

**A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WHAT
SIN WOULD BE IN VIRTUAL REALITY**

by

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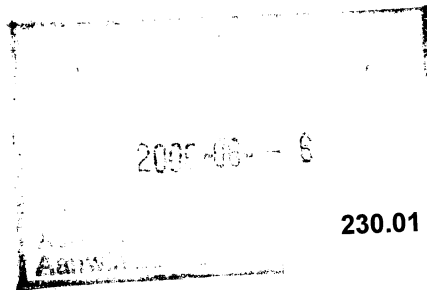
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I declare that A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WHAT SIN WOULD BE IN VIRTUAL REALITY is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.


Signature

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Summary

The genre affiliation is a postmodern study: Virtual Reality (VR) becomes a comprehensive concept, in the face of modernism's illusion, when rhetoric validates all discourses. All is VR. The study is in three sections with an overall introduction and conclusion: the first section introduces VR in its postmodern setting, the second section establishes the postmodern timeless/spaceless paradigm of HyperReality in which all Hermeneutics are being done from, the last section draws the paradigm into the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* discourse of the Scriptures. The proposed theological model is an intratextual theological model, however when YAHWEH precedes language then all discourses become intratextually part of the Biblical discourse. Human creativity is a metaphorical journey; the Fall was the outset of two languages, one in the presence of YAHWEH, while the other one void of this presence led to a nihilistic abstract constellation. Sin in VR is the unbiblical appropriation of this constellation.

Keywords

Postmodern, Postliberal, Poststructural, nihilism, Social Construction, metaphor, paradigm, timeless, spaceless, HyperReality, Virtual Reality, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, Context, text, simulacra, Communal Hermeneutic, presence, topology.

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OVERALL INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to build on the legacy of Unisa as set out in the volume *Initiation into Theology* (Maimela 1998) (edited by Simon Maimela and Adrio König) and particularly on the essay written by Marius Herholdt (Maimela 1998:215-29) *Postmodern Theology* and consequently renders the study a contextual postmodern model rooted in the social determination of truth (Maimela 1998:220). Firstly Marius Herholdt (Maimela 1998:219) refers to Thomas Kuhn who states that postmodernism is technically about a new paradigm and consequently the need to explore the postmodern paradigm, but secondly, Marius Herholdt continues on the same page, that such a paradigm can only be universally applied should it suggest change on all levels of existence, which are:

1. Theory of knowledge,
2. The social dimension of language,
3. The value system of society,
4. Peoples' understanding of reality, inclusive of their understanding of God.

The proposed model hovers in and from these four levels, but in reality can only open the can of worms to leave the full extent to a further/future study. The presentation of the model is being done in three sections of which the first section introduces the scope and range, while the second section coins the paradigm and the last one grounds it in the Scriptures.

The study starts in the centre of the postmodern condition and only takes one contextual issue, begging for theological contemplation, namely: Virtual Reality and then briefly swings to the outer dimensions of the postmodern condition/paradigm to penetrate back to the centre in illuminating the experience of Virtual Reality. To accurately cover the full magnitude of the postmodern condition would imply a deeper study and would certainly outstretch a magister degree, should it be possible, since hindsight in the transition from modern to postmodern is not really possible yet. The Full magnitude of the human race turning into cyborgs, the human

race being saturated with media/electronic generated experiences, are not fully known yet and consequently the attempt to coin the hole magnitude can only be a speculation.

The assumption of the current proposal, in the attempt to understand the postmodern condition, is that poststructuralism introduced postmodernism in philosophical circles and directly influenced theology, its bedfellow. Douglas Groothuis (Groothuis 2000:38) identifies Friedrich Nietzsche as the transitional philosopher from modernism to postmodernism, and is certainly accurate, but it is only in the expositions of the poststructuralism of the French philosophers that the Nietzschean trend became apparent in pop culture (Raschke 2004:35-7). The assumption is consequently that the poststructuralists are the theorists illuminating the postmodern condition, which inturn implies that the post-theologians continue, and need to draw, from this endeavour. This continuation appears typical postmodern in its deferent variations as can be seen in, e.g. Groothuis (Groothuis 2000:139) in his volume *Truth Decay*, who argues that Christians should defend the biblical world view against postmodernity, versus Raschke (Raschke 2004:9) in his volume *The Next Reformation*, arguing that evangelical Christians should embrace postmodernity. All the post- theologies continue from an evaluation of the postmodern condition, but differ in the interpretation and fundamental answers to this condition. As a theological model this study sides with the Postliberal theology of Yale University who partly found their answer in the philosophies of the Lone Ranger, Ludwig Wittgenstein (Lindbeck 1984:20) the philosopher from Cambridge University, who was actually a contemporary of some of these French philosophers.

That the philosophical works of Ludwig Wittgenstein present the answer to this postmodern condition is also an assumption, but a good one, since, as opposed to, e.g. deconstruction revealing the absence of sense in language (Norris 2002:47), Wittgenstein also limits experienced reality to language, but this time to language-games or a form of life (Wittgenstein 1953:66-7) which do make sense and, as Norris (Norris 2002:128) says, his philosophy of language clearly has its anti deconstruction uses.

Compering Groothuis and Raschke the proposed model rather agrees with Raschke in its optimism and actually states that postructuralism has done theology a favour, because, as

Raschke (Raschke 2004:211) says, “Athens has indeed overrun Jerusalem” during modernism and it took poststructuralism to make that apparent. Athens (which stands for propositional truth (Raschke 2004:209) in logical reasoning) has overrun Jerusalem (indicating personal and relational truth (Raschke 2004:209)). To a certain extent, in the Italian Renaissance which was followed by the Reformation, Athens liberated Jerusalem (what Groothuis calls the double-edged sword (Groothuis 2000:34)), but in the nihilism of Athens the pendulum swang too far till Athens trampled Jerusalem. Consequently a return to modernism is not possible, except should poststructuralism be nullified or nihilisms be accepted, and the return to pre-modernism is also not completely possible, except should the occurrence of modernism altogether be denied, but then the proposed postmodernism would not have emerged and inturn would make this study redundant. By also embracing postmodernism in Social Construction (a Communal Hermeneutic), the proposed theological model both continues from modernism in the apprehension of a new paradigm partly shaped by electronic media (VR) etc., but also returns to a pre-modernism/pre-Greek world view in that it is a commitment to the ontological experience of YAHWEH’s presence from which epistemology flows; to put it the other way around, where epistemology flows from the personal and relational presence of the ontology of YAHWEH.

In the first section a comprehensive concept of Virtual Reality (from now on only VR) will be formulated springing out of the famous words of the Media Guru Marshall McLuhan, who said ‘the medium is the message’ (Horrocks 2000:3). In the unfolding of the study it first becomes clear that VR is not really a new reality but only an extension of physical reality, but only to realise that in the postmodern mapping it is not VR that is an extension of physical reality but rather physical reality that is actually VR in its experiences. Consequently the domain of VR would then also include the apprehension of Scriptures itself and so leave nothing excluded but render all domains’ VR in its understanding. Without understanding VR no one understands anything. Without reinventing the wheel this study assumes a fair enough understanding of the philosophical developments of France in the last century in, e.g. the understanding of language, deconstruction, signification, etc. in the works of, e.g. Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1994), Derrida (Derrida 1977) and Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977).

When all is VR, it implies that this study is also nothing else than VR and employs the same rhetoric (functions in the same text) than other forms of VR. Because the 'medium is the message' the form of this presentation is just as much part of the message itself as the content communicated. Traditional scholarly work (supposedly objective and disinterested with an A to Z linear movement) also communicates a message; the message of such a presentation is that science is supposedly objective and disinterested following a clear line of logic and thus objective truths of what is really out there. Both poststructuralism and the Wittgenstein tradition have indicated (as will be discussed) that science does not have this privilege position and are employing the same rhetoric as any other form of VR to validate their truth claims.

Taking this in consideration the preparation of the present VR (rhetoric and creativity) has no intention to claim such an illusionary objective point of view but rather admit the real subjective input; to take it one step further, rather than employing a typical scholarly, literary style, which is part of the message, the message (literary style) opted for is a Biblical one - the Johannine chiasm. A few reasons gave cause to this:

1. When all is VR, the historical preparations and appropriations of Scriptures included, a theological endeavour staying true to Scriptures cannot be wrong when using a form of VR (literary style) contained in Scriptures itself. The 'medium is the message' and when science and everything else are subjected to YAHWEH, in the doctrine of *Creation Ex Nihilio*, the closest models of 'true' VR (presence of YAHWEH) would not be those of science, but rather the genres of Scriptures.
2. Launching a critic from the Poststructuralist endeavour (in the above stated assumptions), rendering a nihilistic abstract constellation in all apprehensions and in this study to be replaced by a Hebraic world view, also justifies the proposed literary style. Jacques Derrida (Norris 2002: 225), in his essay *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, talks about the lack of a centre in the constitution of structure and the process of signification prescribing its displacements. It is at this point that the proposed Hebraic world view, Jerusalem, argues YAHWEH to be this centre, the One who precedes language (this signification) in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilio*. The picture coming from poststructuralism is one of structure spinning around the absence of a centre, this same picture is taken over but this time the spinning and

signification are not around the absence of a centre but around the definitive centre of the presence of YAHWEH. This led to the adaptation of the Johannine Chiasm because, just as the Poststructuralist picture is that of a spiral leading to a nihilistic abstract constellation of an abstract world with no reference, so the Johannine Chiasm is that of a spiral spinning to a climax around a fixed centre. The fixed centre is the presence of YAHWEH, which should lead to the climax of a correct abstract constellation incorporating the ontological presence of YAHWEH in a present experience. The correct present ontological presence of YAHWEH is what is called revival by evangelical Christians and this is where the metaphors of the abstract constellation are moulded in Christlikeness.

3. As will become clear in the study, the Hebraic world view is set against a Greek world view (a pivotal argument), which in turn would render a presentation, which is not traditionally systematic (as inherited from the Greeks) in order. The Johannine Chiasm serves this purpose.
4. In this presentation/VR the Chiasm takes the same form as the Scriptural one of repetition from different angles reemphasising and illuminating the centre.
5. Lastly, the vertical Johannine Dualism (Ladd 1993:259) is the same dualism incorporated in this study. It is the dualism between the nihilistic abstract constellation void of the Presence of YAHWEH, springing out of the abstract constellation which emerged out of Genesis 3, versus the abstract constellation incorporating the ontological presence of YAHWEH; and from this the call to reverse Genesis 3. Being Johannine in the proposed dualistic world view also validates a Johannine literary style.

The didactic motive of exposing the nature and contours of the nihilistic abstract constellation is a theological, evangelistic and a missiological motive. A theological motive because of the call to recenter the presence of YAHWEH in the proliferation of dialogues in the postmodern condition to the language Christians speak/practice in and between these dialogues. It renders the proposed theological model a type of a Liberation Theological model, in the Post-Christendom and Late Capitalism of the Western World, where everyone has become victims of the abstract nihilistic constellation to make sense of the world/discourse they live in (the dwindling numbers in traditional church life illustrates how the traditional apprehension of the

centre of the presence of YAHWEH in society does not make sense any more - the church, and many times the physical church, which used to be the centre of town and society - and consequently the call for a recentering). To reestablish the centre of the presence of YAHWEH in the lives of those that still go to church is the evangelistic call and, as the study will indicate, they are those who are called Christians but are nothing else than Functional Atheists (making the same sense of the world as the non church goers do); the call to reestablishing the church as the bearer of the presence of YAHWEH in a Post-Colonial and Post-Cold war world would then be the missionary call.

The integration of these three motives actualises itself in the re appropriation of the New Covenant: in the Sinai Covenant the presence of YAHWEH first centred around the Tabernacle and then the Temple, with Israel as a Kingdom of Priest (Exodus 19:6) with the missionary call that the whole earth should flock to Jerusalem to find this presence of YAHWEH (Isaiah 45:4-6; 60:3), but under the New Covenant this Presence of YAHWEH was first recentered in the Incarnation to be followed by the day of Pentecost when the Body of Christ (the church) became the extension of the Incarnation to the world. This time the world does not need to flock to Jerusalem to find YAHWEH's presence, but the presence goes out into the world to find those who want to abide in it (Matt 28: 18-20) - The Great Commission. It is at this point where the motives merge; this is where the theological motive, to 'systematically' recenter the presence in the language the Church 'walk and talk', meets the missionary motive, the call to the Church to bring the presence of YAHWEH to a post-modern world.

For this study the epoch modernism stretches from the Italian Renaissance via the Copernicus Revolution, the Reformation and Isaac Newton to the World Wars; although the Enlightenment was modernism proper (Groothuis 2000:35) the roots of the Enlightenment lie in the Italian Renaissance followed by a chain of events culminating in the Enlightenment; so also postmodernism proper is still difficult to determine (lack of hindsight), since the synthesis between electronic media (the continuation from modernism) and the implosion of time and space (postmodernism) is still in making (in, e.g. the Matrix hypothesis), but the roots are already evident in poststructuralism via Nietzsche, Einstein's theory of relativity, the World Wars that scattered certainty and lastly the end of the Cold War in which socialism/communism

was conquered by (Late) Capitalism. Hans Bertens (Natoli 1993:64) says "... in... all recent concepts of Postmodernism the matter of ontological uncertainty is absolutely central. "It is the awareness of the absence of centres..."

The centre, coming from the Italian Renaissance, in modernism was rationalism constituted in humanism and what Raschke calls "the "substance" that is the rational ego". When the Western World entered the 20th century - the results to theology, from this centre, were both Liberalism and Fundamentalism (what Bosch (Bosch 1991:283-97) also calls the Social Gospellers and Conservatives) which became a theology, in the apparatus of cognitive reasoning, a proposal to a dead culture (Athens cannot save Jerusalem from Athens any more), since the illusion of modernism's rational centre has been exposed. The two theologies rendered themselves obsolete in the postmodern paradigm since the one attempted to reconcile all cognitive contradictions till nothing of the Gospel is left, while the other one deconstructed itself to the same effect in claiming cognitive truths against all contradictions. The exposure of the illusionary rational centre in modernist models of theology informs the current postmodern theological project, to not only rest in the absence of a centre, but to communicate, to Socially Construct (in the Communal Hermeneutic within a timeless/spaceless paradigm) the Context of YAHWEH as the necessary centre. As postmodern cyborgs in making VR in electronic media is one of the central mediums that needs to be understood and employed to ensure a holistic experience of YAHWEH in the postmodern paradigm; the overall postmodern experience, the above introduced synthesis between electronic media (the machine) and the -less dimension, is a HyperReality in which YAHWEH should be the centre to avoid the desert of the real.

In the Overall Conclusion the significance and practice of embracing postmodernism in VR will further be illustrated, this is after a theological application/bridge is being proved, making missionary calls possible by using VR to evangelise. To understand sin (a metaphor) in VR necessitates the need to present the opposite love (the right action) also in VR. Just as the development of the printing press was instrumental in the development of modernism, and the reformation in this development (Raschke 2004:208), so VR in electronic media is instrumental in the development of postmodernity (the timeless/spaceless dimension), and to complete the analogy, and should then be instrumental in the next awakening/revival/reformation.

Consequently Christianity should rather embrace VR, and the new landscape it has introduced, rather than resisting its contours or failing to read the signs of the time as the Roman Catholic church failed to do during the Reformation (Gonzalez 1985:345). The how and extend of embracing VR is both a theological and missiological endeavour and although a rapture from the nihilistic abstract constellation is being proposed, the typological application of the promised land motive, in the vertical Johannine eschatology, is not necessarily a rapture out of this physical world, but rather heaven (the ontological presence of YAHWEH) realised in this world, in, e.g. VR and the community, displacing the nihilistic abstract constellation.

Before the study can progress into the first section a few concepts should first be defined:

1. Culture - “the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society” (Soanes 2003: 422),
2. Language - “the method of human communication...” (Soanes 2003: 983),
3. Text and Context - the interplay between the concepts Text and Context is an integral part of this study and consequently needs to be defined. The concept Text is used in the sense poststructuralism uses it as the language and parameters people are born into and in turn produces the text they live by. The definition of Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977:259) is the one this study resides with,

The text is a complex entity of discourse whose characteristics do not reduce to those of the units of discourse, or sentence. By text I do not mean only or even mainly something written... I mean principally the production of discourse as a field of discourse. Essentially these are pragmatic categories, categories of production and of labour.

Context on the other hand is being used for that which precedes Text and gave birth to Text and is contrary to Poststructural claims that nothing precedes text. To use Text to describe Context the German word *Zusammenhang* (literarily to hang together) captures the gist the best (admitting the contradiction since using text to describe something that precedes this text illuminates the limitation). Context in this study indicates the togetherness/presence of YAHWEH from which Text proceed. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson 1989:820-1 [V3]) defines the word context as

coming from the Latin word *contex-ĕre* meaning to weave together. Text has its roots in the weaving Context of YAHWEH.

4. Nihilism - nihilism in postmodern terms is pregnant with meaning in today's environment of uncertainty ranging from terrorism to the Middle East conflict not coming closer to any solution; to this can be added the widening cliff between rich and poor, unemployment and all the challenges of Globalization Western economies are facing. The philosophical meaning of nihilism has its most prominent definition in Friedrich Nietzsche indicating that all values are baseless and that reason is impotent (Pratt 2005). Allan Pratt (Pratt 2005) identifies two different casts of nihilism at the end of the 20th century; the one describing "the postmodern man, a dehumanized conformist, alienated, indifferent, and baffled, directing psychological energy into hedonistic narcissism or into a deep resentment that often explodes in violence", while the second is an upbeat acceptance of meaninglessness and describes the nihilism of the above mentioned French philosophers and is the nihilism this study counteracts. The description of the acceptance of this meaninglessness, in relation to VR, even goes further back than Nietzsche, to Søren Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard 1988) who identified three stages in life of which the first one comprises the *aesthetic stage* and is the stage where someone "lives for the moment and grasps every opportunity of enjoyment. Good is whatever is beautiful, satisfying, or pleasant. This person lives wholly in the world of the senses, and is a slave to his own desires and moods. Everything that is boring is bad" (Gaarder 1994:318).

The nihilism of the postmodern condition is because of the powerlessness of translating meaning over time and space and consequently the value of indulging in endless narratives in the passion for new metaphors is only on the aesthetic level; the ethical and religious stages stay out of grasp in this powerlessness and consequently an acceptance of meaninglessness/powerlessness insofar nothing more than just the aesthetics of narrative is searched after - meaning is only the consumption of the aesthetic level itself.

5. Metaphor - Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:69-70) use of the word metaphor has to do with cross-domain mapping and not only with the traditional use in poetics. Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977:36-9) says:

Therefore, the ways in which poetic and rhetorical language operates are the same, but the latter is more subdued... Thus one and the same strategy of discourse puts into play the logical force of analogy and comparison [metaphor] – the power to set things before the eyes, the power to speak of the inanimate as if alive, ultimately the capacity to signify active reality... Might metaphor not be a poetical process extended to prose?.

On Aristotle he says that metaphor depicts the abstract in concrete terms (Ricoeur 1977:38), which illustrates the cross-domain mapping of Lakoff and Johnson. It is through metaphor that a mostly abstract world make sense to people in, e.g. time as seen in metaphors of motion and space. Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:166) challenge their readers to think about time without motion and space, without a landscape one moves over and without objects or substances moving toward one or away from one. They continue their challenge to try and think about time without thinking about whether it will *run out* or if one can *budget* it or are *wasting* it. The absolute opposite conceptualisation of time between, e.g. North-Western European cultures and African cultures drive this point home: in Anglo-Saxon cultures time moves according to a time line and one needs to focus and plan on time ahead, in traditional African cultures time implodes into the present where the ancestors dead are still part of the community and even the children still needing to be born are part of the community. Planning and thinking past the present breaks out of the established metaphorical conceptualisation.

SECTION I

1. Introduction

Virtual Reality (from now on only VR) can both be defined in a narrow and a broad description: the narrow description is as the *Longan Dictionary of the English Language* describes it “as a computer-simulated environment with which a person can interact almost as if it were part of the real world” (Helicon Pub, Penguin Books LTD. 2001). This description of VR is confined to the interaction with a Virtual Environment by wearing DataGloves, a helmet, DataSuit etc., and is inline with the VR Graham Houston confines himself to in his book *Virtual Morality Christian ethics in the computer age* (Houston 1998). The aim of the present study is to extend this scope of VR to the broader trend of Postmodernism and how theology would look at it.

The broad meaning of VR, as applied to a Postmodern age, can be traced back to people like Marshall McLuhan, in the 60's, with his famous statement ‘the medium is the message’ (Horrocks 2000: 3) by which the whole electronic media are placed under the umbrella of VR and inturn extends VR from the narrow description to the broader description to also include media like the TV, Movies etc. Virtual by definition points to that which is not physical, or without a body, and defines Virtual as only apparent and consequently renders VR as an apparent reality, and in this case, present in electronic media. Everyone knows that a murder committed in a movie did not really happen. It is only apparent; or two people who are married in a soap opera are not really married, it is only simulated, and consequently they are apparently married. This simulation can even be extended to news bulletins where the report of an incident would not necessarily include all the facts but rather the subjective point of view the station intends to communicate (this could be completely unconscious and culturally conditioned); even the types of stories included or excluded in a bulletin, or the sequence between the included stories, is a subjective point of view and inturn renders the new bulletins on, e.g. the TV also a form of VR where the reality observed/experienced is only apparent to what really happened. This subjective nature between different TV station is overwhelmingly evident in, e.g. the United Kingdom where one can watch different News Bulletins on four different stations from 5:30 in the afternoon till 8:00 the evening (a 5 one can be added with Sky News) which highlights the subjective ‘reporting’ on the same stories along political affiliation and inturn illustrates which station sides with which side of the political spectrum.

The difference between the varieties of VR is what is called Hot and Cold media (Horrocks 2000). The principle that defines the category Hot versus Cold is the amount of senses of a person being fed with data through VR: the more senses receiving data the hotter the medium, the lesser the senses the cooler the medium. The hottest medium would be the Matrix Hypothesis, or the Brain in the Vat concept, where all the data entering the Brain are fed by a computer and where the whole environment is digitally generated. That the Matrix Hypothesis is not an impossibility any more is illustrated in an essay by Kevin Warwick, professor of Cybernetics at the University of Reading, who states that he already has a 100-pin port that allows for both input and output from his nervous system to a computer and which he can use to move a robot hand in the UK from New York by only using signals from his brain. He says that he is working on a port, such as in the movie *The Matrix*, and that it will be with us in less than a decade (Warwick 2002) - this is now from when he wrote the essay.

Graham Houston talks about the alternative realities people are interested in today (Houston 1998: 13), which informs the present enquiry asking what would entitle sin in these 'new' realities. The need to do Theology on VR can be illustrated by the obvious contradiction most people would agree with: if a child comes home with a fighting game on PS2 most parents would not have a problem, but if the same child should come home with a sex game on PS2 they most certainly would have one. Why the contradiction since the sex in the sex game is also only VR, the same as the killing in perhaps another game? What would make the sex game wrong and not the fighting game? Or when would the killing in the fighting game become murder, since the sex in the sex game would prove to many that sin is possible in VR?

2. The Scope of the present research

The scope of this presentation is to do a Theological analysis of what sin would be in the content and experience of VR. This analysis would be more than just an ethical or morality enquiry, but rather a Theological one, where the Theological appropriation of sin in physical reality is extended to VR. Graham Houston confined his research to Virtual Morality and the dialogue between the philosophy of technology and Christian ethics. His conclusion is that Virtual Morality is a valid ethical category, but angles his approach from an ethical focus on technology as a whole and how VR should emerge from it (Houston 1998). The present study narrows this inquiry down to only the content and experience of VR from a Theological

perspective. This present study takes VR as a given, and not how it should emerge, and from there asks the question how YAHWEH would want people and particularly Christians, since it is a Theological enquiry, to relate to VR? This does not indicate the intention to search for a demon behind every bush and does admit and acknowledges that many kinds of VR applications exist of which many uses are and can be for the good. Examples of valuable uses of VR are in the training of pilots and test runs in the medical field and have saved many lives and have served the human race for the good.

In contrast to these valuable uses the present theological study confines itself to the application of VR in particularly the fields of entertainment and information and fiction and as it is emerging on TV, in TV games, movies and the Internet. To get to this point, and render theology possible, the study needs to dig deep into what constitutes reality and from there approach both the Word/World of YAHWEH and VR and how they relate.

3. The Postmodern Condition

David Weberman (Irwin 2002: 226) says, in his essay called *The Matrix Simulation and the Postmodern Age* in the book *The Matrix and Philosophy*, that one of the central features of the postmodern experience is the blurring or the vanishing of the lines between reality and simulation. Just as the age of Modernism can be labelled the “age of certainty”, so the age of Postmodernism can be labelled the “age of uncertainty”. The certainty of Modernism was constructed on the persuasive endeavour of science, but just as this certainty can be traced back to the Copernicus Revolution so the age of Postmodernism can be traced back to, or illustrated by, the Theory of Relativity coined by Albert Einstein. The collapse of certainty, emerging out of science, gave way under the present uncertainty, and rippled through to what can be called the legitimation problem of who has the authority/right to say what the truth is. This gave rise to what is called the condition of *pluralism* with many irreducible principles (Natoli 1993:51) where everyone has the right to say what (s)he sees, or believes, the truth to be even in the face of total contradiction. It is out of this uncertainty and pluralism that the present Theological enquiry originates and sets out to pursue a Theological certainty of what sin is/would be in VR.

The importance of the enquiry is highlighted in the effect the uncertainty and pluralism, of the postmodern condition, have made on the Church and how it has constituted a pluralistic

approach by Christians to VR (in all mediums): for some soap operas would be wrong and for others not, for some all of TV would be wrong while others see no fault in anything on TV. Can this be ascribed to the legitimization problem – ‘Who has authority to say what is right and what is wrong’? To write theology about VR is to state YAHWEH as the legitimate authority and what YAHWEH’s Word says/would say what sin is in VR or not. Normal Theological categories, applied to physical reality, are not sufficient anymore, a deeper thinking of what constitutes all of reality is needed and particularly when the plot the reality is cast in is fiction. The extension of the theological enquiry, from physical reality to VR, is per se also a metaphysical enquiry in that fiction has reached a new metaphysical dimension, for instance, where flying etc. is not impossible for humans anymore.

The fictional dimension of VR is with the human race as long as history is recorded. Sarah Worth (Irwin 2002: 182) quotes Kedall Walton who suggests that people experience fiction psychologically in similar ways as children do physically when they play their games of make-believe; although this is the case the fiction in VR has obtained a new dimension under present electronic media where VR is not only the simulation of physical reality anymore, but also an improvement and consequently means the experience of VR has become more attractive than the experience of the Real McCoy (or the make-believe game). David Weberman (Irwin 2002: 232) uses the example of the Grand Canyon and states that one could experience this wonder better in VR than in reality; another example is the bloody mess in certain computer games where the experience of the game must be better than cleaning such a mess in one’s living room.

Does this not enlighten the reason why VR, in its broad form, is busy replacing physical reality all because it is so attractive? The website of the University of Michigan Health System (University of Michigan Health System 2005) highlights some interesting facts: they say that in a typical American home the TV set is on for more than seven hours a day, the average child spends more time watching TV than in school, an average kid spends about 20 or more hours each week watching TV which is more time than is spent in any other activity besides sleeping and the average person will have watched 7-10 years’ worth of television by age 70. The Entertainment Software Association (Entertainment Software Association 2005) states that in 2004 eight Computer and Video Games were sold every second in the USA and that the best-selling title, Halo 2®, raised more revenue on its first day of sales than any movie has ever

taken in its opening day. These statistics and more illustrate how the experience of VR is busy replacing the experience of physical reality and in turn emphasises the seriousness of why theology needs to be done on VR should the church desire to stay contextually relevant. Should physical reality completely disappear in VR (in a Matrix hypothesis) what significance would a statement like 'All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of YAHWEH' have if theologians don't know what sin is in VR? Would the disappearance of the experience of physical reality imply that sin has been eradicated? No. Should all brothels and prostitutes disappear and only appear in VR (the Cyborg motive of the human experience interwoven with technology (Biocca 1997) - something like in the movie *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* by Steven Spielberg where prostitution is being practised with machines) would that mean the end of such sins? No. Should the complete prison system be confined to VR, because of a possible Freudian psychology combined with a sociological apprehension of the criminal desire having a valid place in society, where someone with this desire is sentenced to express this act in VR and consequently to eradicate the physical act by confining it to VR and so protect society? Would that really eradicate the sin and what the act really means? No, certainly not. At present evangelical sermons don't need, per say, to use the experiences of VR to illustrate to someone that (s)he is a sinner, but would the time come for such a sermon? This may come sooner than expected and in turn places the obligation on the church to be ready and conveys both a theological and missiological motive.

4. VR as an extension of reality

Marshall McLuhan states that VR is not a false version of reality, but an extension of people's sensory faculties (Horrocks 2000:49). The concept of one reality, and not physical reality versus VR, is a concept that will be dealt with in detail as the study unfolds, but what is of concern, at this point, is to ask how traditional theological categories can be extended to an extended/new reality? When VR and physical reality are not two independent realities and VR actually an extension of physical reality, as will unfold, then theology on the one reality can be extended to the other one. How this extension can and should be conducted is the intention of this study; as an introduction one common ground in which, this extension can occur is in the sphere of desires. James in James 1:14 states that desires is fundamental to sin (for James in physical reality, since the VR under discussion did not exist in its present form yet), and in turn raises the question 'What roles do desires play in VR and how could these desires become an expression of sinful desires?'

Brenda Laurel (Laurel 1986) suggests that VR is bound with an impulse to make desires concrete and goes on to say that the interface (VR) acts as an object of desire, because it has been invested with the capacity to fill the lack in subjectivity. The true significance surfaces when these desires are recognised as cultural expression, and of concern for this presentation, the sinful side of cultural expressions. Graham Houston (Houston 1998: 20-44) argues that technology is a reflection of culture itself and that technology itself is value-laden (the fact that VR is a reflection of culture itself will gain particular significance when the study will introduce simulacra). In the research of Graham Houston the cultural expression has to do with all forms of technology, but, as already stated, the present concern is only the content of VR and, at this point, how it is culturally driven and an expression of culture itself.

Should no sin have been present in today's culture, no sin could have been depicted by VR; should the Fall of Man, Genesis 3, never have happened, no sinful desires could have been elicited or depicted by VR. The fact that VR depicts the present culture, and since Genesis 3 is a historical reality in this culture, does this imply Christians are justified to blindly accept these depictions? No, not when the mechanics of sin are taken seriously as an expression of desires and when the interaction with VR is illustrated as driven by desire. Sarah Worth says "we are attracted to fictions because we enjoy the ways we respond to them" (Irwin 2002:180). In the Old Testament YAHWEH commanded holy wars to eradicate sinful cultures in order to minimise negative influences, should Christians do the same with some forms of VR? The same principle emerges in the New Testament commanding separation from the sinful world and should consequently also have a bearing on VR. Obviously not all forms of VR are depictions of a sinful lifestyle, especially where the hero, the character being adopted by the viewer/participator in the narrative (as will be illustrated when the study deals with character assignment), acts Christlike; the best example is obviously the Jesus Film self where Christ Himself (or the theological appropriation of Him) is the Hero.

