

**IN SEARCH OF PASTORAL CARE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH: A NARRATIVE APPROACH**

By

**COLIN FINUCANE**

submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY**

in the subject

**PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**PROMOTER: DR. A. G. VAN WYK**

**JOINT PROMOTER: PROF. E. VAN NIEKERK**

**JUNE 2009**

I, Colin Finucane, declare that, “In Search of Pastoral Care in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: A narrative approach”, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

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Date

## SUMMARY

The mission over the last few decades, especially of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has focused on “confessionalism”. In this specific sense of mission growth—numeric growth—has been a priority, and, unfortunately, not caring for “broken” people. The emphasis has been placed on the age-old proclamation of the “truth”, at the expense of social involvement, as it seems that “truth” transcends the needs of people, even of Christians. This has led to the restricting of the scope of pastoral care, and has limited it to an “applied theology”, where the Old Testament and New Testament studies have dictated its structure and methodology.

Within Adventism its view and use of Scripture has dominated its ministry, indicating a number of different methods and approaches. These differences in both the conservative and the liberal orientations only represent their own possibilities. These approaches are the result of a basic understanding of Scripture as a body of divine teachings that needs to be accepted, believed, and obeyed. Consequently, *this perception has moved the focus away from caring to the “so-called” correct doctrine of “truth” and proclamation.*

Postmodernism, however, is challenging the assumptions of modernism and is now confronting us with the understanding that there is no “objective truth”, and that there cannot be a completely detached observer. We observe reality, experience and Scripture not objectively, but rather discern them through the eyes of our own context, experience and history.

The thesis, therefore, postulates as useful, just and proper that we experience reality in a narrative fashion within a secular postmodern world. It is through stories that we grasp and appreciate the important factors in our lives. Consequently, a narrative approach is appraised as being a more meaningful tool in approaching Scripture and pastoral care. Narratives are like rituals, they preserve the memory of past events in a way that they still have power for us in the present. As Jesus is a servant of everybody His narratives are transposed and they become accounts of our involvement in the lives of our fellow “sufferers”.

## KEY TERMS

Adventism

Agonistics

Anthropology

Applied theology

Biblicism

Binary thinking

Community

Confessionalism

Counselling

Deconstruction

Descartes

Eschatology

Foundationalism

Hermeneutics

Intertextuality

Metanarratives

Metaphor

Modernism

Narrative

Objectivism

Pastoral care

Positivism

Postmodernism

Practical theology

Rationalism

Reductionism

Relationship

Seventh-day Adventism

Textuality

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# PREFACE

- **To the reader:**

I would like to share some of my inspiration behind the thesis.

The passion and motivation for the research was born out of my own pain and struggles with depression, and a life-long battle with dyslexia. Part of my experience was that the knowledge of “truth” and the practice of doctrine did not set me free, but rather in times of my deepest need they felt more like “ropes of sand”. Not being able to “pull myself together” or simply “snap out of it” made me search for something deeper and more meaningful.

With this approach I do not wish to imply that I take a stand opposed to the teachings of the Church and the need for doctrine. Rather, it is that one day after attending workshops presented by Michael White and David Epston, the founders of “narrative therapy”, it suddenly dawned on me that there was so much more. I came to realise the value of a narrative approach for Christian ministry, and I began to pursue and use it in my ministry. This was the beginning of a nine year journey of searching.

Then, in 2003 I took this journey a step further and began with my doctoral research program in narrative counseling and its relationship to God’s redemptive acts.

I would like to invite you to come with me on this journey, which has challenged me, as well as having contested many traditional approaches, and now introduces a narrative perspective which re-vision our ministry.

- **Acknowledgements**

At this time I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have journeyed with me so patiently for many years, regardless of circumstances; those who have assisted, advised, supported, encouraged and prayed for me as I wrestled with this research. Firstly, I

wish to thank my Heavenly Father for the love, strength, wisdom and courage He has given me to undertake this pilgrimage and complete my research. He has been my constant Companion, whether I was full of hope, or whether tired and frustrated. Thank you, Father, for always being there for me.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my dear wife, Arlene, who has sacrificed so much during the time of my studies. She has been very patient and loving, and at times when I have become discouraged, tired and irritable, she has been there always to listen and encourage me. To my daughter, Shanelle, and my late mother a very big thank you for all their support and encouragement. They have supported me and have been always willing to sacrifice time so that I could do my research.

A very special “thank you” to my promoter, Dr Gerhard van Wyk. He has been there right from the beginning and has seen the potential of my research and has spent many hours coaching and guiding me. He also challenged me to broaden my thinking, and enriched me with his great wisdom. He was always compassionate and understanding when I struggled, always willing to go the second mile in assisting me. Also a very big “thank you” to his wife Emilie for all her support and encouragement.

An expression of thankfulness for Bertha Le Roux for always being willing to acquire resources I needed, and for the encouragement along the way.

Very special thanks to Rudolph Meyer for being a friend, and for his input, and also for his expertise in editing my thesis.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Peter Landless and the Board of Trustees of Vista Clinic for the financial assistance they made available for the purpose of this research.

A big “thank you” to all my friends who were always there ready to encourage me when things got tough, and for their prayers throughout the years of my research; especially Yesvinth Dahya, Piet Smuts, Johan Vorster, Stephné Watters and the Watson family.

## Introduction

### 1 Humanity facing the twenty-first century

“What is [are] man [humans] that You are mindful of him [them], the son of man that You care for him [them]?” (Psalm 8:4).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a very striking question asked by David and later re-iterated in Hebrews 2.

Now, answering this question, some may glibly say that people are nothing more than sinners in need of salvation.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Plantak maintains that the Adventist church seriously needs to consider this statement by examining its doctrine of humanity, as people cannot be reduced to sinners alone as their characterisation.<sup>3</sup>

As we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Haarhoff reminds us that we have already lived through a “machine age” with its accompanying philosophies of “parts”; technical and scientific advances with their industrial progress as its driving force, authoritarianism and its methods of control, and objective knowledge and information as its goal. Many of these philosophies have to one or other degree “coloured” and “clouded” so many aspects of our lives—our medicine, economics, sociology, academic theories and our theology.<sup>4</sup> Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton and René Descartes, three most prominent so-called gods of the Enlightenment “Pantheon”, have contributed to the establishment of these philosophies and the belief that we live in “...a desacralised and soulless world governed by mathematical laws”.<sup>5</sup> Haarhoff describes humanity so aptly today when he says: “The age onto which we are born, the culture we live in, our parents, teachers, domineers tell us who we are, and we live out the stories they have prescribed for us.”<sup>6</sup> Now it would appear that the time has come where

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1 All Bible verses quoted in the text of the thesis are taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1996.

2 Colin Finucane, 1999. *Seventh-Day Adventism and the Abuse of Women*:65.

3 Z. Plantak, 1998. *The Silent Church. Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*:153, 157-162, 163, 167 & 168.

4 D. Haarhoff, 1998. *The Writers Voice: A workbook for writers in Africa*:10.

5 Haarhoff, 1998:10.

6 Haarhoff, 1998:12.

people are often rejecting authorities that attempt to control and dictate what their stories ought to be, and they are now “...in search of a new sustaining myth that respects their imagination”,<sup>7</sup> their humanity and their existence. Liberation theology and the feminist movement<sup>8</sup> are but a few such forms of rebellion against an authority-dominated world. Liberation theology has come out in revolt against oppression and women are saying “no” to prescribed “women roles”, domination and abuse. Increasingly people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century now seek genuine relationships, longing for their needs to be met and to have a sense of belonging.

## 2 Terminology and abbreviations

I use certain terms that need to be clarified. I do not research these terms, however, for this is not the task of the study, but I endeavour to express my understanding and usage of the relevant terms.

The term “Seventh-day Adventist” is used to refer to that group of religious believers who were first known as “Sabbatarian Adventists”, who were officially originally organised in 1863 as a church organisation and became known as the “Seventh-day Adventist Church”. This name is significant as it points to the focus of this organisation: The importance of keeping holy the sanctified Seventh-day Sabbath and a looking forward to the sure and certain hope of the imminent Second Advent of Christ.<sup>9</sup> I also use the term “Adventists” interchangeably with “Seventh-day Adventist” when referring to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general. The term “Seventh-day Adventist” will be abbreviated as “SDA”. Furthermore, the headquarters of this organisation is known as “The General Conference of The Seventh-day Adventist Church”, situated in Washington DC and will be abbreviated as “GC”.

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7 Haarhoff, 1998:10.

8 I hereby do not wish to imply that I concur with everything liberation theology and the feminist movement stand for, but I am simply pointing out that there are a group of people, within and without the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is in rebellion against a male dominated authoritarianism.

9 For further clarification of these terms see 1988: *Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs ... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*.

I use the term “Adventism” when referring to the “Institutional SDA Church”. Thus, I distinguish between the church as an institution, focusing on doctrine, policies and numerical growth, and the church as a dynamic movement, focusing on people and their individual needs by making theology relevant and more meaningful, yet, not denying its own tradition.

I will also use the abbreviation OT and NT to refer to the Old Testament and New Testament respectively.

When I use the term “narrative” I refer to the stories—the age, culture and society—that fashion, form and nurture our being. It is an attempt to try visualising the experiences and emotions of those that are referred to and written about in the ancient text. A “narrative” is the telling and re-telling of life experiences by an individual within his/her own uniqueness—his/her fears, joys, guilt, freedom, etc. It is an attempt to allow the mysteries of existence and experience to become alive, proceed and be real.

I use the term “pointers” to indicate the direction to God’s truth and not “stand points” or absolutely fixed positions. Pointers, like sign posts on a journey, direct us in a specific direction, they do not provide us with positions of finality.

The concept “episodic” indicates the here and the now and everything that are in play at a specific moment, never again to be repeated in the same and exact way. Thus, it indicates the limited nature of a statement or truth at a specific moment in time.

I use the term “hurting” not to refer to the person who hurt others, but rather the one who is being hurt by others or their circumstances. It is referring to people who have been or are being violated.

I use the term “summary” rather than “conclusion” as it is my understanding that “conclusion” connotes *finality*; whereas “summary” has something to do with drawing together various points of view.

### 3 The research problem

The thesis researches the development and focus of the SDA Church message and mission with regard to caring, counselling and hope for “hurting” people. An example is the issue of dealing with abuse, as I have already pointed out in “Seventh-Day Adventism and the Abuse of Women”.<sup>10</sup>

I hereby do not wish to imply that the SDA Church has not addressed these issues,<sup>11</sup> or that Adventism does not care about these issues, but that they are often regarded as secondary or dealt with in a dogmatic way.<sup>12</sup> According to Henson, SDAs spend a lot of time, money and energy telling the world that Jesus is “coming soon”,<sup>13</sup> yet, as Plantak indicates, we are often silent when it comes to socio-ethical and socio-political issues.<sup>14</sup> Human experiences, values, perspectives and people’s personal faith have in a way been trivialised and marginalised. Sakae Kubo points out that Adventism will always help the poor and sick, but often the focus is on winning so-called souls for Christ. “Helping the poor and sick simply to alleviate their condition and suffering is not enough. We would do good, but calculatingly not spontaneously.”<sup>15</sup>

The SDA Church does run very strong welfare and medical programs and sponsors the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Program. Thus, this is fulfilling Jesus’ mandate to feed the hungry and help the sick. Yet, as Knight indicates, “These humanitarian projects are not divorced from evangelism in its narrower sense”.<sup>16</sup> He says that these activities act as “entering wedges” in order to create space for Adventist evangelism. “These programs had no overt spiritual aim or content, but were [are] regarded as opportunities to ‘break down barriers’ and to provide public health education and community service.”<sup>17</sup>

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10 See Finucane, 1999:2-35.

11 See R. Flowers, & K. Flowers, 1996. *Making Home a Place of Peace and Healing. 1997 Family Ministries Plan book*, and a General Conference document, 1985: *The Role of Women in the Church*.

12 Finucane, 1999:52 . “Institutional SDAs are prone to emphasize ‘evangelism’ and tend to minimize the daily needs of people. Issues dealing with women who are facing abuse are regarded as important, but unfortunately it is only of secondary importance. The proclamation of the Gospel becomes divorced from the questions that men and women are posing with regard to daily issues.” See also Finucane, 1999:57-61.

13 M.S. Henson, 1999. *The Church Leader’s Dilemma*:123.

14 Plantak, 1998:11-37.

15 S. Kubo, 1998. *The Silent Church. Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*:xii.

16 G.R. Knight, 1993a. *Anticipating the Advent: A brief history of Seventh-Day Adventists*:125.

17 C. Kapitzke, 1995. *Literacy and Religion: The textual politics and practice of Seventh-Day Adventism*:118.

Bosch states that evangelicals and Adventists are not devoid of compassion and humanitarian concerns, but that they “...often reveal great sacrificial involvement with the existential needs of victims of society ...” He continues saying that these types of “services” are viewed as aids to evangelism.

Schools, hospitals, orphanages and the like are primarily seen as instruments affording pupils, patients and orphans the opportunity of hearing the gospel. By attending to the human body (for instance in the hospital) or the mind (in the mission school), they are preparing him/her for the gospel. The success of mission schools and hospitals is often judged according to the number of converts they produce.<sup>18</sup>

The church has spent a lot of time and energy developing theologies on issues like the Sabbath, the Second Coming, the Sanctuary, etc. When it comes to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other pietistically oriented issues, Adventism has done a lot of research and has very definite policies in place. Adventism, and especially Adventism in so-called Third World countries, however, has done very little research on issues like family life problems, personal hang-ups, relationship failures and traumatic life events. The church is addressing some issues of human rights and violence or abuse within relationships; however, it is often done in a functional-pragmatic way without giving serious thought to their underlying causes, their theology and mission. When Jan Paulsen, the GC president, has addressed some of these issues in his opening address to the 2002 Annual Council he has been asked if he is now promoting something that “...looks and smells’ like [a] social gospel—one which is no longer focused on the straight preaching of the Word”.<sup>19</sup> The straight preaching of the Word refers to the proclamation of the confessions of the SDA Church. As Couden says, however, maybe this embarrasses us because as God’s so-called “remnant church” we feel that we should live above these human foibles.<sup>20</sup> It could be that too many of our generation “...have spent too many hours worrying about losing our way and not enough time learning how to address our everyday concerns in a responsible manner”.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, when people become SDAs, all day-to-day and relationship problems do not disappear. On the contrary, all too often they lose their jobs, they are rejected by family and friends, and they struggle with anger, alcohol, smoking and many other problems, which

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18 D.J. Bosch, 1980. *Witness to the World: The Christian mission in theological perspective*:33

19 Jan. Paulsen, 2002b. “*Annual Council 2002 Opening Address.*”

20 B. Couden, 1999. *Reflections on Church and the Business of Healing*:100.

21 Couden, 1999:102.

also cause guilt because they are confronted with the church's doctrinal teachings.<sup>22</sup> These changes in their lives bring about added stress.<sup>23</sup> Becoming a Christian is not the end, but often the beginning of a struggle against many socio-ethical issues. There are also the needs of families where tragedy has struck: A child is molested or abducted; a son or daughter turns to drug abuse, or runs away from home; a father is retrenched; a mother is diagnosed with cancer; a husband or a wife has an extramarital affair; a father or a mother is hi-jacked, mugged or murdered.<sup>24</sup> These are not situations that are planned by the victims, but they do happen even to the most dedicated Christians. When it happens, the shame and pain, the hopelessness and despair are so great that they devastate those caught up in it. All too often the victims of such tragedies have to "go it alone". For those caught up in and struggling with these issues there is often very little to no help or hope within the church, except to "tough it out and wait for the second coming of the Lord".

It is my contention that the SDA Church needs to recognise that we are living in a pluralistic world, and pluralistic societies, where the needs of people and cultures differ. We can no longer approach people with a stereo-typed ministry where we take a North American style of ministry and superimpose it on South Africa, for example. I concur with Jon Paulien when he tells us that "...we need to meet people where they are ... Secular people respond to relational approaches that meet them at points of felt need".<sup>25</sup>

Miroslav Pujic also suggests that we need to make a change in our approach to ministry from a confrontational and propositional one to a relational and contextual one. Or stating it differently, we need "a new trajectory",<sup>26</sup> where God's story collides with a human story to make a difference.

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22 The notion of the church's doctrinal teachings will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

23 As people accept the confessions of the SDA Church they need to make radical changes in their lives; when they start keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as prescribed by the SDA Church, for example, they can no longer work on Saturdays and this may cause major problems for them in trying to earn a living. This immediately makes an impact on their family lives. Another example is that as people sometimes struggle to live up to the high standards set by these confessions their guilt increases and they eventually turn away, become bitter and stop coming to church.

24 Many South Africans are hi-jacked, mugged and held up at gun point on a regular basis and these incidences are most often very violent.

25 Jon Paulien, 2003b. *Meeting the secular mind in uncertain times*:19 & 20.

26 Pujic actually states "The concept of story, or narrative, evangelism presents the gospel, not just a mass of data that leads to a logical conclusion. The whole gospel is a narrative in which God's story collides with a human story, and that intersection of human and divine is what makes the difference", because it creates a



## 4 Possible reasons for the problem

Witherington says that the “Bible has been one of the most formative of all books in the West in regard to views about a whole host of subjects including male-female relationships, the family, sexual morality, and women’s roles and functions in various fields including religious ones”.<sup>27</sup> For the SDA Church the Bible is regarded as foundational in shaping its traditions, beliefs, policies, doctrine, theology, mission and view of the world. It is my understanding that Adventism’s view and its use of Scripture, in particular its strong confessional reading of Scripture, its search for “truth” and its evangelistic outreach have greatly determined the church’s anthropology and pastoral care.

The church’s view and use of the Scriptures are foundational to the issue I am addressing. Adventism has a rationalistic “confessional” approach, orientated toward understanding the Scriptures as inerrant, authoritative and normative, without seriously addressing the contexts of people. Its search for absolute and objective truth has been profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment’s epistemology and Descartes’ rationalism and objectivism.

Informed by the “conduit” methodology of modernism, Scripture is read as “...never a movement from men [people], from situation, or from problem to text, but it always advances from the text to men [people] and problem”.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the context may often be ignored and, whereas the “confessional” approach endeavours to support the beliefs of the church, it may be tempted to make the text of Scripture a “timeless”, “universal” and “a-contextual” script. This kind of “confessional” approach has serious implications for pastoral care and human rights issues.<sup>29</sup>

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new story and possibly a new trajectory for a SDA ministry. Miroslav Pujic, 2003. *Process versus instant evangelism*:7.

27 A. Witherington, (Ed.). 1990. *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*: xiii.

28 V.N. Olsen, 1974. *Hermeneutical Principles and Biblical Authority in Reformation and Post-reformation Eras*:57.

29 See Finucane, 1999. As I pointed out in my dissertation, the Institutional SDA Church’s view and use of the Scriptures are foundational to the issue I am addressing. Adventists view the Scriptures as authoritative and normative, and it has a “confessional” approach to the Bible, which views the Scriptures as authoritative and inerrant. The focus is that of the Reformers – *sola scriptura*. Interpretation of the text is achieved via exegesis, where the “nature”, “core” and “essence” of Scripture are determined through a lexicographical and a historical grammatical approach. I pointed out that from the “confessional” approach the text of Scripture becomes the “Word of God”, making it “timeless” and “a-contextual”. I concluded that the “confessional” approach has serious implications for abused women.

Adventists also do not view themselves as simply another denomination, but regard themselves as a prophetic people and as God's remnant true church.<sup>30</sup> They see themselves as a fulfilment of prophecy with a definite mission to "...preach the unique message of the three angels of Revelation 14; and to present God's last appeal to a dying world before Christ returns to 'harvest' the earth".<sup>31</sup> They are holding onto the belief that it is their primary responsibility to proclaim this last warning message to the entire world, "...to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev 14:6). In support of this Charles Bradford claims the following:

Seventh-Day Adventist preaching should be distinguished by something different. It must bring to the present situation those insights and understandings that are found only in the prophetic portion of the Bible. All true Seventh-Day Adventists preaching has Revelation 14:6-12 as its frame of reference.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, SDA ministers are encouraged when "preaching to the times" to focus all attention, help and hope on the second coming of Christ. The focus of this approach to proclaim the Gospel is directed at preparing a people for the second coming of Christ. Damsteegt points out that, from the inception of the SDA Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a vital, integral and central part of their theology of mission is "The apocalyptic-eschatological aspects ... indicated by the three angel's messages with its focus on the third angel's message ... to prepare mankind [humanity] for the second advent".<sup>33</sup>

George Knight's statement may also be helpful in this regard:

One of the most conspicuous outgrowths of the heightened consciousness of the need to plan systematically for world mission was launched at the 1990 General Conference session as Global Mission.

Global Mission marks a conscious shift in Adventist missiology as the denomination seeks to complete its mission of preaching the three angels' messages 'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.' Adventism has traditionally gauged its mission outreach progress on the 'nations' and 'tongues' parts of that text ...

Global Mission, however, has shifted the denomination's eyes ... toward a new way of looking at denominational mission accountability. Rather than focusing on *nations*, Global Mission focuses attention on the fact that the Adventist

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30 Knight, 1993a:5, 26.

31 Knight, 1993a:5.

32 E.C. Bradford, 1975. *Preaching to the Times*:20.

33 Gerhard P. Damsteegt, 1977. *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission*:165.

message is to go to ‘every *kindred, and tongue, and people.*’ That approach is much less comforting.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Adventism has a strong prophetic calling to proclaim the “gospel”<sup>35</sup> of Jesus Christ, teaching the world<sup>36</sup> to keep the commandments of God, the Sabbath, and look forward to the second coming when Jesus will usher in a new world where there will be no more pain and suffering.<sup>37</sup> “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ...He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev 21:2 & 4).

Consequently, it is my understanding that a “confessional” framework with the emphasis on “proclamation” and an apocalyptic eschatology, based upon a rationalistic approach, has far-reaching implications for the church and pastoral care. Whereas, in particular, the more conservative-oriented Adventist supports a “high view” of Scripture most often also supports a “low anthropology”, *regarding confessional truths above the care for “hurting” people.*

## 5 The task of the research

In view of the fact that pastoral care has been, and is still, to a large extent marginalised within Adventism, the thesis will search for an approach to “pastoral care”, which will bring healing, not by applying confessional truths, but rather to integrate, both “theory”, (e.g. Scripture), and praxis in a differentiated way. A narrative approach will seek to provide opportunities for “hurting” people and their communities, where the Scriptures and counsellor tell their own stories. There is a serious need within the Adventist Church for such a narrative approach that can go beyond pastoral care, which largely applied

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34 Knight, 1993a:123, 124.

35 The term gospel here refers to “...something understood as primarily ‘a subject for belief’, rather than ‘a way of life.’ It is a message which, if ‘accepted’, guarantees entrance into the Kingdom.” Bosch, 1980:31.

36 The term “world” here could refer to the global world, or nations, or individual people.

37 “The prophecies of the book of Revelation clearly outline the mission of the remnant. The three angel’s messages of Revelation 14:6-12 reveal the proclamation of the remnant that will bring a full and final restoration of the gospel truth. These three messages comprise God’s answers to the overwhelming satanic deception that sweeps the world just before Christ’s return (Rev. 13:3, 8, 14-16). Immediately following God’s last appeal to the world Christ returns to reap the harvest (Rev 14:14-20).” 1988, *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe ... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*:163.

confessions within the counselling action. I will strive to break new ground by looking at our view and use of Scripture, particularly as confronted by a postmodern era. This narrative approach will seek for a reading of Scripture that goes beyond confessionalism, to become a narrative tool, which is more inclusive of the Kingdom of God that has already come, addressing present-day experiential needs.

In this process it is neither my intention to discredit the beliefs or teaching of the SDA Church, nor to do away with a confessional reading of Scripture. The grammatical-historical and historical-critical reading of Scripture, however, has serious limitations that need to be complimented by a narrative reading. The thesis will also seek to probe beyond official pronouncements regarding these issues to what may be considered the practice of the SDA Church.

Through my research, I wish to point out that although the church has a meaningful ministry in our communities and to the world, there is a need for a ministry of caring, instilling hope in a world filled with despair.

My line of reasoning will be that this issue needs to receive more consideration and be regarded with equal importance along with other issues such as the church's evangelistic outreach program. As a result, the main focus is to address some of the following questions:

- How can the SDA Church and its theology remain relevant within a so-called postmodern world?
- Is there an alternative way of reading Scripture and constructing a theology of pastoral care?
- How can the SDA Church minister "hope" and "healing" in a meaningful and relevant way without detracting from the church's evangelistic mission?
- What influence does "context" have on our theology?
- Can a narrative tool be used, in a differentiated way, in addressing socio-political issues?

I propose that if we, to some extent, can answer these questions, and with some measure of certainty, it can direct us towards important "pointers", suggestions or "indicators" that can lead us to new perspectives on human relationships within the SDA Church. This can assist

in opening up new vistas for bringing the gospel to people trapped in despair, and for those who are being confronted with the challenges of postmodernism.

I recognise, however, that I have preconceived convictions in the thesis regarding the present practice of “pastoral care” in the SDA Church.<sup>38</sup> I do not apologise for these predeterminations, but acknowledge that they influence my research. In my own involvement I experience compassion to “care” for people. Consequently, I acknowledge that my preconceived persuasions influence and direct my research towards what I consider to be important. It is from these preconceived convictions that I recommend a narrative orientation to Scripture regarding pastoral care.

## **6 The methodology**

It is important to state that my approach in my field of study is from the perspective of Practical Theology, and also to state that I realise that this will influence not only my methodology, but also my approach to the Scriptures and my research topic, pastoral care. I choose this perspective because I research the problem from a practical theological approach rather than from a systematic, and particularly, a confessional approach. Rather than to break the study into fragments regarding the different fields, I wish to enter into what I would call a “differentiated creative dialogue” with the existing approaches. I do so as it is my persuasion that postmodernism, which the Western world and also South Africa is progressively embracing, rejects a domineering and authoritarian approach, particularly in pastoral care. Hence, I follow a differentiation of approaches *vis-à-vis* an authoritarian approach in pastoral care, employing creative dialogue.

The narrative approach assists me to address these changes in a postmodern framework and introduce a different perspective to the reading of Scripture and the addressing of the research topic. This approach will endeavour to inform a future pastoral care, not only from a “deductive” way of reading the Scriptures, by applying Scripture, but also from an “inductive” way, by approaching the Scriptures with the practical situation towards a collaborative reflexive mutuality.

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38 I am a professional SDA pastoral therapist, working as a pastoral counsellor in a SDA psychiatric clinic.

I am doing a literary study determining what SDA authors, pastors, church leaders and SDA administrators have claimed and stated about the church's mission, human rights, human relationship issues and pastoral care. I will also focus on the writings of other Christian scholars so as to provide more perspectives and to intensify the research. Thus, the scripts of theologians, the history of dogma, and the context of these formulations are considered toward challenging and enriching a theology of pastoral care within the SDA Church in an ongoing framework—more and more.

Adventist theology has also made progress through different stages, though it is still very careful to get involved in the postmodern debate. It has addressed progressively over the last few years more postmodern and relationship issues. Thus, the need for a new approach to a theology of pastoral care has come to the fore. The Ministry of March 2003, an international journal for pastors, has affirmed this need in a way by addressing the issue that the church is facing a crisis when it is proclaiming the gospel to the postmodern world. It is my conviction that *to research this topic from a perspective of practical theology and, particularly, a narrative approach, can make a significant contribution in challenging Adventism to develop a new Adventist theology of care.* This could lay the ground work in developing a theology that could inspire pastors and “lay people” to render the church a community of healing.

I use a narrative approach in my research rather than a lexicographical and, particularly, the grammatical-historical approach. I do this to relate to this specific issue in a special way: We need other models to help provide new perspectives in our situation, not in an accumulative way simply to increase knowledge, but by switching to other intellectual frameworks to enhance meaning and acquire some answers.<sup>39</sup> I propose that a narrative approach can be one such switch or paradigm shift towards renewal. I do so because the narrative methodology provides a contextual style with more of an inductive approach to Scripture, allowing for the day-to-day experiences of people to be included in our theology. Consequently, I assert that the situations and contexts in which we find ourselves have a profound effect on our theology. König reminds us that “... there is no doubt that context is

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39 M.D. Herholdt, 1998. *Postmodern Theology*:219.

an important source of theology that leads to new questions being put to the Bible and the faith in general”.<sup>40</sup>

The narrative approach actually assists us as it allows for metaphors and contextual issues to become part of the theological debate. It allows for a relational, experiential approach to theology. By using a narrative approach to theology, therefore, the thesis will endeavour to address some of the more important issues that can hamper or enhance a theology of caring.

At the same time, however, the narrative approach is also limited in many ways for it is not an exact reflection of reality. At the same time the “context of the gospel”, as König indicates, also poses a problem. He asserts, “It is not easy to distinguish between the gospel and the culture or the world-view in which it comes to us”.<sup>41</sup> Despite these limitations, however, I claim that the narrative approach will widen our horizons so as to touch the lives of “hurting”, searching people, and to affect especially the postmodern mind set, which has permeated the Western world.

To be able to address this exceptionally complex issue, it is my proposal that a narrative approach to Scripture can bring new understanding to some of these very contentious issues that I have raised. I also recognise that this cannot be a simplistic answer to a complex problem, and that this kind of questioning can be, and should be critically appraised.

## **7 The organisation of the research**

In chapter two I will research the historical development of the SDA message and mission so as to establish the focus of its doctrines and basic thrust of its mission. I will try to establish Adventism’s “theology of caring”, or the absence thereof in regard to human relationships and mission. Consequently, I highlight, what I consider to be, some of the contributing factors for a marginalised or applied pastoral care.

Chapter three focuses on the reason why Adventism follows the approach that has been discussed in chapter two. I discuss, therefore, the church’s apocalyptic eschatology which

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40 A. König, 1998. *Biblical Theology*:16.

41 König, 1998:23.

places its hope in the second coming and in a new world free from pain and suffering. I will do so by researching the confessional framework of Adventism as it is found within the orientations of conservatism and liberalism. In this chapter I will also research Adventism's view and use of Scripture. I will reflect on the implications this type of theology has for caring when it comes to socio-ethical and socio-political issues of "hurting" people.

In chapter four I research the epistemological influence of the Enlightenment on the church and the impact this has on its caring ministry. In this chapter I will discuss and highlight some characteristics of postmodernism, with the background influence of modernism on Adventism. I will discuss some of the challenges of postmodernism and modernism as they pertain to pastoral care within the Adventist Church. It is proposed that postmodernism does not only have some limitations, but offers possibilities and "pointers" for the re-visioning of pastoral care especially within a narrative approach.

Chapter Five will highlight some "pointers" toward a complementary view of Scripture. I will research the possibilities of a narrative approach, which would allow for a narrative approach that moves beyond confessionalism. I will propose that the narrative approach is a tool that provides depth to Adventist theology within a postmodern world. It opens the doors for a mission of caring that will re-vision the gospel in our communities, making it more relevant. I will present a few "pointers" that will make the church's mission more inclusive rather than marginalising it.

The last chapter highlights some "pointers" and provides a summary.

## **8 Summary**

In summary, we are faced with an epidemic when it comes to problematic human relationship issues and people trapped in despair. It is also evident that the Gospel, packaged in its neat little "ABC"-parcel, is no longer relevant and it is not meeting all the needs of the community.



It, therefore, is proposed that the church can no longer ignore the changes that are taking place within our communities and the outcry for caring. It is also suggested that it is the church's view of Scripture that has been a major influencing factor in governing its response with regard to socio-ethical and socio-political issues.

By marginalising pastoral care, the confessional approach, which has served the church well, is becoming more and more limiting. The attitude of "proclamation" is becoming more and more irrelevant and is not meeting all the needs of our communities. Rationalism with its simplistic approach is no longer providing answers or addressing the uncertainty, brokenness and traumas that people are facing.

We need to lift the protective shroud of indifference and face the agony that our brothers, sisters, and children are suffering. It is my contention that as a church, as professing Christians, we cannot turn a blind eye to the issue of human rights and the state of hopelessness people find themselves confronted with.

This task, however, must not be undertaken by simply reinforcing the text through slavish adherence to the letter, but rather to develop a meaningful theology of care; a theology that will ensure the protection of human relationships. A theology that is respectful of the gospel that will leave a genuine inheritance for others after us to continue the struggle for basic insights with regard to meaning and the dignity of human life in this world.



## A Historical Perspective on the Development of Adventist Theology and its Determining Influence

### 1 Introduction

In the chapter I will research the historical development of the SDA Church and especially how this development has influenced its theology relating to pastoral care, or the lack thereof. I will research how the church has evolved and how certain events and approaches have influenced the church's message, mission and theology. My focus will be on the North American Adventist Church, as it is here where the major development of the SDA Church took place and because our theology and lifestyle are very much determined by the North American Adventist Church.

Furthermore, George Knight asserts that Adventism was not born in a vacuum.<sup>1</sup> It is claimed within Adventism that its existence is rooted and founded in the fulfilment of prophecy and that it is not simply another of many denominations. Furthermore, professing to be a people of "The Book", it is held that the churches theology and mission is founded and based upon "Scripture". It is the persuasion of Adventism that the Bible is the only form of authority. I would like to suggest, therefore, that much of the theology of Adventism has been profoundly influenced by its history.

It is also proposed that the build-up to "1844 and its turbulent aftermath is really a kind of indispensable key that unlocks the secrets of classical Adventism as it was understood by its pioneers, such as James and Ellen White, O.R.L. Crosier, Hiram Edson, and Joseph Bates".<sup>2</sup>

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1 G.R. Knight, 2000a. *A Search for Identity: The development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*:29-37.

2 I. Lindén, 1982. *1844 and The Shut Door Problem*:11. When Christ did not return in 1843 as predicted at the Boston Second Advent Conference, further intensive study of the prophecies revealed that Christ would definitely return on October 22, 1844. Yet, when October 22 came and went, and Christ did not return, the believers found themselves in total disarray and discouragement, and experience what is known as the "Great Disappointment". After this disappointment many of the believers returned to their old way of life, some turned away from religion altogether and many others constituted or went to other denominations. A small group believing that something significant happened on that day kept on studying, searching and praying for insight.

Seventh-day Adventism and its message and mission are to a large extent focused on October 22, 1844 and inevitably, it has inherited many of the beliefs of the Millerite movement.<sup>3</sup>

We should also not forget, however, that the worldviews of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also had, to a large extent, an impact on Adventism. The build-up to 1844, therefore, has some very significant “pointers” in understanding the message and mission of the SDA Church.

## 2 The historical background of Adventism

Despite the fact that some claim that Seventh-day Adventism was a prophetic movement that was not influenced by society, political and religious influences, it did grow out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American context. It was profoundly influenced by the worldview of Protestant North America of that time, which was in the throws of a renewed revival, religiously, socially, and politically. There was a very prominent religious awakening that was prevalent at the time. To some extent Millerism, and later Seventh-day Adventism, which emerged out of Millerism after 1844, is a product of its times.

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“The year 1844, instead of 1843, was arrived at by Apollos Hale, Sylvester Bliss, and others, through the correction of a one-year error in computation from B.C. to A.D. dates. The month and day, worked out chiefly by Samuel Snow, were selected because (1) the expectation of the Advent was based chiefly on the calculation of the twenty-three hundred days (counted as years) according to the prophecy ‘Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed’ (Dan 8:14); (2) the annual ritual cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary took place on the tenth day of the seventh month, called the Day of Atonement (see Lev 16: 16-19, 29-34); and (3) this Jewish calendar date was computed—not according to the current Jewish calendar, but according to an older form attributed to the Karaite Jews—as the equivalent of October 22 in 1844.” Don F. Neufeld, and Julia Neufeld, 1976. *Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopaedia, Commentary Reference Series Vol. 10:1337*.

This small group of believers claimed that “...something did happen on October 22, but it was not the second advent.” The two major questions they set out to answer, therefore, were “(1) What did happen on October 22, 1844? And (2) What was the sanctuary that needed to be cleansed?” It was concluded that the sanctuary that Daniel referred to was not the earth or the church, but the sanctuary in heaven. Their findings can be summarised as follows: “(1) A literal sanctuary exists in heaven; (2) the Hebrew sanctuary system was a complete visual representation of the plan of salvation that was *patterned after the heavenly sanctuary*; (3) just as the earthly priest had a two-phase ministry in the wilderness sanctuary, so Christ has a two-phase ministry in the heavenly. The first phase began in the holy place at His ascension; the second began on October 22, 1844, when Christ moved from the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary to the second. Thus the antitypical or heavenly day of atonement began on that date; (4) the first phase of Christ’s ministry dealt with forgiveness, the second deals with the blotting out of sins and the cleansing of both the sanctuary and individual believers; (6) Christ would not return to earth until His second-apartment ministry was completed.” George Knight, 1993a:21 & 23.

These findings became the foundational basis of what later became known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

3 Plantak, 1998:39, and Knight, 2000a:39.

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century there was a religious “awakening” in Europe as well as in North America, known as the “Great Awakening”. Among other factors this awakening was stimulated by the French Revolution, especially when Napoleon’s general Berthier deposed Pope Pius VI,<sup>4</sup> and also motivated by natural disasters, such as the great Lisbon earthquake in the year 1755.<sup>5</sup> These caused a real stir among theologians and focused their attention on the apocalyptic prophecies.

Then the immigration of the Dutch, the French Huguenots and the Moravians also brought Pietism to America, which also focused the attention on religious matters.

## **2.1 The religious-socio-political world of 19<sup>th</sup> century America**

The socio-political world of North America was in a state of great flux. Knowledge was increasing at an alarming rate and brought with it better modes of transport, new methods of communication and also an industrialisation of society.

The political stage was very much one of optimism and prosperity known as the “era of good feelings”. There was a sense of individualism and the hope of an ideal democracy.<sup>6</sup> The spiritual arena was one of revival, and a renewed focus on the Bible, which was partly “...a reaction against the atheistic or agnostic philosophies of the age”.<sup>7</sup> There was also a drive to “...restore the original simplicity and purity of the New Testament faith”.<sup>8</sup> Thus, many missionary and other societies were formulated and there was what the historians have called, the “Second Great Awakening”.<sup>9</sup>

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4 On February 15, 1798, General Berthier entered Rome with a French army, dethroned the Pope, and abrogated the Papal government. See also F.D. Nichol, (Ed.). 1977. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol. 4:52*.

5 It was an earthquake that “...extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the West Indies, in the island of Madeira, in Norway and Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland”. E.G. White, 1950. *The Great Controversy:304*.

6 Damsteegt, 1977:8-11, and A.G. Mustard, 1987. *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development:13*.

7 Mustard, 1987:16.

8 Mustard, 1987:16.

9 Mustard, 1987:17.

This awakening, within the context of the social and political upheaval, reminded people of the biblical description of the end of the world and introduced a millennial frenzy. Knight, quoting Ernest Sanders, puts it this way: American Christians “...were drunk on the millennium...”<sup>10</sup> during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This millennial focus on promise and hope brought with it a wave of personal and social reform that was aspiring to bring about a perfect social order that would usher in the millennium of Revelation 20.

This optimistic millennial teaching was awakened by a renewed study of prophecy which was influenced by the results of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, the recent natural disasters and the American Revolution. The Puritans even went so far as to view “...their settlement as God’s new Israel, a ‘wilderness Zion’”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, there was a renewed interest in the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. It also emphasised optimism, human freedom and prosperity.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, this led to a postmillennial teaching, wherein ministers such as Charles Finney propagated that through human effort the human race can improve. It claimed that “...the soon coming millennium would be a thousand years of earthly peace and plenty brought about by social reform, national progress, and personal perfection”.<sup>13</sup> This prosperity gospel that had overtaken North America also stimulated Americans in the political realm.<sup>14</sup>

Undergirding such perspectives were the extremely positive evaluations of human nature and a concept of the infinite perfectibility of humanity that the nineteenth century inherited from the previous century’s Enlightenment. In other words, social and religious leaders believed that, in spite of a rather brutish past, recent political and technological breakthroughs had begun to provide the machinery for the creation of heaven on earth, with the United States leading the way.<sup>15</sup>

Postmillennialists applied Scripture in “...a spiritual sense and referred them to an age of gradual improvement, social betterment, and the triumph of Christianity in the world in its present state”.<sup>16</sup> It was their understanding, very much in line with modernism and

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10 G.R. Knight, 1993b. *Millennial Fever and the end of the world*:15.

11 Damsteegt, 1977:6.

12 Damsteegt, 1977:9-11.

13 Knight, 1993b:18.

14 Knight, 1993b:19.

15 Knight, 1993b:19.

16 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:886.

progressivism, that human effort could effectively improve the human condition. The emphasis was to increase numbers and to provide quality education so as to “Christianise” the world along with many other social reform movements.<sup>17</sup> Thus, they were often involved in evangelism and social reform, so as to build the “ideal social institution” or “ideal community”.<sup>18</sup> “Postmillennialism, therefore, is assumed to be optimistic and active.”<sup>19</sup>

The evangelistic emphasis during this time period, was that the “...individual and community could do something to bring about religious transformation”,<sup>20</sup> which would culminate in the millennium. The popular eschatological position of American Protestantism was that the hope of the world was not in a sudden “supernatural” intervention, but rather through a gradual social, moral and spiritual reform, culminating with the spiritual reign of Christ, thus referred to as “postmillennialism”. What was more was that their understanding of the millennium within prophecy was that it applied to their time and that God was establishing this thousand-year kingdom of peace and prosperity in the promised land of America.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, opposed to this postmillennial advent were the premillennialists. For this group of millennialists the world was progressively getting worse. They maintained that no human effort or intervention would help or “...hurry the course of providential history, and that ‘supernatural’ intervention alone can halt the downward course of history by breaking across it”.<sup>22</sup> They taught that human beings could not do anything to change or help the world, hence their resigned view of any kind of human-initiated advance in social or moral reform.<sup>23</sup> Premillennialists held to the belief that the advent of Christ would take place prior to the millennium and thus, He would bring an end to sin and suffering in this world. This and this alone was the hope for a world trapped in sin and degradation. Consequently, they had little or no room for a ministry that was involved in social reform.

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17 Damsteegt, 1977:8-11.

18 R.A. Doan, 1987. *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture*:15.

19 Doan, 1987:14.

20 Doan, 1987:13.

21 Plantak, 1998:42.

22 Doan, 1987:13.

23 Plantak, 1998:11.

What was more was that the 19<sup>th</sup> century also fostered “...individualism and its accompanying self-reliance”, later known to historians as the “...age of the common man or the Jacksonian era”.<sup>24</sup> The mind-set of this era was that people did not need to be trained or to be qualified to run for public office, practice medicine, or do theology. “Every person could exercise his or her God-given talents.”<sup>25</sup> This made it possible for a person like Miller, an unqualified theologian, to teach on theological matters without questions being raised.

According to Knight a “common-sense” philosophy also prevailed which was closely related to this view point. It avoided any kind of complicated explanations focusing on the “facts” (including biblical facts) as viewed by the person on the street.<sup>26</sup> This set the tone for Miller, who approached the Bible as a “self-interpreting book”<sup>27</sup> for all to understand.

Thus, the mind set of 19<sup>th</sup> century America was that prosperity, peace and hope were at hand. It held that as society improved and reform reached its fullness, a millennium of peace would come to pass, thus opening doors for reform and change. Challenging this view were those who claimed that there was almost no hope for any kind of reform. It was their understanding that humans were steeped in sin and would only become more and more degraded, and only a “supernatural” intervention would bring about any significant change. The depression of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also served to strengthen *this view and this approach tended to close the door for any kind of pastoral care, focusing on emotional healing.*

## **2.2 Worldviews influencing the American Protestant world**

There were some prominent schools of thought and theological orientations that had a very profound impact on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Protestant world of North America, in which Adventism was born. For this research, I focus on those factors that have influenced the advent movement predominantly, especially a theology of caring.

Mustard, in his research, “James White and SDA Organisation: Historical development, 1844-1881”, refers to revivalism, perfectionism, Puritanism, Congregationalism and

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24 Knight, 1993b:37.

25 Knight, 1993b:37.

26 Knight, 1993b:37.

27 Knight, 1993b:38.



denominationalism as distinguishing influential factors for the “Millerite” movement. The present research, however, focuses on Restorationism, Wesleyanism, Deism, the Puritan influence, as well as Baconianism. I am doing so, because it is my opinion in the research that these have note-worthy implications for a pastoral care ministry within Adventism, or the lack thereof.

### **2.2.1 Anabaptism and Restorationism**

19<sup>th</sup> century Protestantism was a child of the Reformation, according to Knight. Snyder, however, points out that although Luther is most often viewed as the most influential theologian of the Reformation, it was the Anabaptist and Radical Reformers who profoundly influenced American Protestantism.<sup>28</sup>

Anabaptism was born during the time of the Reformation, “...an unwanted and unloved ‘stepchild’ of the mainline reformers, all of whom disavowed responsibility for their unruly offspring”.<sup>29</sup> Martin Luther and some of the other mainline reformers considered this group to be heretics and still others viewed them as sincere and pious.<sup>30</sup>

The Anabaptists took the Reformation further than the mainline reformers, claiming that the entire New Testament had to be brought back into the church before God would respond with the Advent, an ideological aspiration driven by Pietism. They are known by historians as the “Radical Reformation”. They taught that it was the duty of the church to restore the entire NT, all the teaching of Scripture, and not only parts as they believed Luther and the mainline reformers did. It was their conviction that it was the church’s duty to restore God’s will to its fullness. They critiqued Luther and his approach to Scripture, “...appealing to the necessity of reading the letter of Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>31</sup> This approach had consequences for that which was to follow, for “...if biblical truth is known by the letter and the spirit together, anyone graced with the Holy Spirit will be able to interpret the Scripture correctly”.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, their aim was to “...move away from churchly tradition

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28 C.A. Snyder, 1995. *Anabaptists History and Theology*:5.

29 Snyder, 1995:1.

30 Snyder, 1995:1.

31 Snyder, 1995:43.

32 Snyder, 1995:43.

and creedal formulations and shift toward the ideals of the New Testament church”:<sup>33</sup> That is, back to what they considered to be a true understanding of the Scriptures.<sup>34</sup>

The Radical Reformers also viewed human beings as being utterly sinful in desperate need of salvation. They differed with Luther who claimed that salvation was through “faith alone”. According to the Radical Reformers this salvation came by the power and grace of God and set sinners on the path to sanctification. There was no room for social involvement, but rather “...they held that God’s grace opened up the possibility of choice, for the sinner: God’s grace enabled sinners to choose freely either the path of salvation, or the path of perdition”.<sup>35</sup> This had far reaching implications for that which was to follow in American Protestantism and Adventism.

This move towards restoration which permeated almost all evangelical denominations is known as Restorationism. According to Knight, it set the stage for the theological agenda of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Restorationists believed that it was their task to complete the unfinished reformation. According to them, “...the Reformation began in the sixteenth century but would not be completed until the last vestiges of tradition were gone and the teachings of the Bible ... were firmly in place in the church”.<sup>36</sup> Knight goes on to point out that the largest impact that the Restorationists made was their attitude towards “...getting back to the Bible”.<sup>37</sup> Biblical evidence was of utmost importance for them and the Bible was their guide in faith and practice.

Knight also points out that although the belief that salvation is through grace alone came from mainline reformers, the theological orientation of Adventism is not found in the reformation, but rather with the Anabaptists or the Radical Reformers. Thus, for our study, an important branch of this movement according to Knight was the “Christian Connexion”.<sup>38</sup>

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33 Knight, 2000a:30.

34 See Snyder, 1995:159-176.

35 Snyder, 1995:44.

36 Knight, 2000a:31.

37 Knight, 2000a:31.

38 “CHRISTIAN CONNEXION, or CHRISTIANS, sometimes erroneously pronounced *Christ*-ians. This is a religious denomination of recent origin in the United States of America, and among the last that has arisen, which, from its numbers and character, has attained much consideration and influence. Its beginning may be dated about the year 1800; and the circumstances attending its rise and progress are somewhat peculiar. This sect recognizes no individual as its leader or founder. They have no Calvin, or Luther, or Wesley to

This is of significance because J. Himes, J. Bates and J. White, prominent leaders in Millerism and Sabbatarian Adventism, were members of this movement. Much of what they propagated within Adventism had its roots within Restorationism. Thus, Restorationism made an impact on Seventh-day Adventism in the way they practised theology and the way they viewed and used the Scriptures.<sup>39</sup> It also had far reaching influences for anthropology within Adventism.

### 2.2.2 Wesleyanism

Methodism was a very prominent denomination in America and one of the most rapidly growing denominations during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They opposed Calvinism's predestination and propagated a "free will"-oriented gospel—salvation was available to all people rather than to a predestined group.

Methodism taught that people had a free will and that they were able to choose, act and make a difference. "Seventh-day Adventism was born with such Methodist understandings

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whom they refer as an authority for articles of faith and rules of practice. The denomination seems to have sprung up almost simultaneously in different and remote parts of the country, without any preliminary interchange of sentiments or concerted plan of action. Their leading purposes, at first, appear to have been, not so much to establish any peculiar and distinctive doctrines, as to assert, for individuals and churches, more liberty and independence in relation to matters of faith and practice, to shake off the authority of human creeds and the shackles of prescribed modes and forms, to make the Bible their only guide, claiming the right for every man the right to be his own expositor of it, to judge, for himself, what are its doctrines and requirements, and in practice, to follow more strictly the simplicity of the apostles and primitive Christians.

This, then, more than any other, appears to be the distinctive principle of the Christian denomination. Holding the belief to be indispensable, that the Scriptures were given by inspiration, that they are of divine authority, and that they are the only sufficient rule for the moral government and direction of man, they maintain that every man has the right to be his own interpreter of them, and that diversity of sentiment is not a bar to church fellowship, while the very basis of other, or most sects, and their condition of communion, seems to be an agreement to a particular interpretation of the Bible, a concurrence of sentiment in relation to its doctrines. With these views, the Christian connexion profess to deprecate what they consider an undue influence of a mere sectarian spirit, a tenacious adherence to particular dogmas, as an infringement of Christian liberty, as adverse to the genius of the gospel and the practical influence of true religion. They maintain that this spirit enters too much into the principles and regulations by which religious bodies are generally governed." Joshua V. Himes, 1838. *Fessenden & Co.'s Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: Or, Dictionary of the Bible, Theology, Religious Biography, All Religions, Ecclesiastical History, and Missions*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/acampbell/DOC-ERK.HTM> >.

39 "All in all, the Christian Connexion made an extremely large impact on both Millerite Adventism and later Sabbatarian Adventism. Beyond general thinking patterns, two examples will have to suffice. The first is that Bates, the apostle of the Sabbath, would frame the seventh-day Sabbath as one of the things that needed to be restored to the church before Christ could return (SDA [1847], 60). A second is that Bates and White brought anti-trinitarianism into Adventism from their Restorationist background. Certain Restorationists pointed out that the Bible nowhere used the word 'Trinity.'" Knight, 2000a:32-33.

at its heart.”<sup>40</sup> Knight points out that Wesleyanism made an impact on Seventh-day Adventism through E G White. Mustard supports this and asserts that most ministers in the Millerite movement had been Methodists, thus many of the Millerite practices were adopted from Methodism.<sup>41</sup>

John Wesley’s concept of “sanctification” influenced Adventism in an immense way. For Wesley the Reformation concept of justification by faith was acceptable, but he went further and emphasised sanctification as a process of growth, becoming more like Jesus. “To him, justification was the work of a moment while sanctification was the work of a lifetime.”<sup>42</sup> With regard to this work of a lifetime, Knight points out the following:

Wesley also emphasized Christian perfection of character. But his understanding was not the medieval/monastic concept of perfection as ultimate or absolute sinlessness in which one reached a certain state and never changed, but rather the dynamic biblical concept in which one lived in a growing state of perfect love toward God and other people.<sup>43</sup>

This has many undertones for social reform and a theology of caring, for as people become more like Christ, it is implied that their social problems are automatically taken care of. Consequently, there is no need to address humanitarian or social issues: You simply lead people into a closer relationship with Christ. This is according to what Wesley said: “Church or no church, we must save souls.”<sup>44</sup>

### **2.2.3 Deism**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was not only a time of religious restoration and reform as there were also those who questioned religious and scriptural authority. The American world was also confronted with the very powerful but questionable Deism, with its focus on reason rather than revelation.

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40 Knight, 2000a:33.

41 Mustard, 1987:26.

42 Knight, 2000a:33.

43 Knight, 2000a:33.

44 John Wesley, as quoted by Mustard, 1987:26.

Deists were very suspicious of revelation, miracles and the “supernatural”, and they crowned reason as their authority. Deist philosophy was very influential in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as logic and rationality were the order of the day.

For a time Miller had turned to Deism and then later converted back to Christianity. This is important for the research as Deism left its mark on the searching, enquiring mind. “Miller would eventually utilise this logical approach in his study of the Bible.”<sup>45</sup> This is reflected in statements he made, when expressing his experience with the Bible as being a “feast of reason”.<sup>46</sup> He had a strong tendency to focus on the cold, hard, mathematical, historical facts found in Scripture. Thus, Knight points out that Deism, in a way, had made an impact on Adventism. Consequently, Miller’s tendency was to direct the “truths” of Scripture at people’s intellect rather than at their emotions.<sup>47</sup>

No doubt this approach down-played mystery, awe and wonder and focused the attention on an intellectual cognitive approach to Scripture and people. As Thompson maintains, the Bible was viewed more as a “codebook” rather than a “casebook”.<sup>48</sup> This objective approach made an impact on a theology of caring and a rational reading of Scripture, not leaving much room for any other approach, but tending to focus on “objective truth”.

#### **2.2.4 Puritanism**

The Puritans had a marked influence on shaping of 19<sup>th</sup> century thought, and also on Protestantism, through their emphasis on Biblical authority and the observance of the law particularly emphasising the importance of strict Sabbath observance.<sup>49</sup>

Knight points out that they have been the only Christian church up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that has placed such a profound emphasis on “sabbatarianism”.<sup>50</sup> To them this observance and

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45 Knight, 2000a:34.

46 William Miller, as quoted by Knight, 2000a:34.

47 Knight, 2000a:34.

48 See Alden Thompson, 1991. *Inspiration. Hard Questions, Honest Answers*:98-136.

49 Knight, 2000a:35.

50 For the Puritans this Sabbath observance was the strict observance of the first day of the week, or what they called the “Lord’s Day”. See Knight, 2000a:35.

total “...obedience was an eternal sign of their faithfulness”, having “...covenantal overtones that implied a whole way of life, as well as faithfulness to God”.<sup>51</sup>

Eventually many of the lofty ideals of the Puritans transcended Puritanism itself and infiltrated mostly all of Christianity. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century “...sabbatarianism had become as much a social and political concern as it was a church issue”.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the importance of the Seventh-day Sabbath observance was regarded very favourably by the Sabbatarian Adventists.

