nature are directed towards the wholesomeness of the self.

The coherence and correlation between God's grand acts and human acts in daily life are demonstrated in the emergence of a five some awareness in the experience of a wholesome person with (i) an awareness of creatureliness (self-actualisation of creatureliness); (ii) and an awareness of sinful tendencies. These sinful tendencies cause damage to God, oneself, other people and nature which are in need of (iii) an awareness of a salvific and reconciliatory enactment impacting on the self of human beings through the power of the cross and liberative empowerment of the human self through the power of the resurrection, (iv) an awareness of being in a continuous renewal process through the renovating and renewal power of the Spirit of Pentecost, carrying and guiding (v) our awareness about the fulfilment and consummation of all things in the new heaven and the new earth anticipatory experience (van Niekerk 2006:315-420).

Few people are aware that when they pronounce with fanfare that 'Jesus is Lord!' or 'Jesus is the answer!' they are offering the groundwork of a quarter Gospel which flies not only in the face of Jesus being also Priest, Prophet, Messiah, etc

but also because of the sole emphasis exclusively on God's grand act of reconciliation. In the 20th century the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth with his extreme Jesus-centric view of the Lordship of God as spelled out in his *Church Dogmatics*, Volume 1, Parts 1 (1975) and 2 (1956) is the best known propagator of a quarter Gospel. God according to Barth has no other way of working in the world than in Jesus Christ as the sole revelation of God. On the other hand it goes without saying that a sole focus on the renewal work of the Holy Spirit suffers from a similar one-sidedness. Even the one-sided populist theology in charismatic circles focussing solely on God-as-Father of Jesus, in their worshipping, that God as fixed in the position of Father is not able to change into other positions such as friend, priest, prophet and lover. Such a fixated focus on the Father suffers from the one-sidedness of being a quarter Gospel. Deistic types of theology which operate with the notion of a creator God creating the universe out of nothing with intrinsic natural laws and regularities according to which the whole process is operatively running like a time clock is one of 18th century examples of a quarter Gospel. Commonly in a strong deistic approach God's acts of reconciliation (cross and resurrection of Jesus), renewal through the Holy Spirit and future consummation falls at the wayside. Reference to revivalist and end of the times theologies emerging in the 19th century USA complete the picture of quarter type Gospel views (Loughborough 1905; Knight 1993). The tackling of the HIV/AIDS pandemic from a quarter Gospel perspective increases the problem of dysfunctional disassociation of people's suffering from HIV/AIDS.

An example of a half Gospel view is to be found amongst older Reformed theologies working on the basis of God's grand act of creation and God's grand act of reconciliation in Christ as restoration in which creation is restored to its former glory after the 'historical interlude' of Adam and Eve's falling into sin (Genesis 3) which according to this view permeated and placed the whole of creation in the grip of original sin (*peccatum originale*). The notion of the paradise state of creation before the 'historical' event of human beings falling into sin is viewed in these types of Reformed theology Grath 2001:59-76) as that of the garden of life in which the political, social, economic, ecological and spiritual dimensions were called into being. The notion of creation in the grip of sin makes it

therefore necessary for creation to be restored to its initial glory through God's act of redemption, reconciliation or salvation. Though emphases were placed on the Spirit's work of renewal and the events and happenings of fulfilment at the end of time the grand acts of creation and reconciliation as restoration of creation to its original state and between them the historical interlude of falling into sin determined nearly every doctrine and proposition of such a theology. Contrary to this view the notion of sin, evil and suffering portrayed by Genesis 3 is exemplary of what happens to every human being and has to be worked out and linked with all of God's grand acts (Kraus 1970:44-45). Because human beings and the natural cosmic world are intrinsically involved through God's mysterious initiative in God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation (redemption), renewal and fulfilment, sin, evil and suffering are mysteriously but intrinsically part of God's foursome grand acts.

The well known Reformed theologian GC Berkouwer (1971:1-3), has given expression to the mystery of evil in the processes of the world by stating that our only answer to the question from where evil has come (*unde malum?*), could be that we do not know. Drawing links and correlations between sin and evil on the one hand, and illness, HIV/AIDS and even death on the other is very easy when Genesis 3 is viewed as a historical narrative rendition of how it happened instead of viewing Genesis 3 as an imaginative portrayal of how sin, evil and suffering happens in every human being's life. When the notion of falling into sin with the concomitant experience of evil is happening in every human being's life as well within the whole array of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment links and connections with illness, HIV/AIDS and evil are very difficult to establish, not to say nearly impossible. In various theological traditions it is accepted that the phenomenon of death is part of God's creation and that sin and evil placed a burden on meaningful dying. What has been seen as the curse on death and the sting of death is removed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's main reconciliatory tools to humanity and the natural world.

Basically speaking sin and evil are damages done to God, human beings and the physical-organic environment. This means that the relationship between God,

human beings and the physical organic environment has broken down. The whole notion of sin and falling into sin means that falling into sin as in the paradise portrayal of Adam and Eve happens in every human being's and group's lives. The most important perspective is that while sin and evil on the one hand, have to be linked to the threesome of: God, human beings and the physical-organic environment, in every period and context of history, on the other hand, sense-making views on sin and evil are to be obtained through people's experiential involvement in God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment.

The notion of sin and evil as damage being done to God, human beings and the natural cosmic world, as well as the notion of the separation and breaking down of the multiple relationships between God, human beings and the natural world due to sin and evil is one of the investigative pointers which carries the investigation revolving around HIV/AIDS in different contexts.

The full gospel of the Commonwealth of God is not only directed and embodied in communities of faith but is directed and embodied in other societal institutions and organisations (Van Niekerk 2006:372f).

1.2.4 The fourth problem-setting or angle of the study revolves around the sense making approaches of human beings towards texts, theories, natural processes and human doings in regard to HIV/AIDS

Suffering arises not only from so called worldly issues, but also from and between sense making approaches which are termed religions or religious persuasions – even between different groupings within the same religion. Even the way that we approach and make use of the Bible as Holy Scripture demands a comprehensive sense making decision from us. Wars and conflicts caused by religions and the reading of their Holy Books result not only in differences of how pain and suffering of human beings should be viewed but also in different approaches towards the reading of their Holy Books.

Through the investigation, research and writing process an awareness of three basic approaches regarding texts, theories, natural processes and human doings are being cultivated and referred to. They have been termed *mirroring-fundamentalist*, *interpretational-hermeneutical* and *consensible-negotiation* approaches (van Niekerk 2009: 277).

In our day and age, the challenge of how texts, theories, natural processes and human doings are used, implemented and applied in the lives of human beings and the world around them is of critical importance in discussing the notions of evil and suffering in the multi-dimensional multi-cultural and multi-religious world we live. During the modern era two trajectories emerged in which two opposing approaches with several accompanying hybrid forms took shape: in conjunction with an approach in which the main aim to **mirror** a text, a theory, processes of nature or human doings in the life world of human beings; an opposing approach in which the main aim is to **interpret** a text, a theory, processes of nature or human doings for a set purpose in the life world of human beings. In the 20th century a third approach emerged, namely that of the **negotiation** of texts, theories, natural processes and human doings drawing the valid elements of mirroring and interpretation into a differential and integrative approach in which the most noticeable features of the mirroring and interpretation paradigms are recognised and acknowledged (van Niekerk 2009:277-296).

The *first approach* is the mirroring fundamentalist approach

“...is descriptive of all sorts of mirrorisationism, whether it been crude mirroring approaches, as in fundamentalism, or enlightened mirroring approaches concerning texts of the Bible, holy books or other literature, theories of different sciences, natural processes or human doings. The text (or Th, Np, Hudo) (Abbreviations: Th = theories, Np = natural processes and Hudo = human doings) must be re-imaged, re-mirrored, mimicked or emulated when applied in some context of life and the world. In a fundamentalist mirroring mindset, scientific theories, processes of nature and human doings and actions receive the same fundamentalist treatment of imitation and mirroring in people’s lives and the surrounding world as in the case of written texts.” (van Niekerk 2009:277).

Regarding Holy Books the mirroring approach views every paragraph, sentence, word and every letter as a divinely inspired little mirror which God mirrored into the biblical texts and which can only be re-mirrored in the lives of human beings. The three main words of the fundamentalist mirroring approach are divine mirroring, re-mirroring by human beings and appropriation of the mirroring in someone's life. Because of this assumption, nearly all approaches in the Christian world operating with the notion of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible as the word of God are of the mirroring fundamentalist making.

Speaking about fundamentalism as a mirroring approach is not speaking about a cult or a church but about a sense making approach in people's life-worlds cutting and intersecting through churches, societies, religions. It has also been found amongst various early modern approaches of natural sciences where fundamental recording and mirroring of natural processes has been viewed as of the highest scientific expression. Fundamentalism in the mirroring sense of texts, theories, natural processes and human doings cuts through large segments of the Christian evangelical as well as the Muslim world. Mirroring fundamentalism as a sense making approach does not necessarily imply extremism, backwardness, confrontation, intolerance, fanaticism, rigidity, narrow-mindedness, militancy, radicalism and unyielding aggressiveness which in many instances is unfairly ascribed to Christian and Muslim fundamentalism (Elshahed 1992:61-69).

We have to take a few steps back to the 16th century Reformation to be able of describing a fuller picture of the factors that contributed to the modern trajectory in which people have been overly interested in mirroring and recording as the main approach of extracting sense, meaning, happiness and the final goal of a blessed life.

Earlier reference was made to four important avenues of Protestant sense making reflection:

- Firstly, it has been said that the theologism of 16th century Reformation can be captured through a discussion of their main principles of **sola deo** – God alone is the *all-initiating agent* of everything in the world of human beings

and nature. The principle of God alone as all-initiating agent denotes the emphasis of the sovereignty of God as seen by many modern followers of especially the Calvinist trajectory of the 16th century Reformation (Meeter 1930:46-62; especially 58). Viewed from the human side of the Calvinist scheme, the sovereignty of God can only be expressed by giving God alone the glory in every part of their lives.

- Secondly, the Reformers operated with an overarching awareness that a human being could contribute nothing towards his/her own salvation: no penances, sacrifices or anything human could reconcile a human being with God. The salvation of a human being is solely and exclusively the effect of the grace of God without any contribution of a human being. This notion of salvation without human contribution has been expressed as the principle of **sola gratia** (grace alone).
- Thirdly, a human being is sharing the salvific and redemptive grace of God only through faith in Jesus Christ. The third principle was formulated in short as that of **sola fide** (faith alone).
- Fourthly, independent study of the Bible – thus not prescribed views by the church - coupled with the demand that the Bible itself - not the doctrines of the church - is to be viewed as the acid test of the truth about God and God's relationship with human beings and the natural world – expressed the principle of **sola scriptura** (scripture alone).

Shortly after the Reformation it became clear that the undergirding principle of Scripture alone had to be grounded in the domain of common sense and rational thinking. A two pronged question determined the debate shortly after the 16th century period namely; on what grounds are the doctrines of the church to be rejected as the final truth and on what grounds can it be asserted that Scripture is the only acid test of the truth. Calvin and the Calvinist tradition as major contributing co-makers of the interpretation-hermeneutical approach asserted that Scripture has the authoritative position because it has been inspired by the Spirit of God. While it is like that, people have no right to formulate any theological

statement contrary to Scripture. Scripture according to Calvin is the region where the living words of God are being heard by the believers (Institutes 1559: Book III, Ch 7, 1). Calvin also said that the Word could do nothing without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore important to state that Calvin did not equate Scripture with the Word of God though Scripture is the only place where one can expect to hear the voice of God. Calvin's famous paradoxical exposition of faith is that unless faith is granted to a human person such a person cannot believe in Christ, or paradoxically, to faith is ascribed those things which prepare us to receive those things (Institutes 1559: Book III, Ch 2, 33). In a similar sense the workings of the Word of God in Scripture are paradoxically viewed: to the inspired words of God the Spirit in Scripture are ascribed those things which the Holy Spirit prepares us illuminatingly to receive as inward testimony of the Spirit. Calvin view is that as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, similarly the Word does find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit (Institutes 1559: Book I, Ch 7, 4).

In the 16th century the Reformers brought two questions back to the debate: firstly in what sense has the Scripture authority and who has given authority to Scripture and secondly how and in what way is the Bible inspired by God? The first question has been consistently answered as that Scripture has its authority in itself through the Holy Spirit and not through the church. The second question has been eloquently answered by Heppe in his 1861 Compendium:

“The record of the canonical books came into existence by the special and direct activity of the Holy Spirit, which urged the authors to write, gave them the thoughts and words they were to record, and preserved them from any error in their writing. In other words, the canonical writings were in content and in form inspired in their authors by the Holy Spirit. At the root of the original Reformed doctrine of inspiration lay the distinction between, at the root of the later Church doctrine the identification of the concepts ‘Word of God’ and ‘Holy Spirit’. Hence, for Calvin the authority of Holy Scripture rested purely on the fact that it reports upon real acts of God in revelation. In other words, it is the original document of revelations, which were followed before their recording and were for a time transmitted orally.” (Heppe-Bizer 1978:16)

As early as the end of the 16th century the view that the authors of Scripture were inspired in their writing down of God's real acts of revelation changed amongst

some second generation reformers to a view in which the words themselves in Scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit (Berkhof 1996:145). The idea strongly favoured by advocates of the latter approach that authors of Scripture employed their own style and vocabulary was very seldom of operational use because the words of the authors were 'breathed' by God. The notion of God's 'breathing' as permeation of the words of Scripture carries the notion of divinised human words of Scripture as divine mirrored words each of which carries the imprint of the Spirit of God self. Thus, each singular word in Scripture is a word of God. Therefore one only has to cover a short distance to equate Scripture as a bundle of God's mirror-like infallible and inerrant words with the whole of Scripture as the Word of God.

While Catholics needed the church as the overarching authority of Scripture and Calvin grounds the authority of Scripture in both the inspiration by the Holy Spirit of the authors of Scripture, as recorders of God's revelational acts, and the illuminative inspiration by the Holy Spirit of the believing readers of Scripture. Mirroring fundamentalism founds the authority of Scripture on the divine characterisation of Scripture's words as infallible and inerrant mirror-like words of God. Karl Barth somewhere aptly described such an approach as the using of Scripture as a paper-pope people could refer to when in need of an infallible word of God. The words written down in Scripture are therefore infallible - and inerrant. Increasingly during the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries the term 'inerrant' allied to the initial term 'infallible' emerged as characterisation of the words of Scripture in the writings of orthodox Protestant theologians and a new breed of theologians and pastors of evangelical, revivalist, prophetic and charismatic movements (Harris 1998:1-11). Many of these theologians and pastors viewed 'inerrant' as a non-omissible allied term to 'infallible' belonging to the same sense making divine mirroring imprints 'breathed' by the Spirit of God (Harris 1998:14-15, 59-60). In the modern era debates took place as to whether the words of Scripture are only infallible or are in terms of their divine nature both infallible and inerrant (Barr 1980:73). More than any other approach mirroring fundamentalism in its use of words of Scripture as divine mirroring-like words of God is mainly responsible for the strict equation between Scripture and the Word of God that haunted conservative evangelical Christianity for the past centuries.

The *second approach* can be termed interpretationism as the catchword for interpretation and hermeneutical approaches. These approaches boil down to what and how the interpreter or group of interpreters critically and/or historically *understands* a text, theory, natural process or human doing as actually and really saying, portraying and signifying meaning, their *explication and explanation* of what is 'actually'/'really' said, portrayed and signified in the text, theory, natural process and human doing and their *application* in people's lives. The basic idea which openly or tacitly crops up in the majority of interpretation and interpretationist approaches is nearly always what a text (Th, Np, Hudo) is 'actually'/'really' saying, portraying, signifying or expressing in truth and in reality (van Niekerk 2009:284). The interpretation-hermeneutical approaches are

“commonly being viewed as the real opponent of crude and enlightened mirroring approaches. Interpretation of the text of the Bible, holy books, texts of science and literature, scientific theories, processes of nature, human doings and actions, in the broadest sense of the word, is the essence of this approach.” (van Niekerk 2009:278).

Regarding Holy Books, the interpretation approach views the whole text of the Bible as an organ of revelation, thus as the Word of God. The Word of God in the interpretational sense is not a composition of all the words in the Bible taken together as divine spectacles or words of God as is generally accepted by the fundamentalist-mirroring approaches. The authors, composers and compilers of the biblical texts were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the organic revelation of God, through the meandering way of the Kingdom of God executed in and through the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment recorded in Scripture. The moment someone regards the notion of 'inspiration' as that every paragraph, sentence, word and every letter as being inspired by the Holy Spirit the entry into the mirroring fundamentalist world has already begun. The interpretation approach operates with the idea that the Bible as a whole is organically inspired.

The impulse given by especially Calvin in emphasising the inspiration of the authors of Scripture over the words of Scripture steered and set the trend for the interpretation-hermeneutic approach in which the interest revolves around the actual sense and meaning of Scriptural texts as well as the sense and meaning of

the historical background of the texts of Scripture (Institutes 1559: Book I, Ch 7, 4). In the 18th and especially the 19th century people studying Scripture encountered several problems regarding the question of the actual and historical sense and meaning of Scriptural texts (Kraus1969:80-94). Sense making problems piled up and increased in a multiple sense in a comparison of especially the results of the fundamentalist mirroring approach with the new emerging trend of modern sense making actuality and historical-critical construction of the background of the texts as well as taking the modern scientific views of the period into account (Kraus1969:95-103).

In the 18th and 19th century it became clear that Scripture not only uses different styles of writing but in many instances does not report in the same way about certain detail (Kraus 1970:367-396). According to Mathew, chapter 5, Jesus called his disciples and addressed them in the manner of a sermon on the mount. According to Luke, chapter 6, Jesus descended from the mount and he enunciated amongst a crowd what he had to say in the manner of a sermon on the plain. According to Matthew Jesus said: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' (Mt 5:6) and according to Luke Jesus said: 'Blessed are the poor' (Lk 6:20). According to the book of Samuel, God stood up against Israel and incited David to count the people (2 Sam 24:1) while in Chronicles it was Satan who stood up against Israel and incited David to count Israel (1Chron 21:1). According to Mathew, Judas died by hanging himself and the priests bought a field as burial place for foreigners (Mt 27:5-8) while in Act Judas bought a field where he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out (Acts 1:18). One can add more examples but these are enough to emphasise that the modern actual sense making and historical critical investigations into the sense and meaning of the texts of Scripture increasingly underscored the role and function of the interpretation-hermeneutical approach.

The interpretation-hermeneutical approach in the Protestant world created several problems. One of these problems is that the idea of the recording of the organic revelation of God through the writers, composers and compilers of the biblical texts has been viewed as directed directly at us here in the 21st century. What Paul

has written to the Romans and to the Corinthians in their contexts are viewed deep down as actually directed to us. Thus, we have to understand what Paul is saying for instance to the group of Christians in Corinthians, we have to explain then what he was saying and we have to apply our understanding and explication of the Word of God. The interpretation approach with all that it has contributed to the study of the Bible is highly subjective. We have to admit that the fundamentalist-mirroring approach on the other hand fares worse but fundamentalists strongly assert that Paul's words directed at the Corinthians are directed at us for us to accept and not to interpret in terms of our current assumptions. Fundamentalists accept what Paul is saying and refrain from any interpretation of his words. At least that is the pretended approach on the surface.

The three main words of the interpretation approach is *understanding* of what the inspired author, composer or compiler of the text is actually saying, *explanation* and *application* in someone's life of what is actually being said in the text. Because of this assumption, nearly all approaches in the Christian world operating with the notion of interpretation of the organically inspired Bible are viewed as liberal by the fundamentalist mirroring approaches. In the 20th century, it became increasingly clear that the interpretation-hermeneutical approach in its threesome phases of 'understanding→ explanation→ application' ran into real problems which elicited even talk of a crisis in the house of interpretation.

In the *third approach* of sensible negotiation, the sense making view and experience embodied in a text, theory, natural process and human doing is sensibly dealt with on a similar level to the sense making view and approach of the one doing the negotiation with the text (Th, Np, Hudo). An interchange and exchange between the two sense-making views and experiences percolates and fuses both sense making views and experiences into a compromise (co-promise) design from where clues, guidelines and yardsticks can in sensible negotiatory sense be extracted and taken over by other people in their own text and theory formation and their description of natural processes and human doings.

The main framework of a sensible negotiation process with the Scripture operates against the backdrop of two assumptions.

- The first assumption comprises a five some awareness as a wholesome person his/her creatureliness, an awareness of his/her sinful tendencies causing damage to God, oneself, other people and nature, a salvific and reconciliatory enactment of oneself through the redeeming power of the cross and liberative empowerment through the power of the resurrection, an awareness of the renovating and renewal power of the Spirit of Pentecost, carrying and guiding the process of the five some awareness in experiences of fragments and moments of meaning in our present life in an anticipatory sense about the consummation of all things in the new heaven and the new earth.
- The second assumption is that a sense making God-life-world approach embodied and expressed in and through a book, chapter and verse of the Bible, does not have more of the Spirit of God than my, him or her sense making God-life-and-world approach as people of the 21st century. In our negotiation between two sense making views – that of the Bible in a particular text and ours in our situation today – a Spirit-filled negotiation process from both sides takes place (van Niekerk 2009: 289).

According to van Niekerk (2006:374-75) the experience of the togetherness and difference of God, human beings and the natural physical environment eventuates in a myriad of happenings of holiness in daily life through the mysterious operations of the Holy Spirit. Therefore as human beings living in the era of the Spirit in which the Spirit of God as life-giving and renewing Spirit is the driver and champion of the processes of human beings and of the natural world, the Holy Spirit opens up to us our involvement and engagement in the four grand acts of God.

1.2.5 The fifth problem-setting or angle of the study revolves around a God-human-nature view and approach in which God, human beings and nature in their own way espouse through the mystery of their

togetherness and difference a wholesome multi-coloured and multi-layered multidimensionality in regards to HIV/AIDS

The fifth problem-setting or angle of the study revolves around the acceptance of a God-human-nature view in which it makes increasingly sense to accept that God, human beings and nature in their own way espouse in their togetherness and difference a wholesome multidimensionality which is multi-coloured, multi-layered and multi-approachable (van Niekerk 2006:375).

Mysteriously, through and in what is regarded as unholy and sinful, holy and meaningful nooks of people's experience and unclean and evil, clean and healthy crannies of society God's Spirit embodies and participates in new pockets and packages, new contexts and localisations of close togetherness and real differences of God as multidimensional God being involved with multidimensional human beings and multidimensional cosmic worlds.

In accepting the mystery of the simultaneity of the togetherness and difference of God, human beings and nature and by accepting that notions such as God, human beings or humanity, the natural cosmic world, reality, freedom, religion, science or truth belong to a group of generic and limiting notions in the experience of human beings, one is also accepting that one is accepting simultaneously that everyone of these notions could only be accessed in a very particular way from and in the context one is experiencing and reflecting about such a generic notion. The generic notion goes with the type and the experiential context in which the reflection takes place. To explain and reflect on generic notions in a general and generic way is pure speculation and amount to speculative essence-seeking and scholastic and modernist construction of substances and basic natures in one's reflection. To say it in another way, a general or limiting notion cannot be approached in a general way but only be approximated in terms of a specific and particular field, mode or dimension of experience.

One of the biggest challenges of sense making God-human-nature views underlying classical, modern and post-modern theologies, philosophies and

sciences is the strategy of tackling general and generic notions in general and generic ways while they can only be approximated in particular and concrete ways.

A first example is when God is approached in a very general sense as being God, a super-experiential general domain is created which is carried by the assumption that one is talking about God as God-Self loosened from our human experience and the physical-organic environment. In this theologistic domain, questions about who and what God's essential being and nature is, are reflected on and answered in a very general way. When one looks deeper and wider a striking feature of these answers are that they are given usually from a very particular and specific stance within a particular field, domain or dimension of experience. In classical theology, the main avenue of talking about God was firstly the acceptance of the soul of a human being as a thinking and rational soul in which a part of God had been inserted through creation, and which is secondly opened-up by God to grasp and touch God through a theo-thinking, theo-gnostic or theo-logical way. In the modern era since the 16th century especially Protestant churches and theologians have been attempting to open up God's nature through the modern concept of revelation.

Several of the current pantheistic (everything is God), panentheistic (God is in everything) or other problematic types of God-friendly '-istic' views, are all attempts to emphasise the closeness of God to human beings and the physical-organic natural world. The general way of loosening God from God's own handiwork and then trying to build analogical or metaphorical bridges between God, human beings and the natural world, whether it is done through rationality and thinking or faith and belief, remains part of the highly abstract class of reflective experiences.

In a general way many theologians still say 'God is love'. If one asks a question as to whether 'God is faith and belief' an amazing silence greets us. Either it is unheard of, or it has never occurred to someone, that there might be human beings who experience God, faith, trust and belief from the position of human beings in the grip of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment in certain situations and contexts of their lives. Furthermore, what about

God's feelings and empathy, justness and apportioning of justness and joy and suffering? Concrete situations and contexts are defined and determined by the main emphasis of experience at a certain stage and within a particular context through which the quadrilateral pattern of experience of God, oneself, other human beings and the natural environment are running. Traces, clues and hues of God's faith arise in the quadrilateral pattern of believing God, oneself, other human beings and the physical organic environment. Similarly, traces, clues and hues of God's love, justness, feelings and imagination are set free when the quadrilateral pattern is expressed as loving, apportioning justness, feeling or imagining God, oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic environment. The Bible gives us clues from other people's experience about God, human beings and the natural world from a diverse set of eras. A good example is in the letters of 1 and 2 John in which God, human beings and the natural world are described in terms of love. And again in Romans 1-5 Paul describes God, human beings and the natural world mainly in terms of faith and belief. If we want to make sense of John and Paul in these letters we should not place love and faith as opposites in a rigid oppositional 'either...or' way but be open to a multidimensional 'both...and' of speaking about God.

Holtzen (2008:4) in his groundbreaking thesis *Dei Fidei: a relational theological approach to the faith of God* asserts that his task is to show that

"God is not a being above faith, but that God is a being of faith; a being who genuinely believes, hopes, trusts, and even doubts for these acts are necessary for relationship in its fullest; a relationship seeking to foster communion or mutual fellowship between God, creation, and creature."

One-sided reductionist theologies of modernity (Sugden 1994:231) in the fundamentalist as well as the liberal interpretational sense make it nearly impossible to speak in a relaxed way about the multidimensionality of God in a 'both...and' way in which God is a loving, believing, feeling, just and imaginative God. The main reason is that every modern and late modern theologian makes a choice as to which dimension is the main dimension of God under which all other dimensions of God are to be subsumed instead of viewing all dimensions of God in a comprehensive multidimensional way.

In the 20th century, an amazing number of relational and processual theologies emerged. According to Hardy, God reveals himself as a kind of 'energy event' in and amongst people in the natural cosmic world. Hardy explains it as follows:

“God is what...can be called an 'energy event' constituted by a concentration of well-being in relationship which is inseparable from the extending of this relationship with his people in the world, and from the expression of his well-being in that relationship. The world he has brought into being and maintained is therefore a relational one...His purpose is to move toward fuller and fuller relationship with it and all that comprises it, bringing it to its fullness by sharing his own fullness with it.” (1996: 28f).

In terms of the notion of the multidimensionality of God, human beings and the natural world, the problematic side of relational and process theologies is that under the terms process and relationship all other terms such as love, faith, thinking and energy are subsumed. The main problem of various process and relational types of theology is that they are not aware of the reductionist operational strategy of qualifying the relationship between God and human beings either as a processual relationship of love, thought, engagement or energy.

Relational and processual theologies seem to de-emphasise and underplay the natural worldly reality as a partner in the mystery of the connection and the difference of God, human beings and the natural world. The main reason is that they need the natural worldly reality in providing the sphere and the dynamic conceptual tools of a processual and relational ontology as the basic undercarriage in which the interactive process between God and human beings is reflected on theologically.

Viewing and reflecting on classic Catholic and Protestant approaches towards the threesome of: God, human beings and the natural world, against the backdrop of a strong multidimensional approach unlocks a history of one-dimensional reductionist portrayals of God, human beings and the natural world. Early Catholic and later Protestant followers attempted to describe the relationship between God, human beings and the natural world in terms of an analogy of thinking and rationality following the very old tradition of the rational soul qualification 'a human being's soul' (*anima rationalis*). In 20th century Protestantism, Barth (1961 and

1956) set the reductionist notion of an analogy of faith between God, human beings and the natural world encapsulated in Jesus Christ as the main archetype and prototype of how the relationship should be worked out. In various modern Catholic traditions, e.g. a notion of a reductionist analogy and correspondence of love between God, human beings and the natural world were emphasised (Przywara 1932).

In spite of the overbearing one-dimensional approaches, through the ages, the idea of God, human beings and the natural world being truthfully and dynamically multidimensional never fully died down. The 20th century idea of a relational and processual interactive relationship between God and human beings operative in various process theologies is an attempt to describe God and human beings in terms of multidimensional relationships. The notion of multiple relations between God and human beings has been worked out, on the one hand by covenantal theologians of 17th century Reformed orthodoxy who operationalised multiple contracts or covenantal relations between God and human beings such as covenants of nature, grace and fulfilment (Heppe 281-301). Where 17th century orthodoxy missed the boat of meaningful faith reflection, is to view faith as a supernatural tool and reason as a natural philosophical tool in analogising constructions of the relationship between God and human beings. By removing the graceful God from the sphere of philosophical reason they were not able to work with matrix-like patterns of the mysterious connection and otherness of the multidimensionality of God, human beings and nature. On the other hand, 20th century process theology has been subsuming every process and relation between God and human beings under the heading of process and relation (Whitehead 1926, Sanders 1998). This nearly tautological assertion expresses the reductionist access of knowledge of the connection between God and human beings which goes beyond the simultaneous flip-side of the mystery that God's 'being of existence' is not the same as the 'being of existence' of human beings and the 'being of existence' of nature.

One has to accept that the closest we can get to the multidimensional closeness and difference of the Godness of the living God, the humanness of actual human

beings and the naturalness of real nature is through daily and continuous awareness that God is multidimensional, human beings are multidimensional and the natural cosmic world is multidimensional. On the one hand, we experience the principle of multidimensionality through foursome patterns of experiencing God, oneself, other human beings and the natural world. On the other hand, our involvement in the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment presents us with enough sense making clues and ideas regarding the connection and the difference the forms of multidimensionality of God, human beings and nature are manifesting.

God is not a God of the gaps who acts on and intervenes in the lives of human beings and the processes of the natural world from outside but instead is involved and engaged in a multidimensional and intra-human way in human beings and a multidimensional intra-natural way in the natural cosmic world through trust, love, passion, words, thoughtfulness and goodness expressed in God's continuous creation, renewal, reconciliation and fulfilment of human beings and the natural world. In a sense the existence of human beings and the natural cosmic world are drawn into these grand acts of God as 'partners' of God.

Generally speaking, being involved in the grand acts of God in many instances without being aware of it, human beings seem to have a universal desire to make sense of their place in the natural world, trying to make sense of processes and situations in their own lives regarding goodness, joy, celebration and wellbeing as well as evil, suffering, death and life after death. In our current global world, where in most social contexts it is no longer fashionable to speak about God or something overpoweringly big, many people still have a sense of God or the overpoweringly big something, even if it is part of the arrogant atheist debate in science that for example God is called a delusion of the human mind by Richard Dawkins (2006:31). In most religions the notion of an 'Other', a Transcendent Being plays a significant role. The three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity all acknowledge a supreme transcendent being – the God of Abraham, one can also observe that the core of the Hindu faith is to attain oneness with

Brahman and the Buddhist goal is to attain transcendent nirvana. Ward (2007:180) states:

“Throughout the world there are many sets of beliefs and practices whose primary concern is to relate humans to a spiritual being, in a conscious way, for the sake of obtaining good....”

A reading and negotiation with the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures affirms this belief of what the older Reformed theology called a general revelation or revelation through the grand act of God’s creation of everything. According to an approach of Scripture as special and God’s grand act of creation as general revelation, there is in the general revelational sense of the word a general awareness of the Almighty by whatever name the various groups attach to him. Although God revealed and is continuously revealing God self in the natural world, in Scripture as well as through the experiences of human beings when they experience ‘encounters with God’, it is evident that the understanding of God varies between different cultures, between human beings in the same culture and even within close-knit families.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

1.3.1 Chapter 1

In chapter one the parameters and perimeters of this study are set out, which is to say that the basic problem statement is formulated and expressed, the different threads or angles of the study are defined and the complex matrix of their intersections defined. The extent of suffering due to HIV/AIDS is contrasted with other causes of suffering globally and is not treated in isolation but the responses and focus of suffering in the current global socio-political environment are comprehensively discussed.

The five major angles of the study are formulated and discussed; these are:

- The first angle of the thesis revolves around sense making God-human-world approaches towards dimensions and phenomena of sin and pain, evil and suffering in the light of the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in the current inter- and multi- worlds of cultures, religions and faiths.
- The second angle of the thesis presents the analysis of the underlying question being asked of where do sin and pain, evil and suffering fit into the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and nature (the physical-organic cosmic world).
- The third angle of the study intersecting with the other two is expressed as the full Gospel of God's grand acts of: creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation, interwoven with the main theme of sin and pain, evil and suffering and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- The fourth angle of the study revolves around current sense making approaches towards texts, theories, natural processes and human doings.
- The fifth angle of the study revolves around the notion that God, human beings and the natural world espouse in their togetherness and difference each in their own way a multi-coloured and multi-layered multi-dimensionality.

This chapter also considers the importance and purpose of the study, establishing the significant impact of HIV/AIDS on every sector of human life and provides compelling motivation for the need to increase the efficacy of interfaith co-operation in relieving the oppressive suffering which HIV/AIDS brings to human beings, particularly those who are already oppressed by poverty.

1.3.2 Chapter 2

Chapter Two explores the concepts of humanness or being human in relation to, or in interaction with, the worldview of a human being in perceiving the role of God and the interaction of these interrelationships with the natural cosmos. A significant influence on many modern religions is found in Zoroastrianism and the development of the dualistic base of this monotheistic belief system is discussed along with the later more diversely influenced move to a pantheistic worldview. The significant influence of Zoroastrianism on early Jewish thought and Zoroastrianism's parallels with Christianity and Islam are noted. The influence of the overtly dualistic nature of Zoroastrianism on various faiths and worldviews being established, the text goes on to consider the interaction and exchange between dualism and the conceptualisation of the responses to suffering. This section also considers the critical aspects of how a human being interacts with the holy books which pertain to the human being's belief system. Comments are made on fundamental mirroring, interpretation or sensible negotiation with holy texts building on the points of departure established in chapter One. The section also includes an exploration and deliberation of some modern theodicies as part of the interplay between being human and encountering evil and suffering.

Section two goes on to appraise the interplay between concepts of evil and suffering and a dualistic view of God. The significant tension between the belief in a loving God and the very existence of evil and suffering presents many questions of great relevance to human beings who are in sensible (sensible) negotiation with their holy texts in the monotheistic religions. Various theories which try to approach the relationship and dynamic between God-human beings-natural world and suffering are discussed. In particular, ideas on the influence or effect of suffering on God are set out. This is followed by the discussion of ideas for and against and about God's involvement in his creation and the interplay of these ideas on evil and suffering which leads to deliberation on the implications of a dualistic worldview on the relationship between God and Satan in respect of evil and suffering from the viewpoint of the monotheistic faith systems. Developing from this, the ideas of evil and suffering and the dualistic nature of human beings,

are drawn out and set in contrast within various faith systems and worldviews. The significant relevance of the early chapters of Genesis is discussed and considered in negotiation with these perspectives. A further node in the matrix of God – human beings – nature – evil and suffering is the phenomenon of people operating with a dualism between the impact of natural events on suffering and God's involvement in these natural events.

This chapter concludes with the integration of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation with the notions of God's interaction with human beings and the natural world in regard to evil and suffering. The interplay of evil and suffering within the context of holy books and the diversity of cultures and religions are discussed.

1.3.3 Chapter 3

Chapter three begins with an overview of the beliefs and praxis of various religions regarding stewardship and human involvement in causing and reacting to evil and suffering. A review is done of the interactions between various God-human-world views as to how they make sense of the notional pair: evil/suffering and goodness/blessings. While monotheistic religions tend to group together a large area of overlap is observed with pantheistic or idealistic religions. The dynamic between stewardship and HIV/AIDS is considered and a possible relationship between negative stewardship ethics in a religious system and lack of care for AIDS victims is shown to be invalid. Moreover, the major religions, including traditional African religion and nationalism, the churches and cultures are considered as sense making orientations of which the responsibility and accountability towards the HIV/AIDS pandemic have to be evaluated.

Evil and suffering in the holy books of the various religions are considered and religions are seen as sense making approaches in order to understand God – human beings – nature. Regardless of how human beings read and interpret, add meaning, reflect or negotiate their holy books and belief systems in daily life the crux of the matter is that religions are very powerful and potentially positive forces

in societies that could bring greater cooperation in striving for the reduction of suffering from HIV/AIDS and the enhancement of the wellness and wellbeing levels of sufferers.

1.3.4 Chapter 4

Chapter four is grappling with various modern and post-modern interactions with evil and suffering against the background of globalism, pluralism and fundamentalist responses of some groups. The contributions of key thinkers and theologians in these matters are reflected upon which leads to comments on God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation as self revelation and the overlap and otherness between worldviews, faiths and cultures.

This chapter continues with a discussion on the radical position of Ecclesiastes 3 and the relevance of the *ôlām* principle is drawn out in relation to the distinctiveness of human beings in the cognisance of their own experience for eternity which God has placed in the hearts of human beings. This is followed by an evaluation of the dynamic of evil and suffering in 2 Corinthians where the paradoxical situation of joy in suffering is discussed in relation to the comments of Paul and the relevance for human beings today. The concept of sharing in Christ's suffering is discussed in terms of various Christian God-human-world views and this leads into the consideration of the coherence of God's works by means of suffering in the realms of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. The chapter concludes with an appraisal of the tendency of suffering such as that caused through HIV/AIDS in order to raise the awareness of human beings to their own, and others, sinful tendencies.

1.3.5 Chapter 5

The consideration of the effect or influence of suffering on closeness with God is a key aspect of this chapter. The warp and weft of suffering; worldview; closeness and separation from God, other human beings and nature are woven into a

chequered cloth of sense-making orientations. A significant portion of this chapter sets in place important foundational information regarding the technical background relating to viruses and bacteria and the interplay between religion in praxis and the daily life of human beings in terms of viruses and HIV. This leads to the concept that irrespective of the cause of the infection there is a duty of care imposed by many religions for the sufferer. One aspect by which religions interact with human beings who are experiencing suffering, first hand or indirectly, is through the practice of a wholesome approach faith and pastoral counselling. The importance of the latter emphasis on the severity and intensity of suffering as experienced by HIV/AIDS victims has a greater chance of integrating the emotional, social, spiritual, and physical levels of the sufferers. As HIV/AIDS is currently incurable and even the best anti-retroviral drugs only prolong life, HIV positive status brings with it, for the infected human being a new interrelationship with death and dying and faith centred responses to this from the various sense making orientations are considered.

1.3.6 Chapter 6

Chapter 6 establishes that the HIV/AIDS problem causes individual human beings, families, communities, the African continent and the world to suffer and experience consequences. HIV/AIDS is a multifunctional problem and an interdisciplinary approach is essential as it affects the social, physical, spiritual, and economic wellbeing of all. In this case through the interactions between God, human beings, and HIV/AIDS and parallels are drawn between liberation theology and a theology of HIV/AIDS. The concept of binaries of 'in-group' and 'out-group' in this area is considered. The interface between Scripture (mostly Christian) and HIV/AIDS is explored with significant input from the books of Job and Tobit. This is then synthesised into the concept that faith in the foursome grand acts of God leads human beings through a five some awareness process, in order to achieve the end-goal of ultimate fulfilment, when all is in God and God is all in all. The tension between what we know of God and what we do not know is identified. Further that God's Spirit is still working and still revealing himself through the fourfold acts of

creation reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. The overlapping elements of the core areas of all religions of bringing their adherents to a meaningful end-state expectation is identified as central drive to strive towards a cooperative and coordinative approach in the alleviation of suffering through HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 2

God, Human Beings and Nature - Sin, Evil and Suffering

2.1 Introduction

The realities of sin, evil and suffering and how people approach and interact with them are embedded firstly in how human beings make sense of the mystery of the simultaneity of closely connecting and strongly differentiating God, human beings and the natural world. Secondly, human beings interact with the questions of sin, evil and suffering in terms of their sense making God-human-world approaches which include their thinking, social, justice, language and belief experiences. Thirdly, how human beings view and make sense of sin, evil and suffering are to a large extent determined on how they experience, approach and make sense of texts, theories, holy books, natural processes, human doings and God's acts in their daily living. We operate with the assumption that there will be stark differences in the outcomes, whether they approach texts, theories, holy books, natural processes, human doings and God's acts from a fundamentalist mirroring, interpretational hermeneutic or consensible negotiation orientation. Similarly, the outcomes of how human beings view and approach the question of sin, evil and suffering within texts, theories, holy books, natural processes, human doings and God's acts from their aware and sometimes unaware sense making orientation will also differ.

In this chapter the avowed point of departure is firstly that we approach sin, evil and suffering from the mystery of: God, being human and the natural world, as simultaneously closely connected and radically different from each other. Secondly, that we make a choice for the consensible negotiation process grounded in our everyday experience in the era of the Spirit where God's Spirit is interconnected – albeit different – from us as being human and the natural

physical environment in all fields of experience whether they are of the cognitive, emotive, lingual, imaginative, faith and belief sort. Based on their sense making viewpoint, human beings extract their clues, cues and hues through sense making filters in which God, themselves, other human beings and the natural environment are viewed.

Different sense-making approaches led to different pitfalls and questions over a period of time, some of which will be touched on in the subsequent paragraphs. Fundamentalist mirroring, interpretation and consensible negotiation cut across different cultures, religions and faiths. In different cultures, religions and faiths, we find sense-making approaches either of a multidimensional wholesome God, a multidimensional wholesome human being and multidimensional wholesome natural environment, or dualistic or triadic approaches regarding God, human beings and the natural environment.

One of the angles permeating through the study is the assumption that the awareness of creatureliness, sinful directedness, salvific and reconciliatory enactment, renovating and renewal power of the Spirit and consummation of all things are approached differently from people's sense making God-human-and-nature views which have a direct effect on how human beings with HIV/AIDS will be affected and treated. The way HIV/AIDS effected and affected people's experience the mystery of the connectedness and difference of God, their own humanity and the physical-organic environment surrounding them has an immense impact on the way they deal with their illness, treatment or if the illness has progressed to the last stages, how they approach their oncoming death.

Another angle cutting through the study revolves around the acceptance of a God-human-nature view in which it increasingly makes sense to accept that God, human beings and nature in their own way espouse in their togetherness and differences a wholesome multidimensionality which is multi-coloured, multi-layered and multi-approachable (van Niekerk 2006:375). We have said earlier that mysteriously, through and in what is regarded dialectically as unholy, sinful, unclean and evil nooks and, clean, healthy, holy and meaningful crannies of people's experience, God's Spirit embodies and participates in new pockets and

packages, new contexts and localisations of close togetherness and real differences of God as a multidimensional God involved with multidimensional human beings and multidimensional cosmic worlds.

Further, it must be observed that the discussions in this section are in turn discursive with each section viewing the mystery of the simultaneous connection and difference of God, human beings and nature from different angles and therefore with different emphases. One cannot view any one of the threesome without seeing reflections and influences of the others. Therefore, one must include comments, ideas, concepts and perceptions of the others, which are revealed through the discussions of the particular angle considered.¹

2.2 Evil and suffering and a wholesome multidimensional God

2.2.1 God as one wholesome multidimensional God

Everything that we say here about God as the one (monotheistic) multidimensional personal God, as good, loving, trusting, compassionate, creative, governing (lord), serving (priest) and speaking (prophet) is said against the background of the mystery of human beings and nature, being interconnected with, but different from God. Thus, according to the monotheistic viewpoint, God is a personal God, good, loving, trusting, compassionate, creative, governing and serving; a God who blesses, has individual personal knowledge and interaction with an individual human being, a God who is father and mother, teacher and healer.

Yet, how could this view of God be reconciled with evil and suffering? To put it pointedly, if there is a God, who is this God and what are the characteristics of this

¹ This notion of interconnectedness and difference of God, human beings and nature from different angles is obtained from courtesy of van Niekerk in private communication.

deity? Is this God Brahman, Allah, Nirvana, the Transcendent or something completely different? Does God bring about good through evil and suffering? Is evil built into nature and hence unavoidable? Are there evil spirits embodying nature as well as human beings? If God exists, does he entice people and hence is the cause of much suffering as Jeremiah proposed.²

The God-human-world view held by human beings influences the way in which they perceive God as well as the way in which they perceive other human beings, the world around them, and evil and suffering (whether it be their own suffering or acts of evil, observed incidents of evil and or suffering in others, natural or accidental, deliberate or sadistic). Historically, at the time of the Church Fathers, human beings viewed the world as a hierarchy with God on top of this hierarchy as *Absolute Being* – a Being which was unmoved and unchanged by the world and human beings (Fiddes 1992:36-38). The deistic model based on rationality of the eighteenth century replaced this model with God as *Designer* who ran the cosmos by cause and effect. Fiddes (1992:38) is of the opinion that this model led to the concept of an impassible God who is not involved in the day to day running of the cosmos but could be “breaking into the cosmos” from time to time with a miracle.

Religions such as Hinduism and certain schools of Buddhism are pantheistic, as God and nature are seen as closely related or identical. This viewpoint stands in stark contrast to the radical dualism of Zoroastrianism, dated by Boyce (2001:2) between the 12th and 15th centuries BCE, where good and evil are in opposition and it is uncertain which will win.³ Between these two extremes lies Hebrew

² In Jeremiah 20:7 the prophet uses strong language to characterize God as deceptive. He uses the word entice (Hebrew patah) which suggest seduction as is seen in Hos 2:16 and Judges 14:15 respectively. This metaphor describes the pain of the prophet.

³ There has been controversy regarding the dating of Zoroaster’s life, traditionally Zoroaster was considered to have lived 258 years before Alexander. This was established by the Zoroastrian priesthood in the period following Alexander’s conquest of the Achaemenid Empire (330 BCE). However this dating was politicaly motivated and subsequent linguistic studies show strong linguistic similarities with the Sanskrit of the Rigveda and it is improbable that the Rigveda and the

creation theology which presents the creation of human beings and the cosmos as good in two accounts, attributed to different documents by Source critics but harmonized in the classical Jewish tradition by intertwining the stories.⁴

2.2.1.1. The Influence of Zoroastrianism on various world views

The influence of the Zoroastrian eschatology on both the Judaeo-Christian tradition as well as Islam is recognized among scholars (Neusner in Boyce, 1985: 435) as is evident in the concept of 'the Devil' or Satan. The mirroring fundamentalist approach endeavours to make sense of this by personifying Satan as a fallen angel and responsible for 'the Fall' of human beings in the book of Genesis in Christian Scriptures. God is by this approach placed on par with Satan and is in constant struggle in the process of renewing and renovating the physical world and human beings until the consummation. Satan, in the meantime, is 'tearing down' God's work and human beings are more or less absolved of responsibility as they inherited the sinful nature of Adam and can only be renewed if God quickens their spirit and draws them to Him.

There are also similarities between the Zoroastrian saviour, Sōšyant and the Messiah. Hinnell (2000:50-55) held that both of these deities effected the renewal of the earth and of human beings, experienced a virgin birth, defeated demons, resurrected the dead, executed judgement and, at the command of the creator, will give all human beings their recompense based on their actions.

Gathas are more than a few centuries apart. The Rigveda is dated between 1900–1100 BCE (Witzel 1995). The error in the traditional date for Zoroaster is also supported by Yves Bonnefoy in his book, *Asian Mythologies* (1993:105), and discussed in depth in Clark (1998:19-22) who also draws the conclusion that the traditional date is in error and indicates a likely date of 1400 BCE.

⁴ The second account focuses more on the experiences of human beings and the traditional Jewish deity is described more in anthropomorphic terms.

Twentieth century Zoroastrian scholars such as Ilya Gershevitch (1964) draw a contrast between the pure monotheistic religion of the prophet Zoroaster and the paganised, dualistic, ritualistic and nature worshipping Zoroastrianism of Zoroaster's priests who corrupted the tradition. Mary Boyce (1990:4) does not see the later priestly texts as perversions but as a continuity of tradition from pre-Zoroastrian times, through the prophet up to modern times where they are also influenced by modern times.

Although Zarathustra (Zoroaster) himself taught monotheism, conflict is evident between God and the Power of Evil. According to Zoroastrian beliefs (Nigosian 1993: 88) God's purpose is to rid the universe of the independent evil force. This opposing force was very alien to original Hebrew belief as each individual was responsible for his/her own acts. However, after the Persian victory Satan suddenly appears in the Jewish tradition. In 2 Samuel 24:1 God leads David astray because He was angered by the Israelites and He moved David to take a census and in the later book of Chronicles the story is retold but with a difference – now Satan rose up against Israel and enticed David to take a census.⁵ Satan thus embodies evil with resultant suffering as in both accounts YHWH sends a plague on Israel that claims seventy thousand lives.

It seems to me that the earlier narrative in 2 Samuel (written before the Persian victory over Israel in 586 BCE) was recorded with a world view where Satan was not recognised or acknowledged and therefore the external motivator causing David to take the census was attributed to Yahweh but, with the subsequent broadening of the Hebrew world view through the influence of the Persians (i.e. Zoroastrianism), when the event was later recounted in 1 Chronicles the external motivation was attributed to the new embodiment of evil that had been accepted into Jewish thinking – Satan. This situation of apparent contradiction between two Biblical passages shows that whilst the writers were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they were not “dictated to” as they wrote, but were writing from

⁵ 1 Chronicles 21:1 “Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.”

within their own internal perspective or world view and recounting the information from within their own sphere of experience – which means that the significant event of the Persian victory caused fundamental changes within the sense making God-human-nature map from which the Biblical authors were drawing their foundational positions for recounting the narrative. This makes the existence of this apparent conflict within the Bible a powerful and valuable part of the overall picture that we can build up of the greater picture around the narrative.

It is quite plausible that the Jewish people, after the trauma of the Seleucid persecution (The Jewish revolt against the Seleucid Empire (Maccabbee Revolt 166-164 BC) which resulted in severe persecution of the Jews.), tried to make sense of their experiences. As they were devout Jews, they could not perceive any sin and therefore an alien force of evil was seen to provide the answer to religious questions. Hence, hence some of the Zoroastrian beliefs could have been influential and become embraced in their God-human-world view.

The theology behind Zoroastrianism with regards to the resurrection, judgement, angels, demons, good and evil is shown by Shaked (1994) to be more coherent and logical than Christianity or Judaism. Hinnell (2000: 32-33) is of the opinion that there is a theological necessity about there being two judgements in Zoroastrianism:

“...since God, Ahura Mazda, created both the material and the ‘spiritual’...dimensions of a person, so both must be judged and corrected if they are to be reunited in the perfect existence at the end of history. The first judgement after death is clearly of the soul, for the body can be seen to remain on earth; the judgement of the body takes place after the resurrection. The rewards and punishments following those judgements mean that the whole person, judged and corrected, can be reunited in perfect harmony. There is no such logic behind the biblical references to the two judgements.”

Islam also shows Zoroastrian influence as is evident in the revelation to the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century A.D. where Paradise is described in Persian splendour with faithful souls reclining upon soft couches, served with a goblet filled at a gushing fountain and sitting at the side of bashful, dark-eyed

virgins. According to Kriwaczek (2002:195-196) the description of Paradise was attested to by Muhammad,

“...the final Messenger of God, confirmed the vision of Zarathustra, the First Prophet.”

The question could be posed whether there is Zoroastrian influence in the writings of the New Testament human authors in their making sense of the foursome of God-themselves-other human beings-nature through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The theme of demonology dominates sections of the New Testament. In Luke 9:1-9, Jesus, wanting to promulgate the message of the arrival of God's kingdom, sent the disciples out into the villages with the power to heal and to exorcise. Even in Matthew 4:24 Jesus' continuing power over the devil's realm is emphasized with His healing of the demon possessed in Galilee and Jesus' defeat of sickness is part of his overcoming of evil. All three Synoptic Gospels emphasize Jesus' power over demons. In Matthew 7:22 certain human beings claim that they had cast out demons. In the secular Greek of the time this word demon could mean deity (Gooch 1993:1) but generally speaking it is linked with Satan in the New Testament and seems to have a position between God and human beings. The deeds of demons are normally evil and they bring physical limitations to human beings whom they indwell. It is evident that there is a greater emphasis on demonology in the New Testament than in the Hebrew Bible (Grenz 2000:223) – as multiple examples in the Gospels show.

Hinnell (2000:84) held the opinion that Matthew was written in Antioch where Zoroastrian traders and travellers formed a community and

“...it is not implausible that the Jews to whom Matthew addressed his writings were people influenced by the eschatology of their Zoroastrian fellows in that city. In support of this line of thought is the passage on the visit of the Magi (2:1-12) to the infant Jesus. Later legend turned them into three kings but Matthew actually uses the correct term for Zoroastrian priests, Magoi... What I am tentatively suggesting is that Matthew was seeking not only to present Jesus as the fulfilment of Jewish hopes, but also as the fulfilment of the hopes of Zoroastrians living in his

neighbourhood, which implies that he knew of the Zoroastrian expectation of the birth of a saviour.”

If both Luke and Mark used Matthew’s Gospel as a source document, then Hinnell’s argument could have been plausible in explaining the existence of the Zoroastrianistic dualism in the demonology as the opposing force to the saviour. As this is not the case, it seems highly unlikely especially as many scholars believed Mark’s Gospel to be the base document (Nickle 2001:68). However, the point that Matthew could have been portraying Jesus also as the fulfilment of the Zoroastrian saviour could be valid as the expectancy of a saviour is linked with Zoroastrian belief (Davidson 2005:132).

Carrying on with this line of thought would imply that cultures, religions and faith could influence the perceptions, opinions and hence information held and shared by authors of holy books. This does not negate the fact that they still could be inspired by the Holy Spirit in ways that we do not understand. It is quite plausible that the Holy Spirit inspires writings, sayings and doings of people not in a *supernatural* way but in an *intranatural* within the sense making God-human-world experience of the writer. Inspiration does not mean that the inspired human being is writing down word for word as if the human being is the pen of the Holy Spirit. In a similar way the human writer is not recorder or dictation computer of the words and views of the Spirit. The human writer is saying and writing in his/her own words in terms of his/her sense making God-human-world orientation what he/her has learned from the Holy Spirit. This is what revelation amounts to through the Holy Spirit. Thus, any interaction with the text of a Holy book and in particular the Bible must also be done in sensible negotiation between the text, the reader and the Holy Spirit to ensure that the meaning for the current situation is gained from the text. Thus the mystery of the simultaneous connection (at-one-ment) and difference (at-other-ment) of the one multidimensional God, the multidimensional human being and the multidimensional natural cosmic world around us is reflected in the way in which the authors of the Holy books were inspired to create their texts.

2.2.1.2. Worldviews and evil and suffering

The viewpoints or worldviews human beings hold about God are derived from their holy books, cultures, writings, sayings and doings and these determine how they make sense of or interact with suffering, for instance, as is discussed in the opening of Chapter one, human beings working with the binaries of in-group and out-group sometimes regard human beings infected with HIV/AIDS as unclean, deserving of God's wrath and basically suffering from this disease as a judgement of God upon certain cultural groups because of their belief system, opinions and practices as well as ritual traditions. Particular systems of belief and opinions have permeated particular sections of the world and some background information would be appropriate at this stage.

The Greeks experienced suffering as a dominant part of life, as is evidenced from the Homeric poems (Ferguson 1972:30) . According to the Hebrew Scriptures, suffering is viewed as a punishment for sin. For example in Genesis 2-3 Adam and Eve are shown as explicitly disobeying God's word. Through a story, Genesis explains sin and the consequences of sin i.e. both the physical and spiritual consequences. The physical consequences given in the text are pain, toil and death and the spiritual consequences are alienation from God. In the four servant songs of Isaiah (Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12), suffering is also the punishment for sin but God calls his Servant to transform this situation by offering himself for the punishment which others deserve and he does not merit. This is God's way of redeeming corporately and individually.

In the New Testament, Jesus delivers human beings from their suffering. In John 9:1-7 Jesus met a man, blind from birth, at the Feast of Tabernacles. The disciples assumed there must be a connection between sin and suffering and therefore asked who sinned, the man or his parents? Jesus explained that he must work so that God's work may be displayed in the blind man's life. God sent Jesus to do works of healing in order to show God's glory. In agreement with Ferguson (1972:82-83), I conclude that the New Testament does not seem to be so much interested in the origin of suffering as in the opportunity of glorifying God.

However, theological aspects such as sin, the fall in Gen 3-4 and evil will be dealt with in more detail in this thesis. To continue with the argument, it could be said that Jesus repeatedly reminded his disciples that discipleship involves suffering. In Matthew 24:9, for instance Jesus indicates that his followers will suffer for who they are i.e. they will suffer because they are Christians; they will be objects of universal hatred because they bear the name Christian. But even so, as followers of Christ they need to reach out with love and not meet violence with violence.

Not all suffering is chastisement, not all suffering is persecution. Suffering is inherent even within the five some awareness of a wholesome person because purity as well as impurity, suffering as well as health are needed in order to become part of the consummation/fulfilment process. Renewal and renovating, salvific and reconciliatory enactment, awareness of sinful tendencies and hence of creatureliness necessitates suffering. Suffering, however, is part of our humanity – according to the apostle Peter, suffering is part of the basic facts of life, we can endure suffering because God's grace is there to match every trial. Although Peter actually talks about trials here in the sense of the response of unbelievers toward people of faith, suffering is still considered as part of the refining process that prepares an individual for the fulfilment in the consummation of the age (1 Peter 1:6-7). In Hebrews 5:8 we read that Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered, which means that he accepted his suffering unto death because God appointed him to this sacrifice for the sake of his office. Through his suffering he became the source of eternal salvation for all human beings who obey him. Suffering thus seems to be like a school of discipline. Suffering poses a challenge to human beings because they can so easily retaliate or become embittered or view it as an illusion, but the view espoused here is to turn it into a positive force.

James 2:8-9 calls the great commandment 'to love our neighbour as ourselves' – the royal law, and according to him, Christians are governed by the inner compulsion of love. Christians are empowered by God's Spirit which makes Jesus, the cross, resurrection, reconciliation and renewal real and forms an interconnecting 'umbilical cord' between God – oneself – other human beings – nature. They follow the way of love to God and love to other people because the

love of Christ within their hearts compels them to do so. This is the way of the cross – the confrontation of evil with love. This is the way in which God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to God self and this is what Christians are called to follow and empowered and enabled to do by the renovating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Suffering does not separate the believer from Christ, but through sharing in the suffering of Christ, the believer shares in the work of redemption by the ‘inworking of grace’ in the believer’s life which results in the outworking of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Through this process of transformation and renewal the evidence of God’s great acts of continuous creation, reconciliation, renewal with fragments/glimpses of ‘consummation’, could be perceived as a kind of general revelation and perceivable when human beings are engaged in a consensible negotiation approach which ‘opens’ their thinking up to perceive God’s works as they make sense of God in their everyday lives. In this regard van Niekerk(email 13 March 2008) commented in a communication interaction:

“In our present experience, we are set between God’s creation from where we receive ‘golden oldies’ of sense making experiences through the Spirit. From God’s consummation and fulfilment processes in the future, we now in our current experience receive anticipatory ‘golden new-ies’ of sense making experiences through the Holy Spirit. Our access to the grand acts of God in which we are involved is through the Spirit and not in being mystically united with Christ. The Spirit applies the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives as God’s renewing tools in the created world. Furthermore, the Spirit makes Jesus Christ present in our lives as the crucified and resurrected Christ.”

Yet evil is a constant; it is real and suffering is existent and human beings harm nature (God’s creation), God and each other, all of which is against the will of God. With this in mind we also recognize that a strong consideration against the existence of God is the problem of evil.

2.2.2 God outside (transcendent) and inside (immanent) reality

A favourite question of theologians grappling with the issue of theodicy is how a good omnipotent and all powerful, omniscient (all knowing) God could inject, introduce or allow evil in the world. Surely this question not only suggests a

dualistic God, but distances God from the world. The question is not solved by quick and pious answers like 'it is for our own good'. In many instances the 'for our own good' is not evident, especially, for example, in the case of a new born baby ravaged by HIV/AIDS.

The central issue at stake is couched in Bonhoeffer's statement that God is the "beyond" in the midst of our lives (1953:93), thus giving a strong impetus away from the ideology of theologism in which theologistic procedures regarding God by experts and theologians constructing designs in which we are to receive knowledge of God. In the ideology of theologism people tend to speak in the name of God separating questions about God from being human with our humanness and nature's naturalness about pain, suffering, evil and HIV/AIDS. Questions about and directed at God should be directed simultaneously at ourselves, at human beings other than ourselves and to the natural processes of the cosmic world.

In terms of the ideology of theologism several questions are being asked regarding God's role towards human beings and nature:

- Why did God instruct the offering of animals as part of the sacrificial system? This is as if God directly delivered the instruction to people instead of people of the past who somewhere along the line ascribed offering of animals as an instruction from God.
- Why does God allow human beings to kill in his name those who worship him such as has happened with many missionaries as well as with the World Trade centre in the USA on 9/11/2001? This is as if God is the all-initiating agent producing evil things in people's hearts and minds.
- Why does God allow natural disasters such as the devastation of the Tsunami on 26/12/05 in Asia? Again, this is as if God is the all-initiating agent producing evil things in nature through the shifting of the tectonic plates way down below the surface of the ocean?

- Why did God not in his mercy just forgive his wayward creation? Such a theologistic question smacks of the utmost theological arrogance.

Theologistic experts with all their expertise in answering our questions about God, do not bring us one iota closer to making sense of the one multidimensional living God who is not a construction of our theological mind but is mysteriously connected and different from us and the surrounding natural world in multidimensional ways and in multiple situations. When these situations are considered one must ask whether God is implicated in evil and suffering. Did he create evil or worse is it part of God? Is God a one-sided, dualistic or multidimensional God?

The existence of evil can also serve as an argument against an all-powerful, wholly good creator God who loves his creatures. Epicurus, in the ancient world, as well as Hume, in the eighteenth century, asked the same questions (Myers 2001: 189)

- Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able to prevent it? (This would render God as incompetent according to the author of this thesis)
- Or is He able to prevent evil but not willing to prevent it? (This would render God as being sadistic. - *ibid*)
- Or is He willing and able to prevent it but does not do it? (This would render God as being apathetic - *ibid*)

In broad terms these questions are today still unanswered and we could consider the same questions when from a more practical and specific viewpoint we ask: How could a good God allow HIV/AIDS to ravish sub-Saharan Africa?

This question is especially important for the monotheistic religions, e.g. Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Hinduism and Buddhism have no creator God, therefore in the theology of these religions there is no problem with regards to the

existence of evil. The problem experienced by both, revolves around the notion of suffering.

Several theories have been developed and an overview of some will be discussed very briefly. Although these theories will be discussed, it must be stated from the outset that setting God, human beings and nature apart and then trying to put them together again in an attempt to analyse the Godness of God, humanness of humanity and the natural world's naturalness is a superficial exercise fraught with problems. The most we can say is that the living God, the creator, reconciler, renewer and fulfiller of everything is continuously closely interconnected with and radically different from human beings and the natural cosmic world.

The mystery of the simultaneous connectedness and difference between God, human beings and the physical organic environment are being interwoven with us having a foursome awareness of being created (being there-ness), being reconciled in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (being thus and thusness), being renewed through the Spirit (being active and actualness) and being involved in the processes and events directed to the future consummation and fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth ('being this' and 'wheretone-ness') (van Niekerk 2006:371-373).

2.2.3 Divine determination or/and human free will

Under discussion here is "the free will defence" where human beings are responsible for the evils done to themselves, to other human beings as well as to the rest of creation because they exercise their free will wrongly. It follows that human beings are responsible for their own evil actions, which results in suffering and God is thus not responsible. However, an objection to the free will defence is that if God created a good world, he could have created a world where human beings only do good. Why did God give human beings free will? Is he not sufficiently omnipotent that he could create a human being free from evil? In giving human beings free will he created the opportunity for evil.

There are various versions of the free will defence

“...which range from Berdyaev’s quasi Gnostic, uncreated freedom, and the finite God of process theology, the denial of God’s infallible foreknowledge of human decisions in ‘open theism,’ to the equivocal position of theists who affirm God’s sovereign control and yet appear to entertain an indeterministic view of freedom.” (Blocher: 2006:250-252).

According to Runzo (2001:100-101)

“The free will defence responds with the basic notion that evil is necessary as a means to good. If there is no evil, it is impossible to have certain sorts of goods in the universe, and those goods are so good that they would be integral to the best world which could be created.....Perhaps these goods and evils balance out.”

This seems somewhat bizarre as it infers that God could not have created sufficiently good ‘goods’ without allowing or creating evil to allow the ‘certain sorts of goods’ to exist. This then portrays God as limited in capability or power and willing to accept evil and suffering because God wants certain ‘goods’ in the world. This dilemma is clearly a result of human beings not being able to fully comprehend God. Anything one says about God, human beings and the natural cosmic world separately or together, is drawn and acquired first, from clues and cues of being involved in the grand acts of God of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment through our own *inspired* multiple experiences and other people’s *inspired* experiences through the Biblical texts. Second, traces, clues, cues and hues are also drawn and acquired from our quadrilateral pattern of experience of faith and belief (I believe God, believe myself, other people and the natural cosmic world), loving (I love God, love myself, love other people and the natural cosmic world), thinking (I think about God, think about myself, other people and the natural cosmic world), feeling and emotion (I feel God, feel myself, other people and the natural cosmic world), etc. Thus anything one says about God, human beings and the natural cosmic world separately or together is said from one particular viewpoint which is limited and restricted in terms of the humanness and finiteness of the human being who is making the statement.

Yet in John 9 where the blind man is given his sight by Jesus, when Jesus is asked by his disciples “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”, Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.’ (John 9:1-3). The implication from the words of Jesus seems to imply that this man was caused to suffer blindness from birth into maturity so that at this point the goodness of God could be revealed. Both the man and his parents were declared not to have sinned, but to have been caused to suffer because God’s works were to be revealed in him. This implicates God in the causing of the man’s suffering so that God’s purposes could be advanced. This idea ties in closely with the narrative of Job, who was again allowed by God to experience suffering in order to prove whether Job’s motives in serving God were pure. This forces one to consider the possibility that evil and suffering are part of God’s pallet of interaction within his interrelationship with human beings and nature, which would force one to observe this a facet of God’s at-otherness.

When considering Augustine (354-430) and his approach to evil and suffering, two solutions are offered, namely, that human beings are responsible for their acts and that God will judge each and everyone, giving reward and punishment accordingly. According to Augustine (Berkhof 1996:245) evil came into the world because of The Fall and Augustine emphasises God’s justice in dealing with human beings (Augustinus 2006:320). There are, however, objections to this theory, with obvious linkage to the preceding paragraph on the man born blind. If human beings were created good, how did they fall in the first place? Again if Satan was part of God’s good creation how did Satan fall? Another objection is; how could a good God condemn human beings to eternal punishment and torment? This theodicy also assumes that the human race never really improves, which is a fallacy if we consider actions like the abolishment of the slave trade and the significant response of private individuals worldwide to Tsunamis and natural disasters of all sorts.