The concept of sinful desires, and particularly the desire for language and how sin functions with and in this desire, will be developed as the study progresses. The theological analysis in this development will spend ample time on Genesis 1&3 and how the mechanics of sin function in culture.

A very prominent illusion that will be dealt with is the illusion that the world of VR is independent from physical reality - a sort of dualism. This is a type of a Neoplatonist (see quote below) and Techno-romantic philosophy (Horrocks 2000: 37) mixed with a present Aristotelean universe of a good physical reality. The present Aristotelian universes are situated in the cultural shift eminent in the reintroduction of Aristotle's work, during the times of Thomas Aquinas and the abandonment of the, until yet, Platonic bias, rendering the present world as good (González 1984: 315-9). In this mixture and dualism, although an illusion, there are two worlds: one is the world of ideas and is confined to VR, while the other one is the good physical world; in this illusion they are independent from one another where the sinful world of ideas (the depiction of sin in VR) has no effect on the physical reality. Consequently it is a sort of a reversed Platonism and a Neo-Gnosticism where the gold in the pigsty is not the good soul captured in bad body, but a good physical reality immersed in a bad world of ideas which cannot stain the good physical world. What raises the stakes for theology is that this philosophical construction (illusion) has even gone one step higher and has reached its peak in a Plotinus ideal where VR - the world of ideas - has become the only desirable place to abide. Christopher Horrocks says:

Plato separated the world into the realm of our senses (where appearances and things can deceive) and the intelligible realm of ideas – ideal and unchanging forms and immutable Good. Plotinus (205-270 AD) later deployed Plato's doctrine to claim that the soul strives to escape the material body and embrace the unity of the ideal reality. The link with virtuality is expressed in the mode whereby digital narratives have absorbed the idealism of this Neoplatonic concept of ecstasies: the release of the soul from the body. In some virtual narratives, the soul is replaced by the mind – 'the means of ecstasies is immersion in an electronic data stream, and the realm of unity is a cyberspace' (Horrocks 2000:38).

The study reverses this outlook and looks at VR from a Hebraic worldview and consequently replaces the Greek worldview by refuting this illusionary dualism. The Hebraic worldview is a holistic worldview with no dualism and separation of parts as set out in the Scriptures and will be illustrated as the study unfolds (see especially the last section)

5. Virtual Identity

Graham Houston (Houston 1998:63) says that computer-generated experiences may cause us to redefine basic concepts such as identity. Virtual Identity refers to the disembodied identity someone acquires in dealings with VR. McLuhan calls this disembodiment the ‘disincarnate man’ (Horrocks 2000:65). An example is a dialogue in the movie *The Matrix* where Morpheus tells Neo that when someone is plugged into the Matrix he or she retains a “residual self image” and becomes “a mental projection of your digital self” (Irwin 2002: 231) and is given by the movie as the reason why Neo looks the same in the Matrix as he looks in the real world. That such a perfect projection, without seeing oneself, is possible is questionable and elicits no desire to be entertained, but what becomes the concern is not the projection from the self to the medium but the medium to the self.

In a computer game the projection is not from the self to the game, but from the game to the self; the Virtual Identity is predetermined by the game and is projected onto the player, since the objective of the game is to acquire the skills of the intended Virtual Identity and to accomplish the set goals of the game. In a flight simulator the Virtual Identity is a pilot and becomes the projected Identity of the player, the objective is to become a good pilot; in a Martial Arts game the player becomes a physical fighter – even if the only two things (s)he can move are his or her hands. Examples of a reversed projection also exist, where the self is projected to the Virtual Identity and not the Virtual Identity to the self like in the award-winning PC game *The Sims* where the player shares a community with other created identities from all over the world. In this community each player can become whatever he or she desires to be; the player can even have a sex-change and live a day-to-day life as the opposite sex. Other examples of the projection from the self to a Virtual Identity are the socialisation of chat rooms and personals’ websites.

Theologically Virtual Identity raises a few questions and particularly pertaining to the Image of God and Christians/people who are the bearers of the Image of God. When would the acquired Virtual Identity become a perversion of what YAHWEH intended? Or better stated, when would the Virtual Identity be Christlike or not and consequently in the Image of YAHWEH or not? Taking this one step further, when would people’s Identity, in the HyperReality of Late Capitalism, be Christlike or not? In short, what shape has the Image of the world taken in VR asking what should the identity of Christians be in this world? Obviously the only right answer is Christlikeness.

On the peripherals, in the shape society has taken and particularly in the abstract constellation of its understanding, many people see the need to acquire an identity foreign to YAHWEH's intentions and hence the need for some to have a 'sex-change' or 'identity change' etc. in digital environments. A look from outside the illusionary Neoplatonic dualism, from a holistic Hebraic worldview, inspires this study to illustrate Christ as the identity to acquire in order to find wholeness in the Context of YAHWEH as apposed to the abstract understanding of the sinful culture of the day these people are part off. Pointing to these peripheral occurrences (some would argue that these occurrences are turning mainstream) Graham Houston suggests that the fascination of computer-generated environments already suggests that some may prefer synthetic worlds above the real thing, especially those who find normal relationships very hard (Houston 1998:55).

In the reshaping of the identity of the world via VR, the next question would be when would this identity/reshaping become a rebellion against YAHWEH? Should what is said earlier be true, that VR is becoming better than, or a preferred option above, physical reality, when would VR be seen or taken as a better creation/reshaping than YAHWEH's creation? Internally this is flawed since, as stated before, VR is only an extension of physical reality and also only part of the abstract constellation in which much of physical reality is also understood by; what raises the concern is: when would VR become a direct rebellion against YAHWEH's created order? Should the Matrix hypothesis ever materialise, would a perfect world in VR be possible, would it be possible to simulate heaven? Could this be theologically justified? It is at this point that the theological Norm (control belief) of the proposed theological presentation needs to be introduced. The concept of a Norm follows the Paul Tillich definition stating that the "Sources and medium can produce a theological system only if their use is guided by norm". He continues to say that this Norm arises out of the spiritual life of the church as it encounters the Christian message (Tillich 1963). The Norms of the present study is the Presence of YAHWEH and are set forth as the guiding Norm for both the right hermeneutics of VR and the Word/World of YAHWEH. It is the presence of YAHWEH, in a one Hebraic worldview, that constitutes right identity and a perfect world in VR (a simulation of heaven) would only be possible with and within the presence of YAHWEH.

6. Methodology

With the Norm (or determined by the Norm) comes the need to import, or create, a theological model that would render the necessary theological categories to inform the dialogue between Scriptures and VR. The chosen theological model is, what is called, the Postliberal Theological model and particularly as it was freshly backed out of Yale University by Hans Frei (Campbell 1997) and George Lindbeck (Lindbeck 1984). But before attention can be given to this theological model, the Post of Postliberal, which is the same as the Post of Postmodern, firstly necessitates the establishment of a Postmodern methodology in approaching the theological task. The proposed methodology is a 'dialectical' process/dialogue between (Postliberal) Theology/Word/World of YAHWEH, the author's tradition/worldview and VR in HyperReality residing under the umbrella called Social Construction. Social Construction is a discipline in itself, and with Postliberal Theology, qualifies as a useful tool in that both attempt to answer Postmodern questions and illuminate Postmodern apprehensions of Reality. Social Construction is the objective of the Taos Institute in the USA, founded by Kenneth J. Gergen (Gergen 1999), and is a discipline focussing on the positive construction of values/realities out of the rubble of Poststructuralism and the disillusionment of modernism.

Both Social Construction and Postliberal theology are being built upon, and draw from Postmodern Philosophies (in particular the Wittgenstein model) and Social sciences (e.g. psychology in the case of Social Construction and Anthropology in the case of the Yale Postliberal theology) and appropriately serve as the lenses to apply theology to VR. In essence the author's proposed task is a Social Constructionist task in that, the good and the real, is being negotiated between a variety of dialogues of which VR and the Word/World of YAHWEH are the two voices of particular concern to this study. The Postliberal theological model qualifies as the custodian between these two voices to make the task a viable theological enquiry while still keeping the Norm intact. Postliberal theology defines itself as a cultural-linguistic enterprise (Lindbeck 1984: 32-42) and when both VR and the Word/World of YAHWEH could be looked at from culture and language the gap is bridged. The desired antithesis, in the proposed 'dialectical' process/dialogue, is to shed light on how people/Christians should function with and in VR in a YAHWEH approved way.

7. Social Construction

As stated, Social Construction is a discipline on its own but importantly a discipline without an end in itself: without the objective to give a clear-cut presentation of the Real and the Good, and consequently Postmodern in nature, although different from some other Postmodern endeavours as, e.g. Deconstruction who solely seeks to destroy modernist models of reality with no intention/ability to replace it with anything substantial (Gergen 1999: 24-31). The present presentation confines itself to the Social Constructionist worldview (“a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world”(Soanes 2003: 2030)) in that the dialogue stays open between VR and the Word/World of YAHWEH, although, on the other hand, seeks to significantly construct a view of the Real and the Good that is pleasing to YAHWEH. For Social Construction dialogue itself is the Real and the Good and in the progress of the study it will become clear that in this dialogue YAHWEH has a privileged position and consequently the authority to dictate the content and meaning since, while dialogue only occur in language, YAHWEH’s World/Context precedes language. Because the study can also only use language, Social Construction will be the overarching umbrella validating the scientific presentation and research in a Postmodern way while the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH, that which precedes language, will dictate the outcome.

The proposed Postmodern epistemology is typically based on the Wittgenstein tradition and is mainly aimed against the modern concepts of the self enclosed in a body: a dualistic concept of the hidden self in a body impenetrable to anyone else. Kerr illustrates the Wittgenstein tradition as anti Descartes and anti Cartesian in nature (Kerr 1997:24). The preceding modernist concept of epistemology is based on objectivity, as if people are isolated entities and as Kerr says, ‘looking out from our heads’(Kerr 1997:5); in the Cartesian tradition the absolute concept of reality is to aim at a description of things as they would be in our absence (Kerr 1997:24). Postmodern philosophy rejects these claims of objectivity; the Cartesian epistemology says people first have a concept and then they find a word to say it, the picture that one has a thought before one puts it into words (the hidden self using a body to speak with) (Kerr 1997:11), while the present model suggests that people first have a language and then a thought and then they speak.

Language, in the Wittgenstein tradition, is not just words people use, but a way of life “The

‘essence’ of human language is the round of collaborative activity that generates the human way of life” (Kerr 1997:58), and in the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein itself, “the meaning of words is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein 1953). This is where Social Construction begins by arguing that the traditional view of language, as a reflection of the world – a picture or map of events and objects – is wrong (Gergen 1999: 34-5). Language itself is action, as George Gergen says, “Language, in this sense, is not a mirror of life [modernism], but it is doing of life itself” (Gergen 1999:35). For Wittgenstein language is a ‘form of life’, to imagine a language is to imagine an activity (Wittgenstein 1953:23).

Social Construction, as the overarching Postmodern discipline, brings (Postliberal) theology and VR together, and place them on an equal par, in that (all) meaning is gained through negotiations in a dialogue (Gergen 1999: 236) and consequently experienced Reality, the Good and the Real, is being constructed through these negotiations. Gergen illustrates how his endeavour overlaps with the Constructivist endeavour, deeply rooted in rationalist philosophy (Gergen 1999:236). The idea that overlaps is that the mind is not a mirror of the world as it is, but functions to create the world as people know it. From this perspective there could be as many realities as there are minds to conceptualise or construe. Gergen draws on Bakhtin for his concept of dialogue by arguing that a person is being born into meaning through dialogue (Gergen 1999:130). Bakhtin says, “Consciousness is never sufficient, it always finds itself in an intense relationship with another consciousness” (Bakhtin 1984: 26) and “To be means to communicate” (Bakhtin 1984:287).

For Social Construction meaning and reality is not what is ‘out there’, that which can be objectively observed (modernism), but what is negotiated through a dialogue. This has far reaching consequences for both theology, which draws heavily on history and Scriptures written in history when no one has really been ‘out there’ to see how things really happened, and VR, which is both a window on reality, claiming to be ‘out there’, but also based on what people already claimed to be reality. All meaning – to be rational or sensible - (in both theology and VR) comes through relationships and that which is called *individual selves* (the highest commodity of modernism) are socially defined (Gergen 1999:117-31). Social Construction emphasises the termination of individualism in the proposed Postmodern paradigm (the paradigm will be given flesh in the next section).

Jonathan Potter (Potter 1996), in his book *Representing Reality* (of interest for both the claims of theology and much of VR), illustrates how truth is being worked up through certain devices and consequently a product of rhetoric. Social Construction argues the same since, to repeat, truth is not what is 'out there', but is, as Gergen says, 'achieved' through relational rituals (Gergen 1999:36). For Potter facts have to do with discourse and rhetoric rather than cognition (Potter 1996: 205), which could have profound implications for both the factual claims of VR and the Scriptures, the Real and the Good, socially constructed in the proposed dialogue. The factual dimension of VR will be entertained as the study progresses, at this moment it is enough to know that even while VR might claim to be fiction, or Science-fiction etc., the meaning of the fiction, in any genre, is culturally or linguistically determined and in that sense becomes a form of a factual claim or the cloning of facts. The meaning, or substance, of even alien species in movies is in that which is culturally or linguistically recognisable (these aliens also have ears and eyes etc.).

Social Construction endeavours to negotiate new meaningful realities in social sciences (Gergen 1999: 163) and in this tradition the present study endeavours to initiate a meaningful dialogue between the Word/World of YAHWEH and Virtual Reality to attain a version of reality that is pleasing to YAHWEH. Because the Will of YAHWEH is what is of importance, the Norm by which the Word of YAHWEH is being approached (the Presence of YAHWEH) is also the Norm that governs the negotiation process and hermeneutics of VR. As the study progresses the aesthetics of language and the passion for language will become apparent, which is the passion by which the human nature creates new metaphors, and so extend language, and consequently shape reality accordingly. In the essay *On the Possibility of Generating Aesthetic Messages in an Edenic Language*, Umberto Eco (Jobling 2001: 78-91) states that Creativity (typical of VR and the reality that is negotiated in the experience of VR) is in a situation permeated with a physical and mental excitation – passion for physical and passion for language. It is in this endeavour that Social Construction proposes new metaphors, and the seeking of alternative binaries in language (Gergen 1999: 147-54), and is also the current objective where new metaphors should be produced in and through the presence of YAHWEH holding to the belief that the ultimate purpose of all creation is the presence of YAHWEH (Col. 1:15-20). Since YAHWEH accommodates culture, His presence is attainable in the negotiation process; Progress Theology is being rejected in that although the process is a negotiation YAHWEH does not change. The negotiations take place in language, but, as

Genesis 1 will indicate, YAHWEH is outside language and consequently YAHWEH's world (reality) is not shaped by language.

8. Proper negotiations

The previous arguments have established dialogue as the lifeblood of the theological study which in turn introduces the next question. 'What would indicate proper negotiations in the proposed dialogue between VR, the Word/World of YAHWEH and the already held world view being broad to the negotiations?' But by only asking this question, a realism is assumed that first needs to be acknowledged: the realism that VR is a component of the overall experienced reality when someone is exposed to the world of VR. This concept will be fleshed as the study progresses illustrating that the same social cues reserved for human interaction are used in the interactions with characters in VR (Lombard 1997) and consequently true socialisation is taking place. This in turn proves that the voice of VR is a realism that certainly will and can shape the entire ethical and theological realism of a person. Proper negotiations would be to admit that VR uses rhetorical devices, Potter's (Potter 1996) words, in creating its realism and can even be the only realism and voice available to people by which to negotiate a realism to live in.

An example is the alternative lifestyle of Homosexuality in the USA. Not many people in the USA are able to know a homosexual person personally, since (as Peter Sprigg (Sprigg 2004) indicates in his referral to the National Health and Social Life Survey which he claims as the most widely accepted study of sexual practices in the United States), only 2.8 percent of the male, and 1.4 percent of the female, population in the USA identify themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual and consequently it is highly unlikely that an average USA citizen works with a homosexual or even being a neighbour of one. Maybe some have met a homosexual at some occasion but certainly the most are not house friends with one and certainly don't know the psychological and emotional experience of one. Although this is the case "Many times," as Dailey (Dailey 2004) points out "homosexual relationships are touted as being no different from ordinary married couples. But research shows that in several key respects, the homosexual lifestyle differs radically from other types of relationships". The only accessible data many people have of this alternative lifestyle is the realism of the voice of VR and in many instances this data portrays the alternative lifestyle the same as heterosexual ones, as the

summary of another essay of Dailey (Dailey 2001) leads, “Hollywood and the media relentlessly propagate the image of the fit, healthy, and well-adjusted homosexual. The reality is at polar opposites to this caricature: homosexual and lesbian relationships are typically characterized by instability, promiscuity, and unhealthy and risky sex practices, factors that greatly increase the incidence of serious and incurable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including hepatitis, HPV, syphilis, gonorrhea, and AIDS.” Dailey (Dailey 2004) illustrates in his statistics how different homosexual relationships are, compared to heterosexual ones, over a spectrum of categories ranging from relationship duration to the rates of intimate partner violence. When so few people can have direct access to a Homosexual lifestyle, and when the same social cues are used in exposing this lifestyle through VR as when some would know one, how much would VR be responsible for the change in public opinion towards Homosexual people in the face of contradiction of what such lifestyles really entitle? In an essay by Richard Stellway (Stellway [S.a.]), on the raise of secularism, he states that in six years (1990-1996) public opinion has changed with 15% in favour of Homosexuality in the USA. Is this change of public opinion due to the influence of VR?

On the surface this example could appear one dimensional, should only the voice of VR be presented as the medium for the change of public opinion (as the study will indicate in the vanishing of lines it is not clear any more what comes first, culture or VR since VR is the cloning of culture). No, in admitting the realism of VR as a voice in the dialogue of constructed reality is also to recognise that there are other voices equally responsible for the construction of an overall realism people live by; the subject matter becomes extremely more complicated when the Word/World of YAHWEH, and particularly the individual languages of each person’s religious stratification and affiliation, is added to the dialogue (e.g. fundamentalism and its opinion towards homosexuality). It is in bringing all the voices together that the presentation recognises that the overall realism is, what can be called, HyperReality - more than reality and will be delineated under the postmodern paradigm -, and to stay with the example, stating why people can have an opinion about Homosexual lifestyles without a direct exposure to it. HyperReality loads the burden on theology to make sure the chosen theological model is capable of rendering the appropriate theological categories, not just in a dialogue but also in a HyperReality, while still firmly fix the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH as the guardian of the entire negotiation process.

The Postliberal theology model still stays the chosen option, since this model functions from within the reality already created and not from outside - the extent of the (Hyper)Reality does not determine its contours. In his volume *The Nature of Doctrine* (Lindbeck 1984), and according to James Gustafson (Gustafson 1999) the defining work of those calling themselves Postliberals, George Lindbeck defines Postliberal theology as “intratextuality”, as opposed to “extratextuality” describing other Theological models. According to this definition extratextuality locates meaning in objective realities outside the text, while intratextuality (the cultural-linguistic model) presents meaning immanently in language. Lindbeck argues that words and sentences are made comprehensible by indicating how they fit into systems of communication or purposeful action, not by reference to outside factors (Lindbeck 1984:114). In his endeavour he extends the same principle to religions in general indicating that religions function in the same way as a language with its vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar through which this vocabulary is meaningfully deployed as a form of life (Lindbeck 1984:33). Lindbeck rightly observes that pre-eminently authoritative texts that are canonical writings of religious communities, for those who are steeped in them, no world is/becomes more real than the ones they create (Lindbeck 1984: 117), and in Social Construction terms, have constructed for themselves. The mechanics of the Postliberal theology model prove to be sufficient to function in the contours of a HyperReality and to negotiate, under the umbrella of Social Construction, a realism/HyperReality, in the presence of YAHWEH, Christians should live by/in.

By again drawing attention to the Post of Postliberal the need necessitates to be self-reflective and to admit that Postliberal Theology cannot escape criticism (as would be the case with all Postmodern philosophies). In the intratextual nature of Postliberal theology the endeavour attempts to distance theology from propositional statements: Postliberal Theology uses Scriptures as a literary source (Lindbeck 1984: 120), but is vague in the modes of revelation (Gustafson 1999). Although this criticism carries some value, on the other hand, Postliberal theology encompasses this criticism by distancing doctrine from propositional claims by arguing the presence of YAHWEH as the Norm and consequently argues that it is not what has happened in the past that is of paramount importance, but what is happening now and the propositional truth of YAHWEH’s presence now. In the words of Hans Frei “I am persuaded that in the search for an answer to the question of how to understand the text as texts, the closest discipline to theology is not history at all” (Frei 1992: 11) and “...the central persuasion

of Christian theology, not so much to defend as to be set out, is that Jesus Christ is the presence of YAHWEH in the Church to the world..." (Frei 1992:8).

In this quotation Hans Frei even more renders this criticism against intratextuality inappropriate since, in his definition, theology is not to defend but to set out. When Postliberal theology is being seen as an apologetic endeavour the criticism would hold, this is when Postliberal theology is being compared against the lack of a right flank, according to James Gustafson, an orthodoxy (Gustafson 1999), but melt away when the emphasis moves away from apologetics to praxes - setting out the presence of Jesus Christ in the Church and in the world. It is in this praxes that Postliberal theology will become didactic, versus apologetic, in order to secure the Norm in the experienced HyperReality by Christians in this study. Postliberal theology allocates the presence of YAHWEH in the language/meaning people talk/live in as will be argued. Lindbeck says

"...to become religious involves becoming skilled in the language, the symbol's system given religion. To become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms" (Lindbeck 1984:34).

The present theological endeavour is not to defend, or oppose, certain arguments, but to apply the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH to the experience of HyperReality, and VR in this HyperReality, and to be in a dialogue with "whoever it may concern" (a missiological motive).

In the dialectical nature of the presentation proper negotiations are also, what Gergen calls, *Transformative Dialogue* (Gergen 1999: 154) - the missiological motive; it is not a modernist theological presentation dictating objective truths, but rather to invite people to action/practice or as Campbell says of Postliberal Theology, 'the performance of Scripture' (Campbell 1997:212). Proposing a subjective study, as Gergen invites science to do (Gergen 1999:167-93), would justify the use of traditionally none Scholarly material and may include testimonies and empirical data from VR itself. The employment of the Internet and websites, well researched for their authenticity, accentuate the subjective nature of VR being used to reflect on itself. The subjective nature proposes transformative dialogue from within, because, as hard as the author may attempt to approach VR from THE outside, it would be fair of the author to admit his world has always been infused by VR, and many other voices, which created/shaped

his overall realism. In a typical Postmodern notion the author admits that he is emerging out of a HyperReality to use HyperReality to scrutinise VR in HyperReality.

9. The Pre-Modern Hermeneutic of Postliberal Theology

The Postliberal hermeneutic can be both called ‘Post’-modern and ‘Pre’-modern: ‘Pre’ because it is the recovery of a hermeneutic principle from before the Enlightenment and ‘Post’ because it follows modernity. George Lindbeck describes the pre modern Hermeneutic as typological and, less fundamentally, allegorical, where the Bible was not simply a source of precepts and truths, but the interpretive framework for all reality (Lindbeck 2002:204); it is this typological side that enjoys the most prominence in his hermeneutics. Example he uses of the pre modern employment of the typological hermeneutic are Charlemagne who saw King David as a type and the antitype of a king over YAHWEH’s people (Lindbeck 2002: 206) and Charles V in his wars against the Turks (Lindbeck 2002:117). In clarifying his topological use of Scriptures he says that it is not to turn Scriptural contents into metaphors for extrascriptural realities, but the other way around; it is not to find the reader’s story in the Bible, but rather to make the story of the Bible the reader’s story – “it is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text” (Lindbeck 1984:118).

Lindbeck (Lindbeck 1984: 119) argues that under modernism the typological interpretation collapsed under the onslaught of rationalistic, pietistic and historical-critical developments. Scripture ceased to function as the lens through which theologians viewed the world, but rather became an object of study whose religious significance or literal meaning was located outside the text and accordingly the “extratextual” nature of modern models of theology oppose to the “intratextual” one of Pre- and Postliberal models. Postliberal Theology is the recovery of the typological hermeneutic from before the Enlightenment. Garry Dorrien says that the Postliberal endeavour is essentially a Barthian project (Dorrien 2001) and George Lindbeck argues that Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar are 20th-century theologians whose use of the Bible is more nearly classic than anything in several centuries, yet distinctively modern (Lindbeck 2002:219). The Postliberal hermeneutic takes a literary approach to the Bible as a realistic narrative (Lindbeck 1984: 120) and to, use the words of David Kelsey applied to Karl Barth’s view of Scripture, a “vast, loosely-structured, nonfictional novel” (Kelsey 1975:48).

In the proposed negotiations the Scriptures should meet VR, in HyperReality, on equal par since Scriptures, as a realistic narrative in a literary sense, also becomes a VR that could, and have and still do, shape the overall realism of Christians. The Scriptures become VR since, in the Postliberal endeavour, the paramount question of understanding the Scriptures is not a historical one and accordingly without the attempt to recover the real history (firsthand exposure) and consequently the narrative becomes VR, the same as a news bulletin which reports/convey true data but renders it virtual through a subjective infusion (see the illustration above about the different news reports on the BBC); modernism has done (Postliberal) theology the favour of illustrating that the attempt to recover history never can be an objective endeavour and consequently history always stays interpreted. The propositional believe of this presentation is that the realistic narrative of Scriptures should, in Calvin's (Calvin 1599: I.6.1.) appropriation, be the spectacles, the lens, through which faith views all reality, and as Lindbeck says, the world of the reader could be absorbed into the Biblical world (Lindbeck 2002:211). It is the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH which dictates that the world of VR should be absorbed into the World/Word of YAHWEH, since although these two worlds meet one another in language, the ontological reality of YAHWEH's world precedes language in *Creatio Ex Nihilo* (as will be fleshed out later). The negotiations are in language, but it is the World/Word of YAHWEH that should absorb VR, in the HyperReality, for Biblical topology to be correct; should VR absorb the Biblical world the topology would be the other way around and consequently from VR to the Biblical world (has this not already happened as the example of Homosexual lifestyles and the swing of public opinion might indicate or suggest?).

The primary sphere of typological application would be to recognise the patterns of YAHWEH's workings in history and how it corresponds to the current world of HyperReality. Secondly the typological application will be in the domain of meaning, and particularly in the abstract constellation/construction of meaning in the formation of language, with Jesus Christ as the ultimate meaning of what would constitute the presence of YAHWEH in reality and the expositor to VR.

10. Conclusion

This first section has laid the foundation to first launch the enquiry into what the HyperReality, in which both the event of the Word/World of YAHWEH and VR occurs, entitles. Only then can the presentation commence to a Postmodern exe(eise)gesis of the Scriptures, starting with

Genesis 1 & 3, in order to progress to the meaning Christians can/should find in Jesus Christ, enlightening this HyperReality, through the typological application of the Biblical World absorbing all of reality. In short, through which the overall realism of Christians can be shaped by the World/Word of YAHWEH and consequently establishing the Presence/Context of YAHWEH as the fibre of the experienced (Hyper)Reality of Christians. The presence of YAHWEH is an ontological reality, as will be illustrated by the experience of Christians on the Island of Lewis, which surpasses modernist modes of empirical sciences since YAHWEH's Presence/World is about a Context and not a Text (as the exe(eise)gesis of the Scriptures will illustrate). Text versus Context plays on the words of Jacques Derrida's much-quoted phrase 'There is no "outside" to the Text' (translation by Christopher Norris) (Norris 2002:40).

Establishing the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH in the experience of the proposed HyperReality entitles a form of eisegesis, since it is not the history of the text of Scripture or the culture, and to a certain extent, the world view of the authors of the Scriptures, that are of paramount importance, but rather the presence of the YAHWEH in the Scriptures who precedes the Scriptures. The Postmodern HyperReality argues that no two generations/epochs (in the swelling of language and in the abstract constellation of understanding) are able to look at Scriptures the same, and consequently eisegesis is unavoidable, but in YAHWEH's accommodation/grace His presence stays an ontological possibility; a good example is YAHWEH's accommodation and ontological presence on the Island of Lewis in the 1949-52 revival even in the face of a wrong stance towards women (according to a present exegesis) (Peckham 2004:25). The present endeavour is scrutinising VR in order to find a YAHWEH approved experience of VR, but in this quest VR must be understood in its metaphysical environment of HyperReality and consequently the theological study is unavoidably obligated to focus on the overall HyperReality in which both the realism of VR and the world of the Scriptures, as the source for theology, takes place.

SECTION II

1 Introduction

In the previous section the foundation was laid, and the scope introduced, in order to launch a theological quest into what would entitle a YAHWEH approved experience of VR. The argument led that VR is not an independent reality, but just as much part of the fibre of all reality and that the perceived reality - the Real and the Good - is the antithesis of the negotiations between many voices. The blend of these voices, and the abstract nature of language - as will be illuminated -, causes this perceived reality to be, what is called, a HyperReality - more than the real, or the some of its parts as Robert Pirsig (Pirsig 1974) illustrates in his book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* how reality is more than some of its parts the same as a machine (motorcycle) is more than the sum of its parts as indicated in the service manual. The proposed theological hermeneutic is the Postliberal hermeneutic which argues that all of reality should be absorbed into the Biblical reality, which in turn prompts a metaphysical enquiry to first ask what this HyperReality is, and how it functions, that should become a Biblical reality, or better stated, absorbed into a Hebraic world view? The overall endeavour argues a Hebraic world view, versus a Greek world view, where every part is observed from the complete composition of the parts, included in the World/Context of YAHWEH preceding and encompassing every other part and particularly language. This commitment to the holistic Hebraic world view versus a dissecting Greek world view can be seen in the groundbreaking work of the Wesleyan theologian Mildred Bangs Wynkoop (Wynkoop 1972: 48-9).

The enquiry into the fibre of this HyperReality extends the Hebraic world view to include the implosion of all disciplines, since when one reality is argued all truths from every discipline would be part of this one reality. The Hebraic world view includes the full magnitude of what is called true and it is only the absence of truth that would exclude any discipline from this world view. The presupposition that holds is that "All truth comes from God" and has far reaching consequences since it would argue that if any discipline has truths, or has captured some truths, these truths have come from God and where there is a lie, or a deception, it did not come from God. A Greek world view could find this difficult to grasp in the natural separation of autonomous parts, but is not the case in a compound Hebraic world view which actually removes the antagonism between theology and other disciplines.