According to Mustard the Puritan influence on Adventism was their emphasis on the balance that needed to be maintained between the intellect and emotions. There was a restraint placed on making decisions based on emotions only. Converts were expected to “...make intellectual decisions”.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the focus was directed more to the head (the intellect) than to the heart (the emotion or intuition).

He also pointed out that they regarded “regeneration in the life of the believer” as being of paramount importance.<sup>54</sup> A profound emphasis was placed on a changed life-style, and to live in accordance with the teachings of Scripture. Puritanism and Wesleyanism with their pietistic overtones, therefore, had far reaching consequences for Seventh-day Adventism and a caring ministry.

### **2.2.5 Baconianism**

Baconianism (logical deduction, involving rational inferences from general principles) and the Enlightenment also had their impact on Adventism. The theory of a *methodical* scientific mode of the study of the natural world was a popular way of knowing and understanding reality.<sup>55</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans were greatly influenced by Bacon’s philosophy and it also had some bearing on their method of approaching the Scriptures.

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51 Knight, 2000a:35.

52 Knight, 2000a:35.

53 Mustard, 1987:22.

54 Mustard, 1987:22.

55 To be researched in more detail in chapter four.

It emphasised the need to approach the Bible in a logical, methodical and deductive way that would lead to *true* insight and understanding. It also allowed, in a sense, however, for inductive methods to be employed, through the introduction of natural signs and historical events to prove the fulfilment of prophecies.

It propagated the necessity to “...gather all the relevant biblical facts on a topic”,<sup>56</sup> to ensure a “correct” interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon. No doubt this opened the door for Miller’s mathematical approach to prophecy and the calculation of prophetic time periods with greater accuracy, along with the application of historical facts. This, along with the Restorationists and the Reason of Deism, influenced Adventist theology and *a limited narrative approach to Scripture*.

### **3 Millerism and Seventh-day Adventism**

The religious and socio-political worldview of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century was the setting within which Seventh-day Adventism was born and began to grow. The metanarratives that I have discussed above are the decidedly influential discourses that made an impact on Adventism.

It was in this 19<sup>th</sup> century world where Millerism, the predecessor of Seventh-day Adventism, came to its own. It was Millerism that laid the ground work for what eventually became the Seventh-day Adventist movement. Miller’s apocalyptic eschatology, his understanding of the first and second angel of Revelation 14, the Seventh-month movement and what came to be known as the “Great Disappointment”, formed the foundation for Seventh-day Adventism. Thus, it is very important that Millerism needs to be researched in more detail.

At the outset it is important to mention that Millerism was not a radically exclusive movement. Miller and Millerism “...was not radically different but rather it was essentially orthodox”<sup>57</sup> and traditional. Knight, quoting David Rowe, indicates that the “Millerites are not fascinating because they were so different from everyone else but because they were so

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56 Knight, 2000a:36.

57 Knight, 1993b:21.

like their neighbours”.<sup>58</sup> Miller’s teachings had an impact and found no resistance as he was very much at home and in line with the philosophy of the day. The only real major difference in his teaching was the emphasis on a premillennial advent as opposed to the popular postmillennial advent, and it is this difference that has implications for the research.

It, however, would be “...a mistake to assume that every religiously oriented American had established a clear loyalty to either premillennialism or postmillennialism”.<sup>59</sup> Millerites, however, were persuaded that a “supernatural” intervention was the only hope for this world. So, they rejected the notion that human beings could act as agents that would bring about any meaningful moral change to the earth or society. On the contrary, they sought to substitute the postmillennialist doctrines that gave power to “humans”, with “...a doctrine that gave all power to God”.<sup>60</sup> Although postmillennialists, however, refused to believe that their views left God out of the equation. They claimed to be opponents of the Millerite “supernaturalism”, but not opponents of Christianity. “They believed, rather, that ‘God is pleased to employ human agency’ in ‘fulfilling his design to enlighten and reform mankind.’”<sup>61</sup> Miller, however, contended that the imminent and personal return of Christ and the new heaven and new earth alone would bring in everlasting peace and glory and take care of all the ills of humanity.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.1 Miller—his message and mission**

Miller was an avid reader and an industrious student, and in his study of the Bible he became rather perplexed and perturbed over what seemed to be conflicts and contradictions in the Bible.<sup>63</sup> As he continued to gain understanding and pursue knowledge, his inquiries led him to a group of Deists, whose ideas he accepted.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, he turned to Deism, “...concluding that the Bible was the product of designing men—a creation of crafty fabrication rather than a system of revealed truth”.<sup>65</sup>

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58 Knight, 1993b:22.

59 Doan, 1987:14.

60 Doan, 1987:74.

61 Doan, 1987:74.

62 Doan, 1987:78

63 L-R.E. Froom, 1954. *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. Vol. 6:456.

64 Mustard, 1987:34.

65 Froom, 1954:457.



Miller's contact with people throughout his various careers led him to become totally distrustful of all humans and "...thoroughly disgusted with the sinful character of [people]".<sup>66</sup> By the end of his two years in the infantry, as an officer in the second war against Britain, he also had become disillusioned with the Deistic principles because of human atrocities.<sup>67</sup> He then began deliberating on how a "...just Being [God] could constantly save the violators of law and justice. Neither nature nor providence revealed an answer. Only the Bible professed to be a revelation from God, and to offer a solution."<sup>68</sup> From here on forward Miller's passion was to find and know God's plan for the human race. To find answers to his searching quest, he turned to the Bible, which soon became his delight—"...a solid rock in the midst of the swirling stream of life".<sup>69</sup>

The nagging questions, however,—“how could he know it to be true?” “How could he be sure of revealed truth?”—kept on plaguing him, thereby, influencing his approach to the Scriptures. He, therefore, turned to a methodical, scientific, calculated understanding of Scripture to obtain certainty.

Miller's return to the study of the Bible and his conversion to Christianity was not all plain sailing; it brought with it attacks from his former Deist friends. When he was questioned and taunted by these unbelieving friends, he would answer, "...give me time ... and I will harmonize these apparent contradictions".<sup>70</sup> To one such Deist friend he said the following:

...if the Bible was the word of God, everything contained therein might be understood, and all its parts be made to harmonize; and I said to him that if he would give me time, I would harmonize all these apparent contradictions to my own satisfaction, or I would be a Deist still.<sup>71</sup>

So, it was this challenge that drove him into a mechanistic and exhaustive study of the Bible.

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66 Froom, 1954:458.

67 Mustard, 1987:34.

68 Froom, 1954:459.

69 Froom, 1954:462.

70 Froom, 1954:462.

71 As quoted by Mustard, 1987:34, in footnote 2.

### 3.1.1 The imminent advent: The hope of the world

Miller, contrary to the popular understanding of the day, was convinced that the Bible did not support the idea that Christ would have a “spiritual reign” over the earth through the church.<sup>72</sup> Miller, as I have noted, rather held to the premillennialist’s<sup>73</sup> view of the advent, expecting Christ to return before the millennium.

Miller was convinced that Christ was going to

...descend to this earth, coming in the clouds of heaven, in all the glory of his Father: ... that at his coming the bodies of all the righteous dead will be raised, and all the righteous living be changed from corruptible to an incorruptible, from a mortal to an immortal state, that they will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and will reign with him forever in the regenerated earth: ... that the bodies of the wicked will then all be destroyed, and their spirits be reserved in prison until their resurrection and damnation: and that when the earth is thus regenerated, the righteous raised, and the wicked destroyed, the kingdom of God will have come, then his will will be done on earth as it is done in heaven, that the meek will inherit it, and the kingdom become the saints.<sup>74</sup>

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72 White, 1950:321: “The idea of gradual moral regeneration was strongly criticized by William Miller. The concept, he said, was incongruous with the testimony of Dan. 7 in which verse 11 pictures a ‘sudden destruction by *fire*,’ verse 13 suggests Christ’s return, verse 25 provides “an allusion to the sudden destruction of the fourth kingdom,” and verse 26 shows ‘a judgment setting, and a taking away of the fourth kingdom first, not wearing away.’ A Millerite editorial stated that the concept of a gradual introduction of the kingdom of God on earth was in contradiction to Peter’s testimony regarding the judgment of the present earth (2 Pet. 3:5 - 10) at the second advent (2 Tim. 4:1) when the Resurrection would take place (1 Thes. 4:16).” Damsteege, 1977:62 & 63.

73 “The Millerite view was a distinct departure from the popular millennialism of that time.” There were the premillennialists; (this is the view that the Second Advent precedes the millennium). They are also known as “Literalists”, holding to very a literal interpretation of the prophecies. “The Literalist premillennialists interpreted these prophecies literally and expected the second advent to inaugurate a reign not only of resurrected saints but also of mortals on earth. This earthly kingdom was pictured as the ‘iron-rod rule’ of Christ, under which the Jews would rule and teach the ‘nations’ from literal Jerusalem, where the Temple and the sacrifices would be restored, until the final revolt and destruction of the rebellious nations at the end of the millennium. The Millerites, rejecting the position of both these groups, emphatically declared: The only Millennium found in the word of God, is the thousand years which are to intervene between the first and second resurrections, as brought to view in the 20<sup>th</sup> of Revelation (Fundamental Principles, as printed in *The Western Midnight Cry*, 2:65, Feb. 10 1844.)” Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:886. It was “*Resolved*, that we regard the notion of a Millennium previous to the coming of Christ, when all the world, shall be converted, and sinners in great multitudes saved, as a fearful delusion, ... and that the nearer such a millennium is represented, the more dangerous is its tendency, because the more likely to encourage present impenitence, with the hope of future conversion to God. *Resolved*, that no portion of the New Testament scriptures give[s] the most indirect intimation of the literal restoration of the Jews to old Jerusalem; we believe that the arguments drawn from the Old Testament prophecies are based on a mistaken view of those prophecies; and that they have been fulfilled in what the gospel had already done, or remain to be fulfilled in the gathering all the spiritual seed of Abraham into the New Jerusalem. ... *Resolved*, That the notion of a probation [opportunity for conversion] after Christ’s coming, is a lure to destruction, entirely contradictory to the word of God, which positively teaches that when Christ comes the door is shut, and such as are not ready can never enter in”. Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:896. See also Knight, 1993b:17-21.

74 William Miller as quoted by Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:895 and see also Knight, 1993b:17.

His tendency was to focus on the prophetic books of Scripture, in particular the apocalyptic books, believing that these revealed “...times and seasons ... and in time ... all would be accomplished”.<sup>75</sup> This led Miller towards a very powerful apocalyptic eschatological approach to his message and mission.

The Millerites also taught, “...the generally received view that the earth is the sanctuary, and believed that the cleansing of the sanctuary [spoken of in Daniel] represented the purification of the earth by fire at the coming of the Lord”.<sup>76</sup> They taught that this cleansing referred to purification rather than a destruction of the earth. It was to produce “...a finer earth, cleansed by the burning, [that] would become the home of Christ and his saints”.<sup>77</sup>

This literal personal Second Advent message was the central thrust of the Millerites. So, their message was predominantly an apocalyptic-eschatology, which focused on the imminent Second Advent and the pending judgment. They were very much opposed to a social gospel, thus, they did not get involved in any social reform except for Joshua Himes,<sup>78</sup> who from time to time promoted such reform. “They found neither time nor energy to ‘waste’ on matters of earthly existence. ... Even less were ... such issues as human rights or social welfare”<sup>79</sup> entertained. The focus of Millerite theology was a very strong evangelistic thrust, centred around the *parousia*—the imminent return of Christ. This emphasis excluded caring for the day-to-day struggles of humanity, and it focused rather all hope for any kind of reform, on a new world order, ushered in by Christ Himself through His second coming.

It is my understanding in the thesis that this theological focus set the tone for Seventh-day Adventism’s theology of mission, its worldview and its human consciousness. This has led to a marginalisation of addressing socio-ethical issues, as well as relationship and personal

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75 As quoted by H.S. Bird, 1961. *Theology of Seventh-day Adventism*:9.

76 White, 1950:352.

77 Doan, 1987:68.

78 Then Joshua V Himes, a public-relations genius, became inspired by the urgency of Miller’s prophetic message. Himes was a perpetual activist, active in radicalism during 1830s, participating in the abolitionist movement, which was despised by most. He participated in the founding of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, the New England Anti-Slavery Society, and his wife was a member of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. His “...participation in the reform movements had been an important part of his education. He had both seen and participated in methods for spreading knowledge and promoting action. Beyond that education, his natural abilities set him up for a leadership role in what he came to view as the ultimate cause”. Knight, 1993b:69 & 70.

79 Plantak, 1998:12.

problems. Adventism tends to promote a theology that focuses on an apocalyptic-eschatology with a “low”, insignificant anthropology. Because of this approach, if these issues are addressed at all in one form or another, they tend to be pragmatic and prescriptive.

### 3.1.2 A proclamation-oriented mission

Prior to 1844 the Millerite movement had a very strong drive to tell “the world” about the imminent coming of Christ. After Miller’s new-found understanding of the fulfilment of the prophecies he felt a strong conviction to warn the world. Accordingly, the evangelical drive of proclaiming the message of the advent to the world began with the biblical story of the ten virgins as the basis of their commitment and drive to preach the advent message. “Behold, the bridegroom is coming”<sup>80</sup> was the justification of the message that was preached with great commitment and passion.<sup>81</sup>

Their preaching, their publications and their evangelism were very much a one-sided focus on the proclamation of the second coming of Christ. There was no time for social involvement, the world was coming to an end, and that was the all-important message. Every effort was made to proclaim Miller’s message of the imminent Second Advent to the entire world.

“As a consequence of this urgency to prepare for the coming of Christ and owing to the self-awareness of being a movement raised by God to proclaim the three angle’s messages of Revelation 14 the great task of Adventism in the 1880s became *evangelism*” (italics added).<sup>82</sup> It was evident that their time, money, enthusiasm, ingenuity and energy were all utilised with great efficiency so as to achieve this one goal. The evangelistic zeal and strong belief in the imminent Second Advent, as the only hope for the world, are what sustained those who survived that which was to come. It also set the tone for the distinctive and basic character of the theology of Seventh-day Adventism.

Thus, the thesis concludes that Millerism was very much focused on the advent as the only hope for humanity. In Knight’s own words: “At Millerism’s very foundation was a

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80 Matthew 25:1-13.

81 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:896.

82 Plantak, 1998:40.

pessimism that human society would not achieve its grandiose schemes. Instead, the solution to the human problem would come through God's breaking into history at the second coming."<sup>83</sup> People were viewed as sinners incapable of change and improvement, thus, maintaining a very "low" anthropology. Only a very logical rational study of Scripture would lead to an understanding of a God whose coming was imminent to put an end to all human suffering.

### **3.2 Post 1844 and Adventism**

October 22, 1844, the date set by the Millerites for the coming of Christ,<sup>84</sup> brought great disappointment, confusion and division to the movement's ranks.<sup>85</sup>

A small group of people, however, continued to believe in the correctness of the prophetic message that had been preached by Miller. Consequently, they continued to study and tried to make sense and find meaning for what had happened with the disappointment of 1844. By finding a correlation between the prophecy of Daniel 8, Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9, they concluded that instead of Christ coming to destroy sin in 1844, He had entered into a new phase of ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Hence, it was their conclusion that 1844 was the beginning of what was known as the antitypical Day of Atonement within Adventism.

#### **3.2.1 The "shut and open" door and its significance for a theology of caring**

After the disappointment of 1844 "...about half of the Adventist group clung to their confidence that Christ would soon appear in the clouds of heaven".<sup>86</sup> It was their conviction that Christ had delayed His coming. They based this delay on the parable of "the ten virgins" of Matthew 25:1-13, where the bridegroom had tarried until midnight. As time passed and

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83 Knight, 1993b:20.

84 For a more detailed explanation of date setting see White, 1950:324-329, and also footnote 2 of this chapter.

85 See George R. Knight, 1994. *Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994*:10 & 11.

86 E.G. White, 1945. *Early Writings*:xv, xvi.

Christ still did not come, this remaining group of Adventists was divided into basically two groups<sup>87</sup>—a larger group and a small group of believers.<sup>88</sup>

The smaller group of Adventists, known as the “shut-door believers” and later as the “Sabbatarian Adventists”, and still later as the “Seventh-day Adventists”, was convinced that October 22, 1844 had brought about a close to the “Gospel Age”.

So strongly convinced was this core of Sabbatarian Adventists that Christ’s return was still imminent that they held to a ‘shut-door’ theory, that is, that the ‘door of salvation’ was now closed to all except those who had passed through ‘the great disappointment’.<sup>89</sup>

The significance of the “shut-door” theory was that all evangelistic efforts came to a halt. Based on the parable of “the *wise* and *foolish* virgins” of Matthew 25 it was viewed that the five wise virgins had entered the wedding feast and the door of salvation was now shut to the world.<sup>90</sup> It was regarded that all those who had rejected or turned away from the original

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87 “But as the days moved into weeks and the Lord did not appear, a division of opinion developed, and this group divided. One part, numerically larger, took the position that prophecy was not fulfilled in 1844, and that there must have been a mistake in reckoning the prophetic periods. They began to fix their attention on some specific future date for the event. There were others, a smaller group, the forefathers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, who were so certain of the evidences of the work of the Spirit of God in the great Advent Awakening that to deny that the movement was the work of the Lord would, they believed, do despite to the Spirit of grace. This they felt they could not do.” White, 1945:xvi.

88 The larger group of Adventists now claimed that “...nothing at all had happened on October 22, nothing to be worth mentioning in any salvation-historical sense”. They propagated that an error had been made in proclaiming that the advent of Christ was at hand and that unfortunately several thousands of people had experienced a severe disappointment due to this mistake. Thus, claiming that the research and findings of Miller had been faulty. This reasoning gathered momentum and led to the all important Albany conference that was held in New York, 29 - 30 April and 1 May. This Conference was the forum for this larger group of Adventists, those who went back to orthodoxy in reference to Gospel preaching. The Albany Conference also finalised the division between this larger group and the smaller group, labelling them as extremists. Lindén, 1982:17, 18.

89 M. Pearson, 1986. *Seventh-Day Adventist Responses to some Contemporary Ethical Problems*:6.

90 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:1034. “A minority continued to hold that the time had been correct; that the mistake had been in the nature of the prophetic fulfilment; that in October, 1844, the 2300 days had ended in the symbolic Day of Atonement and the parable had been fulfilled (though not in the way that they had expected); and therefore that the door of the parable – whatever it might mean – had been shut in fulfilment of the prophecy. To them the phrase ‘shut door’ was equivalent to the affirmation of belief that the ‘true midnight cry’ had been the climax of a God-given message and the 1844 movement had been led of God and permitted, in His providence, as a test of their consecration and willingness to be ready to meet their Lord. Naturally these regarded the majority, who had given up ‘the time,’ as turning their backs on the truth and denying the Lord’s leading in the ‘midnight cry.’” Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:1035.  
“After the passing of time when the Saviour was expected, they still believed His coming to be near; they held that they had reached an important crisis and that the work of Christ as man’s intercessor before God had ceased. It appeared to them to be taught in the Bible that man’s probation would close a short time before the actual coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. This seemed evident from those scriptures which point to a time when men will seek, knock, and cry at the door of mercy, and it will not be opened. And it was a question with them whether the date to which they had looked for the coming of Christ might not rather mark the beginning of this period which was immediately to precede His coming. Having given

advent message, were the foolish virgins, shut out from the feast, forever lost. Thus, all interaction, social as well as spiritual, was terminated, and not even the gospel was preached any more.

James White, a future leader of the SDA Church, was firmly convinced that “the bridegroom” had delayed His coming and that He would come in October 22, 1845. He was persuaded by the fact that the atonement had been completed in October 22, 1844. He stated: “It is vain for any man to deny that it was the universal belief of Adventists, in the autumn of 1844, that their work for the world was forever done.”<sup>91</sup> Consequently, “...he had no desire to perform any ‘gospel work’ for the world or the churches, which did not care for the ‘deluded Millerites’ anyway”.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, he maintained that the day of “God’s vengeance” had begun in October 22, 1844. White even went so far as to make public his view, “...that to marry at that point in time was to deny faith in the imminent second advent of Christ, which, he believed, would take place later that year”.<sup>93</sup>

Joseph Bates, another future leader of the SDA Church, and someone, who once was heavily involved in social reform, reasoned that it was no longer necessary to fight for the freeing of slaves or to oppose the use of liquor. He clearly believed that these problems would shortly be remedied when Christ returns.<sup>94</sup> There was also two “shut-door” theologians, Turner and Hale, that claimed that “...to labour for the conversion of the world, ‘the great mass of the world’ would mean ‘labour lost’ and be as futile as it would have been for the Israelites ‘when they were down at the Red Sea, to have turned about to convert the Egyptians’”.<sup>95</sup> (Both Turner and Hale, however, rejected this view a few months later and joined what was known as the “open-door” movement.) Thus, the Sabbatarian Adventists were not involved in social reform, and they also stopped preaching the Gospel and evangelising the world.

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the warning of the judgment near, they felt that their work for the world was done, and they lost their burden of soul for the salvation of sinners ... ‘the door of mercy was shut.’” White, 1950:429.

91 White as quoted by Mustard, 1987:104.

92 Lindén, 1982:25 & 26.

93 Pearson, 1986:20.

94 Pearson, 1986:344.

95 Lindén, 1982:20.

Ellen G. Harmon, later Ellen White, writes concerning this “shut-door” theory:

For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. ... It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.<sup>96</sup>

She goes on to say:

In order to prove that I believed and taught the shut-door doctrine, Mr. C gives a quotation from the *Review* of June 11, 1861, signed by none of our prominent members. The quotation is as follows:

‘Our view of the work before us were then mostly vague and indefinite, some still retained the idea adopted by the body of advent believers in 1844, with William Miller at their head, that our work for ‘the world’ was finished, and that the message was confined to those of the original advent faith. So firmly was this believed that one of our number was nearly refused the message, the individual presenting it having doubts of the possibility of his salvation because he was not in ‘the ‘44 movement’.’<sup>97</sup>

For some time they continued with “time-setting”, claiming that Christ was soon to come and spent a lot of time focusing on being ready for this event. This “shut-door” doctrine, however, was soon renounced and an “open-door” doctrine took its place. In time the group, along with James White, also renounced time-setting and within a year he was married to Ellen G. Harmon.<sup>98</sup> It did not take long before the view that they were not to bear witness to the world, began to crumble. For they were confronted with those wanting to join their ranks, those whom they had considered to be eternally lost, because they had not been part of the 1844 event.<sup>99</sup> Now, as these others wanted to join their ranks, they began to question the “shut-door” theory.

### 3.2.2 Sabbatarian Adventists and the Second Advent

Ellen G. Harmon began to move away from the “shut-door” theory to an “open and shut-door” understanding. By 1845 she was in agreement with Hiram Edson in his view on the cleansing of the Sanctuary.<sup>100</sup> According to her, based on further investigation of the

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96 E.G. White, 1958. *Selected Messages: Book One*:63.

97 White, 1958:64.

98 Pearson, 1986:20.

99 Pearson, 1986:6.

100 After midnight on October 22, 1844 the disappointed Edson and a friend went to encourage some of the other disappointed believers and as they crossed Edson field he “...suddenly stopped. As he stood there an overwhelming conviction came over him – ‘that instead of our High Priest *coming out* of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300



“sanctuary doctrine”,<sup>101</sup> they concluded that they were correct when they believed that it was the “2300 day” prophecy of Daniel 8 that ended in 1844. They, however, were incorrect with regard to the event of the second coming taking place in 1844.

It was in 1847 that she made the unique connection between the Day of Atonement and the High Priest entering the Most Holy with the shutting of the door.

While it was true that that door of hope and mercy by which men had for eighteen hundred years found access to God, was closed, another door was opened, and forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the Most Holy. One part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another. There was still an ‘open door’ to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ was ministering in the sinner’s behalf.<sup>102</sup>

So, it was that Edson and Harmon taught that Christ’s work in the sanctuary had not ended, but was continuing in another phase. They also taught, however, that this phase of ministry, this “open door”, would not last long and then Christ would return to the earth according to His predicted advent. So, there was not much effort dedicated to social issues, but again the focus was on proclamation.

As time passed they became convicted that the message of Christ’s advent was “...like streams of light that went clear around the world”.<sup>103</sup> This meant that by 1852 the zeal of the Millerite movement was resurrected and this little group of believers of some time ago began to grow in number. James White reported that by February there were “many” and by May “a large portion” of converts that had joined their ranks.<sup>104</sup> This marked the beginning of the missionary endeavour of Seventh-day Adventism, which was still more focused on proclamation than “nurture”, (the nurturing of people).

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days, he for the first time *entered* on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth. That he came to the marriage at that time [alluding to the parable of the bridegroom in Matthew 25; see ‘Midnight Cry’]; in other words, to the Ancient of Days, to receive a kingdom, dominion, and glory; and we must wait for his return *from the wedding*. ... That concept threw a floodlight upon their disappointment. Christ had indeed fulfilled what the type had actually called for. It would be a while before He would complete this cleansing of the sanctuary, and not until then would He come forth as King”. Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:413.

101 See White, 1950:409-422 for a detailed explanation of the “Sanctuary Doctrine”.

102 White, 1950:429 & 430.

103 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:1036.

104 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:1036.

It was round about this time that another very important doctrinal issue began to emerge. The focus of the fourth commandment became very relevant and the doctrine of the Sabbath was introduced. This doctrine was incorporated into the “sanctuary theology” through the writings of Bates and encouraged by Ellen G. White. It also began to form an integral part of their understanding, of what they called “the three angel’s messages” of Revelation 14:6-11, believing that the Sabbath was a sign between God and His people.<sup>105</sup> This newly found doctrine was also a motivating factor to start again with the evangelising of the world, for the Sabbath now had to be preached to the world, so that Christ would come.

Even now, however, they did not get involved in social reform; instead they propagated political neutrality and focused their efforts on proclaiming the Sabbath and the Second Advent, linking them with their new Sanctuary doctrine. Consequently, once again it became their mission to evangelise the world. The motivation for this evangelistic drive was, inter alia, to preach the gospel so that Christ could come, because “...this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world ..., and then the end will be” (Matt 24:14).

### **3.2.3 Early Seventh-day Adventism and the great advent hope**

The “...period (1844 - 1874) is of great importance because during it the distinctive and basic characteristics of Seventh-Day Adventism were formulated”.<sup>106</sup> A great deal of what they believed and taught and many of their methods were inherited from Millerism.

Miller’s Biblical hermeneutic also influenced early Seventh-day Adventism as they adhered to many, if not all, of his hermeneutical principles. The message and missionary zeal of the pre-1844 Millerites set the tone and gave the basic frame work for that which later developed into the SDA Movement.

As time passed and Christ did not come, the small group of believers who perpetuated Miller’s vision of the Second Advent of Christ also discovered the importance of the

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105 Bates “...argued that by keeping the Sabbath and the other nine commandments, God’s people would be ready to be sealed and only then could they be delivered by Him in the time of trouble”. Mustard, 1987:97.

106 Damsteegt, 1977:xv.

Sabbath doctrine<sup>107</sup> and grew in number. They became known as Seventh-day Adventists and were officially organised as a congregation in 1863. Having evolved out of Millerism, “...they followed a hermeneutical method derived from their 19<sup>th</sup>-century religious heritage”,<sup>108</sup> adopting the same approaches as Miller had for the Scriptures. They held to the same principles for interpreting the prophecies that undergirded Miller’s apocalyptic eschatology, remained premillennial in their approach to these prophecies, with one significant difference: The Millerites claimed that the saints would reign on earth during the millennium and “...the SDAs taught that the redeemed are in heaven during the millennium”.<sup>109</sup>

With this premillennial eschatological perspective SDAs held to the idea that this world was trapped in a vortex of evil, to which the establishment of God’s kingdom is the only answer. With the new understanding of the Sanctuary and Sabbath observance, the fundamental focus was still on the Second Advent of Christ, as the primary hope of sinful human beings. “The second coming of Christ [was and] is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, the focus of their message lay “...primarily in the ‘other world’ where God will take care of all social problems”.<sup>111</sup> Because of the imminence of the second coming they focused their attention, therefore, on the salvation of “souls” for the kingdom to come and *tend to minimise involvement in the daily needs of people*. They claim that it was their duty to “...announce the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaim salvation through Christ, and herald the approach of His second coming”.<sup>112</sup>

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107 “A distinctive feature of the SDA belief and practice is the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, in contrast with the almost universal Christian observance of Sunday. SDAs postulate their belief and practice on the explicit statements of Scripture setting apart the seventh day of the week as a day of rest, ...

The fundamental basis for SDA belief and practice with respect to the seventh-day Sabbath is the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, God’s moral law, which SDAs consider binding upon all men of all ages.” Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:1237.

108 Mustard, 1987:217.

109 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:886. “The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrection. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth.” *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs ... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988:362.

110 *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs ... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988:332.

111 Finucane, 1999:59.

112 *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs ... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 1988:152.

### 3.2.4 1888—A move from law to grace

The 1880s has been a very significant time in the history of Adventism, and it is also significant for this research. As Knight points out, this has been a time they have faced a new “identity crisis”.<sup>113</sup>

Until this time the emphasis was on doctrinal accuracy and correctness, and the teaching of the unique “truths” of Adventism.<sup>114</sup> “Adventists loved their message, with its distinctive doctrines of the second advent, the two-phase ministry of Christ, the Sabbath, and conditional immortality all nicely packaged in the eschatological framework of the heart of the book of Revelation.”<sup>115</sup> Knight maintains that in all of this they had lost sight of the Christian facet of their theology.<sup>116</sup> Then in the mid-1880s, taking their cue from the low spirituality of the members,<sup>117</sup> Ellen G. White, Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones addressed the problem and brought about a “...renewed emphasis on the plan of salvation”.<sup>118</sup> Whidden supports this when he states: “This revival, spearheaded by the Whites, Waggoner, and Jones after [the] 1888 Minneapolis conference, changed the face of Adventism, a change whose impact is definitely felt today.”<sup>119</sup>

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113 Knight, 2000a:90. See also Knight, 1994:11 & 12.

114 “Since nineteenth-century Adventism lived in a largely Christian culture, they tended not to emphasize those beliefs they held in common with other Christians. After all, why preach saving grace to Baptists, who already believed it? The important thing, so the logic ran, was to preach the distinctively Adventist truths so that people would doctrinally convert to Seventh-day Adventism.” Knight, 2000a:91.

115 Knight, 2000a:125.

116 Knight, 2000a:90.

117 Woodrow W. Whidden, 1998. *Salvation Pilgrimage. The Adventist Journey into Justification by Faith and Trinitarianism*:7.

118 Knight, 2000a:91. “The third angel’s message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus has not been proclaimed by the Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand.” As quoted by Knight, 2000a:108.

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men [humans], imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.” E.G. White, 1962. *Salvation Pilgrimage. The Adventist Journey into Justification by Faith and Trinitarianism*:91 & 92.

119 Whidden, 1998:7.

Waggoner, the foremost proponent of this renewal, “...believed that the only method of approaching God ... was through Christ”.<sup>120</sup> For Waggoner humans were sinful and Christ was their only hope and righteousness. He presented humans as “...being depraved and having no good thing in [them], and at the same time, Christ being the embodiment of goodness ...”<sup>121</sup> So, it was that White, Waggoner and Jones brought Luther’s *sola gracia* back into focus and the emphasis moved away from the “law” to “righteousness by faith”. At the same time this renewed emphasis received a lot of resistance from the older leaders like Uriah Smith and George Butler<sup>122</sup> who claimed that:

Perfect obedience to [the law] will develop perfect righteousness, and that is the only way any one can attain to righteousness. ... ‘Our righteousness’ ... comes from being in harmony with the law of God.<sup>123</sup>

For these traditionalists the key word was “obedience”.<sup>124</sup>

It was at the historic Minneapolis conference session of November 1888 that these ideas were thrashed out. It is this conference session that has “...become synonymous with the primacy of justification by faith. ... Mark[ing] a revival of genuine interest in the question of ‘righteousness by faith’”,<sup>125</sup> within Adventism.

Up until this point in time Adventism was overwhelmingly Arian or at least semi-Arian<sup>126</sup> in their theology, especially relating to the concepts of “legalism”, the “Trinity” and the divinity of Christ.<sup>127</sup> Whidden points out that “This Arianism was destroying the Seventh-day Adventist people with legalistic attitudes that were leading to a destructive spiritual

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120 E.C. Webster, 1984. *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology*:167.

121 Webster, 1984:172.

122 Knight, 2000a:101-103, and Whidden, 1998:5.

123 Knight, 2000a:103.

124 An editorial of Uriah Smith during January 1888. “In a January 3 piece he asserted that the Adventist pioneers sought to herald the last proclamation of the second advent and ‘to lead souls to Christ through obedience to this closing testing truth. This was the one objective point of all their efforts; and the end sought was not considered gained unless souls were converted to God, and led to seek through an enlightened *obedience* to all his commandments, a preparation for the Lord from heaven. ... The keeping of GOD’S SABBATH HOLY ... SAVES THE SOUL.” As quoted by Knight, 2000a:101 & 102.

125 Woodrow Whidden, 1998. *Salvation Pilgrimage. The Adventist Journey into Justification by Faith and Trinitarianism*:5.

126 “Arianism is the theological teaching of Arius ( AD 250–336), a Christian priest, who was first ruled a heretic at the First Council of Nicea, later exonerated and then pronounced a heretic again after his death. Arius basically held Christ to be inferior to God the Father in nature and dignity, though the first and noblest of all created beings, leading to a non-trinitarian conviction.” *Arianism* [website], available from: < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism> >.

127 Whidden, 1998:5 & 6.

condition in the church”.<sup>128</sup> Waggoner and Jones along with Ellen White began challenging it and introduced Trinitarianism into Adventism, affecting their Christology, introducing a renewed soteriology.

In this revived Christology, the divinity of Christ and the “in-working” of the Holy Spirit was established.<sup>129</sup> Waggoner was of the opinion that there was only one method of salvation and that was through faith in Christ Jesus, and this in both the OT and NT times.<sup>130</sup> He went on to teach that “...all of Adam’s posterity were [was] born into a state of sin”.<sup>131</sup> This included Christ, bearing the guilt and sin of humans, was inherently righteous and sinless.<sup>132</sup> He claimed that

Christ was ‘absolutely good, the embodiment of goodness, yet He was counted as a sinner.’ ... believing that [the] innocent assumed the crime of the guilty and the sinless One was made sin for us. ... Christ put Himself in the place of those who had violated the law and were under the condemnation of death and thus suffered the penalty of the law.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, Waggoner had a very “high view of the deity of Christ”,<sup>134</sup> and at the same time a very “low”, insignificant view of humanity.<sup>135</sup>

This was very important for Waggoner and significant for Adventism in that being sinners, humans may “...benefit by having Christ, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells, abide

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128 Whidden, 1998:6.

129 Webster, 1984:163-165, and Knight, 2000a:110-117.

130 “Waggoner believed that the only method of approaching to God in the Old Testament and New Testament times was through Christ. This also meant that the forgiveness in Old Testament times was real. He was convinced that God only has one method of salvation and Christ was that Saviour throughout. He believed that no one could build on anything except Christ. To depend on anything except Christ for justification is the rejection of Christ. Waggoner states that Christ was the One who spoke the ten commandments from Sinai and, therefore, He was the great Mediator of the law in Galatians 3. He also maintained that the term ‘until the seed should come’ (Galatians 3:19), not only applied to the first advent of Christ but to the second advent and thus for him the function of the moral law remained to lead men and women experientially to faith in Christ at all times.” Webster, 1984:167 & 168.

131 Webster, 1984:168.

132 Webster, 1984:169. “Christ was sinless; the law was in His heart. As the Son of God His life was worth more than those of all created beings, whether in heaven or on earth ... He took upon Himself our nature, Heb. 2:16, 17; and on Him was laid ‘the iniquity of us all.’ Isa. 53:6. In order to save us, He had to come where we were, or, in other words, He had to take the position of a lost sinner ... And because Christ was ‘numbered with the transgressors,’ He suffered the penalty of transgressors. But the suffering of Christ was not on His own account. ‘He did no sin, neither was guilt found in his mouth.’ 1Pet. 2:22.” E. J. Waggoner as quoted by Webster, 1984:169.

133 Webster, 1984:170.

134 Webster, 1984:179.

135 Webster, 1984:172.

in us and by faith in Him we can conquer as well”.<sup>136</sup> Webster points out that Waggoner’s Christology, which profoundly influenced Adventism, taught that Christ stooped to the level of sinners and resisted temptation, so we too as sinners may resist through the indwelling Christ who achieved victory for the sinner. Thus, the unrighteous sinner is made righteous through “justification by faith”.<sup>137</sup> “Christ brings the righteousness of the law into the heart of the sinner and transforms his [/her] life.”<sup>138</sup> The human suffering and social atrocities, caused by this “sin”, were not addressed in any meaningful way; the focus was rather on righteousness by faith.<sup>139</sup>

Now the emphasis was placed on bringing sinners to Christ as their righteousness, and teaching them about the distinctive doctrines of Adventism. As Paulien indicates that despite the power of the message of 1888 “...to this day Adventist distinctives tend to get more emphasis in most circles than does a living relationship with God”.<sup>140</sup> Their view of humans did not change. Still, they had a very “low” view of humanity, and little hope for any kind of social improvement. Consequently, human atrocities and suffering were not being addressed in any meaningful way, and, thus, no theology was developed to deal with humanitarian issues.

### **3.2.5 A search for identity after 1888**

From its earliest days the SDA movement focused on evangelism as its major task. It picked up where the Millerites left off and had a very strong evangelistic thrust to their ministry, which involved educational, medical and welfare ventures, as well as publishing periodicals and books.<sup>141</sup>

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136 Webster, 1984:184.

137 Webster, 1984:184-192.

138 Webster, 1984:189.

139 By this it is not implied that it is incorrect or problematic to have such a focus, but to point out that socio-political issues were marginalised.

140 J. Paulien, 1993. *Present Truth in the Real World: Adventists struggling to keep and share faith in a secular society*:67.

141 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:776.

Knight indicates that Adventism has “...one of the most ambitious mission outreach programs in the history of Christianity”.<sup>142</sup> For it is viewed that it is the task of Seventh-day Adventism to proclaim the last warning message of Revelation 14:6 to all the world; to preach the gospel “...to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people”. It is also a conviction of Adventism that the history of this world will not come to an end until this message has been preached throughout the earth. Subsequently, and only then, can the millennium commence. Knight asserts that this has been the driving force behind all missionary endeavours undertaken by Adventists.<sup>143</sup>

The early Adventist Church focused very much on the issue of preaching the gospel because the end was at hand. The focus was on the urgency of the time—Jesus was about to come and people needed to be ready. People had to be warned because the end was imminent. Yet, as time passed and months turned into years and years into decades, and as the church still focused on eschatology a shift took place. Eventually, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the focus moved from the end that was about to come, to the work that had to be done so that the end could come.<sup>144</sup>

To justify the validity of having an *organised* church body when maintaining a belief in the imminent Second Advent, and attempts to explain why the advent had not yet taken place, a change in emphasis took place. Daniells, the GC president, in 1902, stated (according to what Oliver told us):

I sometimes heard people give an exhortation after this fashion: they say, ‘The Lords is soon coming; we have consequently a very short time in which to work, therefore we must be greatly in earnest.’ Now I think that is a wrong statement of the matter altogether. If I understand it, the fact is this: we ought to be terribly in earnest in this work, that the message may speedily be given to all the [entire] world, that Jesus may soon come. When we get the fact burned into our hearts that Jesus cannot come until the world is warned with the message for this time, then, dear friends, we shall be earnest that the Gospel may be given, that Jesus may come.<sup>145</sup>

The emphasis was changed from preaching the gospel because time was short, to preaching the gospel in order to shorten the time, to hasten the return of Christ. As time passed, the

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142 G. R. Knight, 1995. *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist mission confronts the challenges of institutionalism and secularization*:57.

143 Knight, 1995:57 & 58.

144 See B.D. Oliver, 1989. *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future*:244 & 245.

145 Oliver, 1989:247.



emphasis progressively moved from preaching the gospel to every nation, to preaching the gospel to every tongue, and then to every person. The task of the church is, therefore, not to assist “hurting” societies or people, but to hasten the return of Christ.

Pearson takes this further and informs us that along with this task came the following:

...the tension produced by the dual imperatives, ‘Prepare to meet thy God,’ and ‘Occupy till I come.’ The tension is, however, heightened by a third duty the fulfilment of which characterizes the time of occupation, that is, the duty to preach the ‘everlasting gospel’ to ‘every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.’ With the broadening of the scope of the mission which Adventists perceived to be theirs, the advent became located in a more remote future. On the other hand, the vitality of the hope in the second advent has been maintained by portentous events in the world which are deemed, by Adventists, to herald the apocalypse.<sup>146</sup>

This tension, created by the delay in the advent, brought new challenges to the church.

Adventism, true to its premillennial view of the Second Advent, however, generally maintained very much a passive position with regard to social and human rights issues. “Human rights were not thought to be a believer’s concern at a time when Christ’s return was so near that they had to think about ultimate salvation for this corrupt and sinful world.”<sup>147</sup> The task of proclaiming the Second Advent of Christ, therefore, was of primary importance. According to Joseph Bates, a prominent leader within Adventism, the Second Advent was the ultimate cure for all the social injustices of his day, thus, it was to take precedence over all other activities. The proclamation has nearly always been considered a much higher priority than trying to address the symptoms of sin.<sup>148</sup> “The central goal of the nascent Seventh-day Adventist movement then became that of preaching the message of the second advent.”<sup>149</sup>

Plantak has pointed out, for instance, that during and between World War I and II the main concern was to survive the hardships and to “...stay faithful to the early literal second coming of Christ and the relevance of the doctrine of Sabbath”.<sup>150</sup> Spalding in his book,

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146 Pearson, 1986:345.

147 Plantak, 1998:39.

148 Plantak, 1998:39.

149 Robin Theobald, as quoted by Plantak, 1998:43.

150 Plantak, 1998:17.

*Origins and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, supports this when he stated: “...their sole purpose is to promulgate the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>151</sup> Plantak takes this even further when he points out that Adventism was inclined to be silent with regard to the persecution of the Jews during World War II, and also regarding the atrocities of apartheid in South Africa. On the other hand, he also indicates that despite the pursuit for political neutrality and remaining aloof regarding human rights issues, when encountering resistance to their Sabbath observance, they *used political means to achieve religious freedom*.<sup>152</sup>

The main thrust of Adventism, therefore, is to evangelise the world, to proclaim the “judgment hour” of God, to preach the “everlasting gospel”, and to announce the Second Advent of Christ. In their search for identity they were preoccupied with the challenge of the second coming. They did not have time to care for a lot of people with emotional and marriage problems that they were aware of. A theology of caring and social involvement was conspicuously absent or marginalised, especially at a time where so much was being done and needed to be done at the social reform level.

#### **4 Early Adventism’s view and use of Scripture**

As we have noted that Restorationism was a very powerful element within the American society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that gave Millerism an influential advantage. Its main philosophy and drive were to restore the Bible and “biblical truths” in the church.

It was their contention that the Bible had lost its authority during the medieval period and that the Reformation had started to reinstate the Bible as authoritative and normative, but that this reformation had to be carried through to its fulfilment. Restorationism also “...provided a religious perspective that tended to bypass such modes of authority as the church, tradition, philosophical speculation, and all human theories”.<sup>153</sup> The Bible, therefore, was a potent force within the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, being used to develop Christian doctrine. Of course, this paved the way for Miller as there was an openness to accept the emphasis that

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151 Spalding, as quoted by Plantak, 1998:17.

152 Plantak, 1998:13-16 & 40-42.

153 Knight, 1993b:38.

Millerism placed on biblical authority and the restoration of the “true” doctrine of the second coming.

#### 4.1 The Reformation and its impact

The Reformation brought about a fundamental change in the view and use of Scripture and the hermeneutical principles.

The Reformation introduced a renewed study of the Bible, and along with it the Renaissance brought about “...a process of liberation of the Western mind from superstition and prejudice ... authority and powers”.<sup>154</sup> Consequently, the Reformers began to read the Bible for themselves and encouraged other to do the same, because they claimed that it contained the message of salvation. “They no longer needed the church and its authority to tell them that it was the Word, because the Word itself was powerful, was convincing readers and listeners, was giving its own spiritual testimony, was self authenticating and was the Word of God itself, powerful unto salvation.”<sup>155</sup>

Thus, “The Reformation began with a reappraisal of the principles of biblical interpretation and grew into a revolt against current hermeneutics and the creation of new exegetical tools by which true biblical theology and NT Christianity could be restored”.<sup>156</sup> It was propelled by more than a superficial amendment or a mere restoration towards regeneration; a “...vast progress beyond any previous age or condition of the church since the death of St. John”.<sup>157</sup> The Reformation was a “...grand act of emancipation from the bondage of the mediaeval hierarchy and an assertion of that freedom wherewith Christ made us free. ... It removed the obstructions of legalism, sacerdotalism, and ceremonialism”.<sup>158</sup>

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154 D. J. Smit, 1998. *Biblical Hermeneutics: The First 19 Centuries*:286.

155 Smit, 1998:289.

156 Olsen, 1974:47.

157 D.F. Neufeld, and Julia Neufeld, 1962. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student Source Book Vol. 12*:788.

158 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1962:788. (Sacerdotalism is a belief that priests can act as mediators between human beings and God; ceremonialism is strict adherence to external rites and extreme fondness for ceremony).

Olsen states that the “Reformation became a real re-formation and re-orientation in the field of hermeneutics”.<sup>159</sup> Once again the authority of the Bible was emphasised along with a strong depreciation of Aquinas’ reason as a source of theology. Luther, in his defence at Worms in 1521, claimed: “I am bound by Scripture ... and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”<sup>160</sup> “According to the Reformers each Christian has not only the privilege but the duty to examine and judge Christian beliefs and practises on the basis of the Bible.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, according to Smit, “...it became the existential reading of the grammatical historical text itself, because its message, its thrust, its central scope was clear for everyone to see: the promises of salvation”.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, this approach to Scripture was viewed as the only method of knowing what the “correct” way to “believe” was and also the “appropriate” way to “behave”.

Having been an Augustinian monk, and having lost hope in himself, Luther’s theology turned to an intensive study of Scripture until it became his sole authority. Being steeped in the theology, philosophy and thought processes of his day, and being acquainted with the teachings of the church fathers, he sought more than what his education had offered. It was the Bible that quenched his thirst and brought relief to his hunger. For Luther and the other Reformers the “...literal, or historico-grammatical, principle of interpretation ... meant in general that a given Bible passage had but one meaning”<sup>163</sup> and gave true meaning to life, solving all problems.

“Through the medium of the *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone) principle, divine grace was found, and thenceforward the Bible was central in the Reformation.”<sup>164</sup> This approach of priority, “the Bible and the Bible alone”, became the formal principle for all doctrine and Christian practice. *Sola fide* and *sola gratia*, other Reformer principles, were founded upon this principle. This focus brought the Bible back to the foreground, allowing people once again to hear the “voice of God”, but at the same time it stifled any concept of awe, mystery and wonder. *Understanding Scripture became an exact science, focused on rationalism.* “A

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159 Olsen, 1974:47.

160 Martin Luther, as quoted by Olsen, 1974: 47.

161 Olsen, 1974:51.

162 Smit, 1998:290.

163 Olsen, 1974:52.

164 Olsen, 1974:52.

heavy responsibility was placed on exegesis, on biblical interpretation itself. The Reformation, therefore, marked the beginning of intense hermeneutical activity that would remain at the heart of theology and church in the post-Reformation era.”<sup>165</sup>

## 4.2 Millerism and Scripture

Miller’s study of the Bible was both “intensive” and “extensive”<sup>166</sup> and his view and use of Scripture had a profound outcome on his apocalyptic-eschatology, affecting the message he preached and the conclusions he reached. When Miller turned away from Deism and returned to Christianity in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>167</sup> he did not leave behind the cognitive reading of Deism, but to a large degree employed it in his reading of Scripture. As he sought to find meaning in his new found Christianity and answers for his sceptical friends, he turned to Scripture<sup>168</sup> with a mechanistic, mathematical, intellectual and literal oriented reading of those Scriptures. This supplied him with the assurance that he was correct in his interpretation and understanding. He said:

I commenced with Genesis. ... Whenever I found anything obscure, my practice was to compare it with all collateral passages, and by the help of Cruden [Concordance] I examined all the texts of Scripture. ... Then by letting every word have its proper bearing on the subject of the text, if my view of it harmonized with every collateral passage in the Bible, it ceased to be a difficulty.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, for Miller gathering all the relevant biblical facts on a topic would always lead to the “correct” interpretation. It would appear, therefore, that Miller’s understanding of the interpretation of Scripture and finding meaning moved toward more of a “verbal kind” of inspiration, “...convinced that the Bible is ‘a system of revealed truth’”.<sup>170</sup> Every “word”, now, had a very significant meaning, and every “passage” was to harmonise with the others so as to give clarity and understanding. Hence, Miller was thus convinced that “...the Bible is a system of revealed truths, so clearly and simply given, that the ‘wayfaring man, though a

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165 Smit, 1998:290.

166 Knight, 2000a:40.

167 See Everett N. Dick, 1994. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis 1831-1844*:3-6; Knight, 1993a:7; Doan, 1987:17 and White, 1950:318.

168 Froom, 1954:461 & 462.

169 William Miller, as quoted by Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:889.

170 Froom, 1954:462.

fool, need not err therein’”<sup>171</sup> Consequently, the Scriptures were regarded as a source of all knowledge and understanding.

He compared scriptural verse with scriptural verse and, according to Mustard, this “...basic method, of comparing one part of the Bible with another until all were satisfactorily harmonised, lay at the foundation of the whole Millerite movement”.<sup>172</sup> Miller stuck to a very strong logical, cognitive approach to Scripture, still holding to his reasonable, common-sense Deist approach towards understanding. He claimed that the Bible “...*could only be the Word of God if it could be proven empirically to be a consistent, harmonious whole, not just in its basic theme but in all its parts*” (italics added).<sup>173</sup>

According to Damsteegt, Miller’s apocalyptic-eschatological motives were founded in this understanding and use of Scripture.<sup>174</sup> His entire rationale for the advent of Christ was firmly based upon the interpretation of biblical prophecies and the historical fulfilment of certain prophecies. His approach was based on the “...presupposition of the *sola scriptura* principle and the unity and self-authentication of Scripture”.<sup>175</sup> It was his understanding that all words in Scripture are to be understood literally, “...that is, in their ordinary historical and grammatical sense, except in those instances where the writer used figurative language”.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, Miller was a strong proponent of the “...hermeneutical rule that Scripture is its own expositor”,<sup>177</sup> making the Bible the ultimate norm, leaving him and his presuppositions about Scripture unchallenged.

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171 William Miller, as quoted by Knight, 2000a:40.

172 Mustard, 1987:36.

173 As quoted by Mustard, 1987:36, in footnote 1.

174 Damsteegt, 1977:16.

175 Damsteegt, 1977:17.

176 Neufeld, and Neufeld, 1976:895. One of Miller’s rules was to “Let every word have its own scriptural meaning, every sentence its proper bearing, and have no contradictions, and your theory will and must of necessity be correct”. Damsteegt, 1977:17.

177 Damsteegt, 1977:17. See especially Rule III of Miller’s “Rules of Scriptural Interpretation”: Joshua Himes, 1841. *View of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology, Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller with a Memoir of His Life*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.earlysda.com/miller/views1.html> >.

Miller was well known for his manner of linking prophecy and history. Don Neufeld, editor of the SDA Bible Commentary, claims that this historicist approach<sup>178</sup> to understanding prophecy was a standard Reformation and Protestant approach.<sup>179</sup> In order to understand and find the fulfilment of prophecy, he relied on the hermeneutical principle that "...symbols were not to be fulfilled in a figurative manner but stood for a historical reality".<sup>180</sup> To understand the fulfilment of a prophecy, therefore, he would look for historical events that matched the symbols and time periods predicted in the particular prophecy. His rule with regard to history's fulfilment of prophecy reads as follows:

To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfilment of a prophecy: If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event; but if one word lacks a fulfilment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development; for God takes care that history and prophecy shall agree, so that the true believing children of God may never be ashamed.<sup>181</sup>

Miller followed a very vigorous lexicographical and especially a historical-grammatical approach or deductive approach to Scripture which "...conceives of inspiration in terms of divine speaking".<sup>182</sup> When considering Miller's "Rules of Biblical Interpretation"<sup>183</sup> we note that "Rule II" emphasised that "every word must have its proper bearing on the subject", stressing the importance of the words used in Scripture. "Rule IV" and "Rule XII" lay the emphasis on every word having its proper influence, its literal fulfilment, making the significance of words very important in understanding the Scriptures. It was not only the words, but also the sentences that were considered of great importance: "Let every *word* have its own scriptural meaning, every *sentence* its proper bearing, and have no contradictions, and your theory will and must of necessity be correct" (italics added).<sup>184</sup>

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178 "Miller belonged to the historicist school. He looked in history for fulfillment of the various features of the visions of John the revelator and, for that matter, of Daniel also. He believed that both prophets gave an outline of history from their day to the end of time. He did not originate the historicist system; many scholars before him had followed this system, and many in his day held it."

"Besides requiring a thorough knowledge of Scripture, the historicist method demands also a thorough knowledge of history." D.F. Neufeld, 1974. *Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement*:111 & 113.

179 Neufeld, 1974:111, 112.

180 Damsteegt, 1977:19.

181 Bliss, as quoted by Froom, 1954:470.

182 P.M. van Bemmelen, 1987. *Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield*:2.

183 For a detailed description of Muller's "Rules of Scriptural Interpretation" see Himes, 1841. [Website], available from: < <http://www.earlysda.com/miller/views1.html> >.

184 William Miller, as quoted by Damsteegt, 1977:18.

Thus, a lexicographical hermeneutic, according to Miller, was the only accurate way of understanding and interpreting Scripture.

### 4.3 James White, Joseph Bates, Ellen G White and Scripture

Adventism has always taken a very strong stand against creeds and formal statements of doctrinal beliefs that presumably could not be altered. “They held that their only creed should be the Bible.”<sup>185</sup> James White plainly claimed that “...*the Bible* is a perfect and complete revelation. *It is our only rule of faith and practice*”.<sup>186</sup> “The Bible is our lamp, our guide. It is our rule of faith and practice. ... It is our only rule of faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere.”<sup>187</sup> Later in 1851 he stated the following:

Every Christian...is therefore duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He [/she] should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his [/her] whole duty. He [/she] is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his [/her] duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he [/she] does, he [/she] places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position. The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the foundation of wisdom, from which to learn duty in ‘all good works’.<sup>188</sup>

Joseph Bates was a strong proponent of the Seventh-day Sabbath doctrine which he proposed as being founded upon “solid Bible study”.<sup>189</sup> Being of Christian Connexion origin, he believed strongly that the Reformation would only be completed when all the great *Bible truths* once again found their rightful place in the church. Thus, Bates relied very heavily upon a literal interpretation and implementation of the Scripture.