With regards to the “free will defence” and Augustine’s worldview, the question could according to Snidle (2000:44) be posed whether HIV/AIDS is a consequence

of free will? The conclusion reached by Snidle and Yeoman is that free will is not just about individuals but rather that the wrong doings of certain human beings have an effect on other human beings through the social interaction of life:

“The man who has sex with a prostitute because he is working away from home for a long time, is in one sense a product of a world or a national economy that creates such a situation. The drug addict who injects may do so out of the very isolation and despair that society helps to create through inequality of wealth or social justice....” (Snidle, 2000: 44)

Once again we see in this observation by Snidle, that there is an interconnectivity and yet separateness between human beings, the cosmic universe and God. The individual makes a choice, a personal choice, to use the drugs or have sex with a prostitute, yet his decision is connected with the decisions of other human beings that have resulted in this situation and these issues in turn, result in the suffering of God through his interconnectedness and otherness with human beings and the cosmic universe.

Yet Stoeber (2005:10-11) clearly sees the free will defence as a crucial aspect of his views on the transformational power of suffering, Stoeber sees Eve’s disobedience as “a good thing, a very good thing indeed.” (Stoeber 2005:10) because through the Fall human beings gained the knowledge of good and evil which leads to the opportunity to “learn and grow and live in and through and by our suffering” (Stoeber 2005, 11). Stoeber regards this to be worth the loss of intimacy with God. Stoeber also points out that the Fall led human beings to the situation where through the “knowledge of good and evil – moral knowledge in freedom” (2005, 10) human beings are able to become “like gods”. This is seen by Stoeber as an essential part of the process of what he quotes as “what John Hick calls this ‘soul-making’ journey” (2005:11). These deliberations and assertions resonate closely with discussions on the Fall in my MTh dissertation (Hearn 2005:169-170):

“...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... 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 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.”

Whilst the mind of God cannot be second guessed due to his complete radical otherness, yet through the interconnectedness that God has put in place between himself, human beings and the created cosmic universe, we can consider that God, in bringing to fulfilment his intentions and plans for the human race and his created cosmic universe, deliberately set the conditions for the Fall in the knowledge that Adam and Eve would elect disobedience and thus setting in place the events that were subsequent to the Fall in order that through the ‘free will’ choice of human beings a people have been, are being and will be created through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ (the atonement) which will, at the consummation when God becomes all in all, provide God with a worthy people able to give meaningful worship to him, glorifying God and the Lamb forever.

This then places suffering in a context where suffering leads to the glorification of God because without evil and suffering there would be no difficult choices to make, no challenges to overcome in our faith in and experience of God. Deprived of these, our free will decision becomes less meaningful.

Tillich (1957:37) discusses Adam’s freedom to sin and draws conclusions which are closely aligned to those I have presented here, Tillich saw that it is because human beings were made in God’s image that they were made with the capability to choose to separate themselves from God, and that God could not have made human beings in his image without this possibility as this would have rendered human beings a “thing among things” (Tillich 1957:37). In effect Tillich is saying that for human beings to fulfil God’s design, for them the capability to choose to separate themselves from God – the free will decision – is what makes them human beings in the first place and without that freedom, human beings would have been rendered “unable to serve the divine glory” (Tillich 1957:37).

There is a poetic irony which can be seen when the free will defence is viewed in the context of the overall story of the Bible. In order to create the opportunity for a

meaningful relationship between God and human beings, it was necessary for God to give each individual human being and the collective groups of human beings the freedom to make free will decisions. This meant that God had to create his creation in a way that allowed for evil and suffering. In this situation it is considered by Fiddes (2000:168) that the choice to sin by human beings was “practically inevitable” but not “logically necessary” in the context of the reality created by the possession of free will by human beings. It would seem to me that God in his foreknowledge recognised that human beings would sin, would cause and experience evil and suffering and would be caused to suffer due to natural phenomenon such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, HIV/AIDS etc. and in terms of the wrong choices made by human beings God then chose, through Jesus Christ, to suffer with human beings and pay the price for the wrong choices of human beings. So, in short, God set in place the possibility to sin. This implies a degree of responsibility on God’s part for the suffering that occurs. God therefore chose to also share in that suffering on the cross and also in self sacrifice to pay the price for redemption through his death on the cross.

2.2.4 Theodicy?

With regards to the concept of eternal hell in the Augustinian theodicy, it is a well known fact that Augustine was influenced by Manicheanism (an offshoot of Zoroastrianism) and his theodicy influenced both Christianity and Islam (McGrath 2007a:199). The idea of an eternal hell is not found in Hinduism but the Buddhist idea of hell (bad karma) is like the Zoroastrian idea of an intermediate state for those who have committed too much evil. In the Buddhist state this hell is a temporary (part of the cycle of samsara which leads to nirvana) and is not like the Augustinian hell which is permanent. This intermediate state in Buddhism resembles the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory.

Irenaeus (125-202 CE) developed a different theodicy where God created human beings in his image but not in his likeness and human beings, as they experience life, go through a process of character building or soul-making resultant in compassionate, free and loving human beings. Evil therefore serves a purpose in

the soul-making process (cf. McGrath 2007a:179). In his influential work *Evil and the God of Love* (1966), Hick contrasts various historical theodicies and identifies two main streams, Augustinian and Irenaean, and in his interpretation strongly leans his opinions on the ideas of Irenaeus and argues that the concepts providing the foundation for the Augustinian theodicy “cannot be saved from the charge of self-contradiction and absurdity” (Hick 1966:75).

In considering these theodicies, Gottlieb Leibniz (in Runzo 2001:108) suggested that

“what God must have created is the best of all possible worlds – we cannot be truly, free, loving creatures unless there is a possibility that we will go wrong. And that makes it highly probable that there is going to be evil in the universe.”

For Tillich, God’s being is creative and this reveals itself to human beings as a negative and positive mystery. With Tillich’s view evil is linked to God and natural evil in creation is perceived as emanating from God (Dean 2006:166-167).

Blumenthal (1993:45) linked sin directly to God and declares that God can sin:

“In the Rosh ha Shana liturgy, God prays that God’s mercy overcomes God’s anger, implying ...that God can be overwhelmed by factors in Godself. And, in the zoharic strain of Jewish mystical thinking, God’s inner stability can be destroyed, provoking great destruction.”

Yet Reif⁶ (Berlin 2004:1938) in his essay regarding the Jewish Bible in Liturgy states, “Yet it must be emphasized that the quotations and citations of the Bible in liturgy are not fully representative of the Bible ...”. He continues in his discussions to show that concepts in Jewish liturgy are not exclusively biblically based. This puts Blumenthal’s assertion into a new, less significant light, since Reif proves the concept is from a 16th century Ottoman Palestinian mystic school which proposed

⁶ Professor Stefan C Reif, Emeritus Professor of Medieval Hebrew Studies, University of Cambridge

concepts with limited biblical authority. It is my assertion that the concept that 'God can sin' is without support in Biblical scripture.

A modern approach is the process theology of Whitehead (cf. Cobb & Griffin 1976:125), where Peace is the ultimate spiritual value. This parallels the Shin Buddhist goal of Nirvana as both of them view Peace as a gift of divine grace (cf. Griffin 2005:87-88). In Whitehead's process theology God is dipolar and has two natures, the primordial nature as well as the consequent nature (cf. Griffin 2005:72). The unchanging, impassible, transcendent, eternal primordial nature is the antithesis of the temporal, changing, immanent, sympathetic consequent nature. Whitehead explicitly rejects the idea of an omnipotent God who created the universe 'ex nihilo' (cf. Griffin 2005:169). All events in nature are self-creative through a process of creative synthesis. The consequent nature of God is the caring God, the fellow sufferer in this world-process and he is forever evolving with the world-process. Seemingly the world adds to the being of God in that there are some 'elements missing' within God according to this theory.

Whitehead (1953) has encapsulated some snippets of truth breaking through into conscious thought but I believe that his Process Theology strings these snippets together into an improbable theology. God is reflected as caring but reactional, creative but limited, and God is reflected as being in constant change due to the interconnected experiences that God shares with human beings and nature. In effect God is reflected as transient rather than the biblical notion of an eternal unchanging God. For me, there are aspects of Whitehead's theology in this regard that I perceive as valuable because of the simultaneous interconnectedness and radical otherness of God, human beings and the created cosmic universe. The interconnectedness cannot exist without there being a resultant impact on God from evil actions by human beings and the various influences that result in suffering, yet Whitehead seems to have made God reactive rather than pro-active in the great scheme of the unfolding of history (Cobb 1976:74). This approach also disempowers the movement to a culmination of God's works when God becomes all in all at the end of the eschatological process.

Another influential writer in this area is Michael Stoeber (1992 & 2005) who along with Hick (shown above) sees the solution to theodicy in the concept that this life is not all that there is, Hick sees that Soul making can continue in an afterlife where after death and the transition into an afterlife, the person is aware of his/her previous life and the ups and downs experienced even out, resulting in a person fully completed as *similitudo dei* (Hick 1994:456). Stoeber espouses the concept that human beings are re-incarnated, thus living multiple lives in their soul making process. Stoeber, in his inability to explain or rationalise certain evils in the world which result in completely undeserving suffering and have no future value to the sufferer, chooses to assume that there must be a situation such as the Roman Catholic concept of purgatory or re-incarnation (Stoeber 1992:167) and:

“Clearly, Christian theology requires further creative speculation about afterlife possibilities in order to move this theme of transformative suffering beyond the problem of destructive evil... Rather, one must postulate either a realm (or realms) of purgatory and/or a return in another embodiment to this environment through a reincarnation or rebirth, wherein further spiritual healing, learning, and growth might occur.” (2005:73)

We can therefore see a reticence in both Hick and Stoeber to deal with theodicy without resorting to novel ideas on which plausible arguments are based. However, these novel ideas, which have no basis in Christian scripture, are alien to the concepts which the majority of non-Roman Catholic Christian denominations espouse. Purgatory and re-incarnation are not directions which are found prevalent in sensible negotiation with the Christian Scriptures.

Stoeber has completed an extensive review of the various non-mystic and mystic theologies in his book *Evil and The Mystic's God* (1992) and comes to the conclusion that the only way that a morally acceptable theodicy can be established is to propose that re-incarnation occurs so that those who suffer unjustly in this world, such as, in this thesis a baby born with the HIV/AIDS knowing only a short life of discomfort and suffering, will be re-born in a cycle of 'soul making'. This proposed system of re-birth is functionally similar to Hindu, Jain and Buddhist concepts but instead of being retributive rebirth, it is simply a “vehicle of moral education” (Stoeber 1992:180) and draws on the concepts presented by Sri Aurobindo in this respect (Aurobindo 1971:87). Stoeber expresses a moral

objection to the concept of retributive rebirth because re-incarnation is said to occur without the re-incarnated human being having memories of their past existence/existences. Therefore Stoeber states

“Surely it is the case that unless the suffering person recognises what they are being punished for, the punishment is but a crude form of retaliation, a kind of outlash of vengeance” (1992:178)

And this objection leads Stoeber to propose that non retributive rebirth is a morally acceptable alternative mechanism of theodicy:

“Moreover, this idea of rebirth [non retributive] overrides the problems of personal identity that are associated with retributive rebirth. For one does not need to secure conclusive personal identity over lifetimes in order morally and rationally to justify the view.” (Stoeber 1992:182)

This may be seen by some as intellectually and theoretically satisfying perhaps in the construction of a theodicy, but even Stoeber himself recognises that this is of no concern to the human being that experiences suffering. In discussing a particular female’s experience of being attacked as a child by someone she knew and trusted Stoeber said

“Since she knew I had written a book on God and the problem of evil, my friend expected helpful answers. Putting on my professor’s hat, I moved into my head, and began to respond in abstract terms of spiritual transformation, how we can learn by and through our suffering, how suffering can be conducive to emotional and spiritual growth. But... realising as I was speaking that I was dangerously close to denying the evil that was done to her as a child, suggesting that it might somehow be good for her...” (2005:3)

Thus we can clearly see that even an eminent current theologian specialising in theodicy considers that the details of a theodicy are of little interest to the human being who is experiencing suffering, and I support Michael Scott (in Moor 2007:28) who asserts that it is by standing alongside the victim of suffering by offering real physical and empathetic assistance that the practical theodicy can express through a new articulation of faith something that is meaningful to those impacted by the suffering (Stoeber 2005:67).

2.2.5 God, change and suffering

For Fretheim (1984), God is also related to God's creation in space and time. He used Jeremiah 23:24 where it says that God fills heaven and earth for instance to justify his premise that God built his own residence into the structures of the created order. God has taken up residence in the world and is working from within the world and therefore is touched by the actions and events of the world. Jeremiah 4:23-28 and Joel 2:10 are used to indicate that because the heavens are affected by human sin, both heaven and human beings are in need of being created anew. These references, in a very strong way, express the renewal process through God's Spirit of which the day of Pentecost is the inauguration as well as the affirmation of a renewal process that had already been in operation through God's Spirit for millions of years. In Fretheim's approach God also entered time and history and therefore experiences past memories as well as hopes for the future. Yet there never will be a time when God is not the living God. (Fretheim 1984:37-44) The God of Fretheim seems to be hampered by self-imposed limitations which are also evident in his foreknowledge which is portrayed in the following four arguments that Fretheim uses (1984:45-52).

1. The divine perhaps ('ûlay): Fretheim uses passages like Ezek 12:1-3, Isa 47:12 and Jer 3:7 to say that God is uncertain as to how human beings would respond and thus there is an openness in the future and it is not predetermined. God's ultimate salvific goals will be achieved and there will be a constant move towards them but there are innumerable paths for human beings to take along the way and these are known as probabilities or possibilities.
2. The divine if: Both negative and positive options are presented to human beings as is evident from Jer 22:4-5 and hence the future is not closed and according to Fretheim it shows how deeply God has entered into the human situation.
3. The divine consultation: Gen 18:7-22 where Abraham and God talk about the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah, is used by Fretheim to show that God uses human thought in shaping the future and that God enters into sharing of matters which are integral to relationships.

4. The fourth argument is the divine question where God becomes vulnerable and opens himself up to risk, for instance when God asks whether he should punish or pardon, in Jer 5:7,9 and Hosea 6:4.

Fretheim (1984:77) concludes that God can never act in complete independence from the world because he does things for the sake of the relationship and this self-limitation is an integral aspect of God's relationship with the world. God, in sharing power with human beings, also opens himself up to a clash of powers where human beings can have an adverse effect on the world. This leads to a divine helplessness. God not only limits himself with relation to space and time but also limits his own power as is evident from the story of the flood (Gen 8-9) where God promised that he will never send a flood again which is a limitation with respect to his divine freedom and power. And although God is continuously present, he sometimes hides his face; for instance when the deeds of human beings are evil as is evident from Mic 3:4. Thus God limits his own power in dealing with evil in the world. God is present at every occasion, yet in some occasions his influence is more significant than in other events. Fretheim (1984:77-78) states in this regard:

“God is graciously present, in, with, and under all the particulars of the creation, with which God is in a relationship of reciprocity. The immanent and transcendent God of Israel is immersed in the space and time of this world; this God is available to all, is effective along with them at every occasion, and moves with them into an uncertain future. Such a perspective reveals a divine vulnerability, as God takes on all the risks that authentic relatedness entails. Because of what happens to that relationship with those whom God loves, God suffers.”

God is not apathetic and, according to Fretheim, God experiences a continuous grief although he is not powerless to do something about it. God is present among human beings who suffer and is at work in death to bring about life, and Fretheim sees God as working from within (1984:107-126). If I understand Fretheim correctly, then, it seems that the God of Fretheim is also a dualistic God inasmuch as God in his self-limiting acts displays dipolar characteristics. To put it pointedly, on the one hand he is an all powerful God and on the other hand he is severely limited with regards to his power – albeit self-limitation. This is reminiscent of

Boteach (1995:86-87) who talks about a duality in God's nature because he is both infinite and finite simultaneously.

Fiddes (1992:56-60) discusses theories that have emerged with regards to suffering and God:

"...the first theory is that God is not affected by our suffering as is evidenced in classical theism. The second theory is that God in His love can suffer and is changed by it because it has an effect on Him....."

However, there is also the implication that the world is necessary for the being of God as Fiddes stated (1992:56-60):

"If God fulfils his being through the suffering of creation and redemption, if he becomes more fully himself by pouring himself out in kenotic love for the world, then it seems that the world is necessary for God to be God."

According to Fiddes most theologians, however, seem to prefer a compromise i.e. they admit God's suffering but deny that he is changed by his world which is the occasion of that suffering.

"The third theory is that God feels suffering but is not changed as stated by H. P. Owen

'.... This suffering of God is in the form of an "imaginative response' i.e. God imagines what it might be like to experience the suffering that human beings and nature knows.' This theory poses a couple of problems. It would be difficult to see the difference between suffering in imagination and suffering in experiencing mental pain which Owen denies to God....If God suffers imaginatively it still would imply that he must be affected by it.....

A fourth theory is that God suffers and changes himself in a limited way. An adherent of this viewpoint is Hans Küng who accepts that there can be no unrealized potentials in God and suggests that God, changing himself to meet the needs and conditions of the world, is the highest form of life. God is not actually changed by an external force but changes (repents) himself and his will because of what human beings do with his love. That means that he changes himself in response to the world but the world does not change him. The problem of this theory is that self-alteration is a different kind of suffering (as God is subject to suffering – but not subjected by it)... " (Fiddes 1992:56-60).

According to Fiddes to propose that God's suffering consists only in his changing himself is to depict a masochistic God, and so to come perilously near to condoning human suffering as an offering God requires. Problems for the omniscience and the eternity of God's divine nature arise when there is suffering which befalls God and which He does not choose.

Some of the abovementioned theories promote a certain dualism in God. The eschatological open view of theism states that God learns from the unfolding of history and therefore I see it as inevitable that he would change his mind with regards to events and decisions with the resultant effect that, as human beings, we could not be sure of the future or his standards with regards to morality as God might even change his mind on that as well. According to open theists God changed his mind in the case of Noah (Erickson 2006:20) as well as in the desert regarding the rebellious Hebrews. God chose Saul as king but later rejected him (Erickson 2006:20). He wanted to destroy the city of Sodom but allowed Abraham to cause him to qualify his decision based on the existence of righteous people in Sodom (Gen 18:20-33) (Huffman 2002:241). I would like to posit a counter argument as God knows exactly what will happen in the future for instance in 2 Kings 20:6 God knows with certainty that he will add another fifteen years to Hezekiah's life and in Isaiah 44:28 God predicted a future king with the name of Cyrus 200 years before the time which is a powerful argument that God fashions history. Seven hundred years prior to Israel's rebellion which is mentioned in Isaiah 5, Moses predicted this rebellion and God's anger in Deut 31:16-21.

In the Christian Scriptures we see that God is portrayed as wholly good, morally free from any evil or corruption. In Psalm 7:17 we see that evil functions like a boomerang, bringing back on evil human beings what they planned for others. God was ready to act against the unrepentant sinner and his action was to direct the consequences of evil away from the innocent human being and back on the perpetrator. God's justice and righteousness is thus portrayed here especially in verse 18. In the prayer of Jesus for all believers (John 17:25-26) Jesus addresses God as 'righteous Father' which acts as a reminder of God's righteousness in his judgement of the world.

In Job 16, God is charged by Job with deliberately bringing all the evil upon him (Job); God has, according to this accusation, launched a brutal attack on an innocent human being. Job's friends want to safeguard the goodness of God and hence argue that Job's suffering must be deserved. With this situation three inferences could be made.

1. The first is that Job is a sinner and deserves the punishment;
2. the second inference which could be drawn is that God is unfair and indifferent to human suffering.
3. The third inference is that God allowed this suffering

which leaves us with the basic question of this thesis. It is very hard to see the reasoning behind this act but John Schneider, (in van Inwagen 2004:255), is of the opinion that Job acquired wisdom not in spite of his experiences but because of them. The question we are left with is then to ask whether there is a kind of good wisdom that only could come about by participating in horrors. It seems that John Schneider (in van Inwagen 2004:256) is of the opinion that we need such wisdom in order to have a mature relationship with God. If we take relationships between human beings as a yardstick then it is true that in certain cases human beings have moved closer to each other through sharing painful experiences in which case we are left to trust that this is the answer.

This viewpoint reflects Roman Catholic views as is evident from "*Salvifici Doloris*" an apostolic letter from Pope John Paul II (Pope John Paul II 1984) where it is suggested that all human beings are called to share in that suffering through which the redemption was accomplished. It would seem in this view that by suffering human beings contribute to the divine suffering by which human beings are redeemed which then seemingly suggests that Christ's suffering and therefore his propitiation for sin was somehow incomplete; which from a Protestant viewpoint would be suspect. Paul in Colossians 1:24 seems to suggest the same thing where he speaks of filling up in his flesh what was still lacking in regards to

Christ's afflictions. Maybe suffering here is a profound way of fellowship. Unamuno, a Spanish existentialist philosopher put it this way:

God suffers in each and all of us, in each and all of the consciousnesses imprisoned in transitory matter, and we all suffer in Him. Religious anguish is but the divine suffering, the feeling that God suffers in me and that I suffer in Him. (Unamuno 1967:207)

Certainly for Laura Ekstrom in van Inwagen (2004:96) suffering is a kind of religious experience. She says:

“It is argued by David Hume, William Rowe, and Paul Draper, among others, that pain and suffering constitute evidence against the existence of God. But perhaps at least some such instances of pain and suffering are, rather, avenues to knowledge of God. Many individuals, Wolterstorff and Job among them, report that the times during which they have suffered the most deeply are the occasions of the most vivid of whatever glimpses they have been given into the character of God.”

2.2.6 God's involvement through the Kingdom (Commonwealth) of God

Dealing superficially with the Christian Scriptures, one may conclude that God is not involved in every event and circumstance. In the history of theology, in too many instances, conscious awareness of the presence of God has been equated with God's involvement in people's surrounding environment. Thus, when God was not experienced in a conscious way God was considered to be more or less absent. Having said that, events in which God's actions were seen for example biblically, when God caused Pharaoh and his household to experience significant plagues because of Abram's wife (Gen 12:17) lead to a superficial acceptance of God's direct action in the world. Closer to today's world, human beings contract cancer which is brought about by their own action of cigarette smoking, yet we cannot deny that God is somewhere and somehow involved. In still other events God and human beings work mysteriously together. For instance according to the biblical narrative God promised to make Abram a great nation, yet Sarai was infertile (Gen 21:1). Both God and Sarai and Abram had to work together to accomplish and fulfil the promise. In other instances God reworks human actions to accomplish good results as in the case of the story of Joseph where his

brothers sold him to traders. In the end the effect was that the whole family survived a famine. (Gen 41-45 recounts the events around the enslavement of Joseph leading to the eventual situation where Joseph was subordinate only to Pharaoh and therefore could provide the food and sanctuary necessary for his family to survive the famine.) Considering God's actions as reflected to us in the Christian Scriptures, we can conclude with Abraham (Gen 18:25) that whatever God does is righteous. There is thus an ontological distinction between the Creator and the creatures just as there is a distinction between the Creator and the rest of his creation. And although there is a distinction there also is a connectedness and as human beings in our creatureliness and our involvement with sin and evil we also partake in the renewal process between: God, human beings and nature, in a process which is directed among other things to the wholesomeness of the self.

2.2.7 Supernatural theologism – God breaking into his own handiwork after being set outside creation by the theologian's scheme

Of the viewpoints that have been discussed so far, deism (McGrath 2001:180) seems to be one of the least plausible. Although the Deists⁷ (McGrath 2001:142-143) believe in a transcendent God, they believe that this God created the universe, establish the order and laws and then basically 'let go of it'. God's intervention in the universe is viewed as infrequent or non-existent. Miracles like healing are impossible and prayer is useless. This God is too transcendent to be bothered with evil and suffering of human beings and as supreme being actually is merely an idea necessary to explain reality, this explains that a relationship could not be established and loving providence is therefore ruled out. This remote God is not the God of the Christian Scriptures because the God of the Scriptures is interested in nature as well as in each human being⁸ as is evident in the teaching

⁷ An extensive list of Deists is given in Richardson 1983,149.

⁸ God is concerned about nature and human beings as is evident in his answer to Jonah's complaint: "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and

of Jesus when he spoke out against worry and told his disciples that God clothed the grass of the field and will clothe them as well (Luke 12:28). The God of the Deists, being an impersonal God, cannot relate to human beings who suffer as he does not seem to care and hence cannot offer any solace to human beings who suffer. The Christian God is a personal God, Emmanuel, God – with – us, and Christ, therefore, is proof that God cares for human beings and is involved in this world. The presence of the Holy Spirit is a continuous reminder of this fact.

On par with the theory of the Deists is the rather ‘skeleton’ theory of David Hume which has been discussed by van Inwagen (2004:41-42) in the following terms:

“David Hume seems to favour ...a . ‘hypothesis of indifference’.....This hypothesis is very broad. It is compatible both with metaphysical naturalism, which denies the existence of all supernatural entities, and also with a variety of supernaturalist hypotheses, including deism, which affirms a personal supernatural creator, but denies that this creator has any benevolent or malevolent interest in the quality of earthly life....Hume.....believes that it is the only hypothesis that can account for what he calls the ‘strange mixture’ of pain and pleasure in the world.”

According to my own sense-making process, God works with nature and human beings – from within them as well as with them as he is all embracing, all pervasive and revealed himself as self-existent, eternal and unchangeable when he said to Moses “I Am who I Am” (Exodus 3:14). This name includes the idea of God’s continual presence which displays his otherness and mystery in his acts. And although God is intimately involved in creation he still remains distinct. The Apocrypha Wisdom of Solomon 12:1 says that God’s immortal Spirit is in all things and he corrects people little by little. We see God’s renewing Spirit through the inworking of the Holy Spirit in the lives of human beings and where the Spirit is active bringing snippets of truth to other faith orientations. In the Gospel of Matthew, human beings are assured that in the coming of Jesus, God was with his people (1:23) and at the end of Matthew’s Gospel this same message is reiterated

twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left – and much livestock?” (Jonah 4:11, KJV)

in the promise that God (in Jesus through the Spirit which makes Jesus real for human beings) will be continuously present with his people until the end of time; his presence will never be withdrawn (Matthew 28:20).

In opposition to original Greek philosophy which viewed God as uninvolved and without feelings, König sees that God is very real and is involved personally in history as is evident from the many and varied ways God reveals himself in terms of human characteristics; König then proceeds to justify his arguments by providing the following list:

“...there is reference to the form (his eyes Ps. 11:4; his ears: 2 Kgs. 8:29; his feet: Matt 5:35), feelings (repent: Gen 6:6,7; glad: Deut 28:63; feels sad: Eph 4:30) and actions of God (he smells: Gen 8:21; he whistles: Isa 5:26; he sees: Matt 6:4, 6, 18) ... The biblical God has feelings and can feel sorry that he created human beings as is evidenced from Genesis 6:5-7” (König 1982:60-61).

That God relates to human beings is evident from Goldingay as well; God does not abandon or reject Adam and Eve and continues with his relationship with them:

“...God who casts Adam and Eve out of the garden goes with them. They are not separated from God.....Expulsion from Eden is a terrible event, yet it does not undo the whole purpose of creation.” (2003:149).

In his relationship with human beings, God interrelates with them from the beginning of the Christian Scriptures as is evident from Goldingay:

“In first creating the world (Gen 1), God’s preferred form of speech had been a command, but once there are other people to relate to, questions seem to be God’s preferred form of speech.” (2003:150).

In Roman Catholicism it is explicitly stated that God is not really breaking into this world but is very much present in this world (Chapman 1994:57) as Christ not only redeems human beings through his suffering (salvific and redemptive) on the cross but also becomes a sharer in all human suffering (Chapman 1994:337) and acts from within that suffering by his consoling Spirit of Truth. And through God’s saving work in Christ, victory over the evils of human suffering has been gained (Chapman 1994:64) as evil and suffering are not only temporal but eternal

separation from God (Chapman 1994:241,234) who is supreme good, is definitive evil and suffering. Fundamental suffering is the rejection by God and loss of eternal life. The cross and resurrection did not abolish temporal suffering from human life (Chapman 1994:64) and the answer lies in the doctrine of original sin. The orthodox Christian doctrine of original sin has four points (Van Inwagen 2004:128),

- 1) original sin is contrary to God's will and is present in all human beings and in all areas of their lives
- 2) it is present from birth
- 3) as the fallen nature is inherited, it results in hereditary moral weakness and hence, alienation from God and
- 4) it has a historical beginning resulting from the sin of Adam who is the progenitor of the race.

The doctrine of original sin has paved the way for the belief that God and Satan are on par.

2.2.8 God and Satan on par regarding evil and suffering?

Is Satan, the devil or is he the main evil-doer - the counterpart of God? From the outset it must be stated that there are no evil forces operating outside of God's jurisdiction over which he does not have control and this will be discussed in detail subsequently in this work.

Different beliefs, opinions and viewpoints have evolved around the concept of evil and the origin of evil which warrant highlighting.

A radical discussion on "the accuser" and his relationship to God has been put forward by Papini in his book, *The Devil*. (1955). Papini sought to explore the

history of God's relationship with Satan. Whilst much of his book is not relevant to this thesis there are often snippets of insight which are valuable to consider. Papini proposes that the role of Satan is important in the development of human beings and without interacting explicitly with the soul making concepts stemming from Irenaeus (discussed above under 2.2.4 Theodicy?), gave the following defence for the existence of the Devil:

Sanctity is evil conquered and cast down; if evil (Satan) did not exist, neither would the saints. Satan has a job to do which is irreplaceable, a providential mission, and in this sense we may affirm that the Devil is by divine will a coadjutor of God. Satan is the adversary but, without the adversary, there would be no battle; without battle, there would be no victory and glory." (Papini 1957:148).

And so Papini sees the existence of Satan as an essential part of the free will defence and the soul making process because without evil, which he equates to Satan, there cannot be free choice for human beings to reject evil and without this a human being cannot choose towards God and away from evil.

And Papini's arguments also propose that the strength of Satan is limited:

If the devil is, in every case, stronger than man and if all the evil in the world is his work, it would follow that every man is in truth innocent, and that any punishment is inconceivable." (Papini 1957:150)

This statement argues against dualism because it places limits on the power of Satan and ensures that in the fairness of God each human being is judged for the actions for which that human being is responsible. Papini goes on to refute dualism by saying:

"Our misfortune, before all else, is that we do not resist temptation but can we honestly blame this weakness on the Tempter? He who attributes responsibility for all sins to the Devil does so – even if he doesn't know it – by making of him [Satan] an omnipotent being, that is another God" (1957:151)

Papini clearly states that omnipotence is attributed to Satan by human beings as a way of absolving themselves from their actions and in this statement it is apparent that Papini does not see Satan as being omnipotent nor being on par with God.

In cosmological dualism, two opposing supernatural forces, God and Satan, who represent the moral qualities of good and evil, are on par. The absolute sovereignty of Jewish religious thought implies therefore that God is the originator of evil (Bare 2001:66) and that the resultant dualism of good and evil is not eternal or absolute as it is seen in Iranian (Conway 2003:28) theology. Several viewpoints exist such as from a general Christian perspective “everything God created is good” (1 Tim 4:4) and therefore Satan was created a good spirit and became evil. This was taught by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Calvin (Blocher in Campbell-Jack 2006:632-633). Augustine further held the opinion “that evil is not a substance with existence per se; it is relative and parasitic; it is the perversion, privation and corruption of the good.” (Blocher in Campbell-Jack 2006:635). Karl Barth rejected the idea that the devils and demons were created and later fell from their original estate. He doesn't seem to deny their existence but represents them as “nothingness” which is a counterpart of creation – something that is rejected by God (Barth 1961:310-320).

Ellul (1990:264-265) is of the opinion that there was an invasion of Roman thought in the Church Fathers, beginning in the third century, with the main emphasis on trial which is very foreign to Christianity with the concept of grace. This Roman thought gave rise to a theology of salvation by works with God as the implacable judge on his throne whose main symbol is Hell.

Dualism asserts that God and Satan are on par and that neither has complete mastery over the other; that neither God, nor Satan is absolute or omnipotent (McGrath 2007:167). If this is true then God may be incapable – albeit sympathetic – of assisting human beings and time spent by human beings in worship and prayer could be of no benefit to the worshipers in their natural lives.

According to EP Lewis (in Wright 1990:34-35) the world consists of three eternal existents, God (creative), the adversary (discreative) and the residue (uncreative). So the world/residue is acted upon by the two forces of good and evil. Nature and human beings are caught between these two forces. Human beings have freedom to decide whether they want to work with the forces of creativity or discreativity.

This theory, however, must be rejected on the basis that it makes evil co-eternal with good and thereby denies the supremacy of a good God.

Eznik of Kolb (5th century) contrasts the God of Christianity with the weaker gods of the dualistic religions (Blanchard 1998:23). God does not cause evil and allow the contest between Satan and himself to show that Satan is an enemy by free will. Satan was not created evil as nothing evil can come into being from a beneficent Creator. Eznik (Blanchard 1998:23) stresses that evil is ‘works of people and not some kind of people’. At first no evil thing existed – the only thing that existed was the command of God to obey, leaving the choice not to obey, which can be considered as the cause of evil. When Adam disobeyed the divine commandment of God, evil came about. Evil is not an uncreated and self-existent being. Jealousy is the beginning of all evil (Wisdom 2:24) as Satan was jealous of the first human beings as they received a superabundance of honour from God (Blanchard 1998:24). Things are not evil naturally but become evil because they are accomplished outside the will of God. When Satan came into being from God, he knew that it is evil to disobey God. Satan was not evil in himself neither was he created evil and an adversary to God but acquired the knowledge that evil is opposition to God’s command. Eznik (in Blanchard) used a very plausible argument to justify his argument when he stated that:

“....But as for Satan, we know that Satan has not come into being from God. But the name ‘Satan’ is on account of his going astray, because ‘Satan’ is translated from the Hebrew and Syriac languages as ‘mised’. But he was established by God as a power capable of good. Yet because of the enmity he harboured toward man he wilfully became ‘the slanderer’ (Rev 2:10; Rev 19:12; Rev 20:2). Having abandoned submission to God, he began to disobey, and to teach man to oppose God’s commands, and subsequently he became like a rebel, and he turned away from God. And the divine Word attests to this term, calling him ‘rebel dragon’ (cf. Rev. 12:7-9)” (1998:62)

Thus Eznik of Kolb saw that through the jealousy of the adversary, death entered into the world (cf. Wis 2:23-24).

In the Qur’an Iblis (Satan) is also seen as the source of all evil and the first one to disobey God. The Qur’an (quoted in Kateregga 1980:20) states:

“And (remember) when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am creating a mortal out of potter’s clay of black mud altered, so, when I have made him and have breathed into him of My spirit, do ye fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him. So the angels fell prostrate, all of them together save Iblis. He refused to be among the prostrate. (Qur’an 15:28-31).

According to Islam then, evil only affects human beings who yield to it and is therefore avoidable if a human being is committed to Allah. This evil is not hereditary but resides in Iblis who disobeyed Allah at the creation of human beings. Human beings therefore do not suffer sin and evil because of Adam’s disobedience and cannot be said to partake in the original sin as set out by Augustine (Berkhof 1996:245).

The term satan (challenger or adversary) or name Satan only appears three times in the Old Testament in order to test human beings to prove or disprove their faith in God as is seen in the books of Job, Numbers and Zechariah. In Numbers 22 the Angel of Yahweh comes as ‘a satan’ against Balaam and his ass. In Job 1-2 one of the “sons of God” acts as ‘a satan’ against Job and in Zechariah 3 the High Priest Joshua is accused by Satan. Kelly (2006:31) explains this phenomenon by saying that the Jews who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek believed that one of God’s angels was actually named Satan, which they rendered in Greek as ‘ho Diabolos’, Devil, in the Books of Job and Zechariah and thus Satan has been born. An increase in the emphasis on Satan as the opponent of God seems to originate from Zoroastrianism where, as described above, there is an emphasis on the dualistic tendencies. Although there was an influence of the Persian religion (Zoroastrianism) on Judaism, absolute dualism was excluded because of the strong Jewish belief that God is in control. Another important factor was the Jewish belief that the evil powers were originally good but then rebelled against God.

In the post-exilic period (1 Chronicles 21:1) the accuser (ha-śatan) changed into śatan, a personal name. In the inter-testamental period Satan becomes a devil with demons who seduce human beings, inflicts them with diseases and hence pain and punishes the wicked. In some of the inter-testamental literature such as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs it is mentioned that a new “priest” will be raised up by God who will bind Beliar and will make war against Beliar (Testament

of Dan 5:10) (Kugler 2001:68). In the New Testament (Mark 3:26-27), one aspect of the work of Jesus is described as the binding of the strong man, the devil as well as the plundering of the house. According to Colossians 2:15, the principalities and powers doing their rounds in the world, have been disarmed by the power of the cross. They have been named and shamed as well as being made a public spectacle.

In the inter-testamental period the literature gained a cosmic character as judgement is not just for human beings and nations but also for fallen angels and demons (1 Enoch 16:1, Charles 1917:11). Even the prince of demons self is judged (1 Enoch 10:6, Charles 1917:6) as well as the sun and moon (1 Enoch 18:13ff) (Charles 1917:12). During this period there seems to be a development in the eschatological imagery of the saviour which corresponds with the Zoroastrian saviour. According to Hinnells the saviour is:

“...said to defeat the demons, the dead are raised at his coming or by him, and he introduces and administers the eschatological judgement. Precisely the same functions are carried out by the Zoroastrian saviour Sōšyant, and since the apocalyptic setting of both is so similar one might reasonably conclude that the development in the Judaeo-Christian saviour imagery is indebted to Iranian influence.... It is in the New Testament that the... Messiah, who originally suppressed the enemies of Israel and established God's own nation, now defeats the forces of evil, and at his coming men are raised to share in God's kingdom” (2000:58-65).

Both in the Old and New Testament it seems that there is a link between “gods” and “demons/devils” as is evidenced in 2 Kings 23:8 when goat-demons are mentioned and in 1 Corinthians 10:20-22, when Paul describes sacrifices made to demons. König (1982:15-16) suggests that Revelation 9:20 shows a particular connection between gods and demons and he proceeded to show that it is not just demons which are in opposition to God, but also the government (Acts 4:19); the belly (Phil 3:19); mammon (Matt 6:24) and elemental spirits (Gal 4:9).

In John's gospel, there seems to be a dualism between forces opposing the will of God as well as human beings and nature as is seen in light against darkness, spirit against flesh, life against death and God against Satan. In this gospel, Satan also appears in the role of accuser and the Holy Spirit as counsel for the defence.

As God's reign has an already/not yet aspect to it and all powers of evil are not yet subdued, 1 Cor 15:23-25 could be used as a point in the dualistic argument. Neyrey (1988:90-91), in agreement with the anthropological model of Douglas (Douglas 1991:178-179) is of the opinion that Paul finds himself in a dualistic world where evil attacks the bodies of God's people and that Paul is an example of this cosmic injustice, whereby the good suffer. According to Neyrey (1988:90-91) in agreement with Douglas (Douglas 1982:65-81), in the worldview of Paul, the Law is an evil which enslaves human beings (Gal 4:9) and Satan causes diseases, death and heresy and his kingdom is in opposition to the Kingdom of God.

A very interesting observation worth mentioning, has been made by Hills (1992:40) that traditionally Luke 10:17-20 has been translated as Jesus who saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven and various interpretations have been suggested but that the article proposes that the imperfect ἐθεώρουν be translated not 'I saw' but 'the demons [in 10:17] saw'. Therefore Jesus' response to the disciples is that their exorcisms were successful as the demons became subject to the disciples because the demons had seen their leader, Satan, dethroned. Goldingay (2003:144) is in complete agreement with this position in saying:

“When Jesus speaks of Satan's 'fall' (Lk 10:18), he seems to be referring to the defeat that came about through his ministry and that of his disciples, anticipating the victory of cross and resurrection.”

In agreement with Forbes (2001:63-65) and in disagreement with Wesley Carr (as discussed by Arnold 1987:75-82) and Neyrey (1988:90-91), I would like to put forward the argument that for Paul, the emphasis was not so much on Satan and demons confronting human beings, but rather, on the Law, Sin and Death which confront human beings. Forbes (Forbes 2001:67) makes the statement that the term Satan is only used by Paul ten times and hence we cannot learn a great deal about spirits and Satan in the Pauline theology although Paul clearly believes in the existence of angels, demons, spirits and Satan. According to Forbes (2002:52)

“In his understanding of 'principalities and powers', Paul is working creatively between the angelology and demonology of his Jewish heritage, and the world-view of the thoughtful Graeco-Roman philosophical amateur...”.

I would like to mention that it is a well known fact that, according to first-century world-view, evil spiritual powers played a prominent role and I believe that this may be one of the reasons for the reference in Ephesians 6:12 asserting that believers are engaged in a conflict with these spiritual powers. Since a dualistic cosmology was widely held in first century Judaism; intelligent beings, both human and spiritual (such as angels), were aligned with either God or Satan.

Wesley Carr challenges such a view and although his theories have been refuted the argument is worth repeating as justification for my opinion. Wesley Carr (in Arnold 1987:75-84) ...

“...sets forth the thesis that , ‘the concept of mighty forces that are hostile to man, from which he sought relief, was not prevalent in the thought world of the first century AD’...In his examination of the Pauline epistles...he finds no evidence either of the existence of demonic forces or of a conflict between Christ and the powers of evil...Paul, therefore, has no concept of a realm of demonic powers, according to Carr....One immediately recognizes that Ephesians 6:12 seems to present an insurmountable obstacle to Carr’s thesis....he (Carr) is left no choice but reluctantly to resort to an interpolation argument...He concludes that good angels and gods were commonly spoken of in the first century, but the idea of the demonic was only in its seminal form and clearly not prominentCarr does not deny the Jewish belief in the adversary ‘Satan’; instead, he notices the tendency that, ‘personalized evil is mainly focused in one being rather than in a host of identifiable demonic powers’....Carr may be faulted:...especially conspicuous is his neglect of the Qumran literature. The very nature of the War Rule ...is a theological treatise symbolizing the eternal struggle between the Spirits of Light and the Spirits of Darkness. Satan is depicted in the War Rule as leading a band of evil spirits into battle....In discussing 1 Enoch and Jubilees, Carr is faced with a dilemma because of the presence of a number of apparent references to evil spirits and fallen angels. Paradoxically, Carr does concede that these ‘powers’ do have a place in Jewish thought as early as the second century BC...Finally, Carr’s statements that the fallen angels play an essentially small role in the two books must be flatly denied.....The concept of a world populated with evil spirits and oppressive demons which led people astray from God is undeniably attested in the Synoptics...The Synoptics subscribe to a belief in an evil angelic hierarchy. The Gospel of Matthew speaks of an ‘eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels’...Carr has utterly neglected to take the magical tradition of Asia Minor into consideration....The presence of this tradition in first-century Asia Minor and throughout the Hellenistic world directly contradicts his thesis.”

As supplementary support for my main argument, the origin of the serpent (in Gen 3) warrants unpacking. In the ancient Near East serpents were considered to be:

“...symbols of protection (Egyptian uraeus), of evil (deadly poison [Egyptian apopsi]), of fecundity (Canaanite fertility goddess), or of continuing life (renewal of skin).” (Waltke 2001: 90).

In Gen 3:1, where the narrative of the deception of Eve by the serpent is recorded, the serpent was not a genuine antagonist but one of the “...creatures the Lord God had made” (New Living Translation) this removes the possibility of viewing the serpent as a force in a dualistic account of the origins of good and evil. (Hamilton 1990:189). Genesis 3 does not refer explicitly to Satan and the serpent in this Scripture was not a spiritual being in disguise, but merely a snake, although the Orphites (Gnostic group) considered the snake as their patron, and according to some Jewish interpretations the snake was symbolic of Satan as is evidenced from the Palestinian targums and possibly the Onqelos targum (Wenham 1987: 80). However, this does not seem to be the view of the narrator of Gen 3.

Atkinson (1990:82) suggests that the snake as the source of external temptation, presents us with the question of responsibility in making choices, and that the origin of evil is left within the mystery of God unless we want to go the route where:

“...in the temptation the serpent as a figure of speech represents the exploring experimental intelligence that is in man’s rational nature and that is evoked by an environment which challenges him to master it.”(Gehman undated: 852).

This statement would read something into the text which is definitely not present as it is explicitly stated in 3:1 that “the Lord God had made” this wild animal.

2.3 Evil and suffering and a wholesome multidimensional human being

2.3.1 Evil and suffering and a dualistic or triadic human being

The question can be posed: how can human beings claim that they are created in the image of God when they are responsible for evil deeds done to other human beings as well as to the rest of creation?

According to the portrayal of Genesis 3:1-6, when confronted by a choice between obedience and disobedience Adam and Eve chose disobedience and hence chose to be in opposition to God's will which could be regarded as evil. Could it be that both human beings and nature which were created good and very good, respectively but not perfect, had the potential to become either perfect by adhering to God's will or could be infiltrated by chaos (being in opposition to God's order) which existed before the act of creation?

Different human beings respond differently to the problem of evil. Generally speaking it can be seen that one group views evil as illusion, as is seen in the Hindu religion where there is no dualism because there is just one ultimate reality which is good. Another group views God as good but finite and therefore an adequate explanation of evil prevails. God does not deal with evil because it is out of his control. This solution is posed by dualism which places God on par with evil forces – Human beings, together with God, struggle against evil.

The dualism found within human beings is an extension of this group. It was believed in the Qumran community (1QSiii, 25) that God created two spirits, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error and that human beings have a choice whether they live in accordance to truth or error and hence are then controlled by the Prince of Lights or the Angel of Darkness (Kuhn 1958:98). The spirit of truth and the spirit of darkness are in conflict within the human heart in order to gain supremacy. This teaching corresponds with the rabbinic doctrine of good and evil impulses. Sins committed by righteous human beings are caused by the spirit of

error. This “two spirits treatise” exhibits a dualism which many scholars believe to have filtered through from Iranian sources (Kuhn 1958:98).

Another group views evil as good as is evidenced in the theory of Gottfried von Leibnitz (1646-1716) where evil works for good as the world is moving towards perfection (Cunningham 2006:243). According to Hick (in Stoeber 1992:54-55), human beings can choose between good and evil and evil is necessary in the gradual development of human beings who will reach completion when all human beings have a perfect relationship with their Creator.

Stoeber discusses this concept in light of the thoughts of Boehme as follows:

“There is in Boehme’s thought, then, the sense that though God could intervene in the forces of nature for the better, he could not create a material world without the blind creative dynamism that is associated with the first principle of the Divine Essence. Our world is the only world God could create as a soul making environment. This places limitations on divine omnipotence by supposing an external constraint upon divine providence.” (1992:159)

This argument proposes that the restraint on God is placed on God by Godself, suggesting that there is/was no better solution to providing an environment for human beings to progress in the soul making process and therefore the freedom necessary to give human beings free choice by its nature implied, and resulted in, the freedom of the natural created world and the natural world’s processes of existence to cause natural disasters. Thus in this view, God is limited only by God’s wish to provide the best of all possible worlds for the soul making journey of human beings. This freedom of the natural world can be considered to be present so that the interconnectedness of God, human beings and the created cosmic universe would remain both interconnected and also at the same time radically different. If nature was not free to cause natural disaster, then human beings would not have been able to be completely free in their choices and actions as certain actions such as the excessive use of carbonaceous fuels leading to high Carbon Dioxide gas content in the earth’s atmosphere, leading to global warming and the resultant natural disasters that involve both the suffering of human beings, nature and through our interconnectedness, God, could not have been possible.

Thus human beings would have been restricted in both the decisions that led to the problem and therefore, the freedom to choose to or not to bring about suitable solutions to the problem. Yet in establishing this freedom, God has allowed human beings to condemn through drought, flood, rising sea levels, hurricanes, earthquakes etc. millions of human beings to suffering and death.

This deliberation leads to a further line of thought, which is: are natural disasters that occur because of natural events evil if they cause suffering? Or are they neither good nor evil but just 'events' and the suffering that arises does so due to the necessary freedoms of human beings and nature in the process of the outworking of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation (fulfilment)? Is the resultant suffering then justified? Does it need to be? What if it is not justified? Does the human being experiencing the suffering care if the suffering is "morally acceptable" or are we making an esoteric moral, academic argument trying to allocate blame instead of being open to the working of the Holy Spirit and moving, acting, helping, empathising alongside the sufferer?

In this thesis the whole notion of independent soul/body (duality) or spirit/soul/body (triadic) concepts is discussed in section 2.3.2 where the concept of a human being is proposed as a differentiated but integrated wholesome singular and irreplaceable human being along the lines proposed by van Niekerk (2008:95ff). This then leads us to view the concept of 'soul making' in a different light, because the human being is a wholesome integrated and differentiated individual person and can be seen through the perspective of the resurrection of Jesus, which is God's greatest tool for the continuation of people's existence through life into afterlife (van Niekerk 2008:121). This approach therefore renders the ideas of Stoeber and Hick (referred to above) with a purgatory style intermediate phase in the development of souls or Stoeber (referred to above) with the concepts of non-retributive re-incarnation to be in need of being reviewed. These deliberations will be continued in 2.3.7 to draw these concepts together with the concepts of wholesomeness.

2.3.2 Relevance of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures

Another appropriate question with regards to evil and suffering that warrants careful consideration is whether the Christian Scriptures are still relevant in this century with its global diseases such as HIV/AIDS. So, before embarking on consideration of the dualistic concept, the question concerning the coherence and contingency of the Christian Scriptures should be established with regards to the concepts of evil and suffering. Ecclesiastes, Job, Deuteronomy as well as Daniel seem to give different interpretations to the problem of evil and suffering. In Deuteronomy 19:21, human beings are admonished with the concept of “Life for life, eye for eye...” to act with fairness as the concept implies that vengeance should not exceed the original injury – this concept does not promote the act of vengeance as some are in the habit to render the scriptures. In Amos 5:14-15 human beings are again admonished to do good and seek justice and not evil.

When considered from a fundamentalist mirroring interpretative perspective, the book of Genesis is viewed as depicting that the evil and suffering in this world are the result of sin and this is justified in this viewpoint by the understanding that the world was put under a curse by God (Gen 3:17) and by the sin of one human being death came upon all (Romans 5:12). The question in the book of Job is therefore: why do both the wicked and the righteous suffer? The book of Job teaches that God alone knows best how to bring glory to himself and that he always works for the ultimate good of human beings and that he always has a purpose in permitting suffering though human beings might not always be able to comprehend it. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes discusses his struggles as he continues to wrestle against the problems of life. He warns against the ‘ruler of this world’(Satan), who even uses blessings of God to entice human beings to trust in the blessings instead of in the One who bestows the blessings (2:11) He also admonishes human beings to prepare for eternity. In the Book of Daniel, the vision is explained to Daniel so that he can know the ultimate triumph of God’s kingdom over all evil. In place of all the unjust kingdoms, God’s theocratic kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom, will be established (Daniel 7:27). With regards to the coherence and contingency of these four Old Testament Scriptures,

when read in sensible negotiation, it would seem that the message is coherent and applicable in new situations.

The same argument applies to the New Testament as is evidenced from the book of Romans. In the book of Romans the same concept of justice is expressed for instance in Romans 2:5 where it is stated explicitly that God exercises righteous judgement. Essential to a good God of love, is his wrath against evil and therefore God will challenge evil, but for human beings salvation is offered through Christ. God, human beings and the physical organic cosmic world are being reconciled in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, being renewed through the Spirit and being involved in the processes and events directed to the future consummation and fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth. (van Niekerk 2006:371-373). For Paul, idolatry⁹ is the reason for all the evil and suffering which is impacting other human beings as well as the created order which is being manipulated and exploited in order to satisfy the greed of human beings. But according to Paul, God has intervened in this evil situation in the world by means of his Son and created a new world order which reflects the already – not yet aspect of God’s Kingdom. Beker sees that:

“The church then....is a new creation of God, not arising out of the idolatrous old creation but inserted into it by God’s grace in order to exhibit a new form of life and to found a new basis for human hope and fulfilment.....The church....is called not only to endure suffering but also to engage suffering, to relieve the suffering caused by the world’s injustice and idolatry....to...develop strategies against the specific forms which idolatry ‘enfleshes,’ such as segregation,...the economic exploitation of marginal people, the plight of the homeless and deinstitutionalized mental patients.” (1987:87).

What is termed church by Beker and many others is negotiably viewed by Bonhoeffer as the *ekklesia* “those who are called forth”, meaning those who wholly

⁹ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry (Col 3:5). Paul also gives a range of activities as examples of idolatry (in 1 Cor 10:1-10).

belong to the world. Bonhoeffer asks the question; in what way are we religionless and secular Christians? He says::

“In what way are we the Ekklesia, “those who are called forth”, not conceiving of ourselves religiously as specially favoured, but as wholly belonging to the world? Then Christ is no longer an object of religion, but something quite different, indeed and in truth the Lord of the world.” (1953:92).

Yet what does that signify – that Christ is indeed in the Bonhoefferian sense the Lord of the world? Van Niekerk negotiates Bonhoeffer’s notion of *ekklesia*, meaning “people that are called forth”, in terms of a diasporical way of looking at the Commonwealth (=Kingdom, Prophetdom, Priesthood, etc) of God:

“The diaspora approach sees the church, or any organisation of faith, as a fairly important social structure where people share in the fellowship of human faith. In other words: an organisation of faith is a corner-shop of faith that deals in mutual faith, belief and trust in which God is involved and present as in any other societal structure, organisation or institution. The Church or a church is not a millimetre more sacred and not a gram more sacramental than any other institution, organisation or community in society. This makes it but one social structure among many in a differentiated modern society which should have the openness for ‘Commonwealth of God’ experiences.

The idea that the force that stimulates people, draws them out of the past, engages them in the present and impels them into the future is the idea of the Commonwealth of God that cannot be identified with any human social structure, context, situation or activity. Any societal organisation overlaps diasporically but is not on par or to be identified with the Commonwealth of God as is occasionally alleged in church-centred circles..... Real life and true reality are there where people live and where true human life enters the “Kingdom” of God which is interconnected with natural reality as the universes, stars, suns, oceans, animals and trees... At no point do we have an isolated, chosen funnel through which God and salvific sense and meaning enter society – neither an institution and organisation that is idolised like the Church, as in the church-centred approach, nor the state (as with 19th century Hegel), nor a group of preprogrammed Christian or religious organisations; yet it could be an organisation of faith, the state, science, marriage, labour union, family or sport, or any other phenomenon. No single structure of the human world may be excluded as if it were by definition unsuitable for salvific sense and meaning. In terms of this approach traces, fragments and moments of God, being human and the physical-organic environment can only be compositely experienced when and where the interconnection and simultaneous otherness of the Godness

of God, the humanness of human beings and the naturalness of nature (= physical-organic-cosmic environment) coincide.” (van Niekerk 2006:394-395).

The *ekklesia* as the church in the sense of “people that are called forth” – not the structure but the followers of the Kingdom (Commonwealth) of God – is called to live out and work out their total involvement in God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment in this world in the midst of evil and suffering and thus be God’s instruments of God’s Kingdom which consists of more than only God’s reconciliatory grace. I would hasten to add that according to God’s creation, reconciliatory grace, renewal and fulfilment, human beings and the natural cosmic environment are called to live out their awareness that they are partakers through the Spirit in God’s grand acts of creation, salvation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment.

The Judaeo-Christian Scriptures need to be read in a sensible negotiatory way taking into the fold all God’s grand acts. The Christian tradition which isolated Genesis 1-3 from what follows is highly problematical as it compartmentalises the text while relevant insights drawn from ‘the full biblical story’ become lost. According to van Niekerk (2009:287-289) the mystery of the togetherness and difference of God, human beings and the natural physical environment bound to God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment eventuate in a myriad of happenings of holiness in daily life through the working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore as people living in the era of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit opens up our involvement and engagement in the grand acts of God as well as providing us with clues, hues and cues through the biblical narrative by virtue of us being totally encapsulated in the renewal work of the Spirit of God. As the Holy Spirit permeates every atom, every being as well as the Scriptures (=inspired by the Spirit), experiences with God and nature are not only possible but are enacted when human beings open themselves in an aware sense as co-workers and co-readers of the Scriptures with the Spirit. Sensible negotiation is about co-reading of the Scriptures with the Spirit instead of mirroring in a fundamentalist way or interpreting what the text in its deeper levels is ‘actually’ saying to us.

Genesis 1-3 is only the beginning of the story – it is a process of original wrongdoing rather than just a:

“... decisive change in humanity’s moral capacity. Cain will now find that sin is lurking at his door, but he is called to master it (Gen 4:7)...Even resentful Cain can pull himself together and obey God if he chooses. He fails to do so, and this becomes part of that portrait of wrongdoing that grows through Genesis 1-6. It is only at the end of this narrative that God concludes that human wrongdoing is not only pervasive (Gen 6:5, 11-12) but inevitable (Gen 8:21).” (Goldingay 2003:147).

Reading these chapters in a spirit of sensible negotiation enables the reader to be indwelt and transformed in a constant push-pull effect of the Holy Spirit and become caught up in a transformational renewal and fulfilling process.

2.3.3 Original sin?

Before embarking on an analysis of human nature the concept of original sin needs unpacking as it could cause a stumbling block in the understanding of humanness.

In the sixth decree of the Synod of Jerusalem (AD672) the Orthodox churches make a clear distinction between human sinfulness and the primordial sin of the first human couple (Webster et al 2007:140). According to this viewpoint, original sin thus retains the historical ‘ancestral sin’ whereas for traditional western Christianity ‘original sin’ refers to the first sin of Adam and the congenital sinfulness inherited by Adam’s posterity as a consequence of Adam’s disobedience, as is also evidenced in some interpretations of Romans 5:12. McFarland (in Webster et al) in an article called ‘The Fall and Sin’ states that

“...the claim that human beings inherit sinfulness as well as death from Adam was first fully developed by Augustine....Since God’s goodness precluded the possibility that human beings had been created sinners, human sinfulness had to be caused by human sinning; and since humanity’s sinfulness was ex hypothesi universal, Augustine argued that it had to derive from the first human being by propagation rather than (as Pelagius claimed) by imitation. Critics charged that this position was indistinguishable from fatalism, but Augustine categorically denied that his teaching undermined human responsibility for sinful behaviour.” (2007:142).

Sinfulness is not perceived to be the same as 'inherited guilt', as guilt is a consequence of an individual's sinfulness, not Adam's sinfulness.

Original sin is also denied by Judaism. Kidner (1967:67) explains this as follows:

"Judaism denies the existence of original sin... True, the idea that the sin of Adam had brought death on all mankind is not unknown in Jewish teaching, but the reference is invariably to physical death, and is not to be confused with the spiritual death from which in Christian doctrine none can be saved except through faith in the risen Saviour. Man can therefore achieve his own redemption by penitence..."

In explanation of Baruch 54:19, Wenham (1987:91) states that:

"Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each of us has been the Adam of his own soul."

According to Westermann (in Hamilton 1990:211), who held the same opinion, the claim of transmission of sin or fall from original righteousness is reading into the text more than the text claims..

In Gen 3:6, 'ishshah' looked at the tree and desired its fruit which led to outward disobedience. Waltke (2001:102) defines sin as "...a breach of trust, an illicit reach of unbelief, an assertion of autonomy" and therefore 'ishshah' performed a sin although sin as such had not been mentioned explicitly in contrast to Gen 4:7 where sin is actually personified 'lurking at the door'. It would seem that both 'ishshah' and Cain could exercise choice in the matter of sin. Even Cain has free choice and thus the capability of making the right choice, otherwise God's words would be meaningless and comic according to Hamilton (1990:228). Adam, 'ishshah' and Cain fail and sin seems to become progressively so pervasive, especially in later chapters, that God concludes that it is inevitable as 'the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth' (Gen 8:21). In this statement (Gen 8:21) we see that the act of making a choice remains for human beings within the creaturely sphere of being responsible and accountable before the countenance of God.

The word 'inclination' represents the notion of the acting out of the choice that has been made. Looking at this textual context, consensibly negotiating in terms of the mystery of the simultaneous connection and difference of God, human beings and nature, we conclude that this statement in Gen 8:21 made by God, according to the narrative, after smelling the sweet aroma of the sacrifices of Noah (after being delivered from the flood), was a generalisation rather than an absolute. The proven exception to this situation, Noah, standing before God making a pleasing sacrifice, has already been acknowledged as a righteous man in the anarchical time before the flood. Moreover, because of Noah's right choices, he and his family were protected from the cataclysmic cleansing of the earth. This narrative rather than being a story of retribution and destruction is a demonstration of how ongoing interaction and negotiation between the Spirit of God and human beings take place. Righteousness is not debarred by "original sin". Noah made the right choices before he knew of the consequences. Genesis does not state that Noah's choices were guided by God before God announced his plan to cause the deluge, but shows that Noah had chosen to be close to God despite being set in his position against the rest of the human beings in the world at that time. Arguing and negotiating the text in this sense cast significant doubt on the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity (Webster et al 2007:148).

In Gen 3-4 human beings seem completely free to make their own choices. Based on this statement, Knight (1981:42) came to the conclusion that there is no trace of the Muslim kismet (fate) or Hindu (karma) or a total fall of human nature and although the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity (Webster et al 2007:148) may be valid, it cannot be based on Gen 3-4. It would seem that the doctrine of total depravity is a polarised view which is not easily justified from Genesis 3 and 4. We see that Abel and his offering were acceptable to the Lord and Cain was presented with a clear warning and encouragement to make the right choice by the Lord in Genesis 4. This infers that both of these individuals as Adam and Eve's immediate offspring were in a position to choose, rather than in a position of being condemned. What they had inherited was the 'knowledge of good and evil' and the inevitability of physical death but they remained responsible for their own choices. In Genesis 4:4 where Cain and Abel brought offerings before the Lord just before

the point of Abel's death, Abel had been looked on with favour by God – an example of a human being who made right choices. This observation of Abel, who was called “righteous Abel” by Jesus (Matt 23:35) and also reported as “a righteous man” by the writer of Hebrews (Heb 11:4) along with the report of Enoch who “walked with God” (Gen 5:23-35), also casts doubt on the Augustinian doctrine of total depravity because these men are examples within the Scriptures of men who were found to be acceptable to God, men who had the knowledge of good and evil but had chosen good and were recognised by God in this respect.

When reading the Scriptures with a responsible sensible negotiation approach an individual becomes aware of his/her creatureliness and sinful tendencies as well as the impact of such behaviour on God, other human beings and nature, enabling and preparing the individual for the salvific and reconciliatory process and enactment of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the renovation and renewal power of the Holy Spirit and the meaningful glimpses that the individual receives of the hope of the fulfilment of everything at the end of times.

Theologies and theories of faith need to deal with sexual, death, faith and religious and cultural prejudices, on the one hand and on the other hand, with ecclesial and socio-political climates which have opposing and one-sided sense making approaches causing people on the ground to suffer as a result of HIV/AIDS.

2.3.4 Dualist or wholesome view of human beings

2.3.4.1 The duality and triadic problem

With the view of Scripture established with regards to human beings, we can now embark on an analysis of human nature which basically could be subdivided in either a duality of soul/spiritual view and bodily/material view or/and a triadic subdivision of spirit, soul and body. Both the duality and the triadic approaches are found in the Abrahamic faiths i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Following the reasoning of Ward (2002:1-9), each of these categories will be fleshed out. Firstly, in the spiritual view as evidenced in the Vedanta-Advaita, physical bodies are not

essential as they are non-dualistic and the Supreme Self unfolds into the illusion of separated and conflicting individuality. What is important is that liberation from bondage can be achieved by means of some sort of mental training which is very much works based. In opposition to the spiritual view is the material view where human beings are mere material bodies and there is no existence after death. Proponents of this theory are usually hostile to religious belief and praxis (for example Dawkins 2006). The third viewpoint is the Abrahamic traditions which believe in embodied souls which are from the material world and there is an existence after death. This existence will be in either a reassembled universe or in a different form of existence. In this viewpoint, dualism could be experienced if a distinction is made between the spiritual and material elements in human nature or experience could be monistic which stresses that human beings are embodied parts of the material universe but they may have other embodied forms in another space-time.

For Dualists, souls are distinct and are contingently connected to material brains. So the soul is a structure but requires the brain for its operation but is nevertheless an external and subsistent entity. And although it is not a natural state, the soul can be separated from the brain; in which case one might hope for a resurrection of the body rather than for a disembodied immortality of the soul. (Ward 2002:146)

In Islam there is dualism and an aspiration to reach righteousness and goodness. When human beings fight with their nafs (carnal personal spirit) and defeat them they get rid of evil desires and proceeds to righteousness (chaqq), goodness (khayr), beauty (jamal) and achievements (kamal) until they reach their destination (manzil) whereupon their nafs become satisfied with righteousness and goodness as is seen according to the Qur'an (Islam 1987:71).

McGrath (2007a:476-477) recounts the position of the Second Vatican Council In the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) (Pope Paul VI :1966), the Second Vatican Council stated their perspective as non-dualistic and explained human nature as follows: Since the beginning God created the human being as a social being with interpersonal communion and therefore in order to be fully human and develop his potential human beings need to be in relation to each

other as well as to God. By being rebellious human beings disrupted their relationship with their own ultimate goal as well as the relationship with self, others and all created things. As a result human beings experience a split within themselves – a struggle between good and evil. The Lord Jesus Christ however strengthened human beings and cast out the ‘prince of this world’ (John 12:31). And although a human being consists of a body and a soul he/she is actually one being and cannot despise the body as God will raise the body up on the last day.

Some Protestant Christians who espouse a dualistic viewpoint believe that between death and the resurrection there is an intermediate state where the soul continues in a conscious existence apart from the body. Others believe that the soul cannot be separated from the body if the human being is to continue to be a person and that the body experiences something like soul sleep which ends in a new physical creation at the resurrection (Hearn 2005:51-53).

Because of the cosmological dualism inherent in Paul’s theology¹⁰ i.e. the conflict between the rule of Christ and the evil forces for instance in Ephesians 6:12, he therefore also divides humanity within two opposing classes i.e. “those who are perishing” and “us who are being saved” (1 Cor 1:18); the “saints in the light” and “the power of darkness” (Col 1:12-13) as is also evidenced in the dualism of the Qumran Community.¹¹ In the Christian Scriptures, Paul’s view of human nature reflects a dualism when he states that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation and that the old had passed (2 Cor 5:17). Even in Galatians 5:16, Paul perceives a struggle between the Spirit and the flesh within each Christian. It must, however, be stated that this is not Hellenistic dualism because, although the flesh is weak, human beings are redeemable and subject to regeneration. There is no ‘complete’ dualism in Paul’s theology as he was convinced that God would triumph in the

¹⁰ Many scholars like H. Koester, W. Schmithals and R. Bultmann detect Gnosticism i.e. opposition between the spiritual world and evil material world in Paul’s writings see Koperski 1996:55.