When all truth is God's truth, it would mean that every discipline capturing/producing truth(s) would be a form of theology. From a Postmodern perspective and a Hebraic world view the

quest would be to define what truth really is when much of what is claimed as truth is produced and not what is really out there (Potter 1996: 176-201). The yardstick for truth in the Hebraic world view is that which originates with/in the Presence/World/Context of YAHWEH and those claims which are not compatible with the Presence/World/Context of YAHWEH are not the truths. In short, the presentation sees no problem with drawing on interdisciplinary material to illuminate the one reality people experience, but which should be incorporated into the Context/World of YAHWEH. This experienced reality - HyperReality - will be the topic of the present section, while the next section will focus on an exe(eise)gesis of the Biblical narrative that should absorb this HyperReality.

Before the introduction can be concluded, the argued sequence should be defended: the fact that the study begins with the definition of HyperReality in order to draw it into the Biblical reality, does not imply a theological model comparable with the first four models, versus the last sided model, of Hans Frei (Frei 1992: 2-5) which are: (1) philosophy as the natural cognitive discipline to theology, (2) the Christian communal self-description is interpretive social science, (3) the third type follows the second type but proposes no supertheory or comprehensive structure for integrating theology and social sciences, only ad hoc procedures, (4) the fourth is a reversal of the second where theology is a non systematic combination of normed Christian self-description and method founded on general theory. The present model is a holistic Hebraic world view and the only reason why a sequence is presented is because it is practically impossible to say everything simultaneous, and although it has the appearance of dissecting things into parts, actually the sequence is inessential and redundant and a Greek world view is flatly denied. In effect the systematic of Systematic Theology has become redundant since the proposed Hebraic world view is not a Greek one.

2 The Postmodern world view

The previous section has introduced the Postmodern condition and argued for a Postmodern methodology to relate (Postliberal) theology to VR in the proposed HyperReality. The description of the Postmodern condition was limited to the signs of the times and the characteristics of these times. What is needed now is to determine how these times have shaped the world view, interpretative frame, of each person or culture as a whole to understand the negotiated realism all reality is understood by and hermeneutics are done within both the Scriptures and VR.

The proposed, and as will be explained, Postmodern world view can be summarised as *A Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of Hyper Reality* and obviously manifests itself in a variety of blends in the lives of people today. The blend is caused by the intersection of times a characteristic of the present time: the present time is a time of modernism in the rear mirror while penetrating Postmodernism, with some people's world view still strongly routed in modernism and others born and raised in an emerging Postmodern world view, ignorant of modernism. It is still an emerging world view and is in line with what David Bosch calls *The Emergence of a Postmodern Paradigm* (Bosch 1991: 349-51), which he applies to missions at the University of South Africa. The proposed application of a paradigm will differ somewhat from David Bosch, since what he calls a paradigm will be narrowed down to a personal level or experience, a personal world view, apposed to a corporate world view of missions.

The emerging nature of the worldier/paradigm implies that the theological appropriation is not only descriptive, as oppose to an apologetic motive as argued in the previous section, but also prophetic by dealing with the paradigm as completely developed and consequently as someone who is completely saturated by the proposed Postmodern world view.

The world view will now be explained.

2.1 (A Timeless/Spaceless Present) **Paradigm** (of HyperReality)

2.1.1 Explained

The lucrative and loaded concept of a paradigm carries a resemblance to the personal paradigm indicated by Stephen Covey in his best-seller *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey 1990), who illustrates how someone's personal paradigm services as a map of reality informing lived experience. It seems like Dr. Covey formulated his concept on the Borges fable used by Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1994:1) and although his intended audience is not the educated elite, as a Doctorate student at Brigham Young University and MBA at Harvard university and according to *Time magazine* one of the 25 most influential Americans (FranklinCovey 2005), his apprehension could be taken seriously. According to Stephen Covey the map is not always a correct simulation of reality and consequently informs a wrong appropriation of reality, and to draw the analogy to its conclusion, one needs to have a correct map of the territory in order to be successful. His sphere of interest, with a focus to success, differs from the proposed sphere of the present endeavour, since the success being sought after is Christlikeness in the interactions with VR - the overall thesis of the study.

To take it one step further, the paradigm (or the map) challenges all the concepts of simulation and in turn, introduces the concept of simulacra. Jean Baudrillard illuminates this challenge in his application/example of the Borges fable in his well treaded volume *Simulacra and Simulation* (Baudrillard 1994:1). This volume is the acknowledged inspiration of the *Matrix Trilogy* (Hanley 2003), which in turn illustrates VR in its ultimate form (and becomes useful to the prophet motive of this study) of the (already projected) Matrix hypothesis or Brain in the Vat concept as introduced in the previous section. The Borges fable states that the cartographers of the Empire drew up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly and is, for Baudrillard, the most beautiful allegory of simulation. He continues his argument that simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance, but the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper real. By taking it one step further he argues that today the map actually precedes the territory, which he calls *precession of simulacra* - the desert of the real itself.

To argue along these lines, of a simulation not simulating a concrete reality, would again emphasize that the paradigm (postmodern map) is not about what is out there, or even what is substantially in people, but what is socially constructed/negotiated between a variety of voices/relationships informing people's apprehension of the world. The construction/map precedes the apprehension of reality and consequently even causes its existence/magnitude. This social construction/negotiation/map is what is meant by the concept of a paradigm and is anti-Descartes and anti-Kant in nature, as argued in the previous section, since their modernist apprehension was to describe things as they would be in our absence (Kerr 1997: 24) but a social construction/negotiation/map cannot exist in the absence of those that created or apprehend it. Where the paradigm raises out of its cast is that, although the map is linguistically determined (as will be fleshed out), YAHWEH precedes the language through which it is negotiated and consequently YAHWEH precedes the paradigm itself. Although the paradigm is socially constructed, and a procession of simulacra, it is not without a fixed point - the presence of YAHWEH - giving birth to the proposed Norm of the presence of YAHWEH that should become the guardian of the entire paradigm. When the focus of the presence of YAHWEH, as the fixed point, becomes lost the paradigm becomes nothing else than *The Desert of the Real* - in Baudrillard's words (Baudrillard 1994:1) and a catch phrase in the movie *The Matrix*.

The previous section pointed to the Wittgenstein 'form of life' (Wittgenstein 1953:23) and the quotation from Fergus Kerr that "The 'essence' of human language is the round of collaborative activity that generates the human way of life" (Kerr 1997:58). For Wittgenstein language has to do with activities, and although this is the case, what raises the stake is that this language is a set of metaphors (Ricoeur 1977:36) and reasoning is largely metaphorical and extends to abstract reasoning (Lakoff 1999:555-6). When reasoning leading to activities, in the mechanics of the paradigm, is formed out of abstract metaphors the conclusion would be that the paradigm itself is a construction (out) of abstract concepts - simulacra - and consequently a complete abstract model. Should the argument stop there the consequent would be *The Desert of the Real* - nihilism -, but Social Construction in a holistic Hebraic world view would indicate the opposite in that meaning is a corporate entity and ultimate meaning is in the construction with/in the presence of YAHWEH who exceeds the boundaries of metaphors and abstractness.

Meaning is not in the respective parts of the construction, but in the composition of the whole: a smile (a separate part) has no meaning in itself, but gains meaning in a social context. A smile can mean happiness, but a smile can also mean hypocrisy; the differences in use are socially determined. No individual person determines what a smile means (the individual language Wittgenstein refutes (Wittgenstein 1953:243)). Actually the smile itself has no value, but only the meaning which is socially determined and communicated. The need for a smile arises when a meaning wants to or needs to be communicated; the need is stimulated when the socially determined prototype - the smile - is topologically applied (Gergen 1999:128). Should the banging of one's head been socially constructed as happiness then everyone, after winning a rugby game, would bang their heads against each other, or against a wall, and not smile or laugh to indicate the emotion (the proposed difference between the signified and the signifier).

One can imagine that this example could be scrutinised and dissected till the reality is exposed giving rise to the signifier, and how the first map was inscribed, to why people use a smile for happiness instead of crying. It consequently becomes a superficial example, but gains a completely different meaning when one considers complete abstract concepts even as close as forms of greetings and as far wide as concepts like democracy and capitalism. To reiterate, Kenneth Gergen identifies in his Social Construction endeavour that all words used in any language have their origin as a metaphor and became true to the fact through long-term usage (Gergen 1999:65) and this in turn renders language as an abstract construction and

consequently a form of simulacra itself. When language is the medium through and in which dialogue takes place and consequently the medium through which people negotiate/construct reality – inscribe the map -, it would imply the map itself is only simulacra (and would stay so should YAHWEH not precede language/simulacra). Consequently when the map becomes simulacra the reality it informs becomes a Hyper Real - a HyperReality.

At this point it is necessary to indicate that the proposed perspective on the HyperReality has boarders and contours as opposed to Poststructuralist movements. The work of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:463-8), giving substance to the Hebraic world view in the proposed HyperReality, counterposes Greek Philosophy, and, of present concern, the Poststructuralist movements in that language are embodied, as opposed to Poststructuralist thought arguing a complete arbitrariness of the sign and the locus of meaning in systems of binary oppositions among free floating signifiers (this is the movement associated with the French philosophers who rediscovered Nietzsche and argue that the human race creates himself and his world through a language that is divorced from the world of objects (Natoli 1993:44-7), of particular concern for this study is the schools of Baudrillard (Natoli 1993:342-73) and Derrida (Natoli 1993:223-41)). The present endeavour takes it one step further and argues the negotiated reality in language as functioning in a Context of which the correct map of reality would comply with the Presence/Context of YAHWEH. Consequently HyperReality is an abstract constellation but with a possible fixed point called YAHWEH; without this fixed point *The Desert of the Real* would be the description of the environment of people without God, lost in a world of simulacra - a nihilistic culture so typical of the Western(ised) World.

The picture of the paradigm (from now on only the word paradigm and not the synonymous analogy of a map) is one of an interlaced web of simulacra (or metaphors, or abstractness) socially constructed and dictating the content of meaning. Should YAHWEH not precede/supersede the paradigm, YAHWEH itself would be a simulation to distract people of the absence of His existence, as illustrated in the works of Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1994:3-7). Meaning would be rendered nihilistic.

On the other hand by affirming the Hebraic world view, and the possibility of the fixed point of YAHWEH, reiterates that Social Construction and Postliberal theology should be done in such a way that the relatedness to YAHWEH should become the informant of meaning. In defining

Postliberal theology George Lindbeck's arguments would superficially indicate a distinction between normal language and a religion which is like a language (Lindbeck 1984:32), but at closer inspection would indicate otherwise, since, as he argues later on in his volume and as referred to in the previous section, people in a religious community "who are steeped in them [an authoritative text], no world is more real than the one they create [socially construct]" (Lindbeck 1984:117). All meaning implodes in one language being used in both the authoritative text and in the normal spoken language otherwise the dialogue would be unintelligible. The identity/worldlier/paradigm of each community is in the one socially constructed language and it is in this one language in which intelligible theology could be done and in which faith should be passed on, and as Campbell (Campbell 1997:232) says, "...faith is a journey into the language and practices [one and the same thing] of a particular community and preaching [teaching] is on learning the distinctive language where language is fundamentally a public instance of communally ruled behaviour". Correct theologising occurs when the endeavour leads to the incorporation of YAHWEH's presence in the communal language or even embracing the negotiated paradigm before the theologising starts.

The incorporation of YAHWEH's presence into language introduces a key element of the presentation, the communal Hermeneutics as illustrated by people like Hans Frei (Campbell 1997:83-114). As argued language and meaning (practically one and the same thing) are a communal construction and the 'true meaning' (for the proposed theological exposition) is only possible through the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (the relationship with YAHWEH). The doctrine of the Holy Spirit should establish all meaning complying with the presence of YAHWEH.

True meaning is in inverted commas since all meaning has not to do with static comprehensions, as in the example of the change from a flat earth worldlier – pre-Renaissance universe - to a round earth worldlier – post-Renaissance universe - which used to be a theological crisis for people like Luther and Calvin (Greer 1982:356-359), but in retrospect has nothing to do with truth but with differences of meaning. Static comprehensions would nullify the whole proposal of a dialogue and the negotiations to a correct reality of the Real and the Good, this again underscores the Postliberal proposal that meaning is not necessarily in propositional claims but in their practice (Lindbeck 1984:66-7). An example of practice versus meaning is the switch from a Newtonian universe to an Einsteinium universe which even broad

the propositional nature of gravity, in Newtonian terms, into question; although this is the case no one would challenge the Newtonian description and jump off a ten-story building and challenge the meaning of gravity - consequently the usefulness of gravity is in its practice and not in its meaning. On the other hand some meaning needs to be static, because of, what Wittgenstein calls, fundamental propositions (Faliaferro 2003:7-20) since the whole discourse in which meaning originates hinges on these propositions and without them would nullify the whole proposal of a dialogue (fundamental propositions would gain particular meaning when the paradigm is pulled into the Biblical world in the next section, the most fundamental proposition would be the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* in the Biblical narrative)

A clearer description of language, and the intrinsic nihilistic abstract constellation of late capitalism, needs to wait for the next section, but does not deny a present application where theology should bring Biblical correct meaning to VR. When the swelling of language, and consequently the enlargement of the paradigm, occurs because of the constant evolvement of new metaphors producing new meanings/practices, it consequently compels the Postliberal endeavour to focus on the communal meaning of this produced language negotiating experienced realism. VR is part and parcel of this realism to be in anyway intelligible and a topological application of language to make any sense to anyone. In a Postliberal endeavour theology should infuse the right Biblical meaning onto the employed signified used in VR; George Lindbeck illustrates his endeavour as a stress on the code [the social constructed meaning of the signified], rather than the encoded [the signifier] (Lindbeck 1984: 35).

VR is a communal expression because the inscription of the content is being done through the language of the community and consequently is part and parcel of the paradigm. Graham Houston argues that technology is part of a complex web of human culture expression (Houston 1998:130). Community means one language, one map, one paradigm (see the death of individualism argued in the previous section - anti-Descartes and anti-Cartesian) and consequently again scatters the illusionary dualism of *I versus them*. There is no individual paradigm only one interwoven paradigm with a blend of minds sharing space and time. Actually the argument can lead that there has just been one paradigm ever and every person is only plugged into the one paradigm at birth and removed at death.

This definition of the paradigm sounds like a description of the movie *The Matrix*, where

people are plugged into the matrix knowing nothing else of reality except what is fed to them by the matrix and consequently simulacra, simulation in the absence of the real - *The Desert of the Real*, and a picture of a Poststructuralist world (the intention of the movie) and a sort of Neo-Hegelian system (a system that brings Hegel's latent antihumanism and assertions of agents' ignorance to the forefront (Natoli 1993:205)). The paradigm changes in the light of the presence of YAHWEH, who precedes the paradigm and to whom humans are responsible to. The paradigm without YAHWEH would completely nullify the concept of freedom and is consequently rejected by this theological study. The proposed freedom is a type of a relationship, to quote Mildred Bangs Wynkoop (Wynkoop 1972:36), who states that freedom means that for "Man [a person], to be a human person, must have a master. He is made this way. And being a responsible creature, he must choose his master. In this is his freedom". Whatever the shapes of the paradigm, and meanings of nonstatic entities, people would always be able, and required of, to make YAHWEH their master. Karl Barth (Barth 1963:69:I.2:661.) says "God's authority is truly recognised only within the sphere of freedom; only where conscience exists, where there exists a sympathetic understanding of its lofty righteousness and a wholehearted assent to its demands".

What would freedom then be in the Matrix hypothesis? Graham Houston quotes Ellul, who says that for the Christian an ethical choice is not a simple matter of choosing between good and evil, but is primarily a choice between what is possible and what is not (Houston 1998:90) and although this raises more question than answers in the scope of eg. the movie *The Matrix*, or other forms of VR, freedom is not possible outside what is determined by the VR and consequently freedom is confined to what is possible. It would always be possible to choose YAHWEH as one's master; in the spectrum of VR freedom to write the plot of the story is to a great extent denied to its user, but not his/her response to it.

2.1.2 Considerations

The description of the paradigm should raise questions about the idealist-realist controversy. Where does this paradigm fit in? Fergus Kerr says that one can hardly imagine a more radical non-idealist thinking than Wittgenstein (a philosophical school the presentation resides in) when idealism, in a philosophical sense, is taken that ideas are more fundamental than action (Kerr 1997:118), the refuted philosophical sense where idealism indicates a dualism between the inner

and outer human being (looking out of one's head to the world as illustrated in the previous section). Even trying to locate a thought (language) in one's brain would only take one back to language, since the description of a thought can only be with a language. The proposed paradigm is not an Idealistic construction, and consequently not a return to a Hegelian system, since the emphasis is not on metaphysics but on meaning in practice. Theorists might designate this reasoning to a Neo-Hegelianism (Natoli 1993:204-9), but Wittgenstein and consequently the present proposals are destined to disagree with these theorists since Hegel's dialectical model centre's around rationalism but Wittgenstein, and the proposed paradigm, rather centre around language-games which precede rationalism (Kerr 1997:118). The proposed dialectical process, in the proposed negotiation, is not per say to find what is 'out there', but rather to find Biblical meaning in practice.

The proposed paradigm is not only anti-Idealism, but also anti-Realist, since, as Wittgenstein argues, Realists do state the priority of things, rather than ideas, but then go on unquestionably in the world of ideas in their reasoning. He says that they too take it for granted that their debate is about matching ideas in the head with items in the world (Kerr 1997:133). In theory they are anti-idealist, but in practice they are not. The proposed paradigm is thus neither realist (epistemology through sense experience), but rather inline with Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1953:402) who argues that language precedes sense experience and consequently informs it. Karr (Kerr 1997:132) refers to Wittgenstein, who in his exploration of the private language fantasy, states that wherever the desire to get to the rock bottom experience on the individual's part, one has to return to the level of the unreflective reactions, patterned responses and so on, that constitutes the world into which the individual is born; the given is the common forms of life [expressed in/through language] in which one participates from the outset – not one's sense data.

Consequently both Realism and Idealism illustrate meaning as a representation – naming objects out there as the observer of passing things - and are consequently both based on an illusionary objectivity, but when that which precedes both of them are affirmed, language-games, it consequently refutes the illusionary objectivity and has a bearing on both the hermeneutics of VR and the Bible. The illusion of two realities - VR versus physical reality - was already suggested in the previous section and it is this illusion which argues that people objectively experience and participate in/with VR as if standing outside this apparent world like an indifferent observer. Graham Houston (Houston 1998:85) argues:

Much debate has focussed on whether we can prove, by empirical means, that watching video nasties influences people to behave aggressively or to make unwelcome sexual advances, etc. The fact that proof is called for exposes an underlying assumption, that inner life and outward behaviour are quite discrete areas of human experience. This seems to fly in the face of common sense. The burden of proof would, rather, seem to be on the other side; we need convincing that such connections are not likely.

Graham Houston calls on common sense and reiterates, as just argued, that the inner life and outward behaviour, in a type of dualism, is unfounded.

The lack of objectivity also has consequences in the hermeneutics of the Bible and would argue that the understanding of the Bible is also predetermined by the paradigm. This is undoubtedly true, but what raises the stakes is to realise that without a guiding principle (the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH preceding the paradigm) the Biblical narrative w/could not become the guardian of the map/paradigm which should absorb all of the reality into the Context of YAHWEH and could the Biblical narrative only be understood through the map/the paradigm and would the onslaught of liberalism be the victor. Right hermeneutics are not about objectivity, which is not possible, but rather about a right relationship with YAHWEH and a right relationship within the community of YAHWEH's children reiterating the Communal Hermeneutic of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck. The onslaught of liberalism has its footing in the language and rhetoric of science, an alien and destructive language when unchecked, because, as Gergen (Gergen 1999:57) says, scientists are becoming [have been] a new breed of high priests beyond question from the unanointed, since they have placed their claims beyond verification.

Bringing the (communal/contextual) language of the Bible to the paradigm would mean to bring the practices of the Bible to the paradigm. To actually pull the meaning of the Bible over the paradigm (absorb all of the reality) would suggest that Christians render the Bible the informant of negotiated metaphors (of life) they live by. The suggestion does not indicate that it would be easily implemented, but through a Communal Hermeneutic the Biblical worldlier can become the worldlier guiding all judgements and values. A contrast that indicates the function of such a metaphor of life is the difference between Africans and Europeans in the comprehension of spirituality matters, since Africans see God, or spiritual factors, in everything they experience, while Europeans see God, or spiritual things, in nothing they experience. For

Africans a spiritual cause-and-effect is a metaphor of life, while for Europeans it is a scientific cause-and-effect metaphor of life that informs their judgments and values. When an African bumps his/her toe, or become sick etc., they would immediately ask what spiritual significance is attached to the experience, while a European would see no such correlation and even Christians, should they become sick, would spontaneously define the experience with scientific reasoning and consequently first go to the doctor and then maybe, should they remember, pray.

Absorbing all of reality into the Biblical reality would imply a redefinition of all/some metaphors, judgements and evaluations are made by via the reincorporation of the Bible/Context/Presence of YAHWEH as the source of meaning in the negotiations of experienced realism. The full magnitude of this task could change the western culture to unrecognisable proportions in metaphorical concepts of eg. time and particularly the Western obsession with the future. A comparison between cultures would highlight such a shift and especially when a comparison is being made between the cultures the Bible was written with present day Western cultures (Pilch 1993).

2.2 A Timeless/Spaceless Present (Paradigm of HyperReality)

2.2.1 Explained

The preceding description of the paradigm does not particularly render the paradigm Postmodern or unique to the times of the 21st century, since it could only be a new interpretation of old data. But by adding the *Timeless/Spaceless Present* dimension (or the metaphorical experience of it) to the paradigm does render the paradigm Postmodern or unique- something new, something the world has never experienced before. In a speech by Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1997) to the I.C.A.(Institute of Contemporary Arts in London), called *The End or the Millennium or the Countdown*, he argues that the world would never experience the millennium, because the world has already been past the millennium and even right to the end. What he plays at is that, through VR and simulacra, the world has already experienced the end. Actually he argues the complete end of time and history all together, because as he (Baudrillard 1997) says:

Prediction, foresight being the memory of the future, it diminishes in exact proportion to the memory of the past. When everything can be seen, nothing can be foreseen anymore. What is there beyond the end? Beyond the end extends *virtual reality*... what are we to do when nothing really comes to an end anymore, that is to say, when nothing ever really takes place, since everything is already calculated, accounted for, expired and realized in

advance.

And about the past:

So, the countdown [to the millennium] has effects in both directions: not only does it put an end to time in the future, but it also exhausts itself in the obsessional revival of the events of the past [through VR and/or simulacra depicting the past].

A wrong way-round recapitulation, which is the opposite of living memory... In fact, this systematic obsession with reliving and reviving everything, this obsessional neurosis, this relentlessness of memory is equivalent to a nonoccurrence of current history, of the nonoccurrence of the event in the information space (Baudrillard 1997).

The consequence of this phenomenon is:

If history can no longer reach its end, then it is no longer properly speaking history. We have lost history and have also, as a result, lost the end of history (Baudrillard 1997).

This is a good picture of how time has collapsed/imploded within this Postmodern paradigm and particularly in the emersion and dimension of the world of VR. Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garrat (Appignanesi 1995:150-2) talk about the *Endlessly Contemporary Amnesia* and quotes Eric Hobsbawm in *Age of Extremes: the Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*:

The destruction of the past is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late 20th century. Most young men and women at the century's end grow up in a sort of *permanent present* lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in.

The amnesia is both because of the excessive production of the simulation of history past and to come in VR and, as Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1997) says in his speech, where everything is free to go on infinitely but only recognisable to the main event through analogy, but no longer as its own and consequent simulacra. He talks about the transhistorical and transpolitical where events do not really take place precisely because they are produced and broadcast 'in real time', where they have no meaning because they can have all possible meanings. He says we have, in a sense, a history which is no longer in the making, but remains at the virtual acting-out stage. Where the whistle blows, still Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1997), is the absence of responsibility and consequently leads to an amnesia of what truly occurred/or will occur. It is an amnesia of

both time and space where the historical event is robbed of its place in history (point in the paradigm) and becomes an always-present or a free-floating event. In the picture of the paradigm it means the event is again (and again and again...) experienced, since it is reinserted into the paradigm, but this time at a wrong place and consequently the meaning/reality is a present construction and not a historical one – it is a Timeless/Spaceless Present event.

The amnesia is also because of what is called zero-consciousness, the Postmodern symptom of impatience without depth. The example: Richard Appigmanesi and Chris Garrat (Appigmanesi 1995:150) is the zapping between TV channels and the end that everyone chooses to watch nothing.

History has become a simulacrum in a present interpretation ignorant (amnesia) of the true reality constituting its content. The example Richard Appigmanesi and Chris Garrat (Appigmanesi 1995:122) use to illustrate the memory lost of reality is the experience of the Holocaust theme park in Washington DC – a stroll through genocide [the word stroll illustrates the amnesia]. They describe the gruesome details one can see, but then ask if anyone has really experienced the Holocaust, in this postmodern theme park, since at the end one will see visitors' ID cards dumped in litter bins between pop bottles and chocolate wrappers? Amnesia and annihilation from reality – time and space – have made the theme park a simulacrum and have actually pushed its meaning up one level (or lower) to, what Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1994:49) calls, the aesthetic dimension: the fact that the people actually enjoyed the theme park and used it as a form of recreation - a "short-circuit" in time has taken place. The border between art and reality has vanished (Appigmanesi 1995:72).

The Postmodern condition is an excessive production/reinterpretation of history – past and future – with the tools/language/metaphors of the present and consequently the event is not in its original time and space anymore, but is metaphorically reconstructed ("...will to metaphor" (Smith 2001:14)) in the merger of historical/future events with present metaphors.

Consequently this prompts the question if this event would still be the same event when it is transplanted from one point in the paradigm to another? Agreeing with Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1997) the answer is no, since, as he says, the systematic obsession with reliving and reviving everything is equivalent to a nonoccurrence of memory and as he says earlier in his speech that the simulacrum takes precedence over the real, information taking precedence over

the event. The one doing the transplantation through simulation constructs the reality of the event with the present language which renders it a different reality as the one it is coming from (future or past) and thus the event becomes a simulacrum. A good example is the movie *Kate and Leopold* where the concept of courting and romance are depicted the same over a century or more, or better stated, today's courting is taken back a century to understand it in today's language. Even a better example is the movie *Troy* where the signifying of romance of 1000's of years ago would make no sense to viewers today and not render the desired emotions, because it is in the language they cannot understand, and consequently present day romance/language is taken back 1000's of years to speak to the present audience. Not even the movie makers would really understand the metaphors of romance of a 1000 years ago, even if they might think they do.

Time is not the only thing which has collapsed in this paradigm, but space has also dissolved into a *Spacelessness*. The Baudrillian Poststructuralism obviously preys on the concept that everything being signified hovers in a sphere of simulacra denying any grounding into space or time. The dissolving of time and space - the referent - is the typical Nietzschean impetus to the Poststructuralist endeavour, Smith (Smith 2001:4) says:

...Nietzsche understood the metaphoric system of "fatal" exchanges at the trust of Western thought: sign for referent, absence for presence, representation for real, same for difference, perspective for truth, and science and material wealth for God. These reversals, or "fatal strategies", are reaching their apogee in postmodernity, where life (as will) takes on a completely semiological complexion, and reality implodes in the nihilistic logic of an image, or technologically induced sign.

With the "fatal" exchanges creped in the absence of time and space in the induced sign.

An example of this spacelessness is for instance the fact that almost everyone in the world is overfamiliar with the American lifestyle although in practice completely ignorant of its local [in the USA] meaning, since what they know of the American lifestyle is what the media has brought into their homes. The ignorance is because the sign can only be understood in the local language and consequently does not inherently carry the significance of the real American lifestyle. The sign becomes spaceless and illustrates why people can be overfamiliar with the American lifestyle and then still go to the USA and experience a culture shock and actually

desire to go back home as soon as possible. The conflict is not in the sign, which is -less (Timeless and Spaceless), but because of a different language interpreting the same sign. In short, all events over time and space have not inherent meaning, but only the meaning that is broad to them from the paradigm. In the Postmodern condition the acquired need for interpretation has exhilarated in the production of the electronic media and consequently the -less (of Timeless and Spaceless) has also produced a powerlessness to determine true meaning in an untranslatability between languages (this is unavoidable without the fixed point of YAHWEH).

A good illustration of how this powerlessness and untranslatability have reach epidemic proportions in the Postmodern condition is an article by Kay Haugaard, called 'The Lottery' Revisited, in the volume *Steering Through Chaos Vice and Virtue in an Age of Moral Confusion* by Os Guinness (Guinness 2000:24-9). In this article Kay Haugaard, a teacher of creative writing in southern California, illustrates how values have changed in the 24 years she has been teaching. In this article she tells how she always utilised a shocking story *The Lottery* in the process of her teaching; it is a story about the killing of innocent blood in a ritual in the USA. When *The Lottery* first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1948 it elicited a storm of shocked outrage and *The New Yorker* was deluged with sacks full of mail in response. Half a century later, as Kay Haugaard illustrates, the reaction to the story had diminished to such a point that the students actually started to justify the ritual of the killing of innocent blood. The typical Postmodern condition is the acknowledgment of this powerlessness to translate between languages which leads to an amnesia of true meaning - the powerlessness to translate between the present language and the language of the one who inscribed the sign.

The powerlessness is situated in the groundless (Timeless and Spaceless) attribute of the signs and consequently hovering in a vacuum. The meaning of the signs can only be in a present language, not in the original, and illustrate why one of the students in the class could say the story was boring in the beginning but actually turned out to be a neat story. Other arguments led that there must have been a reason why the ritual was justified which justifies the ritual for them as well. The students recognise that there is a language in which the ritual/sign use to made sense and by that admit that they are powerless to translate the meaning from the original language to theirs. The "-less" condition of the Postmodern paradigm affirms the authority vacuum (argued in the first section) and consequently a powerlessness to translate between

languages because no fixed point exists - without YAHWEH - to inform a translation.

This illustrates that the “-less” of the Postmodern paradigm is related to the amnesia and zero-consciousness, as stated above, and in turn defines the paradigm as the consumption of signs giving meaning from within a present language with no intention/power to translate the meaning from the original language it was inscribed in, or still occur in, or will occur in and consequently make a judgement on it.

Defining this -less is in many ways a return to a pre-modern time: Marshall McLuhan (Horrocks 2000:4) predicted the ‘tribal’ consciousness returning through mass media in acoustic space (Horrocks 2000:40) as in the times preceding writing and printing. The postmodern paradigm is a paradigm in which the metaphorical nature of space and time has become apparent as opposed to the modern times when these concepts were coined in a literal capacity and employed in historical criticism in a Newtonian universe of space, however in the Einsteinian universe current scholarship has revealed the metaphorical nature of this appropriation of time (Lakoff 1999:139) and space (Wittgenstein 1953:47). The return in the -less to pre-modern times is that just as a tribal community, like in the outbacks of Africa, only live in the present, with little time and space management, so the experience of mass media/VR is only in the present.