Ellen White states that “...the Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His [God’s] will”.<sup>190</sup> “The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears.”<sup>191</sup> She also went further to state that “...the Holy

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185 Knight, 2000a:22.

186 James White, as quoted by Knight, 2000a:58.

187 James White, as quoted by Neufeld, 1974:117.

188 James White, as quoted by Knight, 2000a:60.

189 Knight, 2000a:68.

190 White, 1950:vii.

191 E.G. White, 1948. *Testimonies For the Church: Vol. 6*:393.



Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will”.<sup>192</sup> Yet, she also points out the following:

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.<sup>193</sup>

From Ellen White’s perspective inspiration related to the writers being inspired and not the “words”.

#### **4.4 An intellectual approach to Scripture and its implications for caring**

Miller’s “...intellectual approach to religion found a central role in Sabbatarian[ism] and eventually Seventh-day Adventism. Even to this day when an Adventist says that someone ‘knows the truth,’ it generally means that he or she has an intellectual understanding of the doctrines rather than the broader, more experiential meaning of the concept of ‘knowing’ found in the Bible”.<sup>194</sup>

Miller’s approach was very much one where numbers and history were “...the unlockers of universal secrets”.<sup>195</sup> Via the lexico-graphical method each and every word could be analysed and its exact meaning could be determined. Via mathematical calculation and historical facts and data, exact predictions could be made. In a time where science was providing very accurate and exact meaning to the world, Miller was providing exact meaning to Scripture. He was very successful in preaching to people’s heads, but not to their hearts or their emotions. Adventism, since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century, therefore, has held firmly to a cognitive understanding of “the Bible and the Bible only”. *This view of Scripture moved pastoral care to the periphery, and when care was present it tended to be prescriptive by nature.*

During the Reformation, the Enlightenment made a severe impact upon the church and its view and use of Scripture. The Enlightenment brought about the realisation that humans are

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192 White, 1950:vii.

193 White, 1958:21.

194 Knight, 2000a:34.

195 Knight, 1993b:38.

thinking beings, therefore, they are their own persons, introduced to rationality. There was a move away from traditions and authority towards the rational, positivist, scientific natural sciences. Fritz Guy in his book, *Thinking Theologically*, is also propagating a rational intellectual approach to theology.<sup>196</sup> Consequently, the development of the so-called “historical-critical methodology” entered into the Protestant arena.

With this came an attempt on the part of conservative scholars to defend the authority of Scripture and Adventism’s search for identity.<sup>197</sup> They set out to prove that the Bible was “...authoritative and true, a final foundation, an inspired, ahistorical, timeless, universal, faultless, inerrant source of knowledge, propositions and fundamental truth.”<sup>198</sup> Thus, they opened the door to a very powerful cognitive approach to Scripture. They were so obsessed with finding truth and an identity regarding the teaching of the Bible (in regard to what the Bible teaches) that they had no time or desire to care about socio-political issues. Their message also did not appeal to such issues, but rather to those searching for truth.

## **5 Seventh-day Adventists, practical theology and caring**

The thesis with this approach does not wish to postulate that the Adventist Church is totally devoid of caring.

Pearson, when referring to the tension between “prepare to meet your Maker” and “occupy till I come”, indicates that the focus shifted from “preparation” to “occupation”. In this regard he indicates that, “The longer the occupation, the greater is the tendency toward this-worldly concerns and diversification of interests”.<sup>199</sup> Accordingly, he points out that those later generations of Adventists have realised the need to deal with the rising socio-political and ethical issues in the world. So, over time, the SDA Church has come to “...learn the lessons about human rights and the dignity of human beings”,<sup>200</sup> and have in some ways

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196 See Fritz Guy, 1999a. *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith*.

197 For a more in-depth study of Adventism’s search for identity, see Knight, 2000a.

198 Smit, 1998:292.

199 Pearson, 1986:346.

200 Plantak, 1998:12, 16.

became involved in humanitarian issues. This involvement, however, is still selective and secondary to its primary mission of proclaiming the Second Advent.<sup>201</sup>

There were denominational projects such as *The Dorcas Welfare Society*, and their mission was to help people physically and spiritually. This society was an organisation within Adventism, run by the lay-women of the churches; it was not funded by the church but by the community, and the church officials “...believed that it was the goal of welfare activities to convert people to the church”.<sup>202</sup>

After World War II there was an organisation, called *The Disaster and Famine Relief Services*, later known as *The Adventist Development and Relief Agency* (ADRA). This agency too was initiated by lay members and financed by business people and the community. Today there are many doctors and lay-people involved in independent mission projects such as *Render Effective Aid to Children (REACH)*, *Croatia Relief Organisation (CRO)*, *Adventist Refugee Care (ARC)*, *Vista Private Clinic*, and the like.<sup>203</sup> Yet still, all these caring ministries have been linked somehow or other to the completion of the work of proclaiming the advent of Jesus. All too often this involvement has been regarded “...as the means to an end ... the arguments advanced in favour of educational and medical mission ... As long as service makes it possible to confront men [humans] with the Gospel, it is useful”.<sup>204</sup> Thus, they follow a very pragmatic approach when it comes to pastoral care—doing what works and supports proclamation.

It should also be noted that throughout the history of Adventism, pastoral care has been situated within a “confessional applied theology” where OT and NT studies set the rules for a pragmatic ministry. Long indicates that research done in 2002 by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education reported that only five schools in the United States, and Adventists are not one of them, had longstanding research doctorates in practical theology.<sup>205</sup> Any form of a pastoral care has always been very much a dogmatic one where

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201 Plantak, 1998:13-37, and Finucane, 1999:47-63.

202 Plantak, 1998:64.

203 Plantak, 1998:68-70.

204 Bosch, 1980:203.

205 See Thomas G. Long, 2004: *A Crisis in Practical Theology*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2962> >.

fundamental truth was the guide to believing and behaving. Long further indicates that “...the top university programs in religion have not been interested in religious practices or practical theology, in fact, most first-rate university religion departments are militantly nonconfessional and operate in an ethos of objective research”.<sup>206</sup> So, too Adventism is also devoid of any meaningful practical theology for pastoral care—a pastoral care praxis has never been developed.

## 6 Summary

Adventism was born in the North American Protestant world of logic and rationalism with all eyes turned toward the millennium and the coming of Christ. For many the prospects of peace and prosperity looked very promising, however, the depression and Miller’s message of an imminent premillennial advent began to influence many. Miller emphasised a very pessimistic view of humanity, propagating the imminent, being even at the door, second coming of Christ as being the only hope for a lost world. “Miller’s entire approach to life and ministry centred upon the transcendent world in which God was truly King. And it was the Bible that contained the transcendent King’s revelation to humanity.”<sup>207</sup> With his very strong rationalistic and mathematical approach to Scripture he developed a very persuasive apocalyptic scheme of events, which appealed to the cognitive, but also excited the emotions of an apocalyptic expectancy.

Miller’s view of the millennium and biblical truth with its pessimistic view of social reform made an impact on Adventism. His focus on biblical truth and the imminent second coming of Christ and the urgency to tell the world has permeated Adventist theology at the expense of social and ethical involvement, or at least making it subservient to proclamation. This urgent apocalyptic position, which anticipates “‘...the end of the world’—the sudden destruction of society”—places Adventism in “high tension with its environment”.<sup>208</sup>

Yet, being confronted with “occupy till I come” the church is now faced with new challenges. These challenges brought about a move away from a totally apolitical stance to

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206 Long, 2004: [Website].

207 Knight, 1993b:55.

208 R. Lawson, 1997. *The Persistence of Apocalypticism within a Denominationalizing Sect*:208.

the point where Adventists began to become aware of social structures and relationship issues. “Sadly, in most cases this social involvement went only as far as their own defence was concerned, and no further.”<sup>209</sup> Some of this involvement was selective involvement in temperance, religious liberty and military service, and Sabbath problems that arose due to their strict Sabbath observance. “However, they were sectarian issues. They show primary concern for ourselves and our standards, rather than a concern for others”.<sup>210</sup>

Adventism, therefore, is primarily oriented towards proclaiming the gospel message: “All that really matters is the glorious future”,<sup>211</sup> the coming kingdom of God. For as soon as this gospel is preached to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people the end will come. The “Concern has been for salvation *from* the world rather than for the world’s renewal”.<sup>212</sup> There is a “...resistance toward involving themselves with the structures of society”.<sup>213</sup>

Bosch so aptly describes Adventism with the following words:

Mission thus means the communication of a message that will bring about that ‘rest’. The preacher concentrates on ‘eternal healing’ rather than the merely temporary amelioration of conditions in this world—apparently a matter for which ecumenicals campaign. The changing of social structures is thus of secondary importance because they are in the last analysis irrelevant. ... After all, ‘the whole frame of this world is passing away’ (1 Cor. 7:31). In this view the dualism between spirit and body, eternal and temporal, personal and social, sacred and profane, is total.<sup>214</sup>

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209 Plantak, 1998:41.

210 Plantak, 1998:47.

211 Bosch, 1980:32.

212 Bosch, 1980:202.

213 Bosch, 1980:32.

214 Bosch, 1980:202.



## **A SDA Confessional Framework and Pastoral Care**

### **1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter I researched the historical background of Adventism. The thesis, based on the researched historical background, has determined that the foundation of SDA theology was to a large extent laid by Millerism, with a cognitive approach and an emphasis on the imminent return of Christ.

A theology was built on this foundation that was characterised by a confessional approach with its main focus on establishing “truth”, (as indicated in chapter two; “truth” is referring to that what we can believe as objective truth found in Scripture), and then also focused on *proclaiming* this truth to the entire world before the imminent second coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup> This focus was further sustained by a particular view and use of Scripture with a biblical hermeneutic and theology that was applied to praxis. Within this paradigm pastoral care was marginalised, or when present, it mostly became techniques that were merely applied in a pragmatic way, based on the confessions of the church. A very strong one-sided emphasis is placed on “believing” and “behaving”, whereas “belonging” is seldom addressed.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will research what is considered to be the main “pointers” that have mostly influenced and sustained this believing- and behaving-focused pastoral care. Thus, an overview of an Adventist view and use of Scripture and its hermeneutical approach, particularly pertaining to various orientations within the overarching confessional framework, will be considered. This will also include the impact E. G. White has had on Adventism’s view and its use of Scripture. Furthermore, this chapter will research the proclamation-focused model of Adventism, which is mostly viewed as its primary task and also the reason for its unique existence.

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1 This is particularly true after they abandon the “Shut door” theory as indicated in chapter two. See Neufeld and Neufeld, 1976:249-252.

2 In this regard see Richard Rice, 2002. *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding new love for the Church*.

## 2 Seventh-day Adventism and a confessional framework

The research proposes that Adventism finds itself within a “confessional framework”.<sup>3</sup> As we noted in chapter two, Adventists have from their inception been focused on identifying the “truth” of Scripture. Motivated by Paul it is viewed that the Scriptures are “...God breathed and is useful for *teaching, rebuking, correction* and *training* in righteousness, so that the man [people] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (italics added) (2 Timothy 3:16). The primary task in reading the Scriptures is to discover what can be believed and, secondly, to formulate “biblical truths” or doctrines—the 28 fundamental beliefs<sup>4</sup>—or what I refer to as “confessions”.<sup>5</sup> The thesis, however, is not opposed to this kind of reading of Scripture, but challenges its reductionistic nature.

On the one hand, there are theologians and scholars who tend to make these formulations “absolutise”, causing them to be authoritative and normative confessions. Richard O’Ffill holds to this kind of absolute understanding of the church’s doctrines:

Our doctrines reveal God’s will for our lives. From my point of view, I wish that instead of twenty-eight, we had five hundred. You see, the word doctrine means ‘teaching.’ Can we know too much about the will of God for our lives? The answer is found in 1 John 5:3: ‘This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.’ ... The doctrines of our church are spiritual intelligence that will keep believers from being overrun by the deceptions of the last days. This church was raised up not only to save the lost but also to keep the saved from losing their salvation when the great

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3 I use the term “confessional” to refer to the overarching theology of the church that is primarily busy with establishing correct doctrines, which are focused on “believing” and “behaving”, and its mission is primarily focused on the task of confessing or proclaiming these unique doctrines, which substantiate its existence to the world. As I will discuss later under point 2.1 of this chapter Adventist theologians and scholars do not all agree in regard to these doctrines, but find them on a continuum moving between more conservative and more liberal orientation. These differentiated orientations, however, are all situated within a particular framework focusing on one goal: the confessions or doctrines of the church.

4 The 28 Fundamental Beliefs are a set of theological beliefs or doctrines held by the SDA Church, formulated under the following sub-headings: The doctrine of God, the doctrine of man [people], the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the Christian life, the doctrine of the last things. Traditionally, Adventists are opposed to the formulation of any kind of creed. It is maintained, however, that the 28 Fundamental Beliefs are *descriptions* not *prescriptions*; that is, they describe the official position of the church, but are not a criterion for membership. These beliefs were first known as the **27 Fundamental Doctrines** until 2005 when it was revised and another was added. These fundamental beliefs are published in the book, “*Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs ... A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines*” edited by the GC Ministerial Department. These beliefs can also be accessed on the following [Website], available from: < <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/index.htm> >.

5 In this regard Van Wyk referring to Adventists’ view and use of the Bible, whether from a conservative or progressive (liberal) orientation, are “...sailing in the same modernistic boat, are seeking for an objective reading of the biblical text by adhering to the modernistic communication paradigm, which at times makes ‘religious dialogue ... often little more than a contest to demonstrate ‘We’re right’””. A. Gerhard van Wyk, 2000. *Beyond Modernism: Scholarship and Servanthood*:88.



deception comes. The truth that God has given to this church is not just for Adventists but for all His people, whoever they are. This is no time to downplay the doctrines of this church, whose message prepares a living people to meet a living God.<sup>6</sup>

In this sense the confessions or fundamental beliefs are regarded as the absolute teachings of God (objective truth) for the salvation of His people. Consequently, many in the church have moved towards a very “hard” (rigid) position with regard to beliefs, and many are even falling prey to *confessionalism*, converting beliefs into “absolutes”.

On the other hand, scholars like Guy with a progressive (liberal)<sup>7</sup> approach indicate that a heritage of traditional understanding “...is exceedingly valuable to a community of faith and to its individual members”.<sup>8</sup> Still busy with confessions, he proposes that rather than being fixed points of view they are a “...viewpoint, a frame of reference, a place to stand, a foundation...”<sup>9</sup> and not fortresses. According to him these are “...always subject to revision in the light of a ‘fuller understanding’ of the meaning of scripture”.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the church is enlightened by a critical approach, always in search of “present truth”,<sup>11</sup> making the confessions progressive and even sometimes challenging certain beliefs. Guy with his “tripolar thinking” emphasising the dialogue between the three poles—Christian gospel, cultural context and Adventist heritage, has a greater openness for the questions of present day issues.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, progressives are still busy with the text of the Bible, not from praxis but from a confessional perspective, seeking to construct a body of beliefs that can address the challenges and questions of rational-oriented people.

Pastoral care within the SDA Church still finds itself within this confessional framework where mostly OT and NT studies determine the confessions. Consequently, pastoral care only formulates the techniques as to how to apply these confessions concerning what is right

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6 R.W. O’Ffill, 2007. *LORD Save My Church: Tackling the tough issues*:39 & 40.

7 When I use the term “progressive” I use it as synonymous with the term “liberal”.

8 Guy, 1999a:121.

9 Guy, 1999a:121.

10 Guy, 1999a:121.

11 “Present truth” will be discussed in more detail under point 2.2 of this chapter. It is a term used within Adventism referring to “truth”, but with significantly deferring meanings for conservative and progressive (liberal) oriented positions.

12 Guy, 1999a:225-257. See also in this regard N. R. Gulley, 1992. *An Evaluation of Alden Thompson’s “Incarnational” Method in the Light of His View of Scripture and Use of Ellen White*:75. He accuses Thompson of being very near to being obsessed with the humanness of the Bible.

and wrong. Thus, they focus Adventist ministry within a “believing” and “behaving” framework.<sup>13</sup>

In this regard the research rather wants to propose a “narrative”<sup>14</sup> approach that does not read the Bible from a confessional framework, but seeks to open a dialogue between the stories of the Bible, people’s stories, and the story of all God’s people—the church or priesthood of believers. A narrative approach finds itself within the wider approach to practical theology<sup>15</sup> and in particular a qualitative-oriented methodology. The narrative approach, however, needs to be open to dialogue with all approaches, including the confessional approach to tell “God’s great story” to “hurting” and hopeless people, but it refuses to be dictated to, or prescribed to by a confessional approach.

## 2.1 A confessional approach and its view and use of Scripture

Within Adventism the Bible and its interpretation has been regarded as of cardinal importance to its theology. Seventh-day Adventism has also been profoundly shaped by its focus on the prophetic writings within Scripture,<sup>16</sup>—*inter alia* because of an emphasis on the second coming and an apocalyptic eschatology.

To a large extent Adventist scholars argue that the Bible as the Word of God is the source of Adventist thinking. In this regard Johnsson maintains that “Of all Christian bodies, we [SDAs] are a people who, from our inception, have looked to the Bible as the source and standard for our beliefs”;<sup>17</sup> so much so, that the pioneers, because of their understanding of what the Scriptures taught and did not teach, separated themselves from the existing churches of their day. This conviction has caused SDAs to claim for themselves a unique identity with unique confessions and a strong sense of mission.

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13 See in this regard Rice, 2002.

14 The philosophy and theology of a narrative approach will be discussed in more detail in chapters four and five.

15 To be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

16 “Seventh-day Adventists have been profoundly shaped by the prophetic thrust of the biblical writers. We are not only steeped in apocalyptic prophecy that is the ‘foretelling’ messengers, but have also been shaped by the classical prophetic tradition, that is the ‘forthtelling’ prophets.” Woodrow W. Whidden, 2002. *Ellen White, Inerrancy, and Interpretation*:24.

17 William Johnsson, 1999. *Nine Foundations for an Adventist Hermeneutic*:13.

Not only is the view of the Bible but also the inspiration of the Bible important issues for SDAs. Dederen goes so far as to argue that the phenomenon of revelation-inspiration "...is undeniably the cornerstone of our grasp and sharing of God, of the way we talk about God. Revelation is unquestionably the keynote for theological thinking today".<sup>18</sup> Koranteng-Pipim supports this when he says that "...a person's position on the Bible's inspiration affects positions on many other theological issues".<sup>19</sup> Thus, Adventism's view of Scripture and its interpretation is and always has been a serious issue with regards to its message and mission.<sup>20</sup>

Although the SDA Church claims that Scripture is God's Word and revelation of Himself to humans through human language, there is not complete harmony among Adventists with regard to their view and use of these Scriptures.<sup>21</sup> There are those oriented toward a very literal, mechanistic and lexico-graphical approach, tending towards an absolute authoritative reading of Scripture. On the other hand, there are those holding on to a more progressive approach, even accommodating, to some extent, the historical-critical method.<sup>22</sup> They search

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18 R. Dederen, 1992a. *The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers*:9.

19 S. Koranteng-Pipim, 1992. *An Analysis and Evaluation of Alden Thompson's Casebook/Codebook Approach to the Bible*:31.

20 In this regard see also Thompson, 1991:267-272. He indicates that "The Bible has always played a central role in Adventism. It gave birth to the movement. And when Christ did not return as expected in 1844, again the Bible kept the hope alive. When Adventists first ventured to publish an unofficial 'synopsis of our faith' (1872), the statement affirmed that 'we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline aside from the Bible.' Similarly, our first 'official' statement of beliefs (1931) maintained 'that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice'". Thompson, 1991:267.

21 "In this milieu it is not surprising that we tend to disagree among ourselves as to what is valid and what is not in our hermeneutical approach to the Bible, and thus to disagree over what the Bible is saying to us on important issues." W. Eva, 1996. *Interpreting the Bible: A commonsense approach*:4.

22 "In regard to Adventist theology, there are two competing views on the source of Christian theology. While some hold to the traditional *sola Scriptura* view, others hold to the notion of *prima Scriptura*. The *sola Scriptura* view maintains that Scripture alone can provide theological data. The *prima Scriptura* conviction maintains that Adventist theology should build its doctrines upon a plurality of sources, among which Scripture has the primary or normative role. Evangelical circles identify this plurality of sources as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral" (italics added). F. Canale, 2005. *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation*:98.

Conservative-orientated theologians reject the historical-critical reading of Scriptures. See in this regard Gerhard F. Hasel, 1975. *Old Testament Theology: Basic issues in the current debate*:133. "The method (Historical-critical method) which prides itself of its scientific nature and objectivity, turns out to be in the grip of its own dogmatic presuppositions an philosophical premises about the nature of history." See also Gerhard F. Hasel, 1980. *Understanding the Living Word of God*:24-26; as well as S. Koranteng-Pipim, 1996. *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle*:78. We should "...steer away from the shaky foundations of higher criticism's methodologies..." See also R.M Davidson, 1995. *In the footsteps of Joshua*:9.

Progressive-oriented theologians have a greater openness toward some aspects of the historical-critical method; see in this regard R. Rice, 1991. *Reason and the Contours of Faith*:84-85: "However, many of the

for a more credible intellectual approach where a contextual or “incarnational” perspective is important,<sup>23</sup> as well as its historical context and to a lesser extent the context of praxis, which would play a greater role in the interpretation of the text.

These diverse schools of thought are often presented in the literature as being diametrically opposed, in particular the conservative and progressive approaches.<sup>24</sup> This research proposes, however, that, from a postmodern perspective,<sup>25</sup> these schools cannot be positioned in opposition to each other because the lines of their beliefs are often criss-crossing all categorisations. Thompson states it as “...overlaying the two ways of using ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ yields a quadrant of four basic types: A double conservative, a double liberal, and two types that are half and half”.<sup>26</sup> From an “episodic” and functional way, therefore, the research will rather speak of “conservative-oriented” and the “progressive- (liberal-) oriented” administrators,<sup>27</sup> scholars, and pastors.<sup>28</sup>

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results of the historical-critical study are compatible with traditional view of the Bible’s divine inspiration, and some of them serve to strengthen conservative beliefs.” He, however, warns against an unqualified acceptance of the results of the historical-critical study; as it “...would weaken its status as the Word of God and leave us with a Bible that expresses nothing more than human ideas”.

Alden Thompson (Thompson, 1992. *Adventists and Inspiration: Our History Informs Our Present*:5) speaks about a moderate approach whereby “Adventist biblical scholars believed they could use the descriptive historical-critical methods without adopting the naturalistic presuppositions”. According to William Johnsson, 1999, the real issue about the different interpretations of Scripture has to do with the fact that some are literalist, and the other is based on principle. See C. Rosado, 1995. *How culture affects our view of Scripture*:11.

23 See also Thompson, 1991, and Robert M. Johnston, 1999, *The Case For A Balanced Hermeneutic*:10-12.

24 See in this regard Alden Thompson’s book (Thompson, 1991) and the Adventist Theological Society’s responses to Thompson’s book, F. Holbrook and Van L. Dolson, 1992. *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*.

25 Perspective approach will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

26 Alden Thompson, 1989b. *Winning back the Church*:1.

27 Administrators are inclined to determine Adventist theology by supporting or opposing certain views. See Alden Thompson, 1992. *Adventists and Inspiration: Our History Informs our Present*:1-10.

28 The “conservative” and “liberal” differentiations are used in an “episodic” and functional way to illustrate something of the different positions within Adventism. There is also a protest against the use of these concepts. In this regard see Lee Roy Holmes, 2005. *Liberals and Conservatives: Whatever Happened to Seventh-day Adventists?*:742. Holmes asks the question: “Isn’t it time to put away such needless and misleading labels as ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ and accept anew the name the Lord chose for us, ...” Holmes, 2005:747. According to Fritz Guy, in *Thinking theologically*, “...both ‘conservative’ and ‘liberals’ indicate a serious interest in truth. On the one hand, conservatives are ‘concerned above all to maintain those truths which we already possess, ...liberals want to ‘seek new truths or new interpretations of old truths’”. Progressives see both groups’ disagreements as “necessary and fruitful”. Guy, 1999a:27. Conservatives like Koranteng-Pipim, in *Here we stand*, however, see the progressive standpoints very often as un-biblical fads. S. Koranteng-Pipim, 2005a. *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*:11. See also Koranteng-Pipim, 1996:36.

There are also those theologians, (the two types that are “half and half”), who find themselves somewhere in between a conservative and a progressive approach, representing a “...more moderate or centrist expression in Adventist thinking”.<sup>29</sup> One could say that they subscribe to a “neo-orthodoxy”, or a moderate position.<sup>30</sup>

These differentiated orientations are all found or packaged within the overarching “confessional framework”, or as Knight calls it, an “...end-time framework of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14”.<sup>31</sup> Whereas this confessional approach is less obvious within the “moderate” and “progressive” approaches, it is nevertheless their task to formulate a theology that can defend the beliefs of the SDA Church. All three approaches, the conservative, moderate and progressive approaches, are viewed as confessional because they regard the Bible as a “text” book—a book of texts and prescriptions—that can help us to understand what we need to believe, what our mission and worship should be and how we shall counsel people. In this regard Bursey remarks, according to Thompson, that the conservatives are more concerned with the “honour” of the text, whereas the so-called progressives are more concerned with being “honest” with the text.<sup>32</sup> Whether busy with honour or honesty, they all examine closely the so-called confessions of Scripture.

### **2.1.1 A conservative orientation**

A distinctive characteristic of the conservatives’ point of reference is that they tend to defend a “high view” of Scripture, where the Bible is viewed as the specific, authoritative, normative “Word of God”. It is the Bible that sets the tone for a “message”, “mission” and a confessional approach to pastoral care, where praxis is only important as far as the so-called communicative form of the message is concerned.

When it comes to the message, it is the doctrines, and particularly the distinctive doctrines of the SDA Church, which are regarded as very important and should be defended at any

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29 W. Eva, 1999. *Introducing this issue*:4. The thesis will focus on the beliefs and uses of Scripture and theology in these three streams within Adventism.

30 The concept “neo-orthodox” does not carry the same load as in a Barthian theology. It seeks to move beyond a hard conservative approach, without compromising a progressive approach. Truth for them is more “present truth” than traditional truth, without doing away with the traditional beliefs.

31 Knight, 1994:10.

32 Alden Thompson, in a *Letter to Dr. A. Gerhard van Wyk*, November 2, 1994.

cost.<sup>33</sup> In this regard Price regrets the fact that the “...distinctive truths of the three angels’ message and the Spirit of Prophecy had given way to a message of ‘love and acceptance’”.<sup>34</sup> The conservative orientation argues strongly that the confessions of the church need to be defended because of its mission to this world: “...it [the church] will not grow unless it upholds and preaches the distinctive Adventist messages ...”<sup>35</sup> *What seems to be most important about this growth is not caring for “broken” people, but rather church growth is viewed in terms of numeric growth.*<sup>36</sup> In this regard, Adventists’ unique doctrines should be preached, therefore, and not *per se* the “gospel”. In the event of this not being the case, then it is believed that we preach the “generic” doctrines of the “first-day” churches.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the conservatives and, particularly, the conservatives with a fundamentalistic orientation have a rigid position in regard to issues like worship, women’s ordination, music, jewellery and wine.<sup>38</sup>

- **View and use of Scripture**

The conservative orientation is focused on the “phenomena of *revelation-inspiration*” where God is not just sharing information, but God Himself “spoke His Word into existence”.<sup>39</sup>

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33 See in this regard Koranteng-Pipim, 2005a:10; S. Koranteng-Pipim, 2005d. *True and Counterfeit Unity: Who Is Really Dividing the Church?:*750; R. O’Ffill, 2005. *We’ve Been Fooled:*19-20; E. Bruce Price, 2005. *Are the Churches Really Growing? Church Growth Experiments in Secular Australia:*25 & 27 and Gerhard F. Hasel, 2005. *The Third Wave: Roots of Celebrationism:*395. Ramos states that we should “...embrace Biblical teachings and ideas that make us different—even “peculiar.” I. Ramos, 2005. *What Adventist Youth People Really Want: The General Youth Conference Experiment:*67.

34 Price, 2005:24-25.

35 Price, 2005:31.

36 Kent argues that “A number of other Christian denominations are growing at a faster rate than the Adventist Church. For example, in 1998 alone, one denomination added 18 million people to its membership, an accession considerably greater than the total baptized membership of the Adventist Church. Another denomination, which traces its origins to the early years of the 1900s, has at least 400 million adherents! Our achievement, therefore, good as it may be, must not lead us into a relaxed mood. Instead it should drive us to see ahead an opportunity for much larger harvest. We must pursue and study the ‘how’s’ and ‘why’s’ of evangelism, like never before! This is no time to dilute or compromise our message; to do so is to deny Christ, the biblical nature of our teachings, and our identity”. Anthony Kent, 2003. *Evangelism: Adventism’s Heartbeat:*17.

37 O’Ffill, 2005:20.

38 Holmes, 2005:742. See also O’Ffill, 2005:15-22 and Price, 2005:23-35.

39 “God ... is the Author of the Bible, even though it is written in human language through human agents. It follows that the Bible is not the product of human genius or tradition.” “...so the Bible is inseparably and indivisibly the union of the divine and the human, making it the Word of God in the language of human beings”. G.F. Hasel, 1985. *Biblical Interpretation Today:*100 & 101.

In this regard the Scriptures are viewed as being “...inspired by God, literally ‘God breathed’ ... and this, unquestionably, because the prophets themselves were ‘moved by the Spirit’...”<sup>40</sup> making the Bible the very “Word of God”. An extreme conservative position even tends to propagate an inerrant approach to the Scriptures where the very words are regarded as important.<sup>41</sup> Reasoning “...deductively from general statements that the Bible makes about itself, such as 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21”,<sup>42</sup> it is concluded that the Scriptures are inerrant. “This alleged lack of error involves not only doctrinal and spiritual matters, but also demands absolute inerrancy in the tangential scientific and historical scope of the prophets’ writing.”<sup>43</sup> The emphasis that sustains such a view is found in the above-mentioned verses of Scripture, stating that all Scripture is given by inspiration, which came not by the will of people but as the Bible writers were moved by the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit has spoken into reality a complete, accurate, trustworthy account of all that needs to be known through the Bible writers.<sup>45</sup>

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40 Dederen, 1992a:17. “Being moved by the Spirit, the prophets of old spoke for God. This work of the Spirit is what we refer to as ‘inspiration.’ A supernatural quality all its own marks the prophetic ministry. Inspiration enables the Bible writers to grasp and to convey in a trustworthy and authoritative manner what God has revealed to them.” Dederen, 1992a:17.

41 Although not many conservative-oriented scholars will state that they believe in an inerrant Bible that was verbally inspired, their use of Scripture brings them very close to such a position. See also G.R. Knight, 2000b. Adventist Theological struggles in the light of history:10 “...some Adventists tended toward the verbalism and inerrancy of fundamentalists...”. “Inerrantists stress the divine nature of the Bible and do not see the human instruments as making much significant impress on the communication. They typically see inspiration extending to the very words of Scripture.” Johnston, 1999:10.

42 Johnston, 1999:10.

43 Whidden, 2002:27.

44 “Confessional scholars, on the one hand, often protest against any information that does not suit their *status quo*, but on the other hand they are in accordance with the basic points of departure of the modernistic paradigm. Furthermore, with an irrational rationality and an *ad hoc* incorporation of a metaphysics of understanding, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the verbal inspiration of the Bible and with such tools as the grammatical-historical method, or the *dicta probantia* method, believe that it is the Bible *per se* that supplies them with ‘proofs’ and absolute ‘biblical’ statements.” Van Wyk, 2000:88-89.

45 The conservative orientation holds very strongly to the Reformed school of thought. “Seventeenth-century Reformed and Lutheran orthodoxy is pre-eminently representative of the tradition which saw the Bible as divine revelation on the grounds that it was mechanically inspired by God. It was the word spoken by God in history, so that God’s word in fact is the Bible or Holy Scripture.” Van Niekerk, 1980. *Systematic Theology (Honours B.Th.) Only study guide for STH401-R. (Revised 1988)*:8. In this regard Reynolds states it as follows: “If all of this is true, as Scripture teaches, there must be absolute truth to be found in God’s Word, and there must be a way of learning the truth with confidence that the Divine Shepherd will not lead us astray but will guide us safely into the sheep pen. Indeed, God does not leave us to wander in the dark without guidance. ... At the same time, this pursuit of truth must not be merely a subjective process by which the mind is open to thoughts deemed to be from the Holy Spirit. It needs to have some objective, measurable basis as well, some criteria that are based on biblical principles and that will provide verifiable results which can be tested by others and shown to be based on sound evidence. ... Once we accept Scripture as the Word of God and humble our hearts to learn from Him and do His revealed will, the

From a conservative perspective, therefore, it is held that “...the authority of the Bible is normative for faith and life, doctrine and proclamation, and thought and investigation”.<sup>46</sup> Frank Hasel also maintains that “God has given abundant evidence of the divine authority of Scripture and its trustworthiness”.<sup>47</sup> Koranteng-Pipim supports this when he states that “Adventism’s plain reading of Scripture (the historical-grammatical approach) recognizes that the Bible is (a) fully inspired, (b) absolutely trustworthy, (c) solely authoritative, and (d) thoroughly consistent in all its parts, since it comes ultimately from one divine mind”.<sup>48</sup> He argues that it is this Divine authority that “...gives creative direction to life and all branches of human thought”.<sup>49</sup> The biblical text is viewed as “...a master which dictates and controls what is said”<sup>50</sup> and done.<sup>51</sup> The authority of the Bible is not founded upon the church, nor is it grounded within human philosophy, but is found in God Himself, thus making Scripture an absolute authority. Regardless of past or present contexts “...the Bible as a whole must remain normative”.<sup>52</sup>

This conservative approach has constructed an objective Bible and a hermeneutic that uses the “right tools”. It, therefore, is possible to deduce biblical truths and use a biblical context that is normative for usage in every age.<sup>53</sup> It is from this “high” view of Scripture that

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Holy Spirit can guide us into all truth. There are methods to follow to objectify the study process, and there are tools that will assist us with that process...”. E. Reynolds, 2006. *Accurately Handling the Word of Truth*:14 & 22. Hasel supports this when he argues that “The Holy Spirit through whom Scripture was inspired is needed as an abiding Illuminator for the interpreter. The Holy Spirit creates in the interpreter through Scripture an adequate preunderstanding and the essential perspective for the interpretation of the Bible, the Word of God.” Hasel, 1985:104.

46 Hasel, 1985:101.

47 Frank M. Hasel, 1992. *Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture*:217.

48 Koranteng-Pipim, 1996:32.

49 Hasel, 1985:101.

50 John Stott, as quoted by J.S. Lake, 2005. *Expository Homiletics*:19.

51 The October 12, 1986 General Conference Committee Annual Council document proposes an authoritative stand of the SDA Church with regard to Scripture:

“Adventists are committed to the acceptance of biblical truth and are willing to follow it, using all methods of interpretation consistent with what scripture says of itself. ...the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth... the Bible transcends its cultural back grounds to serve as God’s Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages. The Bible is the Word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested...”. October 12, 1986. *General Conference Committee Annual Council*.

52 Hasel, 1985:106.

53 See Hasel, 1985:108-109. “The elements of continuity between the world of the Bible and our world are much more significant than any changes. The Bible’s picture of humankind and its dilemma is not different from that of human beings in the modern world. The biblical diagnosis of the problems and its solutions remain true and vitally relevant today.” Hasel, 1985:111.



conservative-orientated scholars will defend the “honour” of the text and Adventist confessions.<sup>54</sup> So, God and His Word are not interrelated with the stories of human beings; it is simply to be translated into modern language for the believers to accept and appropriate them in their lives. This approach, however, makes the Scriptures and its use very mechanical, prescribing techniques for counselling, thus promoting an applied pastoral care.

- **Scripture and interpretation**

This view of, and approach to Scripture, lend themselves to a deductive approach when interpreting and trying to understand Scriptures. With a strong lexico-graphical approach and a *dicta probantia* methodology, conservatives and particularly fundamental-oriented scholars tend to lean towards verbal inspiration.<sup>55</sup>

The conservative orientation emphasises the importance of approaching Scripture with an exegetical analysis,<sup>56</sup> thereby claiming that Scripture is to be its own interpreter.<sup>57</sup> Gerhard Hasel asserts that “The famous and time-honored Reformation principle, repeated in modern

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54 See in this regard Ronald du Preez’s three articles in, *Here we stand*. R.A.G. du Preez, 2005a. *Redefinition of Marriage? A Closer Look at the Genesis of Marriage*:481-494; R.A.G. du Preez, 2005b. *Does the Bible Really Support Polygamy?*:601- 620; and R.A.G. du Preez, 2005c. *Must Polygamists Divorce? What Should the Church Do with Polygamous Families?*:621-638.

55 Conservatives are also including in their reading of Scriptures the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment, however, it is not always certain what they mean and believe in this regard.

56 “Exegesis is a process rather than a list of techniques. It consists of a series of analyses that are both cumulative and progressive, with each step building on the preceding one and leading to the next. This tried and proven procedure, if implemented in its entirety, will effectively get to the truth. ... Exegesis is also ‘a process in which God speaks and man listens.’ Whether God supplied or supervised its writing, the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for all of Holy Scripture (2 Peter 1:21).” Lee J. Gugliotto, 1996. *The Crisis of Exegesis*:6. “Correct biblical hermeneutics seeks to discover the original meaning of Scripture in its proper context and to draw out principles for contemporary application. We must read what is there in the text, not read into the text our own presuppositions. Bringing out from the text what is already there is called *exposition*; the technical name is *exegesis*.” Koranteng-Pipim, 1996:29.

57 “The Bible as the Word of God cannot be interpreted like any other book, ancient or modern. The most appropriate context for understanding and interpreting any part of Scripture is Scripture as a whole. Therefore the OT is the key for the NT as the NT unlocks the mysteries of the OT. This reciprocal relation between the two Testaments is grounded in the unity which stems from divine inspiration.” Hasel, 1985:108.

times, namely the ‘Scripture is its own interpreter’ or ‘the Bible is its own expositor’...’,<sup>58</sup> thus, holding the *sola scriptura* principle in high regard and of paramount importance.<sup>59</sup>

Koranteng-Pipim supports this *dictum* when he claims:

Correct biblical hermeneutics seeks to discover the original meaning of Scripture in its proper context and to draw out principles for contemporary application. We must always read what is there in the text, not read into the text our own presuppositions.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, most conservative theologians will admit “...that no one can read the Bible without presuppositions”.<sup>61</sup> Hasel acknowledges that any interpretation of the Bible is willingly or unwillingly from a certain preunderstanding: “It is a well-known truism that absolute objectivity is not available.”<sup>62</sup> He, however, states that “It is a mandate that the interpreter seek to be objective. He must attempt to silence his subjectivity as much as possible if he is to obtain objective knowledge.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, it is still held that these presuppositions can be overcome by “Allowing the Bible to interpret itself [which] also

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58 Hasel, 1985:102, 103. “The meaning and message of biblical books is not determined by reconstructing an alleged oral or written pre-history or by studying an assumed process of development lying back of the canonical texts. Rather, the normative message of a book must be determined from the biblical text as it comes to us in the canon. In addition, the understanding of the message of Scripture takes place within the context of the Bible as a whole.” Hasel, 1985:109.

59 Canale, discussing Adventism and Evolution, indicates an Adventist approach to *sola scriptura*. “The application of the *sola Scriptura* principle means that the hermeneutical condition of theological method, including the principles of divine, human, and world realities, is interpreted only from biblical thought. The *tota Scriptura* principle refers to the interpretation of all biblical contents and the inner logic from the biblically interpreted hermeneutical condition of theological method (*sola Scriptura*). The *prima Scriptura* principle refers to the fact that the hermeneutical principle, interpreted from scriptural thought (*sola Scriptura*) and the entire content of biblical thought (*tota Scriptura*), will guide theologians in critically selecting and incorporating from other sources (philosophy, science, experience) information as the teachings and inner logic of biblical thinking may require.

In Adventism, then, the material condition closely relates to the understanding of revelation-inspiration. Adventist theologians, however, also seem to be divided between the verbal, thought, and encounter views of inspiration-revelation. Theologians who adhere to the ‘thought’ or ‘encounter’ theories of revelation-inspiration and to the Quadrilateral of sources will be more likely to contemplate a harmonization between the biblical doctrine of creation and the theory of evolution and to consider such a harmonization as a positive scientific advance that Adventist theology should recognize. Theologians who believe that the inspiration of Scripture reaches not only its thoughts but also its words and who hold the *sola Scriptura* view will be more likely to reject the theory of evolution as being incompatible with Christian teachings. Thus, choices regarding the material condition of theological method clearly determine the coherence and viability of harmonizing biblical thought with scientific theories.” Canale, 2005:99.

60 Koranteng-Pipim, 1996:29.

61 Dederen, 1992a:13.

62 Gerhard F, Hasel, 1974. *General Principles of Interpretation*:169.

63 Hasel, 1974:170.

means that we do not impose a prior conclusion on the text”.<sup>64</sup> Hasel ratifies this when he says:

The self-interpretation of the Bible is a safeguard against superimposing one’s own views on Scripture. It also denies that one Scripture passage contradicts, misinterprets, or misapplies another. The Bible’s own interpretation elucidates and unfolds other passages without reinterpreting them in such a way that an alien meaning is put on the original intent.<sup>65</sup>

By implication this also emphasises the need to and possibility of obtaining the *original intent* of the text, and at the same time not recognising that the *sola scriptura* principle has its own presuppositions. Thus, it is held that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and via the lexico-graphical approach an “objective knowledge”<sup>66</sup> of the Scriptures may be obtained. Furthermore, Lake asserts that via a “hermeneutical spiral” all preconceived ideas and pre-understandings can be brought into harmony with the intent of Scripture.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, this promotes the notion that the Bible is its own interpreter.

This “*sola scriptura*” principle, however, raises a very important question: To what extent is it possible for the interpreter to overcome his/her presuppositions? To which Hyde and Hasel answer: “Proper understanding of the *sola scriptura* principle—that is, the Scripture principle—militates against the well-known hermeneutic whereby the Bible is interpreted by

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64 Johnsson, 1999:15. “No interpreter can divest himself so thoroughly from his past that he can approach the Bible in absolute neutrality. It is a truism that total or absolute objectivity cannot be attained. The so-called ‘empty head’ principle whereby the investigator divests himself of all preconceived notions and opinions while approaching the subject to be studied in complete neutrality, is simply illusory. Although the mandate to be as objective as possible remains basic for all genuine scholarly endeavours, inevitably there will be a preunderstanding toward which the interpreter will slant his investigation. While we are led to acknowledge this, we must affirm that the interpreter’s preunderstanding must be derived from and remain under the control of the Bible itself” (italics added). Hasel, 1985:104.

65 Hasel, 1985:103.

66 See Hasel, 1980:76-77.

67 “Evangelical scholars ... have recently devoted significant attention to the influence of presuppositions or pre-understanding upon the interpretation process. The most notable evangelical contribution is the ‘hermeneutical spiral,’ which is a creative process whereby the interpreter’s presuppositions are acknowledged and related to the text. The interpreter engages his or her pre-understanding with the text to the extent that a new understanding emerges concerning the text. Thus, one’s understanding of the text spirals nearer to the biblical author’s intended meaning. ‘The text itself sets the agenda and continually reforms the questions that the observer asks of it.’ The means by which this is accomplished is grammatical-historical exegesis. ... Some scholars would argue that finding the true intended meaning of the text is difficult if not impossible because of, among other reasons, our pre-understanding. But in conservative evangelical thought, acknowledging one’s pre-understanding, continually engaging it with the grammatical-historical-theological method applied to the text, and praying for the illumination of the Holy Spirit will help to ensure a gradual understanding of the biblical author’s intended meaning, which these evangelicals believe to be the Holy Spirit’s meaning.” J.S. Lake, 2003. *An Evaluation of Haddon Robinson’s Homiletical Method: An Evangelical Perspective*:172-174.

the intelligence of the individual at his own discretion.”<sup>68</sup> This, therefore, creates a hermeneutical space for conservative scholars to superimpose their own confessional interest on the text, claiming “objectivity”. Olson defending this method asserts:

Any creedal statement... was only a relative authority, but the Scriptures were absolute authority. The Bible was sufficient in itself, hence Scripture interprets Scripture, letting obscure passages be compared with less obscure passages.<sup>69</sup>

The question, however, still remains: If we do not know the meaning of an “obscure text”, how do we know to which known text it should be related? Thus, a *dicta probantia* or proof-text method is used very effectively in establishing what is regarded to be objective biblical teachings and biblical “truth”.<sup>70</sup> This is dangerous because it may thereby construct a theology that is absolute and authoritarian.

Furthermore, the *sola scriptura* principle also brings problems and issues like the use of E.G. White into focus.<sup>71</sup> If it is the Bible, and only the Bible: How does she fit in? Timm goes so far to state that her writings are there “...to help us break away from the human traditions that conspire against the Word of God”;<sup>72</sup> or, that her writings are viewed as a “divine filter”, helping “...us to remove all the human rubble that tradition has artificially imposed on the Bible, so that the divine message of the Scriptures can flow pure and clear into our hearts”.<sup>73</sup> According to Folkenberg her writings do not add to the Scripture, nor do they take the place of Scripture, they simply function as a “...continuing source of guidance and nurture”.<sup>74</sup> Thus, Ellen White is considered to be a “prophetic voice” that can be used to “...lead us back to the unsullied messages of Scripture”.<sup>75</sup> It is often believed that “...the end-time restoration of biblical truth was seen to be fostered by the preaching of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 and by a modern manifestation of the prophetic gift in the

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68 Hasel, 1974:167-168.

69 Olsen, 1974:55.

70 “Joseph Harvey Waggoner, using the proof-text approach common to Seventh-day Adventists and other conservative Christians, strongly argued that Christians must keep all ten commandments in order to be saved.” Emmett K. VandeVere, 1998. *Years of Expansion, 1865-1885*:74.

71 See Sakae Kubo and Leona B. Running: “Without negating the principle of the Bible being its own interpreter the Seventh-day Adventist recognition of the role of Ellen White as the ‘special messenger of the Lord’ to the church, gives her writings a level of authority that is superior to that given to other sources and tools of interpretation.” S. Kubo and L. B. Running, 1974. *Tools of biblical interpretation*:271.

72 Alberto Timm, 2004. *Ellen G. White: Prophetic voice for the last days*:20.

73 Timm, 2004:20.

74 Robert S. Folkenberg, 1994b. *Needed: Preaching the Distinctives*:19.

75 Timm, 2004:21.

life and work of Ellen G. White”.<sup>76</sup> White, therefore, is viewed by the institutional church as an authoritative figure, a messenger of God sent to guide the church and people to a deeper understanding of “truth”. This, however, has caused some dissension within the ranks of Adventism. For, if the church holds to *sola scriptura*—the Bible and the Bible alone—what about her writings? Rather than acknowledging that other sources can also be allowed within the understanding of Scripture, conservatives may be tempted to give canonical status to the writings of E.G. White; (see footnote 70). Furthermore, for arguments sake, we may also ask; “where does nature, stories and parables fit in?”

This kind of approach to Scripture has far reaching implications for pastoral care, as van Niekerk indicates: “The hermeneutics which confines its task to mere exposition (*explicatio*) and application (*applicatio*) of Scripture does not allow for the way in which the Bible functions in modern society.”<sup>77</sup>

Bosch so aptly summarises and points out that this approach has many pitfalls, despite the fact that conservatives are convinced that there are none:

It is customary to claim, especially in theologically conservative circles..., that Holy Scripture is the only norm of theology. The point of departure here is that theology is to be worked out ‘deductively;’ first, it had to be established precisely what Scripture says on a specific matter or in a certain pericope, then normative guidelines that apply to the believer in his present situation, have to be derived from this. But ... the deductive method contains no guarantee that its use will indeed establish beyond doubt what the Bible has to say on specific contemporary matters. We usually presuppose far too readily that we may summon the Bible as a kind of objective arbitrator in the case of theological disputes. In this way we are blinded to the presuppositions lurking behind our own interpretation.<sup>78</sup>

The focus of the conservatives, and in particular those with a fundamentalistic-orientation, is very much on the historical facts and contents of the biblical text rather than on stories, imagination and intuition. The beliefs—confessions—constructed by this approach are regarded as “truth” and, therefore, are to be applied in the life of the believer. The Scriptures are thus viewed as God’s “authoritative and normative” Word, whereas praxis has no bearing on the so-called content of their theology, except to influence its “form”. Thus,

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76 Timm, 2004:18.

77 Van Niekerk, 1980:10.

78 Bosch, 1980:43 & 44.

conservatives, who maintain very much a cognitive learning theory have constructed a “Bible” that supports their confessional approach and their search for objective truths.

### **2.1.2 A moderate view of Scripture: A Christological approach**

An Adventist “neo-orthodox” or moderate orientation has moved away from a legalistic reading of Scripture and is very much focused on a Christological interpretation of Scripture. They recognise the need to transcend a fundamentalist-conservative approach, but still hold to the fundamental teachings of Adventism, interpreting them in the light of the saving acts of God in Christ.

Dederen, referring to the challenge facing the SDA Church with regard to its view and use of Scripture, states the followings:

...the issue at stake is essentially one of authority, namely, how SDAs are going to *do* theology while holding to Biblical authority. Can we agree on exactly what the Bible means for us and how it is to be heard and interpreted? Can we maintain our claim to Biblical authority as a distinctive hallmark if we cannot find a way to move effectively toward theological consensus?<sup>79</sup>

According to him this consensus is to be found in Christ as the Saviour.

LaRondelle supports this notion, stating that “...the principles that ought to guide the Christian interpreter are determined by the gospel of Christ”.<sup>80</sup> He goes on to assert the following:

In harmony with the Reformation interpretation again, Seventh-day Adventists confess that the unifying theme of the OT and the NT is Jesus Christ and the redemption that centers in Him. The distinction between Adventist and early Reformation theology does not lie in the field of soteriology (the way of salvation) so much as it does in the field of eschatology, especially that which focusses on the second advent of Christ.<sup>81</sup>

Paulien puts it as follows: “...the Bible is not primarily about rules regulating behavior but about the Person behind those rules”.<sup>82</sup> The moderate orientation with its Christological approach, therefore, tends to be more focused on relationships and eschatology.

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79 R. Dederen, 1992b. *On Inspiration and Biblical Authority*:91.

80 Hans K. LaRondelle, 1996. *The end-time message in historical perspective*:10.

81 Hans K. LaRondelle, 1974. *Interpretation of Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology*:225.

82 Jon Paulien, 2003a. *Meet God again for the first time*:18.

The focus in interpreting Scripture is to understand God's progressive interaction with this world moving toward His final act of salvation.<sup>83</sup> In this regard Paulien argues with reference to the law that "...we need to view law in the context of 'relationship'. In the absence of relationship 'law' tends to become cold-hearted and abusive".<sup>84</sup> He pointedly remarks that the law is "...not cold and heartless, Law is all about the joy of life with other people. And it is about the joy of being in relationship with God".<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Paulien indicates that it is not only a relationship with God and each other that is important, but also to stand in "...a relationship with the earth".<sup>86</sup> He, however, cautions that this relationship with God, others and the earth "... has to be more than just good feeling. ...A relationship with God must have a solid infrastructure of Scripture and accurate information".<sup>87</sup>

In this regard Venden adamantly argues that "The biggest problem of our church today is that we are not connected to the vine".<sup>88</sup> He maintains that "...too much of the time our primary emphasis is on roasting the Catholics, getting everybody keeping the Ten Commandments and going to church on Saturday, and getting them baptized".<sup>89</sup> Moving away from a behavioural interpretation, he argues, "From both the Bible and hard personal experience, I have learned that all our attempts at righteousness are going to produce only filthy rags".<sup>90</sup> He postulates, therefore, that the attention is not to be on behaviour but rather looking "...totally to Jesus, in the faith relationship with Him, and the rest comes as a matter of course".<sup>91</sup> Thus, all hope is found in connecting with Christ and His acts of salvation, coming to a climax in the advent.

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83 "The apocalypse shows how John saw a new heaven and a new earth, with 'the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God' (Rev 21:2, RSV), which is the end-time fulfillment of all the covenant promises of God to Abraham and Israel. The twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel are integrated into one covenant people in one city, in one world (Rev 21:12-14).

Only then will the OT covenant promises be fulfilled completely, for God's plan of redemption is 'a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph 1:10, RSV). The NT shows how crucial to one's understanding theology is a consistent Christocentric interpretation of the OT prophecies." LaRondelle, 1974:230.

84 Paulien, 2003a:82. In Paulien's own words: "The biblical concept of law is not cold and arbitrary, but is the throbbing heart of a stable society in relationship with a loving God." Paulien, 2003a:87.

85 Paulien, 2003a:91.

86 Paulien, 2003a:24.

87 Paulien, 2003a:111.

88 M.L. Venden, 1996. *Never Without an Intercessor: The Good News of the Judgment*:36.

89 Venden, 1996:107.

90 Venden, 1996:59.

91 Venden, 1996:81.

The implications of this focus are not the socio-political needs of people, but rather on the God who seeks to create a better world. The tendency is to view any socio-political needs in the light of having a correct understanding of God, and not seeking to improve the social standing of people. Socio-political issues are not viewed as a priority when it comes to the mission of the church. So, any kind of caring would be focused on “bringing” Jesus to the sufferer.

LaRondelle states it as follows: “The purpose of the Hebrew symbols in the Christian Apocalypse is to reassure the church of her continuity with Israel’s calling (see Isa. 49:6) so that God’s eternal plan for all humanity will be gloriously fulfilled.”<sup>92</sup> The attention is drawn to the *harmony* and *continuity* of Scripture as it relates to God and His saving act. So, the focal point is very much more on Jesus Christ, the unifying factor of both the OT and NT, culminating in the *eschaton*, rather than dealing with the needs of people.<sup>93</sup>

The moderate approach, therefore, has moved away from a mechanical view and use of Scripture to a functional one. They have also moved away from a legalistic point of view, but not to the extent of the contextualisation of the progressive-oriented theologians. From within a Christological context, however, they are still very much occupied with the confessions. The socio-political context is still not considered as of any great significance.