¹¹ Some scholars claim that Paul was influenced by the Essenes. In opposition to this theory is the more recent thinking as is displayed by E. P. Sanders and J. Neusner rejecting such views.

end. Paul's anthropology is more monistic than dualistic as he views the nature of the human being as both corporeal and incorporeal. The self is an integrated whole and whilst the corporeal and the incorporeal are distinguished, the interrelationship between them suggests a united human being. The body in its spiritual state experiences communion with God. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul expresses the hope that believers in their totality should be preserved as whole (holos) beings.

For the Hebrews the source of evil was the abuse of human freedom as espoused in Genesis 2, where disobedience and lust determined the 'Falling into sin' in opposition to pagan mythology where the source of evil is seen as a result of the capaciousness of the gods. Another example is Psalm 36 expressing that transgression is deep in the heart of the wicked because they lack the fear of God and therefore plot evil. According to the Christian Scriptures, sin is relational – namely the breaking of essential relatedness to God, to other human beings, to ourselves as well as to the rest of the creation. Buber (in Küng 1991:449-450) also bears this out as all real life is encounter, according to Buber:

“This encounter can take place in two ways. The first way is an encounter of I and It. This is the type of encounter where human beings experience objects (which could be trees or human beings) without which human beings cannot live, but which must remain alien to them. Secondly, it could be considered as an encounter of “I and Thou”. “I-Thou” denotes the “world of relation”, the three spheres of which are life with nature, life with human beings, and life with spiritual entities. Only through a relationship to a Thou does a human being become an I.”

Through our relationship with the Holy Spirit, we human beings become more 'I'-more wholesome. Our access to the grand acts of God in which we are involved is through the Spirit and not in being mystically united with Christ. The Spirit applies the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives as God's renewing tools in the created world. Furthermore, the Spirit makes Jesus present in our lives as the crucified and resurrected Christ. According to comments made by van Niekerk, the evangelical nonsensical idea that the divine Christ from the right hand side of the Father jumps into one's ego-centre as the driving force of everything when you give your heart to Jesus – the idea of having the divine Jesus in one's heart

directly bypassing the Spirit – as with Andrew Murray’s views, haunted millions of evangelical people in the world. The Jesus-centric mystical notion – Jesus-dwells –in-the-heart-theology – is the biggest contributor to the devaluation of God’s creation, of the Spirit’s renewal work and of God’s future directed fulfilment of everything in the new heaven and the new earth. For instance, Barth’s (Barth 2004: 38) viewpoint that everything is through Christ did a lot of damage to the proclamation of the full foursome Gospel. For instance, he operates with the scheme that we are in Christ moving and waiting for the return of Christ, while it would be thousand times better to say that we are moving and waiting through and in the Spirit for the return of Christ. In agreement with van Niekerk I would like to assert that the extra-calvinisticum position is important as it opens up the strong non-mystical portions of Paul where he asserts that the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead; furthermore the Spirit applies the mind of Christ, thus applies the cross and the resurrected One in us and not the person Jesus in isolation from his cross and resurrection; the Spirit makes Jesus Christ present in our lives; the Spirit is the present active life-giving ‘link’ providing the interconnectedness between God and human beings and nature; and the Spirit allows us to be co-actors and co-writers of the script of the Commonwealth (= Kingdom, Priesthood, Prophetdom, etc) of God (in Nigrini 2008:109-113).

Having shown the relational aspect of the Spirit, creatureliness of human beings as well as sin with the resultant suffering, the assumption could be made that when God declared human beings as good in Genesis it implied an absence of disease. However, the conclusion that all of the organisms which cause disease were introduced after the Fall, cannot be made. Christian Scripture does not account for the origin of disease but it does affirm that God will punish sin with disease, tribulation, anguish and death as stated in both Romans 2:9 and Exodus 15:26, where God promises that if the Hebrews keep his commandments, he would not punish them with diseases like he did the Egyptians. This indicates that God is willing to use disease and sickness as part of his reward and punishment with the Hebrews. The New Testament does not support the fact that disease and sickness can always be understood as the direct result of sin. And although some Christians view HIV/AIDS as punishment for sin, it is wrong to view it in such a

light, even more so if one considers the fact that babies sometimes contract the disease through no fault of theirs and to stigmatize other human beings like this is to commit a gross sin. Gill offers a theological framework with regards to stigmatization and concludes that:

“The stigmatization of individuals is a sin against the Creator God, in whose image all human beings are made. To stigmatize an individual is to reject the image of God in the other, and to deny him or her life, in all its fullness. This is not just a sin against a neighbour but also a sin against God.....Jesus Himself died as a stigmatized person outside the city gates in order to bring healing for a broken world. To show solidarity with Christ human beings should rather alleviate the suffering and resultant rejection of human beings who contracted this disease and be a prophetic voice against structures and Governments who misallocate their budgets instead of focusing on health issues, education and services for the underprivileged amongst us who sometimes are forced to prostitution because of economic reasons.....Musa Dube’s words have a ring of truth: ‘...Jesus sought the total health of people, thus demonstrating that it is God’s will that all should be fully healed economically, socially and physically.’ Certainly Jesus’ holistic healing ministry offers us a firm theological framework, a basis upon which we should insist on healing as a divine right for all people.” (2007:23-92).

I concur with the concepts expressed by Gill and Musa Dube (in Gill 2007:92), the HIV/AIDS pandemic offers human beings a choice, and that choice can be seen as part of the soul making process open to all human beings We can choose to stand alongside the HIV/AIDS sufferer, offering help, empathy and love. This is a positive step on the process of living life in the interconnectedness of human beings, the created cosmic universe and God; or we can choose to follow the binary concepts of in groups of the uninfected and outgroups of the HIV/AIDS sufferer where the clean=holy worldview means we set apart as unclean those who are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. Thus, effectively using concepts discussed by Tillich and resulting from Calvinistic ideas where the Holy is clean and the unholy is unclean which Tillich observes “means the end of the numinous character of the holy”. (Tillich 1953).

Living in the interconnectedness of human beings, God and the created natural world, human beings have, through the Holy Spirit, the opportunity as espoused by van Niekerk (2006:374), to connect the holy and unholy because of the possibility

of the materialization of the holy or sacred at any moment from within the most unholy, unclean or polluted nooks and crannies as the Holy Spirit moves and brings fresh expressions of holiness irrespective of the labels applied to those nooks and crannies by the perpetrators of the binary worldview.

2.3.5 Is the Judaeo-Christian Bible underscoring dualist and triadic views?

In what has been described above we have seen that the problem of the dichotomist (dualist) view of human beings comprising of a spiritual–soul and body and the trichotomist (triadic, tripartite) view of human beings as spirit, soul and body, is set in such a way that in both the approach of the two components of (spiritual) soul and (material) body and the approach of the three components of spirit, soul and body the components are out of synchronisation with each other due to evil, stress and sin in the world. Therefore as a solution for the acquisition of meaningful patterns of experience in the struggle against HIV/AIDS, the dualist (two) or triadic (three) component views that are doing the rounds in the majority of churches in the world, have to constitute a state of balance which as a solution makes sense if and only if one accepts the sense making God-human-world view that carries the twosome or threesome division of the human condition.

Generally, to many priests, pastors and ministers, a wellness and wellbeing between the dual or tripartite components of a human being can only be brought about one-sidedly by God's grace. They do not realise that God's act of reconciliatory grace is part of the array of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation (grace), renewal and fulfilment. If, however, one is working with a modern radical integral and differential approach to human beings firmly driven by the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment, the twosome (soul/body) and threesome (soul/spirit/body) types of human beings are hopelessly inadequate for the task of tackling minor human problems, let alone tackling the major socially directed and inter-actional problems of HIV/AIDS in human beings. Similar problems, as with the old dualities and triadic schemes seem to occur with the modern version of the duality of mind and matter. The

second problem with the twosome and threesome types of approaches are that they do not slot easily into a modern wholesome (holistic) God-life-and-world view and approach of human beings. One has to admit that the modern duality of mind and matter broadly applied and widely in use in philosophical, scientific and theological circles has a similar aversion of being slotted into a wholesome and differentiated God-life-and-world approach towards human beings.

In terms of the wholesome sense making God-human-world approach operational in this study, a human being comprises a differentiated multiplicity of fields, components, dimensions and facets of experience integrated into a wholesome creature that experiences God, the human self, other human beings and the natural environment in each field of experience. Each component of a human being, though radically different, has the same weight of importance in the broader scheme of things.

A human being is approached as a differentiated but integrated wholesome singular and irreplaceable human being (van Niekerk 2008:95ff). In many instances people still use the traditional terms and designations of soul and body and spirit, soul and body. These designations have a long history and emerged from Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman antiquity. Whether one still uses the more common dualist (twosome) view of an immortal soul/mortal body or the other less commonly held approach of a tripartite (threesome) of spirit and soul (of immortality) and (mortal) body, which is still highly fashionable in certain religious groupings, the intrinsic problems thereof cannot be solved. Two reasons that leap into the foreground are firstly that in terms of a present day wholesome sense-making view, the immortal soul/mortal body dualism is foreign to the Bible and nonsensical from a perspective of the resurrection of Jesus, which is God's greatest tool for the continuation of people's existence through life into afterlife (van Niekerk 2008:121). The notion of the primordial inbuilt immortal soul lingering on through life into eternity is one of the strongest factors undermining the practical day-to-day experience of the notion of the resurrection of Jesus. The second reason is that the ancient tripartite (threesome) and dualist (twosome) views of entities linked together as a divine and eternal grouping with the mortal

and temporal body cannot be meaningfully synthesised with a wholesome differential view of human beings. This wholesome differential view of human beings in our day and age, can claim strong support from a radical approach driven by the full array of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliatory grace of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the renewal of all things through the Holy Spirit and the fulfilment in what the Bible calls the new heaven and the new earth.

In any philosophical reflection of wisdom, the discussion about the number of human fields, modes, dimensions and aspects should always stay wide open. While I am strongly suggesting to people not to follow the ancient essentialist views of soul/body, or spirit/soul/body, they are also not to follow the major approach of modern churches and theologians emerging from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The latter approach boils down to the propagation of faith and belief as the outstanding semi-divine or semi-human field of experience giving meaning and embracing all other fields of human experience. In this sense, the ancient dualist scheme shows its ugly spiritualising head again (van Niekerk 2006:389; 2008:121). The fact that other fields of experience are also creaturely constituted by God, makes no impression on the eager and avid followers of the fideist and pietistic view. According to this view, God added faith in the historical period of salvation and reconciliation through Jesus Christ after God's act of creation as an extra and super field embracing the other fields of human experience (van Niekerk 2008:121). The God-glorifying and biblical adhering intention of such a centralised view of faith is thus to give other fields of experience more meaningful and sensible insight into their basics and characteristic natures as fields of human experience. Unfortunately, reducing everything meaningful in human life to faith and belief is part of the grand sense making approach of idolising faith and belief against the God-glorifying and Biblical-adhering intentions of its supporters.

Various attempts to arrive at wholesome and holistic views with the traditional notions of mind/spirit/soul/body have been undertaken in history. In the Judaeo-Christian world, the ancient essentialist substances were in many instances read

into the Bible without being aware of their ancient Egyptian, Persian, Greek or Roman origins (van Niekerk 2009:121). Generally, people in the present world view the ancient essentialist substances of immortal soul and mortal body as having a truly biblical character. From a wholesome differential Christian sense making God-life-and-world approach, I emphasise the wholesomeness of human beings against dualist and tripartite essentialist schemes. With that in mind, I am well aware that the age old terms of soul, body, spirit, heart and mind are used in many contexts of the texts of the Old and New Testament. It happened mainly in two ways:

Firstly, in different textual contexts a human being is designated in his/her totality and wholeness as *being* totally his/her soul, *being* totally his/her body, *being* totally his/her spirit, *being* totally his/her heart or *being* totally his/her mind. Thus, a human being is totally his/her soul, body, spirit, heart or mind, depending on the textual contexts where these terms are used as designations of totality. In very few instances of the Judaeo-Christian Bible, traces are found where soul, body, spirit, heart, etcetera are used together in an essentialist sense as substances simultaneously in the same textual and contextual setting. One of the few places where soul and body are used in the same context is Matthew 10:28. One has, however, to go to great lengths to read Greek or Roman essentialist entities or substances into the text (van Niekerk 2008:121, 96; Christian 2003).

Secondly, these terms appear in various other textual contexts as partial designations of human beings in the sense of a human being *having* different abilities, sides and aspects, such as, thinking, feeling, believing, speaking or evolving. In the most concrete form of the word, soul-sides, bodily-sides, spirit-sides, heart-sides or sides of the mind, come to the fore in different text worlds. (van Niekerk 2009:99).

2.3.6 A wholesome differential and integral approach to human beings

The approach followed in this study is that of a wholesome Christian approach of human beings who, integrally and differentially, consist of a multiplicity of fields,

modes, dimensions and aspects of experience. The views of van Niekerk are used as operational applicator and framework in the investigative analysis and synthesis of the thesis. Van Niekerk describes a person as simultaneously a uni-, bi- and multi-being (2008:95; 2009:96). As follows:

1. A human being is firstly a singular and irreplaceable being who is connected to God, to him/herself, to other human beings and physical-organic nature but who is simultaneously and radically different from God and physical-organic nature.

2. Secondly, a human being is comprised of a bicameral duality of left and right hemispheres. The bicameral left and right hemispheres are expressive of many dualities, tool pairs and dual organs of the human 'bodily' existence such as two ears, two eyes, two arms, two legs, two kidneys, etc. Some of the dual organs can operate in opposition, others are only complementary, others dialectically or one irrupting into the other as well as continuous serialising of the one after the other in fields, modes, dimensions and aspects of human experience.

3. Thirdly, each human being consists of a multiplicity of fields, capacities, faculties, and modes or dimensions of experience. The multiplicity or multiplex of fields and capacities of experience, interconnected to the physical-organic environments and God, express themselves through, in and as processes of acts, operations and doings of human beings of which the leading emphasis and focus continuously changes episodically and contextually to another leading emphasis and focus. Each one of the following fields, modes, dimensions and aspects of experience may be emphasised as the leading emphasis which draws others along for an episode and for a demarcated setting of experience (van Niekerk 2008:95-96). He points out that each of these fields, as constructed discoveries, had a turn in the modern era to be the constant limitless and timeless reductionist initiating agency and meaning-giver of all the other fields of experience (2009:90-91).

Van Niekerk proposes the following fields, modes, domains, dimensions or facets of human experience as constructed discoveries of the modern era (2009:96):

The following fields, modes, domains, dimensions or facets of human experience as constructed discoveries or discovered constructs of the modern era are being suggested, as to a large degree being accepted, as fields, modes and dimensions of experience:			
Thinking/reasoning: thoughts & reasons	Feeling: emotions & feelings	Loving: love expressions & acts	Speaking/verbalising: words, terms & symbols
Apportioning: justness, justice, laws, rules & ordinances	Economising: supply/needs+ demand/capacities	Imagining/fantatising: imaginative creations, fantasies & artful expressions	Socialising: codes, modes & styles
Producing/performance: products & performances	Bio-organic evolving: cells, organisms & growths	Moving: movements & kinetics	Physico-processing: mass & gravitational processual energies
Chemicalising: chemical processes & energies	Entitising: things & entities	Spatio-coordinating: spatial constructs & coordinates	Informing: information & data
Empowering/managing: powers & strengths	Believing/faith: beliefs & certainties	Educating/training: skills & capacities	Etcetera

Each of these fields of experience in Van Niekerk's view, is encapsulated and intersected by the ancient distinctions of 'mind and matter', 'spirit and physical nature' or 'spirit/soul and body' (2008:97). In traditional dualist and modernist dual views, half of the fields, modes, dimensions and facets of human experience belong to the 'matter and physical nature or body part' and half to the 'mind or spiritual and soul part' of a human being.

In the view presented here, 'mind and matter' or 'soul/spirit and body' cut through

every field of experience of a human being. In this regard van Niekerk (2008:69) asserts that faith, belief and trust – the so-called spiritual and soul facets of traditional views, do not have a higher and more important embracing position than thinking, feelings, producing, loving, speaking, physico-chemical energy, entitising entities or coordinating spatial experience. Faith and belief experience is not more religious and does not contain more divineness than other fields of human experience. The theologistic scheme of viewing faith and belief as a religious supernatural dimension beyond any comparison to the natural, is also given its marching orders. The classic Christian view of faith as an all-embracing permeating dimension inserted into a human being by God's salvific grace, thus turning someone from the state of being an unbeliever, without the capacity of believing, to a believer with that capacity, is highly problematic and is one of the strongest creators of dualist sense-making approaches in the Christian world.

In fact there is 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 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 and connecting: God, the human being and the physical-organic environment, in patterns of experience (van Niekerk 2008:69). The idea of a religious dimension amongst various human dimensions of experience in our lives, creates the impression that God hovers outside non-religious 'ordinary' human dimensions, and is allowed to enter our lives only through a so-called religious and supernatural dimension of faith (van Niekerk 2008:69). In the traditional sense, religious faith plays a basic role among the multiplicity of fields and modes of experience of our created existence, but does not form intrinsically and initially part of human experience. One of the basic premises of the thesis is that one can speak of faith as faith-experience firstly in a similar way as thought experience, experience of emotions and experiential apportioning of justness because God is directly similarly but differently involved in all other patterns of experience than faith experience. In this sense, I deviate from the traditional view which makes faith the basis of every other field of experience and place the Spirit of God in the pivotal position. Secondly, faith experience is to

be viewed in the sense of a repetitive pattern albeit not always in the same order as I believe God, I believe myself and I believe my human neighbours and I believe my physical-organic animal, plant and thing neighbours – thus, ‘faith is faith is faith is faith – experience’.

2.3.7 Implications of the wholesome differential and integral approach to human beings on the theodicies of Stoeber and Hick

Implications of the concept of the wholesome integrated and simultaneously differentiated unity of a human being over the triadic or dualist model on the field of theodicy are significant, and whilst these ideas are not the central thrust of this work, it is nonetheless valuable to review concepts of theodicy from this viewpoint. Firstly, for both Hick and Stoeber’s arguments on soul making through a form of afterlife in probationary purgatory are considered; Stoeber states:

The speculative possibility, then, of a realm and period of probationary purgatory is necessary to coherent teleological theodicy, necessary to account for... dysteleological evils...” (Stoeber 1992:169)

The main thrust for declaring the moral necessity for this afterlife proposition comes from the situation quoted by Stoeber where a child suffers and dies shortly after birth, and therefore never has the opportunity in this world to proceed through the ‘soul making’ process. By suggesting a realm of purgatory (referenced above) Hick and Stoeber propose that the child is given an opportunity to continue his/her journey in ‘soul making’. Yet we see the afterlife represented through the hope given to us by the example of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and in his resurrection we see that he was recognisable, tangible, bore the scars of his ordeal and was able to eat and drink. If then we are to be resurrected in this wholesome integrated and simultaneously differentiated resurrected human being where does the period of purgatory fit in? Furthermore, there is also a concern of the practicality of a baby appearing in the proposed purgatory with no surrounding support systems, no life experience – how would a baby survive if it were embodied and how would it understand the situation if this purgatory were a

disembodied soul? Is it not likely that for this situation, additional suffering would be caused? Hick tries to get around these concerns by imagining

“It will be a real spatio-temporal environment, functioning in accordance with its own laws, within which there will be real personal life – a world with its own concrete character, its own history, its own absorbing and urgent concerns, its own crisis, perils, achievements, sacrifices and its own terminus giving shape and meaning to existence within it. For moral and spiritual growth, as we know it, depends on interaction with other people within a common environment.” (Hick 1994: 418)

If then this baby is to be reborn as a new baby or new entity, because Hick does not exclude the idea that the inhabitants of this world might not be human beings as we know them, and this new entity is going to live a new life with possibly, in Hick’s view, dim recollection of the previous life and will require many subsequent lives in subsequent purgatories to reach spiritual completion (Hick 1994:440), then, this concept of ‘soul making’ purgatory sounds as if it were re-incarnation in parallel time/universes. Surely this concept of a ‘soul making’ purgatory causes more difficulties than it solves as the detail provided to answer criticism takes the concept further and further from the clear example of the resurrection of Christ.

Stoeber also recognises certain difficulties with this ‘soul making’ purgatory concept, questioning the importance of this world and the suffering that occurs if a child that suffers and dies before gaining the opportunity to progress in the ‘soul making’ journey and therefore can complete this journey in the ‘soul making’ purgatory:

“What, then, is the relationship of these tragic experiences to the child’s future existence, and what, if anything, are the criteria of exclusion from participating in the this-world teleology?”

This brings the whole teleological assumption of the necessity of life on earth into question.” (1992:171)

Stoeber then goes on to suggest that the answer lies in non-retributive re-incarnation where the soul is re-born into this world without knowledge of previous existences.

“But as we shall see, when adapted to Christian mystical teleologies this doctrine [of rebirth] provides an effective theological explanation of dysteleological evils” (Stoeber 1992:172)

So with Stoeber’s proposed doctrine of re-birth we have new additional lives, which are not linked by memory or awareness to previous lives, and this leads to the question of the resurrection, which life will the human being remember? Or will they remember all of their previous lives? If we are continually reborn what is the point of resurrection and eternal life? If everyone gets new lives when they die when does resurrection and eternal life start? If we have a cycle of lives, what was the purpose of the cross? For if we must take several lives to “get it right” are we not reducing the value of the cross as the mechanism of veil tearing and relationship repairing between the human beings inner self, other human beings and, most significantly, God?

And what about population growth? With the view that each person being born is a new creation of God (*creatio continua*) and that each person lives a single personal life, will die and eventually be resurrected, there is no complication with long time-scales and growing populations. But if there are growing populations and re-birth is happening, some births must be re-births and some first time births. In this case is it not unfair on the human beings born with ‘first time’ births because they have less time, or less rebirths for their soul-making journey?

It seems then that van Niekerk’s concept of the wholesome differential and integral approach to human beings (2009:96) is strongly at odds with the concepts of the re-birth or ‘soul making’ purgatory theodicies.

2.4 Evil and suffering and the wholesome multidimensional world

2.4.1 Evil and suffering and a dualistic and tripartite world

In order to consider evil and suffering and a dualistic and tripartite world, we must first establish an understanding of the dualistic and or tripartite worldview which

has been established by church fathers such as Augustine who saw a tripartite world of God in heaven, human beings living on earth and the realms of hell 'below' (Hass 2007:805 and 798) and had a dualistic viewpoint on God and evil (Hudson 2001:174). The historical old themes of the dualist and triadic (tripartite) interpretations of scripture were not established in consensible negotiation through the interaction of the reader, the Holy Spirit and the text but resulted from fundamental mirrorisation of scripture. In many instances, these themes have a strong influence on interpretation of scripture even today when human beings use the fundamentalist mirrorisation or even interpretative approach because of the weight of tradition. In this way, Augustine can be seen to influence, for many, the meaning of Isaiah or Genesis, although these were written many years before Augustine lived. What follows then in this section is a discussion from a dualistic and or tripartite worldview.

In Isaiah 65:17 the new creation of a new heaven and earth is set against the old creation which will no longer be remembered. The new creation, however, will be remembered before God. Various Jewish interpreters came to the conclusion that the new age will be better than the present age as the natural world will be liberated as is discussed in 1 Enoch 51:4-5 (Charles 1917:32) and the return of the creation to its original state of goodness: (2 Apoc. Bar. 73-74). In Romans 8:18-25, we read that the creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and everything will be gathered up in Christ, as is also presented in 1 Cor. 15:24-28. The new or renewed creation is identified with the world/age to come and the old creation is identified with the present evil age. The Kingdom of God or the age to come which has a heavenly reality displaces the earthly reality of the present evil age according to Second Temple Judaism (Pitre 2005:75).

In the Old Testament as well as the intertestamental period a duality between heaven and earth is observed which culminates in the new heaven and earth:

“This physical demarcation pointed toward a spiritual distinction: earth as the dwelling place of humankind, the heavens as the place where God dwells. The idea of a third “realm,” Sheol was introduced as the place of the departed, a shadowy realm where knowledge of and fellowship with God were not possible. As the thought of vindication for the righteous beyond

the grave arose, culminating in the hope of personal resurrection, so also Sheol was divided, the righteous waiting for final salvation in a form of paradise. The word paradise (Gk *paradeisos*) was almost certainly a Persian word taken into both Hebrew and Greek, originally referring to a park or garden... Alongside the present/future dichotomy was an earth/heaven duality in which paradise was sometimes located on earth (1 Enoch 32:3-6;77:3) and sometimes in heaven (1 Enoch 60:8;61:12;70:3)" (Hawthorne, 1993:381)

Käsemann (1969:179-80) has used 2 Peter 1:4 as support of his argument to show that there is a relapse of Christianity into Hellenistic dualism where the world is evil and believers in fellowship with God share in the divine nature.

In 2 Peter 3:10 the day of the Lord is depicted as cosmic and as destructive of the old created order. After the destruction by fire, God will create a new heaven and earth. In this verse, the created order with its "elements" (*stoicheia*) i.e. the natural substances of which the world is made, will be consumed. It is worth mentioning that different translations suggest different meanings i.e. in the KJV¹²: 'the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.'; the NIV¹³: 'the earth and everything in it will be laid bare'. However, Peter wrote the word *heurethesetai* which could mean 'be manifest', which would seem right as the earth and all the works will be *disclosed to God at the time of judgement*. This would make more sense as there would not be a total new creation but a re-creation and instead of total annihilation there would be purification albeit through fire. This viewpoint, however, is not without pitfalls. E. Schweizer argues that Pythagorean ideas (Kahn 2001:25-38) have been creeping into the God-human-and-worldview of the human beings at Colossae (as well as in Galatia) and that this worldview dominated the minds of people between 6th century BC - 6th century AD (Schweizer 1982:128-133). In this era the four elements earth, water, air and fire were been seen as in conflict whilst threatening

¹² KJV: King James Version of the Bible,

¹³ NIV: The New International Version of the Bible

to bring about destruction of the cosmos. Schweizer's take on the era is quite plausible.

The God-human-and-worldview, which could be traced back as far as the second millennium with the celestial divination, shows that human beings believed that stars as well as human beings in some way controlled the cosmos and that stars were regarded as spiritual powers. In the Pythagorean worldview (Kahn 2001:25-38) the sun, moon and stars were gods. 1 Enoch 72-82 (Charles 1917:52-63) shows the association of Uriel (an angel) with the stars which underlines the argument of the Pythagorean worldview's influence on early Judaism and Christianity.

Scholars like Kelly (2006:44-45), Kauffman (1967:444) and van Gemeren (1997: vol 4:1118) discuss various forms of dualisms which will be defined as follows: mixed dualism occurs when God is set against gods made of material substances like wood, stone etc and is referred to in Exodus 34:13-15. It is also reflected in the Babylonian religions, which include gods like the sun god, Shamash, earth god, Enlil, vegetation god, Dumuzi etc. Van Gemeren (1997: vol 4:1118) discusses Spatial dualism when the heaven is set against the earth, as is seen in Luke 11:2 when Jesus prays. Van Gemeren (1997: vol 4:1118) further discusses cosmic dualism, as is found in the Qumran scrolls, where the Angel of Light (Michael) controls the realm of Light and Belial is the commander of Evil.

In Ephesus, certain Christians practised magic as is evident from Acts 19:18-19, but they were delivered from the occult bondage to supernatural powers. Whilst in bondage, they lived in fear of evil spirits. Paul taught them that God's power is not obtained through magic formulas and recitations, but by union with Jesus Christ. It was very tempting for Christians to combine their Christianity with their magical beliefs as this was their custom or culture but Paul condemned magic, as is evident in Galatians 5:20 where it is considered as works of the flesh, and human beings who practised such things would not inherit the kingdom of God. Hawthorne points to the following:

“...the powers....were also recognized as the hostile cosmic powers of the universe that gripped with fear the hearts of many in the Roman world of Paul’s day. Whether through association with magic, the mysteries or astrology, popular religion of the first century Mediterranean world conceived of a cosmos haunted by spirits in the heavens, on the earth and beneath the earth. Paul addressed this situation by announcing that the powers of darkness had been defeated by Christ on the cross. Though their power was still real and potent, they were not to be feared by those “in Christ” (Rom 8:37-39). Thus when Paul spoke of the hostility of the powers in this age and their defeat by Christ, he spoke a language.....that resonated in the hearts of his Gentile audience.” (993:751).

Because of human sin, the earth has been subject to corruption but will be redeemed, as is evident in Romans 8:18-25, where the creation will be delivered from bondage into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We see, then, from this discussion that evil and suffering should be expected for human beings in this dualistic and tripartite worldview, where God is in heaven, the Holy Spirit is limited in interaction (mainly to converted Christians) and the powers of evil are ruling the earth. This viewpoint completely misses the crucial undergirding facet of the mystery of the simultaneity of the close connection and radical difference between God, human beings and the natural physical-organic world. Through the inbreaking of the Holy Spirit into all aspects of the world, God is through the Holy Spirit encapsulating atoms, molecules and whatever as the life-giving force, drawing human beings, the natural created cosmic universe through his wholesome foursome grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. Through the empowerment and enablement of the Holy Spirit, human beings, nature and God are linked despite their radical otherness and human beings become co-actors in God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation.

2.4.2 Evil and Suffering and a wholesome multidimensional worldview

In contrast to the dualistic and tripartite world-view we can consider evil and suffering in a wholesome multidimensional world.

We see that from Hawthorn et al (1993:356) according to Paul, Christ's resurrection from the dead influenced both the created order (Romans 8:22-25) and human beings (II Cor 5:17-19) as both find their fulfilment in his lordship through the Holy Spirit. For Paul the creator of the universe is also the sustainer of the universe (1 Cor 8:6) (Col 1:17) and God is seen to have supreme power within the universe (Eph 4:10). God created the universe through Christ and for Christ and therefore the universe belongs to Christ and not to human beings(Eph 4:10):

“The NT does not support the view that the world belongs to humanity, except in the sense fulfilled in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:27, based on Ps. 8). Paul does hint in one place (1 Cor 3:22) that believers are called to see the world as theirs, even if it is transitory (1 Cor 7:31), and they await the gift of their eternal homeland (Phil 3:20-21) at the Parousia. Creation itself is bound up with the human condition, as Paul clearly recognized in speaking of the groaning of creation for deliverance (Rom 8:19-25)..... Paul provides an answer to the question of God's continued activity within the created order. No support is given for the view that, having created the world, God left it to its own devices..... Providence is based on the character of God, who is thought as constantly at work and vitally interested in the well-being of his handiwork.”

Hawthorne is moving in the right direction but he effectively omits the work of the Holy Spirit who is the enactor of God's continued activity within the created order. The natural world is multidimensionally linked and yet differentiated with human beings and God. We see that snippets of the consummation are breaking through into this world and contemporarily, through the work of the Holy Spirit, ongoing creation (*creatio continua*) is progressing as human beings move forward in the strength of the cross, applied by the Holy Spirit and move as wholesome human beings within the wholesome multidimensional world towards the completion of God's wholesome process of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation.

In this scenario of a wholesome and multidimensional world-view, we see that, due to the interconnectedness of God, human beings and the natural world, there is a strong argument for evil and suffering experienced by a human being to impact to a larger or smaller degree, other human beings, the natural world and God. In line with this interconnectedness, is also an acceptance of complete otherness, and therefore, we cannot quantify the impact, result, experience, consequence, effect or relevance of the suffering of a human being on other human beings, the natural

world or on God. So from within this wholesome and multidimensional worldview, we can see that God has in some way taken the risk of allowing the suffering of human beings to be part of God's experience because the Holy Spirit is; the giver and sustainer of life, a ubiquitous presence, and therefore God is present in the sufferings of human beings.

2.5 God, humanity and nature in the process of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment

2.5.1 The importance of a dynamic approach in which the interconnectedness and otherness of God, human beings and nature are processed through creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment

The interconnectedness and otherness of God's works of creation, reconciliation and renewal of human beings, plants and animals indicates the deep involvement God has with creation. As human beings, we are involved in each of these ongoing works of God as we experience them as life-giving and life-sustaining.

“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.” (Hearn 2005:172)

According to Goldingay, there seems to be a reciprocal relationship between nature and human beings and I am in complete agreement with this view:

The First Testament gospel affirms that there is a moral link between humanity and nature. Humanity was created to treat nature itself morally, and would find that things went wrong in its relationship with nature if it failed to do so. Genesis 4 makes a less obvious point, that there is a link between humanity and nature that makes nature react when relationships go wrong between human beings. It senses that things have gone wrong and reacts accordingly. If Cain will not be Abel's watcher, then the ground will be. Creation does not 'fall,' but it reacts when humanity's face falls (2003:153).

Our different God-human-nature approaches cause different Bible translations, different mindsets in theologians and different cultures regarding the concept of creation. This is also true of the God-human-and-nature view that has been in operation in this study. For example, in the production and publication of a Bible, various theological, literary and cultural factors play a role. In the production, doctrines are sometimes excluded as is evidenced in the following example which is two renderings from the Jewish Publication Society:

“1917: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.

1985: When God began to create heaven and earth....And a wind from God sweeping over the water....

....The 1917 version...parts company with the Protestant text by replacing the uppercase “S” of Spirit, a reference to the Trinity, with a lower case “s”.....In the 1985 version...the theological doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*”.....is excluded and the argument goes on, “Moreover, it reflects the opening of the Babylonian creation story, *Enuma Elish*, which also begins with a ‘when’ clause.” (Berlin 2004:2015).

If there is so much variation within the same Society, how much more within cultures and between cultures? Even in the Islamic world during the twelfth century there were two opposing views on creation. The *Mutakallimun* argued for creation *ex nihilo* and the *Falasifa* rejected the view of creation *ex nihilo* (Stroumsa 1999:126-129).

Dualist and triadic God-human-world views about God result in disobedience and confusion about God’s calling to human beings to be partners in creation and thus team-workers in the Commonwealth of God. The easy way out for human beings is to rationalise about their unfaithfulness and irresponsibility towards God, other human beings and the natural world surrounding them. It is therefore vitally important to have the correct perception about God, his works and involvement or interaction with human beings as well as the interconnectedness between human beings themselves and the natural created world. From my perspective, a God-human-world view with a sensible understanding would reflect a heart for mission as interchange, exchange and fusion of experiences of belief, thought, emotions,

apportioning of justness, imagination and love between people. Somewhere in the interactional happenings between people, the full Gospel of the Commonwealth of God appears as the whole array of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, renewal through the Holy Spirit of the whole of created world and many snippets of God's fulfilling act from the future, are drawn into our present life-world.

The question could be posed of how Christian theologians viewed the involvement and interconnectedness of God, human beings and the physical-organic natural world? All people are involved and engaged in the grand acts of God though millions are not aware of their own status of being created, reconciled, and being under renewal on their way to greater fulfilment. One of the attempts to solve the problem of the millions who are not aware of their status of being involved through being just plain human beings in the grand acts of God, has been the idea of a natural/general revelation that they receive while those being aware of their engagement in God's grand acts received something called special revelation.

The incarnational approach of Irenaeus (Dorries 2002:147-149) provides insight as he views continuity between matter and spirit and he saw creation, incarnation and redemption as part of a continuing process. For Irenaeus, God shared Himself in creation as well as in the incarnation, which is the climax of creation as it recapitulates God's intention since the beginning of time, which is the unity between the divine and humanity. With this theory, Irenaeus opposed the Docetists and Gnostics with their negative view of matter and showed that Jesus was truly human and therefore renewed the birth of humankind. For Irenaeus concurring with Ephesians, Jesus was a second Adam, a new creation of humanity, and God was and is continuously involved in the world to create and redeem until he "gathers up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10). All of humanity is therefore invited to be one with their Creator and nature is included because the benefits of redemption are shared by all of creation. In this viewpoint, strong interconnectedness is evident between God – humanity and the physical world.

A more modern theologian Fretheim, concurring with Haggai sees the natural world as being involved in the process of creation as the ground brings forth vegetation (Hag 1:10-11) which resembles that responsibility of human beings, he explains:

The command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28; cf. 1:22) indicates a decisive sharing of creative powers with the human; Gen 9:1, 7 indicates that this is an ongoing address from within the created order. Other passages (e.g. Ps. 139:13-16; Job 10:8-12) indicate that this ongoing creative process is not without continued divine involvement, even in the intricacies of the gestation process. Every birth, every appearance of life, testifies to God's participation in the continuing creative process; and this from within the created order. Again, we meet with an understanding of dual agency in creation. Both God and the human are effectively involved in the process, and God's involvement is appropriate to the nature of the human and is not all-determinative. Human decisions and actions contribute to antecedent causes and can wreak havoc in the process (1984: 74).

Throughout the history of human beings, God in his covenantal position acts redemptively as is seen for instance when he saved Noah and his family from the flood, saved Abraham's son Isaac through the provision of the ram for sacrifice, delivered the Hebrews from slavery under Pharaoh, etc. In the biblical Scriptures, God is known through his acts and human beings respond to these acts in belief or rejection. Scripture is a partial record of God's acts with regards to human beings and nature as well as of the response of human beings to God and to each other and in both instances nature is part of the interconnectedness of the God – human interaction.

In the Old Testament, God liberates his people and has compassion on the poor, for example, in Psalm 9:9 where God is portrayed as a refuge for the oppressed. In the New Testament, Jesus explicitly stated in Matthew 25:31-46, that the righteous who inherit the kingdom of God are those who look after the poor, the oppressed, and the ones in need. A heart that has been transformed by the love of God will serve other human beings in compassion and humility. The concern for the underprivileged is very important to God and each and every human being is accountable before God and should speak out against injustices and oppression this involves speaking out against HIV/AIDS and all the factors that contribute to the spreading of the disease and against the common binary in-group/out-group

reaction by the uninfected towards those who have been infected with HIV/AIDS who become the out-group. Because of the interconnectedness of God, human beings and nature, the material world is very important and therefore uncontrolled development, misuse of the earth's resources, pollution etc., does not reflect good stewardship and hence, this abuse of God's creation represents a sin against the Creator. The Hebrew-Christian tradition underlines the fact that it is God's desire that creation be whole and renewed instead of being damaged, defaced or destroyed and yet the Christian tradition is today seen by many to have ignored its responsibilities and shunned its interconnectedness with nature, van Niekerk comments:

Degrading the natural world in line with the human body was the pastime of millions of Christians in the past. Their main thing was to get into heaven where they were rid of the fleshly material jail of the domains of body and nature. (Comments made in an email: 05 March 2009)

The resurrection of Jesus proves that materiality will be changed into a new creation and will not be destroyed but transformed and renewed.

“The resurrection acknowledges the dignity of the physical world and offers motivation for caring for and sustaining all things. All of nature is part of the kingdom, which in the end will be handed over to the Creator.....The natural world, although not holy, is important as God is the source of all things, dwells within all, and manifests the divine self through all that is visible.” (Hill 1998:93)

Through all of this, the otherness as well as similarities between God – human beings and the created cosmos is evident and everything is interconnected.

2.5.2 Creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation as shadowed and realised in the self-creation (actualisation), self-denial (awareness of sin), self-empowerment and liberation (resurrection) and self-purposing with regards to the problem of evil and suffering in the pastoral counselling ambience.

If we insist on a God who alone is self-existent and who created 'ex nihilo', then, we avoid the dangers of both dualism and a self-centred religion that is to say self-realization. Eznik of Kolb (5th century Armenian Christian) states (in Blanchard 1998:23) that

“...God exists as one essence, inscrutable and incomprehensible by nature. He is 'He Who Is' (Ex 3:14), eternal and originate; no like nature exists before, after or alongside him. He is the cause of all, and creates from nothing; likewise beneficently he preserves all existent beings. Although only he is omniscient, he liberally bestows knowledge on the ignorant.”

In opposition to Kolb's worldview (as expressed here in Blanchard) which is based on the Nicene definition of faith is the New Age movement which is eclectic and espouses the idea that since Christ we are living in the age of Pisces (Hanegraaff 1996:318) symbolised by two fish swimming in opposite directions and implicit in the symbol is a dualistic spirituality. A characteristic of this age is the conflict between body and soul, Christ and anti-Christ tension etc. The Piscean age is now being replaced by the Aquarian age which is represented by water and symbolises new birth or spiritual awakening where the dualisms are overcome. (Hanegraaff 1996:102)

According to many New Age adherents human potential has no limits and the fact of an indwelling God gives, as a consequence, the impression that spiritual progress is the responsibility of each human being (McCulloch 2002:179). In New Age thinking, with the incarnation, human beings became God (Hanegraaff 1996:190-192). This is very different from the wholesome Christian viewpoint, where human beings have become aware of their creatureliness and tendencies towards sin and perceive their need of salvation and redemption, have been redeemed from sin through the salvific work of Christ and are aware of an ongoing

process of renewal and renovation until the consummation of the new heaven and new earth. And yet New Age thinking has also some practical linkages with the concept espoused in this thesis in that there is an unequivocal interconnectedness between human beings, God and the natural world (Newport 1998:4). In this I see snippets of the truth breaking into a faith system that has many significant differences to the traditional Christian viewpoint. I respond to this by acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is the 'active ingredient' of God in this world, not restricted to the 'church' and present in interaction with atoms, molecules, microbes, animals, humans, nature and the whole created order.

In the New Age movement belief system human beings have an opportunity to work out their karma (self-creating, drawn from Hindu beliefs) in their life cycle until they unite with the cosmos and God (Newport 1998:7). According to McCulloch (2002:158) different techniques are employed to assist them with this endeavour such as yoga, meditation, chanting etc., in order to achieve empowerment for co-creatorship. Each human being has the potential to become co-creator with God and McCulloch explains the:

“...attainment of co-creatorship through 'gnosis' or spiritual knowledge is seen to be the key to salvation. According to friendly critic Ted Peters, New Age spirituality is to be placed under the 'rubric' of 'modern Gnosticism.' position vis a vis Christian orthodoxy.” (Mc Culloch 2002:161)

The New Age movement shares in some respects the same worldview as Pantheism where according to Carson (1990:32):

“..god and the universe are one. There is no chasm between creator and created. All that is, is god; god is whatever is. In this worldview, not only adopted by most Hindus but the working assumption of the entire New Age movement, god is not a transcendent “other” who is personal,...The entire universe belongs to one order. Within this universe, however, there are levels of attainment. What Christians see as sin or evil, pantheists are likely to see as imperfections in reality that need to be removed by progressive self-realization, progressive self-improvement. The goal of human beings is not to have their sins forgiven and to be reconciled to a God who holds them to account, but to spiral up the cycle of life, perhaps through reincarnation, but certainly through meditation, self-focus, self-improvement.”

Apart from the fact that evil and suffering have been relativised in this worldview, it could also be deduced that this worldview breeds fatalism where the cry of the Lord Jesus “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” is according to Carson (1990:32) nothing more than desperate proof of immaturity that refuses to accept things as they are.

There are positive aspects of the New Age belief system when interacting with HIV/AIDS, however, because of the belief that ‘all that is, is god’ (Newport 1998:423). This belief system can also foster a concept of interconnectedness between all parts of the ‘system’ in which the New Age adherent exists, similar in concept to the interconnectedness that exists, through the Holy Spirit, between God, human beings and the created cosmic universe. And because of the interconnectedness perceived by a New Age adherent between themselves and other human beings, this can result in significant empathy for the suffering of others. The New Age worldview can also be seen to foster respect for the created universe and especially for the natural world (Newport 1998:2). Both of these aspects align the practical approach of the New Age adherent closely, in practical areas, with the Christian viewpoint although for different reasons. These similarities should encourage dialogue and collaboration in approaching efforts towards the reduction of evil and suffering in the world. Therefore, although Carson (1990:32) points towards the New Age movement being inward focused because of the linkage he expounds to other Pantheist worldviews, this theoretical observation may not reflect the practical outworking of the New Age belief system.

In the pastoral ambience, when dealing with AIDS, such inward focused viewpoints will not hold water as this disease is a major calamity which affects human beings on the physical, psychic as well as the social level and human beings are aware that no cure for the illness currently exists and death is the only end. In circumstances like these, the sharing of Christian Bible stories assists human beings as they can identify with various characters and situations. The goal for the counsellor is to assist the human being to transcend feelings of isolation and rejection and experience the presence of God as that encounter is the only real comfort in suffering, together with the hope of the Christian faith.

König mentions Psalm 22:1 in this regard and shows that there is no answer to the psalmist's 'why' but:

“...rather the wonderful experience of being raised from the dead on the third day by the Father. In this way his forsakenness was brought to an end by a new act, and replaced by a renewed relationship...Furthermore, the biblical promises concerning the resurrection from the dead give us the prospect that on the new earth God's absence will be among the old things that have passed away. There God will live among his people on the new earth (Rev. 21-22). It is by means of these examples, and promises that the Lord sustains us in times when we painfully experience the seeming absence of God. The Old Testament believers teach us how they clung to God by faith, despite and in the midst of their bitter experience of his absence. This is the paradox of their struggle. They doubt God, yet still hold fast to him.” (:121).

Through the continuous guidance and strengthening of the Holy Spirit, believers receive glimpses of a world to come, spurring off new hope and this acts as an energising factor of perseverance. Suffering takes on a different form by way of the working of the Holy Spirit applying the cross and the resurrection in the suffering of believers. In this way they become partakers in Christ's cross and resurrection. In partaking in the resurrection of Christ, in their suffering, they are precursors and anticipators of the fulfilment of everything in the new heaven and the new earth. In a sense, the sufferer is drawn through the Holy Spirit (as life-giving force) in terms of the resurrection of Christ to the end. Similarly, as Jesus was raised by the Spirit (Romans 8:11) so is the AIDS victim raised from the suffering and death process of AIDS; in this life, experiencing snippets of the resurrection and in the fulfilment, the fullness of the resurrection.

This traditional view of Christianity has been significantly challenged by a paradigm shift of the general world culture away from Christianity. In a new world order characterised by consumerism, individualism, multiculturalism and postmodernism, the challenge lies in communicating this gospel in a pluralistic society.

2.5.3 Modernity (1600-2000) and different tendencies of God, humanity and nature with regard to sin, evil and suffering.

Modernity brought with it the emphases on autonomous human rationality where there was no place for revelation and the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ (van Niekerk 2009:127). This worldview began to crumble when it became clear that technological advances created enormous problems as a growing realization took place in human beings that human progress brought with it the potential of self-destruction. The technological knowledge human beings attained advanced their wisdom and scepticism and negativism set in.

With Postmodernism there is no search for the ultimate truth in the modernist sense (Field et al 1998:9). Diversity, fragmentation and splitting into moments of time are celebrated instead. The notion of the 'metanarrative' and the unlocking of meaning on either the cosmic or personal level have disappeared. It follows that the postmodern notions of God, human beings and cosmic nature share in the 'fragmentarisation' and 'momentarisation' procedures. The postmodern God-human-world view is pervasive and widely influences the thinking, attitudes and actions of human beings. Gibbs describes this as follows:

"Cultures permeate every aspect of life, and each culture provides its own lens through which the people within that culture view the world around them. A culture defines what is normative and plausible among a group of people according to its worldview. It also constructs their internal world. None of us is free from the all-pervasive influence of culture. It influences our theological thinking and our missiological endeavours no less than our social interaction." (2001:33)

As human beings are influenced by the populist postmodern God-human-world view which espouses the freedom for each human being to have: his or her own view about God, about being human and about the natural world, the full Gospel of God grand acts is, in contrast, radically different as it liberates human beings to be responsible and accountable to God, themselves, other human beings and the physical-organic environment in every situation. And in common with the adherents of postmodern liberal populism, adherents of the full Gospel know that there is a future which cannot be attained by self-effort as this has proven to be

futile with the overemphasis on faith during the modern period of the 16th century Reformation and the overemphasis on reason during the 18th century Enlightenment. There are still human beings that need to catch up with the advancement that, in every field of human experience, God's Spirit is directly operating. Honest admissions that Christians in many instances suffered from reductionist idol making, "strengthen rather than weaken our testimony among postmodernists who look for honesty and authenticity" (Gibbs 2001:36). Meaningful interchange, exchange and fusions with people in present society and in the future from the side of people espousing a whole sense making God-human-world view can take place because they are continuously aware of their engagement in the grand acts of God as well as being aware not only of the living out and attesting to themselves being engaged in the grand acts of God's Kingdom (Commonwealth), but also attesting to the experience of wellness and wellbeing, through being engaged in the grand acts of God.

With modernism and postmodernism, different worldviews emerge with regards to evil and suffering and some of these will be discussed in order to underline the diversity in various cultures and religions.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is of the opinion, that nature and history moves from a simple (less unity, harmony and Godlikeness) to a more complex existence in God where there is more unity, harmony and Godlikeness (Kelsey 2003:66). And although the world and God cannot be separated, they are still distinct and not identical. For Schleiermacher, following Spinoza (Deleuze 1988:110), the cosmos is an essential expression of the nature of God. The nature of God, as evidenced in creation, is revealed through the redemption, as well as in eschatology. The union of the Divine Essence with human nature, is the goal of all things as God aims to reconcile all things with himself, and in this his wisdom and love are evidenced. Salvation is viewed as participation in this process and sin is viewed as failure to partake in the communion of All in One.

Schleiermacher reacted against the rationalism and the moralism (McGrath 1998:345) which was characteristic of the Enlightenment and stressed the

importance of feelings of absolute dependence on God, which is brought about by Jesus Christ within the heart of the believer.

Karl Barth is highly critical of the liberal Protestants and especially with Schleiermacher (for example in Barth 1991:25). In Barth's commentary on Romans a total gulf between God and the world is portrayed and for Barth this gulf cannot be bridged by efforts of human beings (Barth 1968:93). In this Barth seems to be influenced by Kierkegaard in his 'infinite qualitative distinction' between God and human beings (Kierkegaard 2008:82); Christianity should not be classified as a religion because religion is basically a human invention (natural theology is included), which is the attempt of human beings at self-justification, whereas Christianity is seen as revelation which is God's contradiction of human ideas.

With regards to suffering, Barth is of the opinion that Jesus Christ bore the penalty and pain of sin and therefore human beings will not experience the rejection of God because of all the evil being done. His doctrine of universal restoration and salvation of human beings brought immense criticism from other scholars. (Webster 2000:147)

Karl Barth constructed the concept of 'nothingness' (Das Nichtige) and saw it as a negativity which has no right to exist but which is, nevertheless, under the control of God (Webster 2000:281). God's answer, however, to this 'nothingness/evil' is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his criticism of Barth for theological inadequacy, Wright uses the following argument:

"Barth goes further in his explanation of the origin and says that when God said 'Yes' to creation and calling it into being, God uttered an implied 'No', a rejection of that which is evil, and this 'No', being also a powerful word of God, has created the realm of nothingness. Nothingness is that which God rejects, opposes, negates and dismisses in the act of creation." (1990:39)

Karl Barth uses Gen 1:2 to explain the origin of evil which is exegetically incorrect as this verse is a statement that God created 'ex nihilo' – not a statement about the origin of evil.

Wink on the other hand views evil in a very positive way. Thus Satan even became worthy of respect from human beings as he is viewed as a servant of God. Wink takes the concept of demons, devils, principalities and powers and demythologises and reinterprets them in terms of interiority within human beings. The more human beings invest their time and attention into these powers the more it grows in strength. The reverse is also true. (Wink 1984:5)

Moltmann rejects the traditional view of God and views God as having two natures i.e. He is divine (other-worldly) and human (this-worldly) and therefore rules over pain and experiences pain with human beings (Moltmann 2001:239). For Moltmann, God and evil belong together as creation can suffer but can also be instrumental in suffering. There is thus an oppositional dynamic within God when he creates. Cooper (2007:253-254) discusses Moltmann's pantheism as follows:

"God provides 'space' for His creation by withdrawing His presence which creates a 'nothingness' basically a non-being of the Creator and this nihil within which God creates His creation is therefore God-forsaken and potentially demonic and destructive. Creation therefore experiences a twofold threat: the threat of its own non-being as well as the non-being of God. By means of history God then finally actualizes and transcends the primordial non-being which is inherent within himself....He also uses the kabbalist notion of zimsum (self-contraction) in order to define heaven as the creative power of God and earth as God's self-limiting in order to actualize his power. "Time, space, heaven, and earth are 'in God' because they are self-modifications of God but are not part of his eternal nature." God thus indwells the world he has created but the world also exists within God and all creatures including the devil will be saved because of God's love but sin and suffering will be condemned."

Moltmann, however, tried to ensure that his position is not seen as pantheistic by maintaining the difference between God and the world, because although there is mutual indwelling, God and human beings and other creatures are unmingled and divided. In Moltmann's view, God and the world remain ontologically distinct and transcend each other. They are, however also mutually immanent and cooperative and he finds this final outcome to be implicit in the eternal nature of God. (Baukham 1995:244)

Moltmann's panentheism is Trinitarian (Moltmann 2001:249) as well as eschatological (Moltmann 2001:243). His usage of Scripture shows a deep understanding and theological insight; however, having said that, in Moltmann's thinking there is a dualism within God as God creates evil and is therefore responsible for all the pain and suffering which is rectified by the redemption of the world when the fulfilment of God will include the fulfilment of the universe.

König (1982:160), in evaluation of Moltmann, held the opinion that:

"It would...be correct to say that God is in, or enters into, suffering, but not, as Moltmann says, that suffering is in God. Indeed, The Crucified God is a good example of an approach that goes further than the Scriptures. It derives too much from the cry ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?') concerning what it cost the Father and what he experienced in it and through it. That this word from the cross suggests a revolution (stasis) in God, a 'God against God', enmity in God, and that in this way suffering and death have been taken up into God, is simply to say more than the scriptural data allow us to say."

König's viewpoint is very interesting and like a breath of fresh air in a world where Nietzschean nihilism (Ford 2005:380) is very prevalent and where God, self and the Bible are no longer relevant, resulting in human beings not believing in the dignity of human life, destroying themselves, other human beings as well as damaging the created natural world; all of which reflects as damage to the interrelationship between God, human beings and the natural world.

In conclusion, I would like to uphold König's opinion but also add and highlight the fact that everything happens through and in and by the inworking of the Holy Spirit:

"...in Jesus Christ God ends world history. Jesus dies! And when God raises him, he does not restore to him his old life, as happened in the case of Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain, but gives him a new life, the so-called resurrection body, over which death no longer reigns (Rom 6:9f). This means that in Jesus, God created a new humanity, a humanity which has behind it its history of a broken covenant and unfaithfulness and ahead of it only obedience, love and faithfulness. So when a man, or mankind, or a part of it, or even the major part, continues to be unfaithful to God, and is estranged from other men, that which is really past and gone lives on. In the history which he is now making, God is bringing about existentially, i.e. in

our life and in this world, his purpose which has already been realised in Christ.” (König 1982:160).

Here König expresses a Christ-centric view which is valuable but falls short of the full story where the work of the Holy Spirit is a crucial aspect because of the role of the Spirit in the foursome grand acts of God. Despite God’s radical otherness, the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in interaction with human beings and the created natural world. The work of the cross was completed by Christ but it is through the Spirit that this work is applied daily in the lives of human beings and through the interconnectedness of God, human beings and the natural world, this outworking of the cross is an essential facet of the foursome grand acts of God.

Human beings are in the process of being renewed as is evident from the words in Colossians (3:9-10). As the passive voice is used it indicates that this renewed person has not come about by the efforts of human beings, but by the work of God through the outworking of the cross and resurrection and by the inworking and outworking of the Holy Spirit. I would hasten to add that this work of renewal, reconciliation and renovation is made possible by the Spirit as the active life-giving force, which maintains the interconnectedness of God – human beings and the created universe. Garland (1998:206) explains the process as:

“The new nature comes as God’s gift, not as the result of our will-worship. Our will power, or our self-actualization. What we must do is to work out the salvation that God has worked in our lives. (Phil 2:12-13)”.

2.6 conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to approach sin, evil and suffering from the viewpoint of the mystery of: God, human beings and the natural world, which are considered to be simultaneously closely connected and radically different from each other. A choice has also been made for the interaction with Scripture through the sensible negotiation process which is based in our living in the era of the Spirit where God’s Spirit is interconnected with us as human beings and with the natural physical environment in all fields of experience including the areas of

experience which are cognitive, emotive, lingual, imaginative, faith and belief. Human beings extract their clues, cues and hues through sense making filters which are based on their sense making viewpoint, and it is through these filters that God, themselves, other human beings and the natural environment are viewed and this filtering process also applies to evil and suffering whether it be their own suffering or acts of evil, observed incidents of evil and or suffering in others (natural or accidental, deliberate or sadistic).

In considering the development of worldviews on evil and suffering in relation to faith systems and God, it has been established that Zoroastrianism, which exhibits radical dualism and stands in stark contrast to pantheistic Hinduism and Buddhism, has had a significant influence on the development of worldviews and scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This implies that cultures, religions and faith can influence the perceptions, opinions and worldviews held by authors of holy books and therefore influence their writings in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. Worldviews, influenced by faith systems and their holy books influence how a human being interacts with suffering (whether the suffering be their own or another human being's). In line with the five angles of this thesis, suffering is portrayed as inherent within the five some awareness of a wholesome human being because purity as well as impurity, suffering as well as health, etc., are intrinsic to this process of becoming part of the consummation/fulfilment.

The perennial questions of the role of God in evil and suffering cannot be conclusively answered because setting God, human beings and nature apart and then trying to put them together again in an attempt to analyse evil and suffering is a superficial exercise fraught with problems. This is because within the interconnectedness of God, human beings and the natural world, there is the acceptance of the radical otherness of God, which leaves human beings with a limited view and appreciation of God. Having said this, significant progress can be made in the viewpoint of human beings on this question, by developing an appreciation of the Free Will Defence and the implications that this has on the question of 'how can a good God allow evil and suffering? In an attempt to take the question of the role of God in evil and suffering to a morally acceptable

position, Hick and Stoeber move beyond that which can be defended, as negotiable from the text, when in their efforts to establish a theodicy they extended Irenaeus' concept of soul making to include according to Hick, purgatory, and Stoeber, either purgatory or non retributive re-incarnation.

In the same vein of evaluating God's role in evil and suffering, the question of: can and does God suffer? leads to a quagmire of conflicting thoughts and ideas from various theologians who argue without being able to concretely answer the question. In my opinion, God is with us in our suffering; he cannot be with us without experiencing in some way our suffering. Therefore in some way God experiences our suffering through the interconnectedness of human beings, God and the natural world. However, in what way God experiences our suffering is not clear, due to the radical otherness of God and our limited anthropocentric view of God. With the adoption of a wholesome and multidimensional worldview, we can see that God has, in some way, taken the risk of allowing the suffering of human beings to be part of God's experience because the Holy Spirit is the giver and sustainer of life and a ubiquitous presence. God, therefore, is present in the sufferings of human beings.

In concluding this chapter, I would like to re-iterate that it seems that God is continually aware of the fact that human beings would, have and will make wrong choices, or sin, and that in God's desire to gather together a people who had chosen to worship God in spirit and truth, God accepted, that in giving a choice to human beings, God also accepted the possibility of a negative response and in that negative response, evil and suffering. But in God's grace and love God also chose to die on a cross in Jesus Christ so that God also paid the price of reconciliation for human beings with his suffering, brought reassurance of the resurrection through the resurrection of Jesus and gave the fullness of his Holy Spirit, as guider and sustainer in the process of moving God's creation from inception to fulfilment.

Chapter 3

The Problem-Setting

Evil/Suffering....Goodness/Blessings

Multireligiously and Multiculturally Viewed

3.1 Introduction

Christians consider Christianity as the true religion, adherents of Islam consider themselves to have the only true religion, and Judaism, Hinduism, Roman Catholicism etc., have the same claim. What are we to make of all these; are they all mistaken?

Each religion makes a universalistic claim and finds its doctrines being rejected or contradicted by the other religions. It is important to state that I believe that religious impulse – the desire to worship – is a facet created by God in human beings, but the diverse religious responses are distortions, fashioned by human beings, of this inbuilt facet.

Lots of theologies and theories have a one-sided sense making approach which damages the notion that human beings are co-responsible and co-accountable to God, other human beings, and nature. The outworking of these one-sided sense making approaches on everyday life results in misplaced notions that God is accountable for HIV/AIDS and human beings are absolved or, that human beings are solely accountable for HIV/AIDS and God is absolved or, that the natural world is totally accountable for HIV/AIDS and God and human beings are absolved .

Pain and suffering caused by sin and evil is a common experience shared by all humanity. Various Christian views, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu etc will be discussed and negotiated from the Christian sense making God – human – world approach in which many theoretical snippets of knowledge from philosophies, the sciences and

technology are in operation. Sense making views are also influenced by scientific and theoretical patterns and theories through scattered insertions and injections from many philosophies, sciences and technologies. A pool of scientific, technological and philosophical knowledge is accumulated over many centuries from many cultures of the past and the present. A myriad of activities and things that people encounter in modern life spring from philosophies, all sciences and the technology that follow from each science, from things like electric kettles and microwave ovens; flying aeroplanes to designer drugs and computers, and from theories and approaches such as hypnosis and therapeutic strategies to meaningful patterns of faith, thinking, loving, socialising and speaking. (van Niekerk 2009:51).

Religion can be tyrannical with resultant effects such as injustice, intolerance, segregation, wars, social abuse etc. On the other hand, religion can also liberate human beings, and work towards social health and social reforms, world peace etc. As religious conflict can lead to wars etc., understanding and religious tolerance between religions are deemed to be of great importance in the prevention of war, being humane in our humanness, and working together in the face of pandemics like HIV/AIDS, and national disasters like tsunami's and hurricanes etc. Although crimes have been committed in the name of religion, such as witch hunts, the Crusades, the Inquisition, suicide bombings, Islamist terrorism, genocide and ethnocide etc., religion is still crucial for the maintenance, stability and development of society. To put it pointedly in the words of Küng: "...humanity without divinity can become bestiality" (1991:585)

Just as there are evil religious beliefs, there are also evil non-religious beliefs. According to Ward (2006:35), it is not religion which makes beliefs evil but rather hatred, ignorance etc. and religious books can be misused by human beings. Ward states:

"In short, there are texts that can be found and used by those who are filled with rage and hatred. But they can be so used only by ignoring the scholarly traditions of interpretation in the religion, by a refusal to engage in reflective discussion of the whole scripture, and by basing a careful selection of texts on considerations of hatred and intolerance.....It is not religion that causes

intolerance. It is intolerance that uses religion to give alleged 'moral' support to the real cause of intolerance – hatred of those perceived or imagined to be oppressors or threats to one's own welfare." (2006:38)

Although Christianity did not always succeed with regards to stewardship and reconciliation between various human beings and nations, it has, generally speaking, endeavoured to be God – as well as human centred and cosmic or nature centred. This in itself has caused a divide in thinking and van Niekerk is quick to point out that theological bridging efforts starting exclusively with God is theologism, efforts starting exclusively with human beings is anthropocentrism or humanism and efforts starting exclusively with the natural world is naturalism or cosmologism. He asserts:

"The acceptance of the mysterious connection and otherness of God, being human and nature in experiences of human beings militates against their separation....In a sense the struggle since the Reformation of the 16th century between "theologians", "anthropocentrists" and "cosmologists" clouded the issue of the mystery of the at-one-ment and at-other-ment of God, human beings and the natural world. The pre-eventuated setting apart of God, human beings and nature necessitates the bringing together through a bridging operation and process of either a theologistic neo-orthodoxy, or an anthropocentric humanising, or a natural cosmisation." (2006:368-9)

It is also important, however, to note that there are some strands within Christianity which suffer from religious fatalism, display apathetic resignation and block social change, which ultimately works against a renewal in creation.

As cultures never have been self-enclosed systems but consisted of human beings in interaction with human beings from other cultures, the deduction could be made that cultures and religions influence each other over time.

As God, according to traditional Christian thinking, revealed himself through nature as well as by special revelation i.e. His Word, from the Christian understanding, the universe is without an excuse and all the different religions would seem to be created by the vain imaginations of human beings in their seeking for "The Wholly Other".

Eznik of Kolb (c.430-c.450) (in Blanchard 1998:179) has the following to say:

“In the time of Seruk (Gen 11:20) there came about, they say, the beginning of paganism. Whence it is clear that up to that moment there existed God-worshippers, and the Church of God existed in the world from the beginning, about which even David, having been taught by the Holy Spirit, offered up prayer: ‘Remember your Church which you purchased from the beginning.’ (Ps 73:2)...And so God never abandoned the world without testimony.”

And so we see that from Eznik of Kolb’s viewpoint, the worship of the true God was existent from the beginning, but distortions to this worship began soon after the Flood.

3.1.1 The discussion of evil/suffering and goodness/blessings together in various views.

As human beings, generally speaking seem to be prone to evil and the various religions seemingly “oppose hatred of life” (Ward 2006:41) the best safeguard seems to be the fivesome awareness in a human being’s daily life which

- a) make a person aware of his or her creatureliness,
- b) awareness of own sinful tendencies with the
- c) realisation of salvation and reconciliation, that is, the forgiveness through the cross and the liberating effect of the resurrection of Jesus
- d) the renovating, renewal and enabling of the Life-giving Spirit which guides, enables and enthuses hope in the
- e) consummation and fulfilment of life, which has already started in the here and now.

This fivesome awareness in the daily life of the individual is made real by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a continuous and endless cycle until the final consummation and fulfilment is reached. This process exposes evil and corruption

and empowers and enables human beings to seek goodness in the Ultimate Good One.

With this in mind an overview of the beliefs and praxis of various religions is considered to be of value.

All three monotheistic religions¹⁴ emerged in the Near East alongside other traditions like those of ancient Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Egypt and each of these have had their own distinctive beliefs about evil, goodness, suffering, death and the after-life.

In Judaism and Christianity, we find 'brokenness' as is evidenced from Genesis (3:14-24) where the relationships between human beings broke down when they were unwilling to accept responsibility for their own actions. There is also a 'brokenness' in the relationship between human beings and God as well as between human beings and the rest of nature. This 'brokenness' is not evidenced in the Qur'an as here the earth is not cursed and does not need to 'groan' until human beings are redeemed.

All three monotheistic religions view Abraham as a blessing. In Judaism, Abraham has been elevated to a saving figure who even observed all the commandments of both the oral and written Torah. He is seen as the epitome of goodness. In the New Testament of the Christian religion, physical descent no longer guarantees salvation to human beings and all human beings who believe have Abraham as father, whether they are circumcised or not. According to the Qur'an, Abraham is the 'friend of God' and was neither a Jew nor a Christian but a 'hanif (true believer) dedicated to God', and thus was the first human being to be converted to God and practice Islam.

¹⁴ The Monotheistic religions being Judaism, Christianity and Islam

According to Judaism, God wants harmony and goodness but human beings bring about disharmony and destruction. However, at the consummation, God's plan for harmony, goodness and interrelatedness will prevail. And although, according to the Christian church father Augustine (Berkhof 1996:246), sin is the absence of goodness, God as creator loves God's creation as is evident in the parable that Jesus shared about the good shepherd in Luke 15:7 who does not give up on the lost sheep but goes after it until he finds it. As human beings, we might give up on other human beings, cultures and nations but according to Jesus, God is not like human beings as God's care extends to that of human beings (Matt 10:29-30). The veracity of this statement is borne out by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. For by accepting the cup of crucifixion, Jesus, in obedience to God's will, brought the possibility of salvation to all human beings which extends the boundaries of gender, culture and nation and the question could be posed whether this applies to religion as well? In this thesis, whilst reflecting on evil and suffering as viewed from different cultural and religious perspectives, the premise is that we are engaged and involved in God's creation, reconciliation (cross and resurrection of Jesus), renewal of everything (through the Holy Spirit) and in the movement towards the fulfilment and consummation of everything in the new heaven and the new earth. The question is whether this is true with regards or regardless of our predisposition which in itself is determined upon faith disposition, reading of holy books as well as the approach to the holy books, whether it be fundamentalist mirroring, interpretative or sensible negotiation.