To put more flesh to the above arguments it is because of what is called *Presence* in media experiences (not to be confused with presence as referred to the Norm leading to the Context/Presence of YAHWEH). In an extensive essay published in the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication (Lombard 1997), Matthew Lombard and Theresa Ditton (affiliated with the Department of Broadcasting, Telecommunications, & Mass Media at Temple University) argue that media is not only mediated to the individual, but a realist barrier is rather being crossed. They refer to the perceptual illusion of nonmediation and continue to say that the "illusion of nonmediation" occurs when a person fails to perceive or acknowledge the existence of a medium in his or her communication environment and responds as he or she would if the medium were not there. The illusion of nonmediation can occur in two distinct ways: (a) the medium can appear to be invisible or transparent and function as a large open window would, with the medium user and the medium content (objects and entities) sharing the same physical environment; and (b) the medium can appear to be transformed into something

other than a medium, a social entity.

What is of real concern to theology in this essay (Lombard 1997) is what is called *Social Realism* and *Perceptual Realism*. Social realism occurs when the medium itself presents people with social cues normally reserved for human-to-human interaction and consequently when people respond socially to the medium as if it is a person. True socialisation occurs and consequently a true dialogue. Perceptual realism is even more significant since it introduces another dimension, space; in the interaction with VR one crosses boundaries of spatial separations. In the essay *From Cyber Space to Cybernetic Space: Rethinking the Relationship between Real and Virtual Spaces* (Mitra 2001), Ananda Mitra and Rae Lynn Schwartz, at the Department of Communication at Wake Forest University, argues a rethinking of space. In summary they argue the perception of one space, where the negotiations are the sum of the behaviours and, for the present study, where the behaviour in the real can become influenced by the discourse encountered in VR (the cyber is the word they use).

2.2.2 Illustrated

A good analogy illustrating this *Timeless/Spaceless Present* dimension of the Postmodern paradigm is the language and protocol of the Internet, HTTP and HTML – HTTP stands for HyperText Transfer Protocol and HTML for HyperText Markup Language. A typical illusion in the use of the Internet is that when someone accesses a website that one views the website over distance. This is not the case with HTTP since one actually views the website locally. An example is when, for instance, someone from Australia accesses the website of the BBC in the UK; the procedure is that when the domain name is given to the browser, in this case www.bbc.co.uk, the browser/computer sends the request to the hosting server from where the website is downloaded onto the local PC as a temporary file and from where it is viewed. The content on the screen comes from the temporary file on the local computer and consequently space on the Internet implodes to the local computer. In practice one brings the whole world to the local computer. In the proposed paradigm the analogy stretches even further since it is not only space that implodes but also time, and just as it is an illusion that one watches a website over distance, so it is an illusion that time and space is concrete as observable in VR – all meaning becomes local in both time and space.

Just as the Internet has almost reached infinite dimensions and became unmeasurable in its extent, encompassing time and space, so the proposed paradigm has become typical of the Einsteinian universe people inhabit today: the difference between the Einsteinian universe and the Newtonian is not an ontological difference per se, thus what is 'out there', but a difference in an appropriation informed by the paradigm. The relativity of time and space is not only restricted to the physical universe, but has become the paradigm of interpretation for many of those living in this universe. Also just as the internet has reached infinite dimensions and just as the Einsteinian universe suggests eternity in concepts like Black holes (literally the collapse of time and space), so the dimensions of the paradigm indicate something of infinity and adds an eschatological dimension to it. The objective approach to VR (although an illusion), combined with the simulation of signs captured in a vacuum - simulacra outside time and space -, proposes an intended, although unconscious, godlike approach to VR and consequently people are giving existential meaning to its content. Just as YAHWEH precedes time and space and language, through which reality is constructed and understood (YAHWEH preceding language) and existentially given meaning to its content because YAHWEH stands outside these dimensions, so people in the proposed paradigm, emerged in VR, would, in the illusionary dualism, unconsciously occupy a godlike position outside simulacra existentially giving meaning to its content.

In a Baudrillian universe of pure simulacra (without a fixed point of YAHWEH) in a vacuum, that would be the case since humans would be the sole creators of the abstract content and are consequently liable for the attached meaning. On the other hand when YAHWEH precedes language, meaning would stem ultimately from YAHWEH and consequently true meaning will always be in relation to YAHWEH. The godlike position of existentially giving meaning to the content of the abstract constellation is not completely out of order, although the only correct godlike position would be, and consequently the only correct meaning, a Christlike position. The eschatological dimension is to become like Christ in the interactions with VR where the attached meaning springs from the presence of YAHWEH. The next section will shed more light on which meaning springs from the presence of YAHWEH and which does not, but again does not deny the presentation for a current application.

2.2.3 Applied

Practically the eschatological dimension of Christlikeness indicates that the present language should existentially gain a YAHWEH inspired meaning. The next section will illuminate how language can appear to be right but is not when the presence of YAHWEH is not the yardstick evaluating its truth-claim. The proposed paradigm should be(come) a construction out of a Christlike language where the vocabulary resides in the Context/Presence of YAHWEH and in turn determines the meaning in a Christlike practice - what Jesus would have done.

Vocabulary, in this study, indicates the meaning/practice attached to a prototype/metaphor in the use of language and in this case the language Christians should walk/talk. The employment of the word vocabulary does not per se refer to the signifiers, but the meaning attached to the signified - socially constructed.

Conformity to Christ would mean to acquire a Christlike vocabulary, fuelled by the presence of YAHWEH in a Communal Hermeneutic - doctrine of the Holy Spirit -, and consequently learning the right/Christlike typological employment of the prototypes, since, as argued earlier, language is the typological application of prototypes to communicate meaning (the example of a smile, which is a prototype people use to communicate happiness with). Knowing the prototypes cognitively is not knowing the vocabulary of YAHWEH, since prototypes themselves carry no meaning - simulacra -, but it is in knowing the correct application of the prototypes that institutes a Christlike vocabulary. In short it means that the metaphors Christians comprehend, in the general employment of language, should become Biblical metaphors, grounded/absorbed into the Scriptures. Examples are endless but typical examples are metaphorical concepts like love and evil: both don't indicate a material existence of matter, but are rather metaphors of a type of a relationship - abstract concepts. Although both these metaphors have obtained literal meaning in the abstract construction of Christians, this abstractness - signifiers - should signify Biblical correct meaning in a Christlike language. Love and evil should be what it is in a Biblical Context, but by this one acknowledges that this was and is always the case in the endeavours of theology. The proposed difference that will become clear in the unfolding of the study, is that a (re)turn should take place where the Bible is not a manual (only historical data) from which principles of truth can be subtracted, but rather the worldlier to be superimposed on the current experienced narrative.

Another example of abstract metaphors typical of language, which will be fleshed out in more detail, are the metaphors of jealousy and revenge. Both have gained Biblical indifferent meanings in many forms of VR, from TV to particularly computer games, PS2 etc., compared to Biblical meanings in Christ. In VR jealousy and revenge are depicted in a variety of ways; that this is the case is not the viewer's/participator's responsibility or liability, but what does become the viewer's/participator's responsibility is the topological application of the response/reaction of the observation/participation. In short the viewer/participator is not necessarily responsible for the plot (although that has become the focus of certain computer games like in the game *The SIMS* where people share a VR city worldwide), but is for the judgements made on the plot. The response/reaction to jealousy and revenge is also only a typological application, since a response/reaction is also only a social construction/negotiation by which a prototype is employed to communicate a certain meaning (another example would be the different ways different cultures would reveal shame to different experiences). When there is no illusionary dualism between the language of VR and the language of the participator (since all meaning is present), the typological application can by no means be outside the world of the participator and consequently innocent. Integrating revenge or jealousy into one's experience of VR, and actually enjoying it, would indicate a topological application of an unbiblical prototype and would consequently be wrong in the Wesleyan-Evangelical language.

Without dualism the language of VR must be taken for what it is. In the first place, when the language depicts sin it is sin it is depicting not Virtual sin; the prototype is sin, irrelevant of how abstract it may sound, since should sin never have accidentally entered human experience, VR would have had no language to depict it with (The next section *Creatio ex nihilo* will discuss the evolvment of language and consequently the evolvment of the metaphors of evil). In the second place this does not necessarily imply people are not allowed to look at/experience these forms of VR (although that may be the case when no Christlike response/reaction is impossible), but does imply Christians should pull the World of YAHWEH over these experiences and consequently the response/reaction of Christians, typological applications, should be biblically informed. When all dualisms are removed, in the language of Matthew 5 indicating the start of sin latent in the intention, also the inward-outward dualism of the participator is removed and consequently Christlikeness has to do with a holistic language. In Graham Houston's (Houston 1998:82-4) reference to human personality he incorporates both the inward and the outward when indicating people's interaction with technology and he quotes

O'Donovan, who says that thoughts may indicate acts of thought.

Dealing with language keeps on bringing the argument back to the Communal Hermeneutic, and its implied incorporation of the presence of YAHWEH, setting itself as the Norm for all hermeneutics including the Scriptures. Establishing an overall hermeneutic does not diminish the overall importance of the Scriptures, far from it, but just as all histories are plugged into the present point of the paradigm, giving it a present meaning, so the Scriptures are also transplanted over time and space. The current meaning of the Scriptures is in today's language and not in the language the different events took place in and reiterates the importance of the proposed Communal Hermeneutics. The Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace argues, in the words of John Wesley (Kelley 1997), that the Spirit of God not only inspired those who wrote the Scriptures, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer. History gains/reclaims its significance in that the vacuum, in which the signs are contained rendering an untranslatability, is inflated by the continuous inspiration of the Spirit of God. This continuous inspiration of the Scriptures is not an individual endeavour (although YAHWEH might raise prophets who seem like individual agents, but actually are still part of a communal language), but a communal one where the inspiration should occur in the community and in its socially constructed language - the Way of Israel, the words of Hendrikus Berkhof (Berkhof 1986:253-70) who argues that the work of the Spirit is not the individual to the Community, but the Community to the individual. According to him the sequence of the work of the Spirit is first *Community* and then the *Individual*. Campbell (Campbell 1997:79), referring to Meeks, says that the "'text' [as source for hermeneutics] becomes 'a metaphor for the entire cultural system of the religious community', of which Scripture is only a part, even if the paradigmatic part".

The dealings with the transplantation of events over history have resemblances with Karl Barth (Barth 1963: IV/2 479) who distinguishes between actual historical events (*historisch*) and the interpretation of those events called *saga*. Although something of this is incorporated in the paradigm, the outlook of the postmodern paradigm functions on a different level. One can understand the endeavours of Karl Barth, against liberalism and the spirit of the time, but under the implosion of time and space and the lack of authority, under the Postmodern condition, history has gained a completely new significance altogether. In the Postmodern condition epistemology is not so much about the aesthetics of facts anymore (the modernist condition),

but rather the aesthetics of narrative/rhetorical (Irwin 2002:187) and art that has saturated these narratives (Appignanesi 1995:72). The postmodern mind does not, per say, care about the factual nature of a story, as long as it is cool. This does not diminish the historical horizon of the Scriptures, but rather, in typical postmodern conception, forgets (the above stated amnesia) that no one really knows the full history, since no one was there to give a first hand report, but rather that the meaning/significance is in a Context from which it is being grasped (in rhetoric) and not by the digging back into history to reconstruct a 'factual correct' picture of the events.

The proposed matrix of language is not only a horizontal construction but also a vertical one: only a horizontal construction would be a description of the nihilistic Poststructuralist model of language and consequently the source of a misguided meaning of Biblical events, on the other hand when a vertical dimension is added, a relationship with YAHWEH outside time and space, the (re)construction of the meaning would be correct and lead to the presence of YAHWEH. Actually the proposal is that language springs from the vertical and gave existence and existential meaning to the horizontal. Meaning springs from the vertical and it is the vertical that must find the horizontal for the vertical to be incorporated into the horizontal - the presence of YAHWEH in the horizontal. Two passages illustrate what is indicated (and will gain deeper meaning under the next section):

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word [the intended meaning of God] become flesh and dwelt [tabernacle] among us... But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." - John 1:1 & 14 & 12 (RSV).

And

"So... you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit [this dwelling indicates the proposed Norm of His presence]." - Ephesians 2:19-22 (RSV).

Ultimate theological meaning is the presence of YAHWEH and when 'all truth comes from YAHWEH', by which all discipline becomes servants of theology, no true meaning can be separated from YAHWEH's imputes and indwelling.

The Communal Hermeneutics, and language in general, would indicate that, because meaning is socially constructed, exposure to people outside the community would involve a translation from one language to another. The untranslatability between languages was introduced when the -less, and particularly the powerlessness, of the Postmodern paradigm was explained. This untranslatability is unavoidable and is directly related to the different, and many times opposing, negotiations that require a renegotiation to translate and would consequently not really be a translation but ultimately a new comprised meaning. The untranslatability, on the one hand, is in part what fuels the amnesia and zero-conscience of the Postmodern condition, but, on the other hand, has reached a full-circle in that the apathy towards translation is being fuelled by the amnesia and zero-conscience.

This is where theology can and should swim up the stream, since theology is not restricted to a Baudrillian universe of signs captured in a vacuum and consequently should challenge the typical nihilistic Postmodern worldier. Without the fixed point of YAHWEH, outside time and space, untranslatability would have been a valid argument, but is not because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who constitutes the universe differently. Without YAHWEH the same criticism aimed at Wittgenstein would have been valid, *cognitive relativism*, where the worldier of one community cannot be understood by another (Grayling 1996:118), but since it is a YAHWEH(ian) universe, the agent outside time and space, *cultural relativism* would be more appropriate where one culture can be understood by another (Grayling 1996:118).

Translation/renegotiation of meaning depends on direct access between the cultures of concern. This raises the question “What if the cultures/negotiations are removed over time, as in the case of the hermeneutics of the Scriptures etc. where direct access is impossible (the same applies to the content of many forms of VR, as argued above, where historical events are constantly relived)?” Again the fixed point of YAHWEH exceeds the quest and institutes a degree of possible translation in what Wesleyan language calls the prevenient grace of YAHWEH working in all people. H Ray Dunning (a renown Wesleyan theologian) (Dunning 1988:159-61) argues that systematically the Wesleyan understanding agrees wholeheartedly with the emphasis of most postliberal theology that there is no knowledge of God apart from revelation, the epistemological principle, but even raises the bar that in the ontological nature of prevenient grace the *Imago Dei* resides.

In practice, a degree of translation is always possible because all people are created in the *Imago Dei* (Image of God) and consequently when someone knows the God of the Image (s)he would know something of the Image in people over time and space. This in turn illustrates how the testimonies of the Scriptures can be translated to today's language, in the workings of the spectacles of the Norm, even when these testimonies relate stories of slavery and holy wars; this implies that a sort of Marcionism (ascribing different gods to different parts of the Scriptures) is not necessary in the translation. Cultural relativism understands the times of the Bible as a culture making sense only when interpreted within its own language and consequently on its own terms. The endeavour of people like the Gonzalezs can construct their Liberation Theology on the testimonies of the Scriptures, since, after they do recognise this Cultural relativism, they see YAHWEH acting completely contrary to the culture of the day, and even when the interpretation of these events in a present language would seem cruel, they do see a liberating God in the background. A particular example is the male-female slave-master institutions of the Hellenistic culture and how Paul's passages are actually life threatening set against the culture of the day (Gonzalez 1994:91-2).

The possibility of doing translation moulds the theological endeavour, since YAHWEH is the fixed point anchoring the held anthropology (*Imago Dei*) empowering the proposed translation in a Communal Hermeneutic. The Postmodernism illusion of the impossibility of translation constitutes a purely present existential meaning to transplanted signs (Baudrillian universe) and consequently would also rob the signs of Scripture from its possible translated meaning. An example is love where the present meaning, like in many forms of VR, is only a flight of hormones or a form of sentimentality and consequently the eisegesis of Scriptures w/could inform a sentimentality foreign to orthodoxy, e.g. the disbelief that a God of love could send people to hell (2 Thess. 1:5-10) or how a God of love could set the benchmark so high for those that choose to follow Christ (Luke 14:26-27)? By contemplating this high benchmark the right translating of love would indicate what love means in Jesus and the prototype Jesus set the church in His life and ministry till death on the cross. Jesus emptied himself from the Glory of God and died like a criminal on the cross - Philippians 2:5-11 (Ladd 1993:456-66).

The typological application of this love of Christ (to be like Him - Eph. 5:2) would indicate a self-sacrificial commitment to God and His people. Adrio König (König 2004:91-4) in his volume called *Jesus Name above all names*, illustrates the radical claim of Philippians 2:4;

which is so radical that translators fail to succeed in an appropriate translation and actually made a wrong translation of it in the NIV. His translation is “Let each of you look not to your own interests [as oppose to the NIV which says ‘not only to your own interests’ and by that includes personal interests], but rather to the interests of others” - the call by Paul, in the example of Christ, is complete self-denial. The eise(exe)gesis (both taking out but putting in the present language), a translation/(re)negotiation into a sensible meaning of Scriptures, should be ignited from the presence of YAHWEH, being done in and through the presence of YAHWEH, and consequently reveal the presence of YAHWEH as the example of the revival on the Island of Lewis indicated (Peckham 2004:90).

To make all of this practical the actualisation of this theological task of translation would only realises itself in the teaching/preaching motive of coaching the communal language. The authors of the volume *Postmodern Theology Christian Faith in a Pluralist World* (Burnham 1989) propose the reincorporation of the language of Scriptures back into society as the method to evangelise the emerging Postmodern culture. Examples of the areas begging theological attention, and of concern in VR, are many and rang from the meaning of pornography profaning the image of womanhood (an obvious example) and the casual portrayal (enjoyment) of murder to the subtle meaning of a secularist worldlier indifferent to the presence of YAHWEH. In all these areas theology should inform a renegotiation to the Context of YAHWEH: it is only in the Biblically correct meaning of VR, actually HyperReality as the next heading will indicate, that the church w/could be the “... *dwelling place of God in the Spirit*” - Ephesians 2:22 (RSV), since, as James says,

... *Do you not know that friendship with the world* [meaning opposing or void of God’s presence - see exe(eise)gesis on Genesis 3 in next section] *is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"?* - James 4:4-5 (RSV).

Where the present endeavour does depart from many of the so-called Postliberals is that the present proposal embraces more than only the historical Jesus and more traditionally all of Scriptures (Dunning 1988:161). Defining the Yale Postliberal school in the category of many other Postliberals would miss their proposed intertextual and ecumenical endeavour and in turn rather defines them as a Postmodern method rather than a theological model; this in turn

reconciles the present proposal to be both Postliberal and Wesleyan-Evangelical. Even when some attached to the Yale Postliberal school might argue a contradiction, which would question their right to be attached, they don't have much room for argument in a variety of fronts ranging from the textual nature of the model to the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH defined by Hans Frei (Frei 1992:8).

The intertextual and ecumenical argument can feed the proposed Postliberal theology to the Postmodern domain of relativism, but on the other hand, because it is intertextual, it has the claim of a Fundamental proposition, a text(ual) in which the (inter)textual takes place; and in the present proposal it is the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* Wesleyan-Evangelical text. This in turn confines the whole presentation to this text and renders, from a certain perspective, exclusive to other texts. The text is exclusive of other texts only in so far as it differs from other texts, but when the Scriptures absorbs all of reality and becomes the stage on which all of reality takes place, then it is not exclusive but directly related and prior to other texts. To continue this argument when the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH precedes the text (*Creatio Ex Nihilo*) and is a Fundamental Proposition of the Wesleyan-Evangelical text it would turn the sequence around: not first the Postmodern model and then the text and then the praxis, but first the presence of YAHWEH, then the Wesleyan-Evangelical text and then the Post(liberal)modern model. From praxis to theory defines the present model as a typical Liberation Theology, proposing deliverance from the claws (wrong language/meanings) of HyperReality of the western(ised) world. What will it take for YAHWEH to bring revival back to the Western World? The answer is easy, His direct presence as on the Island of Lewis.

2.3 (A Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm) **Of HyperReality**

2.3.1 Explained

The paradigm is not only Timeless/Spaceless Present, but also a construction of Hyper Reality. HyperReality is the all embracing description of the constructed abstract body of metaphors/meaning by which the overall human language is negotiated and consequently by which (more than) reality is understood by - it is a map of the abstract 'more than the real'. In the Baudrillian universe it is the culmination of simulacra with no reference to a real and consequently purely abstract - it is a nihilistic construction, where "The simulacrum is another game; its signs don't refer to any sense, they flow continually without reference to any sense"

(Baudrillard 1993).

The proposed presentation does not, and cannot, disappear into the same doldrums of nihilism because of the proposed Hebraic worldlier embracing the presence and fixed point of YAHWEH. That the sum of the metaphors of the human language is more than the parts constituting these metaphors is affirmed and becomes apparent in the abstract realities shaping normal day-to-day living experiences, in their acquired literal states, ranging from constructions like international currencies and stock-exchanges to democracy and communism (a good illustration of a laboratory abstract construction). HyperReality is part of the fibre of language and the will to metaphor, but made a giant leap forward in the development of electronic media enabling the acceleration of new and novel metaphors and the extension of language and consequently experienced reality. An illustration is the quote from Larry McCaffery in *After Yesterday's Crash: The Advant-Pop Anthology* by Smith describing the landscape of the pop-culture, which

has increasingly become less a literal territory than a multidimensional *hyperreality* of television lands, media “jungles”, and information “highways”, a place where the real I is now a “desert” that is “rained on” by a disposable consumer goods, narratives, images, ads, signs, and electronically generated stimuli; and people by media figures whose lives and stories seem at once more vivid, more familiar, and more real than anything an artist creates (Smith 2001:119).

The new measurements of the HyperReality, in the postmodern condition, has swollen beyond the possible recognition of a few generations ago in the acceleration of new metaphors and the extension of language in words and concepts like TV, VCR, PS2, DVDs etc. which would have been beyond comprehension a few years ago. The acceleration of new metaphors is deeply tied in with what is called Late Capitalism and consumerism, where

the postmodern will is operative fully within the consumer code, where the subject must will incessantly for more code. Here, “desire”, as will, is produced by the code and circulates as a simulacrum. In this process the “will” is nothing but the will to simulation, wherein subjects must “will to will” just to continue to exist (Smith 2001:9).

The will for language, in the age of consumerism and Late Capitalism, is the will to indulge in more/new metaphors, with no level of saturation, in what is called narrative - the systematic

interweaving of metaphors. HyperReality has become the unsaturable appetite for new narratives or new metaphors combined with old narratives - HyperReality in Late Capitalism is the endless extension of new metaphorical combinations aimed at the same experience. The will for language has one experience as an objective, the experience integral to consumerism.

In a typical Baudrillian universe the world of signs got so messed up that “it appears everywhere around us that the reality happens as if to be on TV” (Smith 2001:126). The seduction lies in the fact that the simulation precedes the real event it flows into: the TV(VR) does not follow the real event, like a report or a retelling of the event, but precedes the real event altogether; as Smith (Smith 2001:123) says, “All events are now made to conform to the image (always) already seen on TV and are destined to return for our consumption“. The conflation happens between narratives: the lived/experienced narrative of people and the narrative in VR (e.g. TV) are/became one and the same narrative in that even the reporting, e.g. the last two Gulf Wars, was the (re)telling of a preconstructed/preconditioned narrative to the right experience. The narrative being reported is not per say what was happening in the Gulf War, but rather what was constructed before the war, because, as Smith (Smith 2001:128) says, “Violence is entertainment, whether it is garnered from religiously following the Gulf War or the *Die Hard* movie sequels“.

Meaning is in narrative and not in what is really out there. Sarah Worth (Irwin 2002:186-7) argues that people respond to fiction in VR in a non-fictional way, even when they know what is depicted is not true. Why is this the case? Inline with what was argued above she draws a clear distinction between the epistemological and the ontological. She goes on to say that the reason why people respond to fiction epistemologically the same as to reality, as if it is ontologically true, is because they ultimately respond to the narrative (Irwin 2002:186-7). The aesthetic motive of the Postmodern will is to scrutinise the systematics of the narrative itself, and not the illusion of the narrative of finding facts anymore, causing the illustrated amnesia and zero-consciousness.

Sarah Worth (Irwin 2002:186) also says that we create meaning [in physical reality] and memory through the hearing and telling of stories and that reality [physical or ontological reality] is more like fiction, in terms of story creation, than people originally thought. This statement places both physical reality and VR on the same par, where beauty and meaning are

an integral part of narrative in all spheres of life and not just in finding facts, as things are really out there, which in turn, actually reverses the modernist notion of trying to sanitise reality of fiction.

The signs (simulacra in a vacuum) are given colour/significance in Late Capitalism in a/the preconstructed narrative people would like to hear (and might have heard time and again) with a new metaphorical extension ready to be consumed/experienced. In the HyperReality only one experience is strived after, the experience of being a consumer, by which the Postmodern identity is defined - "To be(come) [to be self-actualized] is to be a consumer" (Smith 2001:9) where the Postmodern experience is an addiction/dependence upon new metaphorical constructions; even shopping becomes a will to language, because what is bought originates out of new metaphors and shapes new metaphors the consumer identifies with, e.g. what it means 'To be Cool'.

Under the previous heading meaning to signs and simulacra was argued as dismantled particles without meaning entering human language by which they are given meaning and had its place in an ascriptive application and particularly within cultural relativism; under the present heading it becomes clear that in HyperReality these signs and simulacra do have a form of meaning, since they are constituted in a narrative with a meaning (even if the meaning of the narrative is only that 'The Medium is the message'), but where the conflation of narratives indicate that the priority between narratives are not so easily to identify and consequently which narrative comes first? Which narrative do people predominantly consume, their own narratives, maybe with/in new metaphors, or a new narrative altogether or a combination of the two? In a nihilistic universe of poststructuralism the answer would be unattainable since this endeavour denies a presence in any narrative (Natoli 1993:240), but is rejected in the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* discourse of the Biblical narrative where YAHWEH precedes language and all narratives with His presence.

Signs and simulacra gains meaning in a culture and for the present proposal should be the culture of a Community constituted by the Holy Spirit - meaning in a Communal Hermeneutic within YAHWEH's presence. Culture itself is a narrative since, as Jerome Bruner (Bruner 1990) in his dissertation argues, people understand others by thinking in narratives and these mental narratives organise the way people experience the world and regulate feelings. Asking

the question of the previous paragraph would mean that the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* discourse of the Biblical narrative should become the prior meaning to all narratives, and even more, the narrative in which all other narratives should take place: the stage on which they should be executed in their related meaning to all other narratives. The Hebraic worldlier incorporates all narratives in one encompassing narrative of YAHWEH. In the Postmodern/Poststructural condition translation between narratives becomes an impossibility, and consequently absorb all narratives in a cognitive relativism, since the priory narrative (first mover) is unobtainable. This is nullified by the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* discourse of the Biblical narrative which rather constitutes a cultural relativism where translation is possible in the proposed Communal Hermeneutic - induced by the Holy Spirit preceding all narratives. Consequently the narrative of the Community, or in other words the culture of the community, should become the extension of the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* narrative of the Scriptures inhabited by (inclosed in) the presence of YAHWEH.

In the Postmodern narrative of VR in HyperReality the obsessive and excessive extension of metaphors and the swelling of language constantly pushes the point for acceptable experience further away from that which is simulated: the Real McCoy as indicated in the previous section in the example of the experience of the Grand Canon in VR(IMAX) which is better than experiencing the big hole itself (Irwin 2002:232-3) in the new/better metaphorical constructions in the angles of flight etc. By constantly lifting the benchmark for the acceptable experience, realism is being extended and will only increase as the media gets hotter. In a holistic experience, in the Hebraic worldlier in the embodied origin of language (Lakoff 1999), it raises the stakes to continue the translation from the Biblical narrative for an extended realism in order to absorb VR into the Biblical narrative. Graham Houston (Houston 1998:98) says “We affirm that VR is part of total reality, objective and subjective, and that virtual environments have a temporal and psychological existence. VR should not be treated like a figment of the imagination”.

In the holistic Hebraic worldlier the narrative(s) of VR should be viewed/experienced from the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* narrative of the Scriptures, just as any other narrative, and be placed in this narrative according to its overall relatedness and meaning guided by the Norm of the presence of YAHWEH. In this proposal the Postmodern HyperReality loses the “Hyper” and consequently becomes mere Reality in the discourse of YAHWEH who precedes and exceeds

the metaphors and abstract nature of this constellation. In the lost of the Hyper and in the preceding presence of YAHWEH, ontology and epistemology merges so that epistemology is realised in ontology; an example is the movie *The Matrix* where the people in the matrix computer experience the world as it was at the end of the 20th century because the same conditions for such a world were actualised long after its existence. The condition of the presence of YAHWEH is the ontology out of which the right epistemology can emerge, without this ontology the nihilistic abstract constellation as epistemology would be unavoidable.

2.3.2 Applied

In the first section a call to the recovery of a Pre-modern Hermeneutic was introduced and explains the way forward in a Postmodern HyperReality. Looking back unto history, and the times before the Copernicus Revolution, renders the held worldlier of society also as a 'HyperReality', or VR ('more than reality' and/or an apparent reality): in the Middle Ages the world was flat with ghosts that terror people etc. - an apparent reality. Actually the same can be seen of the in-between modern age, from after the Copernicus Revolution till the break of the Postmodern age even when the intention was to eradicate this apparentness, in the emerging Einsteinian universe of relativity. If that could be applied to the in-between modern age, what avoids the same reasoning to render the following Postmodern age also apparent? Future generations might argue in these lines and consequently spill the beans to admit that this study also hovers in the domain of VR.

For this study it only took the recognition and acknowledgment of this uncertainty and relativity in the Postmodern age to surrender/return to a Pre-modern Hermeneutic where the Biblical text (because of a commitment to ontology) absorbs the world. In the Postmodern/Poststructuralist worldlier objectivity a true perspective is not possible and consequently a certainty of the escape from a possible apparent reality is unachievable, and hence the fear causing no subjection to any reality (YAHWEH or Baal) should it be a subjection to an apparent reality, which inturn would always render reality a HyperReality (even when it is only the fear that is apparent). The only way out is a commitment to Someone/something outside HyperReality, which can be no one else than YAHWEH, the One outside time and space in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilio*. The only way out is the

commitment to the narrative of the Scriptures, absorbing all other narratives since it springs out of the preceding ontological presence of YAHWEH, in a Communal Hermeneutic (saturated by the presence of YAHWEH) committed to the task of translating the conditions which first constituted the presence of YAHWEH when the Scriptures were written.

In the example of the movie *The Matrix*, simulating the conditions of the 20th century in order to constitute the experience of the 20th century for those plugged into the matrix, the result is *the dessert of the real* since the epistemology springs from a wrong ontology. When the presence of YAHWEH, in *Creatio Ex Nihilio*, is Normative to the narrative of the Scriptures (in a reversal of the movie *The Matrix*) it means that when people are ‘plugged’ into the narrative of Scriptures the experience of Hyper reality(VR) would be saturated with the Biblically correct epistemology. Being plugged into the narrative of Scriptures institute Scriptures as the lenses through which all of reality is being viewed and experienced. Being plugged into the narrative of Scriptures would make the world of the Scriptures - the world of the presence of YAHWEH - the world currently experienced irrelevant of how far the present times is removed from the time and space the Scriptures were written in and consequently how HyperReal the present times have become through the swelling of language. In essence it means the qualitative world of the presence of YAHWEH exceeds the current reality formed through language and how HyperReal it might be(come).