### 2.1.3 A progressive (liberal) orientation: View and use of Scripture

The progressive-oriented theologians<sup>94</sup> are towards the other end of the spectrum, such scholars as Fritz Guy and Alden Thompson.<sup>95</sup>

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92 Hans K. LaRondelle, 2003. *The Apostolic Gospel: The master key to Revelation’s code*:29.

93 LaRondelle, 1974:225.

94 “The idea of divine self-revelation was worked out in two ways. The first of these was the biblical theology that emerged during the Enlightenment. This school did not rigidly insist that the whole text was divinely inspired, but through its hermeneutic study of the material of biblical history it sought to explain and work out the implications of the idea that there was some crucial element in that history which represented revelation. The second approach was reflected in philosophical theologies which proceeded not from a biblical framework, but from a theoretical-philosophical paradigm based on the hypothesis that human beings and reality are autonomous.

The difference between ‘biblical’ theology and ‘philosophical’ theology is that the former unconsciously and uncritically adopts a theoretical-philosophical world view, whereas the latter does so consciously and critically.” Van Niekerk, 1980:9.

95 I refer to and will focus on Fritz Guy and Alden Thompson as it is my understanding that they, within Adventism, have published different view-points as progressive theologians. I am also using Thompson



Guy states that the “Adventist future will be more ‘liberalised’ (that is, more open, inclusive, and culturally aware) and more pluralistic (that is more self-consciously diverse) than present Adventism”.<sup>96</sup> This is based on two basic assumptions: Firstly, the need to overcome a commonsense literal reading of the Bible and to adopt a more critical reading, in particular a historical-critical reading. Secondly, the importance to focus on the human element within Scripture.<sup>97</sup> Progressive Adventists are more focused on the idea of “present truth” that is not static, but which can lead us to knowledge and critical thinking about our world and human experience; thus, centred on “thinking theologically”.<sup>98</sup>

Although progressives also believe that the Bible is inspired by God they focus more on the human side of revelation.<sup>99</sup> Johnston affirms this, in that “Incarnationalists see the Bible as God’s Word given through human experience”,<sup>100</sup> rather than God speaking it into existence. Thompson brings the human element sharply into focus when quoting E. G. White; he indicates that “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. ... *It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired.*”<sup>101</sup> Thus, Thompson promotes what he calls an “incarnational” view of Scripture, maintaining that the Word of God must be compared with the incarnation. He indicates that “...the perfection of divinity is clothed with the imperfection and weakness of human flesh”.<sup>102</sup> He contends that the Scriptures do not reflect the logic and rhetoric of God,

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because his book, *Inspiration. Hard Questions, Honest Answers*, has stimulated a lot of discussion and even strong disagreement within Adventism.

96 Fritz Guy, 1994. *A more Liberalized Adventist future*:18.

97 In this regard see Thompson, 1991:87-97.

98 See Fritz Guy’s book *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the interpretation of Faith*. Guy, 1994.

99 Thompson, 1991:47-49 & 51-56. See also Thompson, 1992:51, 52 & 56.

100 Johnston, 1999:10. “God’s messages were delivered through human instrumentalities and thus bear the impress of human expression. Humanity affected the content, the composition, the textual transmission, and the translation. Human expression includes language, idiom, rhetoric, cultural perspective, illustrations, incidental facts, and some aspects of worldview. When pressed, even inerrantists concede this. It is necessary to sort out what is human expression and divine message, even though all are inspired.” Johnston, 1999:11.

101 Thompson, 1992:51 & 52. He states: “I hold the conviction that it is possible to see the human *and* still believe in the divine.” Thompson, 1992:90.

102 Thompson, 1989a. *Who’s Afraid of the Old Testament God?*:147.

but rather, that of humans. Although the Scriptures are divinely inspired, progressive scholars and theologians tend to emphasise the human side of the Bible.<sup>103</sup>

It is proposed that this “...is where the points of contention reveal themselves and because this is the aspect that challenges interpreters”.<sup>104</sup> Because of the human element in inspiration, the Bible is viewed to have discrepancies and errors in it.<sup>105</sup> Whatever inspiration may mean, therefore, “...it does not eliminate human slips, so long as they do not impair the main message”.<sup>106</sup> Consequently, a progressive orientation holds to the “honesty” of the Bible, focusing on its present day application. Guy, therefore, entertains the idea that “...the authority of scripture is changing from fallibility to reliability; and the understanding of its function in Christian life is changing from ‘code book’ to ‘case book’”.<sup>107</sup> Thompson, holding to an “incarnational” approach, supports this notion and presents the Bible as a “case book”, which “...describes a series of examples that reflect a variety of responses under varied circumstances. None of these cases may be fully defined or prescribed in other settings, but each is described in a manner that could be helpful to someone facing similar circumstances”.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the Bible is viewed not as a “perfect-book-on-the-shelf” but rather a “perfect-book-in-the-hand”.<sup>109</sup>

At the same time it must be said that neither Thompson nor Guy denies that God inspired the Bible, nor do they claim that the Bible is not normative.<sup>110</sup> From Guy’s perspective the Scriptures are “...the *primary* source and norm of Christian theological thinking...” (italics

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103 According to Thompson, human beings spoke “...God’s message under the guidance of his Spirit, but they are also very much under the influence of their own limitations of language, character, knowledge and ability. ... The Spirit does not obliterate these human elements”. Thompson, 1989a:148.

104 Johnston, 1999:10.

105 Thompson argues that by “recognizing that the Spirit inspired people, instead of words, allows us to admit to the gap between the human words and God himself (‘God and heaven alone are infalible’). Alden Thompson, 1998. *Responding to Pipim and Scriven*:51.

106 Johnston, 1999:10-11.

107 Guy, 1999a:91.

108 Thompson, 1991:100.

109 Thompson, 1992:140 & 260.

110 Thompson pointedly maintains that “Fundamental to the approach I have taken is the position that ‘All Scripture is inspired by God’ (2 Tim. 3:16). That means Old Testament as well as New. Furthermore, I am convinced that we should never let Christian tradition or even another passage of Scripture rob us of the opportunity of coming afresh to each passage of Scripture as God’s word to us. The Bible is normative, but we must not impose upon it a false unity which would have the practical effect of denying canonical status to certain parts of Scripture”. Thompson, 1989a:10.

added).<sup>111</sup> Thus, he proposes that the Reformation's *sola scriptura* is a polemical exaggeration because it is presently being used to avoid the questions that secular knowledge confronts within traditional beliefs.<sup>112</sup> He rather wishes to think in terms of *prima scriptura*—according to Scripture first of all—and also the “Wesleyan quadrilateral” of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience.<sup>113</sup> This opens the way for him to believe that theology is always interpreting the faith and that our reading of Scripture is an interpretation of the biblical text.<sup>114</sup>

It is important to note that for Guy the Scripture's principal concern is not about the supposedly historical facts, but rather the meaning of the events and stories of the Bible. The primary focus of Genesis 1-2:3, therefore, are not on the details of creation, but the story of God's involvement. Similarly, the Gospels are theological interpretations of the story of Jesus as the Messiah. His point of departure is very much from rationalism and even incorporating “redaction criticism”.<sup>115</sup> It is not Christ's miraculous power over demons and nature that signify Him as a unique Person, but the moral qualities of His life. Fritz Guy unlike Bultmann, however, still believes in the resurrection of Jesus. It is a “truly extraordinary event” and it stands out as a notable exception in comparison with the other miracles.<sup>116</sup>

In this regard Guy, rather than holding to a verbally inspired Bible, proposes a scientific approach via “*thinking* theologically” in reading the Scriptures. He claims that theology is an intellectual activity, a cognitive enterprise, because theology is neither impulsive nor emotional but rather rational, where truth is regarded as progressive.<sup>117</sup> He proposes that

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111 Guy, 1999a:126.

112 Guy, 1999a:137. See also Tim Crosby, 1987. *Why I don't believe in Sola scriptura*:11-15.

113 Guy, 1999a:137.

114 Guy, 1999a:138.

115 See Guy, 1999a:148.

116 Guy, 1999a:149.

117 See Guy, 1999a. *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith*. Damsteegt also asserts that “The Bible is also the best means to strengthen the intellect of those who want to improve their intellectual faculties, there is nothing better than the study of the Bible. Ellen White emphatically states: ‘...study of the Bible is superior to all other study in strengthening intellect’”. P. Gerard Damsteegt, 2006. *Objectives and Limitations of interpreting the Bible: Principles from the works of Ellen G. White*:34.

theology has to make sense and, therefore, has to be well *thought* through.<sup>118</sup> It also needs to be an “*open-ended*” enterprise and he provides several reasons why. It is his contention that “The first and most fundamental reason why theological thinking is an ongoing task ...is the necessarily limited nature of our knowledge and consequently ‘transcendence of truth over all our statements about it’”.<sup>119</sup> Guy wants to overcome a reading of Scriptures that merely supports its traditional beliefs; therefore, we should appeal to the whole of Scripture in all its diversities and individualities.<sup>120</sup> In this way he wishes to steer away from a conservative-legalistic reading of the Bible. Consequently, all truth and our understanding thereof are to be regarded as “progressive”.<sup>121</sup>

In being “progressive” Guy seeks to make room within Adventist theology for a historical-theological, cultural-secular and a personal-experiential reading of Scripture.<sup>122</sup> The traditional interpretations of faith from both Adventist and non-Adventist perspectives cannot simply be ignored. Guy asserts, however, that we need to know that we read both our traditions and the Scriptures

...through Adventist eyes—eyes that have been conditioned by a tradition of apocalyptic hope and sabbatarian experience, and by a lifelong and continuing familiarity with the books, articles, testimonies, and homilies of Ellen White. While all of this Adventist influence is related to scripture, it is not simply identical with it.<sup>123</sup>

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118 “In doing theology, as in the faith that precedes and motivates it, a person should not ‘decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence’—which is to say, not emotionally but rationally. ...

It is wrong, always, everywhere and for everyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence. ... Sound reasoning involves common sense, intuition, and imagination. It is thinking concretely and in context as well as abstractly and in general; it is thinking metaphorically as well as logically.

Because theological thinking is a rational activity, it should always be characterized by—and may therefore appropriately be evaluated according to—these four criteria of intellectual integrity: adequate grounds, sound reasoning, conceptual coherence, and existential value.” Guy, 1999a:99, 100, 102 & 105.

119 Guy, 1999a:65.

120 Guy, 1999a:128-132. In this regard, Guy states that “The theological meaning of the whole of scripture is centered in Jesus the Messiah, the definitive revelation of the character of God; and the meaning of each part of scripture is understood in relation to this central revelation. It is God incarnate in and as Jesus the Messiah who is the focus and the ultimate criterion of Christian theology”. Guy, 1999a:132.

121 “The continuing discovery of truth is obvious in the natural and human sciences. We all know that we know a good deal more about both the natural universe and human existence than we did a century, or even a generation, ago. It is less obvious but just as important to recognize the ongoing discovery of religious truth. *The ultimate truth about Ultimate Reality is eternal; but our human understanding of it is always partial and changing.* ... The idea of ‘present truth’ points to the fact that generation is called to build on, and *not just preserve*, the foundation of the past” (italics added). Guy, 1999a:75 & 76.

122 In this regard see Guy, 1999a:151-152.

123 Guy, 1999a:152.

A secular reading of scripture is thus regarded as important not for the sake of an evangelistic pragmatism, but rather because “all truth is God’s truth”.<sup>124</sup> Whereas Guy also suggest a “personal-experiential” reading of scripture he does not indicate how the “wonder”, “faith”, “hope”, and “love” of such a reading can be gained from such a critical reading of Scripture and how it can be integrated into his intellectual approach.<sup>125</sup>

Hence, in dealing with present day issues the Scriptures are to be re-interpreted so as to address these issues in a meaningful way.<sup>126</sup> It is held that the present day context will determine what the Scriptures are teaching with regard to the principle of the matter. The way the church is to behave, therefore, is determined not by Scripture, but by the context, and the Scriptures are regarded as a moral and honourable guide.

In this regard the context is very important for the progressive approach, thus, being more open for the community to be involved in interpreting and understanding Scripture. It is regarded as an “inclusive activity of the community of faith”.<sup>127</sup> Guy states it quite emphatically when he says:

As ‘God’s appointed agency’ for communicating the good news of salvation, the community cannot evade its theological responsibility. However difficult and sometimes disturbing the task of theological reflection, criticism, and construction may be, it is absolutely essential. If the community refuses to do its theological thinking, it endangers its own spiritual health and reduces the effectiveness of its witness to the world.<sup>128</sup>

They, therefore, are more inclined to hold to the notion of a “community of faith” or the “priesthood of all believers” when it comes to the understanding of the Bible.

In practice, however, this community of faith notion is often limited, or sometimes even excluded. Haldeman, when he was associate professor of NT studies at Loma Linda University,<sup>129</sup> cautioned against such involvement and indicated that lay-people are not

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124 Guy, 1999a:154.

125 Guy, 1999a:155-157.

126 “‘Liberal’ scholars, ... most often accommodate the so-called scientific approach and use these ‘scientific’ tools and positivistic methods, like the *historical-critical method*, to interpret the Scriptures and to determine what the Bible ‘really says.’” Van Wyk, 2000:89.

127 Guy, 1999a:33.

128 Guy, 1999a:35.

129 Loma Linda University is considered to be a more progressive university.

equipped to interpret, or capable of interpreting the Bible correctly.<sup>130</sup> Here, progressive theology may be tempted to fall prey to an academic reading of Scripture and ignore the fact that the Bible can also be read as stories; stories that the community of faith can share through their own stories.

Thus, whereas progressives have a greater openness to the community of faith involvement, a progressive approach is not a narrative enterprise, but rather an interpretive and rational activity.

This hermeneutical approach does have more of openness toward pastoral care and socio-political issues, but is strongly resisted by the institutional SDA Church.

## 2.2 The importance of “truth” and “present truth” in Adventist theology

As we have noted throughout our discussion so far, “truth” is of paramount importance for the confessional approach within Adventism. Their studying of the Bible is mainly to find truth, and in particular cognitive truth that can determine the identity of the church.<sup>131</sup> As Guy indicates, truth is regarded as the first and highest principle of theology and being a cognitive enterprise truth is its most treasured asset. He strongly asserts that “There must be no doubt about the supremacy of truth in theology, and no compromise: commitment to truth is prior to all other interests and superior to all competing values. ... An interpretation of faith that has a higher loyalty than truth is not genuine theology at all; it is pseudotheology”.<sup>132</sup>

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130 “The San Diego Chapter heard Madelyn Haldeman, associate professor of New Testament studies at Loma Linda University, speak on ‘The Interpretation of Scripture: Layperson’s Challenge’ on Saturday, April 14. Haldeman addressed an audience of 60 people.

‘Is a layperson capable of correct biblical interpretation?’ was the key question discussed. Haldeman’s answer was ‘No.’ She then described the dangers that lay-people encounter when translating Scripture and Ellen White’s writings, which, in her opinion, require a similar exegetical discipline.

Haldeman gave examples of how lay-people tend to mix and match various translations to obtain unusual interpretations of Scriptural passages. She felt that it is very common for lay-people to bring their personal assumptions and formed opinions into the exegesis.

She also noted how some people will move about between translations searching for a phrase that expresses their own thoughts.” Dana Lauren West, 1984. *Haldeman Says Bible Needs Historical Analysis*:7.

131 See in this regard the following works: Jon Paulien, 1993; Martin Weber, 1994. *Who’s got the truth* and S. Koranteng-Pipim, 2005a. Koranteng-Pipim even has this quote by E.G. White on the front page of his book: “The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth...”

132 Guy, 1999a:52.

The Adventist Church, and in particular its conservative administrators and scholars, in their search for beliefs most often holds to “truth” being objective and absolute. From a conservative perspective Hasel indicates that “...any truth that the Bible reveals is objective, authoritative, and absolute”.<sup>133</sup> Koranteng-Pipim even goes so far as to assert that

Adventists, however, insist that whatever light can be found in other churches, they have also and much more besides. Believing that God has raised up their church as His end-time repository of truth, Adventists hold that they have the present truth, the everlasting Gospel for these last days. The issue, then, is not whether other faiths or churches have some truth. Instead, the question is whether our ministers ought to look to other churches for new light. Given our self-understanding as God’s end-time depository of truth, is it necessary for us to go to churches that are still living in spiritual darkness to discover new light or additional truth from them? If those churches represent ‘Babylon,’ and if it is true that ‘Babylon is fallen,’ how can we call upon our brothers and sisters in ‘Babylon’ to ‘come out of her, My people’ (Revelation 18:4), when we ourselves are now returning to ‘Babylon’ to receive instruction from her?<sup>134</sup>

In this sense he is adamant that the SDA Church is the “alone holder” of truth—*absolute timeless universal truth*. For him and the contributors to the book, “Here We Stand”,<sup>135</sup> the emphasis is on the church being the depository of final objective authoritative “truth” for these last days.

In this regard conservative-oriented authors do not so much argue for a “*present truth*” that needs to be discovered, but rather they are in favour of a truth that is final and fixed. The concept “present truth” is not often discussed within a conservative approach, for truth is regarded as something that we can “stand on”, unmovable pillars or foundations. At the most, the so-called “form” of the church’s message can be changed, but not its “content”. Because truth is gleaned from the Bible, and the Bible only, it is “the everlasting Gospel for these last days”,<sup>136</sup> therefore, it is objective, authoritative,<sup>137</sup> and trustworthy.

Needless to say, the progressives believe in a truth that is progressive and promoting progress, which is not static. Guy states that “...Adventist Christianity has a rich heritage of

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133 Hasel, 1985:103.

134 S. Koranteng-Pipim, 2005b. *Gospel Gimmicks: The Foolishness of Preaching or the Preaching of Foolishness?*:40.

135 See Koranteng-Pipim’s 800 page book “*Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*”, motivating this standpoint on truth. Koranteng-Pipim, 2005a.

136 Koranteng-Pipim, 2005b:40.

137 Hasel, 1985:101.

openness to the discovery of new truth—new truth that does not discard old truth, but incorporates it into a more complete and adequate understanding”.<sup>138</sup> The focus here is that our understanding is always changing and limited and “The theological principle of relativity ...is based on the evident fact that our understanding of reality and truth is necessarily imperfect, so that there is a vast distance between what we know and absolute truth”.<sup>139</sup> Guy describes it as follows:

For the understanding of all the writers—prophets, historians, and poets—was conditioned by historical, cultural, genetic, and biographical factors, resulting in an evident diversity of perspectives. ... And for a third thing, our own understanding of the ancient text is similarly limited by historical, cultural, genetic, and biographical factors. ... In our effort to understand truth more adequately, the principle of relativity should encourage an endeavor to ‘see both sides’ of theological disagreement.<sup>140</sup>

The implications are that “...truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light”,<sup>141</sup> influenced by our context. Context is, therefore, also regarded as very important because “...no one’s theology is a simple matter of ‘God, Scripture, and me’”.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the progressive orientation is prone to propagate “present truth” rather than “absolute truth”. As Guy pointedly claims: “So theology—Christian, Adventist, or anyone’s own—never is, or ever will be, absolute; it ‘cannot claim for itself that authority which belongs to [God] alone.’”<sup>143</sup>

Within this confessional approach, the protection and restoration of truth are the main focus, to the detriment of constructing a theology where pastoral care regarding the needs and the suffering of people are addressed.

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138 Guy, 1999a:75.

139 Guy, 1999a:59.

140 Guy, 1999a:60 & 61.

141 Guy, 1999a:61.

142 Guy, 1999a:62.

143 Guy, 1999a:67.



### 3 The implications of a confessional approach

With regard to the confessional approach Wiklander draws our attention to the following:

One factor is our continued neglect of the receiver in the communication process. We uphold the message: The Word of God, the doctrinal truths, and our theology. We pay homage to the Sender: God, and His call to us. And while we may be correct in what we say, teach, or proclaim, truly adequate information is not a guarantee for successful communication. Success requires that the receivers of God's message perceive the Sender as trustworthy. They must understand the message and feel that it is genuinely pertinent to them and that it actually contributes to the meaning and longings of their lives. This is all too often not the case when the church communicates with secular people. Reasons for this are many. Often, we tend to see secular values as threats to our faith, and we are trapped in an attitude that resists change. The church faces the challenge of the secular machine everywhere, one way or the other.<sup>144</sup>

A confessional approach seldom, if ever, goes beyond pastoral care that cannot transcend a theology of metaphysics, and when it does, it is nothing more than an "applied theology".

#### 3.1 A confessional approach and its implications for pastoral care

Adventism with a pre-millennial perspective is very much focused on the imminent second coming of Christ.<sup>145</sup> True to its name, the *Adventist* Church considers its main mission to be the proclamation of the Second Advent of Christ.

The second coming of Christ is considered to be "...the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel".<sup>146</sup> The doctrine of the second coming is often viewed as the "core" doctrine of Adventism and most others as peripheral doctrines, supporting this one.<sup>147</sup> It is also held that all apocalyptic prophecies and much of Scripture points to this single climactic

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144 Bertil Wiklander, 2003. *Understanding secular minds: A perspective on "life development"*:12.

145 "In the more pronouncedly adventist ... circles all emphasis lies on the *coming* Kingdom of God. The believer looks forward with longing to Christ's return. The present is empty. All that really matters is the glorious future." Bosch, 1980:32.

146 *Seventh-day Adventist Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*:332.

147 "We are admonished to study the signs and pay attention. (Matthew 24:32-35)... Moreover, if we study the nature of the coming of Christ and the purpose of His coming, then no one need be deceived. Yet, strange as it may seem, not a single mainline Christian church teaches the Biblical coming of Christ. Most churches, if they preach about the second coming at all, preach a coming of Christ that will bring peace to the nations, but the Bible teaches a destruction of nations." W.J. Veith, 2002. *Truth Matters: Escaping the Labyrinth of Error*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.:487-488.

event. Because of the importance and high priority given to this event, all money, time and efforts are directed to proclaiming the second coming.<sup>148</sup>

As indicated in chapter two, with a very strong pre-millennial understanding of the Advent,<sup>149</sup> it is held that this world and its socio-political state are fast deteriorating.<sup>150</sup> Thus, not much effort is spent in trying to address these downward trends, as it would be a waste of time and money. All efforts are directed at “preaching” the gospel, counselling people in the truth of Scripture so that the end will come. The end is regarded as the only hope for this decaying world.

### 3.1.1 Adventism, eschatology and imminence

In the research I will now take a closer look at Adventism’s eschatological approach with its focus on the second coming, and the impact this has on a caring ministry. It is believed that the Adventist premillennial understanding with a very strong eschatological approach to the second coming sets them apart from all other Christian denominations who also teach the

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148 “Seventh-day Adventists, with a membership that represents about 700 languages and 1,000 dialects, are proclaiming the gospel in 190 countries. Almost 90 percent of these members live outside of North America. Believing that medical and educational work play essential roles in fulfilling the gospel commission, we operate nearly 600 hospitals, nursing homes, clinics and dispensaries, 19 medical launches, 27 health food factories, 86 colleges and universities, 834 secondary schools, 4,166 elementary schools, 125 Bible correspondence schools, and 33 language institutes. Our 51 publishing houses produce literature in 190 languages and our shortwave radio stations broadcast to approximately 75 percent of the world population. The Holy Spirit has abundantly blessed our mission thrust.” *Seventh-day Adventist Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*:342.

149 As was discussed in chapter two of the research.

150 “The widespread proclamation of the gospel does not necessarily mean a massive growth in genuine Christianity. Instead, the Scriptures predict a decline of true spirituality toward the end of time. ... The spiritual decline within Christianity and the revival of the man of lawlessness have led to a growing neglect of God’s law in the church and in the lives of believers. ... This disregard of God’s law has led to an increase in crime and immoral behavior. ... The disrespect for God’s law current within much of Christianity has contributed to modern society’s contempt for law and order. Throughout the world, crime is skyrocketing out of control. ... Disregard for God’s law has also broken down the restraints of modesty and purity, resulting in a surge of immorality. ... Although wars have plagued humanity throughout history, never before have they been so global and so destructive. ... Disasters appear to have increased significantly in recent years. Recent cataclysms of earth and weather, coming one on top of another, have caused some to wonder whether nature has gone berserk— ... Famines have occurred many times in the past, but they have not occurred on the scale with which they have in this century. Never before has the world had millions of people suffering from either starvation or malnutrition. The prospects for the future are hardly bright. The unprecedented extent of starvation clearly signals that Christ’s return is imminent.” *Seventh-day Adventist Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*:342-345.

second coming. It is also held that the knowledge of the imminent second coming is what makes the message of Adventism particularly unique.

In this regard LaRondelle informs us that the distinctive characteristic of Adventism is its eschatology with its focus on the second coming of Christ.<sup>151</sup> Oliver supports this, informing us that, eschatology and the return of Christ have “...always been a cardinal feature of the Seventh-day Adventist belief system”.<sup>152</sup> This Adventist eschatology not only distinguishes Adventism from other religious denominations or the Reformation, *it also has a very definite impact on the kind of ministry the church is involved in.* Furthermore, this eschatological focus is often an *apocalyptic* eschatology with its focus on end-time events.

LaRondelle helps by giving some insight into a possible Adventist understanding of “eschatology” and “apocalyptic eschatology”.<sup>153</sup> He indicates that “The term *eschatology* [refers to] the fulfilment of OT prophecies ranging from the first advent of Christ to the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. The term *apocalyptic* or *apocalyptic eschatology* is concentrated on the signs of the times leading to the second advent of Christ”.<sup>154</sup> Now, Robbins and Palmer support LaRondelle when they say that eschatology,

...refers to divinely revealed teachings about the final events of history. ‘Apocalyptic eschatology ... is the form of eschatology believing that these events are in some sense imminent.’ ‘Eschatology interprets the historical process in the light of the final events.’ Its apocalyptic variety, ... emphasizes a ‘deterministic view of history,’ in which things are viewed in terms of a model of *crisis-judgment-reward*: a persecuting tyrant (e.g., Antichrist) oppresses the faithful and is destroyed by divine forces, after which there is divine judgment involving retribution for the wicked and a (possibly utopian) reward for the deserving.<sup>155</sup>

Quigley, supporting LaRondelle, Robbins and Palmer, informs us that the focus is very much on the “imminence”<sup>156</sup> of the second coming. He indicates that it “...has always been

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151 LaRondelle, 1974:225.

152 Oliver, 1989:245.

153 LaRondelle “is aware of the considerable revival of theological interest in apocalyptic but wishes to be understood as not reviewing that interest here nor of standing within its boundaries. He sees the Seventh-day Adventist continuation of the largely Protestant and historicist interpretation of Bible prophecy as making an inevitable distinction from the general position, as will be evident in the definitions of *eschatology* and *apocalyptic*” to follow in the text above. LaRondelle, 1974:226.

154 LaRondelle, 1974:226.

155 T. Robbins & S.J. Palmer, 1997. *Patterns of Contemporary Apocalypticism in North America*:4 & 5.

156 “Imminence, meaning a characteristic of that which is likely to happen without delay...” W.B. Quigley, 1980. *Imminence mainspring of Adventism*:4.

the dominant thrust of Adventism—not just the belief that Jesus will come ‘one day,’ but rather that He will come almost immediately, that His coming is ‘at the door!’”<sup>157</sup> Thus, the “...*imminent* return of Jesus was, and still is, the mainspring of Adventism”.<sup>158</sup> Without this disposition, according to Quigley, Adventism has no necessity or reason to exist. This unique focus on the imminence of the second coming, therefore, sets them apart from all other Protestants and makes a profound impact on the focus of their mission and ministry.

In addition, there are the “*signs of the times*”, which also bring the imminence of the Advent into focus. Much time is spent on the study of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation so as to understand their fulfilment. Much value is given to current-day events as being signs predicted by these prophetic writings of the last days. Events like floods, earthquakes, wars, political turmoil, crumbling economies, etcetera, are most often highlighted as signs of the nearness of the Advent. As Robbins and Palmer state it:

The apocalyptic imagination ... bestows meaning on current events. Present events and tensions are seen as an image or prototype of the ultimate decisive struggle between good and evil and its final resolution at the end of time. Current vicissitudes thus have eschatological meaning. They are ‘signs’ of the final crisis to come. The ‘last days’ are thus experienced as ... imminent.<sup>159</sup>

The focus, therefore, is very much on the second coming of Christ and its imminence as the event that holds the only solution to this troubled world. Now, in a sense, this is true; however, this all consuming focus tends to marginalise the caring ministry of the church as it focuses the attention on the urgency of proclamation. Because Christ’s advent is “at the door” there is no time to be concerned with the things of this world. This of course is driven by world events—“the signs of the times”.

### **3.1.2 An apocalyptic-focused eschatology**

As we noted in chapter two the focus of the early Adventist Church was very much an issue of preaching the gospel, because the end was at hand.

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157 Quigley, 1980:4.

158 Quigley, 1980:27.

159 Robbins & Palmer, 1997:5.

This type of apocalyptic eschatology is very deterministic and also “...at least in its catastrophic manifestation, decidedly *dualistic*. Absolute good and evil contend through history such that there is no room for moral ambiguity—no shades of gray.”<sup>160</sup> This implies that “The apocalyptic form of temporal resolution of evil entails the notion that there will be an *end of history* when all things will be sorted out and everyone will get what they deserve (‘justification’).”<sup>161</sup> Thus, a very pessimistic view of humanity, society, and earth’s history was maintained;<sup>162</sup> Wessinger states it as follows:

Evil is seen as being rampant, and things are believed to be getting worse all the time. To eliminate evil, therefore, and achieve the earthly collective salvation, the world as we know it has to be destroyed and created anew by God. Further, it is believed that the catastrophic destruction is *imminent*.<sup>163</sup>

The focus is not on helping people trapped in these catastrophes, but to warn them that these events are evidence of the pending advent and to persuade them to trust God and be ready.

The main focus of an apocalyptic eschatology, therefore, is to teach “...people to trust our Lord to keep His eyes on world events, while we ‘fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith’ (Heb 12:2). There is little in this broken world, and even less in its political and social structures, that we can repair ourselves.”<sup>164</sup> That is to say, the emphasis is placed on *Christ establishing God’s literal, eternal kingdom* here on earth. All hope is tied up in God, keeping His eyes on the matters of earth. There is very little to no hope of doing anything else for this broken world and its “hurting” people, except to focus the attention on Christ.

Whatever the emphasis is, *this type of eschatology that focuses the attention on the second coming tends to marginalise any form of ministry that deals with caring*. The focus is so much on the hopelessness of this broken world and the corrupt political and social structures

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160 Robbins & Palmer, 1997:6.

161 Robbins & Palmer, 1997:7.

162 “Catastrophic millennialism is rooted not only in a pessimistic evaluation of human nature and society, but also in the pervasive human tendency to think in dualistic categories. ... This dualistic thinking, the ‘us versus them’ mentality, which leads to belief in the necessity of battling evil located in the demonized ‘other,’ is the conceptual basis of warfare...” C. Wessinger, 1997. *Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem*:50.

163 Wessinger, 1997:49.

164 Loren G. Seibold, 2002. *Preaching to anxious times*:7. See also “...the foundational message of all eschatology: [it is] that God is in charge of the ultimate fate of this earth. An honest eschatology assures of God’s jurisdiction over earthly and political affairs, without taking liberties with God’s Word.” Seibold, 2002:7.

that all hope and help is made transcendent, otherworldly, where all comfort and security is found in the imminently coming of Jesus.<sup>165</sup> There are, however, exceptions with scholars, for example, Charles Teel from La Sierra University, who is very much involved in social ethics.<sup>166</sup>

### 3.1.3 The remnant idea

This apocalyptic-centred eschatology has also brought the “remnant” idea into sharp focus.

Adventism, based on Revelation 12:17, does not only propose the concept of a “remnant”,<sup>167</sup> but also believes that “...this modern remnant is the Seventh-day Adventist Church”.<sup>168</sup> In October 1994, 150 years after the 1844 disappointment, Robert Folkenberg<sup>169</sup> stated that “Scripture is clear: God has established a remnant church for these last days”.<sup>170</sup> Bullón takes this further and maintains that the “remnant” is those who “...have the eternal gospel, not only to tell it, study it, analyse it, or hear it, but to *preach it*”.<sup>171</sup> The remnant church has

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165 Seibold, relating to the September 11, 2001 disaster, claims the following:

“An old gospel song says, ‘This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through.’ Jesus prayed that His disciples, though they were ‘in the world’ would not be ‘of the world’; they would be, in a manner of speaking, resident aliens.

It is extraordinarily difficult to live in the world, but not be attached to it or adopt its ideas of what makes for ultimate safety and security. So much of us is invested here! Yet this very real though transcendent perspective is the one that we must offer in our sermons and our ministry as a whole. In the end it is this that brings us and our people real comfort and security. We can never be entirely at home with things as they presently are on our planet.” Seibold, 2002:6-7.

166 See in this regard Charles W. Teel, 1995. *Remnant and Republic: Adventist Themes for Personal and Social Ethics*:1-35.

167 “The Bible portrays the remnant as a small group of God’s people who, through calamities, wars, and apostasy, remain loyal to God” *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines*:161. “The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness.” *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines*:152.

168 Robert S. Folkenberg, 1994c. *A People of Prophecy*:8. See also Folkenberg: “... we are the church—the remnant church. We aren’t one more organization, or club for fellowship, or a corporation with a world mission. We are the people of God. Our Chief is in heaven, and we look for His soon return.” Robert S. Folkenberg, 1994a. *Needed: Gospel Preaching*:14.

169 Robert Folkenberg was the then president of the GC.

170 Folkenberg, 1994c:10.

171 Alejandro Bullón, 2003. *Integrated evangelism*:14. Bullón states that “On earth, God would raise a remnant to proclaim to the world the everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6-12) with a final judgment emphasis”. Bullón, 2003:14.

a specific mission and it needs to preach the everlasting gospel and the final judgment.<sup>172</sup> In this regard Samaan states:

God's faithful remnant then and His faithful remnant now is a witnessing remnant. In the darkness of heathenism, they shone as beacons of light. Their experience of sharing their faith in such hostile circumstances should encourage us today to pleasantly and powerfully do likewise... The remnant people's faithful witness can never be an optional luxury. It is the essence of their identity and their spiritual vitality.<sup>173</sup>

This remnant idea also tends unfortunately towards exclusivism and conservatives have in the past proposed a state of perfectionism.<sup>174</sup> It tends towards propagating the idea that there is a group of people who are different from the rest of the world and they are called to lead people out of the world, so as to become a part of this remnant. Folkenberg, as GC president, called all church leaders and membership to focus on the *proclamation* of "...those truths that set us apart as a distinctive people".<sup>175</sup> It does not propose getting involved with the issues of daily living. Rather, as in Samaan's, *Faith in the face of fire*, the emphasis is on the message we need to preach,<sup>176</sup> the "Three Angels' Messages", whereas Scriven, a progressive, differs very much from him. Scriven says that Adventism has not understood the meaning of this metaphor. According to him Adventism needs to reconsider the metaphor of the remnant because it calls "...the Adventist Church to repent of purely personal or individualistic religion and to embrace a radical form of social and political engagement".<sup>177</sup>

For the conservative approach the remnant metaphor is about worship in terms of our beliefs and, consequently, may be seen as propagating an elitist idea, where the remnant metaphor is about Adventist identity and to proclaim the eternal gospel and the judgment hour message. This is to happen so that eternal truth is restored to the church and the Second Advent can be hastened. Plantak, a more progressive Adventist theologian, states that it is

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172 "On earth, God would raise a remnant to proclaim to the world the everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6-12) with a final judgment emphasis." Bullón, 2003:14.

173 P.G. Samaan, 2006. *Faith in the face of fire: Lessons for the final remnant*, in *The Word of God for the people of God*:155.

174 There has been a progressive movement away from perfectionism particularly by moderates and progressives.

175 Folkenberg, 1994b:18.

176 Samaan, 2006.

177 Charles Scriven, 1986. *The real truth about the remnant*:6.

this remnant theology that has led Adventism away from any form of socio-political involvement.<sup>178</sup>

### 3.1.4 Proclamation: The SDA mission

Although there is a slow movement away from seeing the basic mission of the church as that of preaching the Gospel to the entire world, this is still supported strongly in particular by conservatives and church Administrators.

From a more liberal approach the nature of the church's mission is being progressively challenged. Fritz Guy warns of the dangers in attempting to make a theological tradition absolute rather than discovering its meaning personally. We should be very weary of regarding such theologies as the "proclamation-oriented mission", and as being the only mission of the church, regarding it as a "...sacred trust rather than an incentive to theological growth".<sup>179</sup> He also goes on to tell us that when such a theology is challenged, rather than "...acknowledge its fallibility and seek to correct and improve it",<sup>180</sup> there is a tendency to want to protect it. So, Guy challenges the absolute nature of conservative Adventist theology. Scriven even goes so far as to place Sabbath keeping in the context of "...fairness to workers, freedom for the oppressed, and bread and housing for the hungry, homeless poor".<sup>181</sup> *In this way a fundamentalist view of mission is being called into question.*

Conservatives, however, find their motivation for the church's mission first of all grounded upon the following biblical injunctions:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matt 28:19&20).

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178 "The last theological preoccupation that led Adventists astray from social involvement is 'remnant' theology. As Pearson observed, 'The perception of itself as 'God's remnant church' has led Adventism to seek political neutrality.' This understanding of special blessings and a sense of destiny, which Adventists feel, can lead to pride and indifference. Furthermore, it can lead to triumphalism and a narrow exclusivism and the church turning its back on the cry of suffering, desperate humanity." Plantak, 1998:47.

179 Fritz Guy, 1999b. *How Scripture Should Function in Theology*:19.

180 Guy, 1999b:19.

181 Scriven, 1986:8.



Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (Rev 14:6).<sup>182</sup>

A secondary motive is driven by the conviction that if this commission is not taken seriously, those who do not get to hear the gospel will perish eternally.<sup>183</sup> As Charles Brooks, a renowned SDA evangelist, claims: “‘Jesus is *coming soon!*’ He wills His church to gather everyone who is open to hearing His word, to loving and obeying Him, and that voice will be heard above the din of fallacy and foolishness.”<sup>184</sup> There is an overwhelmingly powerful voice within Adventism for mission to be proclamation-oriented.

Holding on to the understanding that the church of Christ on earth was organised specifically for a missionary purpose, it is viewed that its primary task is to evangelise the world. It is to tell the world that Jesus is coming soon and to teach them to obey the “truth” of God—making disciples of all people.<sup>185</sup> Johnsson referring to Neal Wilson’s own words states it as follows: “We are a people of mission, with the entire world our field. From our inception we have been captured, motivated, and energised by the vision of Revelation 14:6.”<sup>186</sup> This tendency is supported by Ted Wilson when, in regard to the church’s mission for 2004, he states the following emphatically:

One of the most important aspects of the YWE [Year of World Evangelism] 2004 is to keep church members, pastors, evangelists, and leaders focussed on our unique evangelistic mission—sharing Christ with others in the context of this one-of-a-kind Adventist message. ... During YWE 2004, we need a growing understanding that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s special

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182 “The primary motive for mission, according to evangelicals, is to be found in the fact that Christ commanded it (Matt. 28:19-20), and, as the authority of Scripture is accepted without question, this motive is sufficient. ... An evangelist committed to the ... full authority of the Scriptures possesses the theological foundation necessary to clearly discern the message and to declare it simply with the power and persuasion given by the Holy Spirit.” Bosch, 1980:31.

183 Bosch, 1980:31.

184 Charles D. Brooks, 2003. *Heaven wills a completed task! Spiritual empowerment and revival*:13.

185 “Thank God for a new, bold emphasis in our church on *evangelism* and the work of alerting our fellow human beings that Jesus is coming soon. We are praying that the power promised us will accompany what we do for Christ so that a judgment-bound world, with all its searching souls will be arrested and won before it is too late.

Our work is to define righteousness, lift up Christ, point out sin, and let the inquirer know what God’s will is. We must encourage them by pointing to the cross and the possibilities that Christ’s ministry has provided. We must proclaim the year of God’s favor and the forgiveness there is in Christ.

We must speak of faith, which appropriates all righteousness. We must teach about victory and sanctification, about the sure word of prophecy and the ‘Rock-based’ promises of God which are as certain as His throne! Then, we must ‘leave the rest with God.’” Brooks, 2003:11 & 13. “It is frequently said by evangelicals that purity of doctrine is of incomparable importance.” Bosch, 1980:204.

186 William G. Johnsson, 1997. *Seven Years of Plenty*:4-5

movement, brought into being to share His message with the world. We need to uplift Christ more in our personal associations, and in the pulpit, pointing people to His second coming. Let's proclaim our message with heavenly power. ...We must positively point out truth in all its glory.<sup>187</sup>

*Once again the emphasis is placed on the age-old proclamation of the "truth" at the expense of social involvement.*

Later, Clouzet also, in reference to "The 2009 Year of Evangelism: Imagine Pentecost II", makes an impassioned plea to keep moving forward,<sup>188</sup> "Because behind that wall, trapped and scared, are our brothers and sisters in Christ who desperately need deliverance."<sup>189</sup> He asserts that "The Holy Spirit is pouring Himself out without measure on those who hunger for Him and are passionate about serving in the great mission He has given His church".<sup>190</sup> A caring ministry is not referred to or considered as part of the mission in reaching out to people. Rather it tends to convert the evangelistic preaching of the distinctive beliefs of Adventism into an absolute.

In this regard the mission of the church is very much seen as a particular confessional proclamation.<sup>191</sup> Price says that Paul had "but little fruit" in his preaching to the secular-minded on Mars' Hill in Athens: "Ellen White tells how he pragmatically 'sought to adapt his style to the character of the audience; he met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy.'" When Paul preached at Corinth and ignored the secular Greek culture, and preached nothing but Christ, Price states the following in his own words: "...Paul experienced real church growth, and a church was planted! It did not happen in

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187 Ted Wilson, 2003. *Year of World Evangelism 2004: Reaping God's Harvest*:5.

188 Referring to evangelism as warfare, Clouzet maintains that "In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul urged every believer to 'put on the whole armor of God' (verse 11). When we read the passage, we tend to forget that the believer is shod with 'the preparation of the gospel of peace' (verse 15). The gospel always marches forward. It is the gospel of peace that prisoners trapped by Satan need most. Imagine with me the battle scene: God's soldiers— His church—on the ground before the walls of the enemy's enclave. Behind the walls are those he has taken by ruse, longing to be free. The devil's archers throw every flaming missile possible (verse 16) at those who answer Jesus' summons to fight for the weak. Imagine Jesus, our Commander, urging each of us to 'Stand firm!' (see verses 11, 13, 14) when the skies darken with arrows headed our way. 'Put up the shield of faith! And keep moving forward!'" Ron E.M. Clouzet, 2008. *2009 Year of Evangelism: Imagine Pentecost II*:13.

189 Clouzet, 2008:13.

190 Clouzet, 2008:13

191 See Koranteng-Pipim, 2005b:44. "...elements such as rock music, drama, clowns, and magicians, our message will fail to make any real moral demand upon the hearers." Here Koranteng-Pipim has either forgotten or does not know how important drama is in the Bible.

Athens!”<sup>192</sup> *From a conservative perspective, Price along with many others, advocate a cultureless kind of proclamation of the Gospel of what is considered to be God’s truth.*

This kind of Adventist mission, which is viewed as the proclamation of “God’s truth” does experience some fertile ground; for example, in Africa and South America, but not without being challenged by serious questions; for example, the division made between Adventist and non-Adventist, which strengthens the exclusive identity of the church as indicated by the remnant idea. An Adventist does not get the blessing of the church when married to a non-Adventist, sometimes called “non-believers”—people who have not “accepted the truth for this time”. A growing number of Adventists, however, are questioning Du Preez’s belief that “...it is better to remain unmarried than to commit ‘sin’ by violating God’s clearly revealed will”.<sup>193</sup>

Adventist mission, particularly in African countries where polygamy is still practiced, is also seriously challenged. Du Preez comes to this conclusion: “In both the Old and New Testaments, therefore, there is clear evidence forbidding the practice of polygamy. ...The conclusions of this study concur with Ellen White that ‘the Gospel condemns the practice of polygamy,’ which is ‘a violation of the law of God.’”<sup>194</sup> Agreeing with Bartlett, du Preez also states the following:

We aim to follow the Word of God in all respects, and even though that should hinder our work and keep many people out of the church, we would rather have only a few people who are loyal to the Word of God in all respects than a multitude who have come in at a compromise. At all cost we should hold to the Word of God.<sup>195</sup>

The church is still largely ignoring the problem of women being sent away because their husbands cannot have more than one wife when they become Adventists, *because “truth” transcends the needs of people, even of Christians.* The consequence of this stance of the church is that these wives, who have been sent away, become prostitutes to survive. In this way, the “truth of the Bible” is being propagated, but many social and personal problems are created.

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192 Price, 2005:32-33.

193 See du Preez, 2005a:488.

194 Du Preez, 2005b:614.

195 Du Preez, 2005c:634.

Yet, Bosch correctly points out that,

This should, however, not be taken to mean that evangelicals are devoid of compassion and humanitarian concern. They often reveal great sacrificial involvement with the existential needs of the victims of society—drug addicts, refugees, the exploited poor, and sick, and so forth—than many ecumenicals who malign them for their lack for social concern.<sup>196</sup>

Unfortunately, all too often this involvement is regarded as an aid to evangelism and not to get directly involved in trying to change or alter the structures in society.<sup>197</sup> As I have already mentioned, Bosch indicates that, when attending to a person’s body or mind the focus is on preparing them for the gospel. The measure for success of mission schools and hospitals is often based on the number of converts they produce.”<sup>198</sup> Caring within this framework is more an application of beliefs, rather than caring for the needs of people confronted with daily issues.

The conservative and moderate Adventists, therefore—and the progressives to a lesser degree—are very much focused on proclaiming the message of God to a “dying” world rather than caring for the needy. In this regard, Børge Schantz asserts: “Our divine call is much more comprehensive and somewhat different. It is to warn about the soon coming of Jesus Christ and proclaim the three angels’ messages. ...Seventh-day Adventists are to bring a warning message to the world.”<sup>199</sup> The Scriptures, therefore, are “...regarded as meeting men and women in their sinful condition, speaking clearly with the authority of God Himself, the rule of faith and practice, pointing to Jesus Christ as Saviour”.<sup>200</sup> This kind of focus has not left much room for helping people for the sake of helping them; it rather tends to marginalise the caring ministry. No doubt, this poses a very real challenge with regard to Bible passages, for example, Isaiah 58:1-9, Luke 4:18 & 19 and Matthew 25:31-40. It would appear that the criteria being used in these passages were not so much centred on *how* the gospel was proclaimed, but on *what* was done for those in need. Thus, proposing that helping the needy is as much a way of doing the gospel work as proclaiming the second coming. Maybe, “The real test of a saint is not one’s willingness to preach the gospel, but one’s willingness to do something like washing the disciples’ feet—that is, willing to do

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196 Bosch, 1980:33.

197 Bosch, 1980:33.

198 Bosch, 1980:33.

199 Børge Schantz, 2003. *Affluent West, slow church growth: Another look*:21-24.

200 Dederen, 1992a:10.

those things that seem unimportant...”<sup>201</sup> Perhaps, NT mission is not merely a proclamation of the gospel, but rather becoming “...broken bread and poured-out-wine in the hands of Jesus Christ for the sake of others”.<sup>202</sup>

Bosch so aptly summarises Adventist mission, although he may be somewhat overstating the case:

Man’s [people’s] greatest anguish is his [/her] lostness before God, his [/her] greatest need to be saved from his [/his] sins and reconciled to God, his [/her] greatest fear for eternal punishment in hell, his [/her] greatest hope for eternal glory in the hereafter. Sin, in this definition, has to do primarily with man’s [people’s] relationship to God which has gone wrong. ... The believer looks forward with longing to Christ’s return, the present is empty. All that really matters is the glorious future.<sup>203</sup>

### 3.2 A confessional approach and ecclesiology

The SDA Church, as we have noted, is very much focused on the protection and proclamation of “truth” with the focus on being ready for the second coming. As Rice puts it, the church is “believing-” and “behaving-oriented”, and not much concerned with “belonging”.<sup>204</sup>

In this regard, Douglas draws our attention to the notion of the church being viewed as a “fortress”, a place of refuge, which is safe from the world. This notion is based very much on Ellen White’s description of the church as “...God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world”.<sup>205</sup> Douglas indicates that this

“...fortress model tends to create a radical separation between the church and the world, the sacred and the secular. The world is seen in opposition to the church; it is not ‘the theatre of God’s grace,’ but an enemy to be defeated. The church, therefore, seeks to protect its members from worldly associations and secular

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201 O. Chambers, 1996. *My Utmost for His Highest*: February 25.

202 Chambers, 1996: February 25.

203 Bosch, 1980:31-32.

204 “For Adventists generally, believing and behaving would be strong candidates for first place. Both are important parts of the Adventist experience. The idea of truth, as in the expression ‘present truth,’ has played a prominent role in Adventist history. Adventists are often identified by the distinctive doctrines or fundamental beliefs they adhere to. Behaving also makes an important contribution to Adventist identity. We take character development seriously. We are widely known for our standards of diet and dress, for Sabbath keeping, for tithing, and for various forms of Christian service, including health care and education.” Rice, 2002:14.

205 E.G. White, 1911. *The Acts of the Apostles*:11.

interests by establishing institutions, initiating and developing programs, and by social engineering, in order to assure them safe passage to their eternal destination.”<sup>206</sup>

The church has become a place of safety within, but separated from, a world of sin without.

This very strong fortress model tends to lose touch with the churches need *also* to care for people, to comfort, to nurture, to “shepherd”<sup>207</sup> those in the world. As Rice so aptly states it:

Theological discussions often fail to connect with concrete religious life. Preoccupied with logical clarity and probative power, they can drift away from the concrete settings where religious life is lived and take on a life of their own, when theology loses touch with its base in Christian experience, it fails to meet its primary objective, to nurture the life of faith, and those who need its ministry are left wanting.<sup>208</sup>

Hachalinga supports Rice when he says the ecclesiological self-understanding of Adventism has always “...gravitated around the eschatological idea of the remnant” focused on its missiological function to the neglect of its ontological aspects.<sup>209</sup> Consequently, not much room has been left for caring for those who were trapped in a world of pain and suffering.

Many conservatives regard SDA ecclesiology primarily as “warfare” and not as an encounter with others and the world.<sup>210</sup> Consequently, they are much more concerned with standing up for the beliefs of the church than for the well-being of people.<sup>211</sup> Douglas promoting a “servant” model for ministry, however, pointedly asserts, “Since the church is not better than its Lord, it must throw itself with ‘riotous loving’ into the furrows of human

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206 W.B.T. Douglas, 1980. *The Church: Its Nature and Function*:62.

207 A caring which could possibly be motivated by Jesus’ words recorded in Luke 4:18 & 19. There are also stories like the one recorded by Luke in chapter 10 verses 30 to 36. The story is told of a man who went from Jerusalem to Jericho. There was a violent robbery and an assault which was followed by a desertion to die. Then came a series of upstanding citizens along that road, what one might think was hope for the dying victim. This hope soon turned to despair when these nice religious, civic-minded would-be rescuers turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to the moans of pain, the gaping wounds and the plea for help. Instead of stopping to assist, they went their way, piously and selfishly, using as an excuse the very religious and patriotic causes they profess. Then came another down the dark road. He was of another race, another culture. Yet, this unlikely foreigner stopped. He was tender, gentle, and caring. He bathed the bleeding wounds. He touched the pain-wrenched face. He offered a cool drink of water. He lifted the broken victim and transported him to a place of healing. Who is this rescuer, this minister of healing, this neighbour? (My own paraphrase of Gloria Gaither’s recital of the “Good Samaritan”). Luke 10:25-37).

208 Rice, 2002:8.

209 P. Hachalinga, 1997. *Seventh-day Adventism and the Remnant Idea: A critical and analytical study of the Seventh-day Adventist Ecclesiological self understanding*:6.

210 See Koranteng-Pipim, 2005c. *Prayer Warriors and Prayer Offensive: A New Approach to Spiritual Warfare*:139-161.

211 In this regard see Du Preez, 2005a:481-494; 2005b:601-620, and 2005c:621-638.

need, working, if necessary, in revolutionary ways for the promotion of peace, justice, freedom and righteousness”.<sup>212</sup>

### 3.3 Seventh-day Adventism and anthropology

It is my opinion in the research that the SDA anthropology determines, to a large extent, the “nature” of its mission. In this section, therefore, I will provide a broad but short overview of various anthropologies. In particular, I will discuss the orientation of Adventism and the consequences this kind of anthropology has for pastoral care.<sup>213</sup>

#### 3.3.1 Anthropological orientations

Van Wyk has suggested a number of anthropological orientations, namely, liberation theological, social, liberal, low, high, Christ-centric and holistic.<sup>214</sup> The research, however, will only consider a “high” anthropological orientation and a “low” one, as these orientations are relevant to the present research about the Adventist position, especially regarding pastoral care.

According to Lategan *liberation anthropology* and *liberal anthropology* lend itself towards a “high” (distinguished) anthropology where human freedom and human rights are held in high regard.<sup>215</sup> A “high” anthropological tradition is epitomised by the *Imago Dei* motif of the story of creation; or as Miroslav Kis has pointed out—the sacredness of humans.<sup>216</sup>

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212 Douglas, 1980:66.

213 The research recognises that the SDA Church has not developed a theological anthropology, especially when it comes to pastoral care. Adventist anthropology has in an undifferentiated way taken over some facets of Reformed Theology without researching its implications for pastoral care.

214 A. Gerhard van Wyk, 2003. *Preaching: The challenge of a Christ-centered and holistic view of humanity*:10-13.

215 This focus on the individual has led to *freedom* and *equality* being held in high esteem. “Everyone has a fundamental and final right to live, think and believe as he or she wishes, always provided that in doing so one does not hinder or prevent others from exercising the same right equally.” D. De Villiers, 1991. *Liberal Anthropology in the South African Context*:21. “Seen from this perspective, the world as a whole is seen without significant moral dimensions, and thus individuals must choose their own values and construct their own morality in a rational manner, to a large extent the individual rests upon the belief that one’s experience is the touchstone of truth. Truth being offered from ‘the outside’ can no longer be relied upon. One should have a ‘healthy’ skepticism of traditional wisdom and accepted truths. The liberal notion of the autonomy of the individual also contains the idea of ‘self-possession.’ Individuals are seen as ‘masters’ of themselves.” Van Wyk, 2003:11.