Another fundamental aspect for consideration is, how the various multireligious dimensions impact human beings in their daily life creating a fivesome awareness in a wholesome person i.e.

- 1) self actualisation of creatureliness,
- 2) awareness of sinful tendencies,
- 3) denial of self
- 4) renovating and renewal power and

5) consummation.

In the Christian Scriptures, when Paul suffered, he experienced the comfort of the Lord Jesus Christ and was thus enabled to comfort other human beings (2 Cor 1:3-7 & Acts 16:22-25). This became a practical response to suffering for Paul and in the book of Acts suffering is often a direct result of discipleship, especially suffering at the hands of other human beings for the sake of Christ and yet the Christians of that time accepted suffering as an honour (Acts 5:41). In 1 Peter (3:13-15), the writer talks about the attitude of Christians toward suffering and comes to the conclusion that, even in suffering, Christians are still blessed. Christians are therefore called to endure suffering for the sake of Christ and meet the suffering with joy, as God will strengthen them and pour out God's Spirit to sustain them. Suffering is viewed in the book of Revelation as a witness against the world (Rev 6:15-17) but it is also used as a witness for the sake of the world (1 Peter 3:16).

Beker (1987:104-105) has the opinion that 1 Peter opened the door for Christian martyrdom as suffering came to be viewed as a noble Christian virtue. This is evidenced in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch who had a passionate desire to be devoured by the wild beasts in the arena (Placher 2005:33-34). According to Paul, evil will be undone when God's kingdom is established on earth and in the meantime suffering should be endured as a necessity because of and against the world's idolatrous schemes (2 Thess 1:5-10).

The Qur'an starts with the actual facts of suffering (Surah 1:7 and 7:94-95) and views suffering as a reality of life, but it does not leave Islamic thought without problems i.e. at the defeat at Uhud (Surah 3:152-155) the question arose why did God allow the faithful to be defeated? The answer is given that God is compassionate and will decide whom God will punish and whom God will forgive (Surah 3:129). As this is not really an answer, the problem still exists. Although suffering is seen as punishment for sin (Surah 3:128), it does not apply to all cases and sometimes it is therefore viewed as a trial that adherents to Islam must expect as suffering forms part of the purpose of God and creates a faithful disposition, divides the sincere from the insincere and in so doing, forms character (Surah

3:165-172). With these answers, an attempt is made within Islam to reconcile God's compassion and His omnipotence with the continued existence of indiscriminate evil and suffering in the world.

According to the Qur'anic viewpoint, the acceptance of suffering is worthwhile as the balance will be restored in the life to come and therefore, as in Christianity, a fatalistic strand could easily be found in the interpretation of this religion as everything could be attributed to the 'will of God' (Surah 3:169-170).

Belief in God's loving generosity and salvation by grace differentiates Islam from the other Eastern traditions. Eastern traditions, generally speaking, locate salvation within reincarnation by means of karma by which human beings receive the outcomes of their personal actions. Davies (2002:81) is of the opinion that in some Hindu and Buddhist traditions, there is an emphasis on the love relationship between the divine and the human being and therefore, grace can flourish.

3.1.2 Level and degree of stewardship in the various views: responsibility and accountability of human beings in the face of evil and suffering

According to the Judaeo-Christian Bible, human beings are both similar and different from the rest of creation and it follows therefore that the life and destiny of human beings are bound up with creation, as is evident in Rom (8:19-23) where Paul clearly states that the creation will be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God and thus human beings will be with creation in the end of the ages just as they have been with creation in the beginning of creation and in the intervening period. Both animals and human beings consume vegetation as is evident from Gen 1:30 and both reproduce, increase and fill the seas and the earth, based on the command of God in Genesis (1:22). However, human beings are given an additional vocation in Genesis (1:26, 28) which consists of a task which needs to be realized in coexistence with all of life, in the land, as well as with the cultivation of the land. This task did not imply conquest but stewardship. Human beings, who are like the non-human creation, but also, unlike it inasmuch

as they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), are given the mandate to reflect God's covenant love in relation with God, within the covenant community of all humanity and with all that God has created.

From a Christian perspective, human beings are created in the image of God (Stated by Paul in I Cor 11:6-8) and represent God on earth and as such, godly characteristics such as care, compassion and a saving aptitude should be prevalent in their behaviour. These characteristics form part of the stewardship role which nations also are supposed to exhibit (Van Dyke 1996:168). Human beings have a responsibility towards nature, and yet, there are instances where human beings cause suffering to nature and to each other for economic reasons i.e. greed, domination etc. Human beings have damaged the earth by polluting it, dumping toxic waste and thereby poisoning the ground, seas, rivers and air, depleted the ozone layer by usage of synthetically derived chlorofluorocarbons, used chemical and atomic weapons etc. This is contrary to Christian Scriptures which recognize the intrinsic worth of human beings and the whole of creation (Gen 1:28). Human beings are part of nature, but also distinct from it, as they are created in the image of the creator. Interdependence therefore exists between human beings and nature and in the same way, interrelationship also exists between God and human beings and nature. Because of the fallenness of humanity, their stewardship is often misdirected and sometimes even destructive.

Within the eschatological dimension concerning redemption of creation, it is expected that human beings endeavour to restore nature and be involved in the 'redemption of the whole creation' (Romans 8:18-25), so to speak, which is just another way of saying that they should be responsible for their actions and the effect of their actions on each other and nature. It seems that, in recent years, there is an increased recognition of the interdependence of all life and the natural world as human beings are increasingly being seen as co-creators and therefore co-workers in the foursome grand acts of God. It follows therefore, that theologies and theories, in order to be meaningful and worthwhile, need to open themselves up to working in the unholy and unclean corners of people's experiences and societies and discard the ghetto approach which leads to alienation, isolation and

dehumanisation of human beings. A renewed effort to work towards renovation, renewal, restoration with the focus on the wholesomeness, holiness and sacredness of life in an endeavour to heighten the interconnectedness of God-human beings-nature should take prominent position globally since the Holy Spirit as Creator will bring in the consummation of a new heaven and a new earth.

Unity is found in our shared humanity and interconnectedness, whilst allowing differences with regards to gender, culture as well as religiously. Space should be allowed for religious diversity, as life in itself is diverse, although there is a unity within the diversity. Having said this, the emphasis should not be placed on diversity but on the interconnectedness and sacredness of all life. Human beings cannot control the wind and cannot control the outworking of the Holy Spirit, but should rather focus on their own role in the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. Certain moral values cut across different religions, for instance the respect for the value of life is shared by Christians and Jains (Dundas 2002:136) alike .

Indian religions such as the Jains, teach a oneness with nature and a reverence for all life as human beings do not have the right to supremacy (Palmer 2003:108). In Hinduism, however, the equivalent of the Christian stewardship principle is nonexistent. According to the Hindu worldview the physical world is neither real nor unreal but a mere illusion (maya) (Anderson 1975:141) and the world has no beginning or end, but is part of an evolutionary cyclic process (Van Dyke 2008:47). Based on karmic law, human beings might be reborn as gods or as animals according to their evil or good thoughts, words and actions (Anderson 1975:143). Karma thus operates as retributive justice.

Adherents to Islam believe they will be judged by their actions and want the good works to weigh more than the wicked actions. Having said that, according to the Qur'an (Sura 37:96): 'God created you and created what you make' which implies divine omnipotence where whatever human beings receive from nature comes from God. This, however, does not take away human responsibility as they must give account of their behaviour on judgement day.

A Sufist theologian al-Ghazali (1058-1111 C.E.), who was a critic of Muslim Neoplatonism, stresses the unity of God as the Sole Being/Sole Light in the universe who could be known through God's self-unveiling in the arduous process of observation (McClellan 1999:249). Human beings as the epitome of creation (because they are created in the image and likeness of God) occupy a pre-eminent position upon the ladder of creation.

Anderson (1975:126) is of the opinion that:

“The average Muslim today firmly believes that man can utilize the power of demons and jinn by means of magic, and the practice of ‘counter-magic’ to protect from evil of all sorts is exceedingly common.”

According to Islam, human beings are created higher than angels and the doctrine of sinfulness has no basis in Islam as human beings have been created as God's khalifa. And as they are not fallen, they are not in need of a saviour. Human beings are essentially good and not evil and have made wrong choices because they are intrinsically weak, imperfect and forgetful of God, and therefore, God sent them prophets to remind them to submit to His will.

Geisler (2007:48) explains the concept:

“As God's khalifa (trustee on earth), man has received the privilege of being in authority over the rest of the creation. ‘We made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful’ (22:36). Further, ‘We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation’ (17:70) However, it should be noted that this understanding of man as God's steward on earth is a fairly recent concept in Islamic theology.”

With regards to the aspect of stewardship in Islam, Geisler et al are in agreement with Montgomery (1983:125-127) who explains that instead of stewardship, human beings are generally referred to as a slave (abd) with God as the Lord/Sovereign (rabb). From my viewpoint, this is in line with the fact that in Islam the purpose of human beings is not to develop a living relationship with God, but rather, to obey his commands.

Stewardship is evident in the Torah as God gave human beings a commission to rule over the animal kingdom (Gen 1:28). The Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible or from a Christian viewpoint the Old Testament) views humanity not as the owners of nature but as the stewards which are accountable to God (Lev 25:23-24). This theology is important in the understanding of the Jubilee (The Jewish Biblical tradition of the release of debts and the returning of land to the original owners – Lev 25:8-17). The land of Canaan is not the property of Israel but a 'holding' (ahuza) and the Israelites are only leaseholders on the divine estate, which underlines the theocentric principle. The Jubilee and Sabbath are therefore an assertion of God's proprietorship. The Torah (or the Pentateuch) demanded personal holiness, justice and righteousness in the relationships between human beings as well as that between human beings and nature (for example Lev 25:14-17).

The responsibility of human beings with regards to the continued existence of animals is emphasized in Deuteronomy (22:6-7) where even the mother bird is preserved. Even in the story of Noah (Gen 6:19), God did not think about Noah alone, but also, about the animals with Noah. In the Torah, it is evident that the pain suffered by animals should be prevented as is evident from the instruction not to plough with an ox and ass together (Deut 22:10) as the whole created order is important in God's sight.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Chapman 1994:516) God entrusted animals to the stewardship of human beings, which implies that human beings have a duty of care for animals. Within reasonable limits, medical experimentation is seen as morally acceptable when contributing towards the saving of human lives. Social justice is important as well as taking care of the material, cultural and religious poverty of human beings. These teachings are very much in line with Protestant teaching

In Catholic moral theology human beings are only tenants of their bodies and as stewards they cannot alter them as we have only charge of the bene esse¹⁵, not of the esse (Curran 2008:54). However, in everyday life the morality of love dominates (Curran 2008:97); this means that it would not be wrong to be the donor of, for instance, a kidney to save or prolong a life.

In Buddhism nirvana is the release of all suffering (Weeraperuma 2003:170). Suffering is dealt with by the elimination of desire, which is an evolutionary process to be achieved by self effort. And, as such, it deals with the problem of pain and suffering, on a personal level, rather than dealing with moral evil.

Having considered the multi and various responses, a further question could be posed. The question is, where do sin and pain, evil and suffering fit into the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and the physical–organic world which is interwoven with God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation? The answer is that it is intertwined and interwoven but that people read it differently according to their sense making approaches and this concept is outlined in this part of the thesis. We will touch on the differences and endeavour to formulate a coherent response with regards the co-responsibility of human beings with God in connection with the concept of stewardship.

In reviewing the concept of stewardship within the various persuasions, we see that there exists a complete spectrum of approaches. The Jews see themselves as stewards of God's creation to such an extent that they view their land as God's land which they have been given stewardship of. On the other end of the scale, the Hindu religion develops no stewardship concepts. Apparently the concept of 'maya' (all is illusion) absolves Hindu's from responsibility for the result of their actions on the balance of nature as this world is seen merely as illusion. In this current climate of concern over climate change and escalating pollution brought

¹⁵ Bene esse – well being; esse - essence

about by the global development of mankind, the cultural influences of the different persuasions on various geographical blocks adds further complication to the function of those who are trying to address these problems through dialogue aimed at reducing the impact of human beings on the environment.

Weaver has a valuable contribution to make in terms of stewardship and nature. He notes that we all too easily blame God for natural disasters or 'natural evil', which result in suffering. Weaver proposes that things like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and extremes of climate are "necessary side effects of a world designed to produce the raw materials of life." and cause suffering because of the effects of the "moral evil of human irresponsibility" (Weaver 1994:196). Weaver reminds us that modern science can predict these disasters and points a finger of blame at rich countries that are not prepared to invest in the systems needed to avert the impact of such disasters as follows:

So countries that are rich in resources and technology could counter such anticipated problems and avoid the worst effects if they had the will-power to accept the economic costs; for example, houses need not be built on a major fracture in the earth's crust where earthquakes may happen, and farmers need not farm on the side of Mount Etna. (1994:196)

Weaver continues to explain that should the wealthy countries be prepared to share their wealth and their safer territory with the peoples of poorer countries such disasters could be avoided. Until then people will still find it necessary to live in places such as the flood plains of Bangladesh. Weaver sees that "raising the moral question of the goodness of God also involves a moral issue for us." (Weaver 1994:196)

Weaver's ideas are valuable because they point to the current situation where science understands and can measure and predict many disastrous situations, but due to greed, nationalism, prejudice, fear etc., wealthy countries do not provide the required expertise and funding needed by poorer countries. Stewardship responsibilities are also singled out as part of the area where human beings fail due to the same motivating factors. Because of bad stewardship forced upon, amongst others, African farmers, fertile soil is destroyed by torrential rain and

washed away, or blown away by winds in conditions of severe drought. These disasters, which reduce the capability of developing countries to provide food for their populations are avoidable if the correct infrastructure, training and assistance are made available.

However, whilst Weaver's argument is valuable, it is also incomplete. HIV/AIDS as a disease was not predicted or expected, and in the first years of its recognised existence, the true cause was not effectively identified. HIV/AIDS is a disaster that arises out of the natural world and while the alleviation of the suffering that HIV/AIDS causes can be challenged with Weaver's proposition, the origin and early development cannot. HIV developed, probably, as a mutation of another virus present in the natural world, prior to which it did not have the ability to infect and attack human beings, but after that mutation HIV became the cause of mass suffering and death. Whilst HIV/AIDS has been used to highlight the limitations to Weaver's assertions, equally other unexpected, spontaneous events from within the created natural world could also have been used.

The concept of Stewardship could also be expected to have an influence on attitudes towards HIV/AIDS in terms of contraction, control of the disease in those infected, care for those infected and care for those impacted through the suffering of others who are HIV positive. Where the stewardship principle is high, one could expect that these aspects of HIV/AIDS would be handled in a responsible and compassionate manner, but where stewardship concepts are low or absent, that these aspects of HIV/AIDS would be neglected. However, these ideas are not so simple because whilst:

“Humanitarian ideas actually conflict with Hinduism's teaching on karma. Karma dictates that one's shortcomings and sufferings are due to what one has done in previous lives. To help people improve themselves through medicine or education is, in essence, to tinker with their karma.” (Matrisciana 2008:190).

This indicates that in philosophical Hinduism, to assist an HIV/AIDS sufferer would in fact be damaging to their karma, i.e. their long term process of attaining unity

with Brahman through the cycle of life, death and re-incarnation. Yet, in practice, we find that:

“Whereas this karmic justice is cold and without recourse in philosophical Hinduism, popular versions of Hinduism allow for divine intercession” (Gupta 2000:1)

and a humanitarian approach is borne out by observation, for example, we see significant care and self sacrifice within certain Hindu communities for HIV/AIDS sufferers. And

“... the teaching of Hinduism is based on the principle of sewa or service to humanity. However, with the establishment of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformed movement which was established in 1785 by Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati, such service is dedicated to the human race, especially the unfortunate and downtrodden. These will include the orphans, people in poverty, battered women and children, and so on irrespective of race and ethnic origin.” (New Jersey Arya Samaj Mandir, Inc: internet resource accessed 22 July 2009).

“We, Heads and representatives of organisations and people of the Hindu faith participating in the Hindu Leaders Caucus held on 1 and 2 June 2008; ... Recognise that the values of Hinduism compel us to respond to the human suffering caused by HIV and AIDS in all communities...” (www.cabsa.co.za/newsite/DisplayPage.asp?Id=402) (Accessed 22 July 2009)

And this reference clearly shows a strand of interpretation within Hinduism that has a strong humanitarian ethos. Therefore, we see that Stewardship is but one contributor to the complex equation which relates the various persuasions to their reaction to suffering, and therefore, to HIV/AIDS.

It is tempting here to consider why there is not a good correlation between those religions which have a low stewardship ethic and a distant response to suffering. As human beings, the natural world and God are closely interconnected, although radically different, it seems possible that the religious dogmas which would appear to limit the response to suffering are in opposition to the natural experience of the human beings who experience suffering and also in opposition to the inworking of the Holy Spirit, who works in all human beings irrespective of faith orientation, and

therefore, because of the experiential impetus, the religious dogma is not applied in ways that would seem to be logically implied.

3.2 Various religions, churches and cultures as sense making orientations

Cultures are not just sets of customs and activities but each culture has a certain shared system by which all the human beings within that society view their world and experiences, and relate to their experiences within this framework which gives them meaning.

How human beings interpret their Scriptures and religious traditions determine their worldview. According to Coward (2000:161):

“...the claim of scripture....is that it reveals truth. Rather than a ‘prison-house’ the scriptural word has the power to realize release from ignorance (the moksa of Hinduism, the Nirvana of Buddhism) or to bring one into a saving experience of God’s living word (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)”.

With regards to the foursome grand acts of God, namely creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation, different experiential patterns of faith place alternating emphasis on faith experience of God, the human self, other human beings and the physical-organic environment. This has a bearing on the main theme of sin and pain, evil and suffering and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. An overview of the general beliefs of the various religions is needed in order to understand the complexity of the sense making orientations.

In agreement with Coward (2000:161), it is imperative to note that in the religions under consideration, the oral tradition is stronger or in some cases as strong as the written word. In Hinduism, the oral tradition is the most evident and in Islam God speaks personally or through an angel to Muhammad who is instructed to listen. The Buddhist scriptures were also handed down orally from the time of Buddha (c.a. 55 B.C.E.) until the first century C.E. Within Judaism, God spoke to his people through Moses and gave them the Law on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20).

These commandments were only written down after God had spoken them (Deuteronomy 5:22). Even in Christianity, Jesus gave his teachings, which were in the form of parables, stories and wise sayings, orally. These oral teachings also were passed down orally by his disciples. Paul's letters are also read publicly before the congregations. Through the ages, the spoken word seems to have creative power as God spoke creation into existence. Even the Protestant Reformers considered the spoken or preached word to manifest the Spirit of the Living God.

Religion is not just the oral word handed down, but it also consists of experiences which reflect attitudes or predispositions to the world. Every religion has a faith in a Being or an Ideal with certain emotional attitudes centred around it as well as practices such as ritual, prayer or worship.

The experience of the majority of human beings is that suffering is, to a large extent, caused by human beings and the majority of religions are aligned with this concept. For Buddhists all suffering is caused by human beings; and Islam, Judaism as well as Christianity are of the opinion that the attraction to worldly things is the cause of suffering. All major religions condemn practices such as adultery, dishonesty, cruelty, greed, selfishness etc., as these practices lead to suffering.

According to Richards the *Nostra Aetate* dated 28 October 1965 of the Second Vatican Council recognize the duty of the Church to promote unity among different nations and human beings:

[The] "Catholic Church....does not reject anything that is true and holy in these religions; often their doctrines reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet at the same time the Church is compelled to proclaim Christ as the way, the truth, and the life...." (1989:10-11)

I would hasten to add that in proclaiming the Christian truth of Jesus Christ, it must be an unadulterated message delivered with humility and love without compromising the truth. In the words of Desmond Tutu:

“The Church must bea serving Church, not a triumphalistic Church, biased in favour of the powerless to be their voice, to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, the marginalized ones – yes, preaching the Gospel of reconciliation but working for justice first, since there can never be real reconciliation without justice.” (Tutu 1983:86).

By doing this, the Christian can bring the message of hope in a world ravaged by suffering. When human beings are being ‘infused’ by the life-giving and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, God continues to work with and within human beings in a systematic and incremental process of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. To quote a comment of Van Niekerk:

“ ...we as people living in the time of the Spirit, have as much of the Spirit as Paul or who else in our lives. If the Bible is inspired, we are equally inspired to make responsible, accountable and reflective decisions as God’s children in today’s world. My question is do we have a living relation with the living and acting God in our lives and secondary with the Bible from where we get clues we can negotiate with, or do we have a relationship first with the Bible and secondary with God? This is a question every quarter, half or three quarter Bible-Gospelist should ask him or herself.” (in private communication March 6, 2009)

3.2.1 Judaism as sense-making orientation

Although the beliefs of this faith have developed with time and circumstances, this ancient faith has influenced both Christianity and Islam. The word Jew is derived from the name Judah the Latin word Judaeus (Judaism – which implies that a human being is a resident of Judea) and thus Jew is more ethnic than religious, although the lines are blurred. Judaism is founded on the written Torah (Scripture) and spoken Torah (Talmud). According to Rabbinic Judaism¹⁶, Israel is not an ethnic entity but rather it is a ‘supernatural’ entity as Gentiles can become part of

¹⁶ Rabbinic Judaism is based on the long held belief that God revealed the Torah to Moses at Sinai partially in writing and partially by retention in the memory of Moses, thus there is a dual Torah – written and oral. (Neusner 2005a:6)

Israel by affirming the faith. To accept the Torah turns a human being into an Israelite.

Judaism is not an-other-worldly religion as the focus is very much on the here and now, on relationships with other human beings as well as nature. According to Ward

“The Jewish tradition is keenly aware of human ‘sin’ – of the fact that humans destroy nature and each other in the search for power and pleasure. It points out that such conduct leads to despair, futility and death, which is the judgment of God on evil. But it also holds that each person has an inner capacity for goodness, and that no one is beyond the possibility of forgiveness, for God will never wholly abandon anyone.” (2006:182)

Judaism believes that God is one, and therefore, repudiates Zoroastrian dualism as well as Trinitarianism as stated in their prayer: “Shema Israel, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai Ehad!” (Hear O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is One!) (Neusner 2005a:36). God is intimately involved in God’s creation although God is beyond and outside the universe. With dualism rejected and Rabbinic literature proclaiming that God is a good and loving God, the sages experienced a problem with the apparent evil in the world and Abraham ibn Daud – a philosopher of the 12th century – (in Cohn-Sherbok 2005:11)

“...solved the problem by arguing that evil is not a quality. It is merely an absence of good.....It was not willed by God. It is simply a gap in the goodness created by God.”

Saadya (882-942) explained that a human being who is wicked is receiving a reward in this life for the good deeds (s)he has done and will be recompensed for the evil deeds in the next world. The reverse also happens and his theory therefore seems to reduce God to a glorified bookkeeper who tests human beings and gives them a promise of compensation, which will be available to them at a later date. (Rosenthal 1980:197)

An unusual approach to evil is posed by Spinoza (1632-77) as he identifies different approaches to the reactions human beings should display towards evil. A real distinction is made between the good and evil human beings do, although this

determines their position in the world through their actions (Garret 1996:276-279). The wicked human being is only focussed on his/her personal passions and acts thereupon, whereas the good human being acknowledges his/her dependence upon God and acts accordingly. A close relationship exists between error and evil, as an evil human being displays a lack of understanding and knowledge with regards to evil and this is then a deficiency in thinking which boils down to error. Spinoza is of the opinion that the importance of evil diminishes as a human being understands more about the problem, and therefore, the blame for undeserved suffering in the world should actually be directed at human beings and not at God. Human beings should stand against evil and suffering and, for Spinoza, the reason for evil and suffering lies within the individual as well as in the world. Human beings are urged to have a proper relationship with each other and consequently with themselves.

Buber made a distinction between two types of evil (Yardan 2001:16). The first type occurs when a human being becomes involved in evil by chance and the second type is when a human being deliberately decides to be involved in wrongful actions. Human beings need to fight evil and suffering.

Irving Greenberg (2004:213 & 92), a post-Holocaust covenantal theologian, asserts that God is self-limiting yet redemptive. Griffin illustrates this as follows:

“According to Jewish tradition, God, out of love, self-limits – first to create and sustain existence, then to enable its ultimate perfection....The primordial self-limitation is expressed in establishing natural order/law and being bound by it....Similarly, God does not continuously interfere with history; nor will the divine enter into human lives with constant miraculous intervention. According to Greenberg, without such divine self-limitation, there could be no covenant, understood as divine-human partnership. As an expression of God’s love for human kind, the covenant is a framework within which human freedom is joined to human responsibility. Through the covenant, humans become co-creators with God in perfecting the world. God is present in God’s hiddenness; to put it differently, God is hidden in the presence of human freedom....Even in the face of overwhelming evil, God declines to intervene in a supernatural fashion, for such intervention, though it may well change the immediate balance of power for the good, will unravel the power relations that enable the covenant. Thus God’s commitment to the covenant is evidenced by God’s self-restraint in the use of power apart from human agency.” (2005:114-115).

In the end, however, traditional Judaism believes that God's king-Messiah will usher in a golden age where He will right all wrongs and bring in a state of healing to the whole earth.

For Greenberg pluralism could be used as a restraining force against evils such as the Holocaust as pluralism has the tendency to divide power, and thereby, saving actual human lives because unlimited power with claims to absolute truths results in great evil. (Griffin 2005:1165)

Unlike other religions, Judaism never views God as a means to an end which is salvation but as the ultimate goal. Suffering and death is seen as something to abolish as co-partners of God. Standing against suffering and death can be achieved by medicine, charity as well as protesting to God so as to move God to usher in an era where goodness can prevail. Such an act is contained in the Scriptures where Abraham did not accept the fact that God intended to punish Sodom and Gomorrah, but challenged the Lord that he might forgive the entire city for the sake of any innocent who are in it (Genesis 18:24-32 Tanaka Translation). Thus, the righteous effect, or try to effect, in this case, deliverance for the whole community, which is a prominent theme in rabbinic literature.

Sometimes, however, God cleanses the soul of sin which is another way of saying that God corrects the error. This correction/punishment is not for the sake of punishment, although it may appear as punishment. God communicated his will to human beings through the Torah, a traditional view is that God has given human beings the freedom of choice to be good or evil and they will be held accountable for their actions and rewarded accordingly. Acts of kindness result in a good life and suffering is commensurate with a human being's evil acts and indifference. For the Lubavitcher Rebbe, a time comes when the suffering that a human being must endure in order to be cleansed from the sin, is so great that it is better and more merciful to let such an individual die than to suffer so much agony.

The orthodox and reformed Jews believe that they are the chosen people of God (Isaacs 2006:33) as they are in a covenant relationship with God and although this

is a privilege it also brings with it a responsibility. In order to remember the obligations they use the mezuzah¹⁷ and phylacteries¹⁸ as visible signs.

In Judaism, the emphasis is on correct practice rather than correct belief and visiting the unwell is an important duty. According to the Talmud, “whoever visits the sick causes him to recover” (Freeman 1999:212). The tradition also teaches that dying human beings should be treated with utmost care and it is important that they make a final confession to God.

Unique to the Jewish custom, is ‘sitting shiva’, which is a ‘healing’ custom. According to Cohn-Sherbok (2005:128-130):

“Once the funeral is over, the Orthodox family returns home to begin a seven-day period of mourning.....It gives the chance for friends and neighbours to do something concrete for the bereaved at a difficult time. Simply by sitting in silence, by quietly remembering the deceased or by distracting the mourner with local news, they are doing a real service. At the same time it gives the family a clear space of time to adjust to their new situation, to be surrounded by family and to be sustained by the love and concern of the community as a whole.”

Resurrection is completely Jewish as it is recited during the Amidah as the second blessing of the Eighteen Benedictions where it asserts that God is faithful to those who lie in the dust and will restore them bodily and grant them eternal life (Charlesworth et al 2006:15).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, there are references to life after death, for instance in Psalm 88, where Sheol is seen as a shadowy region where human beings have no substance and are forgotten. Cohn-Sherbok argues that after the exile in Babylon (6th century BCE), a doctrine of immortality developed which most probably

¹⁷ Ma piece of parchment inscribed with the Shema. Usually in a decorative case and affixed to a doorpost.

¹⁸ Phylacteries are small black boxes containing pieces of parchment inscribed with the Shema which are worn by orthodox Jews on the arm and forehead during weekday morning prayer.

resulted because of the Persian influence and from then onwards it was thought that the bodies of the dead would be resurrected. According to Cohn-Sherbok (2005:48) two biblical books Isaiah (26:19) and Daniel (12:2), considered by some scholars to be of a late date, refer to the resurrection which then was connected with the doctrine of the Messiah. He raises a well thought through argument as follows:

“In the years before the destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70, there was conflict over the doctrine. On the one hand the Sadducees, the aristocratic priestly caste, rejected it as unbiblical. On the other, the Pharisees, the teachers of the law, accepted it and argued that it was implicit in the scriptural text...The twelfth-century philosopher Maimonides listed belief in the resurrection as the last of His Principles of the Jewish faith.....The rabbis of the Talmud clearly believed in a straightforward physical resurrection, since the dead are described as rising wearing their clothes. Maimonides was uneasy with this idea. In his Essay on Resurrection, he...argues that even though the dead would come to life again, like all physical entities, they would die again in the course of time. He believed that only the souls of human beings are truly immortal. Today most Jews who believe in any form of life after death would agree with him.....” (2005:48)

Both Orthodox and Reform Jews stress the immortality of the soul and it seems that nowadays within Judaism the concept of bodily resurrection has been abandoned (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:458). It is further evident that the immortality of the soul has been disassociated from the messianic redemption as well as from the concepts of reward and punishment.

This constitutes a major shift in the Jewish sense-making process as it assisted them in the belief of the world as a creation of a just God as human beings would be compensated for their sufferings in the hereafter, especially in the light of sufferings like the Holocaust. This shift in thinking worked itself out differently within the various strands within Judaism. A small minority, the strictly Orthodox, wait for the Messiah to bring in the golden age – the messianic age (Eisenburg 2006:100). Some non-Orthodox movements still believe in the messianic age as well as the immortality of the soul but are of the opinion that this will happen through the efforts of human beings (Bryant 2009:424). Others do not expect messianic redemption at all and believe that this present world is all there is and

the answer lies in the state of Israel as this became the central focus of religious and cultural identity and Zionism replaced Judaism.

Within Judaism, different approaches to reading the holy books led to different belief systems and even within this religion the fundamentalist mirroring, interpretative hermeneutic as well as sensible negotiation is prevalent.

3.2.2 Islam as sense-making orientation

There are striking similarities as well as differences in the worldview themes of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Human beings of the Islamic predisposition are perceived to be closer to Judaism, however, than to Christianity¹⁹ because of the emphasis on monotheism, food and circumcision. According to Moucarray, an important difference with regards to evil and suffering is that followers of Islam do not believe in original sin. They believe that human beings can attain salvation based on their own actions and do not need a personal redeemer.

“In a paradoxical way, Islam brings Muslims closer to God and yet prevents them from knowing him in his perfect revelation in Jesus Christ.” (2006:359)

In some respects, this is like Buddhism where salvation is through knowledge and therefore again a personal redeemer is not necessary (Dhavamony 1973:306-310).

The oneness and unity of God is the dominant theme within Islamic theology, where it is known as Tawhid. There is a clear distinction between Allah and his creation which is similar to both Judaism and Christian thought. (Esposito 2003:317)

¹⁹ Unlike Judaism and Islam, Christianity believes in the Trinity

Allah rules over the domain of the unseen (al ghaib) and the seen (al shahada). Human beings form part of the 'seen' but have only gained knowledge of the unseen through revelation which results from either angels as servants of Allah or jinn who work towards evil under Iblis' (Satan's) leadership. Before the creation of the world, spirits existed as divine light (Nur). Human beings as well as animals are a combination of clay (hayula) and spirit (jinn). The spirits/jinn which have existed before human beings came into existence and which have not been given a human form became angels. Both evil and good beings are under the control of Allah and everything, both success and misfortune is the will of Allah, which could easily lead to a sense of fatalism. (Burnett 2002:115).

In Islamic thought there are billions of angels (Honest Recorders/Kiraman Katibin) who have the task of recording the actions, thoughts and words of each human being so that Allah knows what each human being is thinking or doing; which stands in contrast to the Christian belief in the omnipotence and omniscience of God where such angels are unnecessary.

According to Horrie (et al2003:29) when Allah created Adam, Satan was the king of the angels but he became jealous of Adam and refused to serve human beings and it is reported in the Qur'an (Sura 18): 'And when we said to the angels: Make obeisance to Adam; they made obeisance but Satan [did not]. 'Then Satan said: 'What! Would you then take [Adam] and his offspring for friends rather than me, and they are your enemies? (18:50). Horrie reported that after

“this argument Satan was banished from heaven and Jibreel replaced him as Archangel. Satan was bitter about this turn of events and decided to destroy mankind by leading it away from Allah towards paganism and eternal damnation....According to both the Qur'an and Hadith the only protection against the work of Satan is constant remembrance of Allah and the word of the Qur'an. The need to protect the mind against Satan is one reason why Muslims attempt to learn the Qur'an by heart and pray so frequently. A person is only really safe from Satanic misguidance when his mind is fully preoccupied with the worship of Allah.”

This belief lends itself to a fundamentalist mirroring approach where every word, paragraph and sentence are viewed as inspired and carrying some sort of magical power safeguarding the reader from evil forces.

Although angels play an important role in Islamic thought neither Gabriel nor Michael are as awesome as the angel of death who has 4000 wings covered in tongues and eyes. Whenever a human being's death is written on the tablets of Divine decrees, this angel tears the soul out from the human being. Two angels, Munkar and Nakir, interrogate the dead human being whilst in the grave and can even punish the human being if deemed necessary (Geisler 2007:37).

According to Islamic thought, human beings have two angels, one on each shoulder. The angel on the right shoulder notes all the good actions and the one on the left takes note of all the evil actions. The angel on the left does not immediately record evil actions and if the human being repents within a certain time span the sins committed are not entered. (Anderson 1975:116)

In Islamic thought Jinns, or spiritual beings, of undefined character (Sura 72), have subclans like for instance, ghūl, female desert spirits who sometimes appear as wild cats (Musk 2004:33). Iblis, diabolos, made from fire, is sometimes regarded as jinn. God created Iblis and has a certain relationship with him but he remains the enemy of human beings. The Semitic concept of Satan as an instrument of God thus prevails in Islamic thought instead of dualism between absolute Good and absolute Evil (Partridge 2005:369).

Muhammad, as a messenger of God, is reported to have performed the same type of miracles as Jesus did (Peterson 2007:69) i.e. breathing life into a bird made with stone, fed a thousand human beings on one sheep, produced rain after a period of drought etc. In these stories he is depicted as a human being with enormous potentialities to alleviate suffering. According to the adherents of Islam, each nation/race have had their own prophets (Surah 10:47 and 35:24) and Islam is not just a religion based on human speculation but is instead based on divine revelation.

Islam is a complete way of life and governs economics, dress, taxation, politics, war, education, diet, banking, social behaviour etc. Having said this, it must be stated that the requirement for women to cover their heads is cultural or traditional rather than Qur'anic, as it is not stated in the Qur'an except for the wives of

Mohammed. Surah 24:31 is the verse most commonly used to justify the requirement for women to cover their heads and this verse only requires modesty (Kramarae 2000:1160). Community is important in this culture and learning large parts of the Qur'an forms an important part of religious devotion and education. In Islam, the faith (din) and state (dawlah) are inseparable and rule (hukm) is inherent in Islam (Dekmejian 1995:41-42). Apart from this, faith, ritual prayer, alms tax, pilgrimage to Mecca and fasting in Ramadan are very important.

According to the Qur'an (Sura 95:4) human beings are considered good although they are weak and forgetful (Suras 4:28; 20:115), for instance, when Adam and Eve forgot God's commandment.

Although a human being is born as māsum (sinless), the human being becomes a sinner and suffers after death in a state of barzak (period between death and the resurrection) from day of death until the day of judgement and then, after judgement by God, suffers in hell. Salvation, however, does not occur through renunciation but by the grace of God, which could be attained through the lifestyle prescribed in scriptures, prayer and worship.

When a human being dies, the soul does not perish with the body, but migrates to another world where it is questioned by angels about its spiritual state. The souls of true believers live in peace and happiness until the day of judgement and those of unbelievers are placed under punishment, which continues till the day of judgement. The fate of human beings will be allotted on the Day of Judgement. Some chosen by Allah will enjoy heaven filled with sensual delights and others will experience torment in hell (Unal 2006:181-187)

As there is a belief in bodily resurrection the practice of cremation is opposed as Allah who created, sustained, called them to die also will call human beings out of the grave (Surah 30:40). It is considered to be important that someone recite the shahada to a dying believer. After death the body is washed according to the rules of wudu, wrapped in white sheets and carried for prayer at the mosque. When placed in the ground the face must be oriented towards the Ka'bah in Mecca (Bryant, 2003:650-651). A few short prayers are said at the grave, and the focus is

on God and the divine action, rather than on the individual. Extended periods of mourning are discouraged (Mallon 2008:96) and headstones at graves are discouraged as this is seen as a form of idol worship.

Human beings of other faiths or no faith can convert to Islam when they recite the shahada/creed: “..there is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” In order to remain an adherent, four obligatory duties need to be accepted, which is collectively known as the ibadah (‘holy slavery’/state of submission). a) ritual prayer five times every day (salat); b) tax payment for relief of the poor (Zakat); c) fasting during the entire month of Ramadan (sawm); d) pilgrimage to the Ka’bah (hajj)

The only unforgivable sin is ‘*shirk*’ which warrants eternal damnation. Shirk is the practice of polytheism and even the division of God into parts or a denial of His absolute command. Once eternally damned there is no concept of redemption, Horrie et al explain:

“Just as Islamic theology has no place for redemption of the individual mortal soul in the eyes of almighty Allah, the shari’ah’s penal code has no place for the rehabilitation of the individual offender in this world. The code is extremely crude and severe and is based entirely on the doctrine of qisas – retaliation on behalf of the community as a whole. Qisas has its origins in the Old Testament doctrine of ‘an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth’ – the principle revealed by Allah to Moses (Musa) when He first revealed His law to the Israelites.” (2003:53)

Suffering in Islam is seen to stem from two sources: from God and from human beings (Bowker 1970:123). Human Beings are seen to cause suffering themselves and the Qur’an is quite clear that human beings are responsible for the majority of suffering as they are disobedient to God and are attracted to worldly things (Surah 2:6-18 and 9:24). In the Qur’an, an attempt is made to reconcile suffering with the omnipotence and benevolence of God by equating it with suffering as punishment (Surah 6:147) and suffering as trial (Surah 2:155), which serves a definite purpose in God’s plan for an individual human being as it creates a faithful disposition and also discriminates between the insincere and the sincere. The suffering God conferred on human beings is:

- a) to those dear to God, to test their faith and patience
- b) suffering as a precautionary measure to save a human being from more severe kinds of suffering and
- c) educative or punitive suffering for those human beings who are not on the right path.

The Qur'an states that war is part of life because there is injustice and oppression in the world: "And if Allah had not repelled some men by others, the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is a Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures" (Qur'an 2:251). Jihad is a struggle in the cause of God and consists of; struggling against a visible enemy, struggling against the temptations of the devil and struggling against the passions inherent within the human being (Salmi 1998:67). Fighting is thus lawful when it is for the purposes of self-defence and restoration of peace and justice (Surah 4:75-76).

War to gain wealth or power (and convert other human beings) is forbidden in the Qur'an (2:256): "There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error." However, it is highly unlikely that fundamentalist Islam would compromise with the secularised West with focus on individual freedom and nationalism as the West worships material goods, and experiences problems with drugs, alcohol, sexual permissiveness, and superstitious cults etc. Adherents of Islam see themselves as the establishers of Allah's sovereignty on earth. This goal of establishing Allah's sovereignty on earth could be achieved through a 'comprehensive' jihad which includes jihad of the type seen in fundamentalist terrorism.

3.2.2.1 Fundamental(ist) Islam

Muhammad ibn-Abd Wahhab (died 1787) was the first human being to advocate purification of the religion and a return to the traditions of the Hanbali Sunni legal school (Aaron 2008:49). Because of the Wahhabi revolt, practices under the name of Islam have been questioned, which became known as the Ijtihadi'yah (those who question tradition) during the nineteenth century. The Ijtihadi'yah, as a

movement for return to Qur'anic fundamentals, has gone much further than originally intended and started to question the traditional literal interpretations of the Qur'an and has become an influential force in many nationalist movements (Hasan in Shienbaum 2006:147). However, this led to the 'secularising' of a significant number of Islam adherents which has led to action against it. This represents a revival of Wahhabi-type fundamentalism which is called Islamism (the incorporation of the religion into a political ideology).

In the 1950's, work of an Indian scholar Mawdudi became available and impacted the Islamic political movements in the Sunni Muslim world. One of the ideas was that the struggle for Islam was not the restoration of the past but the vice-regency of human beings under God's sovereignty (Ayooob 2008:67). Therefore, the jihad becomes not just a defensive war but might be waged against governments who prevent the 'true practices' of Islam. Mawdudi's Islamist ideology is reflected by Dekmejian as:

“..the establishment of an Islamic order (al-nizam al-Islami) is a religious duty which may involve jihad. The resort to jihad transcends the intellectual effort of *ijtihad*, since it connotes physical struggle, fighting (*qital*), death, and martyrdom. Consequently, the violent challenge to the status quo becomes a built-in component of militant Islamic fundamentalism. Since the obligation of jihad involves the possibility of martyrdom, Muslims should be ready to sacrifice themselves; for victory can only come with the mastery of “the art of death” (*fann al-mawt*).” (1985:44).

For Sayid Abdul Ala Mawdudi, the participation in jihad is as important as daily prayer and anyone who 'shirks' it sins and all other religious observances by that human being become null and void.

There is a remarkable change in the attitude of Islam countries and some scholars contribute this to the concentration of oil in the Middle East. One such scholar, Burnett (2002:123) is of the opinion that:

“Oil has given to the Muslim world an economic and political power for use against the dominant Christian world. The oil is believed by Muslims to have been placed there by Allah, and is given for the propagation of Islam.”

3.2.3 Buddhism

Buddhism has several canons/authoritative collections and not just one like the Torah, Bible or the Qur'an. These collections, however, are not divine but are created by human beings and are explicitly for the solving of practical problems (Anderson 1975:170,181). It has been defined by several people as a philosophy rather than a religion (Baruah 2000:280) and is based on good works, faith and grace that will eventually overcome all sufferings and personal shortcomings but does not promote a belief in a personal saviour (Kim 1981:38). Salvation does not come from God, but is brought about by the moral effort of each human being (Kim 1981:38). There are several types of Buddhism and each one has its own notions. But meditation and mind control seem important to all of them.

Buddha seemed to share much of the worldview of his contemporaries, i.e. omens, heaven, hell, gods and demons, but according to him these were not very relevant. He also shares the Indian Hindu worldview of karma and rebirth and the fact that human beings can experience rebirth in hell or in animal reincarnation based on bad deeds (Netland 1991:56).

In Buddhism, liberation is available to all human beings regardless of gender, caste or race and human beings need to overcome hostile feelings in order to experience inner and outer peace which is nirvana (liberation). According to Klostermaier (2002:65) the Wheel of Becoming plays a very important role in this as it:

“... is one of the most popular and concise representations of the ‘Chain of Dependent Co-origination’...It is found not only in Hīnayāna but also in Mahāyāna teaching and appears, with minor variations, on countlesspainted scrolls or wall hangings. It represents the universe as seen through the eyes of the Enlightened One.....The whole world, represented by a large disc, is in the clutches of a black demon.....adorned with five skulls, symbolizing ‘that which neither gods nor humans can give: freedom from old age, from sickness, from death, from decay and from rebirth..... The centre of the wheel is occupied by three animals that chase each other and make the wheel turn: a pig, representing lobha (greed), a peacock, representing moha (delusion), and a snake , representing dvesa (anger, hatred).....Their death means liberation (nirvāṇa).....”

Two ways which need to be avoided, according to the Buddha, are 'the way of the world' with its emphasis on self-gratification and also the 'way of self-torture'. The middle way or Noble Eightfold Path is the best way as it results in higher wisdom, peace of mind and to 'nibbāna' which is the end of all suffering (Siderits 2007:18). Nirvana means the end of all passion, ignorance and aggression. The Buddha preached a simple path to enlightenment which is encompassed in the Four Noble Truths: all life is suffering, suffering stems from desire, there can be an end to desire and the way is the Eightfold path which can end all suffering but requires much self-discipline as it will replace evil with good thought. This way consists of right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right contemplation. (Netland 1991:60-61 and Siderits 2007:18)

The root cause to all evil, according to this religion, is *avidyā* or ignorance, which is the cause of bondage (Carus 2004:115). The theory underlying this disposition is that if a human being minimises internal desires, then suffering also could be minimised, and if there is a complete control over desires, then suffering could be ended. There are three forms of evil i.e. greed, hatred and illusion.

With the commencement of religious acts, Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels (triratna) which consist of the Enlightened One (Buddha), Teaching (the Dhamma) and the Community (Sangha) (Carus 2004:148). The Sangha consists of four "assemblies": the monks (bhikkhus), nuns (bhikkhunis), male lay followers (upāsakas) and female lay followers (upāsikās) (Baroni 2002:276). And although the Sanghas are open to everyone without regards to ritual purity, caste or gender, those who have committed very bad deeds and merit hellish existences are excluded (Trainor 2004:46). Burnett (2002:90) explains:

"The Buddha did not refute the cosmology of the Brahmin priests of India, but merely refused to speculate. He taught that all beings are reborn in one of five (or six) states. The highest is that of the gods (devas), the next is human, the next animal, then ghosts, and the lowest that of the hell-beings. Thus, like Hinduism, humanity is considered as being part of the continuum of living beings ranging from the lowest insects to the highest gods. For the Buddha, the gods were no more than exalted beings that although living for vast periods of time and having great power and pleasure were still caught

up in dukkha. Similarly, although the hell world was considered a reality, and is still greatly feared by Buddhist, it is only part of dukkha.”

Davies attributed the success of Buddhism expansion to their concern with death as follows:

“In Buddhism death is part of a complex process of existence deeply embedded in the life of daily desire, not simply some end-event. One reason why Buddhism expanded and gained success in a variety of cultures is likely to lie both in this concern with death as one of the central pains of life and in its capacity to address the issue of that death complex embracing sickness, ageing and the end of mortal life, all within the much wider field of the transmigration of the soul...” (2002:217)

In this philosophy, the emphasis is very much on the self and there is no place for a personal saviour or the foursome grand acts of God in creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. The wholeness of an individual is viewed differently and not through the fivesome awareness as the salvific and reconciliatory enactment of the cross and empowerment of resurrection through the renovating power of the Holy Spirit is not needed as the individual can work towards nirvana and the end of all suffering through self-denial and self control.

3.2.4 Christianity as sense making orientation

As this thesis is written from a Christian perspective, the sense making pattern of the full gospel of God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment at the end of times cipher through the whole work. This section does not warrant extensive discussion. For the sake of completeness however, certain aspects will be described explicitly.

In a certain sense, Christianity is plural and ever-changing. Christianity as an all embracing notion in reality does not exist. One example will suffice: for some, the basic tenet of Christianity is both the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. For Evangelical Christians found in nearly all churches, the direct indwelling of Jesus in the heart of a person is the ultimate experience. In modern Christianity, the emphasis is less on the ‘person’ of Christ but more on the cross and the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the emphasis is less on who 'he is' but more on what God 'has come to do' in his cross and resurrection. Specifically how the cross and the resurrection operate today, in our experience, is of the utmost importance. We can point to other emphases such as the doctrine of the Trinity which is important to conservative Christians. Differences in opinion regarding the number of the sacraments exist, though a large number of Christians believe in two sacraments namely baptism and Holy Communion, for Pentecostals, the Spirit baptism is extremely important. For Catholics (Curran 2008:113) the Church with all its divine hierarchy and sacred-sacramental structural set up is as important as the divine charity and love that every catholic has to live out and spread in the world.

In the Old and New Testament of the Judaeo-Christian Bible, the main theme is God's extreme involvement with human beings and the natural world in and through his creation, reconciliation (redemption), renewal and fulfilment. Somewhere, in an inexplicable way, sin and evil entered the scene. What we know is that sin and evil are damaging to God, human beings and the natural world (Fiddes 1992:2-3). The notion of 'original sin', on the one hand, is a doctrine of both Protestant as well as Catholic Christianity. The doctrine of original sin is carried by the notion of the processual propagation of sin from primordial times from generation to generation up to our generation. Human beings have a proclivity to sinfulness as evident from Scriptures, especially Genesis 3 where the first sin was committed when human beings were disobedient to God. In Romans (5:12-21) it is explicitly stated by Paul that the sin of Adam, as progenitor of the race, adversely affected the whole human race. The doctrine of sanctification that accompanies this view is that of human beings becoming pure and perfect through reconciliation. On the other hand, the notion of 'un-original sin' takes more and more shape amongst modern Christians. The radical nature of sin and evil is acknowledged and experienced in a sense similar to the adherents of the original sin doctrine, but the difference with the idea of original sin lies therein, that the mysterious and inexplicable nature of sin and evil as damage towards God, human beings and the natural world happen and eventuate in every person's life anew and afresh. The story of Adam and Eve is viewed as a prototypical experience of

every person's life. Of importance is that the doctrine of sanctification, accompanying this view, is that people, in negotiation with the Holy Spirit, become more and more aware of their uniqueness and excellence in the process of renewal of their lives on the road to the fulfilment of everything at the end of times.

Suffering emerged in the world of humans and the natural world while God is continuously involved with human beings and nature through his grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. The full entering of God into the human world in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a first entering and first involvement of God. God's involvement in the human world of evil, pain and suffering is from beginning to end God's mysterious involvement. In Jesus' cross and resurrection God is an indication and endorsement that

"God wills for all human beings a fulfilment for their lives that cannot be defeated by suffering and pain. This world remains crucially important, for God created it, loves it and wills to redeem it." (Ward 2006:183)

It is evident from these scriptures that God's will for the created order is to bring it into fulfilment in the eschatological future. In the meantime, God is involved with human beings by means of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and reconciliation is being worked out, which involves the reconciliation of creation and the restoring of creation, marred by sin, to a new level by the Holy Spirit in God's grand act of renewal.

God, by creating awareness within an individual human being of his or her creatureliness and sinful tendencies, opens the individual for the salvific and reconciliatory enactment of the denial of the self through the cross and the liberative empowerment of the resurrection. Through this process, healing and restoration are brought about, which have the effect that a human being is reconciled to God (brought into at-one-ment with God). A person thus attains the right standing before and with God. This 'work' is being accomplished at the cross and in the hearts of human beings by the presence of the Holy Spirit as the renewing and transforming presence of the Spirit of God. Not only people's faith, but also other fields of experience, such as their thinking, feelings, verbalising, imagination, physicality, bio-organic experience and apportioning of justness, act

as receptors of God's grace that have to be converted and renewed in the movement of the Kingdom of God in this world.

In the present state, a new beginning of life from God is already possible within the life-worlds of people, although there is a 'already/not yet' aspect to the involvement of God within the world. God is involved in the lives of people and the natural world though the involvement is not experienced with same level of awareness by Christians and non-Christians alike. Some would say that is because people are not yet pure and perfect, while others would ascribe this to the non attainment of people's uniqueness and excellence as the basic underlying factor why 'the not yet' and sin and evil are still strong factors in the experience of Christians. Christians, however, can work towards the elimination of suffering and evil and can be instruments of love, peace and joy in the lives of all human beings, themselves included.

Although God must be worshipped through a life lived out in the world by a human being fully aware and involved in his or her daily life of the four grand acts of God as energy drivers and not as abstract doctrines, such a life also consists of corporate gathering to offer praise to God for his grace and glory. Worship includes ceremonial worship i.e. choir, or free worship, where silence, singing, spontaneous prayer etc., are used. There is also worship designed for special occasions i.e. marriage, baptisms, burial etc.

Not all Christians, in general, seem to believe in the equal power of the four grand acts of God creating a fivesome awareness in a person for the benefit and wellbeing of the individual, the community and the spin offs for nature. People's one-sidedness of emphasising Jesus more than the Holy Spirit, or the prophetic end times more than God's act of creation contributes to the seemingly unreal situation which people endorse and encourage the formation and maintenance of in-groups and out-groups around a myriad of issues. This is especially inexplicable in the light of the teachings of the Jesus which transcend such divisions. In the words of McGrath:

“In the first place, Jesus explicitly extends the Old Testament command to ‘love your neighbour’ to ‘love your enemy’ (Matthew 5:44). Far from endorsing ‘out-group hostility’, Jesus both commended and commanded an ethic of ‘out-group affirmation’.....One of the main charges levelled against Jesus by his critics within Judaism was his open acceptance of these out-groups. Indeed, a substantial part of his teaching can be seen as a defence of his behaviour towards them. Jesus’ welcome of marginalized groups, who inhabited an ambiguous position between ‘in’ and ‘out’, is also well attested in accounts of his willingness to touch those considered by his culture to be ritually unclean (for instance Matthew 8.3; 9.20-25).” (2007b:54)

3.2.5 Hinduism as sense making orientation

As each adherent of Hinduism is devoted to a specific deity of his/her choice, the religion is henotheistic and not polytheistic (Sehgal 1999:888) and is also eclectic and as Krishna forgives who he wants to forgive (Menon 2006:364), there is no need for atonement. Although in Hindu thinking there is a variety of gods and goddesses, there exists only one Supreme Being (Anderson 1975:141). The different Vedic gods are only symbols and manifestations of Brahman. The Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Visnu and Siva present individually speaking the power of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world and collectively form the Supreme Being (Swami 1979:136). At present, we are living in the last of the world ages, which is called Kali-yuga, which began in 3002 B.C.E. and which is to end with the apparition of the Kalki-avatāra (Espin 2007:1509), which starts the final confrontation between good and evil.

The only way of release is the merging with Brahman which is the only reality and human beings are in an endless cycle of births and rebirths and experience moksha/desire for release of the earthly existence with its body-soul bondage and from the universe of time and space. The wheel of rebirth involves human beings and animals. All living things have souls and are equal but are distinguished by karma which explains the seeming unfairness of life. (Anderson 1975:142-143)

Community is important and the process of karma is described by Burnett (2002:75-77) as follows:

“The caste system is only part of a larger social order that extends from gods and spirits to plants and insects. Each person has a unique place in this order as a result of the karma of previous lives. Thus people are not of equal value, but are ranked within a multiple caste system....Each caste has its own skills and specialized functions. A person is born into a particular caste and as such, his or her lifestyle, occupation and even the food he or she eats are designated. There is no possibility of social mobility...Some people are born to greater rights and responsibilities than others, which results in a hierarchy of human relations....The cultural pluralism and mutual co-operation that results from the caste system leads to a spirit of tolerance of others. People do not seek to convert others to their own particular way of life.....One builds up good karma not by ‘doing good’ actions like helping old ladies cross the street, but by doing one’s duty and living within the rules of one’s particular caste....Each person has a dharma determined in part by his position in the family, his caste and his age. Each person must be faithful to obey his or her dharma.....The aim of caste law is not justice in absolute terms, but the restoration of harmony within the social group. Actions cannot be divided into good and evil, nor people into offender and the offended. People cannot punish actions which they can never fully understand, and must leave final justice to the law of karma.”

In Hinduism there exists the hope of immortality of the soul whether in its individuality or in absorption into Brahman (Anderson 1975:143, 144). Resurrection does not exist in Hindu thought and sin is defined differently from the Christian concept. Good and evil are defined in the degree of attachment or detachment of the soul to the individual self (Anderson 1975:143-145).

Through the practice of yoga, Vedic scriptures and a personal guru, a human being is released from repeated reincarnation. Human beings are constantly being born into a state of suffering as they are unable to become one with the true being. A human being might be reborn as a god, animal or member of a higher or lower caste based on actions, thoughts and words as the state of each living being is dependent on the good or evil actions of preceding lives. This is very much like a system of retributive justice. (Anderson 1975:143)

There are normally three methods in obtaining spiritual perfection: karma marga/path of disinterested action, bhakti marga/path of exclusive devotion to God and jnana marga/path of spiritual insight, which lead to moksha (release) from ignorance and union with Brahman. (Anderson 1975:146)

Families normally have a shrine at home with effigies of gods and goddesses where they could worship at any time with chanting and prayers (Jani 2005). Apart from rituals and sacrifice, they seem to be concerned with the moral order of the universe (Sehgal 1999:841). Internal desire and anger leads to much evil and suffering according to the Rig Veda and the Bhagavad Gitā endeavours to save human beings from ignorance and suffering (Bowker 1990:207).

In Hinduism, there are numerous holy places and pilgrimages that play an important role in this religion. Animistic worship and the honouring of departed spirits, by providing for them, should be undertaken. Demon spirits need to be kept out of villages and diseases kept at bay by appeasing the goddesses (Anderson 1975:151).

The Hindu sense making orientation contains strict rules against sexual interaction outside of marriage (both pre-marital and extra-marital) (Lawton 2007:14-15), and as such, HIV/AIDS is seen as a direct result of promiscuity, and therefore both the practice and the perceived result are condemned. And yet, according to Minagar (2006:126):

“... HIV/AIDS patients find acceptance and solace in the Hindu religion because of its selfless spirit, and its spiritual teaching about the immortality of the soul.”

3.2.6 Traditional African religion as sense making orientation

In southern Africa, the process of acculturation generally results in human beings making choices between a traditional belief system, a modern Western materialistic worldview and a Christian/Islamic orientation.

Although there are various African religions and they espouse differences, certain similarities exist between them, such as, the belief in a supreme deity ably assisted by lesser divinities. This religious ontology is not governed by a hierarchical structure, as the divinities carry out the work of the supreme being, but

are not necessarily subordinated. There is also a belief in spirits which are non-material, which reside in trees, water, plants etc.

The African Deity is kind and benevolent in providing water, food, good health etc. This deity is assisted by deified ancestors or spirits which can be good or bad, as the good ones give blessings and the bad ones cause diseases and even death. According to Thomas ancestors play an important role in the religious worldview of Africans:

“...people’s welfare and rights are safeguarded by the ancestors. It is the ancestors who ultimately punish wrongdoing, by sending trouble or illness, even death to the transgressor. When trouble comes, diviners inquire as to the reason and are able to determine which of the ancestral laws has been broken. In this way abuses are corrected and people are given an opportunity to make amends and turn their lives around....” (Thomas 2005:36-39)

This religious worldview aims at redeeming living as well as non-living entities, as will become evident in the discussion. The destiny of human beings is in the hands of the divinities and in some African-religious-cultures, it would seem that the destiny of human beings being preordained as bad luck may be part of the ‘chi’ or ‘ori’²⁰ of a human being. God and the ancestors sometimes speak through dreams and happenings and natural symbols like land, animals, hills, numbers and colours can serve as mediums to reveal the mind of God.

In the traditional worldview, the community is more important than individuals. The clan decides what is good or bad and traditions are passed on through generations; traditions cannot be broken as it is considered an act of betrayal and leads to expulsion from the community. When excluded from a community a human being loses his/her value as a human being and becomes a non-person with no rights. Communal living is very important and there is no place for

²⁰ Concept of a personal guardian spirit mixed with some aspects of the Western idea of ‘soul’.

individualism or a personal saviour in the traditional African worldview. This communal living implies the sharing of both suffering and joy.

According to Thomas sin is the breach of harmony in the community and is removed:

“in traditional society through the use of elaborate rituals. The ritual acts may include spitting in one’s mouth, washing or shaving the body, or sacrificing a human being. Although human sacrificial offerings were banned during the colonial era, Awolalu remarks that the practices continued during extreme crisis, albeit under strict secrecy. Awolalu holds that this practice was premised on the idea that human sacrifice was the ultimate offering one could give to God. It also functioned to allow members of the society to transfer their sin to the victim. Thus, the victim served as a ransom or scapegoat for the sins of the community....Awolalu notes that, when an animal sacrifice is used at the festival, people place their hands upon it before it is led to the sacred grove. As they place their hands on it, they cry out, ‘Take diseases away! Take misfortune away! Take impurities away! Take death away!’ The people believe that their offences, communal and individual, are transferred to the animal and prosperity can resume in their lives...African-religio-culture is premised on a system of reward and punishment in this life.” (2005:131-137)

Life-cycle rituals are very important and include circumcision, initiation, the naming ceremony etc. According to this worldview, all events have spiritual significance and if there is a sickness, for example, divination may play an important role. As the soul is not locked into the body it may leave the body, and the ‘loss of the soul’ may cause an illness as a sorcerer may have caught the soul of the human being with the resultant effect that the human being becomes ill and may even die.

Burnett explains:

“The concept of the external soul means that the people can readily accept the ideas of a witch leaving her body at night and flying to do her evil deeds. It explains those strange dreams that seem so real. The immaterial part of a person is not necessarily seen as a total entity. The human soul is understood as several interrelated souls, and not just one, as within Western thinking....Sickness may also occur from the intrusion of a spirit into a person, and in this case the spirit must be exorcized.” (2002:60)

These belief systems can have a serious impact on how an HIV infected person relates to the symptoms of AIDS. Bujo (2007, 72) states that when an infected

human being believes that his or her illness originates from spiritual sources, instead of seeking diagnosis which may lead to modern medical treatment, education and support, the human being tends to become involved in practices which offer no assistance to their HIV/AIDS problem.

3.2.7 The religious effects of culture: nationalism

Nationalism in itself could take the form of a religion and has all the potential to be very dangerous, as has been seen time and again in history for example in Rwanda, the Holocaust, Kenya etc.

Hart (2000:40) posed a relevant question:

“Is religion the principle – motive, force, and secret-soul – of nationalism or is nationalism the principle of religion?”

With regards to this point, an interesting observation has been made by Fowden in Hart (2000:56-57):

“Muhammad and Constantine....Both see themselves as religious functionaries. Muhammad is Allah’s prophet and Constantine is a latter-day apostle. Both construe imperial conquest – one God, one empire, one messenger – as missionary work.”

What is the answer from a Christian perspective? In the New Testament of the Christian Bible, Paul endeavoured to free Christianity from the political, religious and cultural ties to Judaism as is evident in the discussion about circumcision etc. As is evident in the New Testament, the Gospel is meant for all cultures and nations, as Jesus came to save all regardless of race, colour or creed. When the Jewish culture clashed with Jesus’ viewpoint of God, the Jewish laws took second place and were abolished.

Carson (1990:55) made a relevant contribution in that he concludes that the Bible is very realistic about the suffering that the state inflicts, as well as, the suffering that the state protects human beings from. What is the role of the Christian? The

role of the Christian is that, despite the suffering endured, the Christian should endeavour to promote justice.

There is a growing social disorientation and various religions are moving towards a fundamentalist approach to religion in order to cope with the rapid changing world. This is happening in the Islamic world, within the Jewish orientation, and even in Episcopal churches etc. It would appear that the same phenomenon can even be detected in the African worldview, as there increasingly seems to be a fundamentalist tension within the traditional African worldview, as they endeavour to gain lost ground from 'foreign' religions like Islam and Christianity.

Rubenstein (1987:124) is of the opinion that for the sake of political expediency the Islamic governments claim adherence to Islamic principles, although they are divided on the interpretations of Islamic laws, modernisation as well as the role of the clergy. To justify this opinion Rubenstein argues that:

“In addition to the traditional division of Islam between two major sects of Sunni and Shi'a, militant Muslims distinguish between the Established Islam, Islam al-Rasmi, or Islam of the establishment; and the populist Islam, Islam al-Sha'bi, or the pure Islam professed by the ordinary Muslims.”

However, when considering the other major world religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism, divisions can also be observed.

Religion has become intertwined with nationalism and it would seem that human beings would more readily die nowadays for their nation than for their religion. An example is posed by Hart:

“Christians of one nation, state, or nation-state are quite willing to kill Christians of other nations, for their nation. The same is true of Muslims.” (2000:58).

Nationalism brings the sword, intolerance, dominance and international war and is contrary to Paul's message of equality of human beings in 1 Colossians (3:11) where he explicitly states that there is neither Greek nor Jew but that Christ is all in

all. A very important point is the fact that Jesus calls Christians to the renunciation of power, rights, evil etc.

When in the book of Matthew, Jesus commissioned the disciples to go and make disciples, he didn't say that they must destroy the nations and cultures. He said, however, that they must share the Gospel message. Religion forms part of culture, and as such, a dialogue with other faith groups could be hampered by the process of sharing the Gospel message, but if it is shared as the full Gospel of the Commonwealth of God as intertwined and expressive of the four grand acts of God, then the possibility of a dialogue becomes a reality. I believe that is what was meant by the command of Jesus' as he did not endeavour to change the culture of either the Jews or the Samaritans in the first place. By working within their cultural setting with the message of the Kingdom of God, it was inevitable that cultural changes had to take place.

In order to work with God in the renewal of creation, dialogue with other cultures is imperative. Another contributing asset towards the renewal of creation is that many religions, seemingly, are in turmoil and a *kairos* moment, where the various religious groups meet to discuss human experience, in for instance, 'working and strategising together in the cause of the HIV/AIDS pandemic'. It could be fruitful if each one could come to the negotiation table with aware and spelled out motives as all human beings have a common origin and a common destiny, although there seems to be different God-human-nature approaches or belief systems regarding HIV/AIDS. However, a common denominator is that creation is shared by all and each culture should take responsibility for the future of the human race.

As the resurrection of the Jesus Christ was a beginning of a new creation, the opening up of different cultures working towards the renewal of the creation and shedding of pre-conceived ideas and prejudices could be another step towards the renewal in international affairs and in a this-worldly state of affairs on the road to end-time fulfilment.

The Spirit is active all over the world and is poured out on Christians as well as non-Christians like Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists etc and we cannot dictate

the movement of the Spirit. Melchizedek from outside the Jewish faith, brought a blessing to Abraham in Genesis (14:18-20) and, although it is unusual that a foreigner recognizes and reveres God in the Tanakh, it is not unusual in the Book of Genesis; even in the book of Exodus (18:19-22) Jethro advises Moses to continue to consult God.

Having considered different worldviews, it is imperative that the respective Holy Books be discussed in order to understand their sense making with regards to evil and suffering as this will empower human beings in the pastoral ambience when dealing with human beings who have contracted HIV/AIDS.