The Postmodern enquiry is not a critical historical enquiry into the narrative of Scripture, but rather an enquiry into the world of the Scriptures and how it constitutes the presence of YAHWEH. The quest is not per say a historical quest, since that would make the Bible (like) a manual out of which Christians could (maybe) found historical principles capable of a present application (the quest for the historical Jesus could also fall into this category); no, the quest is not a historical quest but rather a typological one where Christians should read the present world into the Scriptures in order for it to echo back into a present typification. The question is not how a Christian can find valuable principles in e.g. the life of Paul capable of a present application, but rather how Christians can read themselves into the narrative of Paul and consequently become like Paul in a present world, to become an echo of Paul (the same can be applied to Jesus etc.) This is where the Communal Hermeneutic, induced by the Holy Spirit, gains particular meaning for Christians to insure a correct translation from Paul’s culture to the present in order to become a present Paul informed and guided by the presence of YAHWEH.

A typological application of the life of Paul, without the presence of YAHWEH, would be an erroneous application. In essence it means the narrative that defines the character Paul, e.g. love in a mission etc., should become the typified narrative; just as the typified meaning of concepts was suggested under the previous heading, so the typified meaning of narrative under this heading is suggested.

This may come across as too simple and yes, everyone cannot become a Paul or a Moses etc., but every Christian can and should adopt the worldlier of the characters of the Biblical narrative and become the continuation of the People of God in the same actions and reactions of the typification of the same fundamental meaning of corresponding world patterns. The proposed hermeneutic builds on or continues from, what people like H Ray Dunning (Dunning 1988:618-28) calls, the Neo-Typological Hermeneutic. The neo-topology focuses on a reoccurring pattern of God's dealing based on corresponding conditions where the primeval event is a type of the final event and is suggested by people like Gerhard von Rad (Dunning 1988:620) whose intentions illustrate the continuity between the Old and the New Testaments. The extension of this neo-topology would mean that just as patterns recur so should the lives of the YAHWEH inspired characters be typified and consequently correspond/recur in the church. The Biblical text should absorb the world in the fundamental nature of the corresponding patterns and establishes the modes of actions in the prototypes of YAHWEH's Biblical characters or His people in general. The quest is how the Biblical characters should be topologically applied to the present topological correspondence of the same circumstances. The worldlier of YAHWEH's people should become the worldlier of the men and women of the Bible, incorporated in the presence of YAHWEH, since even when the culture has changed the corresponding meaning has stayed the same. For this to take place a correct translation from one culture to another, coached by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, should occur; not only in the translation of how YAHWEH's people should live, but also in the translation of the nature of the world/culture in which YAHWEH's people should live Christlike.

To illustrate such a translation, many people in the church are where Israel was in the days of the kings: YAHWEH is still worshipped, but also the gods of the nations that surround them - 1 Kings 18:21. In short the worldlier of many in the church today are in the same way a compromised worldlier, between two world views, as in the days of the Kings. The first step of a correct translation would be to recognise the typification of this compromised worldlier: the

worldlier of many people are typical of those days where the same values as those of secularism are being held and approved and how two opposing world views are compromised into one. Dean Halverson (Halverson 1996:182-97) defines secularism as a world religion and argues three types of secularists - atheists, agnostics and functional atheists - in the volume *The Compact Guide to World Religions*. Functional atheists (those holding this compromised worldlier) are people, although they 'believe' in God, their trust is just as much in science and human reason, as those of atheists or agnostics to solve all this-worldly problems and to establish an acceptable ethics. The above example of the two different held world views between Africans and the Europeans emphasises this point, since because Africa missed modernism a secularist worldlier of the power of science could not originate and consequently a spiritual infused worldlier still prevails.

To come back to the translation, just as this compromised worldlier recurs/corresponds in church today so should YAHWEH's dealings (or proposed dealings) of the purification and sanctity of the Promised Land of Israel correspond in the translation proses over time and space. The same translation occurred and recurred in the Scriptures itself until it reached its spiritual proposal in the writings of the New Testament: the key passage to highlight is 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 where Paul quotes, and consequently translates, from Leviticus 26 which is the proposal for the sanctity of the Promised Land after the Exodus. Before Paul it was quoted and translated by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel in Ezek 37 in the proposed sanctity of the Promised Land after the exile. On the same theme Paul also quotes and translates Isaiah 52:11 commanding the leaving and separation from Babylon.

The pivotal argument and command comes in 2 Cor. 7:1 where Paul commands sanctity and the purification from all that defiles in order to establish YAHWEH's presence in the translation from the Old Testament and should have a direct bearing on Christians when they read themselves into the narrative of the Scriptures when they translate the narrative over time and space indicating how they should interact with VR and the secular culture cloned on e.g. TV.

YAHWEH's dealings in establishing the sanctity of the Promised Land was radical in the actions of, e.g. Joshua and his Holy Wars in the illumination of sinful cultures illustrating how the typification of Joshua would indicate radical actions toward VR when sinful cultures are being typified: a translated Holy War could, for example, be to become radical against certain

types of programmes and consequently to turn the TV off or switch the channel when such a typification should occur or even to throw the TV out of the house should the eradication of the sinful culture not be successful. The scope of this kind of Holy War will become clear in the next section when one sees what the realism of VR did to the mountain kingdom of Bhutan when the TV was first introduced to this isolated community at the end of the 90's, as well as the addiction to soap operas as entertainment worldwide. A correct translation in a Communal Hermeneutic would not lead to a physical Holy War, like in the times of Joshua and cannot be imagined to be the intension of Paul, but rather to a separation as commanded in 2 Cor. 6-7 and in the writings of the Apostle John. The Holy War would entitle an Ideological War between a Hebraic and Greek worldlier and how the Greek worldlier has culminated into a nihilistic abstract constellation against YAHWEH. (The translation of this sanctity can also be seen in the book to the Hebrews, where the motive of the Promised Land is spiritualised both as a present entry into the Sabbath Rest, as well as the entry into heaven. Strong motives on purity are chapters 10:26-28, and 12:1-3, 14.)

A second example of a typical translation that could be done is from what happened to the wife of Lot, who Jesus calls to remember when referring to the *parousia* in Luke 17:32: although Lot's wife did not physically participate in the evil culture of Sodom and Gomorrah, she did enjoy the presence of such a culture. The same can be said of many Christians who don't physically participate in the evil cultures of some narratives in VR, but do enjoy the presence of these evil cultures in the one space of Hyper reality. When Jesus spoke these words He called his followers to translate both the context of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the archetype of Lot's wife, to his times and consequently the continues inspiration of the Scriptures commands present day Christians to do the same translation. Jesus translated this event prophetically to the *Parazoa*, and consequently has direct bearing on 'Christians'/church people today who are 'waiting' for the *parazoa*, but instead could receive YAHWEH's judgement the same as Lot's wife when they attach themselves to the sinful culture that surrounds them. For Christians to read themselves into the narrative of the Scriptures would mean to typify Lot who was "*greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked (for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day with their lawless deeds)*" (2 Peter 2:7-8, RSV) and not freely enjoy these lawless narratives in forms of VR.

A more recent example of this proposed translation between cultures, with the motive of

typifying the archetype Jesus Christ, can be seen in the writings and fruit of two classics: the first one *The Imitations of Christ* attributed to Thomas à Kempis (à Kempis 2003), which was both instrumental in the life of John Wesley, the protagonist of the confessed tradition, and also the inspiration of the second classic *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon (Sheldon 1982), which became the ultimate model of inspirational fiction for fundamentalist Americans (Ziolkowski 1972). In the novel *In His Steps* Charles Sheldon attempts to illustrate how such a translation should be done, translating from the 1st century Christian value system and experience to the value system of end of the 19th century Chicago by asking the question *What would Jesus do?* in the undertaking of all decisions. Consequently the question is “what would Jesus have done should He have lived in Chicago at the end of the 19th century”.

Reading the novel today (only one century later) would already require a translation from one culture to another, since the cultural landscapes of the 19th century Chicago and today’s landscape are already worlds apart; even while this is the case this novel still raises a few questions and applications of particular concern as a model. The first and foremost question would be “how could each person know what Jesus would have done in their respective situations?”; the answer is in the leading of the Holy Spirit (Sheldon 1982:226) and links the novel’s proposal to the argument of a Communal Hermeneutic through which this meaning should be established/translated. Taking the argument through would mean, per implication, that when Christians don’t do what Jesus would have done in their respective situations, even when they have had the intention to do so, the failure is in the Communal Hermeneutic which did not establish the right meaning and consequently lack the proposed presence of YAHWEH as the determining voice in the social construction of right meaning.

The call of this novel is consequently to typify Jesus in each of the situations Christians might find themselves in, but is not 100% in line with the present proposal since this does not completely secure the present narrative being read into the Biblical narrative. To state it differently, it would not per say mean that the present (cultural) condition is also being seen as a typification of a similar condition in the Bible, as the example of Kings above illustrates of a compromised worldlier, and would also render the Bible a historical book from which Christians attempt to find useful principles. No, when the present narrative is being read into the Biblical narrative, the present narrative will play off in the Biblical narrative and consequently render a typification according to the characters in the Biblical narrative - which might be both good or bad. This would state a required typification not only of Jesus (although

the objective is Christlikeness), but of all the Biblical characters in the entire Biblical narrative, in their respective unfolding in corresponding conditions, and how they secured the presence of YAHWEH.

The question would thus not only be *What would Jesus do with or in VR?* but *What would the Biblical narrative do with or in VR?*; in some cases that might be a Holy War against opposing cultures/narratives, like in the case of Joshua, but in other instances it might only be a transformative dialogue like in expositions of creation or evolutionary dialogues prompting a typification of the paradigm shift Israel had to make in the Exile and the destruction of the temple. Many more examples can be argued, but the only way this typification could become a reality is when the narrative of the Scriptures is being embraced and absorbed as the ultimate narrative in which all others occur; or differently stated the only narrative capable of negotiating a reality embracing all of reality. The question is then *What would...?*: what would Joshua have done with the cultures in soap operas, what would Paul have done with evolutionary dialogues in science programs etc.

The extent of the proposal is that when all of reality is absorbed into the Biblical narrative Christians would consequently only deal with one narrative and when only one narrative, embracing the narrative of VR, the question would rather become what should one's place be in this one narrative? The only right answer is obviously Christlikeness, but to make that in anyway sensible the question would rather be how to be(come) Christlike in the respective narratives playing off in the overarching narrative? Gonzalez says: "Whenever we hear or read a narrative [in the Bible or in VR] and seek to derive from it some meaning for ourselves [to enjoy or understand it], the message conveyed by the story depends in part on where we place ourselves in it [character assignment]" (Gonzalez 1994:81). The example Gonzalez uses to illustrate this character assignment was when King David assigned himself a character, first as a judge and then as the rich man, in the story told by Nathan after his sin with Bethsheba and the killing of her husband (Gonzalez 1994:81-2). If all is in one space, one time and one language the dealings with VR proposes a character assignment in the narratives set out by VR in order for the observer/participator to understand/enjoy the narrative; this character assignment may be a first person observer like in Reality Shows, as in the Big Brother mania, or in a sitcom, revealing glimpses of the unfolding of a narrative, but it could also be the character assignment of a first person participator engaged in the narrative in e.g. TV- or PS2 games where one

becomes the fighter pilot managing the unfolding of the narrative. Another good example of character assignment in VR is how children, after watching a Tarzan movie, assign themselves to be Tarzan in make-believe-games; this actually reveals how they already assigned the character of Tarzan to themselves even while they were still watching the movie, in order to understand/experience the narrative.

Assigning a role to oneself in a narrative is not necessarily sin, but when the actions of the character cannot be Christlike it would be the case. When meaning in both physical reality and VR are in narrative, then the theological significance is not per say in the sphere of reality – either physical or virtual –, but in the narrative and the intentions informing the actions as a character in the narrative: in the acts of thoughts. Daniel Barwich (Irwin 2002:82-3) states the thesis of the intentionality of consciousness and says all mental phenomena are intentional; on the same page he quotes Jean-Paul Sartre stating that intentionality is not only a feature of consciousness, but it is the only feature.

The Theological application would be to become a Christlike character in all types of narratives and consequently where one's attitudes/intentions convey love. This brings the enquiry back to the inner dimension of Matthew 5 (Romans 13:8 can also be added) where e.g. intentionally enjoying/participating in unjust and unbiblical murders, by complying with such a character role, would be wrong and contrary to Divine Intension; or assigning oneself to be an evil character, like enjoying the role of a vampire in some thriller movies, would not be Christlike. Christians cannot necessarily be held responsible for the narratives employed in VR, but can be held responsible for the character assignment they undertake and how Christlikeness should be exercised in this capacity. The only alternative responsibility that can be exercised is to avoid these narratives altogether which would be the right thing to do in many instances.

Where the sphere of responsibility becomes muddy is that although one is not directly responsible for the narrative when you switch the TV on, it is public ratings that determine the content on TV since TV stations are in the business of making money out of advertisements and consequently are also not 'responsible' for the content of narratives they put on the TV (or Sony in PS2 etc.). To argue this way around the viewers/participators determine the narratives, and should Christians be the salt and the light Jesus calls them to be, they should take the responsible not to support wrong public ratings. The fact that everyone actually

becomes responsible for the narratives in VR, by contemplating the wrong narratives, this is where people - in James 4:4 language - commit adultery with their own culture/narrative.

The narrative of Hyper reality introduces another difficulty which is not always easy to translate Christlike attitudes into and particularly refers to the advertisement industry where intended correlations constitute simulacra of totally new metaphors: e.g. to drive a certain car means to be cool, a new metaphor including the ingredient 'cool', or having a certain status (the array of hairstyles and piercing between adolescents is also a good example). At the end these new metaphors become new simulacra to consume in Late Capitalism and in turn asks the question of how this narrative of consumerism in Late Capitalism should play off in the Biblical narrative? The Postmodern identity of consumerism introduces a Marxist element of people consuming for a 'higher class': the Postmodern identity of consumerism render people to be like batteries, like in the movie *The Matrix*, where people consume the signs produced by the matrix in order to be batteries for the machine city (Irwin 2002:216-24) and is problematic for Christians since the only right identity would be a Christlike identity and not to be batteries for a Late Capitalism functioning in a nihilist abstract constellation void of the presence of YAHWEH.

The exposition of Poststructuralist endeavour renders the whole notion even more complicated, because, according to them, all people are confined to a language they did not invent or produce. In essence the Poststructuralist endeavour renders people (in all classes) batteries of/for nothing since there is nothing outside text and consequently which can only lead to the notion of nihilism: every person only consuming language, never able to transcend consumerism in invention or production, and consequently a waste of energy - batteries with no purpose since everyone is trapped in a not self owned or produced language. This is where this study takes a different route since YAHWEH is outside text, and ultimately produces text in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*: His Context presents the right language to consume, and to stick to the analogy, to be the batteries for the Glory/Kingdom of God. In the next section the wrong language will be illustrated, void of the presence of YAHWEH and leading to nihilism, since energy not leading to the Source of language is a waste of energy - a misinformed language springing from hell.

To make all of this practical: consumerism is not new to the Postmodern paradigm, but what is

new is how the media generated swelling of language has produced an unprecedented abstract construction people obsessively consume in contrast to Biblical values. Two prominent examples will be introduced:

1. The passivity of induced Late Capitalist consumerism is in contrast with the Biblical activity of consuming the Will of God. The commandment of *'You shall love... your neighbour as yourself'* (Luke 10:27 RSV) is induced with action in the parable of the Good Samaritan, as well as the commandment *'Do [action] for others what you would like them to do for you'* (Matt 7:12 NLT). These two commandments summarise the Biblical commandment of commission versus the sin of omission. Uncontrolled consummation of media induced signs would consequently become sin when Biblical action is being neglected. Could this be part of the reason why the effort of church activities are being neglected in the rise of the Postmodern age? This identity is even in contrast with the identity of nationalism, when any held occupation was practised with discipline and work (Natoli 1993:95); today an occupation is only a means to earn money to render Late Capitalist consummation possible. Should the money be there the occupation would be made redundant for pure consumption, which is in total contrast to the incarnation when Jesus gave up His glory save humanity - Phil 2:6-7.
2. The identity induced by Late Capitalism is for many a materialistic identity, in contrast to the Biblical identity opposed to the love of money (1 Tim 6:9-10). The identity of driving a certain type of car, or wear certain sunglasses, for the image is in contrast with the Biblical identity of being pilgrims on the way to the heavenly city (and actually to be aliens here on earth). It is in contrast to the examples of the gallery of faith heroes in Hebrews 11 who declared that this world is not their home and that they are expecting the City God has prepared (Hebrews 11:13-16). And as the Hebrew's writer further on says "... *Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated-- of whom the world was not worthy--wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*" (Hebrews 11:35-38 (RSV)). Their identity is/was in heaven (which has nothing to do with a particular space, but with the ontological presence of YAHWEH), in contrast to the nihilistic abstract constellation they had to deal with. In the Old Testament YAHWEH intended to establish the right political abstract constellation, in the Sinai

covenant, by reincorporating His presence in this world; but when the mission failed YAHWEH established a New Covenant of His presence in the lives of His children, warring against the abstract constellation of this world, while fixing their identity heaven - where their citizenship now is. *“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”* - Colossians 3:1-3 (RSV).

3. Bringing it all together

This section intended to illuminate the mechanics of the Postmodern paradigm and how the present culture is shaping their realised experience in order to establish a Biblical correct experience/interaction of/with VR in this Postmodern Hyper reality. This Biblical correct experience would be when the Scriptural world and narrative become the Reality, absorbing the Hyper reality, in which all other narratives take place. The timeless/spaceless Postmodern paradigm should be infused by the presence of YAHWEH and consequently all meaning (in action) should be routed in the source of language and thus the only correct language.

The human experience is an abstract constellation of language and consequently a Hyper reality in which both the Scriptures and VR are being experienced. The Hyper reality is not being denied, but since YAHWEH is outside language, in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, meaning stems from YAHWEH and language that does not incorporate His presence leads to nihilism. The next section will throw light on the origin of the abstract constellation alien to the presence of YAHWEH and consequently relate nihilism with the dichotomy between YAHWEH and Lucifer and how the nihilism springs from it.

SECTION III

1. Introduction

The advancement into the third section postulates a Postmodern contemplation on the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* in the light of Genesis 1-3, a pivotal point the whole study hinges on, and the light it shed on the accidental entry of sin into human experience, which in turn enlightens the indicated normative interpretation of the rest of Scriptures and ultimately proposes the Biblically correct interaction with VR in the proposed HyperReality of the indicated Postmodern condition. The main argument is inline with the Postmodern notion of realism being perceived/conditioned in language. The ultimate question would thus be what *Creatio Ex Nihilo* implies for the evolution of language and consequently the grasp of reality possible for finite human beings prisoners of language.

The Postmodern approach to Genesis 1 & 3 is directly informed by secular Postmodern studies of language and reality, but also, on the other hand, by the language of the Wesleyan-Evangelical vocabulary shaped through social affiliation. Lastly the approach is also informed by a personal existential experience of a comprehensive contextual milieu within YAHWEH's presence. Since this is a Theological study, the starting point would be first to consider the authority of Genesis 1 & 3 in a typical Postmodern fashion, from there explanations of Genesis 1 & 3 will follow setting the stage for its natural implications.

The previous sections argued extensively that the theological enquiry, into VR and HyperReality, lies on the level of language and that both the reading of the Scriptures and the interaction with VR are informed by the same language that people live their normal lives by. The main argument then follows that the correct interaction with VR starts with the knowledge that no objective vantage point is possible in any one's interacting with VR, since VR happens, being experienced, in the same language they bring to VR. This led to the conclusions that, firstly Christians' Vocabulary should have a Biblical meaning for all domains of life, and then secondly that the typological application of this Vocabulary, in either action or reaction or response etc. to VR, should be Biblical. What complicates matters is that this section in many ways precedes the previous sections in an explanation of the evolution of language and the way evil works from within a wrong language and how *Creatio Ex Nihilo* informs the language Christians should use since YAHWEH precedes language, but on the other hand this section comes third because it is the previous sections that explain the paradigm from which Scriptures are being approached and consequently from within the paradigm the paradigm becomes self-

reflective on itself - a typical self-reflective postmodern methodology.

2. A Literal approach to Genesis 1 & 3

2.1 The Postmodern perspective

The break between what is called Postmodern and Modern is not always that clear and Postmodernism evidently follows Modernism and can, to a certain extent, be seen as an extension of Modernism. *The Postmodern Bible* (Aichele 1995:12) refers to Lyotard who states that the 'postmodern' signifies not the end of modernism, but another relation to modernism; one way to understand this relationship would be to see that postmodernism foregrounds, heightens, and problematises modernity's subjectivity. Bring it even closer to Scriptures *The Postmodern Bible Reader* (Jobling 2001:2) refers to Walter Benjamin who articulates powerfully a faith that is both modernist and postmodern in the translation of the Scriptures. Consequently a postmodern approach cannot ignore modernism, but since modernism exposed its limitations in the ability to only ask questions, specifically historical questions concerning the Scriptures, the result is also only an exponential increase of different answers to these questions incapable of a definite solution; the natural consequence is the conditions of opinions, a subjective choice of one of these answers and is what can be called Postmodernism. A pure Postmodern approach resides in only opinions, or an answer that could incorporate all answers to only become an opinion in itself; the approach taken by this study is both a modern and a postmodern one. Although the modern answer could be argued as a postmodern one, since it resides in the language of the proposed affiliation – Wesleyan-Evangelical -, it can also be seen as a postmodern answer in one 'modern' propositional truth - the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*.

The most prominent Postmodern approach to the exegesis of the narrative of the Scriptures is a literal one and the Text as literature. Clear examples are the *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible – A Reader* (Adam 2001) where samples covering the whole Bible are included; to this can be added the *The Postmodern Bible Reader* (Jobling 2001). Postmodernism, following modernism, justifies such a notion when a literal approach is to take the text for what it says, as oppose to a historical approach which has proved to be incapable of giving a defining answer to above stated proliferation of questions and answers. In answering the question of how to proceed from modernism into Postmodernism the persuasion of this study, in the words of Hans Frei (Frei 1992:11), is

That historical inquiry is a useful and necessary procedure but that theological reading is the reading of the text, and not the reading of a source, which how historians read it. Historical inquiry, while telling us many useful things, does not tell us how we are to understand the text as text. I am persuaded that in the search for an answer to the question of how to understand the text as texts, the closest discipline to theology is not history at all.

The Postmodern exegetical approach opted for is what is called the *reading-response criticism* which asks the question, not what is happening in the text but what is happening in oneself as one reads the text (Aichele 1995:23)? One of the slogans of reader-response criticism declares, “Reading this passage is the experience of learning how to read this passage” (Aichele 1995:23). The literal approach to Genesis 1 & 3 is committed to the conviction that its production was rooted in the Presence/Context of YAHWEH, and consequently rooted in the intention of YAHWEH, which in turn proposes, not historical questions, but rather only a reader response from this conviction to this Text. The *reading-response criticism* acknowledges the proposed paradigm illustrated in the previous section, since it transports the Text to the present and illicit a response from a present meaning: in the paradigm all text becomes literature, since all hermeneutics are within a present meaning. In the proposed contextual commitment of YAHWEH’s presence the Bible becomes inspired literature, because YAHWEH is an instrumental part of the context the literature was written in; a nonfictional novel (David Kelsey on Karl Barth’s view of Scripture (Lindbeck 1984:120)) since novel is what all literature becomes in the Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of HyperReality, although in this case inspired literature.

To take it one step further, in this proposed Postmodern Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of HyperReality, and the implosion of all meaning, space and time, the Bible itself becomes VR since the Bible is being ‘consumed’/digested the same as all historical data with an amnesia of the ‘true’ reality behind the text with no intension/power of translating the original ‘true’ meaning. The literal approach is the unimposed approach of the Postmodern condition, while the propositional truths for theology, supporting the inspired text, are constantly re-inscribed through the Communal Hermeneutic. This proportional re-inscription, in the ontological Context with YAHWEH in a Communal Hermeneutic, is the work of the Third Person of the Trinity.

2.2 The Genesis 3 reversal

The literal approach to the Text under discussion, the Text as inspired literature, is also because of what the Text, through a reader-response, has already done for people.

Testimonies of a reader-response are endless, but the testimonies that raise the stake for this presentation are the testimonies of a reader-response that has worked a reversal of Genesis 3. This is what evangelical vocabulary would call a Revival: the reversal of Genesis 3 since YAHWEH's presence is again ontologically experienced in measurements comparable with a pre-fall experience of His ontological presence.

The example opted for is the Revival as experienced on the Isle of Lewis, 1949-1952, as illustrated in the volume *Sound from Heaven* (Peckham 2004) coauthored by Mary Peckham, then Mary Morrison, who grew up on the Island and has experienced the Revival herself. To quote the Peckhams (Peckham 2004:90)

Without question, this, *the presence of the Lord*, was the outstanding characteristic of the revival in Lewis and particularly that of the 1949 revival. Without exception everyone to whom we spoke mentioned this as the outstanding feature of the movement. [The Italics inserted is part of the heading – the whole heading is *The Consciousness of the Presence of the Lord*].

During the Revival on the Island of Lewis the presence of YAHWEH was experienced even in so far that physical light could be seen and music being heard coming from 'nowhere' (Peckham 2004:106-7); the barrier between heaven and earth, YAHWEH's world and this world, was taken away – a reversal of Genesis 3. The notion of the reversal of Genesis 3, in this study, indicates the restoration of the presence of YAHWEH being lost through the Fall, and not so much the reversal of other consequences of the Fall, like pain in the delivery of babies etc., although the Revival on the Island of Lewis has proven that YAHWEH's presence can even ease the need for sleep (Peckham 2004:97). The reversal is in line with the Johannine dualism of God's Kingdom that broke back into history, the overlapping of Kingdoms.

The forward, of the volume *Sounds from Heaven*, begins by saying that the last recorded revival on the British Isles ended just half a century ago (Peckham 2004:7), which actually states a mouth full indicating that no revival in Postmodernism has yet occurred on the British Isles. The Western isles of Scotland had experienced a number of short periods of revivals at the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century (Peckham 2004:7). During

this first half of the 20th century almost every 10 years a revival came to the Hebrides islands (Peckham 2004:29-30), but, in the personal words of Mary Peckham in her house close to Edinburgh in Scotland, these revivals were not because of specific people/preachers but the movement of the Holy Spirit although some people were prominent in some revivals. In their volume the Peckham's (Peckham 2004:32) say that this was particular the case in the 1939 revival in that there were not really specific preachers of whom one could say that they featured in the movement.

The revival of concern to this study is the 1949-1952 revival, since personal records of people who experienced this revival still live and because this study could make a trip to these islands and could talk to the Peckhams personally. The Peckhams state the thesis of their volume as preserving the testimonies of those who were in Lewis revivals before they passed away and to give an authentic account of the 1949-1952 revival (Peckham 2005:11). This revival became to be associated with the ministry of Duncan Campbell who was invited to an island prepared, eager and ready to respond to the gospel challenge and invitation; his ministry was only in the Church of Scotland and not in any Free Church service (Peckham 2004:34-5). In a whole chapter called *Characteristics of the Revival* the Peckhams (Peckham 2004:83-110) describe the manifestation of this revival which was from 'a great spirit of prayer everywhere' (and as Mary Peckham told the study that they use to pray through the night and a burning cloud would come and rest on each house), an expectation of great things from God to trances, the shaking of houses, heavenly music, no generation gaps, convictions leading to people seeking the Saviour for salvation every night etc.

A Revival is an occurrence in the paradigm of meaning, see previous section, and the proposal is that it occurs when the meaning, the language, becomes a Biblical meaning: when the narrative of Scriptures becomes the typified narrative in the paradigm and the narrative in which all other narratives play off in and consequently would absorb all reality. Evangelicals would talk about a personal revival, which can be an ambiguous concept, but for this presentation would mean that both the language/narrative the Bible is being interpreted with and the language/narrative life is being lived by should originate out of the Context of YAHWEH's ontological presence. To put it the other way around, the language/narrative of the Context/presence of YAHWEH is the language/narrative in which perceived/experienced reality would include YAHWEH's presence.

Empirical and Humanistic sciences, e.g. Historical and Higher criticism and the onslaught of liberalism, could question the ontological reality of the reversal of Genesis 3, and specifically the above illustrated physical manifestations with their preference for sense experience as the source of epistemology working through empirical sciences. YAHWEH does not per se ontologically reveal himself to the senses they rely on for knowledge, but this is where the Wittgenstein tradition and the break with the illusionary objectivity serve the purpose of illustrating that language even precedes sense experience itself (Wittgenstein 1953:402), and in this case historical criticism and modernism. This has a twofold significance: one that the reader-response of the text of the Scriptures, by the people on the Island of Lewis, reversed Genesis 3 and not an attempt to recover the true history and apparent meaning behind the text; secondly that when language precedes sense experience and *Creatio Ex Nihilo* illustrates that YAHWEH precedes language, then it means YAHWEH precedes not only the Text but also sense experience itself and consequently supercedes and exceeds empirical sciences altogether. The people on the Island of Lewis had an encounter with YAHWEH in and through the Text, but which affirms a correct Communal Hermeneutic since the meaning of language, understanding the Text, is in a community and not with an apparent history behind the Text.

On the Island of Lewis the people found themselves in the presence of YAHWEH not through a historical reconstruction of the history behind the text or the apparent intention of the author other than what the Text blatantly states; to take it one step further, they didn't find YAHWEH in the/a Text, but in the Context of YAHWEH also embracing the Text where a literal reader-response approach to the Scriptures worked a reversal of Genesis 3 - the ontological presence of YAHWEH. The testimonies lead that scriptures were prominent in the schools and they were taught to honour the Word of God and to memorise its content to the extent that they even memorised many psalms and whole chapters of the Bible (Peckham 2004:83); the Text of the Scriptures and the narrative constituting YAHWEH's presence absorbed all that they know as reality.

The proposed Postliberal description of religion argues that religion(s) works like a language and becomes the language people uses to create their experience of all of reality and consequently illustrates the ontological experience of YAHWEH's presence on the Island of Lewis through the Text/narrative of Scriptures. George Lindbeck (Lindbeck 1984:117), in his book *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (and as already stated above which is being viewed as the defining work of Postliberal theology (Gustafson

1999)) says (as also stated above) that “pre-eminently authoritative texts that are canonical writings of religious communities, for those who are steeped in them, no world is more real than the ones they create”. The world created by the people on the Island of Lewis is a context in which YAHWEH is present through the literal reading of the Text/narrative of Scriptures; or differently stated, the people on the Island of Lewis lived in the world where YAHWEH is experienced as present through the inscription of the language/narrative of the Text springing from YAHWEH world.