216 “Christianity views all life as precious, but human life as sacred. ... From the Christian point of view, what makes life sacred? ... Human beings are part of the life cycle of this planet. They depend totally on this

According to Lategan and Van Wyk this approach seems to be embodied in certain passages of Scripture, for example, Psalm 8:4-8.<sup>217</sup>

On the other hand, the belief that although people were created in God's image, have forfeited that image through sin. It is proposed that, "Any biblical anthropology must—the argument goes—take its departure from the *fall*, which stamps humans as sinful creatures, by nature prone to all that is wrong and evil".<sup>218</sup> On biblical grounds there is a tendency to caution against an optimistic view of people, because not too much should be expected of them.

The focus is very much on the sinfulness of people and their state of being "lost". With the emphasis on "grace alone", it is understood to mean that people should accept the situation they find themselves in and not try changing the (social) system by their own efforts. Furthermore, the pietistic notion is to focus the believer's attention on the next world, while enduring the present as best as possible. These factors indicate that a "low" anthropology not only seriously resist change, but also forestalls the development of a positive self-image and self-understanding among believers.<sup>219</sup> Thus, "low" anthropology, with its severe "absolutistic" focus on redemption and salvation within a confessional approach, not only limits the creativity of people created in the image of God, but it is also inclined to disregard their needs and pain.

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earth's biosystems, and so their lives share in life in general. But human life stands above subhuman life. The Bible expresses the uniqueness and superior dignity of humankind as the 'image of God.' ... While all of life, including human life, proceeds from God, belongs to Him, is totally dependent on Him, and exists to serve His purpose, only human beings were created in their Makers image. ... We can say, therefore, that sacredness is Godlikeness, a reflection of Him, and that humanness is Godlikeness as well, and a reflection of Him. ... Human life is sacred because of its God-given powers to create for Him. While the lower creatures simply follow instinct, humans must act responsibly, with a commitment to reflecting their Creator." Miroslav M. Kis, 1991. *The Christian view of human life*:6-8.

217 Bernard Lategan, 1991. *New Testament Anthropological Perspectives in a Time of Reconstruction*:88 & 89, and Van Wyk, 2003:11.

218 Lategan, 1991:88.

219 Lategan, 1991:89.



### 3.3.2 SDA anthropology?

A SDA perspective, very much based on Reformed Theology's understanding that people are "...born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil",<sup>220</sup> are prone toward a *low anthropology*. With very strong premillennial roots the "universal sinfulness of humanity" strengthens this view. *Thus, the tendency is to focus on the weakness of people and not on their creative potential and strengths.*

An Adventist salvation theology has profoundly influenced its view of people, as well as the premillennial approach to the second coming. It is believed that people were created in God's image, but this image has been marred, and almost totally deleted by sin.<sup>221</sup> SDA fundamental beliefs maintain that, "Though created perfect and in God's image, and placed in a perfect environment, Adam, and Eve became transgressors",<sup>222</sup> being no longer perfect and holy. People are now viewed as having sinful natures, with a tendency towards evil and not good, as they have "all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Because of this fallen state, people can't do anything to change their state or redeem themselves from it, and, consequently, are in dire need of salvation.

This view of people, as we have already noted, maintains a very "low" anthropology, where the focus is very much on Romans 3:9-20; Adventists do not have a high regard for the humanness of people and their needs.<sup>223</sup> Bosch claims:

Evangelists tend to regard the world in which we live as essentially evil, surrendered to the 'prince of this world' (Jh 16:11; cf. 1Jh 5:19). The Christian may not enjoy this world; rather he should consistently shun 'the things of this

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220 *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines*:78.

221 "Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants shared this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment." *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines*:78.

222 *Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs... A Biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines*:87.

223 In this regard there are some outstanding differences. Most progressives are protesting for the rights of the poor, oppressed and underprivileged. We need to mention the name of scholars like Charles W. Teel, professor of Christian ethics in the School of Religion, La Sierra University. He has done an outstanding work for the poor and suffering.

world'. After all, his citizenship is in heaven. Contact with the world should therefore be reduced to the minimum.<sup>224</sup>

Because of this low anthropology, caring for this world's present needs is not regarded of any great value.

Furthermore, within this "low" anthropology most of the conservatives have a very reductionistic view of women. Their views are particularly clear in respect of their views about women in the ministry. Professor Wayne Grudem in the "Foreword" to Samuele Bacchiocchi's book, *"Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church"*, states the following:

I am convinced that many Christians who read this book will decide that it is time to say to those holding a feminist viewpoint, 'We have heard your evidence, we have understood your arguments, and we have searched Scripture for ourselves to see if these things were true. While we see many areas where we want to encourage greater participation by women in the life of the church, nevertheless, we, like Dr. Bacchiocchi, must conclude that when you say women can be elders and pastors, what you are saying is simply not faithful to Scripture; it is not what Scripture teaches.'<sup>225</sup>

A very definite stance based on so-called biblical teachings is taken against women being ordained for leadership positions in the church. Gerhard Damsteegt, referring to the OT, states: "It is noteworthy that even though leadership were widely distributed, there was no sense of 'equal opportunity' for everyone to select his or her own choice of a life calling. God gave minute and specific instructions, and no one was allowed to depart from them."<sup>226</sup> They build their arguments around the discriminating notion that women are equal to men, but different. Bacchiocchi maintains that, "...both man and woman were created in the image of God".<sup>227</sup> Yet, he asserts that in Genesis 2 there is "...an overall sense of the woman's submission to man".<sup>228</sup> In this sense a very low anthropological perspective lends itself to viewing the Bible as teaching that women, even though created in God's image, are subservient to men.

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224 Bosch, 1980:32.

225 S. Bacchiocchi, 1987. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*:8-9.

226 P. Gerhard Damsteegt, 2006. *Objectives and Limitations of interpreting the Bible: Principles from the works of Ellen G. White*.

227 Bacchiocchi, 1987:67.

228 Bacchiocchi, 1987:72.

There are conservative scholars, however, for example, Richard Davidson, who has moved towards a more progressive stance in this regard. He asserts that “...there is nothing in Genesis 2 to indicate a hierarchical view of sexes. The man and women before the Fall are presented as fully equal, with no hint of headship of one over the other or hierarchical relationship between husband and wife.”<sup>229</sup> He does make a distinction, however, between a pre- and post-Fall understanding of the relationship between men and women. He indicates the following:

Our conclusions coincide with these recent studies. We have found that the biblical witness is consistent with regard to the divine ideal for headship/submission/equality in man-woman relationships. Before the Fall there was full equality with no headship/submission in the relationship between Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24). But after the Fall, according to Gen 3:16, the husband was given a servant headship role to preserve the harmony of the home, while at the same time the model of equal partnership was still set forth as the ideal. This post-Fall prescription of husband headship and wife submission was limited to the husband-wife relationship. In the divine revelation throughout the rest of the Old Testament and New Testament witness, servant headship and voluntary submission on the part of husband and wife, respectively, are affirmed, but these are never broadened to the covenant community in such a way as to prohibit women from taking positions of leadership, including headship positions over men.<sup>230</sup>

The conservatives, however, accuse this kind of progressive thinking with regards to women rights as “...imposing external interpretations on the Bible”.<sup>231</sup> Without agreeing with the conservatives we need to ask the question if these scholars, protesting for women rights, are not giving a new interpretation, and a much needed interpretation, to the texts of the Bible. Nevertheless, their interpretation is not focused on the critical integration of praxis and the text of the Bible. Conservatives, on the other hand, provide explanations against the statement of Paul, incorporating the historical context of the Bible, but refusing to acknowledge their functional pragmatism, as to the reason why women are allowed to speak in the church.<sup>232</sup>

Thus, people with this reductionistic approach are viewed as mostly spiritual beings that can be reached via our cognitive facilities. Yet, as Vos and Pieterse assert, we need to see people

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229 R.M. Davidson, 1998. *Headship, submission, and equality in Scripture*: 264.

230 Davidson: 1998:284.

231 Mercedes H. Dryer, 2000. *Prove all things: A response to women in Ministry*:46.

232 See 1 Corinthians 14:33 & 34. “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak...”

not only as rational beings, but also as beings with God-given emotions and desires. They pointedly remark: “*Ons moet die mens dus holisties sien binne die breë verbande van sy relasies en die breë verbande waarin die heil ervaar word.*” (We must have a holistic view of people within the broader relations of their associations and within the broad linkages where salvation is being experienced – own translation).<sup>233</sup> Van Wyk indicates that addressing only the spiritual side of people, ignoring their physical and social existence “...may be nothing more than pointing to ‘a pie in the sky, by and by’”.<sup>234</sup> He asserts that, “If we really want them to hear and understand the ‘whole’ good news of the gospel and its implications, and not only the text of the Bible, then it is also important to make known ‘the text’ of the human being”.<sup>235</sup> It is important to realise that people are “total” human beings in Christ. Thus, to construct an anthropology that speaks of people as “whole” beings is of great importance.

### **3.4 An applied theology and Adventist pastoral care**

Adventist conservatives and church administrators, in particular, regard the great commission of Matthew 28:18-20 as the primary mandate for mission and ministry. Because of their view of the *sola scriptura* principle, the literal reading of Scripture and modernistic timelessness of the “text” of the Bible, their message can and should be proclaimed in the first instance, and not communicated in an open-ended dialogue. This makes the context of the text of the Bible important. The context of people, however, is still ignored.

What is more, this confessional framework with its high view of Scripture and “low” view of human beings has a “...degree of reticence toward involving themselves with the structures of society: ‘... there is no point in tampering with the structures of society for society is doomed and about to be destroyed’”.<sup>236</sup> Adventism is regarded as a “culture-less faith”,<sup>237</sup> and hereby the message of the Bible is interpreted from a Western worldview that is

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233 C.J. Vos, & H.J.C. Pieterse, *Antropologiese insigte binne die kommunikatiewe handelingssteoretiese benadering in die praktiese teologie*:150.

234 Van Wyk, 2003:13.

235 Van Wyk, 2003:13.

236 Bosch, 1980:32.

237 See Jan Paulsen, 2008. *Five things the world needs to know about us*:8-9.

dominating the theory-praxis relationship.<sup>238</sup> For conservatives the cultural context is important, but only with regards to the “form” of the message and not the “content”.

Ultra-conservative Adventists even go so far as to attempt “...to force their cultural forms onto other cultures, many Adventist scholars favour the adoption of ‘biblical absolutes’ into other cultures”.<sup>239</sup> This approach also sought to denigrate contemporary experience: The past (divine texts), as understood and interpreted by theologians, is maintained as the norm for contemporary experience. Even when a particular cultural custom was allowed, it was referred to as a “lesser sin”. Because the Bible is regarded as supra-cultural, local culture is not taken seriously; the tendency is to try and force cultural universals onto other cultures. Most of the “cultural universals” are processes and modes of relationship rather than content.<sup>240</sup> Two black South Africans in their booklet, *God or Apartheid*, have questioned this approach:

We are laden with a theology of the West, with all its classical traditions of individualism and separatism, which sees salvation primarily in personal terms. It frowns upon anything indigenous and presents the gospel as a version of American socialization. Genuine Adventism is Americanism.<sup>241</sup>

Whereas progressives have an eclectic openness toward socio-political challenges, the “text” of the Bible is their first priority and, thus, practical theology is but still “applied theology”.

A confessional applied theological approach has been constructed one-sidedly as Adventist theology from the OT, NT and systematic theology. Disciplines such as pastoral care, missiology and ethics were not really allowed to be partners in this dialogue.<sup>242</sup>

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238 See Gerhard Hasel, 1980:181.

239 A. Gerhard van Wyk, 1997. *A Perspective Approach to Contextualization*:30.

240 Van Wyk, 1997:35.

241 Pule Magethi, and Thula Nkosi, 1991. *God of Apartheid: A Challenge to South African Adventism*:17.

242 See H.S. Breytenbach, en H.J.C. Pieterse, 1992. *Doelwitte vir gemeentebou in die lig van ‘n praktiese-teologiese ekklesiologie*:102. They state: “Ons benader die gemeente dus nie soos die sistematiese teologie of dogmatiek nie. Die dogmatiek sal na die oorsprong, die eienskappe en die unieke identiteit van die kerk vra. Ons vra na die ontmoetingsgebeure van God se koms in sy Woord deur die diens van die pastorale optrede of handeling. Die sistematiese teologie besin oor die heil, die praktiese teologie oor die heilsbemiddeling. Die sistematiese teologie dink na oor die spreke van God, die praktiese teologie dink na oor die handeling in diens van die evangelie. Dit beteken allermins dat die praktiese teologie die dogmatiek ‘toepas’. Elke dissipline het sy eie studieterrein en sy eie interesse of kennisbelange. Dit beteken egter dat albei dissiplines interdissiplinêr in kritiese gesprek binne die teologiese fakulteit met mekaar moet wees...” (“Thus, we do not approach the congregation similarly to systematic theology or dogmatics. Dogmatics will call for the origin, the characteristics and the unique identity of the church. We call for the encountering events of God’s coming in his Word through the service of pastoral action or deeds. Systematic theology contemplates salvation, practical theology the mediation of salvation. Systematic

Practical theology was regarded as an applied discipline; it was the builder of bridges between the theological theories of these ‘biblical’ disciplines and the practice of the church. The ‘how’ question was assigned to practical theology and hence it was not allowed to make any epistemological contribution to the theology of Adventism.<sup>243</sup>

Van Wyk claims that this has caused a discrepancy between church praxis and the exalted claims of theological theory:

Because truth and reality were metaphysically substantiated, our ecclesiology, anthropology, liturgy, and even our hymnals were deductively imported from somewhere else. Praxis and context were not important because the ‘Word of God’ contained objective and absolute truths, hence all the important answers.<sup>244</sup>

We, therefore, should take note of what Douglas, as early as 1980, indicated when he pointed out the dangers of a purely proclamation-oriented theology to the neglect of other aspects of Scripture. He maintains:

The temptation facing those who embrace the herald model as theologically appropriate for the church’s self-understanding of its relationship to the world is to ignore the other biblical images of the church such as community, people of God, servant, etc. Because of this theological blind spot, there is a danger that the proclamation of the Gospel will become divorced from the questions that men and women of a particular environment pose to the central inalienable truths of Christian belief. Such important questions are fashioned by the pressures of their society, their range of sensitivity, their perplexities and their imagination. Christianity is a universal religion, but theology is a particular enterprise, particular because it means patient perceptive reflection based on peculiar experience.<sup>245</sup>

There needs to be, therefore, a “differentiated creative dialogue” between theology and context, church and community, between “believing”, “behaving” and “belonging”.

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theology ponders the speaking of God, practical theology reflects the action in service of the gospel. This does not indicate remotely that practical theology only “applies” dogmatics. Each discipline occupies its own field of study and its own interests and pursuits of knowledge. This means, however, that both disciplines have to pursue critical inter-disciplinary discussions with each other within the theological faculty” – own translation).

243 Van Wyk, 1997:36.

244 Van Wyk, 1997:36.

245 Douglas, 1980:64. See also in this regard A. Gerhard van Wyk, 1995. *From “Applied Theology” to “Practical Theology”*:85-101. “The ‘contextual’ approach, according to Burger, is characterized by the following: (1) The context and situational analysis of praxis is important. (2) There is a world orientation rather than a church orientation. (3) The task of practical theology is to bring about social change and a reconstruction of society. (4) The use of Scripture varies from a fundamentalist approach to a selective use of Scripture. (5) The community of believers takes precedence over individuals. (6) The major concern is not with the training of ministers but rather with equipping the community of believers. (7) The approach is ecumenical although D. Tracy is not a practical theologian, he could very well be classified under this heading.”

## 4 Summary

From the above research it is understood that Adventism is obsessed with “truth” and an apocalyptic eschatology, which is motivated by the Second Advent—“...salvation from the earth rather than on renewal of the earth”.<sup>246</sup> A very strong proclamation emphasis, therefore, has dominated its view of mission and ministry. This has led to a “believing” and “behaving” attitude which has left very little room for “belonging” and a caring ministry.<sup>247</sup>

As we have noted, the confessional approach tends to apply the text to every situation: Presenting the Scriptures and the Gospel primarily as “a subject for belief”, rather than a “way of life”.<sup>248</sup>

I have noted that Adventism, with its confessional and rationalistic approach, tended to restrict pastoral care to the peripherals, marginalising it with a one-sided confessional and applied dogmatic perspective. We should take note, therefore, of what Knight says when he warns that,

Seventh-day Adventism faces the same challenges to deal with change and history that have confronted other Christian bodies. There are only so many ways to face these issues. One is to live in the past as if the past can somehow be preserved intact in perpetuity as a golden age. Such an approach disregards the reality of change. In the long run its proponents have nothing to say to the present generation because they have lost contact with the realities that people are dealing with in the world at large. Such an approach finds mission only among those who desire to live in a past-oriented intellectual and/or social ghetto. Many Adventists continue to take this approach to change.<sup>249</sup>

In this regard, rather than simply having an applied theology, Van Wyk recommends that a practical theology which “...employs an intra-disciplinary approach whereby it constructs its own research into (for example) relevant cultural matters...”<sup>250</sup> gives to us a very important perspective. The research, therefore, proposes that a “narrative” approach, found within a practical theology, will provide a meaningful perspective in addressing the Gospel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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246 Bosch, 1980:97.

247 See also Knight, 1995:122-135.

248 Bosch, 1980:31.

249 Knight, 1995:158.

250 Van Wyk, 1997:39.

Nevertheless, these findings do not maintain that the Adventist confessional approach is wrong or misguided, but that it is severely limiting. Its hermeneutical approach has served the church well, especially when it comes to doctrine, proclamation, preaching and teaching, but is seriously lacking when it comes to caring. The emphasis is on gleaning accurate truth from the Scriptures, so as to instruct people in the ways of God, in order to hasten the second coming. With this type of hermeneutics, pastoral care is focused more on believing and behaving than on belonging.<sup>251</sup> It is focused more on truth and facts than on people and their pain and need.

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251 See Rice, 2002:65-74.



## The Challenges of Postmodernism and Possibilities for Pastoral Care

### 1 Introduction

In chapter three, I indicated that the SDA Church is very much obsessed with establishing and proclaiming objective truth. It was indicated that Adventism was born during modernism's age of reason with its quest for absolute truth; even still today, the SDA Church in general "...tends to be modernists to the core".<sup>1</sup> Guided by rationalism, individualism and objective knowledge modernism made an impact on the church's *view* and *use* of Scripture, as well as its theology of mission and ministry. Adventism is conclusively modelled by modernism and finds itself very much within a confessional framework with its focus on absolute truth and objective proclamation, while not sufficiently considering the context of pastoral care and human needs.

Our world today, however, is being challenged by postmodernism,<sup>2</sup> a methodological approach that is calling into question modernism's rational, objective view of knowledge, positivism and the factual understanding of truth, to be supported by empirical evidence.<sup>3</sup> This postmodern approach also makes an impact on the church and, therefore, we should listen to Norman when he asserts that, "The church, which no longer has the kind of cultural support it once enjoyed, must now take its gospel message to this radically new world".<sup>4</sup> Selmanovic also challenges the church in this regard and claims that, "Innovation in itself is not the goal. Yet it is precisely because we want to communicate the unchanging gospel that we need to change".<sup>5</sup> Webber supports this notion when he expresses his conviction regarding the Evangelical world; if we are to understand the conflict situation in the church

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1 Martin Weber, 2006. *Postmodern Evangelism: Reaching Postmodern Society*:7.

2 For a discussion on modernity, modernism, postmodernity and postmodernism see P.J. Leithart, 2008. *Solomon among the Postmoderns*: Locations 92-94, Introduction, Footnote 3. We need to differentiate between "postmodernity" as a social condition and "postmodernism" as trends in philosophy and theory.

3 Rationalism is to make the rational absolute as the foundation of knowledge, resulting in positivism, as a form of empiricism, basing all knowledge on perceptual experience.

4 Ernan Norman, 2008. *Postmodern Evangelism: Reaching Postmodern Society*:25.

5 Samir Selmanovic, 2001a. *Pastoring on the postmodern frontline (part 1)*:10.

today we need to understand the shift that is taking place from modernism to postmodernism.<sup>6</sup> Selmanovic maintains that it is not only our methodology that needs to change, but also our understanding of people with regard to what they think and feel, and also the attempts we make to meet their minds and hearts.<sup>7</sup> Norman asserts that “People not only want to know about God; they want to experience God”.<sup>8</sup> In this chapter, I will take up this challenge in an “episodic” way by briefly researching the assumptions of modernism, as well as the postmodern challenge, especially with regard to Adventism’s focus on objective truth, pastoral care and the narrative approach.

I will discuss some of the assumptions of modernism, as well as the challenges of postmodernism from the perspective of pastoral care in practical theology. Furthermore, it is also important to consider what Smith says: “The notion of postmodernism is invoked as both poison and cure within the contemporary church.”<sup>9</sup> The research of the thesis found that some conservative scholars regard postmodernism as a passing phase and they even speak of a “post-postmodernism”. In this chapter, however, I am not attempting to promote or defend postmodernism, or to disprove modernism,<sup>10</sup> but rather seek some “pointers”, within postmodernism that are helpful in challenging confessionalism<sup>11</sup> with its focus on

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6 Robert E. Webber, 1999. *Ancient Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*:18.

7 “The truth is that in many countries of our world, the culture has not merely changed, it has morphed into a humanity with a worldview radically different from the past. The shift is away from the so-called ‘modern’ worldview, which began roughly in the sixteenth century and was built on the Enlightenment values of reason, science, control, and conquest. The postmodern worldview questions all the assumptions, claims, and fruits of ‘modernism.’ Because contemporary people are committed to a vastly different way of thinking, a correspondingly different approach must emerge in our ministry to them.” Selmanovic, 2001a:10.

8 Norman, 2008:25.

9 “To some, postmodernity is the bane of Christian faith, the new enemy taking over the role of secular humanism as object of fear and primary target of demonization. Others see postmodernism as a fresh wind of the Spirit sent to revitalize the dry bones of the church. This is particularly true of the “emerging church” movement (associated with Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet, Robert Webber, and others), which castigates the modernity of pragmatic evangelicalism and seeks to retool the church's witness for a postmodern world. In both cases, however, postmodernism remains a nebulous.” James K.A. Smith, 2006. *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*: 8.

10 The thesis has taken cognisance of the fact that although it wishes to transcend modernism it is still very much arguing from within modernity itself. The dilemma is, of course, that one can point out the contradictions and basic problems of modernism, but that becomes a dead end in itself, a passage with access only at one end, back into modernism again. To reason only from within modernism is a situation lacking opportunities for real progress, development or advancement in one’s perspectives. To find new perspectives, one has to move towards another paradigm of methods and beliefs.

11 Confessionalism makes the rules just as important as the spirit of the gospel, and transferring the “rules” into a realm of finality; thus, confessionalism becomes an unambiguous modernistic advocacy of the formulation of the dogmas of one’s faith. Confessionalsists believe that differing interpretations or

objective truth so as to re-visioning pastoral care that can transcend the limitations of modernism. My focus is especially on pastoral care, with narrative as a complementary perspective in “reading” Scripture and praxis within the SDA Church.

## 2 Modernism and its assumptions

First of all, as I research modernism it is important to note that there are differentiations within the modern epistemological approach that fluctuates from a “low” modernism to a “high” modernism.<sup>12</sup> It is not the purpose of the research, however, to discuss these positions in any great detail, but Cahoon can be researched for more detailed discussions.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as I discuss the epistemological assumptions of modernism, I label each assumption as an “...ism”, to indicate the overemphasis on its importance, making it into an absolute; each assumption becoming an extreme case, for example, the rational becomes rationalism. The research does not wish to discredit the use of assumptions by modernism, but only to indicate their exaggeration and limitation, especially for pastoral care in relation to practical theology.

The research starts where modernism followed on wherever the “premodern”<sup>14</sup> left off, by evaluating “reason” as the final construal and explanation in the place of myth. A critical

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understandings, especially those in direct opposition to a believed teaching, cannot be accommodated within a church communion.

- 12 “Modernism can actually be clustered into two general types, a more moderate form and a more extreme form, which I term soft modernism and hard modernism, respectively. Soft modernism shares with its forerunner, premodernism, belief in the rationality of the universe and in human ability to know and understand the truth. Both believe that inclusive explanations of reality, or in other words, integrative metaphysical schemes or worldviews, can be constructed. Hard modernism goes beyond its soft counterpart, however, by excluding anything other than this. On the terms of hard modernism, reality is limited to what can be experienced, thus excluding supernaturalism of any kind. Knowledge is restricted to what can be known through reason and experience, excluding any sort of intuition. What is not logical is not considered real.” Millard J. Erickson, 1998. *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Response to the Challenge of Postmodernism*:17-18.
- 13 See Cahoon, 2003. *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*.
- 14 “Premodernism discourse is characterised by an absence of a self-critical approach to one’s understanding of the world, which is structured by the language of the community to which one belongs. The discourse of a community of a so-called ‘primitive’ culture is said to move within ‘a socio-mythic orbit’ - a term which emphasises the role of myth in language and the collective nature of this kind of understanding. The sharing of the same myths guarantees the unity of communal life structured by fixed hierarchical relationships between signs.” J. Degenaar, 1996. *The Collapse of Unity*:6.  
“If the modern period was the period following the Enlightenment, then what preceded it was the premodern, including the medieval and ancient periods. ...”  
The premodern epistemology viewed knowledge as being “transcendent”. God knows everything and humans only know sub-sections of that knowledge. Thus God revealed only that what he deemed fit to reveal. “The premodern understanding of reality was teleological. There was believed to be a purpose or

attitude functioning towards premodern assumptions, such as the socio-mythical order, where mysticism and superstition were dispensed with, and progress and “functionality” were sought after.<sup>15</sup> The Cartesian dualistic epistemology and Newtonian mechanics were moves toward reason, science, control and conquest, and according to Martin Weber, “Faith suffered much under the reign of [this] modernism”.<sup>16</sup> Reason replaced mysticism and Darwin’s theory of origins disowned the divine being.<sup>17</sup>

As an introduction Penner, supported by Webber, summarises the premodern era with, what he calls, three significant characteristics:

(1) First, in premodernity rational thought begins with an attitude of wonder, and the basic orientation for philosophical reflection is characterized as an attempt to explain the perplexities of the universe (which causes one to wonder). ... There is a sense of awe and mystery, and even gratitude that accompanies premodern philosophical reflection.

(2) Second, there is no intrinsic antithesis between faith and reason. In premodernity, the life of faith and the life of reason are entirely consonant.

(3) Third, the life of reason is a communal event. Philosophical reflection takes place within a like-minded community. The ontology of human being—that is, the sort of creature a human is—matters a great deal to the way in which reason is characterized. For the premodern philosopher, a human life achieved its unity in its harmonious relations within a community.<sup>18</sup>

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purposes in the universe, within which humans fit and were to be understood. This purpose was being worked out within the world. In the Western tradition, this was the belief that an omnipotent, omniscient God had created the entire universe and the human race, and had a plan he was bringing about. There had to be reasons for things, and these were not limited to efficient or ‘because of’ causes, but also included final or ‘in order that’ causes. This understanding carried over to the interpretation of history. There was a pattern to history, which was outside it. The aim of the historian, or at least the philosopher of history, was to detect this pattern and thus be able to predict the future direction of history. ...Premodernism and its mentality were supplanted by modernism, which retained and modified some of these features while also diverging from this approach in some major ways.” Erickson, 1998:15.

15 “Modern discourse substitutes reason for myth ... It strives towards a rational explanation of the world, assumes that its use of reason has a universal validity and, in extreme cases, develops a Grand Theory about reality and a Grand Narrative of human progress as exemplified by the rise of modernity. This notion of progress is based on an imperialism of reason which tends to disqualify premodern discourse as backward and outdated. With regard to the problem of unity the modernist would argue that the false mythic coherence of premodern discourse has collapsed and is replaced by the true rational coherence of modern discourse.” Degenaar, 1996:6 & 7.

“...the transcendent conception of reality was abandoned. Rather than being located above or beyond history, its reason and pattern were found within it. The forces that drive history were, in other words, believed to be imminent within it. ... Rather than there being a reality above or beyond observable natural objects there was something within or behind the phenomena, such as in Immanuel Kant’s noumenal world...” Erickson, 1998:16.

16 Weber, 2006:7.

17 Weber, 2006:7.

18 Myron B. Penner, 2005a. *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*:21-22. See also Webber, 1999.

Thus, holding to a Renaissance humanism, which according to Toulmin, (and agreed to by Degenaar), can be summarised as, “...four different kinds of practical knowledge: the oral, the particular, the local, and the timely”.<sup>19</sup>

People with a modern approach in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century radically turned away from premodernism, however, and, according to Toulmin and Degenaar, they converted their concept of knowledge into the written, universal, general and timeless kinds of knowledge, focused on ontology.<sup>20</sup> Webber summarised this shift as the three most important characteristics of modernism,

- (1) individualism, which asserts ultimate autonomy of each person;
- (2) rationalism, which is characterized by a strong confidence in the power of the mind to investigate and understand reality; and
- (3) factualism, which insists that the individual, through the use of reason, can arrive at objective truth.<sup>21</sup>

He indicates that these characteristics brought with them the demise of the moral cosmology of the medieval world when “Mystery was set aside in favor of an exuberant confidence in reason and science as the way of knowing objective truth”.<sup>22</sup> According to Toulmin individualism, knowledge and rationalism set the “...rational, thinking humanity over against casual, unthinking nature, and so enthroned the human intellect within a separate world of ‘mental substance’”.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.1 Rationalism

As we noted in chapter three, both the conservatives and progressives maintain “rationality” as the main tool in discovering truth, but for different reasons and with different emphases:<sup>24</sup>

Those with the progressive point of view use so-called biblical and non-biblical methods and

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19 Stephen Toulmin, 1990. *Cosmopolis: The hidden agenda of modernity*:30-35.

20 See Stephen Toulmin, 1982. *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern science and the theology of nature*:30-35, and Degenaar, 1996:9-10.

21 Webber, 1999:18. See also Weber, 2006:7.

22 Webber, 1999:18.

23 Toulmin, 1982:238.

24 Weber argues that the SDA Church with its rationalistic approach fared very well “under” modernism. “In the age of individualism, we’ve challenged people to stand alone for God amid their Sunday-keeping friends. In a knowledge-focused world, we launched many churches by winning debates with our amazing facts about Bible truth. During the reign of rationalism, we proclaimed a reasonable and convincing system of doctrine that withstood both liberalism and fundamentalism. Adventism was progressive and intellectual enough to flourish amid liberalism yet conservative enough to woo fundamentalists.” Weber, 2006:7.

arguments to motivate their beliefs. The conservatives, however, accuse the progressives of rationalism; they, on the other hand, construct their own criteria for “rationality”. Consequently, they are victims of a rationalistic methodology by way of seeking absolute and objective truths, substantiated by modernism. As we noted, this emphasis on rationality resulted in rationalism.

Rationalism overemphasises “rationality” in its quest for meaning and knowledge, holding on to the belief that human reason is able to discover, in a systematic way, the truth that is present in the “orderly” world.<sup>25</sup> Modernism, emerging out of the Enlightenment, presents a picture of reason very different from that of the premodern era. “The modern program shares the Greek assumption that rational explanation, or knowledge [*episteme*], is self-evidently superior to opinion [*doxa*], and it assumes this as its point of departure for rational reflection.”<sup>26</sup> It is held that reason is the key to *all* knowledge, *all* understanding and *all* “truth”.<sup>27</sup>

René Descartes, *father* of the Enlightenment rationalism,<sup>28</sup> moralised the *dictum*, “I think therefore I am”,<sup>29</sup> postulating that human nature “...is a thinking substance, and the human person is defined as an autonomous rational subject”.<sup>30</sup> Descartes in his search for universal

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25 Erickson, 1998:84.

26 Penner, 2005a:22.

27 There are varying degrees of emphasis, however, ranging from those that claim that reason *holds precedence* over any other method to acquire knowledge, to those who claim it is the *only* way to gain knowledge.

28 “Often referred to as the father of modern philosophy, Descartes in many ways deserves that title. He embodies many of the characteristics of the modern period intellectually, and in some ways does that so fully that he is the basis for some of the caricatures that have been offered regarding modern thinkers in general. He was a mathematician, who invented analytic geometry, and that specialization colors all of his thinking. It was the precision, objectivity, and finality of mathematics that he sought for in all areas of knowledge.” Millard J. Erickson, 2001. *Truth or Consequences: The promise and perils of postmodernism*:53.

29 “Descartes (1596-1650), perhaps one of the main figures of this period and of modernism as such, re-appropriated Augustine’s dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, and claimed that everything could be doubted except the thinking self, which is the first truth that doubt cannot deny.” Rudolph Meyer, 2003. *Dancing with Uncertainty - From modernism to postmodernism in appraising Christian counselling*:57.  
“The era of the Enlightenment was introduced by the philosopher René Descartes, who said: ‘I think, therefore I am.’ Man’s point of departure for evaluating reality was said to be his reason, his intellectual capacity to analyse and to understand. From this point of departure an era started in which science and knowledge reigned. That is why this era is also known as the Age of Rationalism, an era that celebrated the power of man’s ‘ratio’, the Greek word for the capacity of the mind to reason and to conclude from the process of reason.” Johannes Janse van Rensburg, 2000. *The Paradigm Shift: An introduction to postmodern thought and its implications for theology*:3.

30 Erickson, 1998:84. See also Meyer, 2003:57.

knowledge asserted that the human being was able to know absolutely everything there was to know about everything,<sup>31</sup> postulating that the intellect was the fundamental avenue to acquire true reliable knowledge.<sup>32</sup> “The intellectual endeavor, then, is a matter of the rational individual examining the universe to unlock its secrets for the purpose of organising life rationally and seeking to improve the quality of life through technology.”<sup>33</sup> This rational knowledge was viewed as *certain, objective and inherently good*.<sup>34</sup>

Since the Enlightenment Western society has been characterised by rationalism in its quest for absolute certainty and knowledge. Scientific methodology and reason became the controlling “principles” in obtaining exact and unambiguous knowledge.<sup>35</sup> “The naked senses, being the most intimate mode of access to the world, could no longer be trusted.”<sup>36</sup> Reason and logic were held in high regard and emotions, intuition and rhetoric were rejected as untrustworthy.

Penner also pointedly remarks that even “...Christianity shares with the Western philosophical tradition the fundamental notion that human being is rational being and that rational prehension of the universe is both possible and important”.<sup>37</sup> It was considered possible, therefore, to gain absolute knowledge rationally and objectively, discerning and

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31 “He [Descartes] is clear that what he is seeking is a universal type of knowledge, both in the sense of what is true for everyone and of what is true of all areas of knowledge.” Erickson, 2001:54.

32 “The enlightenment project was built on the epistemological assumption that the modern ‘mind’ can obtain certain and absolute knowledge. It is believed that the discovery of more knowledge is always good and that progress in science will set us free from bondage.” Van Wyk, 2000:83. “In the old Enlightenment belief, there was confidence in the possibility of rational, objective scholarship.” Erickson, 1998:28. Descartes even went so far as to develop a set of rules that were meant to facilitate and govern the process of rational thought in search of knowledge. See Rene Descartes, 1954. *Rules For The Direction Of The Mind*:153-180. [Website], available from: < <http://www.mnstate.edu/mouch/305/rules.html> >.

33 Erickson, 1998:84.

34 Erickson, 1998:84-85.

35 “The modernist dream was to enclose the world within a rational, absolute system that would be true at all places and in all circumstances. Modernists like Immanuel Kant and George Hegel developed a version of Christianity that explained Christian faith in a logical, self-contained system. Building on Thomas Aquinas, who held that all faculties of humanity are fallen except the intellect, they believed that rational thinking can make sense of God.” Selmanovic, 2001a:12.  
“Science, and in particular positivistic science, became the foundation on which the modernist paradigm has been built and it framed our intellectual, social and theological thought.” Van Wyk, 2000:83.  
“Modernism is not only the Age of Reason; it is also the Age of Science. Modern science, however, is not the natural science of premodernity, but is *empirical* science—a science that , following Francis Bacon, purports to beg no questions about the theoretical status of its object (the universe) and proceeds in a purely inductive fashion, using only the five senses.” Penner, 2005a:23.

36 Meyer, 2003:58.

37 Penner, 2005a:20.

understanding reality in all disciplines, including theology.<sup>38</sup> According to Webber, this rationalism percolated into every discipline, including biblical studies and theology.<sup>39</sup> This critical methodology, which affirmed the ability of the mind to understand truth via science and reason, was also applied to the study of Christianity.<sup>40</sup> Thus, this approach influences, shapes and formulates its theology, missiology and ecclesiology as it sought after absolute objective truth. Rationalism has played an important role in constructing the “confessional truths” of Adventism.

## 2.2 The search of modernism for objective truth

“To know” is viewed as being “objective”, particularly within the modernistic philosophy. Rationalism paved the way to know and understand reality not only rationally, but also objectively. “Modernity had held to the objectivity and knowability of reality. By carefully guarding the objectivity of one’s methodology, one could attain to truth.”<sup>41</sup> Via reason and with the addition of mathematics, which was the main medium used by Descartes in his formulations,<sup>42</sup> it was held that one could fathom “all of reality”, and thus gain absolute objective knowledge about reality.<sup>43</sup> With this certainty and knowledge, it was deemed possible to obtain objective reliable truth about everything.<sup>44</sup>

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38 “The scientific method. Knowledge is good and can be attained by humans. The method best suited for this enterprise is the scientific method, which came to fruition during this period. Observation and experimentation are the sources from which our knowledge of truth is built up.” Erickson, 1998:16.  
“In the old Enlightenment belief, there was confidence in the possibility of rational, objective scholarship.” Erickson, 1998:28.

39 Starting with William Muller, Adventist scholars are prone to rationalism in their approach to ascertaining absolute truth.

40 Webber, 1999:19.

41 Erickson, 1998:105.

42 Meyer indicates that Descartes “...upheld logical certainty and mathematical correctness and certitude as the model for all knowledge. His basis for knowledge was ‘universal mathematics,’ the science of measure and order”. Meyer, 2003:59.

43 “...sciences that would treat the entire world of nature as being itself an ‘object’ about which the human mind could hope to reach perfectly accurate expectations and on exhaustively comprehensive theoretical understanding, free from irrelevant personal hopes and reliances.” Toulmin, 1982: 243.

44 See Meyer, 2003:68. Also, “In modernity it was thought that the subject can understand and know the objective reality through the medium of language as the direct link to reality, which is one of the basic assumptions of positivism .... In other words, there is a direct correspondence between the most basic fundamental name (proposition) and an object (state of affairs) in reality. This direct correspondence was the non-hermeneutical basis of all positivist epistemology”. J-A. Meylahn, 2003. *Toward a Narrative Theological Orientation in a Global Village from a Postmodern Urban South African Perspective*:48-49.



Modernism along with Adventism placed a high premium on “truth”, especially objective truth as opposed to a “lie”. It was the philosophy of the day that “...truth was based on the certainty of knowledge which in turn was based on the idea that there was a direct correlation between language (knowledge) and reality, which could be empirically verified”.<sup>45</sup> Truth was something that could be discovered by the human mind that was regarded as rational, thus making the human being the “expert”, someone who can discover truth.<sup>46</sup> Via the strictly objective and quantitative-mathematical tools of modernism it was claimed that the truth of an object could be so accurately captured that it was believed to virtually reflect it.<sup>47</sup> This meant that it was possible to construct truth as correspondence to reality.<sup>48</sup> In this way, it is held that our ideas are able to describe reality correctly; reality, which exists totally independent of any knower.<sup>49</sup> Whether scholarly or popular, modernism “...assumed that truth was arrived at by establishing a correspondence between an objectively ‘given’ reality and the knower’s thoughts or assertions”.<sup>50</sup> So much so, that even in the everyday, non-theoretical human experience objective evaluation is regarded as being absolutely authoritative and trustworthy to such an extent that it becomes “truth”.<sup>51</sup> Thus, “truth” is the correspondence between the mind and reality, and ultimately, between the mind and God Himself.

The central theme of this pursuit after truth, according to Rorty, was not for the good of oneself or the community, but for the sake of truth itself.<sup>52</sup> It was held that there is a “...real given that is present in our intellectual system, and that this is before and independent of language and thought about it”.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, this gave “...rise to the idea of the intellectual as someone who is in touch with the nature of things, not by way of the opinions

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45 Meylahn, 2003:46.

46 Meylahn, 2003:47. “... the modern view of the world could be divided into subject (person with mental capacity to understand) and object reality of the world which is there to be understood and language was the reliable and accurate link between the object and subject world. Modern epistemology was built on [the] basic assumption that this correspondence between language and the real world exists.” Meylahn, 2003:48.

47 Erickson, 1998:107.

48 R. Rorty, 2003. *Solidarity or Objectivity?*:448.

49 Erickson, 1998:105.

50 Erickson, 1998:106.

51 Van Niekerk, 1980:17.

52 See Rorty, 2003:447-448.

53 Erickson, 1998:107.

of his community, but in a more immediate way”<sup>54</sup>, through science. Thus, via the intellect and rationalism one could plot and navigate one’s way through life, or for that matter, through the Scriptures, arriving at absolute objective timeless truth.

Consequently, modernism (and Adventism) in its search for absolute truth is characterised, therefore, by the following: Objectivism, reductionism, determinism and dualism.

### 2.2.1 Objectivism

Objectivism is focused on that which is observable and can be verified by human sense perception and experience.<sup>55</sup> With regard to objectivism, Rorty points out that, “The tradition in Western culture which centres on the notion of the search for Truth, ...is the clearest example of the attempt to find a sense in one’s existence by turning away from solidarity to objectivity”.<sup>56</sup>

Meyer indicates that this objective turn emerged from Cartesian philosophy:

By viewing everything outside the mind as non-mental, as being extended, *res extensa*, Descartes’ dualism enabled him to consider *the objective field as devoid of teleology and subject to pure mechanical analysis*. By eliminating all substantial forms, final causes and occult qualities, which were part of the prevailing medieval view of nature, he could analyse nature in a strictly objective and quantitative-mathematical way.<sup>57</sup>

This has given rise to a philosophy where the study of the object is viewed as superior, where the object stands over against the subject and the former is regarded as superior, thus,

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54 Rorty, 2003:448. See also Meyer, 2003:68-69: “In general, the intellectual foundation of the Enlightenment, influencing theology and counselling, comprised specific epistemological assumptions, for example, knowledge was seen as certain, objective and good. It was assumed that the rational capability of a person was able to demonstrate the correctness of philosophic, scientific, moral, political and religious convictions. This ensured *certainty*. Knowledge was also seen as being *objective*. ... This certain and objective knowledge was regarded as inherently *good*.”

55 Van Niekerk, 1980:18-19.

56 Rorty, 2003:447.

57 Meyer, 2003:64. On the Wikipedia website it is indicated that, “Descartes was a substance dualist, and argued that reality was composed of two radically different types of substance: corporeal substance, on the one hand, and mental substance, on the other hand. Descartes steadfastly denied that the human mind could be explained in terms of the configurations of corporeal substance (a chief claim of all forms of mechanism). Nevertheless, his understanding of corporeal substance was *thoroughly mechanistic*. ...His scientific work was based on the understanding of all natural objects, including not only billiard balls and rocks, but also non-human animals and even human bodies, as completely mechanistic *automata*”. *Mechanism (philosophy)*. [Website], available from: < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanism\\_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanism_(philosophy)) >.

leading to objectivism. In this way, modernism proposes, “We are in a world of natural resources that can be known objectively by means of the scientific method and controlled by technological power”.<sup>58</sup> Thus, it is postulated: “Objectivity presupposes an independent reality that can be grasped. If there is no independent reality, or if reality cannot be apprehended, or if reality is merely the concoction of the observer, then, the notion of objectivity is moot.”<sup>59</sup> This impartial objective knowledge is not only regarded as absolute but also universal. It is asserted that, “...the experiment can be repeated anywhere in the world and the same truths will be proven, thus, no subjective or contextual influence determines empirical rational truth”.<sup>60</sup> Thus, within modernism it is held that, “Without subjectively accepting and adhering to [this universal] objective truth, no understanding is possible, no communication sensible and nothing concrete can be achieved”.<sup>61</sup> The object is sovereign and objectivity is regarded as supreme.

Being heirs of this objectivist tradition,<sup>62</sup> the assumption of modernism (and Adventism), even still today, according to van Niekerk, is that “...*objectivity* is the ideal of all scientific and theoretical thought”<sup>63</sup>, which attempts to remove all “subjectivity” from scientific dialogue in this way regarding the object as sovereign.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Ratner and Ayn Rand maintain that it is the objectivist stance that enables researchers to comprehend

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58 J.R. Middleton, and B.J. Walsh, 1995. *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical faith in a postmodern age*:19.

59 Carl Ratner, 2002. *Subjectivity and Objectivity in Qualitative Methodology*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/829/1801> >:3. Peikoff emphatically states that, “Existence and consciousness are facts implicit in every perception. They are the basis of all knowledge (and the precondition of proof): knowledge presupposes something to know and someone to know it. They are absolutes which cannot be questioned or escaped: every human utterance, including the detail of these axioms, implies their use and acceptance”. Leonard Peikoff, 1997. *The Philosophy of Objectivism: A Brief Summary*. [Website], available from: < [www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism\\_pobs](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_pobs) >. See also Ayn Rand, 1962. *Introducing Objectivism*. [Website], available from: < [www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism\\_intro](http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_intro) >.

60 Meylahn, 2003:44.

61 C.W. Du Toit, 1996. *The End of Truth?*:29.

62 Rorty, 2003:448.

63 Van Niekerk, 1980:17.

64 “However, there is a second trend in the history of philosophy, namely to assign the object sovereignty. This not only robs the subject of its rightful place, but the object is venerated as the source, the reservoir from which the meaning of human life and thought is pumped into the subject. This view has become known as objectivism.” Van Niekerk, 1980:22-23.

psychological phenomena.<sup>65</sup> Van Niekerk also indicates that theology has not escaped objectivism and that it is also subject to this objective criterion.<sup>66</sup>

### 2.2.2 Reductionism

Within rationalism and along with objectivism emerged the concept of reductionism. Reductionism asserts that the description, understanding and the meaning of a system could be built up out of the subsystems that a system is composed of, and, at the same time, ignoring the relationship between them. It postulates that a complete description of any phenomena can be gained by understanding the independent particles that make it up. With a description of the functioning of the subsystem that made up the whole the functioning of the whole system can be determined. (In the same way, Adventism has formulated “28 fundamental beliefs” or confessions, which are substantiated by individual texts grouped together by using the *dicta probantia* method. These confessions are regarded as a-contextual, a-cultural, universal and timeless.) Within this reductionism, the rational mind is granted a special privileged position.<sup>67</sup>

Newtonian mechanics<sup>68</sup> along with Descartes’ view of the world as a clock “...provided the impetus for replacing the organic view of the world ... with a mechanistic understanding that reduced reality to a set of base elements of elementary particles”.<sup>69</sup> Grenz formulates it in this way:

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65 Ratner, 2002.

66 Van Niekerk, 1980:20.

67 See van Wyk, 2000:83-86.

68 “The picture of this empirical world was supplied through the work of Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who conceived of the universe as a grand, orderly machine whose movements could be known, because they followed certain observable laws.” S.J. Grenz, 2000. *Renewing the center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era*:223.

“In the Newtonian perspective it is assumed that the laws of nature are knowable, events are predictable, and control is possible—even in social matters. The job of the scientist is to reveal the organized simplicity that lies beneath nature’s apparent complexity such that it can be controlled.” Joe Fris, & Angeliki Lazaridou, 2006. *An Additional Way of Thinking About Organizational Life and Leadership: The Quantum Perspective*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/fris.html> >.

“Newton provided the scientific framework by picturing the physical world as a machine with laws and a regularity that could be discovered by the human mind.” Erickson, 1998:84.

Newtonian mechanics “provided the new scientific framework for modernity, proposing the physical world to be considered as a machine with laws and functioning with regularity. The thinking of Descartes and Newton laid the scientific foundation for the Enlightenment modernism, an autonomous, rational subject encountering a mechanistic world.” Meyer, 2003:67.

69 Grenz, 2000:223.

Each particle embodies an essence that determines its nature and value; each is what it is apart from the other particles. These autonomous particles interact with each other; they ‘push each other around,’ as it were. But such interactions do not affect their inner natures.<sup>70</sup>

These simple entities or particles are viewed as fixed points of view or references, external to language, which operate as guarantees for certainty.<sup>71</sup> From this atomistic perspective, it is believed that everything in the Universe, (and in the Bible), can be reduced to a few simple entities or elementary particles and laws.<sup>72</sup> This reductionistic methodology leads to the explanation of the motion of everything in the heavens and on earth according to a single mechanical principle.<sup>73</sup> This principle had a regularity and order that made it possible for the human mind to grasp its inner workings and thereby construct the laws, which governed its functioning.

Consequently, this has led to a philosophy known as “universal mechanism”, which, however, has fallen into disfavour, but not without leaving its influence on present-day

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70 Grenz, 2000:223.

71 This could be compared to a Land Surveyor using a fixed point of reference in order to measure and mark out the terrain, if the fixed point is correct, all other measurements will be correct.

72 *Reductionism*. [Website], available from: < <http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/ast123/lectures/lec05.html> >.

73 “From the days of Newton and Descartes up until the end of the nineteenth century, physicists had constructed an increasingly elaborate but basically mechanical view of the world. The entire universe was supposed to be a glorious clockwork, whose intricate workings scientists could hope to find out in limitless detail. By means of the laws of mechanics and gravity, of heat and light and magnetism, of gases and fluids and solids, every aspect of the material world could in principle be revealed as part of a vast, interconnected, strictly logical mechanism. Every physical cause generated some predictable effect; every observed effect could be traced to some unique and precise cause. The physicist's task was to trace out these links of cause-and-effect in perfect detail, thereby rendering the past understandable and the future predictable. The accumulation of experimental and theoretical knowledge was taken unarguably to bring a single and coherent view of the universe into ever sharper focus. Every new piece of information, every new intellectual insight, every new elucidation of the linkages of cause-and-effect added another cog to the clockwork of the universe. This was the tradition in which physicists at the end of the nineteenth century had been raised. Classical physics aspired to portray with perfect clarity the intricate workings of the mechanical universe. That the real universe was indeed mechanical, that physicists were depicting in ever sharper focus a reality that existed independently of them—these self-evident suppositions were never questioned.” D. Lindley, 1996. *Where does the weirdness go?:1*.

“Universal mechanism—that is, a system composed entirely of matter in motion under a complete and regular system of laws of nature. The mechanists understood the achievements of the scientific revolution to show that every phenomenon in the universe could eventually be explained in terms of *mechanical* laws: that is, in terms of natural laws governing the motion and collision of matter. It follows that mechanism is a form of thoroughgoing determinism: if *all* phenomena can be explained *entirely* through the motion of matter under physical laws, then just as surely as the gears of a clock completely determines that it will strike 2:00 an hour after it strikes 1:00, *all* phenomena are completely determined by the properties of that matter and the operations of those natural laws.” *Mechanism (philosophy)*. [Website], available from: < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanism\\_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanism_(philosophy)) >.

philosophy. It led to an “anthropic mechanism”, which is presently hotly contested by philosophers.<sup>74</sup>

The thesis in anthropic mechanism is not that *everything* can be completely explained in mechanical terms (although some anthropic mechanists may *also* believe that), but rather that *everything about human beings* can be completely explained in mechanical terms, as surely as can everything about clockworks or gasoline engines.<sup>75</sup>

This Newtonian mechanistic view has had far reaching influences: The universe and people were viewed as mere machines and the *object* became all-important, and turned into the focus of research and knowledge. By studying the motion of the smaller parts, everything in heaven and on earth could be successfully explained. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century even theology had a very strong mechanistic approach, where people like William Miller, as we noted in chapter two, interpreted prophecy with mathematical precision.

### 2.2.3 Determinism

Closely associated with reductionism is determinism, the philosophy stating that everything has a cause, and that particular situations or causes always led to specific unique outcomes or effects. Another way of stating it is that given certain conditions, nothing else could happen.<sup>76</sup>

Determinism is the metaphysical theory that emerged from a reductionistic approach, maintaining that human choice is but an illusion, and holds that all events are determined by mechanistic causes and effects.<sup>77</sup> “This meant that it was possible to define subjects and objects with meaningful clarity that were universally true.”<sup>78</sup> This was leading to a type of cause-and-effect-way of thinking, which was a closed system, where surprises, alternatives,

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74 See *Mechanism (philosophy)*. [Website].

75 *Mechanism (philosophy)*. [Website].

76 See *Reductionism*. [Website], available from: < <http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/ast123/lectures/lec05.html> >.

77 “Determinism is commonly defined as the proposition that each event is the necessary and unique consequence of prior events. This implies that events transpire in a temporally ordered sequence, and that a wave of implication somehow flows along this sequence, fixing or deciding each successive event based on the preceding events.” *The Gestalt of Determinism*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.mathpages.com/rr/s9-07/9-07.htm> >.

78 Meyer, 2003:32.

twists and miracles do not have a place.<sup>79</sup> “The aim of this process in history, thought, culture and society was towards ‘closure’, ‘certainty’ and ‘control’.”<sup>80</sup> That is to say that everything, as well as humans, is controlled by outside factors.<sup>81</sup> Thus, a theological perspective with a confessional approach will have the following predictable outcome if we maintain the “correct” truths (beliefs and behaviour), and then the consequences will be good.

#### 2.2.4 Dualism

Modernism brought with it a dualism with its dichotomy between the mental and the physical, between the object and the subject. Descartes contended that reality was comprised of two radically different substances: A corporeal substance and a mental substance.<sup>82</sup> The mind is viewed as being separated from the physical and, therefore, could observe the physical world from without, a subjective position. The picture this yields is that of a disembodied mind floating above history and social contexts, dovetailing with the assumptions of a God’s-eye-point-of-view.

This, no doubt, leads to the “objective/subjective” dichotomy, where, from a subjective position, an object could be researched and understood. There was a detachment of the

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79 “Determinism also implies that everything is predictable given enough information. Since Newtonian or classical physics is rigidly determinist, both in the predictions of its equations and its foundations, then there is no room for chance, surprise and creativity. Everything is as it has to be.” *Reductionism*. [Website].

80 Meyer, 2003:32.

81 “Causes were regarded to determine situations in a linear way and consequences were deducted in a logical sequence. We could define human action in terms of mechanistic and objective behavioural concepts.” Meyer, 2003:32.