3.3 Evil and suffering in the holy books of the various religions

3.3.1 The Qur'an

The law, literature, art and religion of the Islamic community arise out of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is considered to be the eternal speech of God and thus the ultimate truth . Adherents of this faith believe that it has been written from eternity by the throne of God (Allah) on tablets of gold and that the mother book still exists in heaven (Burnett 2002:117). Christianity (with the exclusion of the fundamentalist mirroring approach), in comparison, believes that the Bible as the revealed word of God has been expressed through human writers with their different personalities but with the purity and accuracy of the divine revelation being intact.

The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel in the Arabic language (Spencer 2007:20). The Qur'an as the speech of Allah (Abdul-Rahman 2008:263) is regarded as uncreated and co-existent with Allah and is thus on par with the position that Christ occupies in the worldview of Christians. The first part was revealed in Mecca and the second part in Medina and although the revelation was complete before the death of Muhammad in 632, the task of making a book was left to the Caliphs who ruled the community after his death.

As the Qur'an is holy and powerful, the emphasis is not so much on understanding it, but on the memorization of it. Certain verses in the Qur'an have curative powers according to the adherents, for instance, Suras 113 and 114 (al-Jawziyah 2003:150) are used for various illnesses and the first Sura is good for scorpion bites (al-Jawziyah 2003:301). The Qur'an projects tranquillity:

“According to tradition when the Qur'an is recited divine tranquillity (sakinah) descends, mercy covers the reciters, angels draw near to them, and God remembers them....For the pious Muslim, then, the chanted words of the Qur'an have the numinous power to create and destroy, to bring mercy, to provide protection, to give knowledge, and to evoke miraculous signs...The reciter must be prepared to sacrifice for the holy word by fasting, by chanting through the night, and by giving thanks...Musical styles used in secular singing are ruled out. The Qur'an is to be recited with dignity of demeanor, softness of voice, and a sorrowful tone....The emotion to be evoked in chanting is one of subdued sadness rather than joyful ecstasy. Because God sent down the Qur'an in sorrow due to the sinfulness of people, Muhammad charged his followers: ‘Weep, therefore, when you recite it.’” (Coward 2000:86-87).

Although the Qur'an is revealed the Hadith is inspired, as it is the words of human beings, nevertheless, it is still perceived as complementary to the Qur'an (Winter 2008:20-21). The Christian notion of Christ as Word of God, as is evident from John 1:14 in the Christian Scriptures, is thus blasphemous to adherents of this religious group. The same principle applies to the Hindu avatar as incarnation of the Veda.

According to the tradition (Hadith) and the Qur'an, human beings who are dear to Allah suffer most in the world and two reasons are given for this viewpoint, namely, that Allah tests the imam or faith of a human being and when a human being experiences suffering in this world they would not need to suffer in the next world. This is explained by Islam as:

“As regards the unmerited sufferings...Islam holds that God being omniscient knows that if they were healthy they would have committed most serious crimes and would have suffered most in hells. Therefore, God has bestowed upon them this suffering and has saved them from more severe kinds of sufferings.” (1987:131)

The worldview human beings have with regards to Allah, influences their thinking and actions as well as their communication with other human beings, and the natural world. It is therefore necessary to look at how Allah is portrayed in the Qur'an.

According to Ahmed Ali, in the Qur'an Allah decides whom he wants to lead (Sura 16:93):

“If God had willed, He would surely have made you all a single nation, but He leaves to err whomsoever He pleases, and guides whomsoever He pleases; you will certainly be questioned about what you were doing.”
(2005:197)

According to Shakir, Allah not only leads human beings astray but he also created evil as is stated in the Qur'an 113:

“**[113.1]** Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn,
[113.2] From the evil of what He has created,
[113.3] And from the evil of the utterly dark night when it comes,
[113.4] And from the evil of those who blow on knots,
[113.5] And from the evil of the envious when he envies”²¹
(1983: Sura 113)

Shakir explains, those who blow on knots refers to witches and it could be concluded from this text that in Islamic thought, Allah created both evil and good.

In the Qur'an there are many references to Allah's mercy and graciousness but this mercy is limited to those human beings who deserve his mercy for instance in Sura 2:218:

“**[2.218]** Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah these hope for the mercy of Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (Shakir, 1983, of Surah 2.218)

²¹ From the electronic version of the Koran: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/k/koran/koran-idx?type=DIV0&byte=970113>

Just as Allah created the universe, he will also bring it to closure and according to Sura's 81 and 82 describe how the sun and the stars are extinguished, how the mountains crumble and the great fires sweep over the earth. He says:

“On the Day of Judgement the graves will be opened. Those who were sinful on Earth will already have been suffering in the fires of hell, but they may now be saved if they are prepared to sincerely repent. But those who have committed the sin of shirk (association) will remain beyond salvation because they have refused to recognise the existence of Allah and His mercy.” (Horrie et al 2003:30).

For the adherents to the Islamic faith, Paradise and Hell are tangible domains and with Sura two, which states that Islamic martyrs do not die but their souls remain alive in a blissful state until the day of judgement when they will be admitted to paradise without any impediment, it becomes quite apparent why many choose to die as martyrs. As the Qur'an is very clear that many human beings will be led astray by Satan into false religions, it therefore would have the further effect of spurring them on to this type of action, i.e. opportunities to die as martyrs as a safeguard against the wiles of Satan. According to this worldview, there are many false religions:

“Christianity, like Judaism, is described throughout the Qur'an as essentially a misguided form of the 'religion of Ibrahim', the true version of which is Islam. The main error of Christians is their misunderstanding ...of the significance of the Islamic Prophet Jesus, Son of Mary.” (Horrie et al 2003:10)

The relationship between Christians and adherents of the Islam faith is addressed to the latter in Sura 5(82-83):

“And you will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe to be those who say: We are Christians...And when they hear what has been revealed to Our Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of what they recognise as the truth; they say: Lord! We believe, so write us down among the witnesses (to the truth)” (Ahmed Ali, 2005:84)

Horrie describes the relationship between the early Assyrian Christians and Islam as follows:

“Many early Christians subscribed to Arianism, a Christian heresy which, like Islam, believed Jesus (Isa) to have been merely human. All that divided Arians from Muslims was acceptance of the finality of Muhammad’s Prophethood and Qur’anic law. But Arianism was crushed after the adoption of a coherent Trinitarian doctrine by the Roman Church at the Council of Nicea in the third century AD.” (Horrie et al 2003:11)

One of the major differences within Islam is between the Sunni and the Shi‘i. The Shi‘i exegesis differs from the Sunni exegesis in that according to the Shi‘i understanding revelation has been granted to those around Muhammad as well as to the eleven imams, which implies continuous inspiration or infallible guidance. According to Shi‘i understanding, there are two levels of knowledge which comprise of the ‘*tanzil*’ known by everyone who knows the Arabic language and the ‘*ta’wil*’ which is only known to those chosen by Allah, i.e. Ali and the eleven descendants (Ayoob 1992:35). The ‘*ta’wil*’ is constantly changing in order to make the eternal truth of the Qur’an relevant to current situations.

In the Sunni tradition, the role of law/sharīa is to interpret and relate the Qur’an to the current generations. The law of the Sunni’s, therefore, has the same function as the imams in the Shi‘ite tradition as both ensure that the revelation of Muhammad remains relevant to every new situation.

According to the adherents of Islam, Muhammad was commanded to recite/repeat the words that were conveyed to him and he did not speak in his own name. Alford Welch (in Coward 2000:83) does not find the claim of the adherents of Islam so clear-cut, he says:

[there is...] “...in many of the early passages (in the Meccan years) God spoke directly to Muhammad and not through some intermediary. Other passages, he suggests, have the effect of elevating God from direct revelation by having the message brought down by an intermediary, for example, an angel...There is also the difficulty of later revelations that caused earlier revelations to be changed or abrogated. This would seem to call into question the orthodox view that every word of the revelation is God’s eternal truth. Three solutions to this problem are found in the Qur’an: (a) Muhammad sometimes forgot parts or was caused to forget parts so that God could substitute like or better ones, (b) Satan when he was yearning for a message from God, inserted something into Muhammad’s thoughts (which God later abrogated), and (c) sometimes God simply replaced some parts with others as good or better.”

3.3.2 Hinduism

The Vedas (written between 1000 and 500 BC) are the authority for Hindus and one section, the Upanishads, deal with fundamental issues like the meaning of life and the nature of the universe. Hindu Scriptures are considered to be without beginning. At each cycle of creation the Scripture is spoken anew, although it is the same as what has been spoken in all of the other cycles. For Coward (2000:105), the eternal presence of the Hindu Scriptures parallel the logos as expressed in the gospel of John 1:1, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' In some schools the Veda is considered to be without an author.

The words of Scripture are linked with the Divine and as such, have the power to transform the consciousness as the mantras (scriptural words) have a healing power. The repeated chanting of the mantras with their vibrating effect ensures that the mantra is heard and remembered and therefore the word is more powerful in the oral form. Coward affirms this as follows:

“While the Divine Word is inherently present within the consciousness of all, it is the ṛṣi s who first reveal it and in so doing make it available to help all others achieve the same experience. The spoken Vedic words of the ṛṣi s act powerfully upon us to purify our consciousness and give us that same full spiritual vision of the unitary Divine Word that the ṛṣi s first saw. This is the enlightenment experience, the purpose for which Hindu scripture exist. In this enlightenment experience yet another difference may be seen: for most Hindus, once the direct experience of the Divine Word is realized, the manifested forms (i.e. the words and sentences of the Veda) are no longer needed. The Vedic words and sentences function only as the 'ladder' to raise one to the direct, intuitive experience of the complete Divine Word. Once the full enlightenment experience is achieved, the 'ladder of scripture' is no longer needed. The very idea that scripture can be transcended is heresy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims” (2000:106)

In Hinduism, the Rig-Veda is the most important of the four Vedas. It is hymns addressed to a variety of gods which represent aspects of nature. The fourth Veda, Atharva-Veda, is generally made up of spells and chants designed to eliminate evil and ensure prosperity in life. The fourth Veda includes:

“Though I am eternal, imperishable, and the Lord of all beings; yet I (voluntarily) manifest by controlling My own material nature using My Yoga-Maya. (See also 10.14) (4.06). Whenever there is a decline of Dharma and the rise of Adharma, O Arjuna, then I manifest (or incarnate) Myself. I incarnate from time to time for protecting the good, for transforming the wicked, and for establishing Dharma, the world order. (4.07-08) The one who truly understands My transcendental birth and activities (of creation, maintenance, and dissolution), is not born again after leaving this body and attains My abode, O Arjuna. (4.09) Freed from attachment, fear, and anger; fully absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, and purified by the fire of Self-knowledge, many have attained Me.” (Bhagavadgītā 4) (Prasad 1988)

“One who knows Me as the unborn, the beginningless, and the Supreme Lord of the universe, is considered wise among the mortals, and gets liberation from the bondage of Karma. (10.03) Discrimination, knowledge, non-delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control over the mind and senses, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, fearlessness; (10.04). Nonviolence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame, and ill fame; all these diverse qualities in human beings arise from Me alone.” (Bhagavadgītā 10.05) (Prasad 1988)

“The contacts of the senses with the sense objects give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, and pain and pleasure. They are transitory and impermanent. Therefore, (learn to) endure them, O Arjuna.” (Bhagavadgītā 2.14) (Prasad 1988)

In the Vedas, a straightforward understanding of suffering is encountered. Suffering is seen as a consequence of activity performed by the gods and bearing in mind that forces in the universe are personified and aspects of nature are seen as gods, the concluding argument about suffering, according to this worldview, would then make logical sense to these human beings. Suffering is not just seen as an external force, but much of the evil and suffering human beings experience is a result of internal desire and is sometimes seen as some sort of possession. (Bowker 1990:202)

Hindus perceive the universe as a chain of killing and being killed. The whole universe could be reduced to food and something eating the food. Sacrifice, therefore, forms part of the process and is seen as some way of trying to bring the process under some control.

Although there is duality and conflict in Hinduism i.e. the relationship between the devourer and the devoured, the urge to live and the urge to death, no dualism can

be found as the two principles are to be found in one single entity. An illustration is to be found in 'Yama', Lord of Death, who is frightening but also handsome depending on your viewpoint or circumstances (Bowker 1990:205). Some human beings welcome death and for others it is frightening.

Based on the above argument, suffering is thus perceived as relative and attachment to objects of this world is thus bondage as they in themselves do not have any eternal value. According to the Upanishads, a human being becomes what (s)he focuses upon and if they aim at Brahman in the right way, they become Brahman. However, an attachment to this life and its pleasures leads to distorted behaviour and understanding which then result in a human being not seeing the whole picture. Brahman, on the other hand, is seen as the sole truth and once realised, this truth isolates a human being from suffering as it involves detachment.

Suffering is the direct result of the working out of karma and the human being reaps the consequences of his/her actions and thoughts either, in this life, or in future existences. Just like in Judaism, suffering is thus connected with morality. In the Upanishads, sufferings are not viewed as an illusion, but as an actual experience; for instance Chandogya Up. (Viii. 7-15) underlines this point with Indra's progress in spiritual understanding when he arrived at the realisation that although the body may suffer the self is not affected (Bowker 1990:216). According to Bowker, there is a realisation in the Upanishads that to be born is to come into contact with evil and suffering and that

“...the material body is full of corruption and potential conflict – a potentiality which is realised if the self gives way to its desires and passions.”
(1970:215)

Because the world has come to be what it is, suffering is unavoidable, but it is not necessarily always regarded as evil.

In the Upanishads, the seeds of non-violence are sown, for instance, in the response of the bear to the tiger quoted by Sita in the Ramayana, that you should not retaliate when another does you wrong, but should be compassionate as no

one is without transgression (Bowker 1990:223). Recognition of suffering is prevalent in the holy books, but suffering is not necessarily evil as it could be undertaken as progressing towards detachment (Bowker 1990:223).

A Hindu philosopher, Sankara, (AD 686-718), emphasized non-duality in the Vedanta and thus promotes a single system with no distinction between the supernatural and the natural (Schultz 1981:78), where God, demons, ghosts and spirits all blend together in an unpredictable universe, where a demon may take the form of a beautiful maiden etc.

With non-duality and a concept that there is only one Divine, as revealed in the Hindu scriptures, and that other religions need to be verified against the Veda, it is obvious that, from the Hindu viewpoint, the Veda occupies a superior role when compared to other scriptures. Although revelations, as found in the Torah, New Testament or Qur'an are useful in raising a human beings spiritual status, they are still insufficient for the attainment of salvation or release and are tolerated in this religion until the human being could be reborn as a Hindu in the next life in order for him to study the Veda to achieve release.

3.3.3 Buddhism

According to Klostermaier (2002:47) the authentic word of the Buddha, the Buddha-vācāna, cannot be identified with certainty because of the long time lapse between the time of Gotama the Buddha until the oral tradition was written down. However, there exists agreement between the various branches of Buddhism on the essentials such as the Four Noble Truths.

The Dhammapada or Pali canon and the Tripitaka or three baskets are revered. The three baskets are as follows, the first basket is called the Sutta Pitaka or basket of discourse, which is apparently the written word of Buddha, the Vinaya Pitaka or basket of discipline contained the regulations for monastic life and the last basket called the Abhidhamma Pitaka contains special doctrine which, although not attributed to Buddha, is nevertheless venerated (Holder 2006:vii).

In the canonical texts, Māra is encountered which is the personification of evil in early Buddhism. Every human being who strives for liberation will find an opponent in Māra as she is:

“...in fact the ancient Indian god of death, and at the same time the personification of lust for life, the power of transience that attracts people. Ultimately it is the power that keeps humans within the cycle of becoming. The Buddha wants us to escape from death, from transience, from samsāra. Only that which can decay can die; ...What is beyond, is outside the sphere of Māra. It is one of the great accomplishments of the Buddha to have defeated Māra on his own ground, to have escaped from his domain into the realm that is no longer under his rule.” (Klostermaier 2002:34)

In Buddhist writings, there are several references to hell in order to serve as a motive for human beings to avoid evil deeds (Holder 2006:168-169, 125). After rebirth as an animal or in hell, it is very difficult to return to a human existence. To be condemned to hell is not eternal as there exists atonement for all sins after a certain time, whereupon a new opportunity is offered to win nibbāna. Human beings that don't believe in Buddha are excluded from entering nibbāna, which is very difficult to reach for normal human beings anyway, as it is such a long process but good karma can lead to a rebirth in heaven.

3.3.4 Judaism

Orthodox Judaism believes that the Torah (law) is the authentic word of God as handed down from Moses to the Jews in the wilderness. According to the rabbis, the Pentateuch was given directly by God and the other books were inspired by the Holy Spirit through the prophets (Jenkins 2003:117). The Hebrew scriptures are divided into the Torah (Pentateuch), Neviim (Prophets) and the Ketuvim (Writings) and are collectively known as the Tanakh. The Torah which Moses received consisted of two parts which are the written part or Pentateuch and the oral part which was oral and only systematized by the rabbis as the Mishnah (ca.22 C.E.) much later on (Jenkins 2003:123).

Just as with the Qur'an, the Torah is never to be placed on the floor but must be treated with respect and must be kept from unclean places. The Torah scrolls are

stored in an ark and the practice of public reading, dated as far back as Deuteronomy (31:10-13) where, Moses instructed the Hebrews to read the Teaching every seventh year publicly to everyone, including the strangers at the Feast of Booths.

The Torah has cosmic significance as it dwelt in heaven with God before the foundation of the earth. It dwelt in God's bosom and sang praises to God together with the angels. It is believed that God consulted the Torah before He started to create the universe and Rabbi Akiva (2nd century CE) used to describe the Torah as the precious instrument by which the world was made (Neusner et al 2000:161).

When a human being starts to study the Torah, then, the individual becomes, more Godly, as God and the Torah basically are one and an encounter with the Torah is an encounter with the Divine. The Torah is Israel's source of life and governs the ongoing life of Israel as well as the state of human affairs, universally. Israel controls, its own destiny in that, if they follow the Torah and do not sin, they are blessed and if they sin they suffer and could be redeemed when they repent. This point, is especially evident in the Lamentations Rabbah which is covenantal theology in which both Israel and God are bound to a common Torah and obedience to the Torah brings the reward of redemption and an infraction produces a penalty (Neusner 2003:142).

The Torah serves as a yardstick to describe the relationship with God and other nations. Based on the Torah, the Jews understood that just as God entered into a covenant with them, so God could also enter into a relationship with other nations and thus, while for them the Torah is authoritative, for others, i.e. Christians, Islam etc., their relationship with God, as expressed in their Scriptures, will be authoritative to them.

Having said that, Coward pointed out that:

“there are other places in the Torah where there is condemnation of other religions and insistence that the Lord is the only true God, or that all other

gods must bow before the Lord (Deuteronomy 5; Exodus 20). But even in the midst of the renewed exclusivism following the postexilic period, the books of Ruth and Jonah claim that the Lord's concern extends far beyond Israel's borders." (2000:31)

With regards to the doctrine of sin and dualism within Judaism, Bowker powerfully asserts that in the book of Genesis the:

"...fundamental assertion is made that the created order is 'very good' and that evil and suffering, summarised in death, are a...consequence of Man (Adam) alienating himself from God. In other words, dualism was excluded, and the existence of suffering and death was located in the choices of Man which opens up those possibilities inherent in creation. There is no second principle or creator responsible for evil. Indeed, it might even be said that Genesis does not portray a single 'fall of man', but rather a gradual extension and exploration of the human capacity to corrupt the gifts of God. The opening chapters of Genesis are a progressive illustration of the effects of the alienation of men from God, particularly in self-centredness, rivalry and murder, exploitation and lust in sexual relationships, the abnegation of responsibility in wilful drunkenness, tension and rivalry between nations; and set against them, immediately and directly, is the covenant promise which offers the restoration of relationship, and which in itself asserts that God is in purposeful control." (1970:8)

Maimonides, in his discussions of evil, sub-divided evil into three categories: firstly there is evil that human beings encounter based on their circumstances – for instance, thunderstorms, but also evil based on the malfunctioning of various body parts. The second type of evil is when human beings inflict evil on other human beings and the third type, according to Maimonides, is when evil is inflicted personally by a human being. Based on this worldview, there is no need for messianic redemption because the orthopraxis as well as studying of the Torah lead to eternal life as it enhances the relationship with God. God, as creator of evil, also created the Torah as the antidote for evil and the Torah serves as the key to the Jewish response to evil and suffering, where suffering is seen as a potential means of grace because the individual as well as communal redemption could flow from this suffering (Bowker 1970:37).

In the Torah, as well as in the book of Job, suffering is accepted although what is questioned is why some human beings experience suffering whilst others do not

seem to experience suffering. The problem therefore lies with the distribution of suffering. Job and his friends try to analyze suffering (Yancey 1990:80).

In the book of Job, which contains the narrative of the testing of a righteous man by the adversary, to prove that Job is righteous, not because of what God can give him, but because of who God is; three main points are interrelated, first, human suffering is not necessarily deserved²² as the pain or sorrow a human being experiences could be unrelated to anything the human being has done or neglected to do. This argument is put forward by Job himself (e.g. Job 31). The second point is that, suffering is deserved and therefore either God or the recipient is in the wrong. The third and last point is that from a human perspective, it is impossible to understand suffering as it is beyond human comprehension.

Looking at this dilemma, Bowker again came with another viewpoint which is logically coherent and is aligned with the bigger picture of God's plan and pattern of work, as is seen from previous works of God as revealed through Scriptures:

“...according to the prologue, Job's suffering was a test of his faithfulness and the Epilogue suggests that his suffering was redemptive as he redeemed himself in as much as his fortunes were restored and he redeemed his friends by praying for them. The writer of Job refused to dissolve the problem of suffering by taking refuge in life after death, and in this he is typical of much of the other material contained in Scripture. Ecclesiastes, for example, has exactly the same realistic honesty in its assessment of death and in its refusal to look for a solution in life after death: 'Naked from his mother's womb he came, as naked as he came he will depart again; nothing to take with him after all his efforts...The living know at least that they will die, the dead know nothing; no more reward for them, their memory has passed out of mind...' This is of extreme importance, not least because it casts doubt on a central point in the Marxist critique of religion, the criticism that religion is effective because it offers supernatural compensations for the natural catastrophes for men; unable to face the terrible evils of alienation, and unwilling to cut at the roots of the problem by removing the causes of alienation, religion holds out the spurious hope that all will be put right after death.” (1970:23)

²² In some cases suffering is deserved when human beings for instance cause their own suffering by risky behaviour or neglecting their health

With regards to life after death and the immortality of the soul Davies argues that

“In the Talmud....the major emphasis lies on the resurrection of the body and not upon an immortal soul. In his study of these doctrinal developments Louis Jacobs argues that Jews did not develop beliefs about life after death in any systematic way until the Middle Ages. Then, he argues, ‘among medieval Jewish philosophers the doctrine of the resurrection was never abandoned but the emphasis was undoubtedly on the immortality of the soul’....Jacobs goes on to discuss various modern Jewish attitudes to life after death. He shows, for example, how the Reform Movement in the nineteenth century ‘did give up the belief in the resurrection of the dead’, even removing references to the resurrection from their prayer-books, stressing instead the idea of the immortality of the soul....Still, other more conservative Jews do believe in the resurrection of the body...The varied nature of the Jewish approach to death, especially in terms of the mixed belief in resurrection and immortality of the soul, should alert Christian authors to the often mistaken assertion that the Hebrew view of death focuses on the resurrection of a unified body while the Greek conception lies squarely on the immortality of the soul. It is quite clear that no such clear-cut distinction is possible. One of the clearest studies of death in Judaism by David Kraemer reinforces this point as he provides a detailed exposition of the beliefs of the Judaism of the rabbis from the second to about the sixth century.” (2002:119)

The classical Jewish response was to say that suffering was punishment for sin. However, both Ecclesiastes and the Book of Job refused to go beyond Scripture and the concluding message is that, although there is evil and suffering, the relationship with God is still of paramount importance and his existence is unquestionable. In fact the book of Job spends a significant proportion of its content in establishing through Job’s friends the concept of suffering as punishment for sin (Job 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25) with Job arguing against this concept (Job 9:21-24, 10:7, 16:19, 23, 24, etc.). It closes with an account of God who declares his anger at the concept put forward by Job’s friends and clearly dispenses with the idea (Job 42:7). It is only through Job’s intercession that his friends are spared punishment by God for their ideas (Job 42:8). So without Job’s intercession his friends would have received punishment in line with their theology of ‘rewards for actions’, yet the book of Job establishes that suffering is not necessarily related to a human beings own doings.

In 2 Kings (21:12-16) Manasseh sinned and caused other human beings to sin and the destruction of Jerusalem is therefore blamed on his heinous acts. In

various books of the Nevi'im, the good triumph and the evil receive their punishment. This understanding of suffering was applied to human beings on all strata of life. So we see in the Jewish scriptures that suffering can be a punishment for sin, yet it can also be unconnected with the doings of the sufferer.

3.3.5 Christianity

For Christians, the Bible is the inspired word of God and there seems to be two broad approaches to have emerged from the varied and diversified experiences of human beings 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. The former is a purely literal reading of the scriptures, where no attempt is made to consider the context of the writings and relate these to a modern context. The latter opens the door to allegorising of the text and the attachment of meanings to the text which were not implied by the original writers. A third option which lies somewhere between these two approaches is sensible negotiation. Van Niekerk asserts:

"The sensible negotiation approach has taken over the meaningful points of the fundamentalist mirroring, imitating and mimicking approach as well the interpretation and hermeneutical approach." (2009:286)

"Our main assumption concerning the Scriptures is that a sense making God-life-and-world approach embodied and expressed in and through a book, chapter and verse of the Bible, does not have more of the Spirit of God than our sense making God-life-and-world approaches as people of the 21st century. In our negotiation between two sense making views – that of the Bible in a particular text and ours in our situation today – a Spirit-filled negotiation process from both sides takes place." (Van Niekerk 2009:288-289)

Van Niekerk, seeing the present times as part of the 'age of the Spirit', believes that a reader of the Bible interacts with the text in negotiation and compromise. As the Holy Scriptures were Spirit inspired and each believer is filled with the Spirit, the Spirit in the believer interacts with the Word and through interaction with the believer's own worldview, brings truth for that believer out of the text.

The Scriptures are seen to prefigure the Lord Jesus and also to be fulfilled by him. In the late second century, the Hebrew Bible is divided into the Old Testament (old covenant) and New Testament. The relationship between the two testaments is understood in terms of Jeremiah (31:31-34), where the new covenant is compared to the old covenant, which was between God and the nation of Israel, as against the new covenant which is with both Israel as well as other believers, (although it is not explicitly stated as such in Jeremiah). Jeremiah states that the new covenant was to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, although, this covenant is applied to believers in the present age, according to Hebrews 8:8-13. Paul in Romans 11, explains this situation when he is encouraging gentile believers with the news that they have been grafted in to the olive tree or Israel and are supported by the same root. According to Paul, the new covenant (*kainos*) is different from the old covenant as it produces a different relationship between God and human beings (2 Corinthians 3:6-15). It produces forgiveness and life, instead of condemnation and death because of Jesus who fulfilled the prediction in Jeremiah (31:31-34).

Coward shows the continuity as well as discontinuity with the Tanakh.

“....the early Christian Churches accepted the written Hebrew Bible as sacred scripture. Jesus made clear that he had no intention of repudiating the Jewish scriptures: ‘Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them’ (Matthew 5:17). Paul also accepts the Hebrew Bible as scripture (Romans 1:2).Thus, from the start Christianity was a religion of the book, although to begin with, that book was limited to the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament....The attitude taken by the early Christians to the written scripture was somewhat different from that of the Jews. Whereas the rabbinic-Pharisaic Jews judged that the inspiration necessary to produce written scripture had ceased in the time of Ezra, the Christians believed that a new age of inspired revelation had dawned in Jesus, and that through him God had given the gift of the Spirit to every believer at baptism. This Spirit was judged to be the same Spirit that had inspired the prophets of old to speak God’s words, which were committed to writing. The early Christians also rejected the oral Torah of the rabbis as ‘making void the word of God’ (Mark 7:13)” (2000:51)

According to the Christian Bible, various reasons could be posed for suffering, i.e. sometimes human beings are punished for sins committed (Numbers 12:10-12).

Here the sin which Miriam committed was publicly punished and thus serves as an educative process. Sometimes, it could be viewed as discipline, as seen in the life of the Lord Jesus, where there is a relationship between disciplinary suffering and sonship which is for the ultimate good of human beings. Lane (1991: 407) concludes that:

“there is a necessary and integral relationship between disciplinary sufferings and sonship. Although Jesus enjoyed a unique sonship (5:8), he himself came to share God’s throne only after he had experienced the disgrace of the cross rather than joy (12:2). Christians should be prepared through faith to share in his exposure to active opposition and suffering. The recognition of the fruitful role played by suffering in the maturing of the relationship with God (12:10-11) undergirds the appeal for endurance in pursuing the goal marked out for the community (12:12-13).”

Sometimes suffering is viewed as a strengthening as in 2 Corinthians (1:3-7) where Paul writes to the Corinthians that, God came to him when he was suffering to strengthen him and give him courage and in 1 Peter (4:12) Christians are exhorted with the words that in suffering they become partakers in Christ’s sufferings and in this suffering they may anticipate the future when they shall be made glad with Christ.

In the Gospels, Jesus met the realities of suffering in the way he engaged suffering and confronted it in a very compassionate, direct and practical manner.

3.4 conclusion

From the worldview of the author of this work, based on an overview which is by no means conclusive because of the limited scope of this study, I would like to propose that a syncretistic approach to bring differing religions and differing confessions or schools within religions would be fruitless as no religion really could compromise on their basic beliefs without denying the core values of their religion. Having said this, I do not deny the apparent fact that God reveals himself, albeit in a limited fashion, in nature as well as in other religions opposed to his revelation in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the daily outworking of the Holy Spirit in myriad of

acts. That cross-fertilization occurred between different religions is also very obvious as well as the fact that religions can learn a lot from each other as there seems to exist good practices in each religion. In some cases the positive aspects of other religions can empower and exhort Christians to a more faithful and sincere approach in their relationship with the Almighty God.

Faith is not a leap in the dark because the foursome acts of God posit the existence of the Supreme Good as God makes Himself known in history and experience, where human beings can daily experience revelations of God's will. With regards to this last point, Ward (2006:96) is quick to point out that:

“...they (the revelations) must be tested by their consonance with what is believed to be a definitive revelation of God, and by their coherence with the knowledge we have of the world from other sources. Revelation can expand the insights of reason, but reason must always test claims to revelation. That is why revelation is never static. It is always developing, though the limits of such development are set down by the original paradigm, in the case of Christianity, of Jesus and the Bible, the witness to his life and work.”

Religions are sense making approaches in order to understand God – human beings – nature and the interactions and interrelationships between them. Therefore, differing religions should not be caricatured or labelled as heretic, but should be considered with understanding. In order to work towards enabling human beings to become wholesome human beings, opportunities should be sought for entering into dialogue between different religious groupings for the common good; such as working on the problem of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Such constructive collaboration between religions on practical work to reduce suffering and in ways which do not challenge, or require modification of basic belief systems would be plausible and could be of great benefit in addressing HIV/ AIDS with greater efficacy. Ward (2006:187) is of a similar disposition:

“We must affirm our own beliefs with total commitment, but with due humility about how much of it we really understand, in all its diversity and profundity. We must fully accept the right of others conscientiously to disagree, and to manifest their disagreement in practice. And we must try to understand the highest motives that lead others to take other spiritual paths than ours. There will still remain beliefs and practices that we really do wish

to oppose, both within our own religion and in the religion of others....But overall there is plenty of room for common social action in mercy and hospitality and kindness.”

And as Ward says, religions contribute a sense of sacredness which:

“..calls people to express something of that goodness in their own lives, and to commit their lives to gaining greater knowledge of that good.....every major religion stresses the objective existence of moral ideals, the importance of moral conduct, and the possibility for human individuals and societies of attaining a good and happy life. Religions are among the chief agents of moral education in most countries” (2006:49-50)

God does not have any favourites and, based on Acts (10:23-48), we can conclude that there is no race superiority and Christians cannot look with contempt on human beings who do not share the same religious doctrine. In fact Christians are called to express love for their neighbours. Peter (Acts 10:23-48) clearly shows that God has showed him not to call any human being unclean or common. This means that all castes and differences are broken down and there exists a unity of life. In the sight of God, all human beings have the same intrinsic value. All are redeemed by the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ as he died for all, albeit, that salvation is extended to but not accepted by all. Redemption and salvation are thus different. The same message is promoted by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (3:28) where he explicitly states that there is neither Jew nor Greek etc. God cares for the whole world and not just for an inner circle of ‘card bearing’ Christians. God has a relationship with anyone who walks in the light that they possess. This is not by the works individual human beings perform but by the grace of God wrought out in the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Campbell Morgan describes it as:

“The sin of the Gentile is not that he does not believe the thing of which he never heard. It is that he holds down the truth which he knows, in unrighteousness”. (1957:220)

Any human being who casts himself on the mercy of God will find that mercy at the foot of the cross. This fact is aptly summarised as:

“...It is not through other religions as ‘saving structures’, ...but rather through the basic fact of God’s general revelation, vouchsafed in nature and in all that is true (including, of course, the truth there is in other religions), and the equally fundamental fact of our common humanity, that the Spirit of God, or the ‘cosmic Christ’, brings home to men and women something of their need. It is this...which helps to explain what Lesslie Newbigin terms an ‘element of continuity’ which is ‘confirmed in the experience of many who have become converts to Christianity from other religions. Even though this conversion involves a radical discontinuity, yet there is often the strong conviction afterwards that it was the living and true God who was dealing with them in the days of their pre-Christian wrestlings.” (Anderson 1975:236)

For Netland (2001:328-329), human cultures are the product, both of God’s creative activity and of human sin and as such, they reflect both good and evil, truth and falsity. This concept is also reflected in the various religions which inevitably leads to the conclusion that all religious traditions and worldviews should be treated with genuine respect and sensitivity whilst not forgetting the missionary mandate the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his followers.

Sometimes human beings, especially Christians, in their zeal to make disciples, let this goal dominate their attitude, communication and behaviour and they seem to forget that they need to earn the right to speak. As Christianity is a religion of grace, it follows that the adherents should be graceful in dealing with other human beings. Genuine compassion and love is not overbearing but reaches out with sensitivity. Metaphorically speaking, the soul of a human being is sacred ground and we need to tread softly and not with forceful or filthy boots in dealing with other human beings and speaking about their belief system, which for most is holy ground.

How holy books are interpreted, applied and implemented in people’s lives, depend on the reading of the texts. The approaches of mirroring, interpreting and negotiation cut across all the religious groupings as human beings determine their own approach in handling texts, based upon variables like social strata, education, whether the readers have rationally defensible belief or irrational fanaticism etc.

But even regardless of how human beings read and interpret, add meaning, reflect or negotiate their holy books and belief systems in daily life, the crux of the matter

is that religions are a potentially positive force in a community and can be a powerful reconciliatory force working for the ultimate good of human beings, creating pockets of forgiving, compassionate and loving environments where human beings can be fulfilled and nature could be cared for. This is providing human beings celebrate both their religious and cultural similarities and their differences in order to preserve the sacredness of God – human life – and – nature. And this can therefore lead to a reduction in the prevalence of ‘in group’ ‘out group’ binary reaction to those who have contracted HIV and can be a positive force in providing means of reducing the suffering of human beings with HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 4

Modern and Postmodern views of Evil and Suffering within the Triad of God, Humanity and Nature.

4.1 Introduction

As postmodernism gives rise to pluralism, it is important to determine how pluralism affects human beings that hold different religious worldviews and whether pluralism in itself could cause evil and suffering. One possible way in which this may occur is when adherents of different religions move to a more fundamentalist position due to the increased pressure of other worldviews and religions in close interaction with their adherents. This may lead to fundamentalism with resultant prejudices against other religious systems or world views.

With regards to this concept, it is considered valuable to interact with various worldviews being held by theologians.

Considering various religions and the related viewpoints concerning evil and suffering, further questions could be posed, such as, whether it is possible to know God's plan with creation and history? In other terms, does God cause suffering as part of God's plan and in the execution of that plan, and is there interrelatedness between God, creation, suffering and evil? The Preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes (which is begun with the concept that all is meaningless and closes with the observation that one is to fear God and keep his commandments because we will all stand before him one day), which is marked by tensions, refuses to solve the problem and displays a fatalism which also could be experienced to a greater or lesser extent in various religions (Ecclesiastes 12:21-26).

As has been noted in the previous chapter, various religions claim a revelatory or illuminatory experience. The question could therefore be posed, whether these “revelatory” experiences are in any way different from those of Christianity or has Christianity the only claim to “being informed about God’s plan with creation and therefore the reasons and logic behind evil and suffering?” In this regard, various modern and postmodern tendencies need to be considered.

4.2 Modern and postmodern tendencies – the perennial question of truth

Perceived discrepancies, differences, overlapping and agreements exist between sense making approaches, religions, cultures, societies, and churches. In the everyday sense of the word, we encounter multiple discrepancies, differences, overlapping and agreements between people as to how they experience God, themselves and the natural world surrounding them. Many people’s experience of such a state of affairs highlight to them the need for something that we can term ‘truth’, ‘ultimate truth’ or even ‘absolute truth’. The story of the quest for the ultimate truth through the ages has been differently narrated in different theologies, philosophies, scientific theories and people’s daily experiential contexts.

When Jesus told Pilate that he came into the world to bear witness to the truth (John 18:38), Pilate asked ‘What is truth?’ but did not wait for an answer. Through the centuries, even in different biblical eras, the question of truth has been answered in different ways. In the days of the patriarchal fathers, truth has been answered in the sense of the handing on of experiences of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the exodus period, truth revolved around the covenantal law and the Decalogue. In the New Testament era, truth revolved around the cross and resurrection of Jesus in transition to Pentecost as the inauguration of the Spirit’s work of renewal.

We make a big leap to the modern era (which spans the period from 1600-2000) in which the idea of an ultimate and absolute truth emerged in terms of the many reductionist historical absolutes, experiential idols or reductionist meaning-givers (van Niekerk 2009:157). On the one hand, van Niekerk (2009:159) points to the reductionist sense making approach of the modern canon of truth of, 'I think therefore I am' (rationalism), of Descartes which emerged and re-emerged with monotonous regularity in umpteen new variants, versions and forms. These include Luther's and Calvin's, 'I believe therefore I am' (fideism), a century before Descartes, or 'I pray therefore I am' (prayerism); or 'I feel therefore I am' (romanticism); or 'I have therefore I am' (capitalism); or 'I produce therefore I am' (communism); or 'I evolve therefore I am' (evolutionism); or 'I love therefore I am' (love-ism); or 'I verbalise therefore I am' (language-ism); or 'I entitise therefore I am' (mathematicism); or 'I am scientific therefore I am' (scientism), like the Richard Dawkins' of this world. Between each one of the experiences expressed in the valid first parts of the statements, the small word 'and' should be inserted, and not 'or' as is prescribed by the reductionist spirit of the modern era. This leads us to situation where the various statements can be mixed together like the drawbars on an organ, which create endless variations in sound, and in this situation creating an infinite range of possibilities in the final outcome of experiences. This under the influence of the all pervasive organist, the Holy Spirit, may be mixed afresh within a human being on myriad of occasions, as the human being moves through life in interaction with: God, being human and the physical natural cosmic world.

On the other hand, van Niekerk (2009:159) shows the way by exhorting people to be courageous enough to turn the whole modern 'absolute or idol-creating mindset' around by expressing, without hesitancy that 'I (or we) are' – created, being reconciled, under renewal through the Spirit, on my (our) way to the fulfilment of everything - 'therefore 'I (we) think...' and 'I (we) believe...' and 'I (we) feel...' and 'I (we) have...' and 'I (we) evolve...' and 'I (we) pray...', etc. as human beings linked to the physical environment in the acting and living presence of God. These acts or modes of human beings are alternately emphasised in different episodes of experience. The moment the second part of the modern reductionist agenda, '...therefore I am', is exclusively added to any of these 'acts' that starts

with 'I (we)...', at that moment a reductionist 'historical absolute' or 'historical idol' is born from which the truth is reductionistically acquired and this not only excludes any other 'absolute' or 'idol', but also excludes the acting and living presence of God.

In the era which has been called postmodernity or late modernity, the historical absolutes and historical idols of the modern era have been fragmented and relativised. Today the question still begs an answer and a strategy propagated by liberal postmodern popular advocates is that truth cannot be prescribed therefore every person has to make up and experience his or her own truth. This thesis attempts to steer clear of the Scylla of the modernist approach in which historical absolutes are created and the Charybdis (Homer 1999:116) of the postmodern approaches in which the question of truth is relativised and fragmented to such an extent that the question about truth cannot be answered in any meaningful way. In such a global postmodern liberal attempt to solve the question, the conclusion is reached that there are no absolute truths, but different truths which are not connected or related to each other but that are equally true.

A fundamentalist approach that is not very helpful is to describe the postmodernist strategy as in direct opposition to the Christian Scriptures. Both Testaments testify that there is an ultimate truth and that truth is bigger than mere social customs and beliefs, This does not imply that if the truth about God, particularly, and the gospel message is the ultimate truth then all other religions are therefore false and can be caricatured as heretical. We can accept with great certainty that there is not one biblical answer to the question of truth. Although truth has been regarded generally speaking, as a system of propositions which have an unconditional claim to be valid and could therefore be verified truth, according to some scholars, truth in itself seems to be continuously developing as human beings grapple with God's grand acts, each other and nature.

For many people, truth as they perceive it is based on their system of reference in a specific setting of space and time and although truth seems to be 'provisional', viewing it from a populist secular perspective as the general non-religious populace might view it, Christian Scriptures still profess that although the

awareness of truth differs between human beings, human beings will still be held accountable for the truth they have received and how they responded to it. An example of this is given in Romans (2:12-16) where Paul contrasts the position of the Jew, who is under the Law, with the gentile, who has not received the law, on the “day when God judges men’s secrets”.

Therefore, the answer for the question of truth must be acquired from the sphere where people experience God, themselves as human beings and the physical-organic environment and such a sphere consists of every context, situation and field of experience in daily life. Thus, the Holy Spirit may manifest and reveal truth just as truth is revealed, manifested and set free in the mysterious connection and difference of God, human beings and the natural world, expressed in God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. Mighty clues, cues and hues about truth are manifested, revealed and set free through the Spirit of God in the Scriptures regarding these grand acts of God and people’s and the natural world’s involvement and engagement in these grand acts. Rather, the difference is between complete (or whole gospel truth) and incomplete, which means that snippets of truth might be found in other religions and the Holy Spirit may reveal truth, just as truth is revealed through people’s involvement with God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation and the mighty clues from the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures.

It is important to continuously state that all human beings and the physical natural cosmic world are involved and engage in the grand acts of God’s creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. Even if many people are not aware of their involvement or various others aggressively dispute the notion of God as a delusion, their involvement and engagement in God’s grand acts is never in dispute. Truth does not solely originate from God or human beings or for that matter from the natural cosmic world but truth is mysteriously revealed and meaningfully manifested in God’s grand acts of creation, reconciliation (redemption) (=cross and resurrection of Jesus), in the process of renewal and renovation in which we are continuously taken up by the Holy Spirit and guided on the way to the fulfilment of all the universes. God’s grand acts, in their full

emphasised and experienced character, cut through cultures and religions as the Great Commission included all nations just as creation, reconciliation (redemption), renewal and fulfilment belong to all nations as is evident in the Book of Revelation when John in his vision saw a multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev 7:9-10). The ultimate truth is the same across these different nations etc although the cultural expression might be different. The closeness and the distance between what is and what we as human beings can analyse and synthesise remains mysteriously connected and mysteriously very different in God's foursome grand acts. There is no infinite gulf which has to be diminished by God in the sense of analogies constructed by Barth (for example Barth 1968:93) (the theologian who is actually the foremost representative of theologism in the 20th century). To say it with Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his letter of 30 April 1944 from jail:

“I should like to speak of God not on the borders of life, but at its centre, not in weakness but in strength, not, therefore, in man's suffering and death but in his life and prosperity....The “beyond” of God is not the beyond of our perceptive faculties. Epistemological theory has nothing to do with the transcendence of God. God is the “beyond” in the midst of our life” (1953:93).

God in the sense of Bonhoeffer, is not up-there squatting outside his grand acts but God is the “beyond” in the midst of our life, in pain and suffering and in celebration, joy and prosperity. We cannot talk about God's grand acts apart from human beings and the physical natural cosmic world which are in any case intrinsically involved in these grand acts, not by their choice, but in the sense of God acting as the living God in these grand acts. Traces, snippets and elements of truth are set free within our patterns of daily experience which usually take on the form of a foursome expression of our experience. Within the sphere and perspective of faith as the main focus of our study, transcendental experiences comprise not only of exclusive experiences of God, but also of transcendental experiences of oneself, other human beings and the physical natural world (in which we live as humans like fish in the water) (van Niekerk 2009:71).

Van Niekerk continues to describe these processes of revelation and manifestation of truth in our lives:

“In every field, mode or dimension of experience such as faith, thinking, feeling, apportioning (justness) and verbalising the foursome pattern of God, oneself, other human beings and the natural cosmic world continues rolling forth thereby expressing and revealing sense and meaning to us through traces, markers and pointers of God, oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic natural environment.” (2009:72).

Van Niekerk asserts that we have acquired a lot of elements of truth through the many idols, historical absolutes and hard and soft reductionisms of the modern era and one can add also truth elements through the idols of the New Age and postmodern approaches. We have to learn at least to discern in the many new age and reductionist enterprises the truth moments of the little “psst!” of God, oneself, other human beings and the natural cosmic universe amongst the myriad of voices in the world (2009:72).

4.3 Main modern and postmodern tendencies in philosophies, religions, cultures and church theology

It is imperative to define modernity and postmodernity before embarking on the various philosophies and religious viewpoints etc. According to Netland:

“.. modernity is identified with the “Enlightenment mentality,” which in turn is said to be characterized by optimism concerning human progress through science and technology, belief in universal truth and normative values, the capacity of reason to discover truth and know it with certainty, the push for homogeneity and uniformity, and grand “metanarratives” that explain the vagaries of history. Postmodernity, by contrast, involves loss of optimism and confidence in human progress, incredulity toward metanarratives, scepticism, suspicion of claims to truth, exuberant celebration of diversity, relativism, pragmatism and pluralism.” (2001:16).

According to Dillistone (1981:2), the twentieth century has been characterised by a massive dismissal of religion as an illusion or delusion, as follows:

“Psychologically it [religion] has been reduced to fantasy or regarded as the product of wish-fulfilment or the projection of infantile fears. Sociologically it has been explained as the bolstering up of class domination or as compensation for class subjection. Philosophically it has been rejected as meaningless because of its inherent incapacity to submit its claims to

ordinary tests of verifiability. But even apart from these more sophisticated dismissals there has been a growing tendency to discount and ignore religion because it seems to be so little related to the pursuit of health, power, affluence, and pleasure – the dominant concerns of twentieth-century man.”

The same trend is also evident within Christian groupings, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations moved from a ‘particularistic perspective’ in the nineteenth century to more open views towards other religions in the twentieth century. The shift is evident with Vatican II and theologians like Paul Tillich in the Protestant quarter.

Runzo has coined the phrase ‘Henofideism’ for the current religious trend of religious tolerance whilst retaining your own viewpoint. According to Runzo, a

“henofideist is one who has fidelity to a single religious worldview, while acknowledging that other religious worldviews might be correct”. (2001:39)

The early Christians experienced the same type of situation when they were expected to tolerate all the different pagan religions in the Roman Empire. Sometimes this type of tolerance seems to be very superficial as in the case of the Dalai Lama and I say this with utmost respect but with tongue in cheek. It would be very prudent in this respect to quote the source:

“...the idea that religions are culturally and historically conditioned human responses to the same divine reality is increasingly popular in the West as well.”(Netland 2001:213)

“Much of the attraction of the Dalai Lama consists in his call for people to cultivate spirituality within their own traditions while respecting the differences of others.’ I am not interested in converting other people to Buddhism but in how we Buddhists can contribute to human society, according to our own ideas.’ In his address to the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions the Dalai Lama said, ‘Each religion has its own philosophy and there are similarities as well as differences among the various traditions. What is important is what is suitable for a particular person...Everyone feels that his or her form of religious practice is the best. I myself feel that Buddhism is best for me. But this does not mean that Buddhism is best for everyone else. All of this might suggest that the Dalai Lama is a pluralist, but this would be to misunderstand his position. As Jane Compson persuasively argues, ‘Whilst his tolerance is entirely genuine, it arises from prioritizing Buddhist ideas over those of other faiths, and in this

respect the apparent pluralism is deceptive. There is no question that the Dalai Lama is a convinced Buddhist, accepting the basic epistemology and ontology of the Geluk tradition.....the Dalai Lama holds as himself a Buddhist, in common with all dGelugs practitioners, that only Buddhism will be found to make final sense.....Buddhism developed the notion of upaya-kaus-alya, or "skilful means," according to which doctrines can be adapted to fit the level of the audience's present state of comprehension. Since not everyone at present is capable of grasping the higher truths of Buddhism, other teachings, even false teachings, can be useful in helping some people along the path. Thus, even though strictly speaking Buddhism rejects as false the Christian belief in an eternal Creator God, theism can be useful for some people." (Netland 2001:216-217)

For the Dalai Lama liberation is only attained within Buddhism (Archer et al 2004:113) He, however is not alone in this because in discussion with adherents of the various religions, particularism is apparent in each one.

In light of this observation, we move on to John Hick who endeavours to propose that the various religions are basically the same. With regards to postmodernity, Hick seems to be the most influential scholar with concerning religious pluralism. Hick seemed to develop from a Christian inclusivist position towards a pluralistic worldview within his career. Hick rejects orthodox Christianity and regards Jesus as 'unambiguously a man, albeit, a human being who was open to God's presence and in this viewpoint we find similarity with the Arian heresy. His worldview seems to entail an incompatibility since he seems to be acutely aware of the incompatibility between the various religions but yet reinterprets the various beliefs in such ways as would be unacceptable to the adherents of the different beliefs. It seems that he designed his model by retro-fitting the various religious beliefs in order to safeguard his model.

The question which could be posed according to Netland (2001:223-224), is that if all the religions are in contact with the same divine reality, how could there be such diversity in their respective understanding of the Ultimate Reality? According to Hick, as discussed by Netland, the various religions can be regarded as historically and culturally conditioned responses to the same Ultimate Reality, i.e. human beings from different cultures view the same Reality through their own cultural lenses and respond accordingly. According to Hick, human beings from different religions moved from self-centredness to Reality-centeredness and based

on this observation, he drew the conclusion that salvation thus occurred. Netland argues this point by explaining that the concept of self-centeredness is different according to the different religions. Even Reality-centeredness is completely different according to the various religions. For Buddhists it would mean the ultimacy of nirvana and for orthodox Christians it will mean acknowledging Jesus Christ as the one Lord and Saviour. The same concept applies for salvation as this is remarkably different in the various religions as well. According to Hick's viewpoint it would seem that each religion provides a way to salvation and with regards to morality no religion could be regarded as superior to another. It follows from here that human beings are not necessarily saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. Griffin seems to have a similar position to Netland:

“In an essay titled ‘The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity’, Hick rejects the ‘absolutist position,’ which affirms ‘a Christian monopoly of salvific truth and life,’ and thereby the conviction that the Christian religion should seek ‘to dispossess the non-Christian religions.’ The pluralistic position, he says, holds instead that ‘Christianity is not the one and only way of salvation, but one among several.’ (2005:6)

Netland critiques the inconsistency in Hick's model as Hick claims that the Real in itself is beyond moral categories but Hick uses moral criteria to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate religious teachings. The counterarguments posed by Netland with regards to Hick's pluralistic model make it unacceptable as a working model.

Contrary to John Hick's model of religious pluralism is Kenneth Cragg (1913), who defended the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ whilst being respectful of other religious groups, especially with regards to Islam (as he acquired a remarkable experience of this religion). For example in 1999 (in his book *Weight in the Word*), Cragg states:

“Despite all that is mutually at odds between things Biblical and Quranic, there are vital, discernable territories that are capable of careful reconnoitre... the passion for the unity of God,... personality, language, situation and circumstance, conscience and suffering.” (1999, vii)

Another dominant twentieth century theologian-missionary is Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) who insisted that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour given for all human beings and he places great emphasis on sharing the Gospel with other religious groups whilst allowing space for the outworking of the Holy Spirit in other religions. (Newbigin 1994:5)

Barth's viewpoint could be summed up as that religion is unbelief and cannot provide any knowledge of God. Religion and revelation are mutually exclusive. Christianity came about by the grace of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and for Barth, revelation occurs when God reconciles human beings to himself by grace. Human beings are incapable of reconciling themselves to God because of their fallen position and therefore human beings become justified and sanctified through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

“On the contrary, we have here an exclusive contradiction. In religion, man bolts and bars himself against Revelation by providing a substitute, by taking away in advance the very thing which has to be given by God.” (Barth 1956:303)

“This is a further illustration, in Barth's view, of the distinction that has to be drawn between revelation and religion.” (Richards 1989:15)

For Barth, Scriptural revelation is unique as God is identical with His act in revelation and He reveals Himself through the *humanitas Christi*.

Emil Brunner (1889-1966) seems to be more open to other religions and stated that God reveals himself in various ways and one way is through his work in creation. God never left Himself without a witness and hence the revelation in creation is thus a logical conclusion. Traces of revelation occur in other religions according to him but they cannot claim an authentic revelation. However, he still rejects any connection between biblical and natural theology. (2002:132-133) For him Christian revelation is absolute and he therefore rejects the theory put forward by Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who is of the opinion that an essence of spiritual elevation forms part of all religions.

Islam and Judaism, although related to Christianity, cannot claim to be completely revelatory as they lack the redemptive qualities and offer, therefore, rationalistic theism with moralistic tendencies. In Christianity we encounter reconciliation within God's self-revelation. Although Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Islam claim to be based on authentic revelation, Brunner disputes this with the following argument: Only the Christian faith

“dares to maintain revelation in the strict, unconditional sense of the word, because it alone dares to assert, ‘the Word became flesh’. (1946:236).

Because Muhammad claimed only that God's word was revealed to him as a prophet, Judaism is a faith system based on a coming Messiah and therefore is by its own doctrine an incomplete faith and Zoroastrianism is based on the affirmation of natural moral conscience.

In sharp contrast to the exclusiveness of Barth and Brunner are the more liberal approaches of Arnold Toynbee and Ernst Troeltsch. Troeltsch displays a relativistic approach in the belief that Christianity is an individual manifestation of the Divine Life and the tendency of Divine Reason is to manifest itself in various forms of which Christianity is one of the many. Christianity is not seen by Troeltsch as an absolute religion (as other religions also are revelations of God) (Troeltsch 2006:126) and this is because God loves all human beings and other religions also reveal the power of God when dealing for instance with grief, guilt etc but he still sees Christianity as the great revelation of God, in saying:

“Christianity remains the great revelation of God to men, though the other religions, with all the power they possess for lifting men above guilt, grief, and earthly life, are likewise revelations of God,...” (Troeltsch 2006:126)

This, however, only applies to nations which have attained a high level of civilized life and thus excludes less developed races which he termed as the animism of heathen tribes (Troeltsch 1957:56). According to Troeltsch, different religions should contemplate mutual understanding and should not try to convert each other as they are culturally determined. Apart from this Christianity is influenced by its intellectual and social situation.

Toynbee displays an inclusive stance to other religions and holds the opinion that salvation can be attained within all the higher religions although the ways in which salvation is attained is different. He endeavoured to work towards harmony between different religions and, in order to work towards the elimination of conflict, he posed the suggestion that Christians should rid Christianity of its Western, Graeco-Roman elements, which make it a tribal religion as well as the idea that it is unique as that will rid it of an intolerant character concerning other religions (Toynbee 1957a:94). This exclusiveness promotes pride and self-centredness, which is contrary to a self-sacrificing God. Although Christianity is a revelation of God it is not the sole revelation as God revealed Himself to other people groups as well, albeit, in different degrees according to the nature of the individuals as well as the nature of the local tradition of civilization and herein God has proved His love. (Toynbee in Thomas 1969:153-171)

For Toynbee, the revelation given to other religions therefore differs in degree but does not differ in kind as God is the God of all human beings (Toynbee 1957a:54). In his call to an acknowledgment of other cultures and religions, he does not suggest a syncretistic religion because that would be an artificial construction which would not have the allegiance of human beings. He does not promote one religion either but a greater openness, respect and reverence towards other faith groups as that would enable human beings to understand and practice their own religion better.

Richards in this regard states:

“He [Toynbee] approves of the practice of proclaiming Christian truths and ideals to non-Christians, in deeds as well as words, but advocates also receptiveness to the truths and ideals of other faiths in order to avoid the sin of arrogance and intolerance (1989:34).”

Griffin has a similar view, as follows:

“Arnold Toynbee argued, for example, that the Jewish-Christian ‘vision of God as being a jealous god, the god of my tribe as against the gentiles outside my tribe or my church,’ should be rejected in favor of ‘the Jewish and Christian vision of God as being love,’ which makes it seem ‘unlikely

that He would not have made other revelations to other people as well”
(2005:10)

From this we can see that there is much in Toynbee’s approach which shows synergism with the concepts put forward in this thesis. Whilst, in my opinion, Toynbee has gone further than necessarily defensible in terms of the detail of the Scriptures, in negotiation with the text through the Holy Spirit, we come to a place where the possibility of veracity in Toynbee’s assertions cannot be ignored. Even in the Bible we read the story of Job and his interaction with God during the suffering that he experienced and yet Job is portrayed in a patriarchal context – i.e. outside of the direct history of the Jewish nation. Scholars differ in regards to the actual place and time of writing of Job but this is not important to the concept of the book of Job being a presentation within scripture of the revelation of God being given to non Jewish civilisation. The Story of Jonah also encourages this opinion because Nineveh was not a Jewish city and yet gained a revelation from God, albeit, through a Jewish prophet, and as a city, Nineveh, received God’s grace at that time.

According to the essentialist approach of Schleiermacher the plurality of religions are essential as each religion embodies something of the essence of religion (Richards 1989:36) and the multiplicity of religions could be ascribed to the work of the Spirit. Although a religion may contain elements which are corrupt, it also contains to a greater or lesser degree that which is true religion. Different forms of faith are indicative of various stages of development. According to Schleiermacher, religions could be arranged according to the evolutionary development of the religious consciousness of human beings with Christianity at the pinnacle as it brings the finite closer to the infinite through the work of mediation performed by Christ. Christ as redeemer is the manifestation of divine revelation and as Christ was a human being, it follows that human nature has the potential to have the divinity embedded in the human self. Only in Christianity, through the life of Christ, is the most perfect form of God-consciousness being manifested.

The starting point of religion, according to Schleiermacher, is the response and surrender of the human soul to the Universe, the Godhead, the Infinite etc. (Richards 1989:37). And although he stresses an emotional response based on feeling, sense and taste, he does not reject the intellectual aspect. "Sense and taste for the Infinite" is a priori cognitive experience as it is the way by which the ground of knowledge could be understood. For him the true nature of religion is a consciousness of the Deity as we experience him in ourselves and in creation. Religion is the relationship of a human being with God and is apprehended differently. A universal religion is out of bounds as human beings differ in their receptiveness to different experiences and feelings with regard to religion.

Schleiermacher asserts that the existence of God in Human Beings was not demonstrated by rational self-consciousness or even by a degree of God consciousness present in human nature. (1956:134)

Schleiermacher goes further to say that:

"There is no other way of obtaining participation in the Christian communion than through faith in Jesus as the Redeemer." (1956:68)

And again:

"... only through Him (Christ) that human consciousness becomes an existence of God in human nature, and only through the rational nature that the totality of finite powers can become an existence of God in the world, [so] that in truth He alone mediates all existence of God in the world and all revelation of God through the world, in so far as He bears within Himself the whole new creation which contains and develops the potency of the God-consciousness." (1956:388)

Regardless of Schleiermacher's viewpoint given above, he still held that Christianity – being the most highly developed religion – cannot be regarded as universal religion since God can be worshipped in a variety of ways which reveal the essence of religion. Religious pluralism is essential for the manifestation of religion. (Schleiermacher 1956:51)

According to Hans Küng, all non-Christian religions are included in God's plan of salvation as God is capable of being known by all human beings. He says:

“After all, all the religions are at the same time both a message of salvation and a way of salvation” (2006: xiv)

According to Küng, there are three ways in which non-Christian religious traditions could be regarded, i.e. they are in error, they proclaim the truth of God although they are in error or they partake in the ordinary ways of salvation for non-Christians which are different from the extraordinary way of salvation which is provided by the church (Richards 1989:56). God has provided these types of salvation as it is his will that all human beings should be saved (Richards 1989:55). They can be saved within their own religious tradition and historical milieu. As human beings are social beings and therefore God sanctions social structures within which human beings can meet God.

True fellowship between human beings and God, as well as, salvation is only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ. Religions, on the other hand, contain both truth and error and stand in need of the Gospel in order to contain the complete truth. Küng does not propound syncretism nor domination of one religion but dialogue between Christians and other religions without relativising Christianity (as it is unique). (Küng 1985: xvii-xix)

For Karl Rahner, non-Christian religions represent God's redemptive universal will. In order to respond to the problem of non-Christian religions, he offers four theses, i.e. (i) Christianity has not always been the way of salvation as it has a beginning although it understands itself to be the absolute religion intended for all human beings. However, where it is presented to human beings, it becomes the only valid religion and the means of salvation for that human being, (ii) Non-Christian religions have a natural knowledge of God and experience the supernatural grace of God which is given to human beings because of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it can be deduced that grace has been offered outside the church and non-Christian religions cannot be regarded as illegitimate as God can reach a human being through his historical situation. (iii) Because of God's supernatural

grace, human beings from other religions thus can be seen as anonymous Christians. (iv) Based on the above arguments, it could be deduced that the Church therefore does not have an exclusive claim to salvation as non-Christian religions may be an anonymous form of Christianity. However, the Gospel still needs to be proclaimed. Rahner states:

“...the world and the history of the world as a whole will *in fact* enter into eternal life with God” (1978,1982:444) (Rahner’s emphasis)

Although Rahner still did not provide concrete justification for the truth claims of non-Christian religions, he accepted their validity to a certain extent.

New Age philosophy is syncretistic (Hanegraaff 1996:370) with its foundations in both ancient spirituality of the East and West. In this world view everything is interconnected and God is all and all is God. This resembles the pantheistic worldview of the Hindu. Human beings form part of God as the whole cosmos is God. As all religions are seen basically as one, a very tolerant view concerning other religions is held by those in the New Age movement.

Another concept, according to the New Age worldview, is reincarnation with the final goal being the merging with the Absolute One (Hanegraaff 1996:262). The imbalance of spiritual energy causes pain and illness and healing can occur when forces in the body are balanced through acupuncture, yoga, herbs etc. As human beings are essentially good, but can perform bad deeds, there is no absolute dualism between good and evil.

In the rhetorical assault against God, in “*The God Delusion*”, Dawkins basically sees Christianity as a force for evil and faith as blind trust in the absence of evidence. (Dawkins 2006:262,286)). In espousing religion as evil “Dawkins is clearly entrenched in his own peculiar version of a fundamentalist dualism.” (McGrath 2007b:25) as human beings are capable of deeds of evil as well as deeds of kindness regardless of whether they are religious or an atheist like himself. This is because it is not the presence or absence of religion that is the determining factor, but the worldview a person holds, which may not be religious

but could be for instance atheistic, Marxistic, existensialistic etc. And while the concept of religious fundamentalists engaging in violent acts (Dawkins 2006:278) is nothing new, neither is that of non-religious nationalist groups embracing violent acts (Boobbyer 2000:169). Christians, generally speaking, would however agree with Dawkins that it is necessary to criticize religion. McGrath explains:

“yet he [Dawkins] appears unaware that it [religion] possesses internal means of reform and renewal. This is especially evident in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, where it often took the form of the criticism or flagrant transgression of cultic regulations or ritual practices, where these were coming between God and his people. The breaking of Sabbath regulations exemplifies this well. The phenomenon of religion is a provisional, human institution, which is open to reform and renewal. Jesus’ mission was to challenge the religious forms of his day and, in the end, that is what led to him being crucified.” (2007b:57)

4.3.1 God’s acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation as revelation

Having considered the worldviews of various theologians, religions, philosophies and some churches, it is imperative to formulate a viewpoint as a summarising concept thus far before embarking on the overlap and otherness, as well as, a scriptural analysis of Ecclesiastes 3.

In the light of justice and mercy it is very difficult to believe that the majority of human beings are excluded from salvation because they are from other religious groupings like Buddhists, Hindus etc or because they are hedonists, atheists, humanists etc. All the various religions cannot be absolutely true, but some religions might have more truth principles than others while some might be more mistaken in certain areas. From a Christian worldview, based on Christian scriptures, it is imperative that God is encountered in the world through His foursome grand acts of creation, reconciliation renewal and consummation being made real in the human life by the indwelling and the outworking power of the Holy Spirit. And as God is not known in himself, it follows that he could only be known through his works or the actions he performs in the world. From a monotheistic viewpoint it could be said that the “Being of God” is the totality of Christ i.e.

incarnation, cross and resurrection and the renovating and renewing power which gives meaning to the human life. So what am I actually saying? Or to put it more pointedly, what is the heart of the matter? Whilst God may reveal himself through many means to people of many different religions, the path ordained by God as his chosen way of salvation is where salvation revolves around the cross and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. This may not preclude salvation for members of other religious persuasions or faiths but the only certain way from the viewpoint of the Christian Scriptures is through Jesus Christ. It is through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in sensible negotiation that one must accept the possibilities of salvation through other faith systems. This assertion, which is abhorrent to the fundamentalist mirroring Christian, is made because of the recognition that God is sovereign, the Spirit is ubiquitous and therefore all religions have greater or lesser veracity as the Spirit has been and is still active in all human beings and at all times, and therefore, has been, and still is, active in all religions. As Christians, we are told not to judge and to love our fellow human beings. Therefore, we have no right to place restrictions on the grace of God.

Some human beings object to this statement of the possibility of salvation through other faith systems with the one or both of the following arguments. God revealed Himself in the Old Testament before Jesus Christ appeared and God also revealed himself in nature as is explicitly stated in Psalm 19 and Romans (1:20). In Romans (1:20), God can be known through creation, i.e. a human being could look at creation and deduce that God is all-powerful but it would be difficult if not impossible to make an assumption based on observation of nature that God is just, loving and righteous. The knowledge human beings could gain from natural theology is thus significantly limited by its very nature. The same principle applies in Psalm 19 where the world of nature declares the glory of God and as human beings reflect upon nature they may come to the awareness of God. But according to the Psalmist as their “voice is inaudible” only sensitive human beings will be able to experience it while it may pass the others by. Peter Craigie (1983:183) is of the opinion that:

“...the heavens declare the glory of God, but the law declares the will of God for mankind, the creature. And though the vast firmament so high

above us declares God's praise, it is the Torah of God alone that reveals to mankind that he has a place in the universal scheme of things."

Jesus Christ came to fulfil the law and therefore it is only in Jesus Christ that human beings encounter God's fullness of purpose as human beings cannot read the book of nature.