When language precedes sense experience, then this language precedes the experience of the presence of YAHWEH; when YAHWEH precedes this language and experience then YAHWEH is truly experienced apart from even the Text itself: the content/history is not what it is particularly about, but YAHWEH’s presence in a Communal Hermeneutic which gave rise to this Text. The world of the Scriptures on the Island of Lewis became their world, and since YAHWEH is inside this world, they were in the presence of YAHWEH. They entered the context, of which God is part off, through the Text and the interiorising of the Text. In George Lindbeck’s (Lindbeck 1984:211) explanation of the Postliberal theology he states that to become religious is to interiorise a set of skills by practise and training and, in Calvin’s concept, the narrative [of the Bible] must be the spectacles, the lens, through which faith views all reality and where the world of the reader could be absorbed into the Biblical world. The people on the Island of Lewis absorbed themselves into the Biblical world, and even when it would make no sense to many historical and empirical sciences, for them there were nothing more real than this world and which the unfolding of this study proves as the only meaningful world apposed to the nihilistic world highlighted by Poststructural philosophy.

2.3 The authoritative norm

A perspective on past Revivals will illustrate the reversal of Genesis 3 in communities with contrasting Theological models, like Calvinism on the Island of Lewis versus Arminianism operative in the Wesleyan Revival in England during the 18th century. This reiterates that the unifying rule of Revivals is not cognitive knowledge, but the presence of YAHWEH, a Context. Hans Frei (Frei 1992:8) says

I find that certain themes in modern academic theology have set me to thinking. One of them is a kind of informal agreement at least among Protestants, and probably among Roman Catholic theologians also, that the central persuasion of Christian

theology, not so much to defend as to be set out, is that Jesus Christ is the **presence of God** in the Church to the world... Whatever one's theological method, however one proceeded to think about theology, the content seemed to be a reflection on Jesus Christ as Incarnate Lord and as Redeemer of the human race.

The right context is the context of YAHWEH's presence and not cognitive knowledge. Unfortunately not all endeavours capture the right context, the interiorising of the right language, and because of this do not experience the presence of YAHWEH in the reversal of Genesis 3. The proposed theological model is the alleged conviction of the right language proposing a reversal of Genesis 3 with the presence of YAHWEH as the norm. The example of the right context is the Revival on the Island of Lewis, which in the first place states a literal reading of Genesis 1 & 3, where the Texts are taken for what it says and in the words of a distinguished Jewish scholar, Raphael Loewe (quoted by Hans Frei (Frei 1992:15))

This is the literal sense in that it is the fit enactment of the intention to say what comes to be in the text... the intention and its enactment are thought of as one continuous process – one intelligent activity, not two – so that you cannot for this purpose go behind the written text to ask separately about what the author meant or what he or she was really trying to say. You had better take it that the author said what he or she was trying to say.

This does not imply that this model throws the Baby out with the bathwater and so reject all historical findings and science altogether. Poststructuralism has done theology a favour in illustrating that science is just another discourse, not the discourse, and people like Phillips (Phillips 2000:50-87) and Hudson (Faliaferro 2003:7-20) have illustrated the untranslatability from other discourses of other sciences to the discourse of the Scriptures. To reason, on the lines of Hudson following the Wittgenstein tradition, one sees that YAHWEH is the fundamental proposition to the discourse of the Bible. The concept of YAHWEH is logically irreducible otherwise the whole discourse of the Bible collapses. Since empirical science cannot prove or disprove YAHWEH, in Poststructuralist terms, empirical sciences cannot be connected to the discourse of the Bible at the most basic level and consequently science cannot destroy the fundamental proposition of the discourse of the Bible and consequently cannot destroy the discourse itself. When the discourse of the Bible stands, and cannot be destroyed, then the proposed theological model can take that YAHWEH created the world *Ex Nihilo* and accordingly precedes language; and when YAHWEH precedes language, combined with His

presence as the norm, Genesis 1 & 3 can be read literally to find the One whose presence is in the Text.

To summarise these arguments; the presence of YAHWEH is the norm validating a literal reading of Genesis 1 & 3 since the Context of YAHWEH gave birth to this Text. The Text is part of the language in which YAHWEH can be experienced when the language is interiorised to create the world in which such contours are possible. The Postmodern paradigm tends to read the Scriptures like VR, in the implosion of time and space and in an amnesia of what really happened, with no intended/possible translation between cultures. This in turn authorises a literal approach to these passages as not inappropriate, but that the needed propositional truth depends on the Communal input – Communal Hermeneutics and the work of the Third Person of the Trinity. The Text comes from a Context (through the Son who created) and must return to a Context (YAHWEH's presence/Glory) within a Context (the Communal work of the Holy Spirit) to reverse Genesis 3, what evangelicals call Revival.

3 The Contextual Discourse

In a typical Postliberal notion the propositional claims Christians/theologians make is the language they talk in their respective religious affiliations and as Hans Frei (Frei 1992:2-5) says “Christian theology is exclusively a matter of Christian self-description. External descriptive categories have no bearing on or relation to it at all”. The theology model of this study is a typical self-description from a Postmodern perspective, but do deviate slightly from the Yale Postliberal claim in that external descriptive categories have become useful since Poststructuralism has done Theology the favour of illuminating the *nihilistic culture* of other discourses.

Poststructuralism has broadened the philosophical discourses of more than two and a half millenniums to the culmination of *nihilism* – nothing means anything and everything is permissible (Gaarder 1991:380) - and is evident in the philosophical works of two prominent philosophers of concern and their roots in Nietzsche and nihilism: the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, following Nietzsche who stands as a forerunner “to the line of poststructuralist thought by questioning the very concepts of method and ‘structure’ in the name of demystifying rhetoric” (Norris 2002:76) as well as Jean Baudrillard (Smith 2001:32) extensively drawn on in the previous section. In this culmination Poststructuralism has done

theology a favour, since when Derrida says there is nothing “external” to the text (Norris 2002:40) and Baudrillard there is nothing but simulacra – simulation with no recognisable reality constituting its existence (Baudrillard 1994), the present modal thanks them for exposing the nature of all discourses but rejoices in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* exempting the present discourse from the same scrutiny since YAHWEH precedes the text. YAHWEH is a fundamental proposition of the Biblical discourse; YAHWEH cannot be removed from the discourse for the discourse to exist. Remove YAHWEH and there is no discourse, which means that in this discourse YAHWEH cannot be subjected to lingualistic criticism since YAHWEH precedes the tools to do it.

This has far reaching consequences since that would mean that the discourse cannot be deconstructed on its own terms before YAHWEH is not removed, but YAHWEH cannot be removed through a scientific discourse. YAHWEH cannot be deconstructed from within the Text itself, since YAHWEH is outside the Text in the Context of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*; the other option is to remove *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, but that would change the Text of the Wesleyan-Evangelical affiliation to another text and then another text is being deconstructed not the one of the Wesleyan-Evangelical community. To take it one step further, fundamental propositions can also not be rendered mere simulacra from within a discourse because the whole existence of the discourse hinges on it and consequently YAHWEH can also not be rendered a mere simulacrum as long as the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* validates YAHWEH as a fundamental proposition. For YAHWEH to be YAHWEH, according to what YAHWEH means from within this discourse, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* also becomes a fundamental proposition. There is not way out from within the Wesleyan-Evangelical discourse to nullify the fundamental propositions, the only other possibility is to deny the existence of the discourse altogether but then poststructuralism would have no tools to deconstruct the discourse with since the discourse is part of their tools itself. Another fundamental proposition, for the sake of illustration, is e.g. the earth; when someone tells somebody else about a walk on the beach, the existence of the earth is assumed and cannot be a simulation. Everything springing from the fundamental proposition can be a simulacrum, but not the fundamental proposition itself otherwise even the discourse, telling about the walk, would be unintelligible.

The advantages of the nihilistic culmination, in the light of the Context preceding the text altogether, means that this study can search the ‘rubble’ of deconstructed discourses for authentic pieces and use what conforms to the proposed norm – the presence of YAHWEH –

in the discourse of any other science, but it cannot remove the Biblical discourse itself. The Biblical discourse, with its doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, removes the anxiety created by the historical scrutiny of modernism and the antagonism between science and the Bible, since the Context itself cannot be challenged. This in turn proposes the presence of YAHWEH to be the norm for all Hermeneutical endeavours and as a result Scriptures must be the means to validate the consistency of any science with the Context of YAHWEH. This sets the parameters for the minimum commitment to the origin of the passage under discussion, should science still be taken seriously.

Von Rad (Von Rad 1963:13), the Old Testament authority, says that the books, Genesis to Joshua (Hexateuch),

In the present form constitute an immense connected narrative. It matters little whether one is more interested in the great individual narrative source that make up the book or in the composition as a whole which arose when a final redactor skilfully combined these. In either case the reader must keep in mind the narrative as a whole and the **context** into which all the individual part fit and from which they are to be understood.

And then on Genesis 1, Von Rad (Von Rad 1963:67) continues that it is a “Priestly doctrine, i.e. ancient, sacred knowledge, preserved, and handed on by many generations of priests, repeatedly pondered, taught, reformed and expanded most carefully and compactly by new reflections and experience of faith”. The literature of Genesis 1 & 3 is the intension of YAHWEH and is the language with which YAHWEH wants Christians to create/perceive a reality committed to His presence; part of this literature is the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* in the Communal Wesleyan-Evangelical Hermeneutics of the proposed affiliation (Purkiser 1977:57).

The tension that remains is that theology is also limited to words, and in this case the attempt to describe that which precedes words, and can have dangerous consequences when something behind or preceding the text is searched for or pointed to, as was the case with liberalism and its attempt to reconstruct an apparent history behind the Text. On the other hand the commitment to Context, from the priestly context Von Rad proposed above as the final formation of the text to the present context of κοίνωσιν, illustrates the Communal Hermeneutics proposed where “Faith is a journey into the language and practices [one and the same thing] of a particular community and preaching [and consequently also teaching] is on

learning the distinctive language where language is fundamentally a public instance of communally ruled behaviour” (Campbell 1997:232). The meaning of language is in a community, and the meaning of the proposed Text is also in a community. In the previous section the Postmodern paradigm suggested that the Hermeneutics of any text is being done from the respective points of presence (PoP) in the paradigm; PoP is the concept used for receiving and delivering emails on the Internet at a particular point and this coincides with the analogy of the Internet in the previous section of how time and space imploded in the paradigm. What removes the danger is that YAHWEH is the invariable one over the length of the paradigm and that correct Hermeneutics, Communal Meaning, is only possible in the presence of YAHWEH through the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ.

The meaning on the Island of Lewis was also a present meaning (Point of Presence), since no one on the Island has lived in the times of the Bible; no one has even lived the same culture or world view as the people of the Biblical times. What constituted the presence of YAHWEH was a commitment to Context on the island: the interweaved presence of YAHWEH in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, constituting the correct present Communal Hermeneutic in order to created/negotiate the right world - a Biblical correct world in which YAHWEH was present.

4 Genesis 1: *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

4.1 Creation into being

Since Kant to Saussure the notion of the prison-house of concepts has evolved (Norris 2002:4-7), which inturn indicates the limits of human reason since when human reason is imprisoned in language a world without language cannot be conceived when no discourse can be translated into this world without language (which again places YAHWEH's world outside the scrutiny of language). For some this may be a pie in the sky dream, but for the Wesleyan-Evangelical discourse an alternative would be unacceptable since that would give in to Idealism/Platonism and inturn subject YAHWEH to language and nullify *Creatio Ex Nihilo* stating a world of ideas which existed before YAHWEH, or came into existence with YAHWEH.

The Saussurian tradition is the tradition highlighting the presence of *difference* in language and how language operates within *difference* (Norris 2002:32). It is this *difference* that Derrida takes up in his enterprise of deconstruction by illustrating the irrationality of a discourse depending on the existence of the opposite (Gergen 1999:24-9) and where meaning is always

different (Norris 2002:32). An example is material versus spirit; the concept spirit would not exist if it did not have an opposite of material and vice versa, which implies all meaning is derived/differed from its opposite – a binary. *Creatio Ex Nihilo* places YAHWEH outside this tradition, since before YAHWEH created there was only YAHWEH and no difference from which the meaning YAHWEH could have been derived/differed from. Before YAHWEH created there was no binary to say this is YAHWEH the opposite of the other binary that constitutes its existence; it was only when YAHWEH created that a binary came into being – a God versus creation. Obviously the word YAHWEH itself could be deconstructed as a binary (the Biblical discourse has nothing else to use), but in the meaning of the Biblical discourse *Creatio Ex Nihilo* verifies that the meaning is not differing since there was nothing to be different from. *Creatio Ex Nihilo* affirms that the reality of YAHWEH does not depend on an opposite to exist.

The implication is that the discourse of YAHWEH is not in the same realm of the nihilistic discourses/simulacra of other discourses, having its origin only in language, and even when the real history of Genesis 1 & 3 is not known, the Text originates out of the presence of YAHWEH who is not a simulation. There is a Context, before the Text

Coming to Genesis 1 in verse 1 God created the heavens and earth (the Hebrew word *bara* affirms *Creatio Ex Nihilo* and concurs with Von Rad (Von Rad 1961:47) who says: “It is correct to say the verb *bara*, ‘create’, contains the idea both of complete effortlessness and *creatio ex nihilo*”), but it is verse 2 that indicates that God has not created language yet since what else would this world be other than chaos without language? The view taken is the traditional view that verse 1 was the first act of God followed by more acts from verse 3 onwards and, to come back to verse 2, the significance of the chaos is the contrast with the order that came after the creation of the rest of the chapter. From verse 3 on the text records the word creation - *fiat* (let there be) – 10 times with 7 approval formulas. The word ‘Let there be’ is the divine word of command that brings into existence what it expresses (Wenham 1987:18). At the end of the chapter God has, through the expression of ‘Let there be...’, broad into existence the world as perceived today.

From a linguistic perspective, in verse 1 God could have created the world as we know it today, but it would have been chaos, as verse 2 confirms, since there was no language to conceptualise it with. From verse 3 onwards God used the formula ‘Let there be...’, the first

use of spoken language in the Biblical discourse, and this could be the moment God created the first discourse and the first order in the universe since only now could the cosmos start to make sense in human terms. It was only in verse 3 that verse 2 became chaos, because in the Saussurian tradition the difference/binary opposite could only now exist for chaos to have meaning when order was created. Verse 1 also only now gains its significance in verse 3, because 'In the beginning...' has only meaning in language. Creation does not have much significance for humans when there is no language to grasp it with. If language was only created in verse 3 then it removes the time crisis from verse 1 in questions like 'When did it happen?' or 'Where does God come from?', since even the concept time is conceptualised in language/metaphors as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff 1999:137-69) illustrates in their book *Philosophy in the Flesh*.

Verses 1:3-2:3 is the story of the evolvement of language, but should the traditional view of God creating/making matter be more appealing, is that not actually one and the same thing? What is the difference between God conceptualising the concept light or animals etc. and God physically creating them, except again should Platonism be opted for but would again change the discourse away from the Wesleyan-Evangelical one? The scientific discourse argues the age of the cosmos over millions of years and is no contradiction to the Wesleyan-Evangelical discourse, should language have evolved over millions of years as the cosmos took shape; language still evolves and even at a faster pace today with the acceleration of scientific inventions. The Hebraic world view, being proposed, has never regarded the days of Genesis as solar days, but as day-periods of indefinite duration (Purkiser 1977:58), not what it became to mean in a Greek world view.

In line with the traditional perspective God created the stuff of the universe in verse 1, and that could have been the already perfect world as perceived today, but from verse 3 onwards God created the language that conceptualises this universe. The break between verses 1 and 2 can only be referential, because as stated above time also depends on language and the word chaos a cushion between the creation of matter and the creation of language. Whatever the case the conviction is YAHWEH exists outside language, which means YAHWEH's actions are not linguistically determined and that there is a Context where language is not the epistemological source. Again this may sound like a complete contradiction, or an impossibility, but would stay outside the grasp of humans who are prisoners of language and for who all epistemology are rooted in language.

Empirical sciences, like all sciences, are an epistemological journey and some would be mystified by the negotiated reality of the people on the Island of Lewis, but when their reality is in the Context of YAHWEH it means that just as YAHWEH's world is outside the touch of linguistic criticism so is theirs. Empirical sciences only have language to scrutinise their negotiated reality and can only move from text to text: everything can be considered, but it all will still be done in language. For the people on the Island the Context in which the above described manifestations happened did not elicit ontological questions or epistemological questions based on empirical data; the context they happened in was real and apparent for those who experienced them, because the world they created/negotiated through the Text was in and from the Context of YAHWEH's presence.

The fact that the revival was resisted on the island itself by the Free churches (Peckham 2004:117) illustrates that the Free churches could not see all these miraculous manifestations of the Hand of God because they did not have the language to create/negotiate the world in which it occurs. It is something like when Jesus performed divine miracles and still the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus and asked Him for a sign (Matt 12:38), because they could not see the Hand of God in these divine miracles from a wrong language.

Back to the island of Lewis, very transparently the arguments above would raise the question, 'What came first the egg or chicken?' Did their language create/negotiate the world YAHWEH is in? or 'Was YAHWEH already in the world they founded/negotiated through language?' In the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* the second one holds, because the first one would propose that YAHWEH was created through the text. By bringing previous arguments to its culmination, since the Wesleyan-Evangelical discourse, with the above stated fundamental propositions, is internally protected from all other discourses (and off particular concern deconstruction who destroyed all other discourses) the second question holds against their proposals. The Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient Grace argues that YAHWEH was the first mover from His Context which they came to inhabit, since YAHWEH was the first mover to reveal Himself unto them (Dunning 1988:161-3); the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* Context even takes it a step further that this revelation, even while they were prisoners of language and their world was a negotiated reality in language, it was YAHWEH who came first in that which precedes language, His Context, and consequently that which preceded their epistemology. This affirms that YAHWEH's self-revelation proceeds first from His Context which in turn embraces His Text. This illustrates that while the Free churches resisted the Revival, although they shared

the same proximate of culture and language, it was because they had the wrong text (wrong meaning in a Communal Hermeneutic), they did not have the Text originating out of the YAHWEH Context and therefore they could not share the same ontology of YAHWEH's presence.

This illustrates that although God moved language into being in Genesis 1, a discourse evolved wherein YAHWEH is not present and Genesis 3 is the story of this discourse. This does not imply that YAHWEH is in no measure present in some people's lives since it would be contrary to the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace affirming YAHWEH's grace working in all people. Rather what it means is that YAHWEH is not present in measures comparable with the reversal of Genesis 3 – YAHWEH's presence in His full Glory –, all because YAHWEH's presence is not compatible with a wrong language/text/discourse. A present reader-response to the Biblical Text calls Christians to create/negotiate the world YAHWEH is present in as opposed to the secular world created/negotiated by the scientific discourse and its particular meaning - the world religion called secularism. The previous section argued that the god of secularism is science and scientists its high priests, since they are the source of epistemological validation its truth claims like a religion. Secularism is the attempt to answer the same ultimate questions all religions endeavour to do, e.g. 'What is the origin of life?' and 'Is there life after death?' and 'How do we obtain it?' and 'What is the good life?' etc., and is directly in opposition to the answers springing from the Context of YAHWEH. The realism of secularism is a negotiation drawing on the discourse of science and its epistemology.

In light of this study the challenge is in what constitutes the right experience of HyperReality, in the Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of Postmodernity, and particularly in VR. What it means, like on the island of Lewis, is that the discourse of VR, or the understanding of the discourse of VR, should find the Context of YAHWEH for it to be Biblically correct; the Context of YAHWEH is the unmovable since it precedes the text altogether and consequently the creative abstract capacity YAHWEH endowed humans with should work back to the Context of YAHWEH to meet the Divine intention of Creation.

4.2 Further considerations

4.2.1 Realism

Firstly there is a Realism positioned outside language contained in the Biblical discourse; it is not idealism, neither materialism, but YAHWEH who precedes language while accommodating

language. Everything known to humans is created in language, since creation informed the first binary for language to exist – God verses creation. This conviction eliminates Idealism from the Biblical discourse, since idealism argues language preceding the signified. Materialism, matter as eternal, is not possible either, since that would mean a binary did exist and YAHWEH can be deconstructed on a difference/differed and then the fundamental proposition of the Biblical discourse is eradicated but which would then also eradicates the whole discourse then leaving no YAHWEH to deconstruct. In the Biblical discourse YAHWEH created *Ex Nihilo*, language included, and consequently YAHWEH's existence does not depend on language. In the experience of the world perceived in the Biblical discourse YAHWEH unquestionably exists and consequently, in this discourse, YAHWEH is the fundamental proposition to all experiences.

4.2.2 Logos – Word of God

What about Jesus, who is the Word of God and who was with God from the beginning, although not created? In the Economic Trinity this raises no problem, neither concerning the Holy Spirit. After Genesis 3 two discourses existed in the world: one is the discourse constituting the context of YAHWEH's presence, while the other one an alien discourse to His' presence. Jesus is the incarnation of the right discourse: the God intended language and metaphors of life, the reverse of Genesis 3 and the call to such a reversal. In the Economic Trinity the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the communal effort to incorporate this language and metaphors of life into the present language - PoP in the paradigm.

The ontological Trinity, which is also the language of the Wesleyan-Evangelical affiliation, on the other hand affirms that this doctrine is moulded in language. Since it is ontologically true, it precedes language and can only be grasped by reading back with language. 'In the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God...' (John 1:1) is the statement reading back with words where words cannot go. John Beasley-Murray says in his commentary on John 1:1 that the phrase 'In the beginning' does not relate to the act of creation, but to what existed when creation came into being (Beasley-Murray 1999:10). In the light of previous arguments it is as good as to say God had the capacity to create, when He created, since when God created language He created *Ex Nihilo*. This would make Jesus the ontological capacity to create; the ontological Trinity is an intratextual/Contextual conviction since it precedes language and affirmed by references like Genesis 1:2 where the Spirit of God was present in matter before

language – before verse 3.

4.2.3 Omniscience

What about statements like, ‘Before the foundation of the world...’ in passages like Ephesians 1:4? Was there a language before the foundation of the world? In all the passages the reference is either to the beginning of the world, or to Christ who precedes the world (John 17:24, Rom 8:29, 2Thess 2:13, 2Tim 1:9, 1Pet 1:20). The most difficult one is Ephesians 1:4, but is also not incompatible with the idea that ‘Before the foundation of the world’ has to do with Christ, since the election is in Christ, and not with a language knowing everyone by name – a sort of Idealism.

Does this imply YAHWEH had no knowledge, in human terms, before creation and consequently had no ‘preplanning’ in the control and unfolding of history? The discourse of the entire Bible certainly states things differently, but reaches its limit in its linguistic properties affirming an intelligent ontological existence outside language, giving birth to this language: that YAHWEH could know outside language is impossible for humans to understand since humans are prisoners of language. For YAHWEH to be YAHWEH, to be able to create *Ex Nihilo*, a new definition of knowledge, a divine knowledge out of the reach of humans, is proposed. That YAHWEH necessarily exists outside language becomes very apparent in the examination of the nihilistic culmination of Poststructuralist philosophy and as Smith (Smith 2001:16) says “In the poststructural metaphysical system of grammatology, everything from power to meaning can only be evaluated in terms of absence and emptiness – it is a culture of nihilism”. Language in its absolute sense, only simulacra, is a Buddhist nihilism YAHWEH would be subjected too, should YAHWEH’s omniscience be tied to language, and as Foucault (Smith 2001:17) suggests: ‘Man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon’. Should YAHWEH be a slave of language then YAHWEH would perish with the human race and in Nietzsche’s words die – because the human race has killed him along with nature in our will to ‘double’ or exchange everything (Smith 2001:16).

The mechanics of language functions predominately metaphorical with abstract concepts and the black hole of abstract encoding is the nihilistic culture Poststructuralism has highlighted. What illustrates that YAHWEH surpasses this abstract constellation of language, is the

inexhaustible scientific explorations of the universe. Postmodernism illustrates how science is also only a discourse – abstract constellation -, but it is through this abstract constellation that the extent of the universe is being discovered and particularly as the exponential increase of scientific discoveries of the previous and the beginning of this century has proven. Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977:25) quotes Hirsch who says that “all modern creativity theory confirms that there are no rules for invention, no recipes for the concoction of good hypotheses, only rules for the validation of hypotheses”. The scientific discourse examines the contours of the universe, but is deeply rooted in language and the development of hypotheses in this language. YAHWEH is outside this abstract constellation, because since this constellation is only still in making the end of the contours were already *Creatio Ex Nihilo* established millions of years ago by YAHWEH (quantum theory could be seen as a challenge to this view should it not have been part of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* itself). Nothing new can be added to the cosmos, the constellation can only negotiate/validate hypotheses discovering its contours and again illustrates how YAHWEH supersedes the prison house of language in a definitive ontological omniscience when He create these contours.

The other alternative is that YAHWEH knew the whole abstract constellation from the beginning, which is not the case except should Idealism/Platonism be opted for. The conviction is that YAHWEH did not know the whole abstract constellation, but that Genesis 2 & 3 and the rest of the Bible assert that the abstract formulation of metaphors is a creative capacity YAHWEH has endowed the human race with and in this resides the capacity of human freedom. The examples of new metaphors created are endless in the discourse of the Bible; one example are two verses in Jeremiah (7:31, 19:5) where YAHWEH says that the children sacrifices the people made to their idols did not come into His mind. YAHWEH did not create these metaphors, but people.

The best example of this capacity is the tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11 where the people planed a new invention (a similar enterprise earlier is not recorded) and in Hirsch words, as quoted above, the validation of a new hypothesis. The people exercised the abstract capacity YAHWEH has endowed them with. The most import significance is the words and acts of YAHWEH as stated in Genesis 11:5-7; firstly that YAHWEH came down to see what they were doing, implies it was a metaphorical construction YAHWEH did not ‘know’ about. Secondly in verse 6 YAHWEH reveals what is at stake in this endeavour, since YAHWEH indicates that they had one language and that this tower is only the first act that will empower

them to accomplish anything, which in turn reveals the power of the abstract constellations and the capacity of language. Thirdly YAHWEH had to halt their intension by interrupting this possibility of the abstract metaphorical construction by interrupting their communication. This passage illuminates the creative capacity YAHWEH has bestowed on humans through language, but also to reveal that this capacity is in a communal enterprise when YAHWEH had to break up the community to stop the evolvement of the abstract constellation - the validation of more hypothesis.

That YAHWEH did not know is in inverted commas, since it does not impede the omniscience of YAHWEH, but rather illustrates the freedom YAHWEH has endowed the human race with. The argument of this study is not, what is called, *Process Theology*, although a number of touching points do exist. For them YAHWEH is also subjected to process, and in this case it would mean YAHWEH is also subjected to the evolvement of the abstract constellation of language. The agreements are that YAHWEH is not coercing people into His blueprint, but is rather persuasive in His love (Cobb 1976:52-62); another agreement is also that evil is real and that humans have a creative capacity (Cobb 1976:69), although for them it means humans are interwoven into the evolutionary process of this world with nothing actualised after the present and consequently people are creating with God. They reject *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, but affirm a doctrine of creation out of chaos (suggested by Plato) (Cobb 1976:65); by rejecting *Creatio Ex Nihilo* they subject YAHWEH to language and consequently make YAHWEH part of a binary and open for deconstruction.

The conviction of this study is that YAHWEH's omniscience knows the contours of the abstractness and consequently knowledge outside the reach and definition of Greek epistemology, but not outside the comprehension of Hebraic epistemology and relational truth; know or knowledge gains a complete new significance in *Creatio Ex Nihilo* as Divine property (especially when the cosmos was created in its full capacity in Genesis 1:1 but language only evolved from verse 3 on and consequently YAHWEH 'knew' before language). While people have creative power, the finality or extend of the cosmos is known by YAHWEH (e.g. what science still can discover). The nihilistic culture, highlighted by Poststructuralism, is the result of abstractness/simulacra that has gone so far away from the Context of the presence of YAHWEH that no reality is visible anymore, but will disintegrate when Ultimate Reality is revealed in the Context/presence of Jesus at the παρουσία –

‘Therefore God has highly exalted him [Jesus] and bestowed on him the name which

is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 2:9-11) (RSV)

No abstract nihilistic culture can survive this day, since no confusion between signifier and signified would be possible, those that will be casted outside the presence of YAHWEH, into what is called hell, would find themselves in a type of a nihilistic existence although not an abstract one: it will be real void of a confusion between the signified and the Signifier.

5 A Hebraic reality

5.1 Defined

The returning of, the buzz word of the last 20 years, Post- (Postmodern, Postliberal, Poststructural etc.) has been indicated, but the extent and direction is what needs further clarification. As indicated modernism, which followed the Middle Ages, was also a return: the Italian Renaissance followed the Middle Aged, but was actually constituted by the fall of Constantinople and the reintroduction of classical Greek literature to Italy (González 1984:366). The succession of Postmodernism after modernism actually proves to extend the return even further back: not just to the classical Greek times, but even further back within Greek philosophy. Poststructuralism, although suggesting a succession from preceding philosophical models, indicates a return, a return to the pre-Socrates philosophical school of the sophists. Poststructural philosophy and the sophists affirm that thinking is always and inseparably bound to the rhetorical devices that support it (Norris 2002:59-63).

Postliberal theology, although indicating a Post-, also makes the claim of returning to a Hermeneutical principle from before the Enlightenment while still retaining something of the times in between. George Lindbeck describes the Pre-modern Hermeneutic, before the enlightenment and modernism, as topological, and less fundamentally allegorical, where the Bible was not simply a source of precepts and truths, but the interpretive framework for all reality (Lindbeck 2002:204), but the extent proposed is to the time even further back than modern times. The proposal is also a return to a pre-Greek time: a return to a holistic Hebraic world view. Again this is where Poststructuralism has done theology a favour, since the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* affirms a non-nihilistic discourse where the signified and the signifier cannot be confused (the Context of YAHWEH), while the Greek constellation of philosophy, culminating in Poststructuralism and deeply rooted in Western thinking, is in a

contrast to this Context. A return to the discourse of YAHWEH's people, from before Greek influences, would therefore be in order and so a return to the Hebraic thinking of the Scriptures (König 1993).

The Hebraic worldview is the hermeneutical principle proposed, although it again does not imply throwing the baby out with the bath water: Christians can still listen to and assess other discourses, although it should be the discourse of the Bible that becomes the framework in which all other discourses are interpreted in and from and should Conform to the Context of YAHWEH. The Context of YAHWEH in the eyes of the Hebraic world view incorporates the Communal Hermeneutic proposed, since community is the seedbed of language.

Christians learn to interpret Scripture not by learning general hermeneutical or literary theories, but by being trained to apply the informal rules and conventions for the use of Scripture that are embodied in the language and practices of the Christian community. It is the "common community of interpretation" that provides the conventions and sets the "reasonable bounds" for the faithful interpretation of Scripture (Campbell 1997:84).