82 “In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes embarked upon a quest in which he called all his previous beliefs into doubt, in order to find out what he could be certain of. In doing so, he discovered that he could doubt whether he had a body (it could be that he was dreaming of it or that it was an illusion created by an evil demon), but he couldn’t doubt whether he had a mind. This gave Descartes his first inkling that the mind and body were different things. The mind, according to Descartes, was a ‘thinking thing’ (lat. *res cogitans*), and an immaterial substance. This ‘thing’ was the essence of himself, that which doubts, believes, hopes, and thinks. The distinction between mind and body is argued in Meditation VI as follows: I have a clear and distinct idea of myself as a thinking non-extended thing, and a clear and distinct idea of body as an extended and non-thinking thing. Whatever I can conceive clearly and distinctly, God can so create. So, Descartes argued, the mind, a thinking thing, can exist apart from its extended body. And therefore, the mind is a substance distinct from the body, a substance whose essence is thought.” *Dualism (philosophy of mind)*. [Website], available from: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dualism\\_\(philosophy\\_of\\_mind\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dualism_(philosophy_of_mind))>.

human mind from the physical world within which the person found him or herself.<sup>83</sup> It is proposed that the human subjects are to assume a neutral disconnected remote position—an objective position—when evaluating *objects*;<sup>84</sup> then, the judgments and conclusions are regarded not only reliable and authoritative, but also universally acceptable.<sup>85</sup> (I will discuss this “remote and neutral position” in more detail later). Thus, two very distinct but separate worlds, the mind and the brain, the subject and the object, emerged.

According to Van Niekerk our first encounter with dualism goes back to the writings of Plato and Aristotle: “...for different reasons ...people’s ‘intelligence’ (a faculty of mind or soul) could not be identified with, or explained in terms of, their physical body”.<sup>86</sup> It re-emerged “In the split world of post-Renaissance natural philosophy, the separation of ‘mind’ from ‘matter,’ ‘reason’ from ‘emotions’—and so humanity from nature ...”<sup>87</sup> From within this dualistic perspective a thoroughly mechanistic understanding of reality, people and nature, began to emerge.

Because of the subject/object view of reality, binary oppositions became prominent and the metaphysical view was characterised by hierarchical thinking, where priority is given to certain signs. Degenaar provides some examples, “speech/writing, truth/fiction, male/female, conscious/unconscious, literal/metaphorical, signified/signifier, presence/absence, reality/appearance”.<sup>88</sup> Modernistic polarities and priorities are vital to realise what

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83 “A major tenet of this modern, scientific world view, is the dualism between two realms, namely the subjective mind and the objective world. ‘The Christian dualism between spirit and matter, God and world, was gradually transformed into the modern dualism of mind and matter, man and cosmos: a subjective and personal human consciousness versus an objective and impersonal material world.’ In this framework, knowledge of the universe was possible on the basis of *impersonal scientific investigation*. This position of detachment from the object of study forms the basis of the objective-subjective distinction - a distinction which is ‘the epistemological and emotional well-spring of the western scientific endeavour...’” J.S. Dreyer, 1998. *The Researcher and the Researched: Methodological challenges for practical theology*:16.

84 “What is an object? Is it correct to say that people alone are subjects and the entire non-human world consists of objects? It is one of the illusions of the modern world that there is a division between human beings and their natural environment, rather as though people are not part of nature, or at any rate do not take part in it.” Van Niekerk, 1980:21.

85 Van Niekerk, 1980:18. “In this process logical connections and patterns are created by neutral human rationality. The distinctive nature of things is disregarded—particularly when it fails to fit the logical or linguistic patterns of rationality. These mental products always have to be tested and retested against observed phenomena, to ensure that one does not end up in an illusory world. In this way people design a world which they control.” Van Niekerk, 1980:19.

86 *Dualism (philosophy of mind)*. [Website].

87 Toulmin, 1982:242.

88 Degenaar, 1996:14.



is “important” and what not: Reason versus faith, mind versus body, prose versus poetry, logic versus trust, clarity versus imagination, thoughts versus emotions and common sense versus intuition. These binary oppositions create a hierarchical two-tier oppressive structure of right and wrong, where the former is favoured rather than the latter.<sup>89</sup> According to Grenz, “This dualism has made its way into Christian thought, with a strong emphasis on ‘saving souls’ but with little concern for bodies, because we believe that the physical dimension of the person is of no eternal significance”.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, *this has had profound consequences for pastoral care as it supports a low anthropology,<sup>91</sup> where those in need have often been viewed as mere “souls” that need to be saved, instructed, corrected and disciplined.*

### **2.3 Newtonian atomism: Individualism and the dispassionate observer**

The rationalistic turn of modernism supported a strong individualistic—an autonomous self—kind of philosophy. As I indicated throughout chapter three, this individualistic notion is very salient within the SDA confessional approach.

According to Toulmin the philosophy and philosophical reflection of the one-sidedness of objectivism and binary oppositions within modernism led to the “dispassionate knower”. Penner supports this when he say that,

The isolation from the *kinesis*, or motion, of the material world is what enables the modern human subject to make universal pronouncements, to be the final arbiter of truth, and to operate as an a-temporal epistemological pivot capable of establishing absolute foundations for infallible knowledge.<sup>92</sup>

Also, according to Toulmin, objectivism held that in order to obtain reliable authentic “truth”, “...it was necessary to view the world in an objective, *detached*, and universalized manner, rather than from any subjective, personal, or particular standpoint of one’s own choosing” (*italics added*).<sup>93</sup>

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89 Thomas H. Groome, 1997. *Religious Knowing: Still Looking for that Tree*:214.

90 Erickson, 1998:96.

91 See point 3.3 of chapter three of the research, “*Seventh-Day Adventism and Anthropology*”.

92 Penner, 2005a:23. “In the Enlightenment, this notion became concrete in the adoption of the Newtonian physical scientist as a model of the intellectual. ... We are the heirs of objectivist tradition, which centers around the assumption that we must step outside our community long enough to examine it in the light of something which transcends it, namely, that which it has in common with every other actual and possible human community.” Rorty. 2003:448.

93 Toulmin, 1982:241.

With regard to this notion of the dispassionate knower Dreyer observes:

Objective knowledge was only possible if the researcher's role in the research situation could be regarded as that of a detached observer. Bryant calls this the 'view from nowhere', because there was no place for the identity and interests of the researcher. The researcher was not in view, only the object of study. He/she was an *outsider*. ... The 'exactness' of mathematics was preferred, which led to a preference for quantitative research. Within this view of science the researcher was seen as the expert, the one who takes all decisions related to the research, who directs the research and whose interpretations (observations) were regarded as valid knowledge. The result was an asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the researched.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, it is held that it is possible for those "in the know" to stand back and distance themselves, like spectators, to observe the object and, consequently, view reality without influencing it. It is held that, "... the cognitive subject must function as an impartial, neutral agency and must 'process' the knowable object in such a way that it 'releases' something objective which the cognitive subject can intercept".<sup>95</sup> Meyer indicates that, in order to free philosophy from the "sterile medieval theologies" it was necessary "...to establish a 'neutral' way of thinking, a detached and objective philosophy that was unfettered by religious constraints...".<sup>96</sup> Thus, by distancing oneself from the objects being investigated and not influencing it, it was believed that untainted objective knowledge could be extracted.<sup>97</sup>

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94 Dreyer, 1998:16-17.

95 Van Niekerk, 1980:23. "Knowledge is objective. The ideal intellectual is a dispassionate knower, who stands apart from being a conditioned observer, and from a vantage point outside the flux of history gains a sort of 'God's-eye view' of the universe—if there were a God. As the scientific project is divided into separate and narrow disciplines, specialists, who are neutral observers who know more and more about less and less, emerge as the model and the heroes." Erickson, 1998:85.

96 Meyer, 2003:58.

97 "From A.D. 1600 onwards for some three hundred years, the central leitmotif of much self-consciously 'progressive' science and philosophy was the need to pursue 'rational objectivity' of a kind that could be arrived at only by a detached and reflective observer. Cartesian dualism made canonical a split in our vision of the world, which had the effect of setting rational, thinking humanity over against causal, unthinking nature, and so enthroned the human intellect within a separate world of 'mental substance.' Given this initial standpoint, the human mind had the task of observing (and syllogizing about) the world of material objects and mechanical processes, but always did so *from outside it*. So, from very early on, philosophy—*qua* 'theology'—became essentially the reflective thought of a spectator; though, in touch of the high origins and affiliation of the term, the philosopher was thought of as a 'spectator' with a touch of class or official status—even with a touch of holiness about him. ...if one were to obtain 'true' scientific results, it was necessary to view the world in an objective, detached, and universalizable manner, rather than from any subjective, personal, or particular standpoint of one's own choosing." Meyer, 2003:238, 239 & 241.

Toulmin goes on to point out that this Cartesian detached spectator posture has produced fruitful outcomes on the previously neglected aspects of the natural world.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, he asserts that in this regard, “...the methodology of Cartesian objectivity eventually became, in Francis Bacon’s terminology, an *Idol*: that is to say, a way of thinking and arguing whose very power tempted people to press it beyond its own proper limits, and so to deceive themselves”.<sup>99</sup> So, unfortunately an intellectual attitude developed, which made science “...predominantly ‘theoretical’—that is, detached and self-consciously ‘objective’—wherein there was no longer any need to think about ‘the whole’”.<sup>100</sup>

This also had an impact on Christian endeavours, in that the Bible was also viewed as an object, which the theologian could observe and study from a so-called distance. The pastor in his or her study—separate and distant from the congregation, and from the social, political world—was able to extract “objective” truth from the Scriptures via specific tools.<sup>101</sup> Thus, placing the caregiver—the pastor—in a detached observer position, the expert, who had objective answers for the needs of those in trouble. Pastoral care is seriously compromised with this approach and becomes very much a prescriptive activity, an applied theology, where the sufferers are admonished to change their ways. The stories of the congregation—their needs, their pain, frustration, uncertainty, sickness, suffering—are not heard, or taken into consideration.

In this way, reason “...becomes a solitary task performed by an individual person. It is up to each human being to be rational for and by himself or herself”.<sup>102</sup> Thus, Penner indicates, “In the end, the modern concept of rationality is in paradox with the material universe, separated off from it; and it becomes the task of reason to measure, categorize, and intellectually master and control an otherwise irrational and brute universe”.<sup>103</sup> In this regard, Toulmin maintains that, “In the split world of post-Renaissance natural philosophy,

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98 “For many previously neglected aspects of the natural world turned out, in fact, to lend themselves to fruitful investigation from a spectator’s detached position. All those things whose behavior is in no way affected by the fact that they are under our observation can be studied and thought about with impunity as ‘objects,’ for the purpose of science. So long as one is in fact dealing with “objects” (in other words) the pursuit of the spectator’s “objectivity” remains a legitimate goal.” Toulmin, 1982:247.

99 Toulmin, 1982:248.

100 Toulmin, 1982:237.

101 Lexico-grammatical and historical critical tools.

102 Penner, 2005a:23.

103 Penner, 2005a:23.

the separation of ‘mind’ from ‘matter,’ ‘reason’ from ‘emotion’—and so humanity from nature—*put a premium on the ‘objective’ knowledge of the Spectator*” (italics added).<sup>104</sup>

## 2.4 Metanarratives

A metanarrative, sometimes also known as a master- or grand- narrative, is an abstract idea that is thought to be a comprehensive *rational* explanation of historical experience or knowledge. It is regarded as a *global or totalising cultural narrative schema*, which orders and explains knowledge and *experience*. The prefix, *meta*, means “beyond” and is here used to mean, “about”, and a narrative is, of course, a story. Consequently, a metanarrative is a story *about* a story, encompassing and explaining these “stories” within totalising schemes, which is pre-determined. Metanarratives are, literally, rational stories that are told to legitimise various versions of “the truth”.<sup>105</sup>

Metanarratives are characterised by a fixed hierarchical way of thinking where certain signs, stories, convictions, beliefs, or approaches are given priority over others.<sup>106</sup> The confessional approach of Adventism is directed toward its eschatology and more especially its apocalyptic eschatology focused on the grand narrative of the Advent—structuring it according to a predetermined *rational* scheme.

Lötter states it quite clearly when he says, “Metanarratives are attempts to interpret events in such a way as to indicate where something (persons, groups, nations, societal institutions) come from, what they are and where they are going to”.<sup>107</sup> Thus, according to him, “...metanarratives legitimate what people do and justify their choices and action”.<sup>108</sup> Penner supports this notion by claiming that, “The primary objective of rational explanation in

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104 Toulmin, 1982:242.

105 The question, however, is whether the rejection of rational predetermined metanarratives is not in itself again a metanarrative. The postmodern approach, however, is deconstructive, anti-theory and anti-totalising, but it is only using the tools of theories and reason to debunk determining metanarratives. To be discussed in more detail later.

106 Degenaar, 1996:14.

107 B.P.P. Lötter, 1995b. *Postmodernism and our understanding of science (in places like South Africa)*:96.

108 Lötter, 1995b:96.

modernity is to establish a set of infallible beliefs that can provide the epistemological foundation for an absolutely certain body of knowledge”.<sup>109</sup>

With reference to Lyotard’s work<sup>110</sup> Smith argues that metanarratives “...are stories which not only tell a grand story (since even premodern and tribal stories do this), but also claims to be able to *legitimate* the story and its claims *by an appeal to universal Reason*”.<sup>111</sup> Thus, it “...appeals to criteria of legitimation that are understood as standing outside any particular language game and thus guarantee ‘universal’ truth”.<sup>112</sup> In so doing, there is a tendency to silence the voice of “the other”. Thus, according to Smith and Lyotard, metanarratives are not only referring to a “grand story” and its scope, but also to the “nature” of the claims that are made.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, not only telling a grand story but claiming to legitimate itself with “...recourse to a *universal* criterion: Reason”.<sup>114</sup> (I will discuss metanarratives in more detail later in this chapter as I research postmodernism’s response to modernism.)

## 2.5 An overview and modernism’s implications for pastoral care

From the above it may be summarised that the aim of 17<sup>th</sup> century science and philosophy was to empower people.<sup>115</sup> Meyer puts it quite clearly that modernism was based on Bacon’s famous dictum, “knowledge is power”, holding that “...knowledge mediates power over nature and, most importantly, over our circumstances towards control of our lives”.<sup>116</sup> Alternatively, as Vanhoozer calls it: “...a drive for certitude, universality, and perhaps, above all, *mastery*.”<sup>117</sup> What is more is that this knowledge is legitimated via rationalism and objectivism. People, their emotions, their intuition, and the affective are disregarded and

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109 Penner, 2005a:22.

110 In this regard see also J-F. Lyotard, 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

111 James K.A. Smith, 2005. *A Little Story about Metanarratives: Lyotard, Religion, and Postmodernism Revisited*:125.

112 Smith, 2005:130.

113 Smith, 2005:125.

114 Smith, 2005:130. See also Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge*.

115 Meyer, 2003:53.

116 Meyer, 2003:53.

117 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 2003a. *Theology and the condition of postmodernity: a report on knowledge (of God)*:8.

viewed as being indistinct and obscure. “The embodied *logos* of premodernity is transformed into an abstract *logic* or algorithm in modernity.”<sup>118</sup>

Meyer maintains that the basic motivation behind this quest for the acquisition of true knowledge was:

...how and on what basis one can establish or re-establish true contact with, and obtain verifiable information from the world. Descartes’ answer was to use the right method, to represent objective phenomena in a symbolic form in the mind. According to this method, a foundation for a true ‘science’ of ‘reality’ can be built. These thoughts were the seeds of the modern construction of ‘reality’, especially by way of logical and mathematical construction according to the right rules and procedures, producing correct results, repeatable in other experiments.<sup>119</sup>

Rossouw, supporting Meyer, argues that, “Empirical and mathematical evidence and logical and objective reasoning thus became the cornerstone of modern rationality”.<sup>120</sup>

This type of modernism was not limited to science only, but also influenced theology in that it developed methodologies that were in accordance with the criteria of these “exact” sciences. This, according to Webber, led to a contradiction between “...science and the Bible, reason and the Bible, and history and the Bible”.<sup>121</sup> Theology became obsessed with finding the correct method to determine exact absolute irrefutable objective truth from Scripture. The liberal response to this was to find “reliable” truth, so the structures of Christianity had to be reinterpreted.<sup>122</sup> This is so as liberalism in theology is characterised by respect for the authority of reason and experience in religion, an openness to culture, a willingness to adapt theological expression to cultural forms, and continuing flexibility in interpreting the texts and practices of its tradition.

On the other hand, conservatives responded with an “evidential apologetics” as Webber indicates: “Conservatives followed the Enlightenment emphasis on individualism, reason,

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118 Penner, 2005a:23.

119 Meyer, 2003:60.

120 G.J. Rossouw, 1995. *Morality in a Postmodern Culture*:156.

121 Webber, 1999:18.

122 “The liberals response was to claim that the structures of Christianity, with its emphasis on incarnation, atonement, and resurrection, had to be reinterpreted. According to liberals, these doctrines were myths that needed to be demythologized in order to find the core of the Christian faith. ... Liberalism interpreted ‘doctrines as non-informative and non-discursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations.’” Webber, 1999:18-19.

and objective truth to build edifices of certainty drawing from the internal consistency of the Bible, the doctrine of inerrancy, the apologetic use of archaeology, critical defence of the biblical text, and other such attempts at rational proof.”<sup>123</sup> This is so as theological conservatism, or in its extreme form, fundamentalism, places the authority of the Scriptures or practices above that of reason and experience, and is often antagonistic to cultural forms, and it is literalistic in interpreting its texts and practices. To gain and maintain an exact understanding and correct interpretation of the biblical text was regarded as of great importance and *the needs of people moved to the peripherals*. The correct understanding of Scripture enabled the theologian to distinguish between truth and error, and theology became more prescriptive and dogmatic.<sup>124</sup> Thus, a pastoral ministry was found within a pragmatic applied theology, dictated by the OT, the NT and systematic theology.

At this point it is beneficial to note Rossouw, citing MacIntyre, with regard to ethics, which makes a valid point for pastoral care: “Reason is calculative; it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more. In the realm of practice, it can therefore speak only of means. About ends it must be silent.”<sup>125</sup> Adventist confessional theology is not dealing in any meaningful way with the suffering and trials of daily living. As people are confronted with crime, abuse, failing economies and the like, despair overwhelms them and they find no help or peace within the confessional approach, except to wait for the coming of the Lord. In

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123 Webber, 1999:19.

124 “Modernism is a framework of dogmatic Biblical interpretation, characterized by the following presuppositions and convictions:

- Empiricism: things are as they appear according to our common sense observations.
- Reductionism: that things may be reduced from the diverse phenomena of life to a primary explainable belief.
- That atomism and mechanism of Newtonian science is applicable to our quest for spiritual truth. Newtonian science indicated that life can be broken up into independent pieces or atoms, to be coordinated again so that they work like a clock with its coordinated mechanisms.
- that Sir Isaac Newton’s way of formulating laws that explain physical phenomena may be used in much the same way in determining everything, including spiritual truth. (Today many of his conclusions have been relativized, if not contradicted—for example by quantum physics.)
- That Descartes’s rationalism, which has been basic to modernism, suggests the best way of arriving at spiritual truth. This is the understanding that life is to be understood only through rationalistic concepts. This rationalism was combined with Descartes’s subject-object split of life, denoting that we can understand the world and find meaning only if matters are objectified and we become the controlling subject.
- That positivism, the conviction that knowledge is confined to the observable, is a viable way of observing the parameters of truth.” A. Gerhard van Wyk & Roelf Meyer, 2004. *Preaching beyond modernism: Problems with communication and proclamation in a modernist framework*:12.

125 Rossouw, 1995:156.

this regard, therefore, and for the sake of pastoral care, we should listen to Rossouw, who makes two valid assertions:

If one has no notion of an end or of the good life, it is indeed very hard to determine what morally responsible behaviour is. It thus became impossible to prove why the ‘is’ statements of reason should become ‘ought’ statements.<sup>126</sup>

And, secondly:

Modernist rationality demands that a rational investigation and analysis of a situation should result in a coherent and non-contradictory truth claim.<sup>127</sup>

Consequently, within the rationality of modernism there is no room for rival truth claims, or dealing with the day-to-day struggles of people, which conflict with objective truth—i.e., a woman wanting a divorce not for marital unfaithfulness, but because of emotional abuse, or dealing with polygamy within Africa.

“So then, modern theology operates within the conceptual confines of the Cartesian theater, crafting a theology that is simultaneously *individualistic* (in that religion is founded upon my experience here and now) and *totalizing* (in that human nature is presumed to be everywhere uniform).”<sup>128</sup> This has very far reaching consequences for a pastoral care ministry when working with people who are confronted with painful circumstances. Can a rape victim have an abortion or not? Is divorce in order if there is excessive abuse in a relationship? How do children relate to (and respect) their parent who sexually abuses them? A modernist confessional approach does not offer meaningful answers to these complex problems.

### **3 Postmodernism and it’s response to modernism**

Thus far I have researched Adventism’s confessional approach with its focus on objective truth, which is rooted within modernism. I have discerned some of the assumptions of modernism, which have affected this confessional approach. I now intend indicating some challenges to the rationalism, objectivism and metanarratives of modernism, raised by postmodernism, which influences the church and its ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, along with “pointers”, towards overcoming these problems.

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126 Rossouw, 1995:156-157.

127 Rossouw, 1995:157.

128 N. Murphy, & B.J. Kallenberg, 2003. *Anglo-American postmodernity: A theology of communal practice*:36-37.



The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought forth an epistemological condition<sup>129</sup> that is challenging, and which is moving beyond modernism with its empiricism, foundationalism and rationalism. Selmanovic, among many other scholars, maintains that there is a philosophy and science that is “...rapidly trickling down to all of us, silencing modernism’s chants of control, conquest, and consumption”.<sup>130</sup> Norman supports this when he asserts, “In the postmodern condition, the seemingly rational, objective, and managed world of modernity has undergone deep and significant shifts regarding knowledge and understanding”.<sup>131</sup> Weber puts it quite clearly when he says, “Postmodernism undermines our foundations of faith by denying [that] absolute truth is knowable or even desirable”.<sup>132</sup> Thus, this postmodern approach is questioning the assumptions, claims, and fruits of modernism. According to some it has responded to the modernist claims of rationalism, challenging its foundationalism, structuralism and metanarratives, which promote human autonomy, unity, finality, control and objective truth.<sup>133</sup>

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129 Vanhoozer describes postmodernism as a condition rather than a position. “Elsewhere I have described postmodernity as a ‘condition:’ a state of being or fitness (e.g., a heart condition); a set of circumstances that affects how one functions (e.g., working conditions); a requirement that must be fulfilled in order to do something else (e.g., a condition of entry).” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 2005. *Pilgrim’s Digress: Christian Thinking on and about the Post/Modern Way*:75. “A position refers to one’s location in space or, alternately, to one’s opinion on a certain issue. The point is that a position, whether geographical or argumentative, can be plotted and specified more or less accurately. Positions are determinate—fixed, definite.” Vanhoozer, 2003a:4. Because Vanhoozer does not regard postmodernism as entirely dislodging the conventions of modernism he maintains the following: “In that respect, postmodernity is not so much a clearly definable chronological period as it is a condition of history; it is not a specifiable moment on the timetable of history but a mood. Twenty-first-century Westerners now live ‘in parentheses’ between the modern and the postmodern ‘in an interregnum period in which the competing regimes are engaged in an intense struggle for dominance.’” Vanhoozer, 2003a:9. For a more detailed discussion see Vanhoozer, 2003a:3-18.

130 Selmanovic, 2001a:10.

131 Norman, 2008:25.

132 Weber, 2006:7.

133 “Postmodern discourse manifests itself in an ironic relationship toward all claims to unity and finality whether produced by myth or reason. Both these claims to unity and finality are based on the assumption that there is only one correct way of understanding signs.” Degenaar, 1996:7. Griffin, relating to the challenge of postmodernism, maintains that “The term ‘postmodernism’ is commonly associated with a wide variety of ideas that together constitute what can be called the ‘dominant image of postmodernism.’ Whiteheadian postmodernism exemplifies this dominant image in many respects. It rejects foundationalism and with it the quest for certainty; it accepts the need to deconstruct a wide range of received ideas, including the ontotheological idea of God, the substantial self, and history as having a predetermined end; and it seeks to foster pluralism and diversity, both human and ecological”. D.R. Griffin, 2003. *Reconstructive theology*:102.

Thus, contemporary people are oriented toward a vastly different way of thinking about social issues, science and spiritual matters;<sup>134</sup> that is to say, they take hold of the idea that “knowledge” is a human construction, motivated and mediated by “human interests”.<sup>135</sup> Western society, in a very big way, is moving away from this modernist philosophy, and becoming more and more postmodern in its approach to the world, life and “reality”.<sup>136</sup> Secular people, so Weber asserts in regard to confessional beliefs, say, “So what? Explain how it matters. Show me how it makes my world a better place”.<sup>137</sup> We should take note of what Weber says: “The bottom line in the postmodern world is that concrete knowledge has succumbed to nuanced insight. ‘I feel’ and ‘I think’ are interchangeable—and beware of saying ‘I know.’”<sup>138</sup> The church, therefore, cannot ignore this shift especially as it would relate to its mission and pastoral care.<sup>139</sup> It opens new and different ways of relating to

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134 According to Van Wyk, “Progressively more scholars believe that we are living in a post-modern age and that our traditional modernistic way of understanding this world is coming to an end. Murphy states that a dramatic change in ‘thinking strategy’ has occurred among Anglo-American intellectuals during the last half of the century. This can be described as a ‘paradigm’ shift that has important implications for theology and in particular for conservative theologians that insist on God’s special action in the world, as well as for the authority of the Bible”. Van Wyk, 2000:77-78. Rosenau also asserts that, “Post-modernism haunts social science today. In a number of respects, some plausible and some preposterous, post-modern approaches dispute the underlying assumptions of mainstream social science and its research product over the last three decades. The challenges post-modernism poses seem endless. It rejects epistemological assumptions, refutes methodological conventions, resists knowledge claims, obscures all versions of truth, and dismisses political recommendations”. P.M. Rosenau, 1992. *Postmodernism and the Social Science. Insights, inroads, and intrusions*:3.

135 “Even the knowledge of the natural sciences reflects the interests and voices that are controlled by the production of such knowledge. According to Habermas, the statement, ‘science has proven’ and which is expected to end all arguments, should be answered by ‘from whose perspective and to serve what interest?’ ‘Scientific explanations and concepts are provisional human constructs organizing the natural world; they are not independent of human intellectual capacities, social interactions, and contingencies of history.’” Van Wyk, 2000:89.

136 “Although the present day is characterized by a great diversity of opinions, there is widespread agreement that our world is changing—and changing rapidly. Whether one considers this phenomenon of change a good or a bad thing, it is virtually impossible to deny its present intellectual atmosphere has come to be known as postmodernism. Although there are rather widely differing understandings of what postmodernism is, there is significant agreement that it is real and that it is increasingly impinging on our lives.” Erickson, 1998:13. “Western culture, all the way from pop culture to academia, is moving into postmodernity. ... This generation is not so impressed as their predecessors with linear thinking, rational argumentation, and final answers. This is a clarion call to [Adventists] to understand what is happening and to respond in the most appropriate way.” Erickson, 1998:90.

137 Weber, 2006:8.

138 Weber, 2006:8.

139 “Adventists cannot just ignore these new developments as though we have no particular philosophy of science and no world view, or argue that it will not affect us. If we overlook these developments we may uncritically accept the data provided by a new philosophy of science, to the detriment of our own theology and our views on contextualization. Rather we must appropriate them in a critical way and substantiate our own point of view. By quoting the Bible in authoritarian fashion, without arguing and motivating our position, we fail to do justice either to the Bible or to a possible Adventist theology of contextualization.” Van Wyk, 1997:29.

people and gives pastoral care an opportunity to take us to greater heights, especially with a narrative approach. The thesis in an “episodic” and tentative way, therefore, seeks to research postmodernism’s answers to the assumptions of modernism in regard to pastoral care.

In regard to this shift and challenge we once again should take note that postmodernism is not attempting to make a clean break from modernism,<sup>140</sup> but in a way overlaps it. Vanhoozer supports this notion when he indicates that despite postmodernism unsettling a number of the conventions of modernism, they are not entirely dislodged.<sup>141</sup> Smith even goes so far as to maintain that even though Derrida and Foucault are critics of modernism, they both “...confess that they are, in an important sense, Enlightenment thinkers”.<sup>142</sup> Lötter, therefore, makes a point when he claims that, “Postmodernism is in no way trans- or anti-modern...” but, rather, it is “...the spirit of the Enlightenment (modernity) coming to self-consciousness”.<sup>143</sup> He, therefore, interprets “...postmodernism as reflection on the nature, potential, shortcomings and darker sides of modernity”.<sup>144</sup> Vanhoozer meaningfully uses the metaphor “*nomad*” when referring to postmodernism. “Nomads do not dwell, but only pass through.”<sup>145</sup>

### 3.1 Postmodernism and its orientations

The postmodern shift brings a matrix of positions and points of view into focus.<sup>146</sup> As Horell indicates when considering postmodernism, “...we need to recognize that uneven surfaces,

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140 Smith, 2006:26.

141 Vanhoozer, 2003a:9.

142 Smith, 2006:26.

143 H.P.P Lötter, 1995a. *Modernity, postmodernism and politics (in places like South Africa)*:37.

144 Lötter, 1995a:37.

145 Vanhoozer, 2003a:15.

146 Postmodernism is “...coalescing in a broad-gauged re-conceptualization of how we experience and explain the world around us. In its most *extreme* formulations, post-modernism is revolutionary; it goes to the very core of what constitutes social science and radically dismisses it. In its more *moderate* proclamations, post-modernism encourages substantive re-definition and innovation”. Rosenau, 1992:4. In regard to this multiplicity of positions Griffin points out that “...the reconstructive type of postmodernism also differs from the dominant image of postmodernism in many respects. Some of these differences are implicit in the very fact that this approach is metaphysical. For example, whereas most postmodernists speak derisively of the ‘correspondence theory of truth’ and the idea of language as ‘referential,’ reconstructive postmodernists defend these notions, partly by pointing out that their denial lead to what Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas call ‘performative contradictions,’ partly by showing how Whitehead’s philosophy, with its panexperientialist ontology and nonsensationist view of perception, overcomes the standard

rough edges, fissures, and gaps always mark the currents of culture and that emerging postmodern sensibilities give rise not to one but to a range of attitudes toward life and the world".<sup>147</sup> As Vanhoozer indicates, "It is too simplistic to tar all forms of postmodernity with the same skeptical brush".<sup>148</sup> As we discuss postmodernism it is very important to keep in mind that there is a spectrum of orientations within postmodernism.

Horell, commenting on this spectrum, proposes that there is a "*trivialising*" postmodernism, or what Rosenau and Degenaar refers to as a "*sceptical*" postmodernism at one end of a spectrum, with a "*questing*" or "*affirmative*" postmodernism at the other end.<sup>149</sup> That is to say, there are orientations ranging from what has been termed "hard" postmodernism all the way through, to "soft" postmodernism.

In this regard Lötter also maintains that postmodernism has a dark side with a "negative, gloomy assessment", holding to fragmentation, disintegration, and meaninglessness, which promotes a sense of discomfort and vagueness.<sup>150</sup> This "sceptical" or "hard" postmodernism "...rejects the idea of any sort of objectivity and rationality",<sup>151</sup> promoting relativism and emphasising a "...radical uncertainty in such a way that it leads to despair",<sup>152</sup> and possibly even nihilism. The "hard" postmodern orientation trivialises the church and treats it with suspicion and even contempt. It approaches "reality" and all forms of objective knowledge or truth with great scepticism.

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objections. Closely related is the fact that reconstructive postmodernism, while rejecting foundationalism, also rejects a complete relativism of both truth and value". Griffin, 2003:102.

Stephen Long also affirms this multiplicity of positions when he relates to a radical orthodoxy within postmodernism claiming that, "Because modern transcendentalism rendered a world where God was irrelevant, radical orthodoxy finds a momentary ally in postmodern deconstruction. No secure presence based upon a critical reflective standpoint remains stable. It can always be deconstructed. The ontotheology that was used to secure that presence is transcended; God can be thought outside the space it defined. But the alliance between postmodernity and radical orthodoxy can be at most momentary, for, like modern philosophers, most postmodern thinkers cannot find their way back to the roots to remember them. ... Moreover, postmodernity itself too easily becomes one more form of transcendentalism where philosophers remain captured by a dogmatic knowledge of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge; for these philosophers *say* to us what they say they cannot speak". D.S. Long, 2003. *Radical orthodoxy*:129.

147 H.D. Horell, 2003. *Cultural Postmodernity and Christian Faith Formation*:89.

148 Vanhoozer, 2005:78.

149 Horell, 2003:89 & 91; Rosenau, 1992:16 and Degenaar, 1996:14.

150 Lötter, 1995b:101.

151 Erickson, 1998:19.

152 Degenaar, 1996:14.

On the other end of the spectrum, we find a “soft” postmodernism that is referred to as an affirmative or questing postmodernism, or even as a “radical modernism”.<sup>153</sup> Degenaar points out that, “The affirmatives are oriented towards change and process, celebrate life and its pluralities, and are willing to make moral choices in spite of the complexity of issues”.<sup>154</sup> This, of course, is very much needed as the church faces the 21<sup>st</sup> century and especially when it comes to modernism and the issues raised by pastoral care.

This “soft” postmodernism challenges the epistemology of modernism, seeking “...to replace the modern Age of Enlightenment with what might be called an Age of Candor and/or an Age of Pragmatic Action”.<sup>155</sup> From Horell’s perspective it promotes the limitations of objective knowledge and rejects universal understanding. Vanhoozer states it quite clearly when he says that, “The postmodern variation of this Copernican revolution is just as far reaching: instead of history and culture revolving around reason, reason is now seen to orbit particular cultures and particular times in distinctive ways”.<sup>156</sup>

While not seeking to defend or promote postmodernism, I still wish to point out that some of the challenges of postmodernism have brought openness into play, which allows for pastoral care to be more present and relevant, and that the “narrative” approach becomes a possible complementary approach to reading Scripture, providing new meaning to the ministry within a postmodern world. In this regard it is interesting to note what Erickson says:

I would propose, as a Christian and a theologian, that the presence of soft postmodernism is encouraging to Christians. It opens the door for believers to contend for the truth of the Christian faith, in contrast to a secular world that formerly excluded any faith of this type. What may not be so apparent is the threat hard postmodernism poses to the cause of Christianity.<sup>157</sup>

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153 “Writers who are critical of the negative manifestations of postmodernism which sacrifice the value of rationality prefer to broaden the concept of modernity rather than fall victim to postmodern scepticism. Giddens uses the term ‘radical modernity’...” Degenaar, 1996:14.

“Soft postmodernism rejects those extremes of modernism found in hard modernism: the dogmatic naturalism and antiscapularism; the reductionistic view of reason, which reduces psychology to biology, biology to chemistry, and chemistry to physics. It rejects the limitations of knowledge to sense experience, and the meaningful use of language to those statements for which we can identify sense perceptions that would verify or falsify them. It rejects the restrictions of the understanding of human personality as a set of stimulus—response reactions. It rejects the type of naive objectivity that denies the effects of historical and cultural situations. In other words, it rejects logical positivism, behaviorism, and all other artificially scientific approaches to reality.” Erickson, 1998:19.

154 Degenaar, 1996:14.

155 Horell, 2003:91.

156 Vanhoozer, 2003a:14.

157 Erickson, 1998:20.

### 3.2 “Limitations” of postmodernism?

Many Christian churches, especially the conservative wing of the SDA Church, to a large degree, have been sceptical about postmodernism.<sup>158</sup> From a modern perspective this can be appreciated, particularly if “hard” postmodernism is regarded as the only “form” of postmodernism.<sup>159</sup> Some scholars speak of postmodernism as being a monolithic movement and even force modernism and postmodernism into the same reductionism.<sup>160</sup> “Hard” postmodernism has indeed brought a strong sense of scepticism, and even nihilism. Some scholars may even operate with a postmodernism that rejects Christian beliefs and even support a naturalistic and a positivistic scientific approach. Postmodernism, even in its moderate form, still presents problems and challenges for Adventist Theology, and even more so for conservative Adventists.<sup>161</sup>

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158 See 1997, Lectures on tape of The Adventist Theological Society: *So many voices ... So What? Adventism at the turn of the millennium*. American Cassette Ministries, Harrisburg, PA.

159 As we consider these limitations, it is also important to take note that Erickson indicates that postmodernism is not a “monolithic movement”. Limitations that would apply to one area or person do not necessarily apply to another. Even within the approach of a particular person there are variations and streams of thought, which at times would be limiting and at other times not. See Erickson, 2001:203: “The evaluation of postmodernism encounters a dual difficulty. ... Thus, criticisms that apply to one postmodern thinker do not necessarily apply to another, or at least not to the same degree. Beyond that, however, there are even variations within the thought of a given thinker. The thought of both Derrida and Foucault contains a more conservative and a more radical strain. A given criticism will apply to one strain, but not to the other.

This internal diversity poses problems for the thinker himself. Superficially it appears to be an advantage, for the rhetorical strength of the radical statements is accompanied by the ability to dodge criticism by pointing out that one has said something quite different than this. Actually, however, it is also perhaps a larger liability than an asset. For to the extent that one attends to the more radical statements, the difficulties with those statements can be attacked. If, however, one turn to the more conservative statements, deconstruction turns out to be rather trivial, not saying something unique, but rather what a number of other positions have also enunciated. ...Thus, the dilemma is triviality or vulnerability.”

160 See H.J.C. Pieterse, 2007. *Hoe kom God aan die woord in die prediking? Die werklikheid en taal waarin ons oor God praat*:118-119. (How does God start to speak in preaching? The reality and language in which we speak about God:118-119 – own translation). Pieterse writes about “*Die postmoderne denke ...het oor die siening van die werklikheid basies dieselfde uitkyk as die modernisme. Dit wil sê dat beide denkstrome die menslike ervaringswerklikheid as die enigste werklikheid beskou. Daar is nie plek in hierdie opvatting vir 'n werklikheid onafhanklik van die mens se ervaring en taal nie (vgl Lyotard 1990; Altena 2003:22; Lose 2003:19; sien ook hieroor Pieterse 2005:90). Hulle wêreldbeeld is 'n wetenskaplike wêreldbeeld wat die werklikheid as 'n geslote werklikheid sien. Buiten die mens se ervaring op hierdie wêreld is daar niks anders nie – geen eksterne, geen geestelike werklikheid nie.*” (“Postmodern thoughts have the same view as modernism of reality. This is that both directions in their thoughts regard human reality of experience as the only reality. According to this view there is no place for a reality independent of human experience and language. Cf. Lyotard 1990; Altena 2003:22; Lose 2003:19; also see Pieterse regarding this approach 2005:90. Their world view is a scientific world view, regarding reality as a closed reality. Beyond human experience there is nothing else on this earth – no exterior, no spiritual reality” – own translation).

161 The conservative confessionalists may have serious problems with postmodernism rejecting objectivism. Erickson, writing about Grenz, states that according to Grenz the tenets of postmodernism “...most certainly eliminates objective truth, the idea that truth is a matter of human statements. In particular, Grenz believes that most traditional thinkers define truth as correspondence of propositions to reality ‘out there.’ The postmodern understanding has some far-reaching implications: ‘This rejection of the correspondence

I concur with Smith, saying, “Much in the work of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault merits criticism, especially from a Christian perspective”.<sup>162</sup> Penner supports this when he cautions that Christians who investigate postmodernism must be careful not to “...make a reactionary move toward subjectivity, which empties it of the possibility of asserting anything as true”.<sup>163</sup> Despite all the reservations, I wish to take note in the thesis of some of the challenges presented by postmodernism.

The thesis needs to address the challenges confronting the notion of “truth”. Some scholars, even a few who have a limited openness toward postmodernism, fear that postmodernism may sabotage Christian doctrine by rejecting objective truth: “This rejection of the correspondence theory not only leads to a skepticism that undercuts the concept of objective truth in general; it also undermines Christian claims that our doctrinal formulations state objective truth.”<sup>164</sup>

In this regard Du Toit indicated that,

In postmodernism truth is viewed by some to have come to an end. ... In this sense the postmodern does not come up with a solution to the problem of truth. It simply negates modernism’s claim to truth by indicating the preliminary nature of truth. ...The crisis is simply postponed, and we await a new version of the crisis. The postmodern reaction is thus incomplete because it doesn’t take us far in coming to terms with the problem of truth.<sup>165</sup>

Furthermore, for many deconstruction within postmodernism is viewed as problematic: Smith indicated that for many the notion of Derrida that there is “nothing outside the text” makes him a “linguistic idealist”, where deconstruction is viewed as being mutually exclusive to the Christian faith. Thus, it is argued that deconstruction asserts, “Christianity is

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theory not only leads to a skepticism that undercuts the idea of objective truth in general; it also undermines the Christian claims that our doctrinal formulations state objective truth.’ The clash with Christian sympathies lies deeper than merely the loss of the correspondence theory of truth, .... ‘More radical ... is the postmodern despair of the quest to discover all-encompassing truth.’ That arises from postmodernism’s ideal that reality is not a unified whole with a transcendent center. Grenz is clear and emphatic in his rejection of such a stance”. Erickson, 1998:90.

162 Smith, 2006:27.

163 Penner, 2005a:30.

164 See S.J. Grenz, 1996. *Primer on Postmodernism*:163. “In general, postmodernism is sharply critical of all-inclusive explanations or metanarratives. One major objection to metanarratives is that they are used as means of oppression, that is, of suppression of the contrary voices that some might raise in contrast to the dominant view.” Erickson, 2001:273.

165 Du Toit, 1996:30-31.

at best a fiction and at worst a waste of time.” Consequently, it is viewed that Derrida’s claim is “...antithetical to authentic Christian confession.”<sup>166</sup> Yet, others like Smith argue that Derrida’s claim is not some kind of linguistic idealism, but rather that, “everything is interpretation”.<sup>167</sup> Even this may sound threatening for conservatives, because “If everything is interpretation, then the gospel is only an interpretation and not objectively true”.<sup>168</sup>

Meylahn also points out that the sceptical “flight from authority” of postmodernism is often viewed as being negative, “...because it questions empirical thought, rationality, reality, relativism and humanism”.<sup>169</sup> Thus, he indicates, “It can ... be seen as *destructive* and *decentralising* as it breaks down the basic authorities of modernity”.<sup>170</sup> Consequently, those who are sceptical of postmodernism view its flight from authority as dismantling and denying the foundations of truth, and that it propagates relativism. Yet, on the other hand, Wisse does assert that via the referential nature of narrative, truth still has a valid point of reference.<sup>171</sup>

There are many interpretations of Lyotard’s views on metanarratives. In this regard it is noted that Lyotard, while rejecting metanarratives, is being accused of constructing metanarratives that may be very oppressive for other narratives.<sup>172</sup> Cunningham, for example, asserts that the incredulity of postmodernism regarding metanarratives has the tendency towards a highly theoretical and abstracted account of its subject matter. He postulates that, “...these accounts are sometimes woven together into precisely the sort of ‘metanarrative’ that it had so heavily criticized”.<sup>173</sup> Thus, according to him it is defeating its own contentions. I wish to be extremely careful in the thesis, therefore, of also constructing

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166 Smith, 2006:35.

167 Smith, 2006:42. This will be discussed later.

168 Smith, 2006:42.

169 Meylahn, 2003:35.

170 Meylahn, 2003:35.

171 “Although that narrative turn in theology has been strongly rooted in a movement against the referentiality of theological language, there have also been scholars in narrative hermeneutics who tried to retain the notion of reference in various ways.” Maarten Wisse, 2005. *Narrative Theology and the Dogmatic Use of the Bible in Systematic Theology*. [Website], available from: < [www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000226/article.pdf](http://www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000226/article.pdf) >.

172 “Postmodernism, for all of its criticism of metanarratives, especially modern metanarratives, is actually something of a metanarrative itself. Postmodernism is therefore caught in what Middleton and Walsh call a ‘performative contradiction,’ arguing against the necessity of metanarratives by surreptitiously appealing to a metanarrative of its own.” Erickson, 1998:111.

173 David S. Cunningham, 2003. *The Trinity*:199.



metanarratives and one needs to take serious cognisance of their oppressive powers. On the other hand, the Christian faith cannot but continue to present the great metanarrative of Christ's redemption, but then not according to absolute rationalistic claims, but by faith, and assured faith alone.

For pastoral care the issue of truth cannot be ignored, neither can it proceed with relativism as its only "pointer". *The serious question is what are the options for pastoral care in transcending modernism?*

It is important, therefore, that pastoral theology, and in particular SDA pastoral theology, does not compromise itself in regard to a "hard" and nihilistic type of postmodernism, and sliding towards anti-intellectualism and irrationalism. On the other hand, however, the church needs to go beyond confessionalism; shunning both objectivism and subjectivism, and allowing for a broadening and deepening of our perspectives; opening the door for, inter alia, the emotional-affective dimension to be incorporated into our theology, without losing its grip on the rational. The thesis will demonstrate that postmodernism can indeed provide pastoral care with "pointers" that can open up new avenues of understanding and experience.

### **3.3 The challenges of postmodernism**

The postmodern mindset is fast breaking away from the worldview of modernism and has lost interest in the determinism of rationalism and a rigidly conclusive logic. As the currents of postmodernism "...are flowing through the doors of church buildings, parish halls, schools, homes, and other Christian faith-centered institutions today",<sup>174</sup> they challenge the search for absolute knowledge, proposing a "...candor and a pragmatic spiritual quest to find new, more authentic ways of connecting with God, self, and others".<sup>175</sup> Postmodernism is more focused on the ambiguous nature of things and interested in the mystery and narratives of life.<sup>176</sup>

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174 Horell, 2003:92.

175 Horell, 2003:92.

176 "...post modernism is not inhibited by the confining walls of rugged rationalism, it opens its doors to mystery, embracing it as an integral part of the life of faith." Selmanovic, 2001a:12.

The important question now looms, what are the challenges postmodernism confronts traditional pastoral care with, and are there any “pointers” that can lead us to construct a narrative approach to pastoral care?

### 3.3.1 Postmodernism dealing with rationalism: Mystery, awe and wonder

Modernism can be “characterised” by rationalism. With its reductionistic view of truth rationalism has determined also, to a large extent, the “character” of theology.<sup>177</sup> We have seen above in chapter 4 point 2.1 how the enlightenment project built on Descartes’ epistemological assumption that the modern “mind” can obtain certain and absolute knowledge.<sup>178</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century became “...a rabid quest for rational certainty and institutionalized reason”.<sup>179</sup> Rationalism became a “tool” used by both conservatives and progressives to formulate, or even to challenge, the church’s confessions.

Postmodernism is challenging this notion of modernism, reminding us that we are more than simply rational beings. It reminds us that the philosophy of rationalism in its search for objective truth is “...not only naive but also hazardous for humanization”.<sup>180</sup> Postmodernism, therefore, draws our attention to dimensions of reality, which the rational scientific methods do not touch on, or bring into focus.<sup>181</sup>

Rationalism focused mostly on “...the *realm of ideas* and not in the sphere of *ethics or behavior*”.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, and this has been significant for the thesis, Groome indicates that knowledge became synonymous with science and a scholars’ notion of knowledge.

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177 See Van Wyk, 2000:83. W.T. Anderson, 1995. *Four Different Ways to be Absolutely Right*:110-111, argues that there are at least four distinguishable world views, each with its own language of public discourse and epistemology: (1) the postmodern-ironist, who believes that truth is socially constructed; (2) the scientific rational, who finds truth through methodical and disciplined inquiry; (3) the social traditional rationalist, who maintains that truth is found in the heritage of the Western world; and (4) the neoromantic, who finds truth by being in harmony with nature and/or spiritual discovery of the inner self. Anderson maintains that the scientific-rational and the social-traditional approaches are conservative world views that are holding on to the values of a modern world that is “beginning to look kind of shaky”.

178 See also Grenz, 1996:4.

179 Van Wyk, 2000:84.

180 “For example, that scientific (namely, real) knowing could be and needs to be ‘objective’ and value free, that it is done best by the lone individual mind, that it is without interest or bias, and so on.” Groome, 1997:208.

181 Erickson, 1998:95.

182 Van Wyk, 2000:84.

According to him, it “...dismissed the ‘common sense’ wisdom that emerged from everyday experience and excluded all who did not have access to academia”.<sup>183</sup> Consequently, rationalism according to Lyotard has led to “scientific knowledge”, which externalises the problem of legitimation;<sup>184</sup> it has taken its recourse “...to a universal criterion: reason—a (supposedly) universal stamp of legitimation”.<sup>185</sup> Scientific reason claims to stand outside of any particular “language game”, (compare Wittgenstein’s concept), and, therefore, assures universal truth.<sup>186</sup>

When it concerns theology, Smith maintains that “Some might argue that the Christian faith can [and should] be legitimated by reason”.<sup>187</sup> What is at stake here is the relationship between faith and reason.<sup>188</sup> As was pointed out above and in chapter two and three, theology, especially SDA theology, has moved away from faith to reason for its legitimation. To prove its standpoint it uses rational agreements and proof texts. Thus, it is “...argued that Christian faith is grounded in reason”.<sup>189</sup> Alternatively, as Conradie states it, “*In die post-reformatoriese teologie het die neiging al hoe meer voorgekom om die kognitiewe moment van geloof te verselfstandig.*” (“Increasingly, the inclination came to the fore in the theology of the post-Reformation period to cause the cognitive moment of faith to become independent” – own translation).<sup>190</sup> Guy, with his “Thinking Theologically”, has fallen prey to this: “...faith is never a legitimate replacement for intellectual integrity. The fact of the matter is that apart from rational thought, truth cannot be distinguished from error, faith has no protection against delusion, and the language of faith may turn into

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183 Groome, 1997:208.

184 Smith, 2006:66.

185 Smith, 2006:67.

186 Smith, 2006:67.

187 Smith, 2006:68.

188 Smith, 2006:71.

189 Smith, 2006:68.

190 “*Onder die invloed van die Aristotelisme en die probleembewussyn van die **Aufklärung** is die gebod steeds meer opgevat as ‘n vorm van kennis wat èers kognitief begryp en pas daarna toegeëien moet word. Ook teologie word, in terme van hierdie opvatting van geloof, ‘n dissipline wat gerig is op die vasstelling en formulering van sekere kennis oor God en sy Openbaring.*” (“Under the influence of Aristotelianism and the consciousness problem of the **Aufklärung** law was more and more taken as a form of knowledge, firstly, to be taken in a cognitive way, and only then, to be appropriated. Theology too became a discipline focused on the determination of a certain knowledge of God and his revelation, in terms of this notion of faith” – own translation). E.M Conradie, 1990. *Modelle van Teologie as Handeling*:15.

nonsense.”<sup>191</sup> Thus, scientific knowledge is considered to be superior to faith, particularly for the progressives.

Conservative-orientated scholars, however, operate with both a fundamental approach and rationalism. If there are enough texts to support their confessionalism, they will prove in a rationalistic way their position is the only correct one.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, they will revert to a fundamental confessional position, claiming to be supported by biblical “truths”, and confronting progressives who are using, for example, the historical-critical approach.<sup>193</sup> Conservatives make claims for their views of Scripture to be true biblical views, without any interrogation, examination or systematic questioning. “With the assistance of some or other rationalistic and mechanistic tools we eliminate all the ‘noises’.”<sup>194</sup> Van Wyk states that,

Confessional Scholars...often protest against any information that does not suit their *status quo*; on the other hand, they are in accordance with the basic points of departure of the modernistic paradigm. Fundamentalists, with an irrational rationality and an *ad hoc* incorporation of a metaphysics of understanding, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and with such tools as the grammatical-historical method, or the *dicta probantia* method, believe that the Bible *per se* supplies them with ‘proofs’ and absolute biblical statements.<sup>195</sup>

Smith maintains that too many Christians have bought into the “modernist valorization of scientific facts”, reducing Christianity to a collection of propositions. What we believe has been condensed in “statements of faith”: about redemption, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, sin, and so on.<sup>196</sup> Our

Knowledge is reduced to biblical information that can be encapsulated and encoded. And so, in more ways than one, our construal of the Christian faith has capitulated to modernity and what Lyotard calls its ‘computerization’ of knowledge, indicating a condition wherein any knowledge that cannot be translated into a simple ‘code’ or reduced to ‘data’ is abandoned.<sup>197</sup>

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191 Guy, 1999a:106.

192 See Korangteng-Pipim, 1992:31-67.

193 Korangteng-Pipim accuses Thompson’s casebook approach of making human reason the “...final norm in determining which sections of Scripture are still authoritative”. Korangteng-Pipim, 1992:49.

194 Van Wyk, 2000:85.

195 Van Wyk, 2000:88-89.

196 Smith, 2006:74.

197 Smith, 2006:74.

Smith states that the Bible was not given to us as a “...collection of propositions or facts...” but as “...a grand, sweeping story from Genesis to Revelation”.<sup>198</sup> Conradie supports Smith’s notion that by encapsulating our beliefs in confessions, we have knowledge about God, but not of God. Here, we have lost the relationship, (“*heilsrelasie*”, “salvation relationship” – own translation), between God and people. Theology has sacrificed its

*...aktuele karakter. Die Skrif word so gesien as ‘n korpus van ewige waarhede oor God. Die doel van teologie is om hierdie geloofswaarhede so akkuraat as moontlik te formuleer en te sistematiseer binne ‘n a-historiese sisteem van heilswaarhede. (...relevant character. Scripture is seen as a corpus of eternal truths about God. The goal of theology is to formulate these truths of faith as accurately and systematically as possible within an a-historical system of truths of faith – own translation).*<sup>199</sup>

For instance, the “nature”, disposition or characteristics of God is a mystery that rationalism cannot unravel. In attempting to do so, “Rationalism, with its infatuation with the scientific method, makes God the object of human scrutiny. Theology becomes the cool, calculating dissection of God, listing his attributes in the form of timeless propositions”.<sup>200</sup> God, however, transcends this rationalism, therefore, “Theology must retain a place for the concept of ‘mystery,’ not as an element of the irrational, alongside the rational, but as a reminder that God and everything in the world go beyond human rationality”.<sup>201</sup> In this regard Rorty rejects the rational, the “...truth as correspondence of the mind”, calling reason and rationality into question.<sup>202</sup> Groome supports this and also questions rationalism, calling

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198 Smith, 2006:74.

199 Conradie, 1990:15. As discussed in chapter three Alden Thompson makes reference of a “code-book” reading of Scripture where the Bible is viewed as a set of codes to be adhered to.