Andrews states:

"What Romans 1 teaches is that man has turned his back upon this particular revelation. Because of sin, he is incapable of correctly reading the book of nature. God is indeed revealed in nature, (and in conscience also, as we read in Romans 2:15), and these revelations are such as to leave man without excuse for his atheism. Nevertheless man in his fallen state is incapable of recognizing God in his creation. This avenue of revelation is closed to man because of his fallen natureAlthough therefore it is true that God is the Author of the book of nature, and although it is true that certain of God's characteristics are revealed in nature, it is still true that man can only know this invisible God through Christ. The book of nature is closed to the eyes of natural man. He may indeed deduce from nature a belief in a god or gods, but what he sees will bear no resemblance to the true God." (1986:118).

In order to know God as Christians, we have the Bible and the Holy Spirit and cannot go against our scriptures in order to 'accommodate' other religions, yet our actions can be radically different to tradition as we are guided in our response to situations through our knowledge of the scriptures negotiated through the work of the Holy Spirit in sensible negotiation with those scriptures. The only option for followers of "The Way" is to follow in the footsteps of the one who called Christians to become followers, as he didn't ask them to start a new syncretistic religion whereby everyone could be accommodated. Instead, asked them to follow in the way he prescribed and to work by means of discipleship and mission, removal of evil and the assistance and empowerment of human beings so that they become whole, physically, emotionally as well as spiritually. We can therefore not excuse intolerance of other religions, nor can we excuse selectivity in who we will try to help in practical ways. When Jesus brought food to the hungry, healed the sick, or consoled the bereaved, he did not ask first 'who do you follow?' but allowed his actions to interact with the world view of the human being with whom he was dealing. So, whilst I do not believe that Christians should sacrifice their religious

belief system for the sake of syncretism, I do believe that Christians should work willingly alongside other religions in alleviating suffering without any prerequisites in terms of religious alignment.

The Christian scripture is the story of God's healing and redeeming power in the face of all the evil and suffering encountered in the world. God is active and calls Christians to an active lifestyle. The life of each Christian portrays the ongoing work of God in this world. Each Christian is thus invited as follower of Christ in the ongoing work of the Father in their own lives, the lives of other human beings as well as the created universe whilst being empowered, guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit.

4.3.2 Overlapping and otherness

Nowadays the same situation is encountered which existed in the time of the early church as discussed by John Ferguson in Netland:

“John Ferguson observes that the attitudes of many in the Roman Empire in the first century were marked by tolerance of alien religious beliefs and practices, accommodation and syncretism. The idea that there are multiple ways in which to relate to the divine, with each culture having its own distinctive traditions for doing so, was widespread. The outstanding exceptions to this general pattern were the Jews and the early Christians, for the strict monotheism of Jews and Christians allowed no room for accommodation with the polytheistic traditions of Hellenism and Roman religion.the early Christians faced hostility on all sides. They were attacked by Jews as heretics, persecuted by Rome as a seditious movement, resisted by the masses for their rejection of the popular cults and mystery religions, and ridiculed by the philosophers for their seemingly crude views. It was within this environment that Christians uncompromisingly proclaimed Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Saviour for all peoples” (2001:26).

As already mentioned, the various religions have radically different positions with regards to God, human beings, sin, evil and suffering and therefore it follows that the various religions cannot be united without distorting their worldviews and traditions.

Christianity in particular faces a challenge as Beker aptly pointed out:

“.....Indeed, Christian faith must meet a challenge, which Hinduism and Buddhism (and in earlier days Gnosticism and Stoicism) do not have to face in a similar way. Christian faith holds creation and redemption together and confesses the vision of a transformed world in conformity with God’s redemptive purpose. To the contrary, Hindus, Buddhists, and all those who view the creation as a fall from true Being or who divorce divine essence from existence consider created life itself a form of suffering. Life in the world is here viewed as part and parcel of a divine design that invites us to travel the path of insight and wisdom. This path gives us the knowledge that our destiny will be perfect unity with and absorption into True Being, for which life in this world is a preparation. Therefore the problem of theodicy and the issue of meaningless suffering are for these religions not the acute problem that they are for Christian faith, because there they have a different focus. Meaningless suffering is only the fate of ignorant people who cling to this world as if it has permanent value.” (1987:93-94)

However, in the light of worldwide evil and suffering it is imperative for adherents of the various faith groupings to work together in alleviating the problems for the benefit of all human beings concerned as well as for the defence of the world ecology. Adherents of various faith groupings can agree to differ on doctrinal issues but be united on issues to alleviate suffering, for example, with regards to HIV/AIDS and related contributing factors like poverty because human beings in all religions are united with regards to their humanness as well as the space i.e. the world where everybody lives. Apart from this factor, God placed a eternity in the heart of all human beings which can only be filled by him (the ôlām principle in Ecclesiastes 3:11) and because of this, there exists in the human heart the longing to worship the creator, to seek him and have fellowship with him.

Establishing and maintaining dialogue and cooperation between adherents of the different faith groupings would take concerted effort as the base position from which the dialogue must proceed is very different, for instance, other faith groups might even read the same scripture/teaching but because of their worldview attach different meanings to it as is evident in the Arabic commentary of Yepheth Ben ‘Ali on the Book of Ecclesiastes. According to Yepheth Ben ‘Ali, God has placed an imam in every age as it is implied in Ecclesiastes (3:14-17) according to Yepheth Ben ‘Ali in (Bland 1966:222):

“The place of justice refers to the abode of this world, the world of action. God made it man’s duty to do righteousness and justice. He set forth the ordinances and established an Imam in every age, enjoining them to carry out the ordinances, to establish righteousness, and to see that justice is done. Therefore Qohelet said, God wants men to do justice and righteousness in this world in order that he may reward them in the next.”

4.4 The radical position of Ecclesiastes 3

Qoheleth, in faith, expects God to reveal himself to the righteous and wise human being. He expects the possibility of eternal life in the presence of God for the righteous and he thus feels troubled when he encounters suffering and death of the righteous. Qoheleth discusses things on earth which have an effect on the lives of human beings in the here and now as everything is ‘under the sun’ (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

Human life has two poles, on the one hand, there is well-being and on the other hand, there is death and loss. However, human beings cannot guarantee their own happiness and human beings themselves cause much suffering through behaviour patterns or moral evil like drunkenness (Ecclesiastes 10:17), adultery (Ecclesiastes 7:26), rebellion (Ecclesiastes 8:3) and bribery (Ecclesiastes 7:7) to name but a few. Nevertheless, the book offers consolation to a certain extent as evil itself is also temporary. However, for the Preacher, the randomness of God is responsible for the disasters human beings experience in life, and although God does not cause it, he allows war, hatred and suffering.

Qoheleth suggests that God placed ‘ôlām’ in the hearts of human beings and scholars differed in their interpretation of this term:

It can mean “duration”, “eternity”, or “world”; the latter is reflected in LXX.....Whitley.... reviews the solutions proposed by various scholars , and favors the meaning “darkness” or “ignorance” (Murphy 1992:29).

After careful examination I came to the conclusion that the interpretation given by Shields makes more sense logically:

“The point is probably that God has given human beings a grasp of history that stretches beyond the immediate and permits them to probe the arena in which God operates in an attempt to comprehend it.” (2006:140).

“Literally, the text can be rendered: ‘Also eternity he has put in their heart, without which human beings cannot discover the work that God has done from beginning to end’. Read this way, Qoheleth appears to be asserting that human beings ought to be able to discover the work that God has done from beginning to end precisely because God has placed *עלם* in their hearts. In spite of the fact that many apparently reject this idea, it does actually make good sense of the text.....According to Qoheleth, it is precisely this God-given human ability to contemplate God’s work beyond the immediate that allows him to conclude that whatever is has already been and that God’s work remains immutable.....The ..conclusion – that God’s work is immutable – reinforces for Qoheleth the senselessness of existence. Because nothing can change what God has done (see Qoh 7:13) and there is nothing new, all human endeavour ultimately comes to nothing. Qoheleth proceeds to another observation about the work that God has done from beginning to end: God ensures that his work is immutable in order to guarantee that human beings fear him....Qoheleth’s fear of God is the fear of a largely unknown but all –powerful deity, in whose hands lies the fate of human beings who do not know what they are required to do in order to obtain the deity’s favour.....” (2006:142-143).

God wants human beings to be occupied with thoughts of the material world by putting it in their heart. In Old Testament thought, the heart was considered to be the organ of reflection and, according to the Preacher, the mere fact that God wanted human beings to reflect upon mysteries that they cannot affect made the situation absurd. Human beings cannot change their situation in God’s plan so they must endure it. According to Qoheleth, God did this in order to frighten human beings into submission.

Another viable option could be that this placing of ‘eternity’ within the human heart could be the image of God within the human being, as this desire is not limited to human beings that have a Christian disposition, but all human beings regardless of religion, culture or gender experience this longing/desire.

Ellul (1990:236-260), in his analysis of Ecclesiastes, is of the opinion that Qoheleth doesn’t promote indifference or fatalism, as Qoheleth consistently proclaims that God has ‘made everything beautiful in its time’ [3:11]. So everything is beautiful, even death and everything is worth living for. Human beings have a desire for their

lives to have meaning and therefore they are constantly are trying to do new things like planting, uprooting, etc but this in itself does not satisfy. And all these relative things that human beings occupy themselves with are called 'good' by God. This seems contradictory, although with further analysis, it could be deduced that with this desire ,God also provided the answer as God answered our desire for eternity in the Jesus Christ as He is God incarnate, Emmanuel: God with us.

In order to shed light on this mystery, Ellul uses Genesis 2 and 3 to validate his argument:

“...remarkable development that has taken place based on Genesis 2 and 3. Clearly, in the communion between the Creator and his creature, in the ‘utter present’ given to Adam, he had neither a concern to understand (since immediacy constituted truth at that time) nor a desire for eternity. Everything was very good. But with the Fall, two outcomes became possible: humanity might die because of the Fall; or human beings might remain alive, but since they had broken with life, they would live either in a state of delirium or like animals. Humanity either takes itself for God or is a brute beast, like an animal in every way, without knowing it! God makes use of this tragic situation. As the rest of the Bible will show us a hundred times, God adapts himself to the situation human beings bring about. God adapts to it, but does not want humanity to sink (he reproaches Cain before the murder: ‘Why is your face downcast?’ (Gen 4:6). Since God wants humanity to retain its specific, different position, he assigns it a new role after the Fall. Humanity is no longer what it was meant to be, but God engages it in a surprising adventure. It is stupid to agree with the recent fad that claimed humanity came of age and could create history thanks to the Fall (oh blessed guilt!). Qohelet teaches us that after the Fall God gave these different human beings new qualities so they could face their unexpected situation. Without these gifts, they were destined for insignificance. His gifts, however, are only possibilities: the concern to seek, and the desire for eternity.” (1990:254)

Even with the answer being within our reach as human beings we still cannot fathom it:

[But] “God has put in the human heart the desire for eternity, although [or in spite of this]...we cannot grasp the work God does, from the beginning until the end’ (3:11..) Thus the distance between what is, which we can analyze, and what God does, which is his work, remains infinite. No science will be able to bridge this gap.....His immeasurable, endless love finally reached its climax and fulfilment in all his work in Jesus Christ. Our desire can neither suspect the existence of this work nor grasp it. Even for the finest of Christians, God’s work in Jesus Christ remains elusive...” (Ellul 1990:249)

Although *ôām* is our desire for eternity, it is also our distinctiveness from the Eternal. It moves human beings towards God and yet they cannot fathom his works, as God is hidden from human beings. Without access to this 'desire for eternity', human life is vain and futile. It is paradoxical in the sense that it is God's presence in our heart, but also, God's hiddenness. With Jesus Christ, this hiddenness came closer to human beings because God was revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it would seem to me as if it is a progressive revelation where 'complete sight' only can be achieved at the consummation, as is stated in 1 Corinthians (13:12) which explicitly states that we now only see dimly but with the hope of complete sight at a later stage. The progressive revelation is made possible by the indwelling and outworking of the Holy Spirit. At this side of the grave, human beings search in order to understand, but it is a search for what cannot be found, like catching the rainbow. God endowed human beings with thinking abilities, but put a veil over their heart so that they cannot comprehend completely and in this, the Creator is different from the creature that is on par with other creatures who cannot comprehend fully themselves, human beings, God or nature. Another similarity with the natural world is that all share a limited existence and God influence everything as He determines the end of everything as well as the beginning.

Death is the great leveller of evil, and righteous human beings, together with the rest of creation, also experience this selfsame process of death and decay. Death in the Old Testament was a separation from God, ourselves and other human beings. Loader (1986:44) says in this regard

“...the Preacher says that ...God only demonstrates that in essence people are animals. Just as animals are not rewarded for practicing justice nor punished for practicing injustice, so people must not expect that God will reward the “righteous” or punish the “wicked.” The result of the sifting process, then, is not only that people are of equal worth among themselves but also that people are of no higher worth than animals.”

With this statement, religions based on works and self-righteous acts like Judaism, Islam etc. are blown out of the water because, if no distinction can be made between the evil and the righteous and both of them, whether they keep the law or not, have the same fate, then religions based on law will not suffice. Therefore the

grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope a human being has if they want to experience the presence of God.

The mere fact that Christ became a human being, communicates the love of God for insignificant human beings and based on this, human beings should occupy themselves with the causes of removing injustices from the world, alleviating suffering and proclaiming the Gospel. As God will wipe the tears from the eyes of his children eschatologically, His followers should wipe the tears of the oppressed and those that suffer in the meanwhile in imitation of Christ who showed human beings what to do with their time on earth. Human beings should be co-partners in the foursome grand acts of God, in creating opportunities for the wellbeing of human beings and nature. Thereby alleviating suffering, opposing evil, and working towards reconciliation with God – other human beings – and – nature. Thus facilitating renewal of human life by the outworking of the Holy Spirit in acts of kindness, mercies, love, gentleness and compassion in order to work towards the fulfilment and completedness of an all pervasive goodness. This is one of the qualities of the Almighty God until God becomes all and in all.

For Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, made real by the Holy Spirit, determines the way in which they deal with suffering as they experience a hope which surpasses suffering in a temporal setting and have an apocalyptic viewpoint which is not meaningless as suffering does not have the last say and the presence of God by the indwelling Holy Spirit gives an assurance of the hope to come which is the consummation. This 'desire for eternity' carries with itself the awareness of God's presence but also the awareness of our humanity as we understand that, with the presence of death this search will either have been futile, as in an eternal absence from the presence of God or it would be fulfilled. If this desire for eternity is fulfilled we will see God face to face and experience his presence in a new and better way than we now can experience God but are not able to see or touch God.

4.5 Towards a theology of suffering in 2 Corinthians

As Christians are called to love other human beings, suffering must be confronted and human beings liberated, for there must not be a Pilate standpoint. And when there are boundaries which cannot be crossed, such as death, then Christians are called to share the pain of those who suffer, not leaving them alone and making their cry louder. Suffering is real and pain – both emotional and physical – very real; and sometimes in the face of innocent suffering, when human beings want to cry out in protest, the doctrine of the incarnation enables human beings to see God's presence in the midst of suffering. In spite of all the pain, when God's presence is experienced, pain and questions cease and worship begins. (Richardson 2002:556)

This paradoxical combination of suffering and joy is portrayed in the life of Paul as well as in the life of every believer.

“If there is a single theme that seems to dominate this letter, it is that of the mysterious and paradoxical combination of suffering and joy, life and death that suffuses the life of the Christian believer and is particularly exemplified in the life of Paul as a Christian missionary.” (Marshall 2004:290)

For Marshall, such a theology of suffering is evident in the life of Paul, where he is:

“...sustained by the new life that is already being imparted by God and that will be fully experienced in the renewal of the body.”(2004: 303)

The question of suffering has not been dealt with adequately neither by philosophy²³, the wisdom teachings (that wickedness leads to disaster) or the

²³ “The philosophical answers to the problem [of suffering] have centred in hedonism, with resultant disappointment and pessimism; stoical defiance without victory over pain; meliorism proclaiming progress with suffering being eliminated and its ultimate banishment as a reasonable certainty; optimism proclaiming the highest good as moral good which can be attained by man only through a process of discipline which includes work, suffering and temptation. The philosophical solutions of

monistic teaching of Deuteronomy (32:39) where, God states that there is no god besides God, and Isaiah (45:5-7) where God again states that he is God and there are no other gods beside him (Richardson 2002:555). The second letter to the Corinthians does however explain, albeit implicitly, that there is suffering such as natural disasters, innocent suffering etc and instead of explaining the reason behind this suffering, readers are left with an example in the life of Paul of how to deal with such suffering (to use it as a tool in the broader perspective of eternity).

The following aspects, with regards to suffering in the second letter to the Corinthians, will be discussed in order to develop a coherent theology of suffering:

- A general concept of suffering in the light of II Corinthians,
- Suffering in Paul's apostolic ministry,
- Suffering as experienced by believers and the role of the church and
- God's role in suffering as evidenced from this letter.

The place and experience of suffering in the Kingdom will be considered in terms of the sufferings of Christ, the ministry of Paul and the implications on the body of Christ then and today. This will contribute to an understanding of the place of suffering in the foursome grand acts of God's process of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. It is also important to keep in mind how God's grand acts influence the daily life of human beings and how these acts work towards a fivesome awareness in a wholesome person. Whereby suffering leads the individual to an understanding and/or confrontation of his/her creatureliness, it leads to an awareness of sinful tendencies, an awareness of the salvific and reconciliatory enactment of denial of self through the cross, and the liberative empowerment of the resurrection experience. Thus, bringing about the renovating and renewal of the human being progressively by the inworking and outworking of

suffering are no more than speculations, however attractive they may be." (Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology 505)

the lifegiving power of the Holy Spirit until the consummation of all things and beings are being fulfilled. Within this process insight will be gained into the positive aspects which result from suffering both for those who suffer from illnesses like HIV/AIDS and those who stand with those who suffer. This will lead to an improved understanding of God's work of salvation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation in the world.

4.5.1 How suffering is experienced

For Paul the worldview of a human being determines the approach to suffering. According to Thielman (2005:330) there are basically two opposing worldviews as is evident from II Corinthians (2:4-7:4), where Paul speaks of his affliction in the flesh and 10:1-13:10 where Paul espouses a spiritual viewpoint vis-a-vis the fleshly versus spiritual approach.

In II Corinthians 11 (23-29), Kruse asserts that suffering falls into four parts:

“The passage falls into four parts, each reflecting a different aspect of these afflictions: (1) verses 23b-25: imprisonments, beatings and being near death....(2) verse 26: frequent journeys, with their accompanying dangers of rivers, bandits and Jews as well as Gentiles....(3) verse 27: toil and hardship, including sleepless nights....(4) verses 28-29: anxiety for all the churches” (1993 18-19).

The following subdivision based on types of suffering is proposed instead of division based upon verse:

- (1) Work which entails compassionate suffering as a consequence of work (II Cor 11: 28-29) and work and toil of ministry (II Cor 11:27);
- (2) Unfulfilled human needs i.e. lack of food, shelter, clothing, thirst, sleep (II Cor 11:27);
- (3) Natural disasters and nature: floods, dangers in the wilds and on the high seas (II Cor 11:26);

(4) From human beings: imprisoned and whipped (II Cor 11:23); stoned (II Cor 11:24); dangers from Romans (II Cor 11:25); dangers from bandits, Jews and Gentiles (II Cor 11:26).

The division by type is more powerful than that by verse, because discussing by type leads people to form a coherent and logical viewpoint and if it is by verse, it becomes an arbitrary division and this is not helpful in drawing meaning from the material. From this we can see that not all suffering is externally sourced, Paul experienced suffering because of his concern for all the churches, and it was his conscience that had caused him to suffer in this way.

Blomberg (2006:216) is of the opinion that although God allows human beings to come 'close to the edge', he never "permits them to fall off it, as long as they rely on his power." This is evident from verses from II Corinthians 6 (4-10) where Paul lists his experiences, 11(23-27) where Paul honestly shares his pain and suffering and II Corinthians 1(8-9) where instead of relying on a Stoic attitude, Paul displays his hope on God instead especially when he concludes that God can be trusted even in suffering because he had felt that the death sentence has been passed on him but God had protected him II Corinthians 1(9). That the power belongs to God, is evident when Paul explicitly tells them that the power belongs to God although the treasure is entrusted to common clay pots II Corinthians (4:7).

Although Paul has been involved in healings, according to II Corinthians 12(12), he was not healed from his 'thorn in the flesh' which may have been a painful physical ailment (II Corinthians 12:7) despite praying for healing. This 'ailment' was used as a tool in his ministry. Twelftree (in Hawthorn 1993:379) asserts that Paul's ailment could be attributed to the demonic and this reading may be accurate. However Twelftree (in Hawthorn 1993:379) also discusses the possibility that the thorn in the flesh 'was given' (being a veiled assertion of God's involvement) by God. This would mean that it implicates God in causing suffering for his own ends.

Paul makes sense out of his suffering by arguing that, although his physical body gradually decays because of the natural order, he is spiritually renewed II

Corinthians (4:16). Several other viewpoints on suffering are expressed by Paul, i.e. :

“(a) He is proud of his weakness because he experienced the protection of God’s power over him (12:9). Thielman (2005:326) is of the opinion that this theological principle saturates the letters and provides unity.

(b) The suffering Paul experienced displays God’s power and glory II Corinthians (4:7).

(c) God is sustaining him through this suffering because, although he is badly hurt at times, he is never destroyed II Corinthians (4:8-11).

(d) Which is for the benefit of others as whilst death is at work in Paul, life is at work in them as his beneficiaries II Corinthians (4:12, 15).

(e) This suffering is also eschatological II Corinthians (4:17) as it brings eternal glory and assurance of resurrection since they will be raised up just like Jesus and come into his presence II Corinthians (4:14).

(f) Amidst all this suffering the Spirit enables him (6:6) to ‘live above his circumstances’ (Blomberg 2006:219).

There is also a sense of sharing in the life and suffering of Christ which is aligned with Romans 8:17, where Paul states that through the Spirit believers are joined with Christ and therefore participate in his suffering. Suffering is therefore, not evil but positive, as it brings the sufferer closer to Christ. Thus is unparalleled in any Jewish or pagan sources known to us. (Harvey 1996:129) Another aspect is that suffering necessitates prayer and thus is demonstrated in II Corinthians 12(7-10), where Paul pleaded – in prayer – with the Lord three times to have his suffering taken away. Suffering also provides Paul with the opportunity to show that he is God’s servant by enduring hardships, troubles and difficulties in a patient manner (II Corinthians 6:4).

God sets limits as demonstrated by Paul’s declaration of his limits set by God in II Corinthians 10(13-14). Even in those limits the Christian life is:

“...according to God’s will even in suffering....There is no suggestion that God is less than wise or good because suffering exists. Since the supreme example of suffering lies at the heart of God’s redemptive activity in Christ,

it cannot be maintained that suffering is alien to the purpose of God.” (Guthrie and Martin 1993:362-363)

Throughout Paul’s suffering, God empowered him to endure the suffering even despite his ‘thorn in the flesh’ (II Corinthians 12:7-10). Paul experienced God’s mercy, help and comfort in his sufferings (II Corinthians 1:3-5) and used the “..formula in 2 Cor 1:3 which is typical of Jewish worship (‘blessed be God...’)” according to Hafemann (1993:168) this serves as a type of resurrection. He explains:

“God has called Paul to suffer in order that through the merciful ‘comfort’ of God’s sustaining power and ultimate deliverance, which Paul experiences in his affliction, he will be able to make God’s power and comfort known to others (2 Cor 1:6-7,10). Paul can thus interpret his own suffering (= death) in terms of the death of Christ, and his deliverance from this suffering as a type of the resurrection (2 Cor 1:9). As such, these too become a means by which the church is encouraged in its faithfulness in the midst of adversity (2 Cor 1:7).”

4.5.2. Suffering in Paul’s apostolic ministry

The relationship between suffering and glory is the central theological theme in the second letter to the Corinthians and is illustrated in Paul’s apostolic experience. In this divinely ordained suffering both the cross and resurrection, power of God is being revealed. Yet there is also no need for all believers to follow in Paul’s footsteps with regards to suffering but the need is for all believers to accept their cup as it is given by God – in the way that Paul accepted God’s decision with regard to his ‘thorn in the flesh’. The two interrelated aspects of his apostolic ministry which God gave him (II Corinthians 4:1) is to be a ‘prisoner in Christ’s victory procession’ (II Corinthians 2:14) which is a death procession in order to reveal God’s knowledge and the preaching of the gospel (II Corinthians 2:17):

“...to be ‘led in triumph’ means, in fact to be ‘led to death’” (Hafemann 1986:39).

According to Hafemann (1986:51):

“Paul views his entire life as one long triumphal procession. This is confirmed by the parallel passage found in 2 Cor 4:10, where Paul again emphasizes that his call ‘to carry in (his) body the death of Jesus’ is something which constantly characterizes his life as an apostle...”

Although the Corinthians believed that Paul’s suffering disqualified him as an apostle it actually legitimized his apostleship and is evidence of its authenticity and therefore to reject the representatives of Christ (II Cor 5:20) is to reject God, as it is as “though God himself were making his appeal” (II Cor 5:20) through Paul and his companions. The significance of Paul’s ministry lies in him being a mediatory agent of the new covenant which parallels Moses’ role.

“Paul... develops two basic assertions concerning his apostolic ministry. On the one hand, his suffering makes it evident that, as an apostle of the new covenant, Paul stands between the death and resurrection of Christ, i.e. the glory of God, and the ‘life’ of his church...in the intermediary role of revelatory agent. On the other hand, the essential content of his mediation between God in Christ and the church is the Spirit. Thus, as the ‘Spiritgiver’ with the gospel, Paul’s role is parallel to that of Moses’, the mediator par excellence between YHWH and Israel, whose task it was to give the law....In turn, as the ‘Spirit-giver’, Paul is the intermediary agent of the eschatological reality of the new age characterized by the work of the Spirit in the hearts of flesh prophesied by Ezekiel. It thus seems almost impossible to over exaggerate the significance which Paul attributed to his apostolic ministry in 2 Cor 2:14-3:3” (Hafemann 1986:220).

Being a minister of the ‘new covenant’ is a fulfilment of both Jeremiah 31(31-33) and Ezekiel 36(26). And although Paul is called to the pattern of Moses in Exodus 4(10) his ministry has a far greater glory (II Corinthians 3:7-11).

An integral part of Paul’s suffering as an apostle was his decision to support himself (II Corinthians 6:4ff) but this self-sufficiency also serves as a mark of his authentic apostleship (II Corinthians 12:13-15 and 11:7-9 in both cases where Paul reminds the church a Corinth that he has not accepted financial support from them).

In alignment with God’s action of ‘mercy before judgement’, Paul changed his travel plans to enhance restoration rather than ‘performing judgement’ (II Cor 1:23-24) in order for the Corinthians to have a chance to repent (II Cor 7:8-13).

According to Hafemann, this mercy is an extension of God's action in Christ (in Hawthorn 1993:168).

With this apostolic ministry of suffering, God's saving purposes has been accomplished (II Corinthians 2:16) and resulted in death (rejection of gospel) or life (acceptance of gospel). This ministry resembles the death and resurrection of Jesus' ministry.

“Just as Jesus died, so his apostle is ‘always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake; and just as Jesus rose from the dead, so ‘the life of Jesus’ is revealed in Paul’s ‘mortal flesh’ ([II Corinthians] 4:11) (Thielman 2005:332-333)

After the pattern of Christ he thus brings the ‘kingdom of God into the world, namely, through death and resurrection’. Beasley – Murray (1993:221) is of the opinion that

“References that compare the apostle’s sufferings and deliverances in ministry to the death and resurrection of Jesus are to be found in 2 Corinthians 13:4.”

Paul’s ministry stands in stark contrast to those of the ‘superlative apostles’. Barnett accommodates this is saying:

“Unsaid but perhaps implied is that the powerful triumphalismof the ‘superlative apostles’ arises from their cross-less gospel...and serves only to disqualify them (2 Cor 2:13; 5:16; 11:4). The ‘falsity’ of these apostles lies in their ‘other’ Jesus, their ‘different’ gospel” (1993:50)

God is co-partner in Paul’s ministry as he initiated this work by putting the treasure of the gospel within them although they are clay pots (II Corinthians 4:7). God therefore indirectly spreads the gospel to those who are saved and lost alike (II Corinthians 2:14-16 where Paul likens his ministry to the aroma of Christ, which is pleasant to the saved but an offence to the perishing). With no resources on Paul’s side it is quite evident that God is accomplishing the work of reconciliation. God led Paul continually into suffering (II Cor 4:8 where Paul mentions his sufferings as part of the witness to Christ) to reveal God’s power and the cross and resurrection of Christ. However, God also continually rescued Paul from his suffering for the

selfsame reason. The antithetical character of Paul's ministry is thus exhibited and Paul makes no attempt to hide his sufferings from people, but exposes it in order for human beings to know that the ministry is not accomplished through human strength but through the power and provision of God by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Both Paul and Christ worked towards the reconciliation of human beings with God as well as reconciliation between human beings. And Paul comments on this point saying; everyone joined to Christ forms part of a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17-18) which is accomplished through a ministry of suffering.

4.4.3. Suffering as believers/church

Romans (8:17) shows that by sharing, in Christ's suffering believers also share in the resurrection (glory) and are continually transformed amidst sufferings until ultimately glorified with Christ. In this suffering where human weakness is exposed, God's grace flourishes in that the one who suffers becomes an instrument of grace and comfort to others. Thielman (2005: 340-341) is in agreement and expresses it thus:

“....precisely through the affliction and poverty of the Macedonians, God's surpassing grace' ([II Corinthians] 9:14) was able to effect both their willingness and their ability to give beyond anything Paul expected ([II Corinthians] 8:1-5). The Lord Jesus, too, had displayed his grace precisely through impoverishing himself ([II Corinthians] 8:9)...Paul argues that God's grace expresses its full power in the weakness of suffering and in the unseen condition of the heart ([II Corinthians] 3:2-3;5:12)...Paul argues a single thesis: God's power is perfected in human weakness.”

According to Blomberg, this is how human beings should understand and respond to suffering as their vocation entails suffering. He explains:

“Christians must always remember that God can often use them in their weaknesses, including illness and poverty, better than he can in other situations because we remain more visibly dependent on him.” (2006:229)

The grace of God enables human beings to cope with weakness and this leads to communion with God and other human beings. Marshall accentuates this point as follows:

“The weakness would appear to be the circumstances of the believer seen from a worldly point of view: a body vulnerable to weariness, injury, disease and death, a social situation that may be one of poverty and lack of esteem.....all of them things that indicate that they are nothing in the eyes of other people. The strength is then the experience of the grace of God that enables them to cope with this situation and to accept it, the inner experiences of communion with God that impact a sense of being loved and of consequent joy, and the power to communicate the gospel effectively and thus bring life to other people.” (2004:297)

Every believer has been reconciled to God and is given the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor 5:18 where Paul states in v17 that those in Christ are a new creation and thus, v18, as God reconciled the saved to himself through Christ so those in Christ has a ministry of reconciliation) in order for other human beings to be partakers of the new creation. As is evident in the reconciliatory service God performed through Christ by reconciling human beings to himself, believers should share in this ministry through the empowerment and enablement of the Holy Spirit.

Just as Paul’s fatherly love and concern (II Corinthians 6:11 where Paul addresses the Corinthians expressing his love for them) is evident in his acts of reconciliation i.e. betrothal of the Corinthians to Christ (II Corinthians 11:2 where Paul recounts his jealousy for the Corinthians as the betrothed of Christ); believers could follow this example of Paul in acts of reconciliation. For Paul, his love resulted in much suffering for him in order to bring life to them.

Just as God brings life through death, missionaries die in order to bring life and this task is done in faith to God, who will give them life, as well as, to those who respond to their gospel. The opportunity to give to others and to suffer for their sake (II Cor 8:1-5 where Paul recounts the generous giving of the Macedonian churches from their position of poverty) is a privilege and a proof of gratitude and love to God who enriched human beings in order for them to give. This is diametrically opposed to a worldly viewpoint. Through sufferings, prayers and comforts believers are united with each other as is evidenced from II Corinthians

1:1-7, where Paul in his opening of the letter summarises the oneness of believers in suffering and comforts in Christ. According to Bultmann (1985:29) intercession for sufferers made suffering more fruitful.

Just as Christ's sufferings are not individual but embrace the suffering of his followers, the same principle underpins the suffering of believers and unites them together. (Bultmann 1985:24) This selfsame principle applies to Paul who draws believers into fellowship through his suffering (II Corinthians 6:3-13 Relates the commitment of Paul despite hardships and suffering to ensuring that his ministry was not hampered by material things, to endure all things that he may give of the Gospel to the Corinthians). In this 'communal suffering', believers become fruitful for each other in the body of Christ. Paul's self-understanding of his afflictions, as well as his comforts, is that they add to communal salvation and comfort in order for others to cope with their sufferings, which is clearly stated in II Corinthians 1:6 where Paul shares with the Corinthians that whether he suffers or not all is accepted with the goal of bringing good to the Corinthians.

4.5.4. Coherence of God's works by means of suffering: creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation

The importance of God's fatherhood for Paul is evident in the beginning of II Corinthians as God is the source of the apostleship, grace and peace and God also provides compassion and comfort in suffering. As God raised Jesus from the dead, human beings have the comforting assurance that God can bring life in the midst of death and they will also be resurrected (in II Corinthians 4:14 Paul relates his confidence that the same one who raised Christ will also raise both him and the Corinthian readers of the letter). God's faithfulness (II Corinthians 1:19-20 where Paul confirms that God has always presented a yes in Christ) and presence with his people are explicitly stated (in II Corinthians 6:16 Paul confirms that God will walk among them and be their God).

According to Green (1993:204-205), God's reconciliation is extended to the entire creation (II Corinthians 5:19), and Blomberg sees that:

“The Greek literally reads, ‘If anyone [is] in Christ, new creation’! In other words, if the messianic age has arrived enabling people to be united to the Messiah, then the beginning of the recreation of the cosmos is underway.” (2006:219).

More than just personal renewal is involved (cf. Rom 8:19-22 where we read that creation waits for the renewal that will come through the culmination when God becomes all in all). I would dare to say that snippets of the consummation process are experienced in the life of believers which revitalizes and renews them as they move towards a total, final, complete consummation of a new heaven and new earth.

The main Jewish apocalyptic view consisted of the doctrine of two ages, where the present age of suffering was to be superseded by a messianic age in a restored Israel (Hays 2004:20). This is illustrated in Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa 65:17-19) where Isaiah prophesies regarding the new heaven and the new earth. Hays is of the opinion that Paul is proclaiming that, through the cross, God has nullified the kosmos of sin and death and brought a new kosmos into being (2004:20). According to Paul, the inbreaking of the new kingdom has already started as ‘everything old has passed away’ (II Corinthians 5:17) where Paul states that those in Christ are a new creation and uses some phrases from Isa (65:17).

In Pauline thought, as is evident from II Corinthians (4:14), where Paul states that the one who raised Jesus will also raise those in Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ inaugurated the new age – although not in its fullness. In this period of restoration a tension is visible between the visible present and the invisible future (yet-not yet aspect of kingdom). Thielman sees that:

“In the present, Paul’s alignment with the death of Jesus is clearly visible. He is ‘wasting away,’ afflicted with ‘troubles,’ and groaning under the burden of his ‘earthly tent’ (2 Cor 4:16, 17; 5:1-4; 6:4-5, 8-10). At the same time, these afflictions are both ‘light and momentary’ in comparison to the ‘eternal weight of glory’ that God is producing for Paul through them ([II Corinthians] 4:17)” (2005:336-337)

Precisely because the kingdom is not present in its fullness Paul carries the ‘death of Jesus’ in his body but at the same time this becomes also a revelation of the

resurrection power of God as God delivers Paul from his suffering (II Cor 1:8-11 which presents Paul's assertion that he had been tried beyond his endurance in Asia but had been delivered by God's work alone). According to Beasley-Murray (1993:219-220), Paul has been delivered up to death by God in order for Jesus to be revealed in Paul's mortal body which therefore serves as God's plan to spread the gospel and reconcile the world to himself through the redeeming acts of Jesus. God's works of reconciliation give meaning in suffering and amidst this suffering the church has a role to play in the cosmic drama of God's reconciliation process, this is done by making friends with human beings and reconciling them to God and each other, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ (in II Corinthians 5:14-18 Paul states that he is compelled by love, that Jesus died for all and those that live in him should then live no longer for themselves but for Christ) and working towards the restoration of nature.

Paul turns tribulation into a component of God's plan of realizing salvation. Glorification follows suffering which gives meaning to suffering.

“Christian suffering manifests unity with Christ, who suffered and was glorified, and whom Christians will thus also follow in glory....Paradoxically, therefore, believers can 'boast' in afflictions too (...2 Cor 12:1-10) because of their positive eschatological significance for the afflicted.” (Gundry-Volf 1993:41)

Human beings are becoming acutely aware of the sinful tendencies of themselves and other human beings when they encounter suffering and especially suffering through HIV/AIDS. This disease highlights sinfulness of humanity in various ways e.g. exploitation, greed, apathy towards other human beings etc as has been highlighted in this study. However, amidst this awareness, rays of hope shine through. The works of the Lord Jesus in the cross and resurrection can be made real to human beings being open to the inworking of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit then, in turn, enables them to become renewed in their inner life, being renovated and receiving a hope to endure the suffering in anticipation of a new future and a new hope in a new heaven and a new earth where God will become all and in all and will wipe away the tears from all eyes which stands in stark contrast to the nihilist solution rendered by postmodernism. These works of God, in order to create a

wholesome person, are made real in the life of human beings as God has already placed a desire for eternity in the human heart in preparation for the reconciliation process.

4.6 conclusion

Regardless of what modernists, postmodernists, New Agers, etc. say, truth cuts through cultures and religions as truth is through the Holy Spirit mysteriously revealed and meaningfully manifested in God's grand acts of creation, and reconciliation, in the process of renewal and renovation, as human beings are continuously taken up by the Holy Spirit and guided to the fulfilment of all creation.

This truth cuts through cultures and nations, pain and suffering and various theologians, with differing perspectives, (ranging between inclusiveness and exclusiveness) have endeavoured to engage in the debate.

At the fulfilment of time, human beings together with angels will stand amazed, when we consider the mysteriousness and wholly otherness of God's wonderful grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment.

In the meantime, God placed eternity in the hearts of all human beings in order for human beings to probe the arena in which God operates. This will necessitate that human beings grapple, wrestle and interact with eternity and in so doing draw closer to him. And although human beings work towards an understanding of God, they cannot fathom his works because of His wholly otherness and hiddenness. Nevertheless, God wants human beings to be occupied with the natural world, other human beings and God self because of their relatedness regardless of religion, culture or gender, health or sickness. Human beings should be co-partners with God in the foursome grand acts of God for the wellbeing of nature and other human beings by the working of the Holy Spirit in order to alleviate evil and suffering. Suffering must be confronted and form part of the life of every human being as well as nature. This is even evident from the apostle Paul's life in the Christian Scriptures. Suffering leads an individual to an understanding of

his/her creatureliness and, through the working of the Holy Spirit, the potential for renewal and renovation is created as we move towards God's work of consummation and fulfilment.

Chapter 5

Nearer To God, To Oneself and To the Natural World

5.1 Introduction

Does suffering have a function in bringing human beings closer to God, themselves, other people and the physical-cosmos? Is it true when we speak of 'nearer to God' in any sense that we are further away from ourselves and are thus alienated from our unique position as creatures of God? Is suffering always a fore phase for blessings and goodness? The well known 'no gain without pain' is expressive of the latter sense making view.

With regards to evil, suffering and pain both the New and Old Testament of the Christian Scriptures are witnesses to the fact that evil, suffering and pain are pervasive and intertwined with the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation (=cross and resurrection), renewal of everything through the Holy Spirit and consummation.

Hays' comments on this aspect are valuable:

"Everything is changed by the cross and resurrection. We now live in a situation in which we confess that 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us' (2 Cor 5:19). Those who have been entrusted with such a message will read the Old Testament in such a way that its portrayals of God's mercy and eschatological restoration of the world will take precedence over its stories of justified violence." (1996:337).

Hays is suggesting that we read the Old Testament Scriptures in sensible negotiation, so that as we now live in the age of the Holy Spirit, we allow the Spirit to guide us in drawing the meaning for ourselves, for our age, for the human beings of today from these scriptures. It is valuable to consider the interpretation of

the Old Testament from the post cross, resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost viewpoint. The Spirit inspired refocusing on God's mercy and eschatological restoration of the world, will help human beings who are of the Christian faith group to see the value of their response to suffering, as a reflection on God's mercy and an interaction with death, from a standpoint of God fulfilment of everything in future, whereby God will be all in all.

5.2 The problem-setting of cause and effect and the triad of God, human beings and nature

With regards the problem-setting of cause and effect and the triad of God, human beings and nature, our main assumption concerning the triad is that, a Spirit-filled negotiation process takes place where people take their clues, cues and hues from the Old Testament, New Testament and Third Testament, which is our era of the Spirit of God, a negotiation between the sense making experiential patterns of the textual world and the sense making experiential patterns of our current world takes place (van Niekerk 2006:379-381). This largely covers the foursome acts of God i.e. creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation wherein 'human goodness' and nature are partakers through the grace of God to control evil (evil diseases and viruses like HIV/AIDS). And this is in order to work towards the goal of a wholesome creation where viruses, bacteria and the like are overcome. Human beings, through a fivesome awareness process, could become whole when God's fulfilling actions are increasingly universally established.

Human goodness comes about by the working and guidance of the Holy Spirit in co-operation with the human spirit as it places evil in the life and mind of human beings under the 'overpowering power' of the cross of Jesus, thereby renovating them and making them partakers and co-workers in the process of goodness or renovation. This does not imply that human beings are disembodied intellects which can be taken over by the Spirit willy-nilly, but rather that the Spirit as the agent of certitude, in negotiation with the human spirit, enables human beings to change their attitudes, for instance, from apathy to HIV/AIDS infected human

beings to empathy and to embracement as the Spirit works through the sense making approach of human beings in their religious experience, revelation, arguments, sensible negotiation processes etc. This is evident from Psalm 51 where the psalmist cries to God to fashion a pure heart and a steadfast spirit. This actually describes the reconciliatory enactment of denial of sinful self through the redemptive influence of the cross and the liberative influence of the resurrection in a renewal process of the Holy Spirit. And this by God's gracious act of involving human beings in his foursome grand acts and enabling them to be partakers in this process by taking up their responsibility as stewards, given to the human race in Genesis (1:28) when God blessed them and gave them the responsibility as stewards for his creation.

The creator God works through and within his creation – human beings and the natural world or cosmos – in his foursome grand acts which affect the totality of his creation until the fulfilment of his plan, i.e. when God is all and in all.

Part of the responsibility of human beings in this process, is the elimination of evil processes, viruses, bacteria etc. Although other viruses will be mentioned, the focus will be on the HIV/AIDS virus with the resultant effect on human beings and the animal world as well as the cause of these viruses and bacteria in God's creation and its relationship to God.

“With an estimated 5 million people infected with HIV, South Africa is believed to have the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world (Department of Health, 2003; UNAIDS, 2002). Indeed, AIDS is considered to be the leading cause of death in South Africa today and is estimated to account for 40% of adult deaths.” (Wechsberg 2005:Supplement1:55)

According to a 2003 report from the Department of Health in South Africa, one in ten South Africans aged between 15 - 24 are HIV-positive. The disease is rampant despite various HIV prevention interventions in South Africa through the schools, media and local community groups. (Campbell 2005:471)

And the 2006 report from the South African Medical Council and Actuarial Society of South Africa gives figures of 5.4 million out of nearly 48 million being HIV

positive (slightly over 11%), with 1.3 million under the age of 25 and over half of 15 year olds not expected to reach 60 years of age. (Dorrington 2006, i & ii)

WHO (2009:3-4) gives the HIV/AIDS prevalence in South Africa as 5,700,000 cases (2007 figure) in a population of 48,557,000, which is approximately 11,74 percent. These three sets of statistics reflected above show a continued growth in HIV/AIDS within the population of South Africa.

HIV/AIDS as a global epidemic has the potential to change world history. This will not be the first time that a disease has a major impact on whole groups of human beings, for instance with Columbus' landing on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola in 1492, there were approximately a million human beings of the Taino group. In 1519, a disease like smallpox appeared and by 1550 the Taino were extinct. (Barnett 2002:25)

In light of the abovementioned facts, it would seem imperative that adherents of different religions work together in the handling of this and other problems of the same magnitude that affect vast numbers of human beings and cause an enormous amount of suffering. Because the cost of caring for large numbers of human beings affected by HIV/AIDS is high the impact on the economy of poorer nations is great. This may well lead to suffering even among those who are not infected with the virus.

5.2.1 Viruses, bacteria and the triad

There are diseases that are signs of health. In the case of an infectious disease, germs attack, for instance, the throat and produce toxins which immediately destroy a large number of the cells in the mucous membranes. The body reacts quickly to this attack, generating a higher concentration of blood in the infected areas, increasing body temperature, and producing antibodies to counter the viruses and pathogenic toxins. As a result of this, the toxins are gradually neutralized and the microbes are killed. (Drees 2003:184)

Other diseases, however, are not signs of health but carry with them a death sentence; such a disease is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Viruses, generally speaking, contain genetic material called DNA or less frequently RNA, have no cell walls and are parasitic. This means that they can only replicate by entering host cells. HIV belongs to the Retroviridae family which develop over a long period and produce various diseases of which many affect the immune system or the brain. Many human beings suffer from dementia since the virus also infects the central nervous system. AIDS is a complex of diseases which includes pneumonia, meningitis and skin disease. HIV has an enzyme called reverse transcriptase and once the virus infects a cell DNA copies of HIV RNA are made and reproduce. These abilities of the virus make the development of pharmaceutical responses very difficult.

It is important to consider the cause or history of HIV. Ian Brown (1987:18) is of the opinion that Human T-Cell Lymphotropic Viruses (HTLV) contains three related viruses, namely HIV (HTLV – 111) which causes AIDS, HTLV – 11 which don't seem to have any link to any disease at this stage and HTLV – 1 which causes one type of adult leukaemia.

HTLV – 111 is a complex virus and is related to some bacteria in the sense that it causes bacteria to become active and increase; for example about one-third of the population of the world carry the disease causing bacterium (Engelkirk 2007:180), Mycobacterium Tuberculosis, but it is inactive because of the healthy immune system of the human beings which keep the bacteria contained. If a human being is infected with HIV, this eventually breaks down the immune system and increases the possibility for human beings to pass from inactive to active tuberculosis. HIV/AIDS is thus an accelerator of tuberculosis.

Within South Africa significant increases in deaths due to tuberculosis have occurred, and the development of drug resistant tuberculosis has been rapid. tuberculosis has become a major resultant cause of death for HIV/AIDS sufferers but it is likely that many HIV/AIDS related deaths are recorded as Tuberculosis deaths without the causal influence of HIV/AIDS being recorded. In 1992, Dr. C. Lewis of Eskom, (South Africa's electrical utility) reported visiting several Natal

hospitals which had been re-allocated to dealing with tuberculosis and were encountering high proportions of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis, and among these high proportions of HIV/AIDS infected patients. (Lewis, 1992 private verbal communication)

Within an HIV-infected human being, a battle commences between the virus and the immune system and during this period the viral load is high but before the introduction of the p24 test, the HIV status could not be detected by standard tests. However, since 1996, the p24 test has been used and this can show results far quicker, “within 24 hours of acute infection” (Shaw 2003:16) and typically 11-14 days of infection (American Red Cross Website). This ‘window period’ can last from several weeks to several months and at the end of the window period the human being will usually experience an illness which resembles flu. This window period will be followed by a long incubation period. During this period of incubation, about 2000 million CD4 cells may be destroyed each day. In a healthy person, there are 1200 CD4 cells per micro litre of blood. As infection progresses, the number will fall. When the CD4 cell count falls below 200, opportunistic infections begin to occur and a person is said to have AIDS. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus attacks CD4 cells until the human body cannot fight the bacteria and viruses anymore. Infections will increase in frequency, severity and duration until the person dies. It is these opportunistic infections that cause the syndrome referred to as AIDS. The period from HIV infection to illness and death is crucial. (Barnett 2002:31-32)

Human beings seem to be mystified with regards to the origin of the virus but still endeavour to trace the origins. Ian Brown, Lecturer in Pathology, is of the opinion that:

“There are currently three members of this family, known as Human T-cell Lymphotropic Viruses(HTLV); HTLV – 111 is the cause of AIDS. A feature common to all these viruses is that they infect a subgroup (T-4) of human T-lymphocytes which are responsible for the control of the body’s immune defences.” (1987:16).

Brown continues:

“HTLV -111 is a complex virus, and even evolutionary scientists find it difficult to accept that it has suddenly ‘appeared’. There are two possible explanations: it may have been an animal virus which has suddenly begun to infect humans; or it was a minor virus causing little in the way of illness in humans and either the virus has altered or human behaviour has altered. It is certainly possible that it was an animal virus. There are several very similar viruses which infect monkeys e.g. Simian T-Lymphotropic Virus – 111 (STLV – 111) causes disease very like AIDS in macaques. In addition African green monkeys are infected with this virus, but they do not suffer from AIDS.....If it was a human virus it is possible that it has recently ‘changed its spots’. Many viruses are known to do this e.g. influenza virus visits us with a different type each winter. HTLV – 111 is different from HTLV – 1 and HTLV – 11 in its ability to change its structure and to multiply rapidly.” (1987:18)

The spread of some types of disease between various animals and between animals and human beings is an accepted fact, for example, the influenza virus originating from waterfowl. These birds have been described as reservoirs of infection because they carry almost all known types of influenza without ill-effects, distributing them through their faeces to the rest of the animal kingdom. This source of infection results in many different animals contracting influenza including human beings. For a virus to take over a cell, the cell has to have the correct receptor for the particular virus and human cells do not have suitable receptors for avian flu and therefore cannot contract avian flu directly but when an intermediary is involved, then, the virus, which does not suit human cell receptors, can be mixed with a virus that does and therefore the new combination can become infectious to human beings. Barnett (2002:36) explains:

“The Hong Kong flu, for example, held seven genes from a human virus and one gene from a duck virus: these met inside a pig, producing a new hybrid.”

Human beings infect other human beings and thus the rapid spread of viruses result. Just like other viruses, HIV also spreads rapidly. Infections could occur from sexual contact, sharing hypodermic needles, an infected female to her fetus, contact with an infected person’s bodily fluids or even blood transfusions. These are the most obvious examples of how infections occur.

HIV is not a static virus but mutates, Barnett informs us:

“Anti-retroviral drugs stop the growth of the virus and are not a cure but human beings using anti-retroviral therapies can expect to live longer. However, recent evidence suggests that viral resistance to these drugs is growing, approximately 20% of new HIV diagnoses in the UK are of drug resistant mutations. If, as is feared, this phenomenon is generalised, then the threat from the epidemic is as great in the future as it is in the present” (2002:31-32)

Barnett’s summary however, does not represent the full picture on drug resistance because work reported by Schuitemaker (2000:227) shows that drug resistant strains of HIV are best avoided by the use of combinations of various antiretroviral drugs which reduce the possibility of drug resistant mutations.

It would seem that there are three stages in the treatment of the disease. During stage one, when a human being is infected but the CD4 cell counts are still high, the emphasis is on healthy living, i.e. eating the correct food, and caring for the body by minimizing exposure to other human beings who are infected with flu viruses etc. At stage two, when the CD4 cell count drops, prophylactic treatment to prevent infections commences. During the third stage antiretroviral drugs are used to fight the disease.

Human beings who are affected the most are those who already live on the margins of society, the poor, the dispossessed, females and babies (Snyman 2006:9). The words of the Lord Jesus immediately spring to mind, where he said that he came to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken hearted and liberate the oppressed (Luke 4:18). It follows that, people with a Christian disposition should be involved to work towards liberation of these human beings i.e., assisting them from an educational, economical, spiritual, emotional and physical perspectives. This is in order to promote a fivesome awareness in a wholesome person.

Human beings of various worldviews and faith orientations as partakers in the foursome grand acts of God need to address poverty among the disadvantaged. Poverty enhances HIV/AIDS as discussed by Whiteside:

“....work in cell biology has shown that the mechanisms which connect malnutrition and parasite infestation depress both specific and non-specific immune responses by weakening epithelial integrity and the effectiveness of cells in the immune system. Protein-energy malnutrition, iron-deficiency anaemia, vitamin-A deficiency, all poverty related conditions, decrease resistance to disease.....although the most proximate causes of being infected are biological, a person’s sexual behaviour is next in line as it determines the number and type of sexual encounters he or she will have. However, sexual behaviour is in turn determined by economic, social and cultural factors. For example, a truck driver on any of the major routes in Africa may be away from home for long periods. He might have sex with a commercial sex worker because he is bored, he feels his job is dangerous and he deserves some compensation, he is frequently away from his wife and family, he experiences peer pressure from his fellow drivers to engage in this activity and he has the necessary money. The commercial sex worker, on the other hand, is driven by poverty and the need to feed her family.” (2004b:11)

Girls that are poor in South Africa, often engage in sexual encounters in order to gain money or clothing and therefore it is quite feasible to make the deduction that this pandemic is gender and poverty related (Snyman 2006: 25 & 34) although it ultimately has effects on each and everyone in South Africa in terms of the resultant burden on health departments, the economy etc. By far, the biggest and most traumatic consequences are felt by those already marginalised, displaced and poor, who are trying to survive in very deprived conditions e.g. living in shacks with very little nutrition. In the rich world, human beings normally have diseases related to affluence like heart diseases, but in the poor world, the picture is completely different as human beings tend to live shorter lives and are ravaged by bacterial diseases and protozoa like diarrhoeal diseases, cholera, tuberculosis etc and viral diseases like HIV/AIDS, smallpox, influenza etc.

McElrath mentions these views as follows:

“..... there are 5 million adults and children living with HIV in South Africa (Wilson 2000).....The proportion of women infected has possibly overtaken that of men: The Joint United Nation Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that 55% of infections in sub-Saharan Africa are in women.....This means that the region also has the highest risk of transmission to infants.” (2002: 202)

This assertion is borne out by the WHO AIDS report for South Africa (2009:5) follows:

“HIV prevalence among young people, 2007

	Male	Female
Prevalence among 15-24 year olds	4.0	12.7

Source: UNAIDS/WHO, 2008”

and the significant bias in HIV/AIDS infection in Southern Africa is borne out by Snyman (2006:6) where a three to one ratio of female to male HIV infection is reflected.

According to Greyling, orphans are a legacy of the HIV epidemic:

“Globally, thousands of children are being orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. In 2001, there were 660,000 new orphans worldwide due to HIV/AIDS, and it is estimated that there will be 24.3 million orphans by the year 2010. Of the more than 15.6 million AIDS orphans, more than 90 per cent are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Caring for them is one of the greatest challenges facing South Africa All will have been traumatized by the illness and death of parents, and often by separation from siblings. This trauma will be exacerbated by the stigma and secrecy around HIV/AIDS that hampers the bereavement process and exposes children to discrimination in their community and even in their extended family. Orphans will probably be more susceptible to becoming HIV-infected through abuse, sex work or emotional instability, leading to high-risk relationships. As children grow up under these conditions, they are at high risk of developing anti-social behaviour and of becoming less productive members of society. The consequences for affected children and society as a whole will be profound.” (2002:11)

From the abovementioned the conclusion could be drawn that poverty, gender inequality and discrimination are the driving forces of this pandemic in Africa.

Human beings who have contracted the AIDS virus tend to be reluctant to be identified because of the stigma associated with the virus. This then worsens their situation and suffering as they do not tend to seek help but suffer depression (Snyman 2006:167), illness and death. If their families are informed, they sometimes suffer isolation and rejection in addition to all the pain. Sometimes the disease is passed off as something more respectable like tuberculosis.

There are cases where AIDS is contracted by means of sexually promiscuous, or drug abusing lifestyles. Although a traditional Christian viewpoint condemns such lifestyles, Christians cannot justify distancing themselves from the victims and should reach out with an offer of love, assurance and forgiveness. This approach by Christians is clearly taught in the Gospels. An example of this concept being modelled by Jesus is when Jesus called Matthew (Matthew 9:9-10) and went and ate with Mathew and his friends. In Jewish circles at that time, tax collectors were closely associated with sinners and were outcasts of society, ostracised by society in many ways similar to the HIV/AIDS victim of today, Jesus did not care about Matthew's past or even current activities, practices, motivations. Instead, Jesus cared about Matthew's future. To me, this situation, which portrays Jesus' unconditional love, which is also the unconditional love of the Father and the Spirit, can be negotiated with the current situation of HIV/AIDS. It is apparent to me that Jesus would have made his ministry to the HIV/AIDS victim a priority. Just as Jesus healed the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) bringing comfort and help to the complete outcasts of that society so HIV/AIDS (which can be seen as a modern day leprosy) sufferers should be welcomed, loved and supported and given material, medical and spiritual assistance by the Christian. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit and we should welcome the work of the Spirit as we are pricked, cajoled, directed and encouraged to serve the HIV/AIDS victim in practical and valuable ways.

5.2.2 Viruses and religions

According to Duncan (1989:29), some of the most dangerous sexually transmitted diseases are caused by viruses and until there are effective anti-retrovirals which will control the disease to render its control as effective as the control of diabetes an alternative should be practised this includes resorting to the practices chastity and celibacy which form part of the religious teaching of Jews, Christians and followers of Islam. Duncan explains:

“In 1988, the Ugandan Minister of Education, the Hon. J.S. Mayanja Nkanki...said: ‘AIDS is not a medical problem but a spiritual

one'. If these Biblical principles were practised by all the members of the Christian faith, while Jews followed the teachings of the Torah and the prophets, Moslems the code of practice outlined in the Koran, and the Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists followed the teachings of their holy books, and taught the practice and principles of these beliefs to their children, instead of allowing them to be brainwashed by pornographic radio, television, movies, books and magazines, not only would STD and AIDS be controlled, but we could have a return to the principle that the family unit is the strength of the nation." (1989:30)

Various religious groups are quite outspoken about individual responsibility. For instance, in the Buddhist teaching, the principle that human beings need to take responsibility for their own lives and their fate is explicitly stated in the Buddha-vagga : "Not to do evil, to cultivate merit, to purify one's mind – this is the Teaching of the Buddha." (Chapter 14, Verses 183, Anandattherapanha Vatthu; www.vimokkha.com/dhammapada2.htm)

The abovementioned comments, reported by Duncan, certainly are potentially effective as a route to prevention of HIV transmission. But in a postmodern society persuading the majority of the population to adopt these practices is easier said than done. However, in the meantime it is valuable to look at the whole problem from the viewpoint that HIV/AIDS represents a collective suffering because as human beings, we all are affected by the problem, and in our interconnectedness with other human beings, God and the natural physical-organic environment, we are driven by the Spirit, irrespective of the type or even existence of our religious persuasion, to be committed to alleviating suffering. The majority of HIV infected human beings are poor and lacking in education and according to Scripture, as succinctly described by Desmond Tutu, the poor are:

"...important to God. He died for them. He loves them. He knows their names. The very hairs of their heads are numbered.....So be warned. Respect them, because God does. Be courteous and don't bully them just because they will seldom answer back. God will answer back one day on their behalf." (1983:73)

The need for assistance that the poor and marginalised in our society have, should cause human beings to move beyond the boundaries of cultural, ethnic origin, gender, poverty, sexual orientation, class structures, personal prejudices. In their

humanness and through their interconnectedness through the Holy Spirit, people should begin to strive for a society where the HIV/AIDS victim is not forced into further suffering through isolation, rejection, self doubt, blame, outdated and unfounded theologies of judgement, but is liberated, supported and treated inclusively as they are assisted to minimise their suffering which results from the physical aspects of the infection. Christ did not submit himself to the cross for a select group of human beings, but went to the cross because he “wants all men to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4), and through the resurrection, we see demonstrated the power to bring healing and through Pentecost, the coming of the comforter.

However, Hays points to the danger of the liberation approach as a focal image:

“One potential danger in the use of liberation as a focal image, however, is that it can easily be understood in a purely immanent sense as a political term, thus losing touch with the New Testament’s emphasis on the power of God as the sole ground of hope and freedom....For the New Testament writers who use the term, liberation is not a political program that human beings can implement; rather, it is the promised eschatological action of God. Consequently, just as love is best understood through the focal image of the cross, so also liberation is best understood through the focal image of new creation: liberation is already given to us through Christ (Gal 5:1), yet we still await liberation – the redemption of our bodies – while groaning along with the creation in bondage to decay” (Rom 8:18-25) (1996: 203)

I would hasten to add that a polarised approach to the poor and HIV/AIDS sufferers should be avoided especially in the light of experience already gained in the South African context. In the historical South African context, facile solutions were offered by traditional as well as black and liberation theologies during the South African struggle against apartheid with the notion of God’s solidarity with the poor, marginalised and diseased. As an operational driving force, it meant very little. The mystery of the connection and difference of God, human beings and the natural physical-organic environment, underlying the ‘co-responsibility and co-accountability’ of God, human beings and the natural physical-organic environment is not honoured in the notion of a preferential option of God for the poor. In the struggle against HIV/AIDS by reactivating the notion of God’s preferential option this time for the HIV/AIDS sufferer and his/her suffering repeats the theologistic position of solely placing the responsibility and accountability

regarding the alleviation of suffering due to HIV/AIDS on God. This then, opens the question of God's involvement in the creation and contagion of HIV, in the first place, for if God is now accountable for alleviating the suffering why is God not responsible also for the contraction?

In the mystery of life, God – human beings – nature are simultaneously connected and radically different. Although human beings experience and partake daily in the foursome grand acts of God, God is still God. In his Godness, the humanness of others and the naturalness of nature are experienced daily and are touched by the mysterious workings of God's Spirit. We cannot take them apart, analyse them and put them together because of the complexity of the interrelationships.

With the acceptance of the mystery of: God, human beings and the natural world, being simultaneously connected and different from each other, we have been gathering notions of sin and pain, evil and suffering set within the experiential sphere of faith, belief, trust and confidence. The purpose of gathering concepts, faith notions and modes of elements of truth from a diverse bulk of literature, is an attempt to clarify, explain and to create at least slight accessing and overlapping of people's God, human, world approaches. It is an attempt to draw closer to what many term the ideal of creating common understanding of words, concepts and faith notions used when notions such as sin and pain and evil and suffering are being discussed.

According to some conservative fundamentalists and even some more liberal interpretational God-human-world views, the sin of a human person must be condemned but the condemnation must be tempered by love or caring for the sinner. To put it more pointedly, promiscuous sexual behaviour both homosexual as well as heterosexual, is considered from these Christian viewpoints to be sinful. With regards to homosexuality the following statement warrants mentioning:

“Most leading psychologists now agree that homosexuality is not innate and does not have any genetic connection. Dr. Charles Socarides, author of a treatise most frequently used by medical scholars on the subject has pointed out that homosexuality is learned, acquired behaviour. As with other

kinds of conduct, thoughts become actions, actions become habits, habits become a lifestyle.” (Riches 1988:14)

However, I am of the opinion that whether sin committed by another human being is sexual or not, human beings, according to Romans 2:1, do not have the right to pass judgment on each other, as all human beings stand “..equally condemned under the just judgment of a righteous God.” (Hays 1996: 389).

This implies that any self-righteous judgment is as much a sinful act as any sinful sexual behaviour exhibited by human beings. Christians are called to love and pray for friends and foe alike irrespective of whether they are aware of sinful acts in others or not. Van Niekerk (2006:373-376) is convinced that holiness cannot be pre-programmed and prescribed as ‘sacred, sacramental and holy church space’ and ‘quiet time space’. Holiness happens in the sense of a mystery. Thus through and in what is regarded as unholy and sinful, holy and meaningful nooks of people’s experience, and unclean and evil, clean and healthy crannies of society God’s Spirit embodies and participates in new pockets and packages, new contexts and localisations of holiness. Thus, where the Godness of God, the humanness of human beings and the naturalness of nature are closely together and really different at the same time, holiness emerges even amongst pain, suffering and depravation in the world (Van Niekerk 2006:375).

Christians, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, should have the awareness of their fivesome qualities advanced as they proceed through their development in life. Thus through their awareness of their creatureliness, their own sinful tendencies, their realisation of salvation (and the liberating effect of reconciliation and forgiveness of the Supreme Goodness), the empowering and enabling which is gained through the life-giving Spirit and their hope in the consummation through the resurrection of Jesus after the cross (which is even now breaking into this time as a foretaste of the things to come), human beings should respond as co-responsible and co-accountable for other human beings as well as nature. Therefore human beings should be bound to reach out in compassion to those who already suffer with the consequences of AIDS. In gratitude for what Christ did for all human beings and because we are engaged as human beings and nature in

the cross and resurrection through Jesus, and because we have the Spirit as the Renewer, Consoler, Guider and Embracer of all our experience, we need to reach out in care and self-sacrifice to all human beings regardless of race, religion or gender or even sinful habits. Christians, being called to be the salt and light of the earth and for the transforming of societies, should fight stigmatisation and prejudice, model an alternative lifestyle and challenge behaviours that are contradictory to Scriptures (but always in a spirit of love). Hays puts it like this:

“Love enacted in community makes God known to the world. The love of God continues to be visible, not only through the telling of the story of how God sent his Son for us but also through the ongoing life of the community of faith that lives by that story.” (1996:374)

Whether the HIV/AIDS sufferer is an innocent victim of the virus, or has contracted the disease through negligent practices, where prior knowledge of the risks was held, Christians need to live:

“..as a community that embraces sinners as Jesus did, without waving God’s righteousness. We live confessing that God’s grace claims us out of confusion and alienation and sets about making us whole. We live knowing that wholeness remains a hope rather than an attainment in this life. The homosexual Christians in our midst may teach us something about our true condition as people living between the cross and the final redemption of our bodies.” (Hays 1996: 403)

The relationship between human beings, God as evidenced in the Lord Jesus Christ and suffering is spelled out by Loba-Mkole as follows:

“By the phrase ‘Son of Man’ the author of Lk. 22:69 and Acts 7:56 has underlined not only Jesus’ human nature, but also his solidarity with humankind, especially in a context of suffering and humiliation. This very humiliation has been turned into a motive of honour not only for Jesus, but also for the disciples who were persecuted because of him. In Lk. 22:69, Jesus can be seen as the intercultural mediator between God’s realm and the world, while in Acts 7:56 Stephen plays the same role between Jesus and an early Christian community. Lk. 22:69 and Acts 7:56 also show how Jesus and his first disciples have already experienced in their times the sufferings and persecutions that are affecting the sons and daughters of men/sons and daughters of women in Africa today. By virtue of solidarity, they are also entitled to share the honour of the Son of God, who associated himself with all human beings by his self-given nickname ‘Son of Man’ or his ‘subjective identity’. They are also invited to become

intercultural mediators between Jesus' gospel and their respective communities." (2007:24)

The Spirit who was active in the ministry of the Jesus is the selfsame Spirit active in the natural world. God is active in the world through the Spirit but is also apart from the world. In both the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Scripture the activities of God with regards to the natural physical-organic world and human beings is often mediated through the Spirit of God. In spite of the widely differing aspects of the various writings in the Bible, there is a remarkable unity with regards to the functions and character of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit enables and guides human beings in renovating, liberating and renewing processes, it follows that the presence of the Holy Spirit in pastoral counselling would be real and could be experienced by parties involved in the processes.