Hebraic thinking is comprehensive and relational in nature (Wynkoop 1972:42-52); Hebraic thinking looks at life as a whole and not as separate parts as Greek philosophy has suggested. A holistic world view should include the Context of YAHWEH, or better stated, it is the Context of YAHWEH that should include everything else and should be the holistic weaving together of all of reality and not just empirical data; it is the worldlier/paradigm in which YAHWEH is the stationary point and in which reality is negotiated via a communal hermeneutic in the relationships and guidance constituted through the third person of the Trinity. Social Construction, as proposed by Gergen (Gergen 1999:30-3), proposes a succession following the rubble of Poststructuralism, in the same way the present endeavour can be called a Social Constructionist endeavour proposing a negotiation towards a Transformative Dialogue (Gergen 1999:154), although in this case from the Context of YAHWEH in a comprehensive Hebraic worldlier acknowledging the fixed presence of YAHWEH in this Dialogue. Where the succession outstretches Social Construction is that the succession is not only forward, post after modern, but also a succession backwards past the sophists to a Hebraic Social Construction.

Coming back to language, the groundbreaking work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson

(Lakoff 1999:555-7) illustrates how language is subordinate to people's bodies and environment (incorporating more than just sense experiences), and not vice versa; their thesis boils down to reasoning and language evolving out of bodily experiences (Lakoff 1999:494-5) (empirical knowledge out of more than just sense experience). Bring their thesis to the present study, the commitment to the Context of YAHWEH, in *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, should be part of this bodily experience, or the bodily experience should be part of the Context of YAHWEH, and, to take it one step further, the comprehensive Hebraic experience should inform reasoning and language and not vice versa. The arguments of the theologian Adrio König (König 1993), in the last chapter of his volume *Menslike Mense Deel 5*, affirms this holistic view of human experience in the Scriptures, which in turn places language, human reason and discourse in perspective subordinate to a context and only a part of the whole, it is not the whole. In the Hebraic worldlier life is not partitioned, but every aspect is substantially part of the whole and consequently language (the medium reality is perceived by) is thus also only a part of the whole, the body, as Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:569-73) would say, and should also be part of the Context of YAHWEH as the Scriptures would say (Rom 12:1). The body consequently comes even before language and confirms the sequence of Genesis 1:1 before vers 3: YAHWEH's Context and matter before language. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop (Wynkoop 1972:42-3) says that in the Hebraic worldlier a person's 'word' was an almost physical projection of that person itself and that the abstract way of Hellenistic thinking is in contrast to the personal one of Hebraic thinking. In Hebraic thinking a person's 'word' was his/her essence as a whole.

This places the Scriptures of concern in a different light, since, from a Hebraic worldlier it is, e.g. not the abstract reconstruction of history which is of importance, but the personal projection of the Context of YAHWEH. The reader-response to the passage is a personal one, not an abstract one.

5.2 Workings of language

The work of Lakoff and Johnson is an interdisciplinary study drawing on cognitive science, which, just like Poststructuralism, challenges philosophic thinking of the last two millennia but this time by explaining the metaphorical nature of abstract thinking evolving out of bodily experiences. They say "Reason, arising from the body, doesn't transcend the body. What universal aspects there are arises from the commonalities of our bodies and brains and the

environment we inhabit” (Lakoff 1999:5). They explain reasoning to be 95% unconscious, but which in turn shapes and structures all conscious thought; the startling aspect is that the hidden hand of the unconscious mind uses metaphor to define people’s unconscious metaphysics (Lakoff 1999:14). It is the metaphors evolving out of the bodily experiences which shapes the language people use to construct the realism and build the paradigm they live by.

Language is a metaphorical construction; Lakoff and Johnson’s (Lakoff 1999:555-6) explanation goes as follows. They say that people’s biological makeup, from the beginning, automatically categorises and, which informs their thesis, it could only happen through the body. It is from this categorisation that Basic-Level concepts are formed. The activation of neural connections produces, what they call, Primary Metaphors and, with sensorimotor inference, produces Conceptual Metaphors, which, as Complex Metaphors, permits abstract conceptualisation and reason. This abstractness is a pluralistic conceptual system with a great many mutually inconsistent structuring of abstract concepts and becomes the focus of the proposed theological analyses of VR and HyperReality, since the identified Postmodern apprehension is predominantly an abstract constellation with a pure metaphorical point of reference. It is out of these inconsistencies in abstractness that people like Baudrillard has identify everything as simulacra (Baudrillard 1994), it is in this abstractness that the difference between the signified and the signifier became blurred in the mapping (the mechanism of metaphor) of concepts in, e.g. advertisements: is it the girl who is being advertised or the car on which girl is lying, or why is it cool to drive a particular kind of car when others are just as good (Smith 2001:1-2). It is also in these inconsistencies of metaphorical thinking that Lakoff and Johnson challenge the history of Western philosophy.

When life is primarily a metaphorical journey with the largest part of its content abstract/simulacrum, what are the metaphors employed in this abstractness? The answer to this question has particular significance to this study, since VR is evidently and predominantly abstract. When the human conceptual system of primary and complex metaphors are part of the cognitive unconscious they have no control over, and in turn this cognitive unconsciousness control their conscious reasoning, what are the metaphors coming from and working in the unconscious that control their lives? In the holistic Hebraic communal and relational thinking the theological significant metaphors should spring from and in the Context of YAHWEH: the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* language/discourse of the Scriptures, within the ontological presence of YAHWEH, should be the primary voice employed within the Communal Hermeneutics to

negotiate the right metaphors leading back to the Context of YAHWEH. The ontological presence of YAHWEH should become part of the environment shaping primary metaphors in order to condition conceptual and complex metaphors since conceptual and complex metaphors can be conditioned and altered (Lakoff 1999:57&556).

The implication of Hebraic thinking is that the language of VR is not an objective abstractness, but just as much part of the fibre of the abstract thinking of day-to-day living, the language of VR is everyday language. Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:565) state that

A major function of the embodied mind is empathic. From birth we have the capacity to imitate others, to vividly imagine being another person, doing what that person does, experiencing what that person experiences. The capacity for imaginative projection is a vital cognitive faculty.

The experience of VR in one space and language was highlighted in the previous section and also proposes a character assignment in the understanding of narrative and is, what Lakoff and Johnson call, this imaginative projection. This confirms that people cannot have dissected areas of experience with one area in the Context of YAHWEH and another in VR, especially when one language contradicts another. A holistic Hebraic Worldlier incorporates all languages in one Context, while Greek thinking dissects/systemise them.

The work of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:60-6) also illustrates how judgements are metaphorically conditioned, first from primary metaphors followed by complex metaphors. An example they used is the mapping still being used with the complex metaphor of 'Life is a Journey'; they illustrate how this metaphor of 'Life is a Journey' is subconsciously alive and working in most people in the Western world and has even made a material impact in the cultural document called Curriculum Vitae (from Latin, "the course of life"). In their chapter, called Embodied Realism, they state a number of studies illustrating the subconscious working of metaphors of which one illustrates how the metaphor "Knowing is Seeing" is present in all Indo-European languages and going as far back into antiquity as can be determined (Lakoff 1999:85).

This states the stake at hand for theology and that the language of the discourse of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* must constitute the metaphors Christians make judgements from and particularly, for this presentation, in VR and the Postmodern paradigm in HyperReality. These judgments should include, to state an example, concepts like revenge which cannot be permissible to

concur within VR while disagreed within physical reality; these judgements should be informed by the Scriptural prototype of, e.g. Jesus who said: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34) (RSV). The metaphor(s) constituting revenge in VR is the same metaphor(s) judgements are made from in physical reality and therefore judgements in the interaction with VR could for Christians not be different from those made in physical reality. The endeavour of Lakoff and Johnson is to expose the workings of metaphors in the subconscious and to actually identify the metaphors; the extent of subconscious metaphors a theological point of view should change would outstretch this magister degree and consequently the example of the community on the Island of Lewis proves to be enough of how judgements were theologically informed (Peckham 2004:101-3).

The enterprise of drawing on Lakoff and Johnson does not imply Christians could change culturally conditioned metaphors individually. Language is corporately owned; the real change of lasting Metaphors of Life should be in the community and for theology should be in the Context of the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The holistic Hebraic paradigm of the community, Context of YAHWEH, is illustrated by the mandate of a right language, metaphors of life, in the Scriptures and which was extended well into the early centuries of New Testament church history; examples of this right language are the fatal commandments of the eradication of wrong influences, wrong languages, from the community in YAHWEH’s presence which would compromise this presence as stated in Leviticus 20. The opposite is seen in the mandate of the education of the children by their parents to the extent that they should talk to them about the commandments of YAHWEH when they sit at home and when they walk along the road, when they lie down and when they get up (Deut 6:6-7). The right metaphors of life, language, needed to become an integral part of their lives from which all judgements should be made from, as the next two verses in Deut 6 illustrate, when Moses says they must tie them as symbols on their hands and bind them on their foreheads and write them on the doorframes of their houses and on their gates (Deut 6:8-7). Since these metaphors do not only originate out of abstractness/language, but from something coming before (in Lakoff and Johnson’s words the bodily experience); the shaping of Biblical metaphors of life is not just in teaching but in the ontological presence of YAHWEH being part of the milieu in which a holistic experience can take place.

Again the example of Biblical metaphors of life, constructed in the presence of YAHWEH, is the Island of Lewis and how the presence of YAHWEH shaped their realism. The Peckhams

(Peckham 2004:24-5) say that in 1949 children would drink theology with their mother's milk and that even the sinner could on Sundays reel off as much theology as the minister in the pulpit – "They were 'theologians' before they were saved". The Context shaped the metaphors of life these people lived by, e.g. every member of the church would attend the weekly prayer meeting, illustrating the metaphor of trust and faith in YAHWEH informing their conscious. Heaven and hell were realities and inturn the building blocks of metaphors of life that shaped many actions, as Mary Peckham (Peckham 2004:101) says "We understood very well that there was a hell to shun and a heaven to gain'. The wrath of an Almighty God was real and true and accordingly shaped their actions to conform to YAHWEH's Context.

5.3 The proposed Hebraic worldlier

Another argument of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff 1999:19) is that Prototyped-based reasoning constitutes a large proportion of actual reasoning people do and for them prototypes function at basic level reasoning. In the previous section the argument led that language is the typological application of prototypes, and the proposal was made that these prototypes should be giving a biblical meaning in both actions and reactions in all uses of language, while of concern for this study in the interactions with VR. In the *Creatio Ex Nihilo* discourse the prototypes of the Bible should become the metaphors that inform the actions and reactions of Christians: it is the prototypes of the Bible, with their right Contextual meaning, that must be topologically applied in all actions and reactions in judgements of life. To add to the previous section the typological application should firstly lead/keep Christians into/in the Context of YAHWEH, but then secondly the typological application should be informed by the metaphors of life shaped within the Context of YAHWEH.

Von Rad (Von Rad 1963:39-43), the Old Testament authority, states that the patriarchal narratives had a typological occurrence in the life of Israel with Deut. 26:5ff as the ancient credo, the theme of the Hexateuch.

Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labour. Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with

miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey...” (NIV)

The patriarchal narratives were part of the metaphors of life Israel lived by and in turn made their judgements from, even when some of these judgements were wrong. An example of a wrong judgement is that they sometimes thought they were in right standing before YAHWEH, only because they are children of Abraham, but were not, or the wrong appropriation of Deut 28, the Deuteronomy theology, presenting the condition for blessings and curses. Duane Christensen (Christensen 2002) says that some scholars have suggested that the book of Job was written to challenge the simplistic interpretation of the Deuteronomy theology.

The cycle of typifying the patriarchal narratives rightly into the biblically correct metaphors of life, only to drift away by infusing wrong metaphors of life from the nations that surrounded them and eliciting a prophetic call to reincorporate the right typifying of the patriarchal narratives, does diminish the fact that the narratives of the patriarchs has shaped the people called Israel. Von Rad says (Von Rad 1963:39):

The patriarchal narrative, in spite of all sharp, historical, individual contours, have enlarged inner events from a unique to a kind of typical occurrence... Therefore one could say pointedly that this narrative is not ‘historical’; but the experience that God miraculously preserved the promise beyond human failure was eminently historical for the community... Under no circumstances may the narrative be deprived of the imponderable element of history movement.

The enlarged inner events, from which a unique to a kind of typical occurrence was formed, were the metaphors of life that defined the people of Israel in the Scriptures.

Abraham was the defining patriarch since in him the people of Israel entered the covenant of circumcision and as Patrick Fairbairn (Fairbairn [c.a.]:296) says “...yet we are not to lose sight of the fact that Abraham was more especially the person with whom the covenant took its commencement, and in whom it has its more distinctive representation” in his volume *The Typology of Scripture*. It was also in Abraham that they received the promise of Canaan, and as Von Rad (Von Rad 1963:42) says “One of the most conspicuous sacred themes in the patriarchal narratives is the possession of the Land of Canaan. It occupies such a large place that it requires an exegetical egg chance in order to pass by this uncomfortable fact...”.

Both the Covenant and the Promised Land became part off the metaphors the people of Israel lived by and part off the defining Hebraic worldlier/paradigm. What is of real significance for this study is how the promise of the Holy Land was carried over into the New Testament.

Again Von Rad (Von Rad 1963:42), still on the same quotation

...in the way by which Yahweh orients the lives of the patriarchs towards this gift of promise the Christian sees announced the contours of the New Testament gospel of Christ... Does not the Church of Christ... also know itself again on the move from promise to fulfilment? Such typological exegesis, however, does not need any obtrusive Christian apparatus at all, the best thing is a simple exegetical obedience, which clearly works out the lines of the Old Testament kerygma.

This study professes such an exegetical obedience.

The same promise to fulfilment in the expectation of the entry into the Promised Land can be seen in the letter to the Hebrews. In late Judaism this Promise Land gained an eschatological meaning, and as Lane (Lane 1991:98) argues, presumably through synagogue preaching and school debate, which in turn show how Jewish teachers related the 'rest' of Ps 95:11, used in Hebrews 4, to refer to the consummation of redemption. In Hebrews the Promised Land is heaven and the typological application is in the expectation of the exodus to heaven although with a present significance, in a Johannine Dualism, within a vertical eschatology. In Hebrews 11 Abraham is again set as the prototype who, in verse 10, was expecting a heavenly city (the metaphor the Hebrew writer uses in 12:22 for the New Jerusalem - heaven). The ancient credo of the Pentateuch is carried over to a faith shaped around a new exodus, an exodus to heaven, and, in the light of previous arguments, the carried over credo must become the metaphors of life for New Testament Christians and accordingly the moulding principal judgements are being made from. It must shape the language Christians live by and, in Postliberal terms, the Realism Christian's life in.

The typological application of the carried over credo has the implication that when heaven, the New Jerusalem, is the Promised Land it means that this world is Egypt. Such a worldlier is far removed from many Christians today, but was certainly the worldlier and carried over typological application of the early church: Herbert Kane (Kane 1971:21) tells how other people saw the early church as a separate and distinct people and how they confessed to be "strangers and pilgrims" here on earth. He says that the early church saw the Christian community as a colony of heaven here on earth and eagerly anticipated the return of Jesus

Christ to establish His reign of righteousness and continues that they believed that the world system was under the judgment of God of which Satan was its god and prince; consequently this world was for them Egypt. This worldly and typological application, metaphorical journey, extended till the times of Constantine. González (González 1994:103-4) states that the reason why this typological application died out was because when the persecution stopped the people could not read their stories in the Bible any more; they could not see this world as Egypt any more and consequently the patriarchal narratives could not be a metaphor of life any more (however the early monastic movement was an exception and a reaction against the new worldly as already indicated above).

In the secular age of today, and the penetration of secularism into the church, the same typological application has been a problem: how to see this world as Egypt. In the previous section the arguments of Halverson (Halverson 1996), in his volume *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, were introduced stating secularism as a world religion. Halverson (Halverson 1996:182-5) says there are three types of secularists, Atheists, Agnostics, and Functional Atheists. The last group are people who, although they 'believe' in YAHWEH, live life like Atheists, since their trust is just as much in science and human reason as those of atheists or agnostics in establishing ethics and determining a good life. Contrary to the early church the good life is not claiming this world to be Egypt, but rather a place to enjoy/exploit through materialism and Late Capitalism – to be an excessive consumer – and, as Smith (Smith 2001:8) says, the “posthuman” condition is a “becoming” that is “fundamentally a becoming consumer”.

This study defines the nihilistic abstract constellation of this world as Egypt, which in turn has far reaching consequences to how Christians should interact with VR. Egypt is the metaphor for the nihilistic abstract constellation, which has negotiated every aspect of what is called normal according to this world, and not necessarily the physical matter that is associated with the world. Again this is where Poststructuralism, and the nihilistic culture highlighted by them, has done theology and this study a favour, since Poststructuralism has illustrated that the abstract constellation of the secular discourse is self-destructive. The *Creatio Ex Nihilo* discourse of the Scriptures point out that this nihilistic abstract constellation is self-destructive because it is mostly irreparable removed from what it should have been should Genesis 3 not have taken place; of particular concern is VR and to what extent VR has been saturated with present day culture and the irreparable discourse of the abstract constellation highlighted by

Poststructuralism.

Examples of the abstract concepts in the irreparable abstract constellation are endless and have moulded life in the Western world to unrecognisable propositions and not many people in the West would know how to live life should they be removed; examples are concepts like democracy, capitalism, freedom of speech, and even nationalism etc. Do these concepts really exist? What are the real relationships between signified and signifier in these concepts? No one can put these concepts on a table or point them out by a finger, although many/most of them have gained a literal meaning in the minds and world view/paradigms of many. At a closer inspection it becomes clear that they are only abstract concepts: democracy, without social influences in complete freedom, does not really exist, part of capitalism is the handling of money on stock exchanges and the common belief that money does exist even when there is nothing tangible to substantiate it (it's only a common belief). The list is endless, and as Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1994:1) has pointed out with his map analogy, because they are all rooted in simulacra. The true relation between the signified and signifier has completely been blurred in this abstract constellation even so that a war, say the last Gulf war, became abstractness on CNN with who knows what truly happened out there – its only simulacra.

From theory to praxis Liberation theology exposes this abstract constellation in its oppressive nature. In correcting the wrong impression of some, González (González 1994:26-9), a Liberation theology apologetic, has pointed out that this abstract constellation is not only oppressive to some, but is actually oppressive to everyone, since while only some are physically suffering, the others are forced to be on the other side of the line and be part of the oppressor regime. While capitalism oppresses many poorer countries, just working an innocent job in the West is to be part of capitalism. The nihilistic abstract constellation is a forced nihilistic emersion to almost everyone and consequently the only liberation is an exodus to heaven or heaven that comes to this earth in, e.g. a revival.

As opposed to liberation theologians many theologian, like Hendrikus Berkhof (Berkhof 1986:511), sees things differently when he claims that the Holy Spirit works in a kind of a separate form of sanctification in the world and consequently sanctifies the abstract constellation. For him, and like-minded theologians, this 'sanctification of the world' is even a kind of reversal of Genesis 3 in things like pesticide and the easing of pain in delivery of babies etc. This notion of a separate sanctification is rejected and that the formation of the abstract

constellation has exponentially increased, since the Italian Renaissance, has more to do with Greek philosophy/thinking than the Holy Spirit as indicated above that the Italian Renaissance was a return to the classical Greek times. The core metaphors of this abstract constellation, which opposes the metaphors the church should uphold, cannot be reconciled and consequently should be rejected by Christians: the metaphor of trust in God cannot be reconciled with the secular trust in science for the solution of all problems. To uphold the metaphors of the Scriptures, versus the metaphors of secularism, is to mix oil and water and is the reason for what is called above – functional atheism – since only one set of metaphors will turn out to be the metaphors of life informing all realism judgements.

Should Genesis 3 never have taken place an abstract constellation would have existed, but not with its roots in Greek thinking and humanistic philosophy, but in a comprehensive world within YAHWEH's presence. Wolfhart Pannenberg (Pannenberg 1996) indicates the right belief of some people that modern progress is a secularisation of the Christian eschatological hope and that the hope for a better world is no longer directed toward another world, but becomes the human project to improve this world. That Christians must be good stewards of earthly matters are not to be denied and that Christians are called to ecological responsibilities are also not to be denied, directly implying (technological) progress, but that a nihilistic abstract constellation, which has gone astray from what it was suppose to be and from which no person can escape, should also not be denied. Only then will Christians have the same eschatological hope as creation itself has

For the creation was subjected to futility... because the creation itself will be set free [at the παρουσία] from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now [a travail caused by the nihilistic abstract constellation] (Rom 8:20-22) (RSV).

History has many examples of reactions against the abstract constellation by the church, as already a few times indicated by reference to the monastic movement of the 4th century (González 1984:136) when the church was also faced by a secularisation, when the values of abstractness (states, privilege, position etc.) also displaced the presence and Context of YAHWEH. George Lindbeck's (Lindbeck 2002:97) proposal to the secular age is, what he calls, a Creative Minority and, in sociological terms, a sectarian group because of its distinctiveness suggesting no compromise to alien forces. The missiological call of this study is

to become this Creative Minority in embracing VR to a Biblical extend, to translate the Scriptures into VR, and to be a sectarian group in the eyes of those saturated in the nihilistic abstract constellation and consequently to become a pressure group against them.

The primary prototype in the typological application of the ancient credo, where this world is Egypt and heaven the Promised Land, is Jesus since Jesus is the perfect example of a Comprehensive Hebraic worldlier in the Context of God. The comprehensive Hebraic worldlier, in the proposed Christology, firstly sets forth the approach Jesus had towards the nihilistic abstract constellation, but then secondly also what the true language/meaning should be/have been in the creative abstractness of human freedom. Although the proposed topological application of the ancient credo is strongly emphasised in the New Testament (an egg change is needed to argue it away as Von Rad argued and stated above), and in the kerugma of the early church, there also remains another side that cannot be ignored: the expectation of the exodus to heaven argues the one side of the typological application, the other side asserts that the expectation should not only be for an escape but also a wilful and deliberate opposition - a pressure group. González (González 1999:28) proposes that all Christians should become Liberation fighters against the social forces keeping everyone captive and, in many ways, this theological proposal has a typical Liberation motive when it also proposes a resistance against the negative abstract influences of VR on a church subjected to a late capitalist society of HyperReality. The move from praxis to theory is the same as in Liberation theologies and inturn illustrates the motive of first describing the Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of HyperReality, as done in the previous section, in order to establish the realm of the metaphysics in which both VR and the Bible are perceived from.

Before ending this chapter one last probability, of what the Hebraic worldlier and the working of language could have been, should be pointed out in order to illustrate that this is not the case. The recognition and proclamation of the metaphors of life in Scriptures itself, the typological application and the hermeneutic principles exercised in Scripture itself extending to the times after the canon was closed (in the Old Testament and from Old to the New Testament progressing well into church history), could be seen as the effort of a new kind of Postmodern criticism call *Psychoanalytic Criticism*. *The Postmodern Bible* (Aichele 1995:367) describes this criticism as focussing on the unconscious, and has touching points with the endeavours of Lakoff and Johnson, but differs in that the *Psychoanalytic Criticism* is predominately a Freudian enterprise and focuses on the dark realm that governs people they can't govern

themselves and whose contents express themselves obliquely – not transparently – in displacements, sublimations, condensations, and substitutions. The present study denies this and rather affirms a positive proposal, based on a valid Hermeneutical principle found in Scriptures itself with nothing sinister as Freudian analyses would argue and consequently does not see Metaphors of Life operating on the same level.

6 Genesis 3: the birth of the abstract constellation

6.1 Methodology

To refresh the memory, the critical approach with which this chapter is being approached is called a reading-response criticism: what the literary text in its apparent meaning or level surface states and what happens with the one reading the text; the stake admitted is the background and already shaped research and consequently an objective reading, a modernist illusion, is being denied. The proposed exe(eise)gesis is to find what the text surfaces in light of the Postmodern Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of HyperReality and consequently to bring the text forward (not going back to reconstruct an apparent history) and interpret it in a present language. The effort is not a historical attempt of translating the real historical background into a present language, since Postmodernism has come to the conclusion that such a notion is impossible and a futile exercise, but rather to experience the Text for what it says. The Postmodern Paradigm (re-)experiences all events as coming from somewhere else in history/future with no intension to translate forward/backward. The lack of translation is both because of an amnesia of the real significance/signified, but also because of an authority-vacuum (lack of a signifier) where truth has become only an opinion. The Postmodern paradigm resides in the blurring of the signified versus die signifier and the disappearance of a 'real' reality being signified; for Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1990:190) the way out is for humans to learn to live in simulation and side with the object. History has become data/code exempt from critical scrutiny, since when normal life being lived is more like fiction (Irwin 2002:186), why contemplate if transmitted history is fiction or not?

Where this Christian endeavour and study differ from a complete Postmodern perspective is to acknowledge that there is an Ultimate Signifier and consequently recognises that YAHWEH is the fixed unmoveable entity of the proposed Christian worldlier, since YAHWEH, through *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, is the overall signifier of the Text under discussion. In the proposed Postmodern paradigm both the signified and signifier (and the blurring of lines) of historical

events are particularly evident in VR. In the reader-response the Text under discussion becomes like VR, where the signifier is the work of the Third Person of the Trinity in a Communal Hermeneutic and where the signified is an always present reality in a present language. The narrative is always experienced from within a present language and not in what physically happened.

The historical significance of confirming the true existence of Adam and Eve, as the first couple, is completely irrelevant for what the Text means in the reader-response criticism, but that the Text is the drama (putting it in VR terms) YAHWEH intended humans to have, and that the reality of the Text is a VR in which the true signified is not lost, is affirmed. That sin came accidentally into this world is the timeless signified/language of the Text, while the untranslatability of the text/words, the mess of signified and signifier highlighted by Poststructuralism, illustrates that the meaning of the Text is not in its history/syntax (like meaning in VR where no one really dies in an action drama since the signifier is rather the medium), but in YAHWEH who in *Creatio Ex Nihilo* precedes the Text. The Text is an inspired/authoritative signification, coming from YAHWEH, and is part of an inspired reality – the Context of YAHWEH - since YAHWEH is the ultimate signifier. Taking both Poststructuralism and *Creatio Ex Nihilo* seriously informs a literal reading of the Text where Text is taken to say what it says on the surface level.

Staying true to a Postmodern effort the author recognises different traditions, e.g. the Priestly versus the Yahwism etc., and that Genesis 1 and 3 are/could be from different traditions. The problem of assigning different authors to different passages is to confuse the intended signified of each author and is rejected by the Wesleyan-Evangelical tradition. Not throwing the baby out with the bathwater, the minimum propositional conviction sides again with Von Rad (Von Rad 1963:16-7) that only one author assembled at least the entire Pentateuch (for Von Rad it is the entire Hexateuch),

For a thorough understanding of the first books of the Bible it is crucial that we come to a realistic view about the formation of the literary tradition. For it was the Yahwist who, so far as we can see, gave to the entire Hexateuch its form and compass. The Yahwist marks the decisive line of demarcation in the history of culture...

This minimum conviction affirms the affiliated Communal Hermeneutic from which this Text is being read and as part of the language that negotiates all of perceived reality. In the Context of YAHWEH, the one and only real author is YAHWEH, the fixed point in the paradigm, and

consequently the only signifier (indifferent signifiers are because of the lack of the Context of YAHWEH). Since the Signifier/YAHWEH is what is sought after, and when the language is taken to mean what YAHWEH intended it to be, then the language and the signified, not the history, can be broad/translated forward to gain meaning in the present.

6.2 Reader-response

As already stated, YAHWEH endowed humans with the capacity for language which includes the capacity for abstractness. The first real exercise of this capacity already came in chapter 2 of Genesis when YAHWEH broad the animals to Adam to see what he would call them, which must have been a tremendous metaphorical exercise to find so many names. Although this is the case, the first real metaphorical challenge came in the commandment preceding this exercise when Adam was commanded not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The challenge is in that Adam could not have known the metaphorical meaning of concepts like good and evil and death. How was Adam to know the metaphor “good” when the binary opposite of evil was not known to him yet, or how was Adam to know death when life could not have been defined in terms of the binary opposite of death? In essence it means that the call of YAHWEH came for obedience and not understanding, since even when YAHWEH could have explained their meaning, with the intention that they would understand it, they still would have been existentially unborn metaphors till Adam could experience the opposite binary.

Does this imply that these metaphors did exist for YAHWEH to use them and, when the Wesleyan-Evangelical tradition confesses that YAHWEH is not the author of Evil, how or from where did these metaphors then originate? Again the Wesleyan-Evangelical language, Communal Hermeneutic, has a well-formulated explanation: these metaphors have their origin in the fall of Lucifer; in the fall of Lucifer the opposites were realised and shaped as full-fledged metaphors with their binaries. The metaphorical meaning is even further stretched in that the death YAHWEH introduced, as the consequence on the disobedience, was not physical death since they still lived a few hundred years after this incidence, and also explains, when these metaphors originated in the fall of Lucifer and he supposedly died, why is he still alive. The metaphorical meaning is a spiritual death and had its origin in the spiritual death of Lucifer where spiritual death signifies separation from God. The separation is from the Context of YAHWEH, firstly when Lucifer was cast out of heaven, but then secondly when Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden – in both cases’ separation from the Context/presence of

YAHWEH (although prevenient grace does argue a retention of YAHWEH's presence, to some degree, in keeping order in this world and making salvation possible (Dunning 1988:157-9)). Complimenting this spiritual death and separation Wenham (Wehham 1987:74) points out that the "significance of this death lies in the history of Israel when being expelled from the camp, where God was present through the tabernacle, was seen as death".

How well Adam and Eve understood the metaphors of Genesis 2, when the narrative enters chapter 3, is not known, but that Adam and Eve had the capacity for abstractness and the grasping and making of metaphors is known. Umberto Eco (Jobling 2001:78-91), in an essay called *On the Possibility of Generating Aesthetic Messages in an Edenic Language* in *The Postmodern Bible Reader*, proposes that sin had its origin in the use of language - in the mapping of constructing metaphors. For him the origin is in the contradiction, the conflict between, the signified and the signifier of 'Serpent' and 'Apple' (how something can be simultaneously good and bad). For him YAHWEH is constrained by the inherent imperfection of language and ultimately YAHWEH is responsible for evil in the prohibition He gave with a conflict between signified and signifier. Again the Wesleyan-Evangelical tradition rejects such claim that YAHWEH is responsible for the origin of evil, although agrees on the abstractness/metaphors/mapping that gave rise to it. His claims could side with a typical Poststructural conviction where everything, YAHWEH included, are confined to language and consequently denies that YAHWEH precedes language and subjects YAHWEH to language, since, as he also says, 'Adam discovers that Order, as such, is non-existent; it is just one of the infinite possible states of repose which disorder occasionally arrives at' (Jobling 2001:91).

What is of real value is his explanation of the birth of culture, in both metaphor and abstractness, and that the Fall of Adam and Eve inaugurated a 'language passion' (Jobling 2001:78-91) – a passion for more metaphors and abstractness. This passion is the seedbed for the evolvement of the nihilistic abstract constellation pointed out. The capacity for abstract and metaphoric formation in Adam and Eve was good and right and was intended by YAHWEH to be used correctly, but instead it was used to create an abstractness lacking the presence of YAHWEH and in turn resulted in the lost of the Context of YAHWEH.