“So ‘n verselfstandinging van die kennisstrewende veronderstel nie meer in sigself ‘n aktuele heilsrelasie tussen God en mens nie. Dit word kennis, nie van God nie, maar oor God. Juis daarom verloor teologie dan ook sy aktuele karakter. Die Skrif word so gesien as ‘n korpus van ewige waarhede oor God. Die doel van teologie is om hierdie geloofswaarhede so akkuraat as moontlik te formuleer en te sistematiseer binne ‘n a-historiese sisteem van heilswaarhede.” (“Such a self-supporting pursuit of knowledge in itself does not assume a relevant salvation relationship between God and a person any more. This becomes knowledge, not of God, but about God. Exactly because of this, therefore, theology also loses its relevant character. The Bible is seen in such a way as a corpus of eternal truths about God. The aim of theology is to formulate these truths of faith as accurately as possible and to systematise them within an a-historical system of saving truths” - own translation). Conradie, 1990:15.

200 Erickson, 1998:95.

201 Erickson, 1998:95.

202 “Rorty jettisons the older view of truth as correspondence of the mind or language to the objects referred to, and measured by either comparing the words to the objects or finding the coherence of the statements with one another. ...Rorty’s position is that words do not refer to any object outside language, but only to other words. Instead of ‘systematic philosophy,’ which would presuppose a single unifying pattern to reality, he proposes ‘edifying philosophy,’ which seeks to continue a conversation rather than to discover truth.” Erickson, 1998:87.

it a narrow epistemology, which “...came to embrace a narrow rationality that excluded not only much of the person but most people as well”.<sup>203</sup> God is more, much more than what rationalism can unravel or even begin to understand.

Herewith, postmodernism is not attempting to be anti-intellectual, but rather reminds us that we are far more than mere rational beings. Postmodernism prompts us to keep in mind that human beings are “discerning” beings, they understand with their “whole” being.<sup>204</sup> Postmodernism, therefore, challenges the modernistic notion of rationality that took away “intuition”, “mystery”, “awe” and “wonder”, replacing them with scientific formulas and mathematical equations. Consequently, Groome proposes a meaningful way of asserting understanding “...with its strong biblical resonance”. According to him, “‘Wisdom’ and ‘becoming wise’ are more holistic and more historically grounded words than ‘knowledge’ and ‘cognition’”.<sup>205</sup> It is Groome’s assertion that wisdom is the engagement of a person’s head, heart and hands and, consequently, “Wise people do God’s will, and they especially promote justice, compassion, and peace (Prov. 2)”. Wisdom “Beyond the mind, the knowing process must engage people’s affections and emotions, their desires and volition, their conscience and will, their aesthetic and creative aspects, and all the wisdom and ways of knowing of the human body”.<sup>206</sup>

Consequently, theology and life are more than correct statements or dogmatic propositions. For Adventism, and particularly for pastoral care, faith “...is a holistic affair that engages and shapes people’s entire ‘being’”.<sup>207</sup> Wisdom/truth for Adventism should include, but also go beyond “...the rational assent that is given to stated truth”, and also demand “...integrity and growth in holiness of life”.<sup>208</sup> That is to say, regarding wisdom/truth that “...faith invites it to be taught with the intent that people will at least learn from it to benefit their lives,

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203 Groome, 1997:208.

204 “People are not only wise in knowledge but also in their thoughts, desires and choices. People need to get involved in a knowing process that engages ...their affections and emotions, their desires and volition, their conscience and will, their aesthetic and creative aspects, and all the wisdom and ways of knowing of the human body.” Groome, 1997:207 & 219.

205 Groome, 1997:216.

206 Groome, 1997:217 & 219.

207 Groome, 1997:214.

208 Groome, 1997:215.

instead of simply learning about it with some feigned objectivity...it *invites to be taught with ontic intent*" (italics added).<sup>209</sup>

### 3.3.2 Postmodernism and deconstruction

Deconstruction, reacting to the modernistic use of language with its understanding of objectivism and "presence",<sup>210</sup> challenges the rationalism, structuralism, binary oppositions and objectivism of modernism, of being "closed" or inflexible, and unsubstantially dogmatic. The concept "presence" in this regard means the invalid claim that one can get into direct or "unmediated" contact with the object, so to speak, into the "presence" of the object. Derrida says that deconstruction has contributed to the collapse of the unity of Western thinking by confronting the "logocentric" tradition with its flimsy mastery of meaning, and "concept over language".<sup>211</sup>

"Deconstruction is not destructive", or negative as some may think.<sup>212</sup> It takes the text apart, pointing out the behaviour of language (figuratively), and in a different way put the elements of the text back together again. Degenaar calls this a "re-inscribing or situating signs differently".<sup>213</sup> Consequently, deconstruction queries the assumptions of the validity of texts in a positive way, to determine the more valid assumptions on which the text may rest. The deconstructive method is to delineate the text (and its presentable meaning) in all its fullness and consequences towards its extreme, testing its authenticity, validity, legitimacy and

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209 Groome, 1997:215. "Ontic intent" indicates wisdom/truth regarding holistic practical existence, or existence precisely the way it is, without any reference to rationalistic knowledge as the key or source thereof.

210 "The concept presence is closely linked to the concept of logocentrism for both depict the illusion that it is possible to bypass the endless play of language and to arrive at something which is present to man and which therefore guarantees certainty." J. Degenaar, 1992. *Deconstruction - the celebration of language*:199.

211 Degenaar, 1996:14. "...*logocentrism* is a concept created by the German philosopher, Ludwig Klages in the 1920s to refer to the perceived tendency of Western thought to locate the *centre* of all texts or discourse within the *logos*, (a Greek word meaning *word, reason, or spirit*)." Logocentrism is often used in deconstruction as a derogatory term, referring to the tendency of writing or speaking *to emphasize language, or words, and meaning to the exclusion or detriment of the matters to which they refer*. Logocentrism claims, invalidly and not in a cogent way, a foundational "presence" or meaning of the *logos* from the so-called original, or primary beginning, the source of all knowledge, the universe or God. The "presence", or the "now", manifested as meaning through our thoughts and language is, however, always interconnected with various meanings throughout history, "inter-textually", with other writings and language. *Logocentrism*. [Website], available from: < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logocentrism> >.

212 Degenaar, 1992:187.

213 Degenaar, 1992:187.

genuineness, to the point where its incoherencies and intelligibility collapse and the text deconstructs, providing another possibility.

Deconstruction does not only designate the collapse of unity but it opens up new modes of thinking, for example, reflexivity, intertextuality and “difference”:

- **Reflexivity**<sup>214</sup> indicates that the meanings of terms are related to the context and process of its production. This demands a second reflection that can reveal that assumed unproblematic categories might be a part of the problem of our interpretation.
- The notion of **intertextuality**<sup>215</sup> demands an open view of a text because the “...text is not a self-enclosed set of signs”. Because the meaning of a sign is its use within the context of a text, and since a context is never completely filled, the text and the sign need to be kept open for intertextual involvement. Derrida says this undermines all claims by text or sign to foundational status.<sup>216</sup>
- **Différance**,<sup>217</sup> demonstrates three meanings: Difference-differing-deferring. Degenaar states that *différance* designates three aspects of writing:

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214 *Reflexivity* is, in effect, a two-way feedback mechanism in which the situation helps shaping participants' thinking, and the participants' approach helps shaping the situation in an unending process in which thinking and reality become reciprocal, but never identical. The emphasis in praxis, however, is on the unity of theory and practice, which we could still distinguish, but not separate.

A good example of the way reflexivity works, is the laboratory rat saying to his pal, “*I've got this scientist well-trained, every time I press the button, he gives me a peanut*”. Reflexivity is an unexpected reversal of relations between two entities, as if a laboratory rat were training the scientist—in fact, it is a reciprocal relationship with people and our situation influencing us and we them.

215 *Intertextuality* is the notion that a given text is a response to what has already been written, be it explicit or implicit, and referring to another, separate and distinct text, therefore, becoming a text within a text. It is the shaping of texts' meanings by other texts. It can refer to an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another. The term “intertextuality” has been borrowed and transformed since it was coined by philosophical poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966. The notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of “intersubjectivity” when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader, but instead is mediated through, or filtered by “codes” imparted to the writer and reader *by other texts*. Intertextuality makes each text a mosaic of other texts and quotations, and also part of a larger mosaic of texts, just as each text can have and be a web of multi-level links. The consequence of this insight is that no text is ever a closed and final text. See *Intertextuality*. [Website], available from: < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intertextuality> >.

216 Degenaar, 1996:15-16.

217 *Différance*, is a French neologism coined by Jacques Derrida in 1968 and is homophonous, indicating that it is characteristic of the phenomenon of words of different origins that are pronounced the same way, with the word “*différance*”, from the original *différer*. It demonstrates three meanings: Difference, differing and deferring. It indicates that *différance* gestures at a number of heterogeneous features which govern the production of textual meaning. The first, (relating to deferral), is the notion that words and signs can never fully muster what they mean, but can only be defined through appeal to additional words, from which they differ. Thus, meaning is forever “deferred” or postponed through an endless chain of signifiers. The second (relating to difference, sometimes referred to as “*espacement*” or “spacing”) concerns the force which differentiates words and meanings from one another. The third, (relating to difference), indicates that two notions, words or phenomena can never be identical, or mimetic from the Greek concept, *mimesis*; there's



...a 'passive' difference which has already been made and available to the subject; an act of differing which produces difference; and an act of deferring which refers to the provisionality of distinctions and to the fact that the use of language entails the interminable interrelationship of signs.<sup>218</sup>

### 3.3.2.1 Deconstruction and language

Not reason, as in modernism, but language is regarded as that which constitutes the relationship between people and their world. Degenaar says that this language "...is not neutral or innocent since the use of words is value laden and involved in power-relationships".<sup>219</sup> With its play of language, it stands over against the so-called objective truth, promoting "openness" with an interpretive play of signs and symbols.

Degenaar, addressing deconstruction and language, differentiates between three basic but differing views of language:

Firstly, the traditional view is "...a system of signs with 'a large overarching, communal vocabulary'".<sup>220</sup>

The second view is that of Wittgenstein where the meaning of language is found within the fixed rules inside an overarching system, called a "language game"; and each "game" has its own rules. A particular culture has specific rules for language and within that culture its usage is understood.<sup>221</sup> "Understanding takes place within a language game which is not identical with language in general, but only one of many systems of intelligibility which can be made use of."<sup>222</sup>

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always some difference. *Différance*, as a new mode of thinking and an approach to life, indicates that the basis of life and the foundation of our beliefs is not factual, positivistic or objective certainty, but faith certainty. See *Différance*. [Website], available from: < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Différance> >.

218 Degenaar, 1992:197.

219 Degenaar, 1996:13.

220 Degenaar, 1992:188.

221 "Understanding takes place within a language game which is not identical with language in general, but only one of many systems of intelligibility which can be made use of. I understand a sentence because I know the limited language game that I am playing." Degenaar, 1992:189.

222 Degenaar, 1992:189.

There is a third view of language, however, which is imperative for a narrative approach to take serious cognisance of. In this approach language, whether overarching or limiting, is not seen as reductionistic, or governed by rules of fixed frames. In this approach language is viewed as being open to difference and not reduced to any set frame of reference.<sup>223</sup> “Language is a system of signs which is in constant play and meaning is a product of this play of differentiations.”<sup>224</sup> In this regard Degenaar asserts the following pointedly:

This view does not entail that understanding is a haphazard affair or that anything goes with regard to the interpretation of texts. Understanding implies that one commits oneself to language which is already a play of differences and that one is sensitive to the presence of traces of countless other words which are absent.<sup>225</sup>

For Derrida meaning does not have foundations, but it is characterised by a network of differences. The notion of “*différance*” proclaims the indeterminable conditions for establishing the meaning of a text; it also criticises foundationalism, and, according to Derrida, this pronounces the “destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence”. Meaning is a “...never-ending process of a conditioned intertextual play of writings”.<sup>226</sup> Van Niekerk concludes that meaning is established and constituted between people, and between people and text, through myriads of signs, and two-way movements.<sup>227</sup>

This understanding of language emerged with the dismantling of the modern mind through “...a theory of literary criticism known as deconstruction, which arose as a response to structuralism”.<sup>228</sup> This approach asserts that there are no fixed points or overarching vocabularies with a fixed origin or fixed finality within language. “There is only the open play of difference which remains an unending adventure.”<sup>229</sup>

Deconstruction has opened new ways of thinking: *The notion that it is not reason but language that constitutes the relationship between our world and us provides a narrative*

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223 Degenaar, 1992:189.

224 Degenaar, 1992:189.

225 Degenaar, 1992:188-189. See also in this regard Derrida’s notion of *différance*, which is used to produce three verbal nouns: “Difference-differing-deferring”. Degenaar, 1992:197-198.

226 Erasmus van Niekerk, 1995. *Postmodern Theology*:77.

227 J. Derrida, 1976. *Of Grammatology*:50.

228 Erickson, 1998:85.

229 Degenaar, 1992:190.

*approach with the possibility to move beyond rationalism to a metaphorical approach in reading Scripture, telling and listening to stories.*

### 3.3.2.2 Deconstruction: Interpretation or objectivism?

- **“Nothing outside the text”**, (indicating there is no meaning outside interpretation)

To comprehend the narrative approach of the thesis it is important to address the question of objectivity and its continuing interpretive reading of Scripture from a relational and metaphoric approach. From a “confessionalist” perspective interpretation is regarded as a subjective approach that “...replaces the objectivity of the Bible being its own interpreter...”.<sup>230</sup> According to confessionalism this will leave us with a “...too subjective norm (experience) as the interpreter of Scripture”.<sup>231</sup> In this regard, Reynolds states that,

...other methods, like reader-response criticism and deconstructionism, are far too subjective and do not take the text itself seriously, leaving the reader to determine the meaning of the text without reference to any meaning or intentionality within the text.<sup>232</sup>

This notion of interpretation, therefore, would make Christians very nervous. It is held by some that without objectivity, we will never know if the gospel is true, or what about it is true. Theologians like Carson and many conservative SDA scholars, (as referred to in chapter three), maintain that “...one can only be said to know ‘truly’ if one knows ‘objectively’”, and “...if a truth is objective, then it is not a matter of interpretation”. Thus, “If the gospel is an interpretation, and therefore not ‘objective,’ then it would seem that it cannot be true”.<sup>233</sup> It is believed, therefore, that it is imperative for us to confront Derrida’s dictum, “there is nothing outside the text”.<sup>234</sup>

Derrida’s statement has been misunderstood and especially the conservative-orientated scholars have viewed Derrida as being a “linguistic idealist”,<sup>235</sup> and a nihilist.

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230 Gulley, 1992:79.

231 Gulley, 1992:79.

232 E. Reynolds, 2006. *Accurately Handling the Word of Truth*:11.

233 D.A. Carson, as referred to by Smith, 2006:43. See also Hasel, 1972. *Old Testament Theology: Basic issues in the current debate*:136. He states we must translate the text as “...objectively as possible by careful employment of the respective and proper methods of interpretation”.

234 Smith, 2006:31-58.

235 “Someone who thinks there are only words, not things.” Smith, 2006:35. With regard to this criticism Smith acknowledges that it would be true, “...if by knowing we mean unmediated objective or pure access to ‘the way things are’”. He states that Derrida will regard this as “...a naive assumption because it fails to

Smith, however, postulates that this is a misrepresentation of Derrida's thesis for he does not propagate linguistic idealism, but rather "*interpretation*". Using Smith's own words:

It is not just that writing or texts are the portal through which we must pass in order to get to things or the gates that provide access to an uninterpreted reality; rather, when Derrida claims that there is nothing outside the text, he means there is no reality that is not always already interpreted through the mediation lens of language. Textuality, for Derrida, is linked to interpretation. To claim that there is nothing outside the text is to say that everything is a text, which means not that everything is a book, or that we live within a giant, all-encompassing book, but rather that everything must be interpreted in order to be experienced.<sup>236</sup>

Smith regards Derrida rather as a "comprehensive hermeneuticist" who views all our experiences as already being an interpretation; interpretation cannot be bypassed. Smith asserts that Derrida cannot be regarded as a linguistic idealist, denying the material existence of things, but according to the stance of Martin Heidegger, (*Being and Time*), he asserts the ambiguity of interpretation.<sup>237</sup> His point is that "...the very experience of the things themselves is a matter of interpretation".<sup>238</sup>

Derrida is challenging the idea of language being "...a lens through which we see the world, albeit with some distortion, simply because this lens stands between us and the world".<sup>239</sup> He is calling into question the idea that we have to move *through* language to recover the author's original intent—via a code that needs to be broken, or simply to read the text as it is.<sup>240</sup> Vanhoozer remarks pointedly that, "Instead of thinking that humans can explain the world according to a rational blueprint ...postmoderns are more interested in what constructs, and constitutes, human subjectivity".<sup>241</sup> Thus, it is held that it is rather "...to be aware of the fictive nature of our linguistically constructed world".<sup>242</sup> Derrida, according to scholars like

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recognize that we never really get 'behind' or 'past' texts; we never get beyond the realm of interpretation to some kind of kingdom of pure reading". See Smith 38 & 44.

236 Smith, 2006:39.

237 Smith, 2006:39.

238 Smith, 2006:49. See also Vanhoozer, 2005:78.

239 Smith, 2006:36.

240 "Often when we read—and biblical commentaries tend to be a great case study for this—we imagine that the text or the language of the book is something we have to get *through* in order to recover the author's original intent. In other words, the text becomes a hurdle that we have to jump over—or a curtain we need to pass through—in order to get to what is behind the text, such as the author's idea or the referent (the thing to which the text points)." Smith, 2006:37.

241 Vanhoozer, 2005:76.

242 Vanhoozer, 2005:76.

Smith and Vanhoozer, upholds the “...awareness of the deconstructability and contingency of every text and system of meaning and truth”.<sup>243</sup> Meylahn, therefore, asserted that “There is nothing outside the text”, and there is “...nothing behind, below or within it save the free play of human desire”.<sup>244</sup> It is simply the axiom, “everything is interpretation”; “It is interpretation all the way down”.<sup>245</sup> “Instead of attempting to find truth in the sense of correspondence to reality, we should be satisfied with interpretation.”<sup>246</sup>

- **Objectivism**

When stated that language and not reason constitutes relationships this does not support a lexicographical understanding of language, which provide a description of language in general use; lexicography is the *scholarly discipline* of analysing and describing the *semantic, syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* relationships within the vocabulary of a language.<sup>247</sup> We have already noticed that language is the open play of differences, where there are no fixed points of finality.<sup>248</sup> Murphy and Kallenberg reflecting on Wittgenstein maintain the following: “‘How words are understood is not told by words alone,’ rather, it is *praxis* that gives words their sense.”<sup>249</sup> For the use of words are value laden and involved in power-relationships.<sup>250</sup>

In modernism, with its quest for certainty, language<sup>251</sup> has been given a very specific status. It has been “...regarded as thoroughly objective and treated as if it were ready-made, produced and practised, as if it were not a socially produced cultural artefact, created by human formation and organization”.<sup>252</sup> Language has been given an authority all of its own

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243 Smith, 2006:42.

244 Meylahn, 2003:51. Smith reminds us that “Derrida argued that all of us interpret our world on the basis of language. ... In one of his first books, published ... (in French), Derrida famously put it this way: ‘There is nothing outside the text’ [*Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*]”. Smith, 2006:34.

245 Smith. 2006:42. See also Vanhoozer, 2005:77-79.

246 Erickson, 1998:87.

247 “Language, and not reason, is viewed as that which constitutes the relationship between human beings and the world. This language is not neutral or innocent since the use of words is value laden and involved in power-relationships.” Degenaar, 1996:13-14.

248 Degenaar, 1992:190.

249 Murphy and Kallenberg, 2003:36.

250 See Degenaar, 1992:187-188.

251 The narrative nature of language will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. In this chapter I, however, will discuss the postmodern response to modernism’s objective usage of language.

252 Meyer, 2003:214.

as reason and rationality came into vogue. Scholars, for example, Foucault and Derrida have contended that modernism with its “subject-object” dualism, striving for certainty and control, has “...reduced the possibility of differentiation by constructing *closed* binary oppositions”.<sup>253</sup>

“Confessionalsists”, those with a belief in the importance of full and unambiguous assent to the whole of a religious teaching, or those who embrace their confession in absolute terms, in particular conservatives, are using “biblical” tools and a lexicographical reading of Scripture to obtain this assumed objectivity.<sup>254</sup> *The context of the biblical text and the contexts of people play a minor role to reach this assumed objectivity: hermeneutics seldom becomes more than an exegesis of Scripture.* Consequently, there is no real hermeneutical challenge and therefore, no proper need to interpret the Bible in-depth. It is almost as if the “...text takes on a kind of transparency so that we can simply see what it means”.<sup>255</sup> As we noted in chapter three, Smith points out that “...most of us think that when we read the Bible, the same is true”,<sup>256</sup> namely, that we know directly what it means. A narrative approach should take cognisance of the fact that denying interpretation and asserting that something can only be objectively true, most “...often translates into the worst kind of imperialism and colonial agendas, even within a public culture”.<sup>257</sup>

Deconstruction recognises that everything is interpretation and claims to open

...a space of questioning—a space to call into question the received and dominant interpretations that often claim not to be interpretations at all. As such, deconstruction is interested in interpretations that have been marginalised and sidelined, activating voices that have been silenced.<sup>258</sup>

It challenges the concept of “objective knowledge”, therefore, and proposes “...other ways of knowing besides being ‘objective’”.<sup>259</sup> Vanhoozer supports Selmanovic here, and indicates,

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253 Van Wyk, 2000:75.

254 Progressives, however, in their search for objective truths often used the historical-critical method.

255 Smith, 2006:37.

256 Smith, 2006:37.

257 Smith, 2006:51.

258 Smith, 2006:51. Smith states that to “Acknowledging the interpreted status of the gospel should translate into a certain humility in our public theology. It should not, however, translate into skepticism about the truth of the Christian confession. If the interpretive status of the gospel rattles our confidence in its truth, this indicates that we remain haunted by the modern desire for objective certainty. But our confidence rests not on objectivity but rather on the convictional power of the Holy Spirit...”

259 Selmanovic, 2001a:13.

“Postmodernists reject unifying, totalizing, and universal schemes in favor of a new emphasis on difference, plurality, fragmentation, and complexity”.<sup>260</sup> In this regard it is also important to take note of Van Wyk’s statement: “By challenging absolute and objective points of view it is not assumed that there are no ‘absolutes’, as some postmodernists believe, but it is to challenge pretentious scholars maintaining a ‘God’s eye view’.”<sup>261</sup> As the concept “absolute” is challenged, however, it does not reject the idea of the possibility of an “absolute truth”, but rather *the epistemological certainty of “absolute knowledge”* and fundamentalism, and in particular, the way in which it is constructed by rationalism.<sup>262</sup>

### 3.3.2.3 Deconstruction: Objective truth, or “pointers”?

- **Objective truth and power**

As I noted in chapter three, point 2.2 above, the SDA Church relies very heavily on “objective truth” for the construction of their confessions.<sup>263</sup> Postmodernism, however, maintains that this kind of truth is value laden and it is, consequently, a power structure of control.<sup>264</sup> It is construed in such a manner that, “There is no claim to truth that is innocent; there is no knowledge that simply falls into our minds from the sky, pristine and untainted”.<sup>265</sup>

In this regard it is interesting to note that Foucault, being suspicious of any universal truths, “...rejected any external position of certainty that is beyond history and society”.<sup>266</sup> He postulates that the very interpretation is not innocent, but it is propounded by those in power, thus, making it an exercise of power.<sup>267</sup> Du Toit, supporting this notion, goes on to point out

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260 Vanhoozer, 2003a:11.

261 Van Wyk, 2000:91.

262 Selmanovic, 2001a:13.

263 See also Guy, 1999a:249. “The Adventist heritage is, more fundamentally than anything else, a heritage of commitment to truth.”

264 “Knowledge, or what counts as knowledge [or truth], is not neutrally determined. Instead, what counts as knowledge is constituted within networks of power—social, political, and economic.” Smith, 2006:85.

265 Smith, 2006:86.

266 Du Toit, 1996:37.

267 Erickson, 1998:86. Smith, using Foucault’s metaphors of “genealogy” and “archaeology”, points out that, “Foucault the genealogist traces the lineage of such thinking to the beliefs that really motivate it. Or to use his archaeological metaphor, he digs beneath the surface of what goes around as objective truth to show the machinations of power at work below the surface. ... and ‘finds that there is ‘something altogether different’ behind things: not a timeless essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.’ ...so Foucault’s genealogy intends to

that truth always seems to be equated with “...the truth of the dominant group(s) in power”.<sup>268</sup> According to Janse van Rensburg, therefore, “It is the regime, the power behind knowledge, that must be challenged”.<sup>269</sup> Alternatively, Smith indicates, “Foucault is not out to lament this situation, as though we had lost our foundations, but rather to get us to own up to what has always been the case”.<sup>270</sup> Thus, from this perspective, “Truth is vested in theological and metaphysical power schemes. Truth is only outwardly independent of the group which holds the power”.<sup>271</sup> Smith also reminds us: “To claim that power is knowledge, then, is to make a claim about the power relations that stand behind both institutions and ideas.”<sup>272</sup>

In this regard Janse van Rensburg makes a very valid point when he indicates that Foucault’s contention is not against knowledge, but rather the power engendered by the regimes that hold that knowledge. The problem is when these regimes *produce* knowledge to use it to enforce obedience.<sup>273</sup> Scholars such as Smith and Janse van Rensburg indicate that Foucault is opposed to the way knowledge and truth are used as powerful tools to control the lives of people, what they do and what they believe.<sup>274</sup> Foucault, so Smith tells us, describes it in this way:

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show that modernity’s claims to scientific objectivity or moral truth are fruits of a poisoned tree of power relations. Or to use an architectural metaphor, Foucault’s archaeology sets out to show that what we thought were sure foundations are more like collections of fragments piled in the bottom of the hole”. Smith, 2006:86-87. See also Foucault: “...The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn’t outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn’t the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.” M. Foucault, 2003. *From “Truth and Power”*:252.

268 Du Toit, 1996:36.

269 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:19. “Foucault argues that scientific proof is governed by statements followed by statements governing one another, thus constituting a set of propositions that are scientifically acceptable and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures. He calls this scientific process the regime of politics of the scientific statement.” Janse van Rensburg, 2000:19.

270 Smith, 2006:87.

271 Du Toit, 1996:36.

272 Smith, 2006:78.

273 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:19.

274 “Likewise power plays a major role in imposing certain ideas and theories on others. Power forces people into a certain mode of living.” Janse van Rensburg, 2000:19.



...social institutions and relationships are necessarily constructed on the basis of power relations; power is ubiquitous. Moreover, power is understood as power over others—some kind of domination (even if it isn't a simple bifurcation of haves and have-nots, those with power and those without). This power is channeled through mechanisms of discipline—various practices and regimens—that form the individual by conforming him to what society wants—a good worker and consumer.<sup>275</sup>

Smith proceeds to indicate that the church considers it its duty to “...enact countermeasures, counter disciplines that will form us into the kinds of people that God calls us to be. Too often we imagine that the goal of Christian discipleship is to train us to think the right way, to believe the right things”.<sup>276</sup> In this regard, the church is viewed as the custodian of the truth. Truth, therefore, is used to enforce what is considered proper and improper, what is right and wrong, what is lawful and unlawful. According to Groome, “These false assumptions actually diminished the potential assets of truly critical reason and encouraged a ‘technical rationality’ instead; such reductionism as only ‘what works’ in the interest of control and production”.<sup>277</sup>

Postmodernism challenges this use of truth, this form of certainty, this sort of bedrock or foundation upon which all knowledge is based.<sup>278</sup> Smith, over against objective truth, indicates that, “...the ultimate goal of sanctification and discipleship is to shape us into a certain kind of person: one who is like Jesus, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), loving God and neighbour, caring for the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (Jer. 22:3; James 1:27)”.<sup>279</sup> Horell, therefore, postulates the following:

... the currents of postmodernity encourages a movement away from modern notions of foundational and comprehensive knowledge toward an embrace of specificity, contingency, and limitation in knowing. From a modern perspective we should strive, at least ideally, to approach most issues and concerns by beginning with first or foundational principles. ... From postmodern perspectives whatever insight or wisdom we have is grounded in our past, our specific life

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275 Smith, 2006:100-101. See also Richard Rorty: “...the tradition in Western culture which centers around the notion of the search for Truth, a tradition which runs from the Greek philosophers through the Enlightenment, is the clearest example of the attempt to find a sense in one's existence by turning away from solidarity to objectivity. The idea of Truth as something to be pursued for its own sake, not because it will be good for oneself, or for one's real or imaginary community, is the central theme of this tradition.” Rorty, 2003:447-448.

276 Smith, 2006:106.

277 Groome, 1997:208.

278 “Knowledge is uncertain. Foundationalism, the idea that knowledge can be erected on some sort of bedrock of indubitable first principles, has had to be abandoned.” Erickson, 1998:86.

279 Smith, 2006:106.

history. ... Similarly, postmodernity encourages us to replace seemingly universal ideals (such as modern, universalistic conceptions of justice and truth) with a more limited sense of patching together a framework for understanding life and the world from within the limited, finite outlook of a specific perspective.<sup>280</sup>

Postmodernism, therefore, instead of generating universal understanding and human solidarity, calls for plurality and “contextuality”, because its truth is regarded as very oppressive. It rejects the idea that knowledge is completely rational and certain, holding that it is rather personal and relational, and that it can never be viewed as final and complete.

- **“Present truth” and story telling**

In chapter three we have seen that progressives, like Fritz Guy, is challenging the church’s understanding of absolute truth when he postulates, “...eternal truth is by definition always ‘true,’ a particular element of truth may have particular relevance to, and meaning for, a particular time and place”. Thus, he intimates that truth is timely, contextual and progressive, indicating that it should be understood as both “eternal” and “dynamic”.<sup>281</sup> Hereby, he indicates that truth is a “present truth”, being the “...most important single element in the Adventist theological heritage”.<sup>282</sup> His epistemology, however, is in search of a present truth that is relevant for a “thinking theology”. His theology that does not want to disregard the aspect of faith is nevertheless reductionistic, because, “Thinking theology is primarily a cognitive rather than affective activity: it is thinking rather than feeling”.<sup>283</sup> In this way, he places himself within modernism with its logic and its search for facts.

On the other hand, we have seen that conservatives, and in particular fundamentalist-orientated conservatives, are also using the notion of “present truth”. They steer away from concepts such as “relevancy” of the message for people within a specific context. The accent is rather on the relevancy of the confessions: “Our message is still valid”, not the “new” but the “true”.<sup>284</sup> The metaphors used for truth indicate that truth is static: they are something we can “*stand on*”; they are the *pillars* of our faith.<sup>285</sup> This kind of epistemology finds it

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280 Horell, 2003:86-87.

281 Guy, 1999a:81.

282 Guy, 1999a:81.

283 Guy, 1999a:11.

284 C.D. Brooks, 2005. *I Want My Church Back!*:85 & S. Koranteng-Pipim, 2005e. *Where Do I Stand?*:779-794.

285 Koranteng-Pipim, 2005a:10 & Gerhard Damsteegt, 2005. *When Is a Doctrine New Light?*:127.

difficult to transcend foundationalism and often falls prey to a cognitive reductionism with its occasional “irrational” rationalism.

Although some postmoderns, for example, Malpas, deny the existence of the notion of truth, the thesis sets out from his point of view that we can still speak about truth, but not about truth as an autonomous static entity.<sup>286</sup>

Whereas I acknowledge the fact that there is something we may call “absolute truths”, for example, God, we will always have a limited view of that truth. Loader maintains that there is a sceptical view of reality in the Scriptures:

Somewhat surprisingly, no doubt, to some, biblical sapiential literature often espouses scepticism as to the human ability to know truth, or to put it in typical Israelite parlance, to have wisdom.<sup>287</sup>

He concludes, using the metaphor of mining for gold: we are mining in the outcrops where truth eludes us. Ultimate truth is neither encapsulated by our mining activities, nor by the mining policies:

Like the Job poet and his wise colleagues of all times, we can only mine you snippets and little gems. Truth only comes in snippet format.<sup>288</sup>

Modernism made it difficult, if not impossible, to tell our stories and we were virtually unable to communicate our experiences and the Bible’s stories. Du Toit maintains that by destroying the assumptions of the logic of identity, however, postmodernism has again introduced the metaphoric nature of all communication. Not only is our world understood as a story, life itself is being revealed by stories. He states:

Story is the mode of our being in the world. ...Truth is not that which is unfolded or revealed, but simply the unfolding process itself. ...The metaphor of ‘unfolding’ stresses truth as a dynamic movement and not a static relationship between a cognitive subject and a known object. ...Truth is no longer a mere servant of knowledge, or a predicate of a sentence. It is not merely a different name given to reality, nor is it equated with a fact. ...It is through storytelling that we are healed.<sup>289</sup>

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286 See Du Toit, 1996:30. We also need to disagree with Nietzsche, although he acknowledges the possibility of a metaphysical world, he believes that one cannot do anything with it. See Du Toit, 1996:34-35.

287 J.A. Loader, 1995. *Fools can explain it, wise men never try*:131. Loader states that as humans, “...we have been made with an innate Faustian urge to look for explanations, answers, reasons – final ones. What we have found in Job 28, is that the ‘truth’ is there. ...Nevertheless, we shall not find it”. Loader, 1995:141.

288 Loader, 1995:143.

289 Du Toit, 1996:39-40.

Du Toit believes that the “...end of religious truth is the end of any exclusive truth”, because there is no universal criterion outside a specific religious belief; the criterion needs to be determined within that religion.<sup>290</sup> To a certain extent also, it has become rather impossible even to determine what “truth” is within a specific tradition. Universal theories of truth are progressively rejected, because of the different views, for example, regarding context, views of Scripture and worldviews.<sup>291</sup>

The modern scientific view, where truth is determined by a mechanistic, reductionistic worldview, is being rejected.<sup>292</sup> What is said about scientific research is, to a large degree, valid for confessional propositional statements. It does not produce ultimate truths, but only probable findings and it is not a precise replica of a text or phenomena, but it gives us a rational account of its possible meaning, relationships and interactions.

The play of language and meaning, the challenges of discourse and power, the metaphoric, relational and holistic aspects determining truth demand that a *narrative approach* needs to

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290 Du Toit, 1996:32.

291 Ed Gungor supports his argument by way of referring to a particular attitude towards tattoos and body piercings. “Let’s say that you believe that it is wrong for people to get tattoos and have their body pierced. Maybe you heard your mom and dad say it was wrong. Or perhaps it’s because when you were growing up, tattoos and body piercing were only fashionable for mean-looking bikers, biker chicks, and those on the shallow end of the socioeconomic scale. Is that an unfair prejudice? Absolutely. But if that was your experience, it impacts how you think.

Whatever the reason, inbred opinions cause us to read Bible texts with a predetermined selectivity—some texts literally pop off the page at us, while others remain completely ignored.

We may come across the verse, ‘Do not cut your bodies ... or put tattoo marks on yourselves’ (Lev. 19:28), and it leaps off the page. And when an internal ‘resonance’ occurs, it can feel very much like a spiritual epiphany—like the voice of God. *No wonder tattoos and pierced noses trouble us so, we reason. God feels the same way!*

Never mind that in the previous verse men are told to never ‘cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard’ (v. 27). We ignore that. But if we choose to obey the command that forbids tattoos or piercings on the basis of God’s Word, then we must by necessity of reason demand that men grow side-mullets and sport scraggly, untrimmed beards—with a great big ‘Praise the Lord!’

So, why aren’t we fair and reasonable with Bible texts like these? Because something in us longs to emphasize those verses that resonate with our own opinions and biases, while ignoring the ones that don’t. It’s one thing to interpret matters in a biased way, but it’s quite another to slap *God’s* endorsement on our interpretation. But people do it every day.” Ed Gungor, 2007. *There is More to the Secret*:58-59.

Stackhouse asserts that, “...various versions of the ‘pure gospel’ are more contextually influenced than their advocates recognize”. He notes how critics of the ethnocentrism, sexism, racism and colonialism of Christianity have often pointed out that what has often been propagated in the name of the “pure gospel” seems to correspond to the prejudices of the time, gender, race, and geographical and social location of those who talked in such spirited terms about the “pure gospel”. Max L. Stackhouse, 1986. *Contextualization and theological education*:71-72.

292 Du Toit, 1996:33.

go beyond the metaphor of “present truth”.<sup>293</sup> This method or approach needs to opt for a holistic approach where all the stories, using various methods of communicating (communicative “tools”), can be told.<sup>294</sup>

A narrative approach will not endeavour to communicate the facts of objective and absolute truths; nevertheless, its stories will seek to convey “episodic pointers” to God’s great truths.<sup>295</sup>

### 3.3.2.4 Deconstruction and binary oppositions

Degenaar proposes that deconstruction seeks to bring language into play by showing the importance and reductionistic nature of hierarchical oppositions.<sup>296</sup>

Van Niekerk maintains that it seems that modernity “...is haunted by the idea that everything really worthwhile is to be expressed as a disconnected twosome binary”.<sup>297</sup> The hierarchical relationship where “surface” thoughts are causally linked with foundational, or “depth dimensions” is seriously questioned. The modern binary dialectic of essence and appearance “...becomes two or more adjacent surfaces”.<sup>298</sup> These binary oppositions represent a hierarchical two-tier structure, with one of them—the surface—on top and its deep counterpart as the real foundation of what is expressed on the surface. Derrida writes and says that he

...does not want to cancel or delete the oppositions, but to interrogate them as points on a continuum, to see what indicates that each of the two terms must appear as *différance* of the other: the one as difference of the other, deferred or delayed in the economy of the same continuum.<sup>299</sup>

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293 The notion of “present truth” as metaphor may still find itself within a confessional approach, however, it has lost much of its dynamic openness and its potential to construct “episodic” pointers to truth.

294 Ted Peters, 1985. *David Bohm, Postmodernism, and the Divine*:93. Peters, in this regard says that the thirst for postmodernity is the thirst for a renewed sense of the whole. This world of Isaac Newton and René Descartes is plagued by a drought because it is unnourished by the rains of holistic thinking.

295 The thesis does not regard these “episodic pointers” as infallible pointers to truth, as Henry accused Brunner of believing. See C.F.H. Henry, 1976-83. *God, revelation, and authority*: Fifteen thesis, part II:434.

296 Degenaar, 1992:194.

297 E. van Niekerk, 2008. *Systematic Theology: Faith philosophy and science*. Tutorial letter 501/2008:149.

298 Van Niekerk, 1995: 70.

299 J. Derrida, 1982. *Margins of philosophy*:13.

Scholars like Taylor maintain that the Western theological tradition is built upon a dyadic foundation, of two items of the same kind. The movement is here between the so-called evident and exclusive opposites: God - world; eternity - time; mind - matter, etcetera. These oppositions are not regarded as equivalent, but it is an "...asymmetrical hierarchy in which one member governs the other throughout the theological, logical, axiological, and even political domains".<sup>300</sup> Taylor indicates that, "By inverting and subverting the poles between which Western theology has been suspended, deconstruction reverses itself and creates a new opening for religious imagination".<sup>301</sup> Van Wyk states that such a "husk-kernel", or "form-content" does not only indicate a search for objectivistic and a universalistic content of the Bible, but it may represent a paternalistic approach.<sup>302</sup> Scholars operating with the *sola scriptura* and *sacra scriptura sui ipsius interpres* principles, may become imperialistic dictators, because they assume that they are only informed by the Bible. They dictate the "core" of the gospel, whereas others may only decide on the "form" or "husk". The "core" is then regarded as the "pure" gospel. This "pure" gospel, however, may be more influenced by a specific context than their advocates seem to recognise. Stackhouse notes how critics of ethnocentrism, sexism, racism and colonialism have pointed out that what has been seen in the name of the "pure gospel" seems to correspond to the prejudices of the geographical and social location of those who have determined what the "pure gospel" is.<sup>303</sup>

Van Niekerk proposes an episodic "pointer system", or "episodic ontology", valid for the duration of the reading of the text, or for the duration of the discussion.<sup>304</sup> "Here the 'pyramid' of being rests upon no foundation at all: it trembles, certain neither of order or disorder, of determinacy nor of interdeterminacy, or of any decidably specifiable ontological principle."<sup>305</sup> Van Wyk states that,

Every text is embedded in a myriad of experiential pointers, like faith, love, imagination, verbalisation or thinking. In a specific reading, understanding, feeling, etc., of a text, these pointers function as a lookout point from where we can observe the text.<sup>306</sup>

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300 M.C. Taylor, 2003. *From Erring: A postmodern A/theology*:437.

301 Taylor. 2003:439.

302 Van Wyk, 2000:91-92.

303 Stackhouse, 1986:23.

304 Van Niekerk, 1995:71.

305 J.F. Solomon, 1988. *Between determinism and interdeterminism: Notes toward a potentialist metaphysics*:18-32.

306 Van Wyk. 1999. *Practical Theological Discourse: Modernism and beyond*:91.

It is like a still camera taking a still picture at a specific point in time, and, thus, it can be reductionistic; therefore, communication cannot be less than a continuous movement from one “episodic pointer” to another. Whereas the binary oppositions within modernism represent closures, an “episodic ontology” may give access to infinite differentiations.

### 3.3.3 Postmodernism challenging metanarratives

With regard to modernism’s metanarratives as discussed above<sup>307</sup> and Adventism’s confessional approach, it is noted here that a person with a postmodern approach is deeply suspicious of this modernist philosophy. Such a person would argue that there are no valid overarching rationalistic theories, and no one generalised description for all phenomena of a specific type.<sup>308</sup> He/she would rather propose that there are many points of view, which are diverse and even contradictory.

It is the “metanarrative”, which is translated from the French, *grand récits*, meaning the “big story” that situates Lyotard where he postulates, “incredulity towards metanarratives”.<sup>309</sup> Lötter indicates that by doing this Lyotard addresses science, which “...tries to legitimate its own status by means of philosophical discourse which appeals to some kind of grand narrative”.<sup>310</sup> Smith, commenting on Lyotard, supports this and maintains that, “Postmodernism, then, is the suspicion of and disbelief in ‘big stories’”.<sup>311</sup> Postmodernism rejects the notion of rationalistic metanarratives.

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307 See point 2.4 above.

308 “... the postmodern focus on social context entails a movement away from reliance on meta-narratives (overarching and inclusive frameworks of meaning and value). ... For some, the movement away from meta-narratives entails a rejection of such overarching frameworks. For others, overarching paradigms may remain meaningful but become secondary in importance. Those for the latter position generally concede that even if the formulation of overarching conceptions of life and the worlds remains a goal, there can be not self-evident universal insight to serve as first principle of human practice and inquiry.” Horell, 2003:83-84

309 Jean-Francois Lyotard states that, “simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives”. J-F. Lyotard, 2003. *From “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge”*:260.

310 Lötter, 1995b:97.

311 Smith, 2006:63. “As with Derrida, Lyotard’s claim and orthodox Christian faith are often understood to be mutually exclusive. And we find such a reading suggested by even the most nuanced Christian commentators on postmodernity.” Smith, 2006:63-64.

Erickson, commenting on Middleton and Walsh's book, *Theology Is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, indicates that the problem with metanarratives is that they become power structures of control, for

...those who develop and set forth metanarratives and worldviews are finite human beings. They are therefore incapable of gathering all the data necessary to create a total view, but beyond that, being sinful, they will inevitably tend to use such ideologies for their own purposes, which results in oppression of others. The historical observation is simply that in fact the biblical story has been used to oppress and exclude those regarded as infidels and heretics. It is used to rationalize or legitimate one group's activities, which may include prejudice and violence.<sup>312</sup>

Furthermore, Erickson argues that metanarratives may not necessarily be oppressive, but, "there is...a strong measure of historical truth in this contention".<sup>313</sup> Lötter concurs:

These narratives are attempts at interpreting the world in such a way that they indicate where something (person, groups, nations, societal institutions) come from, what they are and where they are headed to. They have the function of legitimating what people are doing and provide justification for people's choice of their actions.<sup>314</sup>

Horell indicates that metanarratives have a profound effect on relationships. He maintains that the "...modern focus on foundational and comprehensive knowledge leads to the neglect of the relationships and social bonds that are necessary for common understanding and action".<sup>315</sup> This neglect, no doubt, also has had a profound impact on ministry and pastoral care. Postmodernism, therefore, rejects this legitimation of universal overarching narratives. It proposes a plurality of narratives, many little narratives, which are found within particular communities at particular points in time. These little narratives give meaning to communities.

No doubt, the postmodern rejection of metanarratives has raised the suspicion of many Christians, because, as Smith points out, if ever there is a grand narrative it is the one offered in Scripture. The implications are that if postmodernism is incredulity toward metanarratives, then, as we have already noted "...postmodernism and Christian faith must be antithetical: postmodernism could never believe the Christian metanarrative, and

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312 Erickson, 1998:112.

313 Erickson, 2001:276.

314 Lötter, 1995a:45.

315 Horell, 2003:87.



Christians should not participate in postmodernism's incredulity".<sup>316</sup> Smith, therefore, raises a crucial question:

If postmodernity is incredulity toward metanarratives, then does postmodernism signal a rejection of Christian faith insofar as it is based on the grand story of the Scriptures?<sup>317</sup>

To this question, he answers with an emphatic, "no!" On the contrary, thought-provokingly he points out that Lyotard's thesis on incredulity towards metanarratives does not make him the enemy of Christianity, but rather an ally.<sup>318</sup> For it is not the *scope* of narrative, (or the stories they tell), which is challenged but rather the *nature*, (or the *way* they tell them), and the claims they make.<sup>319</sup> When Lyotard critiques metanarratives, Smith maintains that it is not the tension between the big or global stories versus little or local narratives that is at stake; instead it is the conflict between science and narrative.<sup>320</sup> The main issues for Lyotard "...are stories that not only tell a grand story (since even premodern and tribal stories do this) but also claim to be able to legitimate or prove the story's claim by an appeal to universal reason".<sup>321</sup> "In this sense, the postmodern critique described by Lyotard as incredulity toward metanarratives represents a displacement of the notion of autonomous reason as itself a myth."<sup>322</sup> It could be said, therefore, that Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives is derived from "...the fact that modernity denies its own commitments, renounces its faith, while at the same time never escaping it".<sup>323</sup> Consequently, it is the *legitimation* of

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316 Smith, 2006:63.

317 Smith, 2006:68.

318 Smith postulates: "However, this judgment is a bit hasty—another myth that needs to be demythologised. It is a bumper-sticker reading of Lyotard that is not informed by a careful understanding of just what Lyotard means by a metanarrative. ... Christians should find in Lyotard not an enemy but ally: orthodox Christian faith actually requires that we too, stop believing in metanarratives." Smith, 2006:64.

319 Smith, 2006:64.

320 "The central tension for Lyotard is not between big stories and little stories or global narratives versus local narratives. Instead, he formulates the tension as a conflict between science and narrative: when judged by the criteria of modern science, stories and narratives are little more than fables." Smith, 2006:65.

321 Smith, 2006:65.

322 Smith, 2006:72.

323 Smith, 2006:72. Smith argues that "...it is precisely here that we locate postmodernity's incredulity toward metanarratives: they are just another language game, albeit masquerading as the game above all games". Smith, 2006:67. Smith also remarks pointedly that, "...modernity and its science can't stop telling stories (is there a bigger story than *On the Origine of Species?*)—all the while claiming that they are opposed to such 'fables'. ... Whenever science attempts to legitimate itself, it is no longer scientific but narrative, appealing to an orienting myth that is not susceptible to scientific legitimation". Smith, 2006:68.

metanarratives, which appeals to absolute science, and universal reason that are being rejected, and not the narratives themselves.<sup>324</sup>

For this reason Christian thinkers should rather find the “...critique of metanarratives and autonomous reason an ally that opens up the space for a radically Christian witness in the postmodern world—both in thought and in practice”.<sup>325</sup> Together with Weber, Norman, Smith and many other scholars I find in the thesis this “space” within a “narrative approach”,<sup>326</sup> but it also takes cognisance of Monk and Gehart’s warning, namely, that counsellors often bring their own metanarratives into the room or space.<sup>327</sup>

### 3.3.4 Postmodernism and communication approaches

- **Communicative action**

Modern communication theories are being progressively questioned by postmodernism.<sup>328</sup> It is imperative that the communication theories and actions within pastoral care take serious notice of it.

Some scholars like Tehranian<sup>329</sup> consider Habermas to be a postmodernist. According to Habermas technical rationality (*Zweckrationalitat*)—orientated to the achievement of goals and “success”, must be counterpoised to practical rationality (reaching understanding), and emancipatory rationality (emancipation from oppression systems).<sup>330</sup> His communication action wishes to overcome the bifurcation between receiver and sender, and would like to place them in a mutual reciprocal relationship. Conversation that is “unlimited” is

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324 “The question of the relation between modernity and postmodernity revolves around this issue of ‘legitimations.’” Smith, 2006:65.

325 Smith, 2006:73.

326 Weber responding to Adventism and the postmodern challenge asserts: “How can we Adventists make our case for truth amid the challenges of postmodernism? The key is *narrative*. ‘Tell me your story’ is a favorite conversation starter for postmodernists.” Weber, 2006:8. Norman also indicates: “We must be storytellers... Cerebral, cold, unimpassioned presentations of the biblical message must give way to a narrative that has feeling and passion!” Norman, 2008:26.

327 G. Monk, & D.H. Gehart, 2003. *Sociopolitical activist or conversational partner? Distinguishing the position of the therapist in narrative and collaborative therapies*:19-30.

328 See D.K. Mumby, 1997 *Modernism, postmodernism, and communication studies: A rereading of an ongoing debate*:1-28.

329 M. Tehranian, 1994. *Communication and development*:281.

330 See A. Gerhard van Wyk, 1999:77.

designated by Habermas as “...an ideal speech situation in which people are, in principle, able to participate without domination”.<sup>331</sup>

Van Wyk, however, states that Habermas’ “ideal speech situation” is not progressing beyond late modernism, defending a strong “cognitivist” position.<sup>332</sup> Habermas’ communication action is oriented towards the background of consensus. We reach a consensus by the force of a better argument.<sup>333</sup> Habermas’ thoughts on consensus, his universalistic approach, metanarrative and conduit approach have been challenged in a serious way.<sup>334</sup> According to Rorty, Habermas is still seeking an Archimedean point from which to motivate the normative foundations for his communicative action. He is not “...freeing ‘communicative reason’ from the ideal of ‘universality’”.<sup>335</sup>

According to Habermas, not only is understanding, but also reaching consensus important. Best and Kellner say that although we can argue that Habermas promotes both consensus and agonistics, he is really championing consensus.<sup>336</sup> For Habermas the good life is a life oriented towards a consensus agreement because of unlimited discourse.<sup>337</sup> Yet, Lyotard maintains that paralogy, false reasoning, and dissensus are the driving force of a social system and that *consensus as a goal actually freezes dialogue*.<sup>338</sup> This brings into focus what Degenaar refers to as “...the ‘agonism of difference’—each person opposing and respecting the other”.<sup>339</sup> *It stands over against “antagonism” which attempts to achieve a consensus.*

Antagonism forces one to conquer, silence or convert the other, while agonism accepts the other in her otherness, resulting in each treating the other as crucial to itself. The advantage of this way of thinking is that there is no nostalgia for unity but acceptance of tension because of the respect for difference.<sup>340</sup>

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331 See Van Wyk, 1997:78 and T.W. Tilley, 1995. *Toward a theology of the practice of communicative action*:11.

332 Van Wyk, 1999:79.

333 P. Duvenage, 1994. *Die kritiese teorie as ‘n filosofiese perspektief van die twintigste eeu*:32-54.

334 See in this regard R. Francesconi, 1986. *The implications of Habermas’ theory of legitimation for rhetorical criticism*:16-35 and W. Sullivan, 1979. *Shifting loyalties: Critical theory and the problem of legitimacy*:253-272.

335 R. Rorty, 1998. *Truth and progress. Philosophical papers*:318.

336 S. Best & D. Kellner, 1991. *Postmodern theory: Critical interrogations*:242 & 250.

337 See N. Romm, 1987. *Habermas se wetenskapsteorie*.

338 Lyotard, 2003:269-273.

339 Degenaar, 1996:19.

340 Degenaar, 1996:19.

According to Peukert the “ideal” speech situation is a mere illusion.<sup>341</sup>

“How can we be in solidarity with those who can never be present? We cannot affirm our interactive solidarity with those who are gone. Many people in our society are prevented from participating in these discourses which concern them.”<sup>342</sup>

There are voices from the margins of society, voices of the “other”, “...voices from the dominated cultures which the ‘first world’ exploits, and voices from those who are disempowered and in other ways are silenced”.<sup>343</sup>

Lyotard, from a postmodern perspective, rejects Habermas’ metanarratives—“...the overarching philosophies of history like the Enlightenment with its idea of progress of reason and freedom”<sup>344</sup> as a commitment to modernism. According to Lyotard, Habermas’ “emancipation” notion is but an abstract and generalised metanarrative. Western culture has constructed a “truth” that ignores, disregards and deletes “...the stories and voices of those who by virtue of class, race and gender constitute the ‘Other’”.<sup>345</sup>

A narrative approach, particularly within an African context, would also seriously question the Eurocentric assumptions of Habermas as it is revealed within the confessional approach. Here, the appeal to reason and consensus is tempted to deny their own implications in the production of knowledge, confessions and power. Giroux says that, “...within such narratives are elements of mastery and control in which we can hear mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality”.<sup>346</sup>

In this regard it is important to take notice of Van Wyk’s critique of Habermas:

Habermas’ metanarrative of emancipation wishes to legitimise a specific culture and he is not content that the narratives of a specific culture define their own problems and consensus. He does not accommodate a ‘context-dependent’ sort of criticism, such as ‘good arguments’ for people within a specific situation and at a given time. Lyotard believes that this narrative view is denying its own history and its own social constructions, and is not only in confrontation with

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341 H. Peukert, 1984. *Science, action, and fundamental theology: Toward a theology of communicative action*:206-210.

342 See Van Wyk, 1999:81 and H. Peukert, 1984.

343 Tilley, 1995:11.

344 Van Wyk, 1999:82.

345 Van Wyk, 1999:82.

346 H.A. Giroux, 1997. *Pedagogy and the politics of hope. Theory, culture and schooling. A Critical reader*:194.

difference, contingency and particularity, but it is also a mechanistic and atomistic approach.<sup>347</sup>

- **Conduit metaphor**

Furthermore, Van Niekerk maintains that the “ideal speech situation” of Habermas is based on the “conduit metaphor”.<sup>348</sup> Whereas Habermas has tried to overcome the object-subject dichotomy, nevertheless, he follows the conduit method, although it is diversified from the conduit of language or understanding, because he uses a multiplicity of individual “pipelines” between persons.<sup>349</sup> According to Van Niekerk the Claude-Shannon information theory is presenting one of the most powerful modernist metaphors—the conduit metaphor.<sup>350</sup> Its main concern is to “transmit” a message through a channel with the least possible “noise”. Shannon regards this “noise” as equivocation, causing interference and disturbance and therefore, needs to be filtered out or eliminated.