5.3 The problem of evil and suffering with regards to HIV in the faith and pastoral counselling ambience.

Depending on variables like culture, religion, personality, classification of disease etc., the attitude of human beings with regards to the experience of suffering and pain will differ.

Religion influences how human beings experience pain, for instance the early Christian martyrs (Huss and Polycarp) who were burnt at the stake for their religious convictions seemingly experienced diminished pain as they were 'ecstatic' when they suffered. (Forbush 1926:143 & 9)

Pain and suffering affect the 'total human being', both the body and the emotions, and leads to psychological symptoms such as anxiety, fear, depression, anger, guilt, shame etc. These psychological symptoms sometimes have the tendency to increase the pain experienced by the human being. The pathos of suffering is depicted in Lamentations 1(12-13) where Jerusalem calls out for sympathy and feels that without a comforter (as evident in verse sixteen), her mourning cannot be completed. These verses reflect the emotional distress human beings

experience when they suffer and feel isolated from other human beings and even from God self. In this Lamentation, the unsympathetic attitude of the other human beings (verse 21) leads to resentment and bitterness against them and God. This is indicative of the emotional turmoil experienced by human beings suffering from HIV/AIDS. Autton expresses it like this:

“Fear, anxiety and depression are the most common symptoms of the mental pain of the dying. Fear is often the fear of the unknown but it may also arise from recollections of poor pain control in the past....Depression can readily arise when there is the feeling of ‘nothing more can be done’. Often too there are feelings of remorse and guilt which if left to themselves, unshared, become internalised and turn to resentment and bitterness. Grief becomes appropriate in those who recognise they are dying, and a sense of loss and separation can bring deep regret and pain..... Feelings of helplessness, meaningless, failure and regret often create spiritual unrest which in turn aggravates pain.....Spiritual pain often takes the form of belief that the pain or illness has been sent as a punishment from God for past misdeeds. It is the meaningless desolation of realising that life is ending.” (Autton 1986:39-40)

Some human beings might experience their suffering as punishment for evil deeds they have committed and thus perceive suffering as deserved. Others might experience it as undeserved. These differences of interpretation of the suffering may be based on religious predispositions, as has been discussed in chapter three. There are also differences with regards to death and grief, according to the various religious predispositions (Lines 2006:152-153). However, from a Christian pastoral perspective, conditions should be created where death is seen as a door and not a wall because the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ make resurrection an eschatological event, and the self same Spirit that raised Jesus is working in human beings today. Part of the process of alleviating suffering is to bring human beings closer to themselves, other human beings, God as well as nature in a fivesome awareness in a wholesome person.

In 1 Samuel 16:14-23, music therapy was utilized by David to relieve mental stress within Saul as it has a tendency to exhilarate the mind when a human being feels depressed. In the Old Testament, music was often used to calm the mind of prophets in order for them to clearly hear the word of the Lord as in the case of Elisha when he asked for a musician in order to empower him to prophesy (2

Kings 3:15). Music can relax the muscles and relieve the human being from anxiety and depression, which will alter the perception of pain and suffering. As is evident in the above scriptures music could also bring human beings in contact with their spiritual side and thus nearer to God, themselves, other human beings and the natural world.

5.3.1 Faith counselling as a wholesome and multidimensional approach

A faith counselling approach that seems most prudent in the context of HIV/AIDS is born out of the operational application of the mystery of the close connectedness and radical difference of God, human beings and the physical-organic natural world. In this sense, the mystery embraces two of the angles or trajectories operational in the thesis. In the first angle, the focus is placed on wholesome experiential patterns of faith experience in a discursive and alternating way - faith experience of God, of the human self, of other human beings and of the physical-organic environment is experientially emphasised as one trajectory that plays a role in every section. With regard to the second angle, the focus is on the trajectory of God's grand acts of creation (creatureliness, we are being there), reconciliation (redemption = cross and resurrection of Jesus), renewal (daily renovation in self - and mutual training) and consummation and fulfilment towards the end (aim and goal of one's life).

The HIV infected human being, once diagnosed, becomes the hub of a system of care. The system may be elaborate or practically nonexistent, depending on the location, health systems available and the wealth of the victim. Within this system of care there are many nodes which represent various human beings involved in the care of the HIV/AIDS sufferer. A node is also present which represents the Holy Spirit. Roles such as nurse, doctor, counsellor, friend, carer, family, partner etc., each become a node in the system. Interaction firstly occurs between the HIV/AIDS sufferer and any given node. The interaction is two way, i.e., from the node to the sufferer and from the sufferer to the node. This implies that the effects of HIV/AIDS impact both. Moreover the potential exists for interaction between the

various nodes themselves, for instance, when a friend, interacts with a carer, a partner interacts with a doctor etc experience of evil and suffering therefore, permeates the whole system or network of the HIV/AIDS sufferer and cuts across religions, nations and genders. This system is interesting because it represents a subsystem of the interconnectedness of God, human beings and the natural world, as each person in the HIV/AIDS system of the sufferer is, in turn, connected in their own social, cultural, life system. This connectedness of systems and people through relationships and service providers and, through the interconnectedness achieved by the inworking of the Holy Spirit, demonstrates how HIV/AIDS is a cause of suffering for all of humanity, the natural world and to God.

5.3.1.1 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of the four grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment

A wholesome approach of faith counselling is continuously emerging from alternating fields of experience in which the foursome experiential pointers of God, oneself, other human beings and the physical natural world are equitably treated as being 'pushed', 'pulled' and 'driven' by the consensible negotiation filter of the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. Within the ambit of the four grand acts of God and within the subsequent pattern of foursome pointers of experience of God, the human self, other human beings and the physical natural world, every bit of human life, the stewardship, responsibility and accountability of human beings towards the wholesomeness of the Kingdom, the Commonwealth of God is taking shape in many events and forms amidst the chaos, pain and suffering that sometimes seem to take the lead in the world.

One of the main tasks of a faith counsellor is not only to be engaged in people's one-sided foci on the large number of modern idols as their sense making providers, but also to be engaged in many Christians' one-sided operational attitudes in which they concentrate and extract everything that makes sense to them from one or two of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. Van Niekerk (2005:401-405) points to the dysfunctional disassociation

created in the evangelical world by the simultaneous one-sided emphasis on a divine Jesus living in a person's heart as the driving force of someone's life and Christ the Lord as the archetypal example of how Christians ought to live. By nestling a divine Jesus – without his human side - in a person's ego-centre, as the driving force of all his/her actions and doings in this life, a person's place may thereby be ensured in a future place called heaven. Instead of being aware and thus experiencing one's *creatureliness* as, by God, the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as God's act of *reconciliation* applied as God's tools of reconciliation in God's act of *renewal* through the Holy Spirit, directed towards God's act of *fulfilment* in future, a personal divine Jesus is built into the heart of a person. Thereby deemphasising the responsibility and accountability of a person's 'created-in-the-image-of-God' side. Too much Jesus and too little God as creator, the Spirit as renewer of everything and God the future fulfiller is one of the biggest contributors of such a dysfunctional disassociation experience.

Another problem in Christianity is that the grand acts of God are not experienced as energy forces and pointers carrying meaningful daily experience, but are viewed in nearly all churches as doctrines of which the orthodox and truth character first have to be determined by a church, its clergy and theologians before members can apply these, experientially in their lives. In the majority of cases, people belong to different churches because their parents or themselves are/were attracted to these churches because of divergent and contradicting reasons which strangely may form a consistent whole when viewed from within their own sense making approaches. The point being made here is that a faith counsellor has as one of his/her tasks, the raising of people's awareness regarding the coherent and comprehensive character in which the grand acts of God operate as energy pointers and forces support, sustain and maintain a wholesome God-human-nature sense making way of experiencing daily life.

Plante (2001:201) reports work in the concept of 'Hardiness' - "a psychological construct composed of the personality dimensions of commitment, challenge, and control..." which can be correlated with better health over time in individuals with

HIV. From the faith counselling point of view the interest in this comes from the fact that, in a study reported in his book, Plante states:

“Hardiness was significantly correlated with a composite measure of all spiritual activities combined; greater hardiness was tied to more spiritual involvement” (2001:201)

With a particular recognition of the value of prayer, we see a scientific study that shows that, within a group of HIV infected male human beings, those with a spiritual worldview have better capabilities in resisting HIV than those who do not. Surely this shows that the grand acts of God can be experienced as energy forces and pointers, carrying meaningful daily experience and measurable benefit when HIV infected human beings enter into a true faith based relationship with God, other human beings and the created order. Given strong research evidence of this phenomena, it becomes possible for the counsellor to take greater confidence in the value of his/her faith based counselling with HIV/AIDS victims and, for the latter victims to be shown, demonstrably, that there is power in the interaction between God, human beings and nature through the inworking of the Holy Spirit.

5.3.1.2 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of the foursome experiential pattern of believing God, oneself, others and the physical-organic natural world

Another focus of the faith counsellor is directed towards the sense making balance between the weights of the foursome experiential pattern of, ‘*I believe God and I believe myself and I believe my human neighbours and I believe the physical-organic natural environment*’. One should be aware that unbelief, doubt and guilt function in each of the foursome as a counter position. Luther, the 16th century Reformer, viewed the attitude of doubting God as part of his aspects of faith. Here we want to extend the notion of unbelief, doubt and guilt to, doubting of oneself, as a position opposite to believing oneself in self-confidence. People sometimes have doubt in themselves, their abilities and capabilities. Sometimes people doubt other people and the physical-organic environment.

It is worthwhile repeating that the quality of our everyday patterns and actions of faith experience, which include the foursome of: God, oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic environment, appears in a similar sense in our everyday patterns and actions of thinking, feeling, loving and speaking experiences. In such an approach, the mysterious meandering of the Commonwealth of God (= Kingdom, Priesthood and Prophetdom), is intertwined with the grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation, renewal and the future directed fulfilment of everything (van Niekerk 2008:73).

Van Niekerk (2008:73) in this regard poses the question whether churches and communities of faith bring people in the experiential foursome pattern of faith simultaneously closer to God, themselves, other human beings and the physical-organic environment. His answer to this question is in the negative:

“Unfortunately, my experience is that the more churches and communities of faith succeed in bringing people closer to God, the further people are taken away, alienated and estranged from themselves as human beings, other human beings and from their own physical-organic bodily environment as well as the physical environment surrounding them. You are not for a second removed from yourself and the physical-organic environment in the most minor things such as the inhaling of air to carry on living. The inhalation and extraction of oxygen from the air happens even in the most divine, super-pious church service or mega-sacramental mass.” (2008:74).

Historically the connection between spirit, soul and body, as duality or tripartite approach, is emphasised. In the modern world of priests, pastors and ministers and their churches, strong emphasis is laid on religious faith and spirituality as representing the spiritual side of a human being while on the other hand the modern counselling world and the medical world, the bodily matter side of a human being is emphasised – admittedly, sometimes with a snippet of spirituality within the overall perspective of the physical-material body.

A faith counsellor emphasising the idea that God exclusively covers the whole domain of faith, is actually contributing to people's tension and stress levels. On the other hand, especially in the world of HIV/AIDS, a wholesome approach in the

foursome sense of faith and belief is a very powerful energy and force as faith is not only directed to God, but also directed to oneself (in the radical sense of self-confidence), to other people and to the physical-organic environment. Then, again, so is guilt as a negative powerful energy, as guilt towards God, oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic environment. Priests, pastors and ministers would do themselves and their churches a service if they apply a foursome pattern of faith as an evaluative and support template in their counselling and care of HIV/AIDS infected persons.

Smith notes that HIV victims are prone to low self esteem (in Wickes 2002:303) which may happen either rapidly or more often gradually. As self esteem is recognised as an important factor in clinical response to HIV/AIDS mental outlook is a factor which Smith states is “something that demands attention in the pastoral care of persons with HIV” (Wicks 2002:303). This ties in closely with the observation above that guilt is a powerful negative energy and with the concept of hardiness discussed under 5.3.1.1 above, a tangible demonstration of the positive power of wholesome foursome faith in God, faith in self, faith in other human beings and faith in the created order. Smith specifically links Christian Scriptures positively with the development of the relationship between the HIV/AIDS infected human being, God and other human beings (2002:311) in the improvement of the clinical response to HIV/AIDS. This observation of the role of Scripture and Christianity is perceptive, but needs to be expanded from a three-quarter interrelationship to the full foursome wholesome situation which forms one of the key angles of this thesis.

In Shaw and Mahonay (2003:67-74) M.A. Brown, a professional nurse states:

“The person with HIV/AIDS is facing physical and emotional challenges that are clearly evident and generally well addressed in the health care providers’ plan of care, Sadly, the spiritual dimension of a clients health is usually left to chance or disregarded as falling into the realm of the ordained clergy.” (2003:67)

Brown (in Shaw 2003:71) continues to state that research supports the notion that spiritual wellbeing is a significant factor in helping a human being with HIV/AIDS

cope with the disease (Shaw 2003:71) and concludes the contribution in Shaw (2003) with a statement regarding the spiritual health of the human being involved in nursing an HIV/AIDS infected human being:

“Without wholeness, the nurse’s love of God, love of self, and love of client will ultimately suffer” (2003:73)

Brown continues in explaining how integral wholeness can be achieved and suggests that “walking and spending time in nature” (Shaw 2003:74) is an important facet of maintaining personal spiritual wholeness. Brown, then, has made a linkage that is very rarely presented in theological and religious literature and practice and without the concise presentation of the concept given by van Niekerk (2008:73) perceived through experiential avenues exactly this essential linkage between the wholesome foursome of love of self, love of God, love of other human beings and love of nature, in the interconnectedness of the foursome through the inworking of the Holy Spirit.

5.3.1.3 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of the management of change between fields of experience and social roles in daily life

A further aspect of a faith counsellor’s negotiation with human beings in the counselling context concerns the notion of meaningful differentiation and change between fields of experience and societal roles in daily life. The continuous changing of emphasis from one field of experience to another with the accompanying changing of emphasis of roles and the unaware management thereof is one of the most underestimated areas in the lives of human beings. In the lives of many human beings, the continuous changing of emphases of fields of experience and social roles - which happens in any case whether one attempts to keep oneself within one field of experience and one social role - contribute to high levels of wellbeing while in other people’s lives, diverse levels of stress play a very significant role. A faith counsellor may present clues and hues to a human being regarding the ongoing challenges of changing and managing of the social roles encountered in a single day. Faith counsellors also contribute to a greater

awareness of how human beings of our era are to manage the continuous change of types of experience and changing of social roles, as healing and coping processes, viewed and experienced from within the field of faith experience.

These concerns are particularly relevant with the progression from a healthy human being to an HIV positive human being and to a terminally ill advanced AIDS sufferer because, as a human being progresses through these states and all of the intermediate stages that occur in the progression, there are both sudden and gradual changes in societal roles and fields of experience that will occur. Firstly, there is the change in HIV status which a newly diagnosed human being must come to terms with. This is a significant change for most because it tends to mean a move from an open ended view of life to a clear view of future suffering and death. Secondly, there is the stigma issue, which can vary from severe to mild; rejection, isolation, accusation to general acceptance. Thirdly there is the change in social role as the HIV positive human being starts to experience deteriorating health due to declining immune system capabilities, followed by disability, dependence and death.

Dobson and Wong (in Tomer et al) state that

“... social support is important not only on an emotional or practical level, but also on an existential and spiritual level” (2007:201)

They continue in this discussion to emphasise the importance of the development of support groups for HIV positive human beings because participants, in such groups, reported on by Dobson and Wong found that the support groups became the surrogate family for the participants. The participants reportedly found that unless these HIV participants became part of a local support group, stigmatisation and rejection from their natural families left them without social support. These observations were related to a study of 161 HIV positive intravenous drug users of which only one was suffering from AIDS. This observation by Dobson and Wong underlines the significant changes that HIV diagnosis can bring existentially and socially even though, physically, the impact of HIV has yet to take significant effect.

5.3.1.4 Continuous focus in faith counselling on the trajectory of different types and levels of sickness and illness and wellness and wellbeing

A faith counsellor counsels people, not only on their levels of sickness, illness and guilt in the HIV/AIDS domain, but is continuously aware of different types of wellness, wellbeing and contentment in a person's life. By tackling different types of sickness and wellbeing from different fields and social roles of a particular person's experience, a faith counsellor may just succeed, where others fail, in bringing these fields and social roles of the person wholesomely together and making the person aware of the open networking of support structures in his/her life. Such a creation of awareness of a fairly wide and qualitative networking of support settings can happen in the most modest situation of abject poverty.

A meaningful way of handling complex choices and levels of experience of a multi-dimensional life is paradoxically to increase the complexity. Whether someone is in an advantaged or disadvantaged setting, a human being's life is far from simple and the various levels of illness and wellness have to be tackled with a multi-dimensional approach. Faith experience, in the foursome sense of the word, is but one, albeit, important, dimension of a team of people, each with their own perspective, involved in assisting the HIV/AIDS sufferer.

This diversity in counselling needs, which results in HIV infected human beings (with the particular emphasis established above of the need for the early establishment of faith counselling within the palette of counselling needs to enhance hardiness and mental attitude as a valuable part of the process of delaying the onset of AIDS) results in the need for the development of holistic counselling, Musopole succinctly states:

“We need to advocate a holistic approach that entails looking at ourselves in the totality of our existential context ...” (2006:12)

And because faith counselling has value as an early counselling intervention it would seem that effort is needed to encourage the faith counsellor to gain skills

and expertise in a wide range of counselling issues, which the HIV infected human being will experience in the progression of the disease. Because counselling is relational, both the counselled and counsellor form a trust relationship with each other in the counselling process. Because of the often limited range of specialised counsellors available in the African situation, and in particular to the poor, the development of wider capabilities in faith counsellors to empower them to handle a wide range of counselling issues would obviously be of great value to the sufferer of HIV/AIDS. This does not suggest that professionals from other specialist areas are supplanted, but that, as an initial or early point of counselling contact, the faith counsellor is in a more valuable position towards the HIV/AIDS sufferer if he/she is better integrated into the holistic care package for the sufferer. In such situations, however, there is a danger that the faith counsellor could take advantage of an HIV/AIDS sufferer and try to use the vulnerability of that human being to proselytise and convert that person to the faith system favoured by the counsellor. Faith counselling of HIV/AIDS victims should never be focused on the external influence of change in faith system but should be about helping sufferers to see their value and place in God's grand acts through the working of the Holy Spirit within that person's worldview.

5.3.2 Alleviation of suffering in HIV-infected human beings whilst bringing them closer to themselves, other human beings, nature and God.

In evaluating, contemplating and wrestling with the mystery of the close connectedness and radical difference of God, human beings and the physical-organic natural world, through the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the interaction of faith experience of God, of the human self, of other human beings and of the physical organic environment, in light of the God's grand acts of creation (creatureliness, we are being there), reconciliation (redemption = cross and resurrection of Jesus), renewal (daily renovation in self - and mutual training) and consummation and fulfilment towards the end (aim and goal of ones life), one can see a pattern for faith counselling emerging, which integrates these aspects for the

counselee, encouraging the counselee to consider their existence within this worldview and in particular reference to HIV/AIDS to their suffering, faith and life and death with HIV/AIDS.

As HIV/AIDS brings about severe suffering on various levels such as emotional, social, spiritual and physical, the only valid response from other human beings in their humanness could be a responsible compassion that reaches out across the abyss of stigma and discrimination. Bongmba (2007:68), in his plea and love for human beings (amidst the social and political dynamics of Africa), challenges all human beings to reach out and 'touch other human beings'. The example he used was where Jesus touched a leper (Mark 1:40-42) although leprosy was a dreaded disease:

"Christians ought to copy the example of Jesus and show compassion to people who have been despised by the community. Touching people living with HIV/AIDS ...involves more than giving them the occasional hug...our touch ought to communicate love...and ...[should] include verbal support with an active involvement to make life better for people living with HIV/AIDS....We are invited to give a sustaining touch because the dignity of others is at stake. Our touch must reach across all types of barriers...We all share in the image of God and have an obligation to respond with compassion to uphold the dignity of all persons." (Bongmba 2007:68)

Physical touch is very powerful as it conveys identification and breaks through the barriers of isolation and rejection that many human beings infected with HIV/AIDS experience. It also communicates acceptance and connects human beings with their humanness as pain tends to alienate human beings and they experience a cutting off from other human beings and sometimes even God Himself. Autton explains:

"Physical touch decreases the level of anxiety and reinforces a component of security and warmth. It is an act which symbolises understanding, comfort and interest, and may often lead on to verbal interchange." (1986:126)

Touch can therefore be seen as an existential reminder of the interconnectedness which exists between the HIV/AIDS sufferer, other human beings and, therefore, also with God and the physical organic environment and as such has a place of

value when used sensitively within the gambit of faith based counselling of HIV/AIDS sufferers.

Orthodoxy (belief) is related to orthopraxis (action) and human beings with a Christian religious predisposition, in their co-responsibility and co-accountability towards other human beings suffering from HIV/AIDS could assist towards a fivesome awareness in a wholesome person, i.e. in bringing: (1) awareness of creatureliness, (2) awareness of sinful tendencies, (3) salvific and reconciliatory enactment of denial of self through the cross and liberative empowerment of resurrection when they (sufferers of HIV/AIDS) are made aware of the acts of God in the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, (4) intercessory prayer for HIV/AIDS sufferer for the indwelling, renovating and renewal power of the Holy Spirit which will give meaning to life even amidst suffering and, (5) the sharing of the Christian hope of consummation.

When a human being comes alongside another human being in such a 'faith-seeking interconnectedness', a spiritual awakening might occur although this awakening never could be under human control, as it is evasive and yet present. And yes, whilst we can experience the power of God in the explosion of a supernova in the natural world, we can also experience God when we become aware, through the work of the Holy Spirit, of our creatureliness, our humanness and also when we encounter 'the other' in their humanness and their vulnerability. In experiencing 'the other', a co-responsibility for their humanness could be displayed in the working together, with God's Spirit, in enabling 'the other' to experience the presence of God and therefore, becoming a whole person by God's grace through faith. According to Bloesch:

"Psychologically, faith might legitimately be described as a leap in the dark, but theologically faith is an awakening to the light, which is not accessible to either human perception or human conception. We believe what cannot be comprehended by human reason, but the eyes of faith can nevertheless see dimly what is beyond reason's compass. As Augustine put it, 'Faith has eyes by which it in some way perceives to be true that which it does not yet see, and by which it very surely perceives that it does not yet see what it believes.' Human reason cannot grasp the mystery of divine revelation, but it can witness to this mystery. It cannot encompass this mystery, but it can

make contact with this mystery, though not on the basis of any power within itself.” (1992:59)

5.3.3 Faith counselling in the light of the four foci

Section five has the overall title of Nearer to God, to Oneself, and to the Natural World, and in this chapter the Human Immunodeficiency Virus has been considered and seen as part of the gambit of evil and suffering which is intertwined with grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation (=cross and resurrection), renewal of everything through the Holy Spirit and consummation. And we have established that the effect, influence and impact of viruses, bacteria and the like is not part of God's eschatological intentions. Yet we see continued growth in HIV infection, and the significant impact of the opportunistic infections that result in the diagnosis of AIDS and lead to the death of the HIV/AIDS sufferer. Whilst medical science has made significant progress with antiretroviral drugs so also has the Human Immunodeficiency Virus developed drug resistant strains. It thus became necessary for medical doctors to prescribe cocktails of three or more different antiretroviral drugs in a programme known as HAART – highly active anti-retroviral therapy – to affect improvement in life span of HIV/AIDS infected human beings. However “HAART's success in clinical practice falls short of what might be hoped” (Martz 2007:132) with broad ranging and severe side effects and rapid rise in HIV presence if HAART is discontinued.

It is clearly evidenced that poor nutrition encourages the early onset of AIDS in HIV positive human beings (Whiteside 2004b:11) and therefore that poverty has a very significant negative influence on quality and length of life for HIV positive human beings.

In light of the fact that a cure for HIV/AIDS is not yet available and that none is foreseen in the near future, it is important that HIV infected human beings are able to gain wholesome holistic help in their situation. This means medical, practical, spiritual and social guidance and help. It is clear that in the current medical scenario, HIV is incurable and leads to death. But the duration, comfort and value

of life in the period between HIV infection and detection, onset of AIDS and death is greatly variable from case to case. Despite the radical difference, there is a connectedness between God, human beings and the natural created order, which is achieved through the Holy Spirit, it is right that human beings, through the working and enacting of the Holy Spirit, are offended by the fact that the quality of life experienced by an HIV infected individual is so greatly influenced by their degree of poverty or wealth, and their country or region's prosperity (it is important to note that human beings who are considered, or consider themselves, to be poor in wealthy countries are in general comparatively rich with respect to the poor in poor countries). The Holy Spirit brings a potential awareness of the suffering of the HIV/AIDS victim to the HIV negative human being through the solidarity that comes through the interconnectedness of God – human beings – natural world. This awareness allows the HIV negative human being to share in the suffering of the HIV positive human being, this is not to say that all HIV negative human beings will experience this sharing of suffering because many human beings are aware of HIV/AIDS cognitively but for them, it remains an impersonal issue.

In the current medical scenario, HIV/AIDS is a reality that human beings, communities and nations must come to terms with and therefore, it is essential that care extended to HIV positive human beings is individually optimised. Irrespective of whether a human being becomes aware of their HIV positive situation soon after infection, or only when AIDS symptoms become apparent, counselling is an important and valuable part of the care package. Counselling can be regarded in terms of its interaction with God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation and fulfilment towards the end. Each of these grand acts intersects the life of the HIV/AIDS sufferer as the act of creation is experienced through the human being's experience of creatureliness. The very experience of frailty or vulnerability made new to the human being through the knowledge of being HIV positive creates the possibility of a renewed awareness of creation, and therefore, of God, through his acts of creation. This knowledge and awareness can be developed, explored and matured through the work of a compassionate faith counsellor. A faith counsellor can also bring the HIV/AIDS sufferer to the place where they can interact through the Holy Spirit with

reconciliation because through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, redemption has been made real for the HIV/AIDS sufferer. This brings the HIV/AIDS sufferer to a point where the truth of renewal through the Holy Spirit can be experienced. Despite the prognosis of HIV, daily renovation of self worth and spirituality can be developed, and whilst a degree of certainty has been gained in terms of potential future health problems, counselling can guide the HIV positive individual in an appreciation of fulfilment of that individual in the light of God, and can work through the interaction of the HIV positive human being with their goals for their life. Thus it can be seen that Pastoral Counselling has a vital role to play within a holistic programme of care for an HIV positive individual, improving the quality of life and death of the sufferer.

This existential improvement in quality of life, though an increase in the spiritual, has been shown to increase hardiness²⁴. And therefore, the first of the four foci for wholesome faith counselling is established as this interaction with the four grand acts of God, which can be applied experientially as energy forces and pointers which support, sustain and maintain a wholesome God-human-nature sense making way of experiencing daily life. As higher self esteem is linked to higher hardiness the foursome experiential pattern of '*I believe God and I believe myself and I believe my human neighbours and I believe the physical-organic natural environment*' is a further critical part of the faith counsellors template for developing a wholesome life attitude in an HIV positive human being, who needs to be moved from a state of apathy, dejection, despair to a belief in self, others, God and the natural world. Thus raised self esteem can be nurtured which results in better handling of the HIV infection in terms of health. These facets are of great importance because the movement through the various stages from HIV positive diagnosis through to AIDS related death, dictates significant changes in social

²⁴ "a psychological construct composed of the personality dimensions of commitment, challenge, and control..." (Plante 2001:201)

roles where both rapid or step changes and also gradual changes occur. Changes of social role, which are perceived to be negative by a human being, present difficulties to that human being and through the application of wholesome faith counselling, a human being can be assisted in coping with these changes. In this respect the integration of the human being into HIV support groups has significant value. A wholesome faith counsellor then, counsels people from a holistic position with a viewpoint through the lens of perception of faith in God, faith in self, faith in the HIV infected human being and faith in the natural world. This viewpoint presents the wholesome faith counsellor with the possibility of success in bringing the various aspects of sickness and wellbeing and contentment from different fields and social roles together, and through these benefits, seeing the HIV/AIDS sufferer experience reduced suffering.

5.4 conclusion

As human goodness comes about by the working and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon individual human beings, such human beings as co-workers in the foursome grand acts of God, take up their responsibility of the stewardship process in the elimination of evil processes, viruses, bacteria etc.

HIV, from an external starting point, enters the human being and begins its diabolical destructive work within the human being, thereby effecting the relationship between themselves and God, their relationship to oneself, other human beings as well as nature, leaving them isolated and broken hearted; feeling in many cases bereft of God, other human beings and of the value of the natural world. They are crying out for deliverance from the angst of bondage to disease and meaninglessness and, as God in God's foursome grand acts, identified Godself with human alienation and lostness in the form of Jesus Christ (especially in the cross and resurrectio, and in the renewing through the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual, human beings are called to give expression to the authenticity of the message of reconciliation by becoming agents and co-workers in God's foursome acts.

As human beings suffering with HIV are affected in their totality and in exhibiting their psychological symptoms their pain and suffering can increase, it is imperative for other human beings to reach over the abyss of emotional turmoil in acts of “reconciliatory empathising”, where infected human beings could experience the closeness of other human beings in their time of utter desolation.

As spiritual wellbeing significantly helps a human being in coping with the disease, certain human beings are helped in their spiritual wholeness when being given the opportunity of spending time in nature, being exposed to music, which enables them to reflect on their relatedness and participation in the whole process of God’s foursome acts. Touch, as an existential reminder of their interconnectedness, also promotes spiritual wellbeing. There exists a diversity of counselling needs based on individual predispositions and situations. Responsible compassion and sensitivity in determining specific therapies for specific predispositions would be conducive to the well-being of the individual.

As has been discussed in this chapter the existential improvement in quality of life through an increase in the spiritual aspect of a human being’s life increases hardiness and it is therefore imperative that faith counsellors and religious groupings work together for the benefit of the human being downcast by HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 6

HIV/AIDS as a Multifunctional Problem

6.1 Introduction

“Abantu Abaafa! – People are dying! People are dying. Children are being orphaned. The elderly are left uncared for. Already disgraceful poverty is made worse.” (Barnett 2002:7)

Why should we be bothered by this? Is it not the case that the world is overpopulated anyway and maybe this is nature’s way of balancing things out as the need has shifted away from extensive manual labour in the technological age and what is therefore less human is deemed necessary to perform work that others are not willing to do? Some might espouse such rationalistic thoughts but from a humanitarian perspective as well as from a Christian perspective such viewpoints are sacrilege. This is because all suffering human beings are made in God’s image and their suffering is our suffering, their pain is our pain. Because we are the same race, the human race, and because we live in an interconnectedness with God, other human beings and the created natural world through the work of the Holy Spirit and therefore, in the words of Gallagher: “It is humanity that has AIDS, and not simply an isolated person..” (Keenan 2000:280)

The HIV/AIDS problem causes individual human beings, families, communities, the African continent and the world, globally, to suffer and experience negative consequences. This is a multifunctional problem and needs to be handled in an interdisciplinary way as it affects the social, physical, spiritual, and economic wellbeing of all; from those infected and their family and through a ripple effect on to their community, to their nation, to their continent and globally, the entirety of humanity.

McElrath links the impact of HIV/AIDS with the global economy thus:

“The long-term impact of HIV/AIDS – sickness, death, and orphaning - on social and economic functioning and development is difficult to determine with accuracy but will include reduced productivity; pressure on managerial, professional, and technical expertise; greatly increased demand on health and welfare services; and reduced capacity to deliver. AIDS exacerbates poverty, hinders development, and radically changes dependency ratios.” (2002:210-211)

This disease adversely affects poverty and increases inequality with regards to income as well as asset distribution and in the face of this, all religious persuasions and Christians especially, need to take co-responsibility and co-accountability for the alleviation of this pandemic.

The whole fabric of society is affected as HIV/AIDS may affect adherence to law and order of society as well, Poku comments:

“...the pandemic may have important effects on the ‘civility’ of society, by decreasing popular compliance with the law, and increasing violent protest, social intolerance and criminal activity....People infected with HIV and ill with AIDS also tend to be lonely and depressed. Such conditions often lead to hopelessness and apathy, but they may as likely lead to frustration and aggression, which could turn into non compliance or even political violence.” (2004:206-207)

Communal worldviews held by human beings affect all aspects of life and spill over into politics, public health, religion etc and determine how human beings react to certain events like the HIV pandemic and to programs implemented to curtail such a disease. On the political scene, there exists a cultural divide between, for instance the whites (segkoa) and the others, with the whites being viewed as the instigators of HIV for population control and even genocidal purposes (Heald, in Elison 2003:228) according to certain belief systems especially in rural areas of South Africa.

The high incidence rate of HIV/AIDS amongst black Africans in Africa, has led to further racial prejudice. Within South Africa, poverty among the Black African population remains a very significant contributory issue in the spread of HIV/AIDS, because the majority of this ethnic group are caught in the poverty trap. Because people in this situation are made more vulnerable to contracting HIV a perception

has become prevalent that poor Black Africans are automatically HIV positive and this prejudice damages the interconnectedness of human beings, which in turn, damages the interrelationship between God – human beings – and nature. This continuing stigma must be resolved. However, regardless of the political scene, in a study done by Eileen Stillwaggon (in Barnett 2002:16) the relationship between inequality, poverty and infectious disease has been shown and is evident in the link...

“...between malnutrition, parasitosis and susceptibility to infection in general and to HIV in particular. This analysis provides solid evidence that there is a strong relationship between poverty and epidemic spread and that the chain of causation between poverty and epidemic infection passes through a link of poor nutrition and related subsequent immunosuppression – this even before a person is infected by HIV.”

Cultural factors may enhance the spread of the disease because of the emphasis placed on childbearing. Fertility determines the social identity of females in some cultures and based on female children, iLobolo (bridewealth) is paid. Another point is that, in such cases, the use of condoms would not be culturally acceptable as reproduction ensures care in old age as well as the place of the female in the society.

Certain cultural belief systems see the condom as the very cause of the spread of HIV instead of a preventative measure as is believed by Western culture:

“The condom – as a barrier method – is seen to prevent the healthy mixing of male and female bloods in intercourse. This relates not just to the importance of procreation. For, as the Tswana have it, women not only ingest male blood but men take in female blood likewise during intercourse and this on ejaculation is deemed to have a cleansing function. The condom of course prevents just this – causing a man to ingest his own substance or even the air in the condom, thus blocking his channels. From this perspective, the condom is seen not as a defence against AIDS but as one of its very causes.” (Heald 2004:225)

Wechsberg (2005:S56) concludes that

“... Mythical beliefs about HIV may further compound risks. Although anecdotal, there is evidence that babies and young girls are particularly vulnerable to high –risk sexual encounters because of the belief that sex

with a virgin will cleanse an HIV-infected man of the disease.....This socio-cultural ideology may foster sex-related physical violence against women and has enormous public health implications for the HIV epidemic.”

In light of this evidence of distrust of medically established procedures for the reduction of HIV transmission and reliance on practices of healing which have no basis in fact and are conducive to the further spread of the disease, it is clear that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a complex social challenge in which belief systems can play a fundamental role, both for positive and for negative influence. This is to say that answers that seem logical and sensible in one group of human beings' worldview are in another groups worldview seen as detrimental.

6.2 Theology of HIV/AIDS

As theology is faith reflection continuously including God, oneself, other human beings and the natural cosmic world, from a perspective of faith and within the field of faith experience and is also the continuous dealing with God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment in which we as human beings and the natural world are engaged and involved, it is implied that God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment include involvement with human beings in their suffering and death. Therefore it would seem important to speak about a theology of HIV/AIDS. God has a continual connectedness with human beings and the natural world, despite his radical otherness, through the work of the Holy Spirit and therefore, God has a connectedness with HIV/AIDS and the concomitant suffering that emerges from the virus.

The need for a theology of HIV/AIDS stems from the fact that so many human beings are adversely affected by HIV/AIDS in their whole being or essence. HIV/AIDS brings together concepts such as sin, rejection, humaneness, compassion, healing, suffering, pain, incarnation, atonement, reconciliation, creation, death, bereavement and a myriad of other aspects. HIV/AIDS is a significant issue for theology because of the role that evil and suffering play in the view of God that many human beings hold. The old question of 'how can a good and compassionate God allow such suffering' is reflected in the questions of many

who suffer through HIV/AIDS and this is an inherent question in the second problem setting perspective of this work.

As God is speaking to human beings within the suffering and impact of HIV/AIDS, it is important to determine the message which is directed through clues and hues in any given situation in which a Spirit lead sensible negotiation process takes place. For example, there is no greater compassionate response to a situation than negotiating about the compassion of God in Jesus of the cross and the resurrection for those rejected by society and broken by their suffering. Systematic theology as well as pastoral theology have a major role to play in how human beings perceive and relate to HIV and more specifically to human beings who are infected by this virus, together with their families and/or communities, as the far reaching tentacles of this virus infiltrate our societies.

Problems like stigmatization and prejudice against countries and human beings, must be dealt with because Christian praxis should follow in the footsteps of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment. As co-workers in the Kingdom of God, Christians should be involved in communicating and doing the truth (as human doings) and negotiating the truth for their context in order for human beings to be set free from the bondage of oppression, rejection and depravation. God's grand acts, in their fullness, embrace the lepers in society. As co-workers in the Kingdom of God, Christians ought to reach out to those in our society and bring healing to them on psychological, social, spiritual and physical levels within the gambit of the responsibility for stewardship that is placed upon human beings by their place in the interrelationship between God, human beings and the natural world and their co-participation in God's co-creation within his grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and consummation. In many ways we can draw parallels between HIV/AIDS today and leprosy circa 0 to 100 A.D. both in regards to the impact of the disease on individuals and the response of society to those infected (Phillips 2007:34-36).

Jantzen (in Nelson 1994:307) encapsulate this concept eloquently in her evaluation of HIV/AIDS as a modern day leprosy:

“Another common way of coping with our feelings or horror is to offer compassion at a distance... perhaps generous charity... The recipients of the charity... are diminished in their humanity by it, forced to receive condescension, to accept the role of victim. They have to see themselves as people whom no one wishes to touch, people who cause revulsion, people who cannot be received and loved. When one is already suffering and fearful, the burden of such rejection is intolerable... As for us as givers of such charity ... We refuse ourselves the opportunity to come to terms with them... and distance ourselves also from learning about the dignity and courage, humour and hope available to those who use their illness to discover their meaning and their worth.. we deprive ourselves also of God, for God sits with the sufferer against whom we hold our nose.”

I stand alongside Jantzen as I recognise the importance of action, inter-personal relational action with compassion, love and empathy so that we, as Christians, may find the human being within the suffering, stigmatization and rejection, and in so doing find God and the Holy Spirit within that situation. This brings a closer appreciation of the interconnectedness of self, other human beings, God and the natural world through the Holy Spirit.

Jantzen also states:

“... if the incarnation is about the solidarity of God with humankind, then practical identification with people with AIDS can send us back to reading the New Testament with joyous insight that we did not have before.” (in Nelson 1994:306)

This statement demonstrates the power and blessing that can be achieved when we read the Scriptures in sensible negotiation with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, co-negotiating and co-determining the meaning within the Scriptures, that we can now find, as we blend our current situation with the eternal truths of the Scriptures to bring forth meaning.

HIV/AIDS is a disease and not a sin as it has often been perceived in fundamentalist interpretation within Christianity (Fernández 2006:349), and Islam (De Waal 2004:249). Fundamentalist proclamations of divine retribution against HIV/AIDS sufferers are indefensible as many innocent human beings and babies contract this disease. Carlton falls into the fundamentalist trap, where in his discussions of theodicy he states:

“The HIV/AIDS virus is transmitted by a process of fluid exchange, which effectively means either by sexual intercourse (both homosexual and heterosexual) or by intravenous injections by drug users and haemophiliacs. And sometimes, by a bizarre amalgam of both sex and drugs....” (2005:33)

This expression of the process of HIV transmission completely ignores the infection of babies by HIV positive mothers, while it draws attention with its emotive language on sexual practices (implied promiscuity) and drug abuse. Whilst it is true that drug abuse and homosexual practices were a significant factor in the early spread of HIV/AIDS in the West, other forms of transfer have resulted in human beings being infected who have no interaction with these modes of contagion. Such emotive and short sighted statements are likely to cause increased stigmatization for HIV/AIDS sufferers, lead to further reticence to admission of HIV positive status among human beings resulting in more innocent infections, shorter life of lower quality of life and greater suffering both for the HIV positive individual and their families and communities. Carlton also demonstrates his personal biases when he states

“Added to these, is the critical factor of ignorance and a cavalier indifference to consequences, especially in parts of Africa...” (2005:34)

And yet, one has only to consult the literature to find widespread concern, action, commitment, communication, medical assistance, pleas for funding for AIDS abatement and treatment programmes in Africa etc. Such personal and ill-informed worldviews, published as a serious attempt at grappling with questions of theodicy, are highly detrimental to the role of human beings who are grappling and wrestling with the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, its victims and the resultant suffering in this time of the Third Testament, where God is moving through his Spirit in negotiation with the Scriptures and the existential context in which these human beings live.

Liberation theology re-interprets Scripture and brings the interpretation more in line with the spirit of Christianity. A theology of HIV/AIDS can benefit from the groundwork that has been set in Liberation theology as there are parallels in that both deal with the underprivileged and oppressed whom the world at large rejects.

In the light of previous comments I have made in this thesis, I would like to emphasise that God cannot be made responsible for HIV/AIDS. Human beings are co-responsible and co-accountable as has again been highlighted in this study. Yet some learning points can be gleaned from liberation theology, especially, if human beings engage in a sensible negotiation approach when engaging, wrangling or wrestling with Scripture in light of the mystery of the way in God, human beings and nature, in their own way, interact in the wholesome multidimensional, multi-coloured and multi-layered negotiation process of gaining meaning. A Theology of HIV/AIDS asks human beings to reconsider the mandate the Jesus gave i.e. set the oppressed free, healed the sick and preached the good news. Why? In order for them to become whole and dignified human beings as God intended when he created them; to be free from bondage and fetters of rejection and prejudice with a hope for eternal life where God will dry their tears and they will experience the glory and freedom of the compassionate Father and the fellowship of other human beings. In this way, bringing human beings into a new revelation of the interconnectedness and radical difference of: God, human beings and the natural world, within the intersecting grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation (=cross and resurrection), renewal of everything (through the Holy Spirit) and consummation.

But this theology also asks Christians to come alongside their suffering brothers and sisters and be united in pain and suffering, so that it is not an 'us-them' situation but a 'we are in this together-attitude' as the Christians – as part of Christ's body – go on in the given mission to preach, feed and heal as they get out of their buildings and into the streets to take the Bread of Life in its strongest sense of being material to those who needed it in their extremity. The love of God, the passion of Christ, needs to be kindled in the souls of Christians through the work of the Holy Spirit in order for them to go on and do the job. The avenue for this includes a Systematic Theology of HIV/AIDS that looks anew at what it means to be human, what it means to suffer, to die, to love, to be rejected, and to look at the role of God, the Holy Spirit and the risen Christ in all material and spiritual aspects. In Pastoral Theology, aspects such as cultural and social stigmatization must be handled within families and communities, further discrimination against

women, poverty and other related issues which are mentioned in this thesis also are impacted by Pastoral Theology. The purpose is to bring hope and dignity to those who have been denied by society their God-given dignity as image bearers of Christ.

Before reconciliation between human beings could happen, i.e. between the 'pure' in-group and the 'impure' HIV-infected out-group, as some people with a binary mindset would put it, reconciliation within oneself and between oneself and God, between oneself and other human beings and between oneself and the natural created world must first occur, through the action, (leading – prompting – guiding) of the Holy Spirit. It is imperative for a process of reconciliation that human beings face their own prejudices, fear, hatred or what ever emotions they experience and that they face 'the other' in a relationship. This process of exposure wherein human beings become vulnerable in themselves and towards others, forms part of the healing process and the knitting together between God, oneself, and other human beings.

This process inevitably creates a certain amount of tension as the outcome is never predictable and a certain amount of risk-taking is necessary. Reconciliation is imperative for transformation to happen which in itself is a prerequisite for the consummation. Lederach points out that:

“..reconciliation is about the transformation of people and their relationships. It means change, moving from isolation, distance, pain, and fear toward restoration, understanding, and growth. As shown often in the Bible story, the basic purpose of God acting in history is reconciliation. All things are being brought together (Col 1:20)” (1999:131).

There is always a tension in Christian hope and believers amidst this tension are partakers in the bringing in of the consummation process in the here and now. In the words of Bosch, discussing and developing a concept attributed to Kasemann²⁵:

²⁵ (from Kasemann, E., 1980. *The Eschatological Reign of God, in WCC, pp61-71*)

“Christian hope is both possession and yearning, repose and activity, arrival and being on the way. Since God’s victory is certain, believers can work both patiently and enthusiastically, blending careful planning with urgent obedience....The reign of God has already come, is coming, and will come in fullness. It is because God already rules and because we await the public manifestation of his rule that we may, in the here and now, be ambassadors of his kingdom. Christians can never be people of the status quo. They pray, ‘Your kingdom come...on earth as in heaven!’ and interpret this both as a petition to God and as a challenge to themselves to attack evil structures around them.” (2005: 508).

My thinking is that we should not focus on why suffering occurs, but rather, on how God wants human beings to respond to those who suffer. How God wants to reconcile and unite human beings in suffering in order to bring about cohesion between human beings – an interwovenness, where human beings reach out and care for their neighbours regardless of religious predisposition, as is evident in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-36. Through being a neighbour to one who is suffering God is encountered. This concept of community is, in a certain way, prevalent in traditional African Religion and espouses the spirit of Jesus’ teaching. God is encountered when human beings love themselves and love other human beings – when they are in contact with themselves, accept themselves, love themselves, love others as themselves and reach out unselfishly towards others in order to bring about wholeness, dignity and healing within others in reconciliatory acts. Reconciliation must come to pass between God, human beings and nature where the union becomes so strong that God becomes all in all.

And yes, God is Wholly Other but also the Same and this sameness will, in the consummation, be increased and fulfilled, but in the here and now, we can agree with Martin Buber, the Jewish existentialist:

“Of course God is the ‘wholly Other’; but He is also the wholly Same, the Wholly Present. Of course He is the Mysterium Tremendum that appears and overthrows; but He is also the mystery of the self-evident, nearer to me than my I.” (1958:7)

A theology for HIV/AIDS cannot be adequately developed from the viewpoint of a quarter, half or three quarter Gospel, because the full story and full Gospel of the Commonwealth of God, is intertwined with and expressive of the four grand acts of

God. This is not only directed to and embodied in communities of faith but is directed to and embodied in other societal institutions and organisations. Thus every pocket and package, context and situation commonly regarded as unholy and holy, slime and muck, waste, sanctified and wonderful, despoiled, grime, sickness and wellness, mysteriously has to do with the Commonwealth of God and is mysteriously part of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment.

When approaching the problem of the relationship between God, human beings and the created biotic world in the midst of HIV/AIDS, it is important to take into consideration that mysterious simultaneous connection and otherness or difference between God, human beings and the physical organic world, which is interwoven with the foursome awareness in human beings of being created (being there-ness), being reconciled in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (being thus and thus-ness), being renewed through the Spirit (being active and actual-ness) and being involved in the processes and events directed to the future consummation and fulfilment (being this and whereto-ness). (van Niekerk 2006:371–373).

Focusing on any one aspect of the full or foursome Gospel, such as an exclusive emphasising of, either Jesus Christ (reconciliation), or the Holy Spirit (renewal), or God the creator (creation), or God the fulfiller of everything (consummation), limits the negotiation and interaction that can be held in the deliberation between the evil and suffering encountered in HIV/AIDS to just one aspect of God's grand acts. Similarly, limitations occur with a half or three quarter gospel. It is only in the light of the full gospel that a truly satisfying, valid, coherent and multidimensional dialogue or interaction can be entered into.

Without this openness to the full Gospel, the value of the fivesome awareness in a human being's daily life which make a human being aware of, (a) their creatureliness, (b) aware of his/her own sinful tendencies, (c) with the realisation of salvation and the liberating effect of reconciliation and forgiveness of the Supreme Goodness, (d) in the renovating, renewal, empowering and enabling of the Life-giving Spirit which guides, enables and enthuses hope in the (e)

consummation and life-filling which has already started in the here and now. These awareness's are valuable because both the HIV/AIDS sufferer and the faith counsellor, friend, medical worker, family member or carer can begin to move forward with belief in themselves, belief in other human beings, belief in God and belief in the natural biotic world, in the knowledge of his/her role, place, security of God's grand acts. With this understanding of the fivesome awareness, the awareness of an HIV/AIDS sufferer's creatureliness automatically leads the sufferer to realise the limitation and finitude of this earthly life. This is finite and limited irrespective of HIV/AIDS. The viral infection becomes then a point of detail and duration of longevity rather than an introduction of death that did not previously exist for human beings before the HIV infection.

This development of fivesome awareness in the light of the full gospel, also creates an understanding in a human being of their sinful tendencies. As sin and evil are damage done to God, human beings and the physical-organic environment, this brings a realisation of the importance of taking to one's self God's grand act of reconciliation in the salvific and reconciliatory enactment of the cross and the liberative empowerment of the resurrection experience and through this the power of the supreme goodness of God in forgiveness. By accepting that forgiveness is given, has been purchased through God's grand act of the cross and resurrection, the HIV/AIDS victim is able to separate themselves from self doubt, self blame, self chastisement and begin to express belief in self, belief in other human beings, belief in God and belief in the natural created world. This acceptance of forgiveness is crucial for the acceptance of the renovating, renewing, empowering and enabling of the Life-giving Spirit and through this the HIV/AIDS sufferer can begin to see his/her participation in the movement towards the consummation and fulfilment which has already started in the here and now.

In the context of this discussion it is possible to see a move towards a theology of HIV/AIDS developing. This is done through bringing together the various angles of this thesis to synthesise a meaningful tool which could serve the interests of the HIV/AIDS infected human being, faith counsellors, carers, friend, medical worker,

or family member and be of value in reducing the suffering, particularly mental suffering, of those impacted by HIV/AIDS.

6.3 Scripture and HIV/AIDS: an interface

In John 3:16, we read that God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Why? Bringing about his work of reconciliation, renewal and restoration, God reconciled human beings to himself in the cross and the resurrection of Christ. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus present human beings with the lifelong task of the daily enactment of reconciliation towards other people as co-workers of the Holy Spirit. 1 John 4:8 makes it quite clear that born again followers will love with the love of God, and with the passion of Christ who gave himself for sinful human beings. Love, being the love of God, the love of self, the love of other human beings and the love of the created natural order, means affirming other human beings regardless of culture, religion and gender. Jesus offered salvation to human beings as they need to be saved from themselves, their fear, their anxieties, their sin etc., and as followers, Christians are invited and commanded to partake in this work of reconciliation and salvation. And Christians are equipped for this task by the empowering and strengthening of the Holy Spirit. Reconciliation needs to happen within human beings within themselves, between human beings of the same and different cultural, gender and religious predispositions because human beings are interconnected and interrelated. With such reconciliatory actions prejudices and stigmatization would be removed and thus, conceptually speaking, would imply the consummation breaking into this time and into the experience of those who are reconciled. Human beings need to become involved in this process of reconciliation, as co-creators with God, in the process of ongoing creation ('creatio continua') in order to establish the fulfilling consummation whereby God, human beings and nature would be united and God's glory will be all encompassing.

In the sufferings of Job, Job experienced the presence of God as is evident in Job 42. Previously his experience of God was indirect and with his sufferings, he wanted his accuser, God, to appear. When God spoke to him and he experienced

God directly within his sufferings and pain, this experience made him recant his earlier statements about God – as is evident in Job 42(5-6) which implies that Job realised his creatureliness and that, as he is a creature, a mere mortal, he is unlike God. The suffering Job experienced was completely overshadowed by the presence of God. This seems very much like the first step in the fivesome awareness process, where an individual becomes aware of his/her creatureliness.

In the book of Tobit, God is present in human suffering through an intermediary. Tobit wanted release from life as he expressed a desire for freedom through release from suffering and through the angelic intermediary God was present as a healer and a helper. When Moses expressed a death wish in Numbers 11:15 God commanded Moses to gather other human beings around himself as support. God is in the suffering, as his Spirit is all pervasive and sometimes he uses other human beings as intermediaries for support and strength.

Obviously, the Bible does not speak of HIV/AIDS directly, but it does speak to HIV/AIDS as it brings the reader to negotiate, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the readers knowledge and understanding of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the message relevant to HIV/AIDS when the reader seeks through consensible negotiation this meaningful interaction. Clearly this is influenced by the reader's sense making approach towards texts, theories, natural processes, human doings, good and evil, and suffering. In the case of HIV/AIDS, a close parallel can be drawn between HIV/AIDS today and leprosy in the Bible, which simplifies the negotiation process that the reader must have with the text. However, it is critically important that the Spirit is allowed to draw the reader outside of the direct linkage with leprosy in the Bible, as there is much that can be used in synthesising an understanding of the interface between Scripture and HIV. Pauw (in Jensen 2008:35) contributes to this concept:

“Christians believe that Scripture's particular demands and promises somehow reflect the purpose and reality of God, but they also trust that the same Spirit who illuminates Scripture also brings them into a fundamental interrelatedness with the entirety of God's creation. Listening to this larger voice of the Spirit may involve joining with people of other faiths to address common problems too big for any single religious community to handle. Whether it is... the HIV/AIDS epidemic... Christian commitment to the

demands of their own Scripture can be manifested in banding together and standing in solidarity with readers of other Scripture, a central guide, in addition to the rule of love, must be the freedom and beneficence of the Spirit as the giver of all life.”

Pauw’s comment is critically important to consider because apart from the perceptive observation of the need for different faith groupings to join together in the face of issues, such as HIV, that are too big for any single faith group to tackle alone, Pauw uses the term “readers of other Scripture” which essentially recognises the inherent value of the Scriptures of other faith systems. Just as there is an interface between the Christian Scriptures and HIV/AIDS, so there also is an interface between the Scriptures of other faith groups and HIV/AIDS.

The practical outworking of this can be seen in the outcome of a meeting of senior Hindu religious leaders on 18 June 2008 where they signed a joint declaration pledging to raise awareness and work to overcome discrimination. A key aspect of this declaration is:

“Recognise the need to incorporate HIV information in appropriate ways into our discourses, our rituals, our festivals, our religious education and training of future leaders of our faith;...”
(www.cabsa.co.za/newsite/DisplayPage.asp?Id=402; accessed on 22 July 2009)

Thakrar (2008:8) states that Hinduism does not have a “common doctrine nor a single scripture” and places the focus for Hindus on correct practice rather than correct belief. Therefore, the joint declaration by the Hindu leaders on 18 June 2008 reflects that, correct practice will now include HIV relevant teaching. It is clear from the declaration’s statement on human suffering:

[Hindu Leaders] “...Recognise that the values of Hinduism compel us to respond to the human suffering caused by HIV and AIDS in all communities...”
(www.cabsa.co.za/newsite/DisplayPage.asp?Id=402)

(Accessed 22 July 2009)

that in contemplating orthopraxy for a Hindu, the Hindu leadership find values through their Scripture which they are able to negotiate into meaning for humanitarian action.

In the worldview of Islam, HIV/AIDS has impacted the understanding of Islamic Scripture:

“... how the Islamic discourse of a Muslim NGO in Cape Town, Positive Muslims (PM), which caters for Muslims living with HIV/AIDS has challenged the understandings and approaches to HIV/AIDS of the mainstream ‘ulama’ by combining a reinterpretation of core Islamic scriptures with understandings drawn from human rights discourses.” (Bangstad 2007:59)

And in this situation, we can see that from within this strand within Islam, sensible negotiation of the Scriptures of Islam has occurred, which has changed the understanding of the Scriptures in relation to HIV/AIDS. As Christians, we believe that the Holy Spirit is ubiquitous and it is my belief that such sensible negotiation of the Islamic Scriptures by practicing holders of the Islamic faith, represents the work of the Holy Spirit in negotiation with the Islamic reader and the Islamic Scripture.

6.4 Ministry as social and cultural response

Both social and cultural factors enhanced the spread of the HIV/AIDS disease and therefore, in order to curtail the problem, these factors need to be taken into consideration. An effective pastoral response from the religious community would include various actions such as: discussions on how to tackle the poverty and gender inequality issues with governments, health organisations etc, discussions with church leaders and various religious groups in order to promote and ensure the well-being of the whole infected human being in their respective societies, and, education and support for whole families which are affected by the infection of a family member. Home-based care programs, counselling group programs and foster families for orphaned children need to be established where they do not already exist.

In various cultural groups, women need to submit to male dominance with the resultant effect that they are powerless in sexual relations and the risk of HIV infection is thus higher for them. Liberation for women in these circumstances is crucial. Such women should be given a voice with regards to sexual relations and this is an aspect which needs to be addressed from a theological viewpoint, both pastorally and systematically. It would seem that some work is done currently in South Africa, but a more integrated approach would be beneficial. Bate (in Keenan 2000:213-221) emphasises the importance of medical and psychological care:

“It is worth noting that healing refers to two related but distinguishable clinical tasks: the establishment of effective control of disordered biological and psychological processes, which I shall refer to as the ‘curing of disease,’ and the provision of personal and social meaning for life problems created by sickness which I shall refer to as the ‘healing of illness.’ HIV/AIDS exhibits aspects of being an illness and a disease.Healing is an essential ministry today, especially in a world beset by cultural, social, and psychological sickness.....So we need to look for ways to set up ‘caring structures’ which help people to cope and live human and Christian lives. Counseling, group therapy for HIV positive people, and family-based care for people with AIDS would be examples of effective healing..... the underlying problem is a cultural one and so the long-term effective remedy needs to operate on this level.”

In the modern Western society, the human body (physical) takes precedence over the spiritual. However, as Christians we must insist on the wholeness of the entire human being, in all aspects of his/her being, and endeavour to recover the spiritual dimension of human life. Religious conviction is an essential part of healing a human being from a spiritual viewpoint. Whilst from a Christian worldview, it may be preferable for a person to be a Christian, in times of suffering, and therefore for HIV/AIDS sufferers, there is benefit in a strong faith based response from the human being that suffers, irrespective of the faith group with which the sufferer identifies. This approach, which forms the underlying assumption of this thesis, stands in stark contrast to the worldview of scholars such as Pratt, who believe that the loss of the ‘supernatural’ i.e. God, does not rob life of its meaning. His belief is that:

‘...science eliminated ‘supernatural’ phenomena because of a basic incompatibility of presupposition, and that without any implications for man’s

experience, all talk involving 'the supernatural' has become in consequence meaningless." (1970: 20)

A Christian worldview entails an action of becoming radically different, not just in a belief system, but also in action, and the acquisition of a 'revolutionary spirit', just as the founder Jesus Christ also displayed such a spirit and stood against the oppressive structures and diseases of his time. This type of spirit is only available through the working of the Holy Spirit and cannot be acquired by human means because it would 'reek' of 'being phoney and unreal' and would be exposed for what it is, during and in, the consummation. Bosch touches on this process to an extent and calls this process a new perspective as follows:

"The new perspective is not merely a variation on an earlier position but something fundamentally different...Instead of seeking to know God's future world plan, we ask about the Christian's involvement in the world...The world is no longer viewed as a hindrance, but as a challenge. Christ has risen, and nothing can remain the way it used to be. It was a stupendous victory of the evil one to make us believe that structures and conditions in this world will not or need not really change, to have considered political and societal powers and other vested interests inviolable, to have acquiesced in conditions of injustice and oppression, to have tempered our expectation to the point of compromise, to have given up the hope for a wholesale transformation of the status quo, to have been blind to our own responsibility for and involvement in a world en route to its fulfilment. In assuming a critical stance vis-à-vis the authorities, prescriptions, traditions, institutions, and ideological predilections of the existing world order, we are to become a ferment of God's new world." (2005: 509)

Christianity needs to lead the way as the alternative response in an apathetic world, reaching out and touching people by working towards wholeness within human beings, between human beings, between human beings and the physical-organic environment as well as between human beings and God. In this way, Christians will be a blessing and bring a blessing as part of the reconciliation process. In leading this alternative response, it is imperative that Christianity seeks to join hands with other faith groups, drawing together a faith community focused on action, action to reduce suffering, poverty, stigmatisation, segregation etc. A faith community which stands together and in support of the HIV/AIDS victim, integrating into the holistic framework of care for HIV/AIDS victims, bringing the

Spiritual and social aspects which are often so lacking in the lives of HIV/AIDS victims, working alongside the medical and social services.

HIV/AIDS currently has a higher rate of incidence amongst Black South Africans (given by the HSRC²⁶ as 12.9% for Black Africans, 6.3% for whites, 6.1% for Coloured and 1.6% for Indian [Karim 2005:63]) but it is also this community that suffers the greatest deprivation and poverty. Thus Karim (2005:85-86) indicates that there is a shorter mean time to AIDS after HIV infection in Africa than in Western countries, which he links possibly to poverty but states "... all the evidence points to the disease increasing poverty and misery at the household level" (Karim 2005:406) and also discusses the primary force of poverty in the sale of sexual services for survival (Karim 2005:150). This information is shared to demonstrate that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a complicated socio-economic issue that cannot be solved by condoms alone (although they obviously help), but can only be solved through a holistic approach, where the many contributory causes are addressed along with medial intervention and spiritual/social support. Faith groups are powerful and have significant resources and presence at the community level. By learning to speak from one mouth on HIV/AIDS and speaking out in love and compassion for HIV/AIDS sufferers, speaking out in truth to help educate and reduce disease transmission and speaking out in action against poverty, faith groups through their ministry, can be aligned to bring an order change in the physical, social and cultural response in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

6.5 Spirituality and suffering

The worldview and particularly the religious beliefs a human being holds, determine how they perceive and handle their suffering. Religious beliefs can be a source of support, when a human being experiences suffering, even if these beliefs do not reduce the suffering. For example, Akiba was a Rabbi who was

²⁶ HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa)

tortured to death for his part in the Bar Kokeba revolt. In his dying moments the time came for the saying of the shema. Akiba is reported to have said the shema and laughed. When asked why he laughed in his agony, Akiba replied that all his life he had felt sad when he recited the shema because he could not understand when he could fulfil the command of loving God with all his soul, but now as he gave his life and said the shema he understood. (Bowker 1990:36)

Human beings with a religious predisposition are seemingly better able to handle suffering as they appear able to make sense of the events in their lives and Christians in particular have an eschatological hope which facilitates positive mental health. O'Conner (in Meier 2005:17) supports this observation with:

“Quantitative and qualitative research indicate that religion and spirituality can help those with severe medical conditions better cope with their illness, and can offer hope in the midst of challenges.”

The religious beliefs of a human being with regards to death, influence their behaviour. When death is viewed as a transformation or as an after-life, human beings seem to assimilate the suffering in a more positive way. Religious rituals may also assist as a human being experiences a reassuring communal spirit which helps in countering feelings of loneliness and rejection. Having said this, it is also true that some human beings question and reject spiritual beliefs and become bitter when they experience suffering.

How human beings view God and their relationship with God, affects how they experience and deal with suffering, for instance, if they see God as a God that judges their deeds, suffering might lead them to self-blame as they interpret the suffering as punishment for their actions with the resultant effect that instead of having just physical suffering, they also experience psychological suffering.

Through the process of suffering, spiritual growth could also occur as a human being might reflect on the meaning of life. It would seem that when human beings face up to their mortality, a more purposeful predisposition with regards to life and relationships develop. Death serves to counter the over inflated opinion certain human beings have about themselves as 'gods' in their own right as human beings

come face to face with their mortality when confronted with death. Such extreme situations sometimes open the heart of human beings to accept that, even in God's radical otherness, there is an interconnectedness between God – human beings – natural physical organic cosmic world, and from this and through the Holy Spirit, develop a relationship with their Creator. Relationships to God and other human beings might improve as a human being in his/her sense-making process reflects and evaluates past and future prospects and situations and might turn away from self-centredness. This developed awareness of the God – human being – created world interrelationship can lead to a new strength, new resolve within the human being as he/she begins to grasp the full Gospel of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation (cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ), renewal and consummation which can transform the human being.

In such situations, a Christian counsellor – who would be culturally sensitive whilst working for the holistic wellbeing of the whole human being without abusing the trust and vulnerable position of that human being – is needed. The worldview of the human being needs to be explored and a situation of acceptance for this worldview must be established together with the cultural and spiritual context within which the human being operates, as a human beings belief system influences his/her thought processes and actions. The psychological process encountered by human beings differs when faced with death and some may turn to aggression, violence etc, this needs to be dealt with anyway as the well-being of the individual, from a Christian perspective, is more important than the negative or anti-social behaviour which human beings might exhibit.

It is very important to be a companion to human beings in the process of dying and to assist them to approach death from a viewpoint which is congruent to their personal values and lifestyle. It is imperative to enable them to die with dignity in an atmosphere of care. We cannot escape death; we cannot master it and so we cannot recognize ourselves within it. It is alien to us, as an offensive opposite to life. But, as E. Jüngel (in Fiddes 1992:207) points out, because we cannot escape death it is equally true that death belongs intimately to us, he explains:

'No one can rob us of our death', for it belongs to our life from the beginning, and (as we have already seen) we orientate our sense of passing time by its boundary. Thus we experience death as something, in Jüngel's fine phrase, 'most alien and yet most our own'. It is strange to us, and yet also reaches back into our life with an estranging power.

HIV Infected human beings will be emotionally 'confused' and turmoil is to be expected with regard to their feelings as fear, anger, bitterness, depression and possibly shame and many more emotions will surface during these times of psychological suffering. This can be worse than the physical suffering. Reconciliation, acceptance and understanding is critical during this period in order to enhance the personal well-being of the individual, dealing with various emotions and the building up of self-esteem and dignity within the human being, as well as reconciliation between the individual and the community, depending on the specific conditions of the situation.

This disease affects those around the infected human beings also as they too experience suffering and need to work through issues in order to equip them to deal with themselves, others in the community, the infected human being as well as their concepts or relations on a spiritual level. They need to be touched with the love of Christ and they also need to be inspired with a hope for the future and a lifting out of fatalism or the dregs of despair. Therefore, society needs healing from HIV/AIDS as it affects each and everyone but on different levels. God created human beings in community and therefore our lives are lived out in community. This implies that when a neighbour goes through the suffering of HIV/AIDS, this invariably has a ripple effect on other human beings.

6.6 The importance of the dynamics of the process and pattern of 'faith is faith is faith is faith' as: believing God, believing yourself, believing other human beings and believing the physical-organic environment.

Paul in his letter to the Galatians, makes it very clear that a human being is not justified by the law and that God's blessings comes by faith (Gal 2:16). And as the

righteous person will live by faith, Paul affirms in 2 Corinthians 3:6 that, only the Spirit can give this life, and hence, enable a human being to become whole as part of the fivesome wholesome process. Faith, as a life-giving process, consequently enables a human being to become united with God, other human beings and the physical-organic environment, as there is unity in Christ and all become one in Christ through the Spirit until God becomes all and in all with the finalisation of the consummation.