In verse 1, of chapter 3, the serpent came to Eve, the serpent is the embodiment of opposition to God; Wenham (Wenham 1987:73) says that in the world of the Old Testament animal symbolism a snake is an obvious candidate for an anti-God symbol. Lucifer fit the present

model since, as stated above, it would explain where the binary metaphors good and evil comes from in the commandment of the previous chapter. To argue the realism of Lucifer or not, a typical modernist notion, is not the intention of this study, since it would be doomed to fall in the same modernist trap of only asking more questions to only increase the answers - not solving the problem -, but rather accepts the Wesleyan-Evangelical explanation, in the timeless/spaceless paradigm, of how evil enter the cosmos at the Fall of Lucifer and that he had to be the snake in this story.

The crux of the narrative is in the demolishing of the difference between the signifier and the signified, as pointed out by Poststructuralism, and explains how the nihilistic abstract constellation emerged at this point. The serpent came to Eve and ask: “Did God really say...”, inherently the serpent challenged the signifier and the signified? The serpent challenged the signifier by challenging the authority of YAHWEH and the signified as to what the words really point to and, as if this challenge was not good enough, in verse 4 the serpent made the signified something completely different: the serpent changed the signified from ‘they will die’ to ‘they will certainly not die’ and ad to the signified that they will actually become like YAHWEH: their eyes will be opened and they will know good and evil.

The break down between the signified and the signifier, and what the signified really constitute, is very subtle, as Walter Moberly (Moberly 1992:1-27) has pointed out in his essay *Did the Serpent Get it Right?*, since it seems like the words of the serpent actually came true and not YAHWEH’s words in that they did not immediately die and their eyes did open and consequently did become like YAHWEH by knowing good and evil. On closer inspection it becomes apparent it was an event in language: the serpent challenged the words of YAHWEH, but what did the serpent really challenge since these words/metaphors had no existential meaning for Adam and Eve yet, even while they were included in the prohibition as stated above? The serpent gave a new/other meaning to these not yet realised metaphors, which consequently would turn out to be right in the natural formation of language, since when they broke the commandment they came to understand the metaphors good and evil in the closed binary – before this even good was outside their grasp, since good can only exist in a contrast to evil, but now when the binary was closed they could know both good and evil. If the indication of becoming like YAHWEH was to know good and evil, then the serpent’s words also became true in that they, just like YAHWEH, now knew the metaphors of good and evil. On death the serpent’s deception is a bit more tricky since, although the metaphor death proves

not be immediate physical death, the metaphor death has two meanings: they quickly came to understand that this metaphor also could carry the meaning of spiritual death which did stem out of their eviction from the Garden of Eden and the lost of the direct presence of YAHWEH.

Verse 6 illustrates where it all went wrong, it was when Eve gazed at the tree of good and evil and when she was challenged by the words of the serpent; it was when she saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom. It was when the metaphorical use of the serpent, stating a different meaning than indicated by YAHWEH, was combined with the metaphors Eve already had; the melting together of metaphors empowered her to construct new metaphors, an abstractness, that cost them the garden of Eden and the Context of YAHWEH. The metaphors she had, formed through preceding experiences in the garden, were 'good tasting fruit' versus 'bad tasting fruit' and the metaphors 'food' versus 'non food'. They also knew YAHWEH to be greater than them, and them less than YAHWEH. Now when she was confronted by the serpent and her gaze at the tree of good and evil, she had the stuff to construct a new abstractness contrary to YAHWEH's command; she had the stuff to deconstruct the words of YAHWEH and map the meanings of good and bad differently so that the bad of the tree actually could be seen as good. The new abstractness was formed out of the good-bad binary, food-non-food binary, YAHWEH-us binary and the metaphorical construction of the serpent being good (who said he was bad and consequently could say something wrong?). The serpent stated a new hypothesis, a new mapping of existing data, and to repeat what Ricoeur (1977:25) said quoting of Hirsch "all modern creativity theory confirms that there are no rules for invention, no recipes for the concoction of good hypotheses, only rules for the validation of hypotheses". The hypothesis of the serpent was to look at it from a different angle and, with the metaphors Eve already had, she could validate a hypothesis where the tree is good, with good fruit, and not bad and also a means to become like YAHWEH.

Eve had to choose between the hypotheses of YAHWEH (still only a hypothesis since the metaphors were still unborn for them) and the serpent's hypothesis also based on unborn metaphors. Her choice was the last one and apparently seems like to be the valid metaphorical construction, mapping of meanings, since most of the serpent's hypotheses proved to be true. This brings the matter to the heart of the deception since, as Poststructuralism has pointed out, the validating of hypotheses has more to do with rhetoric, sensible abstractness, than with what is really out there in, e.g. Baudrillard's (Baudrillard 1994:16-9) illustration of the conflict

between the left-extremists, the extreme-right and the centrists in any bombing in Italy. In this conflict in Italy everyone's arguments seem to be valid and true and in the same way illiterates the real deception of the serpent's temptation aimed at Eve: it is not the validity of any hypothesis that renders it sin or not, but if the hypothesis, abstract reasoning, originates from the Context of YAHWEH and are pointing to the Context of YAHWEH. The signified of the serpent's hypothesis turned out to be valid, but unfortunately only the signified, not the signifier, constituted in an abstractness shaped in rhetoric. The ultimate signified, not only rhetoric since YAHWEH precedes language, also became true when they lost the presence/Context of YAHWEH which turned out to be called spiritual dead.

It is this deceptive signified of the serpent in abstractness, versus what originates from the Context of YAHWEH, that has persisted till today and is what is called the nihilistic abstract constellation referred to above. The language of YAHWEH is not based on a rhetorical logic within abstract concepts and consequently YAHWEH had no reason to explain the metaphors of His commandment when His authority/Context proved to be enough. Pure abstract concepts are rhetorical in essence, however scrutinising abstract concepts from the norm of YAHWEH's presence is to look at it from the Context that precedes this rhetorical language and establishes the norm as the norm of this language itself. The realism negotiated in the discourse of the nihilistic abstract constellation has found a perception of a true meaning, however the true signified, the presence of YAHWEH, renders the meaning as deceptive - a nihilistic construction - which has proven to be fatal in the words of Smith's (Smith 2001) 'fatal theories for postmodernity' (the subheading of his volume *Reading Simulacra*).

The free-floating correlation between the signified and the signifier, in the discourses of the nihilistic abstract constellation, is not compatible with the Context of YAHWEH; the only right correlation is in and from the presence of YAHWEH leading to the same presence that steers them. Language is a communal phenomenon, stressing the proposed Communal Hermeneutic in and through the work of the Holy Spirit, in which the right correlation between the signified and the signifier should be established; abstractness from outside the Context of YAHWEH is destined to turn nihilistic as in the example of the discourses pointed out by the Poststructuralist endeavour. In the Hermeneutical task of interpreting/experiencing VR, VR needs to be translated into the Context of YAHWEH and scrutinised by the norm of the presence of YAHWEH for abstractness to be cast and interpreted in the same language that constitutes the presence of YAHWEH in the Biblical discourse (e.g. the κοίτουσίᾳ discourse).

6.3 Progression of two languages

The consequence of Adam and Eve's conflation of metaphors is the passion for language, as proposed by Umberto Eco above. From this moment on the abstract metaphorical constructions had free reins and the need for YAHWEH's Context to govern these constructions were fatally lost. Firstly Adam and Eve realised that they were naked, as Drewermann (Drewermann 1982:76) points out, they must have had a sense of guilt. They must have learnt the metaphor of guilt from both what happen to Lucifer and the existential experience of choosing the false abstract logic of his hypothesis. Next when YAHWEH confronted them, Adam blamed Eve and Eve the serpent; their mapping has progressed from guilt to blame in what the serpent/Lucifer did to YAHWEH's good creation and/or in the prohibition YAHWEH gave them when the hypothesis of the serpent turns out to be true; the logic of the nihilistic abstractness made sense to them and it is this logic which turned the creation unto the creator when Adam even blamed YAHWEH for giving him a wife.

The following chapter, extending to the end of chapter 11, is an example of the escalation of evil metaphors in an abstract constellation. In chapter 4 the first murder is recorded, a new metaphor of termination being employed by Cane, and it was this metaphor that was passed on until the narrative states in 6:11 that the whole earth was full with violence. The culmination comes in chapter 11 where YAHWEH reveals that the power of this abstract metaphorical constellation is the empowerment which would render nothing impossible for humans anymore. It is this abstract constellation that has saturated all expressions of life and which will stay till the παρουσία (in the Johannine dualism the one Grand Narrative).

At the end of chapter 11 it almost seems like only one Grand Narrative in human experience, the one in direct opposition to YAHWEH, would prevail, however in chapter 12 YAHWEH broke in (or back in Johannine terminology) with a 'new'/correct Grand Narrative of His Context with the calling of Abraham. This calling reached its climax in chapter 17 of Genesis when YAHWEH commanded Abraham to walk in His presence (to apply the proposed norm to his life) as Wenham's (Wenham 1994) translation of Westermann indicates "God directs Abraham (who here represents Israel) to live life before him, a life in which every step is taken looking to God and every day of which is accompanied by him". The proposed norm is the command directed at Abraham who had to walk in company with YAHWEH: Abraham had to construct and make sense of abstractness in and from the Context of YAHWEH and

consequently could model the prototype/crédo for YAHWEH's people to apply typological in their respective construction and sense making of abstract metaphors in times to come – the other Grand Narrative in the proposed dualism.

In this typified Grand Narrative realism was being constructed by and experienced in the Context/presence of YAHWEH and became the norm of all of Scriptures: it was firstly realised in the Tabernacle cult, then passed over into the Temple tradition, but most significantly actualised in the Incarnation of YAHWEH's presence in Jesus the Messiah and which will culminate in the second coming (παρουσία) when the Grand Narrative of YAHWEH will completely displace the other Grand Narrative as indicated in Revelation 21:27 “But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practice abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life” (RSV). At this displacement New Jerusalem will descends back to earth and Genesis 3 would be completely reversed (Revelation 21). YAHWEH's Grand Narrative will ultimately prevail since it is the language grounded in the unmoveable presence of YAHWEH in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*.

This dualism, of these two Grand Narratives, becomes most apparent in the Johannine literature and the most strikingly in the last few chapters of Revelation (e.g. as stated above in the displacement of the abstract constellation opposed to YAHWEH). Drawing on Lohmeyer's (Loymeyer 1970) definition of Babylon, the Babylon of Revelation 18 is the personification of language against YAHWEH and used to construct a world opposing or displacing YAHWEH, since, as he says, it is a term used in the Old Testament and Judaism for the earthly power opposed to God. Babylon is a picture of the present day nihilistic abstract constellation, which however appears to be the most meaningful and sensible way to live life; the deception is in the rhetoric of its hypotheses, which do make sense and seems right the same as the hypothesis of the serpent. Consequently the real truth of the real signified is being lost – the presence of YAHWEH -, the same as what happened in the Garden of Eden. Examples of this apparent meaningfulness of these abstract conceptions are endless and were already pointed to above and ranges from abstract concepts like democracy oppose to Theocracy, or pure capitalism verses the Old Testament commandment of no poverty allowed in ancient Israel etc.

In Revelation 18:3 three reasons for the displacement of this nihilistic abstract language is stated, following David Aune (Aune 1998:987-9), the first reason is her negative influence on the nations, the second is the fornication of the kings committed with her, and lastly the

merchants of the earth who become rich from her excessive luxury. Does this not illustrate what secularism has done, and are busy doing to the church, and why the need for an exodus from this nihilistic world/construction has become redundant in a fornication with an abstractness to materialism and a late capitalism - of being an excessive consumer? Many Christians are trapped in this Late Capitalist culture of only consuming while ignorant of the opposite Bible language of "Giving" (the opposite of consuming): Do to others what you want them to do to you" (Matthew 7:12) (NCV) has turned into "Consume from others till you can do nothing for anyone anymore?" Consumerism in the church, and church hopping or lack of commitment, can be compared with the choices one make between, e.g. McDonalds and Burger King: one day one feels like a McDonalds/this church, next time one feels like a Burger King/another church.

In many Late Capitalist churches the lines separating the language of YAHWEH's Context from the language of the nihilistic abstractness constellation have completely blurred. The question this trend probes this study is what part did/does VR play in this blurring of lines and the proposed fornication in a Postmodern paradigm? In the first section this question was asked in relation to homosexuality and how public opinion has been shaped through VR; in the previous section it became clear that all experienced reality occurs in one language. The question that remains is how the proposed Johannine dualism fleshes out in VR, as discussed in this section, and consequently how the two Grand Narratives, and their respective metaphorical meanings, play off in this experience.

In a documentary series by Jeremy Clarkson on BBC (Clarkson 2004) called *Inventions that changed our lives* the last program of the series was dedicated to the TV. Jeremy Clarkson says that he always viewed TV as only portraying life and not influencing life (and is not against TV otherwise he would have no job), but goes on to say that his conviction was shaking by what happened in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan when the TV was first introduced in 1998. He says no scientific test would have been able to prove TV's effects faster than what happened in this mountain kingdom; the impact of TV was immediate, the people of the Kingdom of Bhutan instantly turned into consumers and immediately introduced unknown practices like prostitution to the society. In the same series Jeremy Clarkson says that Soap Operas are the most popular form of TV viewing worldwide and that Soap Operas are more pervasive than advertising, more persuasive than political opinion and are more watched than the news. He also says that it is official, according to a study he refers to, TV makes people

fat.

In the realism of VR the abstract rhetoric of VR is just as much part of the fibre of life as any other discourse/abstract rhetoric; fornication with the abstract rhetoric in VR is when its apparent logic, nihilistic rhetoric/hypothesis, is accepted above what YAHWEH's Context and discourse inform. It occurs in the same fornication Eve committed when she indulged herself in the serpent's apparent correct hypothesis informed by an abstract rhetoric. The Context of YAHWEH should become the norm by which all abstractness is being judged by and in which the right meaning, in understanding, actions and reactions, are derived from; without this Context VR would enforce the influence as indicated in the previous paragraph.

In an essay by Elaine Scarry (Jobling 2001:275-95), in the *The Postmodern Bible Reader*, called *The Interior Structure of Made Objects* she states that the Hebraic scriptures are deeply hostile to material culture, but that the Scriptural attitude toward human acts of creation and culture cannot be simply and summarily identified as dismissive. She indicates two kinds of creations in the Old Testament, those permitted by YAHWEH and those not and that these material creations are acts of description [language]. She goes on to say that the making of graven images [abstract constellations] are the blurring of the categorical integrity of body and voice. She proposes a conflict between materialised verbal artefacts: one the one side the graven images and on the other side those made by YAHWEH in the Passover images [tabernacle]. Her belief is that the waning lines of categorical separation, between YAHWEH's body and man's body, is the reason for the invention of the Jesus narrative.

That the narrative of Jesus is only an invention is completely rejected, but that Jesus is the voice of YAHWEH in an embodied form not.

In the days past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son... - Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

In the Postmodern conceptualisation, in the Timeless/Spaceless Present Paradigm of HyperReality, all history imploded into the present and in this implosion, for those steeped in the Postmodern culture, Jesus should be the embodiment of the language and the Context of YAHWEH as well as the ultimate prototype becoming the metaphor of life Christians should live by. In the implosion Jesus should become a present Jesus. The incorporation of Jesus into the language Christians talk, when experiencing VR, is not that difficult to conceptualise from

within the Postmodern paradigm where the narrative of the Scriptures has become VR itself in the implosion of time, space and meaning and character assignment indicated in the previous section. Christians should become Christlike', speaking the same language as Christ, in their experience of VR, which is inline with the Greek fathers for who the Incarnation potentially transform human nature and made it possible for mankind to become godlike through the union with Christ; Irenaeus (Dunning 1988:307) said "He [Christ] became what we are that we may become what he is". Taking the same language the enduring questions should be again 'What would Jesus do?' as indicated in the previous section.

7 Christology

In the proposed Christology Jesus' position towards the nihilistic abstract constellation is to be seen in His obvious apathy towards its illusory meaningfulness. Jesus' point of view is particularly evident in the temptation narrative when the typical concerns/meaningfulness of the nihilistic abstract constellation was hurled at Him: economic significance in the stones to bread episode, political significance and status in the offer of all the kingdoms of this world, and then lastly the illusion of trust or source of truth issue when Jesus was tempted to jump of the temple roof.

The apathy and opposition of Jesus' point of view towards the nihilistic abstract constellation are the best illustrated in the Johannine Jesus and have particular significance as the last Gospel and biography of Jesus being coined down. The particular words that captured Jesus' mood the best are when Jesus was before Pilate and His words in John 18:36

Jesus answered, 'My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world. (RSV)

Act 1, a non-Johannine passage, ties beautifully in with these words when the apostles asked Jesus if His political significance would begin at this point and Jesus indicated that they understood the times wrongly. Jesus' mission did not depend on the nihilistic abstract constellation of this world to operate on and was actually in opposition to its significance since its is an irreconcilable narrative/meaning/signifier opposing the Context of YAHWEH. On the day of Pentecost it was this enlightenment that became the worldlier of Jesus' disciples, a paradigm ship in the meaning of abstractness, to the extent that they sold everything they had and shared everything in common and solely focussed on the Kingdom of YAHWEH in prayer

and preaching (Acts 2-6). They exercised a complete reversal/break with what the nihilistic abstract constellation of their cultural immersion (communal language) they grew up in taught them and which made normal sense as what is a meaningful life; in this break they consecrated themselves to the presence of YAHWEH.

In the comprehensive Hebraic worldlier of Jesus it seems like all 'normal' concerns/values gained a completely new meaning, e.g. the meaning of money as an important ingredient of a sensible life in the nihilistic abstract constellation, had a new meaning in the life and ministry of Jesus as something the Kingdom of God does not depend on and actually has no concern for. It is this same meaning that was passed on to the disciples on the day of Pentecost and made them to abandoned their material possessions and labelled the early church as a sectarian group. Worldly possessions and status had a completely new and different meaning in the life and ministry of Jesus, as oppose to the nihilistic abstract constellation of the day, so that Jesus even at one point indicated that He has no house to stay in when someone offered to follow Him (Matt 8:19-20). The contrast can also be seen in Jesus' approach to evil and sickness and the fact that His ministry was recognised as superior/different to that of the religious teachers of the day (Matt 7:28-29).

It is Jesus' worldlier that illustrates what the right employment of human creativity in the formation of abstract meaning should be. Jesus ultimately affirmed what the true meaning of abstract concepts like love, hate and evil should mean. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus turned the table on traditional abstract meanings in matters like, 'What does it really mean to kill or harm someone?' (Matt 5:21-22;38-42), or 'What does it really mean to swear?' (Matt 5:33-37) or 'What should love really be about?' (Matt 5:43-48) etc. Jesus extended the metaphor of love to include even enemies. Also in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus states how the Context of YAHWEH should be the this-worldly security and not the traditional economic abstractness (a nihilistic abstractness) and how trust in YAHWEH would provide all necessary needs (Matt 6:11-34). In the last chapter of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus proclaimed that the entry through the narrow gate should be of the uttermost concern as preparation for the *παρουσία* (Matt 7:13-14) and that the interiorising of Jesus' words is like building a house on the rock, while the held meaning of the nihilistic abstractness of the false prophets is to certainly perish (Matt 7:24-27).

The significance of Jesus' worldlier, as opposed to the proposed nihilistic abstract constellation,

echoed in church history after the day of Pentecost, when the church so broke with the abstractness of this world that even all material means surfaced to be used for God's kingdom alone. The paradigm shift even extended to the point that they had no time for anything else than prayer and preaching (Acts 6). In that the ancient credo was revitalise – 'This world is Egypt and the exodus is to heaven (or heaven realised here on earth)' - and became the lifeblood of the ancient church during its time of persecution. This worldier lasted till the times of Constantine.

8 Conclusion

The study has reached the point where the tapestry of the three sections has become clear and how actually this section precedes the first two in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilio* illustrating that Scriptures even precedes the language being used in the first two sections. The doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilio*, coupled with the ontological experience of the reversal of Genesis 3, becomes the cornerstone of this study and how the postmodern experience should be existentially informed from this ontology leading to the right epistemology. In effect, when all reality is being absorbed into the Biblical discourse, this section should be read back into the previous sections, but in the same breath realise the reflective nature of actually the previous two sections that determined the methodology of this section.

Sin then becomes the existential infusion of a wrong validation of hypotheses and consequently is the establishment of wrong meaning, void of the Presence of YAHWEH. In abstractness the internal rhetorical logic could render the appearance of hypotheses to be meaningful, but is not when void of the ontological presence of YAHWEH in measures comparable to the reversal of Genesis 3 as was the case in the negotiated realism of the people on the Island of Lewis. Metaphorical meaning became for them the right typification of the patriarchal credo, which was completely realised in the direct Incarnation of the presence of YAHWEH in Jesus Christ indicating what true meaning of abstractness should be and consequently how the Johannine dualism of two Grand Narratives are playing off in human experience. In broad strokes the two narratives can be defined in a Greek versus a Hebraic worldier.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Reaching the end of the last section the intratextual proposal of the study has truly gained its full colours and consequently the study itself has become a closed circle, a language with its own grammatical rules, which can only be understood and valued from within its own contours: take the fundamental propositions (YAHWEH, *Creatio Ex Nihilio*) away and no study is left. In the Overall Introduction the point was highlighted that the systematical sequence of three sections is only because it is impossible to say everything simultaneous and consequently, rather than trying to systemise, the opted structure is a Johannine Chiasm with everything spinning around the presence of YAHWEH as the centre. What would do justice to the whole study is to read it again, but this time backwards and see how the last section, this time, reinterprets the second and first section and likewise the second section the first one. Reading it backwards would only really then place it in the right time sequence: first the Hebraic worldview, then the Greek infused interpretation of the postmodern worldview and lastly Social Construction following the rubble of Poststructuralism from the first section.

Admitting the subjective dimension of postmodernism, the intension is not to change the sequence, but rather to see the study progressing in the same manner as a young Christian: first young Christians usually only understand and read the New Testament because they can only really culturally relate to this part of the Scriptures, but as their spiritual walk progresses and when they become more mature they realise that the New Testament cannot exist without the Old Testament and actually the Old Testament precedes and grounds the New Testament. The last section in this study grounds the whole study, but it is the first and the second sections that bring it close to present day culture. The proposal of a typological hermeneutic operates on a few levels, ranging from the existential attribution of meaning to signs to narrative, and proposes that the last section actually comes first in that the typification of this patriarchal credo should be read back into the postmodern paradigm, and consequently into VR within HyperReality and into culture. In short sin would be when this is not possible or, when possible, being neglected.

Reading back, the conviction is that Christ is the centre on two levels: firstly in the presence of YAHWEH in the Incarnation extending into the Body of Christ, the church, through the third person of the Trinity inflating the proposed Communal Hermeneutic (John 14-16) and consequently the proposed Norm indicating that even the patriarchal credo also only really gains meaning in Christ, but secondly Christ should also become the centre within the present day culture and consequently the same as the second section of this study being in the centre proposing the existential question “What would Jesus have done?”. Sin would be the lack of Christlikeness in the interactions with VR when one cannot say Jesus would have done the same.

Recognising the closed circle of the proposed model, in order to reach a sound conclusion, an obvious tension first needs to be resolved and so tie up all the loose ends. The tension is how an intratextual postmodern theological study, intratextual in its own language and grammatical rules sheltered from, e.g. other scientific languages with their own languages and grammatical rules, can draw on and use the arguments of Poststructuralism and the Wittgenstein tradition as a pivotal tool. The answer is twofold: firstly, according to the rules of logic the outcome of Poststructuralism, the nihilistic abstract constellation, cannot be acknowledged, and consequently the break down of modernism and how Athens overran Jerusalem, without also acknowledging their language and grammatical rules; secondly in the proposed intratextual language, when all reality is absorbed into the Scriptural narrative, Poststructuralism actually becomes part of the language and grammatical rules of the Scriptures, although what is at stake is rather the relationship between the Context of YAHWEH and Poststructuralism.

Stating these two answers can intun rather raise more questions than really give answers, but the held view is rather that they are two different angles looking at the same tension. In the first answer, in order to use the outcome of Poststructuralism, who broke down and exposed the internal arguments of modernism and consequently inaugurated the Postmodern relativity in philosophical circles, the conclusion is that Poststructuralism has done theology a favour by cleaning the table rather than placing something new on the table. The surfaced nihilistic abstract constellation of Poststructuralism gives this study the opportunity to place a new theological model, concerning VR in HyperReality, on the table. Again this places the study inline with the Social Construction endeavour of Gergen (Gergen 1999:1-31) who also, rather than lamenting the clean table, ask how one can place something new and fresh on the table. Accepting the outcome of Poststructuralism, from within an intratextual system, can also relay

the thanks to Poststructuralism, who destroyed Athens, that the effort of a completely new theological model, without any diminishing influences from Athens, is now possible.

To complete the first answer to the tension from an intratextual theological system; Poststructuralism has swept Athens away, and consequently when its arguments are upheld, it is to acknowledge the clean table and so to render this magister dissertation only an introduction for a deeper intratextual theological mode setting out the full magnitude of Athens being removed from Jerusalem within the timeless/spaceless postmodern paradigm of HyperReality. In effect, as an introduction, it is not necessary to internally validate the extratextual Poststructural discourse to use it as the springboard why a completely new theological model, replacing everything on the table, is being constructed. This brings the argument back to the Overall Introduction embracing postmodernism: not embracing postmodernism has the effect of lamenting either the death of modernism and consequently tries to salvage modernist cognitive tools within the modernist Biblical worldview but only to become culturally irrelevant to a secular society, or it strips theology of the initiative (missionary calling) necessary to construct a new model for a new epoch of cyborgs (at the start of postmodernism the world has only yet experienced the pick of the iceberg of, e.g. how the Internet and VR will shape human experience in years to come).

The second answer is an answer from within the intratextual discourse of the Scriptures, actually arguing Poststructuralism as subordinate to the Scriptural discourse when all discourses are absorbed into the Biblical discourse. On this level the study has upheld the arguments of Poststructuralism and actually indicated that, from within the subordinate Poststructuralist discourse, the Biblical discourse precedes the furthest point they can point back to, which is the text, in the doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilio*. The argument goes as follow, just as all the post-disciplines follow modernism they actually also return to times before modernism: e.g. Poststructuralism is within Athens a return to before the Socrates school of philosophy, to the sophists; in this proposed Postliberal theological model the proposed return is even further back to the times before the Greeks altogether, to a Hebraic world view. In this return, in the intratextual theological model, relational truth is set above propositional or cognitive truth in which and from which Poststructuralism function. When the Poststructuralist discourse is being absorbed into the Biblical discourse, it means that relational truth is absorbing propositional or cognitive truth into its perusal. Again when this dissertation is only an introduction, it is of no concern to really scrutinising the intratextual nature of the

Poststructuralist discourse itself, but rather to ask how this whole discourse relate to the Biblical discourse and consequently Athens as a whole to Jerusalem.

Again when Postmodernism is being embraced, it indicates that in this relationship Poststructuralism has proven the validity of removing Athens from Jerusalem since Athens does not make sense anymore. Removing Athens overnight, in its absolute form, would mean a total collapse of civilisation and total chaos in, e.g. the removal of technology coming out of modernism; on the other hand replacing it with the technology that would have evolved out of the pure Hebraic worldview would take too long and can certainly also not happen overnight. The proposal of removing Athens can become very academic, but when relational truth is set above propositional and cognitive truth, the question rather becomes what should be the relationships within the world of cyborgs rather than what is the nature or properties of things in itself within the cyborg experience. The saturation of Athens into human experience, and particularly within abstractness, is being absorbed into the Context of YAHWEH when the relationship to these entities starts from YAHWEH and only lastly commence to the question of what their nature or properties are, should that even be possible to determine. In that is the missionary motive, aimed at the new epoch, to establish the right sequence of relationships above propositional and cognitive questions and answers which only led to the postmodern apathy to truth; because of this apathy all theological models coming out of modernism, or still deeply grounded in modernism, can give no better answer to postmodern cognitive opinions and thus the need to clean the table and construct and new theological model for VR in HyperReality. The conviction is that Athens will only be completely removed at the παρουσία, but can be pushed aside in the vertical Johannine eschatology as was the case on the Island of Lewis.

From the proposed Hebraic worldview all truth is relational truth, when the most people in the world walk out the front door in the mornings they empirically see the same flat world as someone saw a 1000 years or even 3000 years ago: the sun still comes up in the east and goes down in the west; the fact that the earth is not flat but round, is a relational truth, except for the few that could fly out to space and see it with their own eyes. Even a better example is the virus one has during a flu, 3000 years ago or even a 1000 years ago the people had another explanation for the occurrence of flu-like symptoms; today relational truths argue it is a virus causing the symptoms, but who has really seen this virus to argue against the fact that it is only a relational truth (with an inherent rhetorical logic) versus an empirical one. Stating all truth as

relational would beg the question what about those then that did fly out to space and see the earth is round? Again this is where Poststructuralism and the Wittgenstein tradition, coupled with the Einsteinian theory of relativity in science, illuminate the fact that this is a relational truth, grounded in hypotheses coming through language: who knows what science would point out in a few 100 years, maybe it would become apparent that the earth is not really round but something else when a bigger picture arises to inform empirical data. Who would have thought, during the times of the Newtonian universe, that soon even the law of gravity (which gave birth to the Newtonian universe) would be under question? Even the law of gravity then proves to be a relational truth, maybe the round earth would be challenged the same why in a few 100 years?

To bring this closer to theology, when the Russians first went into space they asked where God is, but when the Americans did the same they said it must be a God that created the universe; the relational truth is what they took out into space conditioning what they wanted to see. When secular science still steeped in modernism would scrutinise the revival on the Island of Lewis, they would not understand the Context infused phenomena according to their propositional and scientific truth claims, grounded in empirical data and logic (as was the case with those churches resisting the revival on the island itself); they would find a scientific explanation for everything and Athens would again overrun Jerusalem.

Looking at it internally, even trying to understand the revival in its propositional truth claims as reflexed in the preaching would not even make sense to this study, with its Wesleyan-Armenian affiliation, since the people on the island were steeped in Calvinism and its view of predestination (Peckham 2004:24-5). The revival on the island of Lewis only makes sense within relational truths, within and from the Context of YAHWEH, and consequently epistemology that flows from the ontological presence of YAHWEH. The epistemology held on the island was completely different than that of, e.g. the 18th century Wesleyan revival and even more different than the cultural world of the Scriptures they were steeped in, but the ontology of YAHWEH, and consequently the relationship with YAHWEH, was the same and consequently could be grouped under the same Grand Narrative. To take this back to the second section, the signs and narrative (point in paradigm) of all of these respective occurrences state the same fixed point of the presence of YAHWEH.

The second answer to the tension then is that the proposed theological model is intratextual