Human beings cannot get right with God by adhering to any religious rituals or laws but only through faith which is the pattern of “I believe God” and “I believe myself” and “I believe my human neighbours” and “I believe my natural neighbours” (=animals, plant and things). However, when a human being is justified it implies that he/she receives grace from God in that he/she are redeemed from sin through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection. This is made real in the life of the human being who has faith by the working, empowering and renewing actions of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer who enables such a believer to become progressively united with God, other human beings and the physical-organic environment. And by being progressively united with God, other human beings and the physical-organic environment, the human being with faith is experiencing concretely the outworking of “I believe God and I believe myself and I believe my human neighbours and I believe my natural neighbours as they become progressively closer and more connected, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

What am I saying? It means that God seemingly provided a way for justification through faith for Abraham which is different from the way understood in a mirroring sense to be given to Christian believers through Scriptures, such as is detailed by Paul in Romans 3. Here justification is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; yet in Romans 4 we read that Abraham was justified through faith because “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:3). In negotiation of these Scriptures faith seemingly was and is equally available to Abraham and other believers alike, and was not conditional on Scriptural definition as Abraham did not have the Scriptures to gain that definition. This righteousness,

given to both Abraham and believers through the ages and today, is a gift from God, where God decided not to hold the sins of human beings against them but to acquit them; and as with justification, reconciliation was also achieved through the work of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the work of God through the renewal work of the Holy Spirit which puts in place the certainty that God will complete his grand acts in the consummation.

Faith, being – I believe God and I believe myself and I believe my human neighbours and I believe my natural neighbours, and believing the foursome grand acts of God, leads human beings through a fivesome awareness process in order to achieve the end-goal of ultimate perfection when all is in God and God is All in All. Without faith in the foursome grand acts of God which include the salvific, reconciliatory and renewal aspects, the consummation cannot be personally and experientially made real.

Faith is not a nebulous feeling, but is a concrete reality and thus must lead to dynamic action and therefore deeds as the Lord Jesus explains in his analogy of the two builders and their houses (Matt 7:21). The Lord Jesus shows clearly that it is not about dead faith which is religious words, rituals, songs or scriptural verses – although these may be important pointers in faith, but about obeying and doing the Father's will, which is to love God as well as to love and serve others. This extends to the whole created order, human beings as well as God's physical – organic world as everything created by God has a special significance in God's realm and should be cared for. This means discerning through the Holy Spirit and in negotiation with clues, hues and snippets, ideas and images, the practical outworking of this love in the life of a particular human being in their situation as their life unfolds. Thus love, thinking, feelings and apportioning of justice are also directly directed to God, to oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic environment.

Faith is grounded in all four of God's grand acts of creation, reconciliation, renewal and fulfilment, as revelatory acts portrayed in the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures. From the experiential processes of faith, the close connection and radical otherness of God, human beings and the created natural environment, is the

irrupting and breaking into the life-world of human beings through the work of the Holy Spirit. Human beings cannot be reconciled to God by having 'faith in faith' but only by believing God. This is by having faith in God, faith in themselves, faith in other human beings and faith in the created natural world. This type of faith leads to action because in such an experiential pattern of faith, a human being endeavours to work towards the living out and enacting of the power of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus towards other human beings and the immediate surrounding natural environment. We should never forget that the cross and the resurrection of Jesus are God's main salvific tools used by the Holy Spirit in this world.

Faith must be dynamic, for if faith is not dynamic, then it is isolated from the living God and from the caring Father, crucified and resurrected Jesus and working Holy Spirit. If faith is not dynamic, it is static. but God is active in progressing God's creation towards the consummation and so static faith is like a photograph rather than a movie. It reflects just an instant that was, rather than a story that is unfolding.

'Dynamic' faith is explained by Wiersbe as:

"Rahab could have had dead faith, a mere intellectual experience. Or she could have had demonic faith, her mind enlightened and her emotions stirred. But she exercised dynamic faith: her mind knew the truth, her heart was stirred by the truth, and her will acted on the truth. She proved her faith by her works." (2007:866)

Van Niekerk is of the opinion that faith is given in *creation*, drifts away through *sin* but is *reconciled (converted)* and put on the road of *renewal* through the Spirit to its *fulfilment* at the end of time in the new heaven and the new earth. (Van Niekerk 2006:376-379) And as we live in the time of the Spirit, we live in a time of *renewal* of faith, belief and trust. What is critical for this thesis is the effect that this renewal should have on the relationship between the Christian co-worker of the Spirit and the HIV positive human person. Jantzen (in Nelson 1994:310) states:

“Like St Francis, the church needs to stop holding its holy nose and take the men and women with AIDS and HIV into its arms and learn from them to see Christ.”

The hope shared by all three monotheistic religions is of a coming Kingdom, as has been shown above, where God will reign and all suffering will cease. According to Judaism, Islam as well as Christianity, death is seen as a gateway to a new beginning. This concept is evident to a certain extent in traditional African religion as well where the joining of the ancestors is experienced as a continuation of the being of the human being, albeit, on a different level. From a pastoral viewpoint, these types of belief systems enhance the healing process and well-being of human beings as the individual can make sense out of the process, with sensitive guidance and counselling, which take into account the belief system of the affected human beings and their role in society.

The Christian hope is evident in the removal of evil and suffering by the redeeming power of the Lamb of God within God grand acts of creation, reconciliation (cross and resurrection of Jesus), renewal of everything (through the Holy Spirit) and in the fulfilment and consummation. The book of Revelation, in the Christian Scriptures is of particular importance as it gives suffering human beings the assurance that, despite all the evil and suffering, nothing can negate God’s providence and even that suffering forms part of God’s ultimate plan and God is therefore in control. And regardless of what happens in this life, it is not the end because there is an eternal life. What is crucial, for the Christian, is the unspeakable glory of God and that God:

“...has an eternal plan, and that that plan will be realized regardless of human evil. What is important is for us to focus on that plan. If we do, Revelation assures us that we will be able to endure whatever ill may occur in this transitory age, and in the end we will have eternal salvation.” (Sinclair 1992:156)

In the last book of the Christian Scriptures the leaves of the trees which provide healing, are offered to all the nations (Rev: 22:2) just as everyone has been invited to partake of the offer of eternal salvation and this offer is inclusive rather than exclusive.

Suffering is seen as a normal part of life, according to Christian Scriptures, as is evident from Psalm 38(10-11), where the psalmist speaks of the fading of his strength and the rejection of his friends in his illness. The same predicament is described by Paul in Galatians 4(12-15), although the cause of Paul's suffering is not discussed. In both these cases, as well as others within both the Old and New Testament of the Christian Scriptures, suffering due to illness does not seem to be regarded as evil in itself. Harvey - in his analysis of Paul's sufferings - is of the opinion that suffering brings the sufferer closer to God with benefit to other human beings:

“But his [Paul] experience of suffering bringing the sufferer closer to Christ, causing an inward renewal and spilling over into benefits for others, caused him to write of it as something of positive value in itself; and this, it seems, is without precedent in any Jewish or pagan sources known to us, and is hard to parallel in the revered writings of any other major religion.” (1996:129)

This suffering for the benefit of other human beings, as espoused by Harvey, is in line with the concept of redemptive suffering according to Beker where Christians are called to move from apathy to sympathy and remove the suffering of the oppressed, and thus, be involved in redemptive suffering although suffering will only be completely resolved in God's eschatological reign:

“...suffering and hope are curiously intertwined in Christian life. For just as hope motivates Christians to suffer in the world for the sake of justice, so it enables them to endure the burden of tragic suffering. And this is so, because both forms of suffering are sustained by the knowledge that evil and death will not have the final word in God's world.” (1987:112-113)

Beker also states:

“The church, the new creation of God in the midst of the old creation, is called not only to endure suffering but also to engage suffering, to relieve the suffering caused by the world's injustice and idolatry. Therefore, the church is not allowed to interpret its suffering as tragic and meaningless or as a form of divine discipline or punishment” (1987:86)

As we see the church as the body of people who have faith in God, faith in themselves, faith in other human beings and faith in Gods created natural world, I

understand Beker to be saying that the church, i.e. the Christian, is called to be co-worker with Christ, in bringing the redemption that was achieved by God's grand act of reconciliation – the cross and resurrection of Christ – to other human beings, and the created natural world. Therefore, in enduring suffering to achieve this actually suffers redemptively for other human beings and the created natural world.

Redemptive suffering, for the sake of other human beings, calls for sensitivity as the process of grief is unique for each individual. And in order to travel on the spiritual journey with another human being, discernment is necessary in order to understand where the human beings find themselves to be before travelling together on this road of loneliness, lethargy, despair, sadness etc., towards psychological healing and an acceptance of the situation. This requires the acceptance of the human being of his/her humanness and relationship to God and to other human beings. Grief is a natural process and must be handled in a meaningful way in order for human beings to experience the fact that they do have a place in society and that they are important in the overall plan of God. They are created in the image of God and he cares for them in their individual situation. This forms part of the sense-making process and helps human beings to re-anchor.

6.7 Conclusion

God is inscrutable and as modern day human beings, we can conclude that, there are certain things about God which we can comprehend whilst there are other things which are incomprehensible and shrouded in mystery. We may come up with definitions of God's ways and plans but when all is said and done, we can only conclude that, God's ways are impenetrable, as aptly illustrated by Martens' discussion of the book of Job which ponders the problem of theodicy: How can a good God allow evil?

“Closely allied to the view that Job teaches the bankruptcy of orthodox wisdom is the view that the problem addressed by the book of Job is struggling with an understanding of the nature and ways of God. The general conception is that God is a righteous judge....While Job subscribes

to this view, there are moments in which Job charges that God is capricious...The purpose of the friends' speeches is to expose a naïve view of God. These men feel they know how God works....Job himself is reaching for something or someone greater than the definition of God given by these friends. But he is hardly prepared for the awesome event of God's appearance.....The answer to the mystery of God's ways is still partial at the end of the book, but now for Job the answer is adequate." (1994:176).

In a nutshell, this viewpoint of Martens sums up the gist of this thesis. There is still a tension between what we know about God and what we don't know, but having formulated a sense making God-human-worldview after considering viewpoints from various peoples and disciplines, we can conclude that the answer is adequate for the moment. God's Spirit is still working and he is still revealing God through, and in terms of God's four grand acts of creation reconciliation, renewal and consummation.

Witherington (2003:254) is of the opinion that creation and redemption are part of the same process:

"Creation has a place in the final order of redemption. There is a sort of Urzeit-Endzeit pattern here. The end will be as the beginning...It is after all the creation order that is being redeemed, and that redemption means the completion of God's original plans for creation."

According to the theology of John in the book of Revelation, God, as the author of life, is seen as the creator and sustainer of this life in which suffering as part of the process is inevitable. Human beings have a part to play in this drama of evil and suffering, since by faithful prayer, worship, witness and the living out of life in the Spirit in service and love, and in working to alleviate suffering, injustice and poverty, human beings can partake in the renewal process of, within and between human beings and the created natural world. Through this, human beings become co-participants with God by the working, and guidance, of the Spirit. These actions of human beings need to continue, as evil and suffering endures until the end. There is no place for fatalism in John's theology, as human beings participate in the process of alleviating suffering by the abovementioned actions. This call to these actions is not to be confused with salvation and redemption and the outworking of the Holy Spirit, which have been realised through the cross and

resurrection of Jesus Christ within God's grand acts of creation, redemption, renewal and consummation.

The comments made by Witherington with regards the Christian book of Revelation are in line with this thesis and could be used with great effect to validate points made in this thesis:

“John...would see most modern theodicies as incredibly naïve, not taking into account the depth of human and supernatural evil. His optimism would be grounded in grace, not in human nature, unlike most modern secular philosophies and self-help programs. The heart of the matter for John is the divine human encounter, not innate human ability or the nobility of human struggle. It is no accident that his work ends with the consummation of the divine human encounter, now without evil present any longer. The solution to the problem of evil, according to John, involves neither the dissolution of the Creator-creature distinction (or the absorption of the human into the divine) nor the denial of the reality of radical evil. Rather, it entails the transformation of the world and God's people into all that they were meant to be, which is to say into the likeness of Christ in the latter and the pre-fallen garden in the former. Until such time the most important things a believer is urged by John to do are (1) worship; (2) pray; (3) trust/believe; (4) witness, even by giving up one's life if need be; and (5) obey.” (2003: 258).

It would seem that this process, wrought by the Holy Spirit, highlights the fact that God's foursome grand acts create a fivesome awareness in human beings which starts with the awareness of their creatureliness and sinfulness. This leads to the realization that their only hope is the salvific work of the Lord Jesus in the cross and resurrection, made real for them by the working and guidance of the Holy Spirit which renew their minds and spirit in a continuous process until the consummation.

In 'The New Flatlanders' Eric Middleton explains his sense making process as:

“The Spirit reveals himself through the created order, in cosmology and physics, as well as through our own experience of his presence. Heaven is 'God's dimension of present reality'. A dimension, normally kept secret, a deposit, a gift for our encountering the Spirit, if we are willing. Perhaps chaos and disorder are like suffering. Inner healing then leads to a new wholeness and integration, unification between the Lord and ourselves if we

become a new creation in Jesus. Through him we can 'know the mind of God.'" (2002:157)

The above paragraph represents a Christian theological view upon the subject matter, but in what way can this work also provide a practical proposal that will allow this theological goal to be achieved? An attempt must be made to find a way to draw in the various faith groups because meaningful impact on HIV/AIDS will only be achieved from the faith community if that community is unanimous in its approach. From an African perspective, traditional healers and diviners would need to form part of a holistic and integrated approach in order to bring healing to a society ridden with HIV/AIDS.

When we consider the intersections of the various persuasions with evil and suffering, we are able to see that, despite the significant perceived differences between the religions, and irrespective of the opinions one may hold in respect of the veracity of the claims of the various faiths and over and above the diverse worldviews of their adherents, there is an overarching bond in the humanity of those who are suffering and those who are outside of the suffering looking in upon it. Each of the religions has a common thread. They attempt to help other human beings gain an elevated end state, which represents in some way, an integration with God or attainment of nirvana. Therefore, each religion has, in this respect, a similar goal. That goal dictates a need to work for the good of those who are part of that system. If this were not so then, why would any religion continue to grow? Those who were 'enlightened' by that particular faith would simply develop to their goal alone rather than attempt to proselytise and gain new converts to their system. This common thread could form an effective part of a methodology for a concerted co-operative interfaith endeavour towards the alleviation of evil and suffering and pointedly, towards the alleviation of the impact of HIV/AIDS worldwide. Irrespective of the different theologies and praxis that the various faith orientations espouse, it is the common bond of the fact that they attempt to advance humanity that offers the power to achieve a synergistic amalgam of faith groups. This does not propose a syncretistic approach which would be counter the existing religions and effectively just form yet another religion. Such a synergistic amalgam of faith groups can have a real positive impact on HIV/AIDS in terms of

both the pastoral care of the infected and the impacted, and the process of bringing control measures that become effective in reducing the rate of infection of human beings with this disease.

This proposal does not suggest that a syncretistic approach should be adopted, but simply, that an approach should be considered which transcends the barriers of religion, disease, culture and gender in order to enhance the well being of the human being created in the image of God. To move towards this, it is imperative that fundamentalist mirroring of the Scriptures of all religious persuasions as well as the modern interpretational approach to these Scriptures, give way to an approach of consensible negotiation, where the sense making view and experience *embodied and embedded in a text, theory, natural process and human doing* is consensibly dealt with on a similar level to the sense making view and approach of *the one doing the negotiation with the text (= Th, Np, Hudo)*. An interchange and exchange between the two sense making views and experiences percolates and fuses both sense making views and experiences into a compromise (co-promise) design from where clues, guidelines and yardsticks can consensibly be derived, extracted and taken over by other people in their text and theory formation and their description of natural processes and human doings. In all of this consensible negotiation process, the reader is guided by the action and interpretation of a third party in the process – the Holy Spirit. It is my belief that, as the Holy Spirit is ubiquitous, and that God loves all of his creation, people reading their non Christian Scriptures are also able to fully enter into consensible negotiation with those Scriptures through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This move to the approach of consensible negotiation in interacting with Scripture is fundamental to the process of dealing with HIV/AIDS and its concomitant suffering because only when the Spirit, the reader and the text are allowed to bring forth understanding relevant to today, can the crucial solidarity be gained between the various faith communities. And, as has been stated so many times in this thesis, because of the crucial role that the various faith systems have in guiding, forming and leading their adherents sense making approaches, worldviews and life choices, without the spiritual leaders of the faith communities understanding,

commitment, guidance and leadership in espousing a co-operative, collaborative, dynamic and vibrant approach to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the value and efficacy of the faith communities contribution to the HIV/AIDS pandemic will not be properly realised.

In such collaborative faith interactions, it is not necessary or required that faith groups surrender their unique beliefs and practices, but that they allow sensible negotiation to guide their praxis into new areas of collaboration, acceptance and confidence. So, a God-human-nature view and approach in which God, human beings and nature, in their own way, espouse through the mystery of their togetherness and difference, a wholesome multi-coloured and multi-layered multidimensionality could function as a collaborative force in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

This would still allow for the somewhat one-sided affirmation that the only way of salvation, from a Christian viewpoint, is through Jesus Christ, but, that God, who is sovereign, can according to God's will, save other human beings who have not accepted the cross and the resurrection of Jesus with the other grand acts of God as the full gospel story of salvation. Why? While God is Almighty and his thoughts are not our thoughts and we are given clues and hues and inklings of this possibility in the very old narrative of Abraham. From a Christian perspective however, we cannot go outside the parameters and perimeters of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures, which are in the most radical sense, portrayed in the full gospel of the four grand acts of God's creation, reconciliation in Jesus Christ, renewal through the Holy Spirit and the process of fulfilling acts of God leading to the fulfilment in what the Bible names the new heaven and new earth. The last word will remain for a Christian that salvation is given by God in which the cross and resurrection of Christ play a central role.

Christians cannot withdraw from the tensions apparent in the world. In coherence with the work of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the indwelling Spirit, they need to live out the love of Christ, in community, as disciples of Christ, impelled to become co-workers of the Holy Spirit in the era of the Spirit. Therefore bringing wholeness to other human beings and creation through interactive processes. By

the working in the life of a human being of the Holy Spirit who is life-giving, through the grace of God, a human being awakens to an experience of loving life and this experience deepens their experiences of life, God, other human beings and the created physical-organic environment. The more the Spirit increases in the life, thus making a person more aware of his or her created humanness, the more such a person exists, lives and loves and has an urge to reach out in love especially to suffering human beings. This is in parallel with the urge for the preservation of the cosmos etc. All the above is an expression of the mystery of the simultaneous close connection and radical difference of God, human beings and nature (= the physical-organic cosmic world). This whole life-giving process leads to the wholeness of a human being, as a 'human being is a human being through other human beings' and the created cosmos. This is evident in the high-priestly prayer of the Jesus in the narrative of John when he prayed that human beings should be part of him and God as everything should be united with God, which implies the fulfilment or consummation of everything. (John 17:22-24)

Both the physical-organic world and human beings are subject to death and decay and must be born again to eternal life, this is accomplished through the life-giving force of the Holy Spirit, being God's mediated presence in the world. The movement and work of the Holy Spirit is towards the consummation, which, by implication, is the encompassing and all-pervasive glory of God, brought about by the redemption and reconciliation of all things in and to God.

The new heaven and earth does not imply that God abandons the present created order, but instead, a continuation is evident in the fulfilment of God's plans for the universe. Nothing is wasted. Nothing is abandoned but both human beings and the created physical-organic environment are renewed in a new birth bound together in a unity of an all-encompassing God, enfolded in love and a culmination and fulfilment of potentiality for those who accepted the reign of God. Mercy is evident in the option granted to human beings. Human beings who choose against the Creator will find that their choice would also be respected in that they will not experience the presence of God. Genesis starts with a garden and:

“..the new heaven and earth are represented in the New Testament not only by a restored gardenbut also by a city. The city is the place of human community, creativity and technology and the ‘glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.’” (Alexander, 2004:172).

This community and fellowship is possible, as it is the fulfilment of God when God’s glory will be in all and with all. And yet, the God of the consummation is also the God who created human beings and the physical-organic environment. God, through the Holy Spirit, is the ‘Mastermind and Enabler’ of reconciliation between human beings and the created physical-organic environment. McGrath (2002:13) sees that:

“There is thus a created resonance between ourselves and the universe. We are enabled to hear the music of its creator and discern the hand of the creator within its beauty. It is part of the purpose of the creator that we should hear the music of the cosmos and, through loving its harmonies, come to love their composer.”

Within any great piece of music, the combination of certain notes singled out from the music at any one time would sound discordant and unmusical. Yet, because of the skill and knowledge of the composer, within the music, these notes combine to give sublime beauty. The great composer of life has created out of his creation something of sublime beauty and value, but from within that creation, we neither see the full picture nor understand the ultimate place and value of suffering within his ultimate symphony. Perhaps Job reflected the mystery of God’s ways when he said “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” (42:3b)

Bibliography

- Aaron, D., 2008. *In Their Own Words: voices of Jihad: compilation and commentary*. Santa Monica, CA : RAND
- Abdul-Rahman, M.S., 2008. *The Meaning and Explanation of the Glorious Qur'an (Vol 10)*. MSA Publication Limited
- Abraham, J., 2002. *Eve: Accused or Acquitted? A reconsideration of feminist readings of the creation narrative texts in Genesis 1-3*. Carlisle: Paternoster
- Achtemeier, P.J.; J.B., Green & M.M. Thompson, 2001. *Introducing the New Testament: It's literature and theology*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Ackermann, D., 2001. *Tamar's Cry: Re-reading an ancient text in the midst of an HIV/AIDS pandemic*. Stellenbosch: Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa
- Ahmed Ali, M., (Translator) 2005. *The Holy Koran*. Florida, United Muslim Foundation
- Alexander, D.; R.S. White, 2004. *Beyond Belief: Science, faith and ethical challenges*. Oxford: Lion Publishing plc
- al-Jawziyah, M.A.B.Q., Abdullah, A.R., 2003. *Healing with the medicine of the Prophet*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia ; Houston, TX : Darussalam
- Alter, R., 1996. *Genesis; transl. and commentary [by] Robert Alter*. N.Y., London: W.W. Norton
- American Red Cross Website (accessed 17 July 2009) *HIV Antigen Test*
http://www.wcredcross.org/bloodmobile/qa_hivantigen.html
- Ammicht-Quinn, R.; Hacker, H. (Eds), 2007. *AIDS*. London: SCM Press
- Amos, C., 2004. *The Book of Genesis*. Peterborough: Epworth Press
- Anderson, N., (Ed) 1975. *The World's Religions*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Andrews, E.H., 1986. *Christ and the Cosmos*. Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press
- Angha, M.S.M.S. 1996. *The Mystery of Humanity: tranquillity & survival*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc
- Archer, M.S., Collier, A., Porpora, D.V., 2004. *Transcendence: Critical Realism and God*. London: Routledge
- Arnold, C.E., 1987. "The Exorcism of Ephesians 6:12 in Recent Research: A critique of Wesley Carr's view of the role of evil powers in first century AD belief." *Journal for the study of the New Testament*. Issue 30: June 1987, pp71-87
- Arnold, C.E., 1993. Article "Power". in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), 1993. *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Atkinson, D.J., 1990. *The Message of Genesis 1-11: The dawn of creation*. Leicester: IVP.

- Augustinus, A., 2006. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21st century*. Brooklyn, NY: New City Press
- Aurobindo, S., 1971. *The Problem of Rebirth*, from Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library; Pondicherry India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Vol 16
- Autton, N., 1986. *Pain: An exploration*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.
- Ayoob, M., 1992. *The Qur'an and its Interpreters. Vol.2, The House of Ìmrañn*. Albany : State University of New York Press
- Ayoob, M., 2008. *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and politics in the Muslim world*. Singapore: NUS Press
- Bangstad, S., 2007. *Global Flows, Local Appropriations: facets of secularisation and re-Islamization among contemporary Cape Muslims*. Leiden: Amsterdam University Press
- Bare, C.W., 2001. *Do You Still Believe in the Devil?* Paducah, Ky.: Turner Pub. Co
- Barnett, P.W., 1993. Article "Apostle." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds),. *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Barnett, T.; Whiteside, A., 2002. *AIDS in the Twenty-First Century – Disease and Globalization*. Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Baroni, H.J. 2002. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*. New York : Rosen Pub. Group
- Barr, J., 1980. "The Fundamentalist Understanding of Scripture," in *Concilium, Oct 1980. Conflicting ways of Interpreting the Bible. 70-74*,
- Barr, J., 1993. *Biblical faith and Natural Theology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Barth, K., 1956. *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 1, Part 2. The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark
- Barth, K., 1961. *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 3, part 3. The Doctrine of Creation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark
- Barth, K., 1968. *The Epistle to the Romans*. London: Oxford University Press
- Barth, K., 1975. *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 1, Part 1. The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Barth, K., 1991. *Homiletics*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press
- Barth, K., 2004. *Church Dogmatics, Vol. 1, Part 1. The Doctrine of the Word of God*. London: T&T Clark International
- Barton, J.; Morgan, R., 1988. *Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Baruah, B., 2000. *Buddhist Sects and Sectarianism*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons
- Bauckham, R.J., *First Steps to a Theology of Nature*. *Evangelical Quarterly* 58, 1986, 229-244
- Bauckham, R., 1995. *The theology of Jürgen Moltmann*. Edinburgh: Clark

- Beasley-Murray, G.R., 1993. Article "Dying and Rising with Christ." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), 1993. *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Beker, J.C., 1987. *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical vision and the human predicament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Berkhof, L., 1996: *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co
- Berkouwer, G.C., 1971. *Dogmatische Studien. De Zonde. Oorsprong en kennis der Zonde. Band I*. Kampen: Kok
- Berlin, A. and Brettler, M.Z. (Ed), 2004. *The Jewish Study Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Berry, R.J., 1996. *God and the Biologist*. Leicester England: Apollos
- Blanchard, M.J.; Young, R.D. (Translators), 1998. *A Treatise on God Written in Armenian by Eznik of Kolb (floruit c.430-c.450)*. Leuven: Peeters Publishers
- Bland, R.M., 1966. *The Arabic Commentary of Yepheth Ben 'Ali on the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapters 1-6*. Berkeley: University of California
- Bloesch, D.G., 1992. *A Theology of Word and Spirit*. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press
- Blomberg, C.L., 2006. *From Pentecost to Patmos: Acts to Revelation an introduction and survey*. Nottingham: Apollos
- Blumenthal, D.R., 1993. *Facing the Abusing God: A theology of protest*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press
- Boneffoy, Y, Doniger, W., 1993. *Asian Mythologies; Edition: 2, illustrated*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press
- Bongmba, E.K., 2007. *Facing a Pandemic: The African Church and the crisis of AIDS*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press
- Bonhoeffer, D., 1959. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Translated from the German. London: Fontana Books.
- Boobbyer, P., 2000. *The Stalin Era*. London; New York: Routledge
- Bosch, D.J., 2005. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books
- Boteach, S., 1995. *Wrestling with the Divine: A Jewish response to suffering*. London: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Bowker, J., 1970. *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bowker, J., 1990. *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*. Cambridge (u.a.): Cambridge University Press
- Boyce, M., 1985. *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*. Leiden: E.J. Brill
- Boyce, M., 1987. *Zoroastrianism: a shadowy but powerful presence in the Judaeo-Christian world*. London: Dr William's Trust

- Boyce, M., 1990. *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Boyce, M., 2001. *Zoroastrians: their religious beliefs and practices*. London & New York: Routledge
- Braybrooke, M., 2002. *What We Can Learn from Hinduism*. Hampshire, UK: O Books
- Brown, I.L., 1987. *AIDS – A Modern Black Death?* *Ethics and Medicine*, 3:1
- Brueggemann, W., 1976. Article: “*Theology of Death*” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible – Supplementary Volume*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon
- Brueggemann, W., 1982. *Genesis*. Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press
- Brueggemann, W., 1997. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, dispute, advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- Brunner, E., Wyon: O., 1946. *Revelation and Reason: the Christian doctrine of faith and knowledge*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press
- Brunner, E., Wyon: O., 2002 *The Christian Doctrine of God*. Cambridge: J Clark
- Bryant, C.D., 2003. *Handbook of death & dying*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications
- Bryant, C.D., 2009. *Encyclopedia of Death & the Human Experience*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications
- Buber, M., 1958. *I and Thou*. Trans. Smith R.G., New York: Charles Scribner
- Bujo, B. Czerney, M., 2007. *AIDS in Africa: Theological reflections*. Nairobi, Paulines Publications,
- Bultmann, R., 1985. (Translated by Roy A. Harrisville). *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House
- Burke, M.T.; Chauvin, J.C.; Miranti, J.G. 2005. *Religious and Spiritual Issues in Counselling: Applications across diverse populations*. New York: Brunner-Routledge
- Burnett, D., 2002. *Clash of Worlds*. London: Monarch Books
- Calvin, J (1559) – (1970). *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Ed. McNeill, J.T; translated by Battles, F.L. Philadelphia: Westminster Press
- Campbell, C.; et al 2005. “The Impact of Social Environments on the Effectiveness of Youth HIV Prevention: A South African case study.” *AIDS Care* 17(4) pp471 –8.
- Campbell-Jack, C., McGrath, G.J., (Eds). 2006. *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. Leicester England: Intervarsity Press
- Carlton, E., 2005. *Dancing in the Dark: Reflections on the problem of theodicy*. Madison New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press
- Carr, W., 1997. *Handbook of Pastoral Studies: Learning and practising Christian ministry*. London: SPCK

- Carson, D.A., 1990. *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on suffering and evil*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Carus, P., 2004. *The History of The Devil and the Idea of Evil*. Whitefish, MT : Kessinger Pub.
- Chapman, G., 1994. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Sheffield: London Press Ltd
- Charles, R.H., 1917. *The Book of Enoch*. London: SPCK
- Charlesworth, J.H., Elledge, C.D., et al, 2006. *Resurrection: The origin and future of a Biblical doctrine*. New York : T&T Clark
- Choksy, J.K. 2002. *Evil, Good, and Gender: Facets of the feminine in Zoroastrian religious history*. Oxford/New York: Peter Lang
- Christian, C.W., 2003. *A Theological Argument for the Unity of the Human Being: An issue in evangelical theology*. DTh thesis Unisa: Pretoria (Unpublished)
- Clark, P., 1998. *Zoroastrianism: an introduction to an ancient faith*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press
- Clines, D.J.A. et al, 1978. "The Theme of the Pentateuch." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament – Issues*. 1978, Issue 5 January, pp10-11. Sheffield: Sheffield Printing Unit
- Cobb, J.B. Jr., Griffin, D.R., 1976. *Process Theology: An introductory exposition*. Westminster John Knox Press
- Cohn-Sherbok, L. & D., 2005. *Judaism: A short introduction*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications
- Cohn-Sherbok, D., 2003, *Judaism: History, belief and practice*. London: Routledge
- Conway, D.C., 2003. *Demonology and Devil Lore, Part 2*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing
- Cook, M.A., 2000. *The Koran: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Cooper, J.W., 2007. *Panentheism: The other god of the Philosophers*. Nottingham England: Inter-Varsity Press
- Coplestone, F.S., 2002. *Jesus Christ or Muhammad?* Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications
- Coward, H., 2000. *Scripture in the World Religions: A short introduction*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications
- Craigie, P.C., 1983. *Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers:
- Crenshaw, J.L., 1988. *Ecclesiastes: A commentary*. London: SCM Press Ltd.
- Cunningham, L.S., Reich, J.J., 2006. *Culture and Values: A survey of the humanities*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth
- Curran, C.E., 2008. *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A history*. Washington, D.C. Georgetown Univ. Press

- D'Costa, G., 1986. *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd
- Davidson, J., 2005. *The Gospel of Jesus: In search of his original teachings*. Bath : Clear Press
- Davies, D.J., 2002. *Death, Ritual and Belief*. London: Continuum
- Dawkins, R., 2006. *The God Delusion*. London: Bantam Press.
- De Waal, A., 2004. *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*. London: Hurst
- Dean, W., 2006. *The American Spiritual Culture: And the invention of jazz, football, and the movies*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group
- Dekmejian, R.H., 1985. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab world*. New York: Syracuse University Press
- Dekmejian, R.H., 1995. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab world. (2nd Edition)* New York: Syracuse University Press
- Deleuze, G., 1988. *Spinoza: Practical philosophy*. San Francisco: City Lights Books
- DeSilva, D.A., 2004. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, methods & ministry formation*. Leicester: Apollos
- Dhavamony, M., 1973. *Phenomenology of Religion*. Rom: Gregorian Univ. PR.
- Dillistone, F.W., 1981. *Religious Experience and Christian Faith*. Suffolk: SCM Press Ltd
- Donovan, V.J., 1989. *The Church in the Midst of Creation*. London: SCM Press Ltd.
- Dorries, D.W., 2002. *Edward Irving's Incarnational Christology*. Fairfax, VA : Xulon Press
- Dorrington, R.E., et al 2006. *The Demographic Impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa: national and provincial indicators for 2006*. Cape Town: Centre for Actuarial Research, South African Medical Research Council and Actuarial Society of South Africa
- Douglas, C., 1991. *Positive Negatives: A motif in Christian religion*. New York: Peter Lang
- Douglas, M.T., 1982. *Natural Symbols*. New York: Pantheon.
- Dowdle, W.R., 1988. "Strategy for AIDS Prevention and Control." *HIV and Other Highly Pathogenic Viruses*. p5. ICN Pharmaceuticals annual conference on Virology –
- Drees, B. (Ed), 2003. *Is Nature Ever Evil?* London: Routledge
- Dube, M.W., 1999. "Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into 'Demons' in the Setswana Bible." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Issue 73: March 1999, pp33-59*.
- Duncan, M.E., 1989. *An Alternative to Condomania?* Ethics and Medicine, 5.2
- Dundas, O., 2002. *The Jains*. London: Routledge
- Eisenberg, J., Scolnic, E., 2006. *Dictionary of Jewish Words*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publ. Soc
- Elison, G.; Parker, M.; Campbell, C., 2003. *Learning From HIV/AIDS*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Ellul, J., 1990. *Reason for Being: A meditation on Ecclesiastes*. (Translated by J.M.Hanks) Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Elshahed, E. *What is the Challenge of Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalism?* in *Concilium*, June 1992, 61-69.
- Elwell, W.A., (Ed) 1996. *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Carlisle, Paternoster Press.
- Engelkirk, P.G., Burton, G.R.W., 2007. *Burton's microbiology for the health sciences*. Philadelphia : Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
- Erickson, M.J., 2006. *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It?: The current controversy over divine foreknowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan
- Espin, O.O., Nickoloff, J.B., 2007. *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press
- Esposito, J.L., 2003. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ezzati, A., 1978. *An Introduction to the History of the Spread of Islam*. London: The Ludo Press Ltd.
- Fakhry, M., 2005. *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A short introduction*. Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications
- Ferguson, J., 1972. *The Place of Suffering*. London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd.
- Fernández, F.; Ruiz, P., 2006. *Psychiatric Aspects of HIV/AIDS*. Lippincott, Philadelphia: Williams & Wilkins
- Fiddes, P.S., 1992. *The Creative Suffering of God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Fiddes, P.S., 2000. *Participating in God: A pastoral doctrine of the Trinity*. London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.
- Field, D., Taylor, S., 1998. *Sociological Aspects of Health, Illness, and Health Care*. Oxford: Blackwell Science
- Flannery, A.P., 1975. *Nostra Aetate*. (In the book: *Documents of Vatican 11*) Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans
- Forbes, C., 2001. "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing apocalyptic?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Issue 82: June 2001*. pp 61-88
- Forbes, C., 2002. "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology? Principalities, powers and the elements of the world in their Hellenistic context." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Issue 85; March 2002*. pp51-73
- Forbush, B., 1926. *Fox's Book of Martyrs: A history of the lives, sufferings and triumphant deaths of the early Christian and Protestant martyrs*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston Ltd
- Ford, D., 2005. *The Modern Theologians: an introduction to Christian theology since 1918*. Malden MA: Blackwell Pub.
- Fredericks, D.C., 1993. *Coping with Transience: Ecclesiastes on brevity in life*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press

- Freeman, D.L., 1999. *Illness and Health in the Jewish Tradition: Writings from the Bible to today*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society
- Fretheim, T.E., 1984. *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament perspective*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press:
- Ferguson J., 1972. *The Place of Suffering*. Cambridge, J. Clarke
- Gaffin, R.B., 1993. *Glory, Glorification* in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Garland, D.E., 1998. *Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House
- Garret, D., 1996. *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*. NY: Cambridge University Press
- Gebrekrstos, H.T., et al 2005. "Knowledge and acceptability of HAART among TB patients in Durban, South Africa." *AIDS Care: Psychological and socio-medical aspects of AIDS/HIV. Volume 17 Number 6 Aug 2005*. pp767 – 772
- Gehman, H.S. (Ed), undated. *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Press
- Geisler, N.L.; Saleeb, A., 2007. *Answering Islam: The Crescent in light of the Cross*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books
- Gibbs, E.; Coffey, I., 2001. *Church Next: quantum changes in Christian Ministry*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press
- Gill, R. (Ed), 2007. *Reflecting Theologically on AIDS – A global challenge*. London: SCM Press
- Goldingay, J., 2003. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's gospel – volume 1*. Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster Press
- Goldingay, J., 2006. *Old Testament Theology: Israel's faith. volume two*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press
- Gooch P.G., 1993. *Dangerous food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in its context*. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press
- Green, J.B., 1993. *Death of Christ*. in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press,
- Greene, C., 2003. *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking out the horizons*. Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press
- Grenz S.J., 2000. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans
- Greyling, C., 2002. *Poverty, HIV and AIDS: The challenges to the churches in the new millennium*. Stellenbosch: Ecumenical Foundation of Southern Africa
- Griffin, D.R. (Ed), 2005. *Deep Religious Pluralism*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press:
- Griffiths, P.J., 1991. *An Apology for Apologetics: A study in the logic of interreligious dialogue*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

- Gundry-Volf, J. M., 1993. Article "Apostasy, Falling Away, Perseverance." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Gundry-Volf, J.M., 1993. Article "Expiation, Propitiation, Mercy Seat." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Gupta V.D., 2000. *Hindu Approaches to Handling Crises*. The Record, Northern New Jersey Accessed on the internet at: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Hinduism/2001/01/Hindu-Approaches-To-Handling-Crisis.aspx?p=1>
- Guthrie, D. and R.P. Martin, 1993. Article "God." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Haddad, Y.Y., 1982. *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History*. Albany State Univ. of New York Pr
- Hafemann, S.J. 1993. Article "Suffering." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Hafemann, S.J., 1986. *Suffering and the Spirit*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck)
- Hafemann, S.J., 1993. Article "Letters to the Corinthians." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Hamilton, V.P., 1990. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans
- Hanegraaff, W.J., 1996. *New Age religion and Western culture: Esotericism in the mirror of secular thought*. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill
- Hardy, D.W., 1996. 'The Foundation of Cognition and Ethics in Worship', in: *God's Ways With The World*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark,
- Harries, R., 2003. *After the Evil: Christianity and Judaism in the shadow of the Holocaust*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Harris, H.A., 1998. *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Harrison, E.F; G.W. Bromiley; C.F. Henry (Eds), 1999. *Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.
- Hart, W.D., 2000. "Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hartley, J.E., 2000. *Genesis*. Carlisle: Paternoster
- Harvey, A.E., 1996. *Renewal Through Suffering: A study of 2 Corinthians*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark
- Hasnain, M.; et al, 2005. "Influence of religiosity on HIV risk behaviors in active injection drug users." *AIDS Care: Psychological and socio-medical aspects of AIDS/HIV*. 1360-0451, Volume 17, Issue 7, 2005, Pages 892 – 901.
- Hass, A., 2007. *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*. Oxford [u.a.]: Oxford Univ. Press

- Hastings, A.; A. Mason, H. Pyper. (Eds), 2000. *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*. Oxford: University Press
- Hawthorne, G.F; Martin, R.P; Reid, D.G. (Eds), 1993. *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press
- Hays, R.B., 2004 *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. London: T&T Clark
- Heald, S., 2003. Article "An Absence of Anthropology: critical reflections on anthropology and AIDS policy and practice in Africa." in: *Learning from HIV and AIDS*. 210-237 Editors: G. Ellison; M. Parker and C. Campbell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hearn, L.J., 2005. *The Ongoing Coherence and Otherness of God's Works of Creation, Reconciliation, Renewal and Consummation of Human Beings and the Cosmic Universe*. Pretoria, University of South Africa, Systematic Theology MTh (published UNISA online)
- Heppe, H., 1978. *Reformed Dogmatics: Set out and illustrated from the sources*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.
- Hick, J., 1966. *Evil and the God of Love*. London, Macmillan
- Hick, J., 1994. *Death and Eternal Life*. Kentucky, Westminster/John Knox press
- Hick, J., 1999. *The Fifth Dimension*. Oxford: Oneworld
- Hill B.R., 1998. *Christian Faith and the Environment: Making vital connections*. New York: Orbis Books
- Hills, J.V., 1992. "Luke 10:18 – Who saw Satan fall?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament JSNT* 46 [1992]: 25–40
- Hindu Leaders: www.cabsa.co.za/newsite/DisplayPage.asp?Id=402 (Accessed 22 July 2009)
- Hinnells, J.R., 2000. *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies: Selected works of John R Hinnells*. Aldershot UK: Ashgate
- Holder, J.J., 2006. *Early Buddhist Discourses: Edited and translated*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co
- Holtzen, W.C., 2008. *Dei Fide: A relational theological approach to the faith of God*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) Pretoria: Unisa.
- Homer, Pallmer, G.H. 1999. *The Odyssey*. London : Constable and Company
- Horrie, C.; Chippendale, P., 2003. *What is Islam: A comprehensive introduction*. London: Virgin Books Ltd
- Hudson, H., 2001. *A materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*. Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press
- Huffman, D.S., Johnson, E.L., 2002. *God Under Fire: modern scholarship reinvents God*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan
- Hunter, W.B., 1993. "Prayer." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press

- Irwin A.; Millen, J.; Fallows, D., 2003. *Global AIDS; Myths and Facts: Tools for fighting the AIDS pandemic*. Cambridge: South End Press
- Isaacs R.H., 2006. *Questions Christians Ask the Rabbi*. Jersey City, NJ : KTAV Pub. House
- Islam, A.N., 1987. *The Nature of Self, Suffering and Salvation*. Allahabad-India: Vohra Publishers & Distributors
- Jani, M., Jani V., Bhargava, N., Dave, V., 2005. *What You Will See Inside a Hindu Temple*. Woodstock, Vt. : SkyLight Paths Pub
- Jarick, J., 1990. *Gregory Thaumaturgos' Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes*. SBLSCS 29. Atlanta: Scholars Press
- Jenkins, E., 2003. *The Creation: secular, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim perspectives analyzed*. Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland & Co.
- Jensen, D.H. (Ed), 2008. *The Lord and Giver of Life: perspectives on constructive pneumatology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press
- Jomier, J., 1989. *How to Understand Islam*. New York: Crossroad
- Jones, S.A; et al, 2005. "Exploring Socio-economic Conditions and Poor Follow-up Rates of HIV-exposed Infants in Johannesburg, South Africa." *AIDS Care* 2005 17(4) 1360-0451, 466 – 470
- Kahn, C.H., 2001. *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A brief history*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett; Lancaster: Gazelle
- Karim, S.S.A., 2005. *HIV/AIDS in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Karkkainen, V.M., 2004. *The Doctrine of God: A global introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic
- Käsemann, E., 1969. *New Testament Questions of Today*. London: SCM
- Kateregga, B.D., Shenk, D.W., 1980. *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim and a Christian in dialogue*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans
- Kauffman, D.T., 1967. *The Dictionary of Religious Terms*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott
- Keenan, J.F. (Ed), 2000. *Catholic Ethicists on HIV/AIDS Prevention*. London: Continuum
- Kelly, H.A., 2006. *Satan – A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Kelsey C.L., 2003. *Thinking About Christ With Schleiermacher*. Louisville, Ky. Westminster John Knox Press
- Kidner, D., 1967. *Genesis: An introduction and commentary*. Leicester, IVP
- Kierkegaard, S., 2008. *Sickness Unto Death*. Radford VA: A&D Publishing
- Kim, Y.C., 1981. *Oriental Thought: An introduction to the philosophical and religious thought of Asia*. Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams and Company

- Klostermaier, K.K., 2000. *Hindu Writings: A Short Introduction to the Major Sources*. Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications
- Klostermaier, K.K., 2002. *Buddhism: A short introduction*. Oxon, England: Oneworld Publications
- Knight, G.A.F., 1981. *Theology in Pictures: A commentary on Genesis, chapters one to eleven*. Edinburgh, Handsel Press Limited
- Knight, G.R., 1993. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press
- Knitter, P.F., 1996. *One Earth, Many Religions*. New York: Orbis
- Konig, A., 1982. *Here am I – A believer's reflection on God*. London: Marshall Morgan & Scott
- Koop, C.E., 1987. *Surgeon General's Report on AIDS*. Ethics and Medicine, 1987, 3:1
- Koperski, V., 1996. *The Knowledge of Christ Jesus My Lord: The high Christology of Philippians 3:7-11*. Kampen: Kok Pharos
- Kragg, K., 1999. *The Weight in the Word: Prophethood: Biblical And Quranic*. Brighton: Sussex Academic
- Kramarae, C., Spender, D., (Eds) 2000. *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. New York: Routledge
- Kraus, H-J., 1969. *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Kraus, H-J., 1970. *Die Biblische Theologie. Ihre Geschichte und Problematik*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Kriwaczek, P., 2002. *In Search of Zarathustra*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson:
- Kruse, C.G., 1993. Article "Afflictions, Trials, Hardships." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993
- Kugler, R.A., 2001. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Sheffield: Sheffield Acad. Press
- Kuhn, K.G., 1958. "New Light on Temptation, Sin, and Flesh in the New Testament." article in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*. edited by Stendahl, K. p21, London: SCM Press Ltd
- Küng, H., 1992. *Judaism: The Religious Situation of Our Time*. London: SCM Press Ltd
- Küng, H., 2006. *Tracing the Way: Spiritual dimensions of the World Religions*. London: Burns and Oats
- Küng. H., 1987. *Christianity and the World Religions*. London: Collins
- Lamp, J.S., 2003. "Is Paul Anti-Jewish? Testament of Levi 6 in the interpretation of 1 Thessalonians. 2:13-16" article in "Catholic Biblical Quarterly" Vo. 65. 2003. pp408-427.
- Lane, W., 1991. *Hebrews 9-13: Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers:

- Larson, E., 1988. *AIDS, Medicine and Moral Absolutes*. Ethics & Medicine, 1988, 4.1
- Lawton, C., 2007. *Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Lederach, J.P., 1999. *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press
- Leon-Dufour, X. (Ed), 1988. *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. London, Geoffrey Chapman
- Levenson, J.D., 1994. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish drama of divine omnipotence*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press
- Lines, D., 2006. *Spirituality in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage
- Loader, J.A., 1986. *Ecclesiastes: A practical commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company:
- Loba-Mkole, J., 2007. "The New Testament and Intercultural Exegesis in Africa." in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Volume 30. September 2007.*, pp7-28.
- Locke, D.C.; Myers, J.E.; Herr, E.L., (Eds) 2001. *The Handbook of Counseling*. Thousand Oaks California: Sage
- Longman III, T., 1998. *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. Cambridge U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Loughborough, JN 1905 (Reprint 1972). *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its rise and progress*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn/New York: Arno Press.
- MacLulich, A., 1988. *AIDS: Social and Pastoral Considerations*. Ethics & Medicine, 1988, 4.1
- Mallon, B., 2008. *Dying, Death and Grief*. London: SAGE Publications
- Marshall, I.H., 2004. *New Testament Theology: Many witnesses, one Gospel*. Nottingham: Apollos
- Martens, E.A., 1981. *Plot and Purpose in the Old Testament*. Leicester: IVP
- Martens, E.A., 1994. *God's Design: A focus on Old Testament theology*. Grand Rapids : Baker Books ; Leicester : Apollos
- Martin, T.W., 2002. "The Good as God (Romans 5.7)." *JSNT 25/1 (2002) pp55-70*.
- Martz, E; Livneh, H., 2007. *Coping With Chronic Illness and Disability*. New York: Springer
- Matrisciana, C., 2008. *Out of India: A true story about the New Age movement*. Silverton: Lighthouse Trails Pub.
- McClellan G.F., 1999. *Ways to God: Personal and social at the turn of the millennia*. Washington Council for Research in Values and Philosophy
- McCulloch, G., 2002. *The Deconstruction of Dualism in Theology*. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs

- McElrath, K. (Ed), 2002. *HIV and AIDS: A Global View*, article in: *A World View of Social Issues*. London: Greenwood Press
- McFadyen, A., 2000. *Bound to Sin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- McFague, S. 1982. *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in religious language*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- McGrath, A., 2002. *The Re-enchantment of Nature*. London: Hodder & Stoughton
- McGrath, A., 2007b. *The Dawkins Delusion*. London: SPCK
- McGrath, A.E. (Ed), 2007a. *The Christian Theology Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- McGrath, A.E., 1993. Article "Theology of the Cross" in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds),. *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press,
- McGrath, A.E., 1998. *Iustitia Dei: A history of the Christian doctrine of justification*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University
- McGrath, A.E., 2001. *Christian Theology: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Meeter, H.H., 1930. *The Fundamental Principles of Calvinism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Meier, A.; O'Connor, T.; VanKatwyk, P.L. (Eds), 2005. *Spirituality and Health : multidisciplinary explorations*. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfred Laurier University Press
- Menon, R., 2006. *The Mahabharata: a modern way of living*. New York: iUniverse inc
- Middleton, E., 2002. *The New Flatlanders*. Surrey, England: Highland Books
- Milazzo, G.T., 1992. *The Protest and the Silence: Suffering, death, and Biblical theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- Minagar, A. Shapshak P., 2006. *Neuro-AIDS*. Hauppauge NY, Nova Publishers, 2006
- Moltmann, J. 1985. *God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation*. London: SCM Press Ltd
- Moltmann, J., 1997. *The Source of Life*. London: SCM Press Ltd
- Moltmann, J., 2001. *The Crucified God: The cross of Christ as the foundation and criticism of Christian theology*. London: SCM Press
- Moltmann, J., Wolterstorff, N., Charry, E.T. 1998. *A Passion for God's Reign: theology, Christian learning and the Christian self*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co
- Montagne, J.R.; et al. 2005. "Update on the AIDS Treatment Evaluation Units." Article in: *HIV and Other Highly Pathogenic Viruses. P15*. Edited by R. A. Smith [ICN Pharmaceuticals annual conference on Virology: California] San Diego, California: Academic Press, Inc
- Montgomery, W., 1983. *Islam and Christianity Today*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Moor, A., Scott, M., 2007. *Realism and Religion: Philosophical and theological perspectives*. Aldershot Ashgate (ebook)
- Morgan, G.C., 1957. *The Acts of the Apostles*. London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd

- Moucarry, C., 2006. *Islam*. in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*. (ed: Campbell-Jack, McGrath) Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Murphy, R., 1992. *Ecclesiastes*. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers
- Musk, B.A., 2004. *The Unseen Face of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslims at Street*. London: Monarch Books
- Musopole A.C., 2006. *Spirituality, Sexuality, and HIV/AIDS in Malawi: theological strategies for behaviour change*. Zomba, Malawi: Zomba Kachere Series
- Myers M.W., 2001. *Brahman: a comparative theology*. Richmond: Curzon Press
- Naidoff, B.D., 1978. *A Man to Work the Soil: A new Interpretation of Genesis 2-3*. JSOT Issue 1978:8
- Nelson, J.B.; Longfellow, S.P. (Eds), 1994. *Sexuality and the Sacred: sources for theological reflection*. Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press
- Netland, H., 2001. *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The challenge to Christian faith and mission*. Leicester. U.K.: Apollos
- Netland, H.A., 1991. *Dissonant Voices: Religious pluralism and the questions of truth*. Leicester, England: Apollos
- Neusner, J., 1995. "Was Rabbinic Judaism really "ethnic"?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol. 57*. 1995, pp281-305.
- Neusner, J., 2003. *The Perfect Torah*. Leiden; Boston: Brill
- Neusner, J. 2005a. *Questions and Answers: Intellectual foundations of Judaism*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson
- Neusner, J., 2005. *Rabbinic Literature: An essential guide*. Nashville: Abingdon Press
- Neusner, J., Avery-Peck, A., 2000. *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell
- New Jersey Arya Samaj Mandir, Inc Internet resource accessed 22 July 2009. <http://www.njaryasamaj.com/contact.html>
- Newbigin, L., 1969. *The Finality of Christ*. Richmond: John Knox
- Newbigin, L., 1994. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans
- Newport, J.P., 1998. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: conflict and dialogue*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans
- Neyrey, J.H., 1988. "Bewitched in Galatia: Paul and cultural anthropology." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly. Vol 50*. 1988, pp73-100.
- Nickle K.F., 2001. *The Synoptic Gospels: an introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press
- Nigosian S. A., 1993. *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and modern research*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press

- Nigrini, J., 2008. *Kenosis and Identities: Pneumatological pointers*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Ogden, G., 1987. *Qoheleth*. Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, England: JSOT Press
- Olbricht, T.H., and J.L. Sumney (eds), 2001. *Paul and Pathos*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature
- Owen, J., 1979. *Calvin's Commentaries, vol 1*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House:
- Palmer, M., Finlay, V., *Faith in Conservation: New approaches to religions and the environment*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank
- Panikkar, R., 1977. *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd
- Papini, G., 1955. *The Devil: Notes for a future diabolology*. London, Eyre & Spottiswoode
- Partee, C., 1977. *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*. Leiden: Brill
- Partridge, C.H., 2005. *The Re-enchantment of the West. Vol. 2, Alternative spiritualities, sacralization, popular culture, and occulture*. London: T&T Clark International
- Pattison, S., 2000. *A Critique of Pastoral Care*. St Albans Place, England: SCM Press
- Paul, J., 1984. *Apostolic Letter Salvifici Doloris Of The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II*. L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, 20 February 1984, page 1
- Peterson, D.C., 2007. *Muhammad, Prophet of God*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co
- Phillips, J., 2007. *Exploring People of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications
- Pitre, B.J., 2005. *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration eschatology and the origin of the atonement*. Tuϋbingen : Mohr Siebeck ; Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Academic
- Placher W.C., 2005. *Callings: Twenty centuries of Christian wisdom on vocation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co
- Plante, T.G.; Sherman A.C., 2001. *Faith and Health: Psychological perspectives*. New York: Guilford Press
- Poku, N.K; Whiteside, A., 2004. *The Political Economy of AIDS in Africa*. Bodmin: Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd.
- Pope Paul VI, 1966. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: (Gaudium et spes)*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media
- Portier-Young, A., 2001. "Alleviation of Suffering in the Book of Tobit: Comedy, community, and happy endings." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol. 63. 2001, pp35-54*.
- Powell, D.E.B., 1987. *AIDS and Ethics: A response to Professor Raymond*. Ethics and Medicine, 1987, 3:2
- Prasad, R. (Trans), 1988. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Fremont California, Amer. Gita Society;<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/gita.htm>

- Pratt, V., 1970. *Religion and Secularisation*. London: Macmillan and Co Ltd
- Pruett, G.E., 1987. *The Meaning and End of Suffering for Freud and the Buddhist Tradition*. London: University Press of America
- Przywara, E., 1932. *Analogia Entis. Metaphysik. Prinzip*. München: Josef Kösel & Friedrich Pustet
- Rahner, K., 1982. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An introduction to the idea of Christianity*. New York, Crossroad
- Rendtorff, R., 2005. *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A theology of the Old Testament*. Leiderdorp, Deo Publishing
- Reventlow, H.G.; Hoffman Y., (Editors), 2002. *Creation in Jewish and Christian tradition*. London: Sheffield Academic Press
- Richards, G., 1989. *Towards a Theology of Religions*. London: Routledge
- Richardson, A; Bowden, J. (Eds) ,1983. *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*. London: SCM Press
- Riches, V., 1988. *Aiding the Young*. Ethics & Medicine, 4.1
- Rose, A., 1992. *Judaism and Ecology*. London: Cassell Publishers Limited
- Rosenthal, E.I.J., ben Joseph, S., 1980 *Saadya Studies*. New York: Arno Press
- Rossano, P., 1981. "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism." in *Mission Trends No. 5: Faith meets faith*, ed. G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans:
- Rowley, H.H., 1951. *Submission in Suffering*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press
- Rubenstein, R.L. 1987. *Spirit Matters: The worldwide impact of religion on contemporary politics*. New York: Paragon House Publishers
- Runzo, J., 2001. *Global Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications
- Ruthven, M. 2000. *Islam: A very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University
- Salmi, R.H., Majul, C.A., Tanham, G.K. 1998. *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and practices*. Lanham: Univ. Press of America
- Sanders, J., 1998. *The God Who Risks: A theology of providence*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press
- Schimmel, A., 1992. *Islam: An introduction*. Albany, NY State:University of New York Press
- Schleiermacher, F., *The Christian Faith*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956
- Schuitmaker H., Miedema F. 2000. "AIDS Pathogenesis" (*IMMUNOLOGY AND MEDICINE Volume 28*) Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Schultz, J.P., 1981. *Judaism and the Gentile Faiths*. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press
- Schweizer, E., 1982. *The Letter to the Colossians: A commentary*. London: SPCK

- Scott, B.E; Weiss, H.A.; Viljoen, J.I., 2005. "The Acceptability of Male Circumcision as an HIV Intervention Among a Rural Zulu Population, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." *AIDS Care* 17(3), pp304-313
- Sehgal, S., 1999. *Encyclopaedia of Hinduism. Vol. 3, H-Q*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons
- Shaked S., 1994. *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of religion in Sasanian Iran*. London : School of Oriental and African Studies, Univ. of London
- Shakir, M.H., (Translator) 1983. *The Holy Qur'an*. Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/koran/>
- Shaw, J.K.; Mahoney E.A., 2003. *HIV/AIDS Nursing Secrets*. Philadelphia: Hanley and Belfus
- Shields, M.A., 2006. *The End of Wisdom: A reappraisal of the historical and canonical function of Ecclesiastes*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns
- Shienbaum, K.E., Hasan, J., *Beyond Jihad: Critical voices from inside Islam*. Bethesda, MD: Academica Press
- Siderits, M., 2007. *Buddhism as Philosophy: An introduction*. Aldershot: Ashgate
- Simkins, R.A., 1993. "God, History, and the Natural World in the Book of Joel." article in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol 55, 3, 1993, pp435-452*.
- Simkins, R.A., 1994. *Creator and Creation*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.
- Sinclair, S.G., 1992. *Revelation: A book for the rest of us*. Berkeley, California: BIBAL Press
- Sire, J.W., 2004. *The Universe Next Door*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic
- Smalley, S.S., 2005. *The Revelation to John: A commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse*. London: SPCK
- Snidle, H. & Yeoman, D., 2000. *Christ in AIDS*. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press
- Snyman, D., 2006. *A Fully Human Spirituality: A gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the South African church*. Doctoral Thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Soelle, D., 1975. *Suffering*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd
- Spencer, R., 2007. *The Truth About Muhammad: Founder of the world's most intolerant religion*. Washington, DC: Regnery Pub
- Stoeber, M., 1992. *Evil and the Mystic's God: Towards a mystic theodicy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press
- Stoeber, M., 2005. *Reclaiming Theodicy: Reflections on suffering, compassion and spiritual transformation*. Hampshire U.K. Palgrave Macmillan
- Stordalen, T., 2000. *Echoes of Eden*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters
- Stratton, B.J., 1995. *Out of Eden: Reading, rhetoric, and ideology in Genesis 2-3*. Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press,

- Stroumsa, S., 1999. *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam : Ibn al-Raḥwandī, Abu Bakr al-Raḥzī and their impact on Islamic thought*. Boston: Brill
- Sugden, C., Samuel, V., Sampson, P., 1994. *Faith and Modernity*. Oxford: Regnum Books
- Sullivan, M.W. (Ed), 1981. *Change and the Muslim World*. New York: Syracuse University Press
- Swami, P., 1979. *The Spiritual Heritage of India*. Hollywood: Vedanta Press
- Terrien, S., 1983. *The Elusive Presence*. New York: Harper and Row
- Thakrar, D.; Das, R.; Sheikh, A., 2008. *Caring For Hindu Patients* Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing
- Thielman, F.A., 2005. *Canonical and Synthetic Approach: Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan
- Thomas, D.E., 2005. *African Traditional Religion in the Modern World*. London: Mc Farland & Company Inc.
- Thomas, O.C. (Ed), 1969. *Attitudes Towards Other Religions: Some Christian interpretations*. London: SCM Press Ltd
- Tillich, P., 1953. *Systematic Theology: Vol 1* London: James Nisbet and Co.
- Tillich, P., 1957. *Systematic Theology: Vol 2* London: James Nisbet and Co.
- Tillich, P., 1973. *The Boundaries of Our Being: A collection of his sermons with his autobiographical sketch*. London: Collins
- Tomer A.; Eliason G.T.; Wong P.T.P. (Eds), 2007. *Existential and Spiritual Issues in Death Attitudes*. Mahway, New Jersey: Larwence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Toynbee, A., 1957a. *Christianity Among the Religions of the World*. New York : Scribner
- Toynbee, A., 1957b. "What Should be the Christian Approach to the Contemporary Non-Christian Faiths?" In Thomas, O.C. (Ed), 1969 *Attitudes Towards Other Religions: some Christian Interpretations*. London: SCM Press Ltd
- Trainor, K., 2004. *Buddhism: The illustrated guide*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press
- Troeltsch, E., 1957. *Christian Thought, its History and Application*. New York, Meridian Books
- Troeltsch, E., 2006. *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press
- Turner, L.A., 2000. *Genesis*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press
- Tutu, D.M., 1983. *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and speeches*. Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.
- Twelftree, G.H., 1993. Article "Healing, Illness." in Hawthorne, G.F., R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds), 1993. *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press
- Uñal, A., 2006. *The resurrection and the afterlife*. Somerset, N.J.: Light, Inc.
- Unamuno M., de, 1967. *The Tragic Sense of Life*. London: Collins

- Van Dyke, F., 1996. *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical basis for environmental stewardship*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press
- Van Dyke, F., 2008. *Conservation Biology: Foundations, concepts, applications*. USA: Springer
- Van Inwagen, P., 2004. *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
- Van Niekerk, E., 2005. "Wholesome and Dynamic Sense Making Approaches" In *the Transfer of Doctrines and Theories of Faith. Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae, Vol XXX1, Nr 2, pp 401-425*.
- Van Niekerk, E., 2006. "The Church as Golden Calf in History and the Meandering Processes of The Commonwealth of God." *Studia Histriae Ecclesiasticae, Vol XXX11, Nr 3, 315-405*
- Van Niekerk, E., 2008. *Faith, Philosophy and Science*, TIC3702, TL 501/2008, Unisa: Pretoria.
- Van Niekerk, E., 2009. *Faith, Philosophy and Science*, TIC3702, TL 501/2009, Unisa: Pretoria.
- VanGemenen, W. A. (General Editor), 1997. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Volume 1. VI*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House
- Wallace, H.N., 1985. *The Eden Narrative*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press
- Waltke, B.K., 2001. *Genesis: A commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan
- Walton, J.H.; Matthews, V.H.; Chavalas, M.W., 2000. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press
- Ward, K., 2000. *Christianity: A short introduction*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications
- Ward, K., 2002. *Religion and Human Nature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Ward, K., 2006. *Is Religion Dangerous*. Oxford: Lion
- Ward, K., 2007. *Is Religion Dangerous?* Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co
- Ware, B.A. 2000. *God's Lesser Glory: A critique of open theism*. Leicester England: Apollos,
- Weaver, J.D., 1994. *In The Beginning God: Modern science and the Christian doctrine of creation*. Smith and Helwys Publishing
- Webster, J., 2000. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Webster, J; K.Tanner; I. Torrance, 2007. *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*. Oxford, University Press
- Wechsberg, W.M., et al, 2005. "Violence Against Substance-Abusing South African Sex Workers: Intersection with culture and HIV risk." *AIDS Care: psychological and socioi-medical aspects of AIDS/HIV. Volume 17 Supplement 1. 2005, 55 – 64*.

- Weeraperuma, S., Weeraperuma, C., 2003. *Nirvana: The highest happiness*. New Delhi : Vedam
- Wenham, G.J., 1987. *Genesis 1-15*. Waco: Word Books
- White, H.C., 1991. *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Whitehead, A.N., 1953 (1926). *Religion in the Making*. New York: Meridian Books
- Whiteside, A., 2004a. "Poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa." *Third World Quarterly: Global Health and Governance – HIV/AIDS*. 23, 2, 2004, pp313-332.
- Whiteside, A., 2004b. "Responding to AIDS in Crisis Situations." *The political economy of AIDS in Africa.- Global Health* pp 1-18,
- WHO, 2009. *Epidemiology Fact Sheet on HIV and AIDS: core data on epidemiology and response, South Africa 2008 Update*. World Health Organisation Viewed via the internet on 08 July 2009. http://apps.who.int/globalatlas/predefinedReports/EFS2008/full/EFS2008_ZA.pdf
- Wickes, R.; Parsons, R.D.; Capps, D., 2002. *Comprehensive Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling* New York: Paulist Press
- Wiersbe, W.W., 2007. *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The complete New Testament*. Eastbourne, UK: David C Cook
- Wilckens, U., 1979. *The Understanding of Revelation Within Primitive Christianity*, in *Revelation as History*, (ed) W Pannenberg. London: Sheed & Ward.
- Wilken, R., 1995. *Remembering the Christian Past*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans
- Wilkins, S., Padgett A.G., 2000. *Christianity & Western Thought: A history of philosophers, ideas & movements*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press
- Wilkinson, J., 1980. *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament principles and practices*. Edinburgh: The Handsel Press Ltd
- Wink, W., 1984. *Naming the Powers: the language of power in the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press
- Winter T.E., 2008. *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. Cambridge [u.a.] Cambridge University Press
- Wintermute, O., 1976. "Serpent" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible – Supplementary volume*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon)
- Witherington III, B., 2003. *Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Witzel, M., 1995. *Early Sanskritization: Origins and development of the Kuru state*. Harvard University in Electronic Journal Of Vedic Studies, Volume 1, Issue 4 (December 1995) (<http://www.ejvs.laurasianacademy.com/ejvs0104/ejvs0104a.txt>)
- Wood, M.A.P., 1988. *Counsel and Care*. Ethics & Medicine. 4.1
- Wright, C.J.H., 2004. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press

Wright, N., 1990. *The Satan Syndrome: Putting the power of darkness in its place.* Michigan: Zondervan

Yancey, P., 1990. *Where is God when it hurts?: A comforting, healing guide for coping with hard times.* Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan Pub. House

Yardan, J.J., 2001. *God and the Challenge of Evil: A critical examination of some serious objections to the good and omnipotent God.* Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

ooooooooOooooo