In theological, and specifically pastoral, communication, this “noise” is not regarded as information, but it is an interference of the true message. As a conduit—a one-way communication—there can be only one correct reading of the text. The correct interpretation is the one with the least distortion, interference and misprints.<sup>351</sup>

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347 Van Wyk, 1997:82.

348 Van Niekerk, 1995:74.

349 According to Van Niekerk, Habermas has ignored, “nonverbalized actions and bodily expressions”. Habermas (1979:2) claims that communicators in his “ideal speech situation” are: “...uttering something understandably; giving (the hearer) something to understand; making himself thereby understandable; and coming to an understanding with another person”. Van Niekerk, 1995:73-74.

350 See Van Niekerk, 1995:73. See also M.J. Reddy, 1993. *The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language*:164-201.

351 Van Niekerk, 1995:73, states that “the conduit metaphor can be characterised by the following: (1) Language functions like a conduit, transmitting thoughts in a bodily sense from one person to another.(2)When writing or speaking people infuse their thoughts or feelings into the selected group of words. (3) The selected words accomplish the transmission by containing the thoughts or feelings and conveying them to others. (4) When listening or reading, people retrieve the thoughts and feelings, extracting them from the selected words”.

- **The postmodern “toolmaker’s” paradigm and a networking model**

Axley maintains that this conduit metaphor, however, leads us down a socially blind alley, for we cannot capture meanings in words.<sup>352</sup> He argues in favour of the “*toolmaker’s*” paradigm.

The conduit metaphor is the paradigm that ideas are directly and fully transmitted via written or oral communication—the communication medium acts as a conduit for the idea to pass through from one person to another, and that *the words themselves “contain” meaning*. The “*toolmaker’s*” paradigm, on the other hand, maintains that the words we exchange are but rough instructions that the receiver uses *to construct meaning* inside his or her mind. A “*toolmaker’s*” metaphor uses many tools or signs such as “...cultural signs and pointers, concepts and words, ideas and meanings, products and physical phenomena...” between people through which they communicate with each other.<sup>353</sup> Individuals design these signs, and their meanings are established between people at specific points in time, and it may grow or wither. In this regard, meaning is to be seen as the play of differences. Communication takes place through an infinite variety of signs or tools and is a two-way movement. “In contrast to the metaphor of a hosepipe conducting a message between people, we have here an immense workplace filled with tools which serve as units of communicative transference...” between people.<sup>354</sup>

Lyotard insists on a narrative understanding of knowledge: Different people, nations and cultures need to tell their story. These stories are “smaller” narratives that function well within their own contexts, however, it cannot be cemented within one grand narrative that unifies and represents all knowledge.<sup>355</sup> Lyotard’s connectionist model, however, is being accused of having only a local legitimation and is causing the relativising of all knowledge and, thus, the fragmentation of society, because there is no external evaluation on any discourse.<sup>356</sup> Lyotard argues that this is a misunderstanding of the role of the individual. It is

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352 S.R. Axley, 1984. *Managerial and organizational communication in terms of the conduit metaphor*:428-437.

353 Van Niekerk, 1995:76.

354 Van Niekerk, 1995:76.

355 Van Wyk, 1999:86.

356 Paul Cilliers, 1995. *Postmodern Knowledge and complexity (or why anything does not go)*:129, states that, “To allow previous marginalized voices equal opportunity, once again does not imply that ‘everything goes’. Dissenting voices receive no special privilege, they have to enter into the ‘agonistics of the network’

incorrect to see individual people or individual groups in terms of atomistic entities, but they need to be seen as a “fabric of relations”, or as nodes in a network of the communicative circuit.<sup>357</sup> This makes the network far too complex for general overarching descriptions that may be tempted to become some or other grand narrative. Cilliers states that the need for a multiplicity of discourses is not a wilful move, but “...it is an acknowledgment of complexity. It allows for the explosion of information and the inevitable contradictions that form part of a truly complex network”.<sup>358</sup>

The “toolmaker’s” metaphor is not focused on “objective” correct interpretations, but holds to a good and holistic interpretation.<sup>359</sup>

#### 4 In Search of a practical theology beyond modernism

Within Adventism practical theology is practiced as applied theology, informed and motivated mainly by OT and NT studies.<sup>360</sup> In this way modernism, and also rationalism as part thereof, dictated its view of Scripture because of their apprehension towards disciplines like systematic theology and practical theology.<sup>361</sup> Here practical theology as applied

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where their relevance is dynamically determined through competition and co-operation in terms of history as well as the changing needs and goals of the system”.

357 Lyotard, 1984:15.

358 Cilliers, 1995:128.

359 See Van Wyk, 1999:92.

360 Fernando Canale, 2001. *Is there room for Systematics in Adventist Theology?*:110, 115. “Later I discovered that when Adventists considered opening a seminary, one clear concern was to stay with biblical theology, because ‘a shift from biblical theology to systematic theology would have a liberalizing influence on Adventist religion teachers.’” They “...held the conviction that systematic theology can only distort the true results of biblical exegesis”. This was even more the case when dealing with praxis.

361 See Toulmin, 1990:30-36. He states that the change from premodernity to modernism introduces the following: 1. **A transition from the oral to the written.** This also means a transition from rhetoric to logic. Whereas the pre-Cartesians regarded both rhetoric and logic as legitimate fields of study, Modernism disregards all questions about argumentation and ignored rhetoric as a field of study. 2. There was also a shift **from the particular to the universal.** Modern philosophers assumed now that the Good and the Just can be reduced to universal and timeless principles and “particular practical cases” was ruled out of ethics. 3. A shift **from the local to the general.** According to modern philosophers disciplines like geography and history can broaden the mind, but cannot deepen it. Toulmin states that for modernism: “The demands of rationality impose on philosophy a need to seek out abstract, general ideas and principles, by which particulars can be connected together. ...From now on, abstract axioms were in, concrete diversity was out.” 4. A shift **from a timely to the timeless.** Whereas the humanist concentrated on timely issues: issues in specific moment of time dealing with the now and not with yesterday. “From Descartes’ time on, attention was focused on timeless principles that hold good at all times equally: *the permanent was in, the transitory was out.*”

theology is placed, therefore, between OT and NT theology, (or historical theology), on the one hand, and the practice of ministers, on the other.

In view of the fact that Adventist applied theology has not given serious attention to methodology and epistemology I will in this section discuss the challenges of “diaconiology”.<sup>362</sup> I do so because applied theology and “diaconiology” departs to a large extent from the same theological paradigm.<sup>363</sup> Here, in Adventist theology, the agenda for “practical theology” is first and foremost its theological (biblical) modality. In this conservative approach, the Bible is only in need of,

*...vertolking, of bediening, ontsluiting, uitleg of vertaling van die Skrif in die eietydse situasie, maar nooit van interpretasie van die Skrif in 'n sodanige situasie nie. (...interpreting, or ministry, unlocking, exegesis of, or translating Scriptures in the particular contemporary situation, but never an interpretation of the Scriptures in general – own translation).*<sup>364</sup>

To interpret the Scriptures in general is possible for the Adventist conservatives and “diaconologists”, as the Bible is very much viewed as a “timeless” book. In this regard, Paulsen states:

As a Seventh-day Adventist, I want the public to know that the values the Bible teaches are not imprisoned within any one culture or any particular period of history. They are timeless and ‘culture-less’.<sup>365</sup>

Jonker differentiates between the view of the nature of the Bible as “tydsgebonde” (“bound by time”), on the one hand, and “tydsbetrokke” (“time involvement”), on the other.<sup>366</sup> With the notion of “tydsbetrokke” (“time involvement”) he wishes to indicate that the Bible is not

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362 “Diaconiology” is a term used by Johan Janse van Rensburg for his epistemological approach to theology, which he regards as being very close to some practical theologians. See Van Rensburg, 2000, especially page 89.

363 The problems confronting Adventist “applied theology” has never been seriously addressed, and little or no material, dealing with this issue, is available. In view of the fact that Adventist applied theology corresponds to a large extent with reformed “diaconiology” the thesis will focus on the challenges confronting a “diaconiological” approach. As I do so I am not evaluating or criticising theologians and their views, but I am looking for “a space” to accommodate my approach regarding a pastoral care approach in practical theology.

364 A. Gerhard van Wyk, 1989. *'n Evaluering van die grondslae van die Diakonologiese benadering vanuit 'n prakties-teologiese perspektief*:78. See also W.D. Jonker, 1981. *In diens van die Woord*. Within Adventism this is true of conservative orientated scholars. Although progressive scholars wish to move beyond fundamentalism, even they are applying the same theories into praxis.

365 Paulsen, 2008:8-9.

366 W.D. Jonker, 1976. *Die Woord as opdrag*:48-49. Here, hermeneutics is mostly understood as the method of interpreting Scripture.



given only for a specific historical context. Van Wyk asked the question if this is not only a functional indicator for a timeless view of Scripture.<sup>367</sup>

The commitment of “diaconiology” to start with God’s revelation and Scripture and to secure a theological modality for practical theology (“diaconiology”), to maintain the “inherent authority of the Bible”, needs to be greatly appreciated, but at the same time it also confronts us with many serious questions.<sup>368</sup>

The search for “objectivity” within applied theology and “diaconiology” is regarded as very important for these conservative approaches. I wish to indicate in the thesis that I believe that there are truths accepted in faith, as well as factually accepted statements, but what is questioned are Adventism’s and diaconiology’s methodology and ability to construct these truths. How do we construct these “principles for basis theory” without falling prey to fundamentalism and foundationalism, if we do not acknowledge our presuppositions in our Reformed and Adventist confessions? In this conservative way, could pastoral care be regarded as not only speaking on behalf of God, but speaking God’s own words?<sup>369</sup> Janse van Rensburg’s desire to overcome the “...danger of a fundamentalist approach to Scripture” and his aim “...to move away from a modernistic way of dealing with Scripture” may provide some healthy results for “diaconiology”.<sup>370</sup>

“Diaconiology” and applied theology still seems to be close to foundationalism, however, particularly in its search for absolute and objective truths.<sup>371</sup> A fundamental- and foundational-orientated reading of Scripture can tempt us to discover so-called objective truths and “principles” in the Bible. This may be counterproductive for pastoral care:

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367 Van Wyk, 1989:74.

368 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:92.

369 The question needs to be asked if one’s assumptions about God and one’s view of Scripture does not already predetermine the so-called principles of the basic theory? How does it differ from scholars who start in praxis and superimpose their findings on the Bible?

370 Johannes Janse van Rensburg, 2003. *Narrative preaching. Theory and praxis of a new way of preaching*:8-9.

371 See Janse van Rensburg, 2000:77. Conservative scholars accommodating themselves within the framework of applied theology or diaconiology have serious problems in overcoming foundationalism. Janse van Rensburg, by stating that “A responsible use of the Scriptures **will look** (my bold) for basic principles...”, and one of these basic principles is that God “is a God of order”, does not seem to indicate that these remarks are not merely a statement of faith or an acknowledgment that this is the product of his own theological construction but rather his objective reading of Scripture. Finding basic principles in Scripture and not constructing them from Scripture place a theologian very close to fundamentalism.

confronting people with a fundamentalistic view of Scripture tends to be prescriptive in counselling because its claims to have the (final) Truth (capital T). With this approach pastoral care leaves very little or no room for a sound pneumatology, where the Holy Spirit can operate.

It is also important to note that the human sciences are believed to play an important role for “diaconiology”. Janse van Rensburg states:

As the human sciences are recognised (consider, in particular, the important input of communication science in respect of preaching; Kellerman 1978; Pieterse 1988; 2001:23-28; Malan Nel 2001; Vos 1998a), no objection can be raised against adding empirical research as a minor and supporting component to the basis-theoretical study.<sup>372</sup>

Within “diaconiology” these sciences are regarded, however, as mere “*hulpwetenskappe*” (“auxiliary sciences”), and their epistemological contribution are reckoned as only of *strategic value*.<sup>373</sup> Within the “diaconiological” approach, theology may even take cognisance of philosophy or culture, but it does not beg for a critical integration into theological theory. From within “diaconiology” and Adventist applied theology the gospel should be *implemented in, and applied to* this world; (“*die evangelie moet op die lewe in die wêreld betrek word*”); (“the gospel must be applied to our lives in the world”).<sup>374</sup> The “gospel” in this case is not a practical theological *theory*, but a *confessional construction* determining praxis. Empirical research assists mainly in determining the so-called form of pastoral care. Where faith and theology is very closely related to each other, communication with the sciences becomes extremely difficult. Practical theology departing from a “...*dogmatistiese werkwyse ontbreek aan die vermoë om op ‘n onbevange en wetenskaplike wyse...*” (“...dogmatist way of working lacks the ability, in an impartial and scientific way” – own translation), to evaluate praxis and praxis to evaluate dogma.<sup>375</sup> A narrative approach should rather search for a methodology where it can be the integrational power of a “...*nie-gedupliseerde, nie-geannekseerde en nie-bevoogde wetenskappe*” (“...non-duplicated, non-annexed and non-efficient science” – own translation).<sup>376</sup>

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372 Janse van Rensburg, 2003:8.

373 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:91. See also Janse van Rensburg’s, 2003:9, where he asserts, “Louw’s (1998:58-59) asymmetrical model, according to which the empirical component may not dominate the research and the theological character may not suffer, is adhered to in this regard”.

374 Van Wyk, 1989:161.

375 Van Wyk, 1989:113.

376 J.A. Wolfaardt, 1980. *Praktiese teologie en aanverwante geesteswetenskappe*:4.

“Diaconiology”, also needs to learn from postmodernism, according to Janse van Rensburg, particularly, its “...emphasis on the importance of the individual and the context”.<sup>377</sup> He admits that if people are not addressed within their own context, our communication with them will be ineffective. “Diaconiology”, however, is not willing to start, like the theory of communicative acts, with the communicative acts of people finding its research methodology in the humanities. “The diaconiology definition starts with God and His revelation in Scripture, thus indicating the main principle of this epistemology.”<sup>378</sup> This substantial approach claims God and His revelation for themselves and thus falls prey, according to Strauss, to “...’n dualistiese grondmotief van natuur en genade” (“...a dualistic foundational motive of nature and grace” – own translation).<sup>379</sup> The thesis departs from the notion that not God, or people, or this world, but faith “...waarin God, mens en wêreld as grensbegrippe funksioneer” (“...where God, people and the world function as border concepts” – own translation).<sup>380</sup> Not the object of study, but the perspective from which it is being researched is to be considered as the most important.

Many practical theologians within a South African context, have moved beyond any merely applied theological or “diaconiological” approaches. Some have set themselves the goal to construct a practical theology with a sound *scientific base*, supported by a *theological theory*. Practical theology is making its own important contribution in this way, having the potential to bridge the gap between theology and praxis.<sup>381</sup>

Van der Ven believes empirical theology, “...which meet the criteria for scientific research in a university setting and by emphasizing the praxis of the church and pastoral care in the

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377 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:37.

378 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:93.

379 D.F.M. Strauss, 1991. *Wat is teologie?*:3.

380 A. Gerhard van Wyk, 1994. *Wetenskapsteoretiese vrae in die praktiese teologie en diaconologie*:31.

381 See H.J.C. Pieterse, 1991. *Die wetenskapsteoretiese grondslag van die praktiese teologie*:38. H.J.C. Pieterse, 1994. *The empirical approach in practical theology: a discussion with J.A. van der Ven*:82. “Omdat die vak sodoende ‘n deel van die **universitas scientiarium** geword het, is praktiese teoloë genoop om hul te verantwoord ten opsigte van die heersende wetenskapsteoretiese en metodologiese bewussyn (vgl. Serfass 1988:35).” (“As the discipline has become part of the **universitas scientiarium** in this way, practical theologians feel obliged to justify themselves regarding scientific theoretical and methodological consciousness” – own translation).

He is persuaded that the empirical approach is an accepted scientific method in the university setting. The quality of its results enables theologians to partake in the contemporary public scientific discourse.

cultural and social context as its object”, can bridge this gap.<sup>382</sup> He rejects a mono-disciplinary or an applied theology, (as he had labelled it before). This option does not provide practical theology the possibility to research praxis. It cannot develop its own theological theory, but applies the knowledge, which other theological disciplines would have brought forward.<sup>383</sup> Van der Ven also rejects a multidisciplinary approach, the cooperation of social sciences and theologians. Theologians interpret empirical research material with a two-phase approach. Theology is regarded as the “...critical-religious consideration from the perspective of the normative nature of the Gospel”.<sup>384</sup> His interdisciplinary approach is striving for a proper interaction between theology and social sciences. Ganzevoort says that Van der Ven’s critical correlation is “...often based on some understanding of an anthropological agreement”.<sup>385</sup> True “interdisciplinarity”, however, is hardly ever achieved. “Intradisciplinarity” for Van der Ven requires that theology itself becomes empirical.

Pieterse wishes to introduce practical theology to a broader approach of rationality, rather than to maintain critical rationalism. Thus, he maintains that practical theology can overcome objectivism and the critical rationalism of Popper.<sup>386</sup> According to Pieterse the hermeneutical movement (*benadering*), (“approach”), separating itself from the subject-object approach of the so-called natural sciences, has made considerable contributions towards a broader view of rationality. Habermas, with his communicative action, developed a “*volbloed breë rasionaliteitsopvatting*” (“complete large scale rational opinion” – own translation),<sup>387</sup> and has replaced the subject-object problem with a subject-subject relationship. He also endeavours to provide a theological motivation for his communicative action: It is “in service of the gospel”. Without this correction, practical theology may

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382 Pieterse, 1994:77.

383 R.R Ganzevoort, 2008. Teaching That Matters: A Course on Trauma and Theology. In *Journal of Adult Theological Education*. Also, [Website], available from:  
< [http://www.ruardganzevoort.nl/pdf/2008\\_Teaching\\_that\\_matters.pdf](http://www.ruardganzevoort.nl/pdf/2008_Teaching_that_matters.pdf) >.

384 Ganzevoort, 2008.

385 Ganzevoort, 2008.

386 Pieterse, 1991:39.

387 Pieterse, 1991:41.

become praxeology.<sup>388</sup> Pieterse opts for Firet's paradigm<sup>389</sup>: "...practical theology which focuses on the subject matter of communication acts in service of the gospel", understood as action from a "...voorgewe sin, naamlik die werklikheid en praxis van God" ("...predetermined sense, namely the reality and praxis of God" – own translation).<sup>390</sup>

The narrative approach of the thesis may benefit by taking notice of Pieterse's postfoundationalism, via Van Huyssteen. He points to the following fact:

*Die boek van Bernstein wat ons filosofies uit die impasse gelei het, het 'n weg begin aanwys verby die objektiwisme van die fundamentele benadering en die relativiteit, die subjektiewe van die nie-fundamentele benadering (Bernstein 1983). Vir die teologie het Van Huyssteen hierdie weg aangewys, naamlik 'n postfundamentele benadering (Van Huyssteen 1997).* (Bernstein's book, which led our philosophy out of the *impasse*, began to indicate a way beyond the objectivism of the fundamentalist approach and relativity, the subjectivity of the non-fundamental approach (Bernstein 1983). Van Huyssteen showed this way for theology, namely, a post-fundamentalist approach (Van Huyssteen 1997) – own translation).<sup>391</sup>

According to Pieterse postfoundationalism is in a rational way in search of "good reasons", (*not objective reasons*), for our Christian beliefs and moral choices.<sup>392</sup> Pieterse has also a limited use for postmodernism:

*Die postmoderne staan nie direk teen die moderne aanpak nie, maar is eerder 'n kritiese terugkeer na die vrae wat deur moderniteit geopper is. Daarom kan ons steeds krities gedeeltelik daarby aansluit.* (The postmodern does not oppose the modern approach directly, but it is rather a critical return to the questions brought forward by modernity. Consequently, we can still critically and partially adhere to it – own translation).<sup>393</sup>

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388 Praxeology is a framework for modeling human action on a "secular" level, the logical structure of human action. It portrays the idea that every conscious action is intended to improve a person's satisfaction. Pieterse, 1991:44-48. See also D.J. Louw, 1996, *Praktiese teologie in sosiologiese perspektief – enkele kritiese vrae met die oog op teologiese teorievorming*:30. He maintains that when the communicative action becomes the object of research the reliability and veracity of theological knowledge is questioned.

389 Pieterse, 1994:82.

390 Pieterse, 1991:44.

391 Pieterse, 2007:125.

392 Pieterse, 2007:125. He also maintains that postmodernism is not in direct opposition to modernism, but is rather a critical rethinking of modernism's questions: "Daarom kan ons steeds krities gedeeltelik daarby aansluit." ("Consequently, we can still join it critically and partially" – own translation).

393 Pieterse, 2007:125. "*Predikers kan met vertroue, vrymoedigheid en geesdrif die goeie tyding van die evangelieboodskap aktueel en konkreet vir vandag se mense verkondig. Ons hoef nie ons teologie in te ruil vir teologieë wat wesenlik vreemd aan ons Reformatoriese teologie is nie.*" ("Preachers can proclaim the gospel message relevantly and practically for today's people with confidence, boldness and enthusiasm. We do not have to exchange our theology for theologies, which are fundamentally foreign to our Reformed theology" – own translation).

Van der Ven's empirical theology has also brought some important gains, and it cannot be denied that it has surely given a possible "scientific" face to practical theology, and, therefore, made it possible for practical theology to attain university and a universalised status.<sup>394</sup> It is also important to note that practical theology is no longer limited to the praxis of clergy, but it incorporates the praxis of religious communities.

From a postmodern perspective, however, the reductionism of modernism, in this case, high modernism with its rationalism is still limiting practical theology—both in regard to its practical and theological dimensions.<sup>395</sup>

Our best theological constructions are still creating space between the Bible and those whom we wish to assist in pastoral care. This type of theologising, however, particularly from a modernistic and rationalistic perspective like Van der Ven's approach, may rather widen than bridge this gap. With its emphasis on praxis and its functionalistic and pragmatic interest, practical theology may superimpose its own presuppositions, (critical rationalism, critical-hermeneutical theories, systems theory and Habermas' theory of communicative action, and particular confessions)<sup>396</sup> and "communicative action" onto the Bible. While I reject fundamentalism in the thesis, I can also not compromise with a practical theology where it, in its universalised form, claims to present both God's action and the action of people.<sup>397</sup> In this regard Malan Nel states that the practical theologian should make sure that

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A. Gerhard van Wyk, 1991. *'n Verkennende gesprek rondom the begrip teologie in verskillende prakties-teologiese benaderinge*:82, propounds that although Pieterse' practical theology departs from both Scripture and praxis his confessional-orientated approach still determines his practical theological theories to a large extent.

394 The concept "science" is still very much debated and from a sceptical viewpoint of science, the scientific status of practical theologies may even be questioned by some scientists operating from within modernism.

395 Pieterse, 1994:78. He states that "The gist of Van der Ven's work is, to my mind, an effort to grapple with the sense of the Christian religion in a situation of modernity". Van der Ven not only wants to address Christians within a modern world, but his methodology and epistemology is very much characterised by modernism: A narrative approach, therefore, cannot but help question the "scientific methods" of practical theology, which, to a large extent, are still informed by Newtonian mechanics and rationalism.

396 See Pieterse, 1994:81.

397 See in this regard Louw's remarks: "Die vraag duik op: wat is die criteria wat deur die praktiese teologie gebruik word om die 'diens van mense' (intermediërende praxis) as 'handelinge van God' te interpreteer? Indien begrippe soos die 'koninkryk van God' en die 'handelinge van die Heilige Gees' (pneumatologie) ingevoer word om die praxis teologies te red, hoe betroubaar is hierdie reddingspoging? Of is die finale voorveronderstelling vir praxis georiënteerde kennis: menslike handelinge=Goddelike handelinge? Kan praktiese teologie werklik voluit teologies bly met so 'n naïewe voorveronderst(sic)lling? Of is alle teologie tog maar naïef? Ook Skrifuitsprake oor die wil van God?" Louw, 1996:31. ("The question emerges: What are the criteria employed by practical theology to interpret the 'service of people' (inter-mediating praxis) as 'acts of God'? If concepts, for example, the 'kingdom of God' and the

the dynamics of Scripture are retained: “*Die waarheid is Christus self en nie in die eerste plek, stelling, teorieë, opvattinge en beskouinge nie.*” (“The truth is Christ himself, in the first place, and not statements, theories, convictions and views” – own translation).<sup>398</sup>

In order to construct a “practical theology”, and in particular a narrative approach beyond modernism, one needs to confront oneself with the problem of “scientisation”. Dreyer, following Beck’s statements, indicates that during the Enlightenment science was connected with a “primary scientisation”; a firm belief in science and the role rationality developed to play:

*‘n Skerp onderskeid word gemaak tussen opinie (‘doxa’) en kennis (‘episteme’), en laasgenoemde word weens die gebruik van ‘die wetenskaplike metode’ tot ‘n wetenskaplike status verhef. Wetenskaplike kennis word sonder meer as belangriker as en superieur tot ander vorme van ‘kennis’, soos tradisionele ‘kennis’ en ‘local knowledge’, geag. (A pointed distinction is made between opinion (‘doxa’) and knowledge (‘episteme’), and the latter is raised to a scientific status as a result of ‘the scientific method’. Scientific knowledge is regarded, willy nilly, as more important and superior to other forms of ‘knowledge’, for example, traditional ‘knowledge’ and ‘local knowledge’ – own translation).*<sup>399</sup>

From a postmodern perspective practical theology cannot entertain this emphasis on the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and its view of the progressiveness of faith. This caused Dreyer to ask whether practical theology, in search of its scientific status, is not determined by modernistic presuppositions, and whether empirical change is not functioning as a dogma. It is not Scripture, but the scientific nature of the empirical research that functions as primary legitimation.<sup>400</sup> Consequently, Louw came to the conclusion:

*Wanneer ‘n teologiese teorie gekorrigeer en verbeter word met behulp van empiriese beskrywings van kerklike prosesse, is dit nie onvermydelik dat die induktiewe metode oorgewig verkry nie? (When a theological theory is corrected and improved with the assistance of empirical descriptions of church processes, is it not inevitable that the inductive method would gain the upper hand? – own translation).*<sup>401</sup>

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‘acts of the Holy Spirit’ (pneumatology) are brought in to salvage praxis theologically, how trustworthy is this rescue attempt? Or is the final assumption for praxis-oriented knowledge: human action equals God’s acts? Can practical theology really remain fully theological with such a naïve supposition? Or is all theology, nevertheless, merely naïve? Also Bible statements about the will of God?” – own translation).

398 Malan Nel, 1991. *Die wisselwerking tussen teorie/praxis in die praktiese teologie*:29.

399 J.S. Dreyer, 1997. *Praktiese teologie, refleksiewe verwetenskapliking en die verhouding tussen wetenskaplike kennis en praktiese handelinge*:16.

400 Dreyer, 1997:16.

401 Louw, 1996:31.

One needs to ask the vital question how practical theologians, like Van der Ven, can ever hope to transcend the reductionalistic approach, while they are “...streven om problemem vanuit het perspektief van de rasionaliteit op te lossen” (“...striving to solve problems from the perspective of rationality” – own translation).<sup>402</sup> In this regard Pieterse maintains that Van der Ven’s empirical theology is emphasising quantitative research profoundly, but there is scarcely an accent on “...qualitative empirical research”.<sup>403</sup> Louw’s remarks also may be helpful: If theology wishes to address practical issues, “...sal dit nie net eensydig ‘n kniebuiging in die rigting van die kognitief-rasionele intrumentaliteit (Van der Ven) kan maak nie. Dit sal inderdaad ook moet buig voor die ‘praxis van God’”. (“...it would not be able to make a one-sided concession towards the cognitive-rational instrumentality (Van der Ven). Indeed, it would have to stoop undeniably before the ‘praxis of God’” – own translation).<sup>404</sup>

Louw regards theology as a science of faith (*geloofswetenskap*).<sup>405</sup> Challenged by, *inter alia*, postmodernism, Louw questions whether theology can still function as a science. Knowledge is never absolutely objective:

*Die moontlikheid van weerlegging (Popper) laat die ruimte vir allerlei verrassings. Die wetenskap is in haar teoretiese stellings steeds voorlopig. ...Die paradigmatische raamwerk van teologie veroorsaak dat teologie altyd voorlopig is en steeds binne ‘n proses van interpretasie hersien moet word.* (The possibility of refutation, cf. Popper, allows the possibility of various surprises. Science is in its theoretical contentions constantly tentative...The theological paradigmatic framework causes theology always to be provisional, and that it would have to be revised constantly within a process of interpretation – own translation).<sup>406</sup>

Louw wishes to transcend the “*kognitief-instrumentele rasionaliteit*” (“Cognitive-instrumental rationality”) and the danger of a “...produksie-, prestasie- en verbruikersgeoriënteerde benadering wat dreig om van die praktiese teologie ‘n *praxeologie te maak*” (“...an approach of production-, achievement- and consumers-

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402 J.A. Van der Ven, 1993. *Ecclesiologie in context*:18.

403 See Pieterse, 1994:81. Pieterse also questions Van der Ven’s *basilea* symbol as normative principle and would rather opt for evangelical values.

404 D.J. Louw, 1998. *Hoe teologies is die praktiese teologie en hoe prakties is die teologie? Ontwerp vir ‘n prakties-teologiese hermeneutiek*:56. What is meant by the “praxis of God” also needs to be addressed.

405 Louw, 1998:46.

406 Louw, 1998:52-53.



orientation, threatening to ‘convert theology into a praxeology’” – own translation).<sup>407</sup> In hermeneutics the process of understanding has deeper roots than our efforts to methodological control and mastery. According to Louw: “*Dit ontsluit nuwe wyses van bestaan en transformeer mense binne konteks.*” (“It releases new ways of life and transforms people within a context” – own translation).<sup>408</sup>

From Louw’s perspective practical theology needs a “*prakties-teologiese ‘metaforisiteit’*” (“practical-theological ‘metaphorical’ approach”) to escape relativism.<sup>409</sup> Practical theology within a postmodern paradigm cannot do away with the tension of relational-relativity.<sup>410</sup> Relational-relativity is the theory that there are only relations between individual entities, and no relations between intrinsic properties. Relativism and relativity are not the same. Theology is always relative, as it also always refer to another conviction, and to some particular frame of reference, and the validity of a theological statement depends on who interprets it, from which context, as no final and absolute *consensus* can be reached; and theology is not absolute, as it is tempered with counterbalances, whereby it cannot claim any absolutistic, complete and final values. To be relative is to assert that what may be true or rational in one situation may not be so in another.

Theology, however, needs to transcend relativism. Relativity maintains that there are truths and values, but denies that they are absolute; it is the idea that all points of view are equally valid. Louw states that when the empirical research is the only source of knowledge, then practical theology has fallen prey to relativism. He states that practical theology is more than empirical data and it needs to pay attention to the metaphorical:

*Wanneer die saak metafories gedui word, en metaforisiteit ‘n betekende saak beskryf wat die ervaringswerklikheid oorstyg, kan die kerklike praxis nie met induktiewe analyses volstaan nie.* (When an issue is indicated as metaphoric, and the metaphorical describes a signifying concern going beyond the world of experience, the church praxis cannot be content with inductive analyses – own translation).<sup>411</sup>

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407 Louw, 1998:55.

408 Louw, 1998:54.

409 Louw, 1996:31.

410 Relational-relativity is the theory that there are only relations between individual entities, and no relations between intrinsic, properties.

411 Louw, 1996:32.

He challenges theological theories to take note of the epistemology that makes room for a “...*verwondering wat meer is as net menslike ervarings*” (“...an amazement that is more than merely human experiences” – own translation).<sup>412</sup> Within our human experiences there is a need for a *kerugmatic* dimension (*kerugmatiese dimensie*) whereby our faith becomes meaningful. Faith knowledge is more than mere human experiences.<sup>413</sup>

*Die ‘ervarings van die Gees’ bring ‘n direktheid wat op onverklaarbare wyse ‘n sinvolle klaarheid (rasionaliteit?) in die menslike gees (belydenis) bring: Ek glo in God omdat ek God glo. Hierdie getuigende dimensie is deel van die praxis van die praktiese teologie. (The ‘experiences of the Spirit’ bring about an ‘immediateness’ that inexplicably causes a meaningful lucidity (rationality?) within the human spirit, a confession: I believe in God, because I believe God. This confessing dimension is part of the praxis of practical theology – own translation).*<sup>414</sup>

*A narrative approach needs to take serious cognisance of the fact that theological theory is metaphorical.* If metaphors provide us with terminology that lies beyond our concrete experiences, then practical theological theorisation needs to transcend the action of people. Louw states that the praxis of God is more than merely the praxis of people. Practical theology “...*moet steeds worstel om hierdie ‘meerwaarde’ sinvol te kommunikeer*” (“...constantly has to struggle towards communicating this surplus value meaningfully” – own translation).<sup>415</sup> Whereas the narrative approach to pastoral care wishes to transcend rationalism by listening to the stories of human beings, it needs to go beyond the stories of people to the “Story of God” itself, as told by the counsellor and the “priesthood of all believers”, and interpreted by the Holy Spirit.<sup>416</sup> It, therefore, is imperative to take cognisance of McGrath’s statement (as referred to in Louw):

To the eye of reason, all that can be seen in the cross is a man dying in apparent weakness and folly, under the wrath of God. If God is revealed in the cross, he is not recognizable *as God*. Empirically, all that can be discerned are the *posteriora or posteriore Dei*. Reason therefore, basing itself upon that which is empirically discernible, deduces that God cannot be present in the cross of Christ, as the perceived situation in no way corresponds to the perceived situation.<sup>417</sup>

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412 Louw, 1996:34.

413 Louw, 1996:34.

414 Louw, 1996:34.

415 Louw, 1996:35.

416 This will be discussed further in chapter five.

417 Louw, 1996:37 and A.E. McGrath, 1985. *Luther’s theology of the cross: Martin Luther’s theological breakthrough*:167.

His relational model where we do not only think about God, but *thinking from an encounter with God, and an encounter between God and a person*, can contribute valuable assistance to the thesis and its narrative approach.<sup>418</sup>

Janse Van Rensburg, departing from a “diaconological” approach, also maintains an openness for a narrative reading, but then only “as a strategy”:<sup>419</sup>

...we should not be so eager to use the narrative as a therapeutic strategy *if the narrative is explicitly placed within a postmodern epistemology*. ... The narrative strategy must, however, at all costs be placed within a paradigm that would not jeopardize the truth and the reality of the narratives or the direction of pastoral care, counselling and therapy.<sup>420</sup>

The narrative approach of the thesis does not only reject such a “strategic-epistemological” binary opposition, but also disputes the reductionism of the narrative approach, condemning it to being only a strategy.<sup>421</sup>

Müller wants to find his way out of a modernistic, fundamentalistic and foundationalist science, but also from the “fatalism of some postmodernistic approaches”. He is also concerned about the limitations of the hermeneutical approach. Firstly, because of the use of language there is a continuous distortion of communication and, secondly, the hermeneutical approach does not provide “real contextual outcomes”, but only theoretical abstractions. These “theories for praxis” are too far removed from the real world.<sup>422</sup>

His social-constructionist approach leads him to “...firstly listen to the stories of people struggling in real situations, not merely to a description of a general context”.<sup>423</sup> Practical theology needs to pay minute attention to particular situations and not abstractions. The grandiosity of many theological researches seeking to “order and control”, rather than to

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418 In view of the fact that I wish in the thesis to transcend a mere confessional reading of Scripture, I question Louw’s confessional point of departure, *inter alia*, regarding the nature of his pneumatology and ecclesiology. See Louw, 1998:55 & 59.

419 Janse Van Rensburg, 2000:62.

420 Janse Van Rensburg, 2000:62.

421 W. Brueggemann, 1993. *Biblical perspectives on evangelism: Living in a three storied universe*:13. From Brueggemann’s perspective to know is “essentially imaginative”, and he values imagination as a “practice of epistemology”, and a “valid way of knowing”. This issue will be discussed further in chapter five where a narrative approach will be motivated.

422 Julian Müller, 2004. *HIV/AIDS, narrative practical theology, and postfoundationalism: The emergence of a new story*. [Website], available from: < <https://www.up.ac.za/dspace/handle/2263/4317> >.

423 Müller, 2004. [Website].

understand and to assist, in setting people free is not appreciated. Practical theology that is not involved in a specific concrete context "...regresses into some sort of systematic theology".<sup>424</sup>

Müller is connected to the paradigms of social-constructionism and postfoundationalist theology, facilitating social-constructionism as the basis of his narrative approach. This provides him with "a *third way*, a way out of being stuck in modernistic or foundationalist and fundamentalist science and theology, on the one hand, and the fatalism of some postmodernistic approaches, on the other".<sup>425</sup>

Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalism and critical realism, with its rejection of positivism, should be greatly appreciated.<sup>426</sup> It seems, however, that Müller's social-constructionism and, therefore, his narrative approach with its "practice-theory-practice" circular movement operates with a theology that may be nearer to people, but, unfortunately, seems to be "far removed" from the Scriptures. By stating that the very "*essence*" of practical theology is that it demands a focus on "concrete contexts" he is not only falling prey to modernism, but also indicates that theory, and in particular theological theory, plays a secondary role.<sup>427</sup> The thesis departs from the point of view that when people come for *pastoral* counselling, it is not only their actual practice that is very important, but also, and very much so, their relationship with God and, as Christians, their relationship with the gospel narratives.

The narrative approach of the thesis cannot find an accommodation, a suitable space, without moving beyond modernism and by confronting the above-mentioned problems, and, then, only within the broader view of practical theology. A Narrative approach seeks to address both praxis and theology by creating space for "story-telling", and the relationship with God.<sup>428</sup> This challenge will be addressed in the following chapter.

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424 Müller, 2004. [Website].

425 Müller, 2004. [Website].

426 W. Van Huyssteen, 1997a. *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology*:2. He challenges the foundationalism of modernity. "Postmodernism is, as I see it, first of all a very pointed rejection of all forms of epistemological foundationalism, as well as of its ubiquitous, accompanying metanarratives that so readily claim to legitimize all our knowledge, judgements, decisions, and actions." "*Foundationalism*, as is generally defined today, is the thesis that all our beliefs can be justified by appealing to some item of knowledge that is self-evident or indubitable". He also rejects hard postmodernism's nonfoundationalism.

427 Müller, 2004. [Website].

428 This will be discussed further in chapter five when dealing with the narrative approach.

## 5 Summary

The Enlightenment modernism has dominated philosophy and theology for centuries, where rationalism and objectivism have ripped apart the healthy fibre of societies and theologies. In this chapter, in a limited way, I have researched the insidious nature of modernism in its quest to find meaning and knowledge. By crowning reason as “sovereign” and via the mechanistic tools of rationalism, reductionism, dualism and objectivism, it was deemed possible for the so-called autonomous individual to establish absolute universal truth. This modernism also infiltrated theology and infected the church, robbing it of its sense of community by focusing its attention on *what can be believed—dogma, albeit Christian dogma*. It focused the mission of the church on *confessionalism*, where modernistic “truth” has become the hallmark of theology. Thus, robbing people of a sense of humanness and leaving them devoid of a sense of “belonging”; a sense of not belonging to Christ and to the Christian community, and not being spiritually and in a human way comforted.

Postmodernism, however, challenges this autonomous philosophy and theology, and seeks to move beyond its abusive power structures. Many in Western society and also in the church are currently calling into question this autonomous claim to absolute objective knowledge. Unravelling the abusive nature of foundationalism, structuralism and metanarratives, they seek to move beyond individualism, rationalism and “factuality”, being based on so-called facts, arguing for a more interrelated dynamic theology and philosophy. They reject the notion of absolute objective knowledge to reclaim, according to Toulmin, the oral, the particular, the local and the timely kind of knowledge, over against the written, universal, general and timeless knowledge.<sup>429</sup> Thus, an “affective postmodernism” is challenging modernism, and its philosophies and theologies in a way that “...does not sink into scepticism or cynicism”.<sup>430</sup> It rather strives to establish more meaningful, valuable and appropriate ways for our “...fast-paced, multifarious era in which we now live”.<sup>431</sup> Consequently, it holds to an “interpretive relational” understanding of reality, which entails “uncertainty”, ambiguity and pluralism, so that the voice of the “other” may also be heard.

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429 In this regard see Toulmin, 1990:30-35 and also Degenaar, 1996:9-13.

430 Horell, 2003:98.

431 Horell, 2003:98.

This approach to postmodernism wishes to take theology beyond confessionalism and the rationalistic component of “believing and behaving”, and demands ethical integrity in which justice, compassion, peace and relationships are being promoted. It brings us to a point where people and their well-being needs to be regarded with high esteem. It is imperative, therefore, that our Christian and especially Adventist communities develop a practical theology that enters into dialogue as to how it is “...shaping our understandings of morality, our senses of personal and social identity, and our outlooks on life and the world”.<sup>432</sup> Recognising that times and cultures are changing and that important different methods and approaches are appropriate and necessary. “As the pace of cultural change accelerates, we must also recognise the need for ongoing faith formation that enables us to relate our Christian faith to the complexities and ambiguities of our ever-changing postmodern world.”<sup>433</sup> Thus, it is the contention of the thesis that there is a real need to develop a theology of pastoral care that goes beyond confessionalism; a theology that will sustain “...an ethic of care and compassion on both personal and social levels of people’s lives”.<sup>434</sup>

I also indicated that pastoral care, if present within Adventism, is practiced in an “applied theology”, which is very close to a “diaconological” approach. I indicated that there are scholars, however, that have moved beyond that, and challenged the modernistic confessional theology, yet, not without limitations. Maintaining both the contexts of people and their community, and the Scripture in high regard, there is, in a broader perspective, open space within practical theology for the narrative approach, which, I have asserted, will sustain an ethic of care and compassion.

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432 Horell, 2003:101.

433 Horell, 2003:99.

434 Groome, 1997:225.

## Beyond Confessionalism: Pastoral Care in Search of a Narrative Approach

### 1 Introduction

I have indicated in the thesis that modernism has made an impact on most of the Christian churches and also on Adventism with its confessionalist proclamation. This has marginalised pastoral care into an approach, which is not much more than applied confessional theology.

In chapter four I have indicated that postmodernism is questioning the philosophy and theology of modernism, rejecting many of its assumptions. Furthermore, postmodernism opens up a space where a narrative approach can be accommodated. This empowers the church with pastoral care where suffering people are no longer being told what to do, but where they become participants, “networking” with others and God to solve their problems. *The narrative approach to pastoral care is challenging Adventist theology to move beyond a mere application of confessional beliefs.* Confessionalism, which applies the Bible to the lives of people without any specified contexts, does not only treat them as “faceless” people, but also does not show due justice to Scripture.

Over the last few decades a lot has been said about “narrative” within theology, philosophy, history and psychology. Many arguments, both in favour or against a narrative approach have been formulated. Yet, it appears that narrative has played an important role in the shaping of the lives of individuals and communities down through the ages. According to Lester, Jean-Paul Sartre once said: “...humans are always tellers of tales, we live surrounded by our stories and the stories of others, we see everything that happens to us through these stories; and we try to live our lives as if we were telling a story.”<sup>1</sup>

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1 Andrew D. Lester, 1995. *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*: 27.

Smith pointedly remarks that “Lyotard reminds us about the ultimately narrative character of Christian faith”.<sup>2</sup> Based on this and what I have already researched in the thesis, especially in chapter four, I propose a narrative approach within a broader view of practical theology; an approach that wishes to move beyond the Adventist confessionalism, which I have researched in chapter three. Hereby a confessional approach is not deleted, but is invited to be engaged in an open discourse with a narrative approach. There is a need for a narrative approach because it is important to tell the “Bible story” in such a way as to “...effectively awaken our imagination, speaking to our hearts, as well as to our minds”,<sup>3</sup> and thereby, serving “broken” and “hurting” people. Here, therefore, I will endeavour to “re-vision” and “re-imagine” Adventist theology, and in particular, pastoral care.

This chapter highlights some pointers, specifically from the perspective of a narrative approach that will facilitate a pastoral care ministry, pointing out both its possibilities as well as its limitations. Then, I will indicate my narrative view of Scripture and why this approach that transcends confessionalism is meaningful for pastoral care.

## 2 Why narrative?

People tend to relate to, retain and share daily information and experiences as anecdotal narratives rather than organised logical objective facts. It is narrated with characters, plots, motives and actions with one or more points of view, filled with emotion, expectation, certainty and questions. These spoken or written narratives are enhanced by way of imagination, and furthermore, much of the Bible itself is cast in such narrative form.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Smith, 2006:75.

3 Rice, 2002:88.

4 Narrative is “...a genre in which much of the Bible is cast ... as a way of grasping and making sense of the whole of history as this is interpretively presented in Christian Scripture”. J.B. Green, 2003a. *The (Re-Turn of Narrative)*:18. Meylahn indicates that, “The Bible does not only contain narratives about God and His people, but also contains other literary genres such as letters, poems, chronicles and prose, yet it would seem that narrative plays a dominant role within the Bible. The biblical scholar Lohfink distinguishes three basic literary forms in the biblical language namely: 1) *Argumentatio*, 2) *Appellatio* and 3) *Narratio*. (Weinrich 1977:47). He argues that *Narratio* (narrative) is dominant in the sense that it is determining. ‘...die narrative Sprache grundlegend und bestimmend ist und alle nichtnarrativen Elemente nur sekundäre Funktion haben’ (Weinrich 1977:47) ...For some time scholars (Gerhard van Rad, Oscar Cullmann and G. Ernest Wright) have become aware of the importance of *Heilsgeschichte* (story of salvation) in biblical theology the core of Scripture is a set of salvation narratives which serve as the common denominator for the whole of Scripture (Stroup 1984:136). Within the genre of biblical narrative there is no uniformity as there are various different kinds of biblical narratives such as the historical narratives, myth, sage,



Keen and Fox make a very valid point when they say that people are “...story telling animals”.<sup>5</sup> In this sense human beings are viewed, especially within a postmodern world, to be “story living and telling” beings. Sallie McFague says:

We all love a good story because of the basic narrative quality of human experience: in a sense *any* story is about ourselves, and a story is *good* precisely because somehow it rings true to human life. ... We recognize our pilgrimage from here to there in a good story; we feel its movement in our bones and know that it is ‘right.’ We love stories, then, because our lives are stories and we recognise ... our own story.<sup>6</sup>

Narrative, fashioned by poetry, myth, metaphor, allegory and imagery, enables people to enter into a meaningful relationship with God and each other. Functioning beyond the objective facts of modernism, it is a networking tool which creates community and gives expressive meaning to life.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, narrative could be an indispensable tool for Christian theology as it contends that “...virtually all our basic convictions about the nature and meaning of our lives find their ground and intelligibility in some sort of overarching, paradigmatic story”.<sup>8</sup>

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chronicles and parable to name just a few. Stroup gives two reasons why narrative is the dominant genre in Scripture: the one philosophical-sociological and the other theological (Stroup 1984:145)”. Meylahn, 2003:118.

5 Sam Keen and Anne Valley Fox, as quoted by L.M. Williams, 1986. *Narrative Theology and Preaching*:24.

6 Sallie McFague, 1974. *Parable, metaphor, and theology*:640.

7 “Social scientists are rediscovering the unity of body/mind/spirit that characterizes the human being. Frustrated with reductionist concepts that blur the distinctions between human beings and machines, both theorists and therapists have been developing new paradigms for addressing the more profound philosophical and psychological questions about human existence. *Narrative theory* is making a major contribution. Theodore Sardin, a theoretical psychologist, suggests that the concept of ‘narrative’ has gained the right to function as a new ‘root metaphor’ for ‘the task of interpreting and explaining’ the human condition. Narrative psychology is providing fresh ways of framing the human situation. Narrative theory provides an alternative way of comprehending selfhood and personal identity. Research in narrative theory, both in psychology and theology, has confirmed that human personality is storied. Human beings do not simply tell stories, or illustrate their lives with storytelling. We construct our sense of identity out of stories, both conscious stories and those we suppose.” Lester, 1995:27 & 29.  
“We all must have a story. As Robert Roth has said, ‘story is reality,’ and without story it would appear that we live in an unreal world.” Urban T. Holmes III. 1976. *Ministry and Imagination*:166.

8 M Goldberg, as quoted by Paul Griffiths, 2001. *The Limits of Narrative Theology*:229. From Goldberg’s perspective, “...narrative is perhaps nowhere more evident and justified than in the portrayal of a life. ... [W]e take the time to tell our *life stories* to those to whom we feel close, to those whom we trust, to those who, we think it important that they come to know and understand us as the people we truly are. To be sure, one may abstract certain elements, details, and statements of ‘fact’ from the story which must remain, which does remain, basic. For, after all, it is the story from which these abstractions *are abstracted*, and it is the story that provides the context that gives the various elements their meaning and significance”. M. Goldberg, 1982. *Theology and Narrative: A critical introduction*:62 & 63.

## 2.1 The power of narrative

Scholars have highlighted the value of narrative and indicated why it is such a powerful tool. It is asserted that it is the narratives that are told that contain the plot and give deeper meaning to the profound “...experiences of self and world that have been called spiritual and religious”.<sup>9</sup> “Stories make an impression on our minds and have the power to move our hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

In this regard Curtis and Eldredge state it this way: “The deepest convictions of our heart are formed by stories and reside there in the images and emotions of story.”<sup>11</sup> Holmes supports this and asserts:

A story is like a ritual, it preserves the memory of the past events in a way that those events still have power for us. A story basically lives first in the lives of people. It does not begin as a detached literary imposition.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, narratives are very important as “Stories are a stamp of human life”,<sup>13</sup> the “...quality of experience through time is inherently narrative”,<sup>14</sup> and it gives the flow of meaning and makes the connections between action and events.<sup>15</sup> Every personal encounter or stimulus is by and large being shaped into a story; we understand and make sense out of our experiences by stories,<sup>16</sup> and Williams asserts that through stories people even develop “...their identity and give order to their existence”.<sup>17</sup>

A large percentage of people in the world are communicating in oral mode rather than in a written form. Erickson says that, “These people find stories to be much more manageable, and more easily remembered, for there is a natural basis of cohesiveness: the plot or story

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9 Goldberg, 1982:12.

10 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004. *Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible*:ix.

11 B. Curtis, & J. Eldredge, 1997. *The Sacred Romance: Drawing closer to the heart of God*:38.

12 Holmes III, 1976:169.

13 D.M. Gunn, & D.N. Fewell, 1993. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*:1.

14 Lester, 1995:28.

15 Lester, 1995:28.

16 Lester, 1995:28.

17 Williams, 1986:24. See also Michael Goldberg. 1982:12. He says people always find a sense of identity in and through “...the kind of story which [they] understand [themselves] to have been enacting through the events of [their] career, the story of [their] life”.

line”.<sup>18</sup> In this regard Booyesen, when quoting Henau, reminds us “...that without ‘narrative all experience is inarticulate ...without narrative even the language of faith is silenced””.<sup>19</sup>

It is narrative that enables people to link up with the “real” world, giving meaning to life and experience.<sup>20</sup> They reflect the dynamics of a given culture and it is even thought of as creating our worlds. Gunn and Fewell give to narrative a “performative” rather than simply explanatory value: “They give meaning to life, implicitly making proposals for thought and action which are then embodied in a re-created world.”<sup>21</sup> At times, it may even have the subversive task of social criticism, and the potential to create new social communities.<sup>22</sup>

Rice pronounces that, “In recent years, religious scholars have come to appreciate more than ever the power of narrative”.<sup>23</sup> According to Lester, the theory of a narrative approach can make a significant contribution to religious studies<sup>24</sup> and to a pastoral care ministry. According to him narrative concepts can be used to interpret biblical material, to understand religious experience and they make “...an important contribution to the philosophical and theological anthropology that supports a pastoral theology of hope”<sup>25</sup> and caring. Thus, narratives are expressive ways of encountering and engaging people within their lived experience, attaching value to their lives.<sup>26</sup> We think of, perceive and imagine reality through narrative: According to Rice,

...some thinkers believe that the very structure of human thought has a narrative quality. In other words, we think in stories. We experience things in narrative fashion. We grasp the important elements in our lives in the form of stories, and we view our lives as a whole as extended narratives.<sup>27</sup>

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18 Erickson, 2001:202.

19 Willem M. Booyesen, 2002. *The Functions of Imagery in Narrative Preaching*:28.

20 G.W. Stroup, 1981. *The Promise of Narrative Theology*:79.

21 Gunn, & Fewell, 1993:1 & 2.

22 Gunn, & Fewell, 1993:1 & 2.

23 Rice, 2002:141. “More and more, theologians today are attending to the practical dimensions of religious conviction—narrative and metaphor.” Rice, 2002:8.

24 Lester, 1995:27.

25 Lester, 1995:27.

26 I am of the opinion that cold hard facts—the “truth”—can very often rob people of the value of their experience and their voices. Facts all too often give a message that you or I should not have thought/done/said or felt according to our own ideas. What you or I think, feel, and do is of no consequence if it is not in accordance with the facts. When focusing on facts there is a tendency to bully people into conformity and thus silencing their voices.

27 Rice, 2002:141.

For a pastoral care perspective it is important to note that “...all meaningful communication is a form of storytelling ... and so human beings experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, each with their own conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends”.<sup>28</sup>

Like good paintings, good stories tell more than what facts or mere words can relay. Life must not be regarded as a list of propositions, but it is a series of dramatic scenes, and stories help us to articulate these experiences.<sup>29</sup> Stories are the way we live; stories are the language of our hearts: “Our souls speak not in the naked facts of mathematics or the abstract propositions of theology; they speak the images and emotions of story.”<sup>30</sup> Stories linger in the mind and are told and retold long after the facts have faded.

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28 On the Wikipedia website regarding narrative it is pointed out that “Fisher proposed that the way in which people explain and/or justify their behaviour, whether past or future, has more to do with telling a credible story than it does with producing evidence or constructing a logical argument. The traditional paradigm of the rational world claims that:

- people are essentially thinking beings, basing their reasoned decisions on the merits of discussion and evidential reasoning;
- what is judged rational is determined by the knowledge and understanding displayed, and by how the case is argued, i.e. the way in which the argument is made will determine the outcome so long as the form matches the forum which might be scientific, legal, philosophical, etc. This presupposes that life is a set of logical puzzles that can be solved through the application of rational methods.

Fisher reacts against this model as too limited and suggests a new paradigm of ‘narrative rationality.’

He begins with the proposition that:

- people are essentially storytellers;
- although people claim ‘good’ reasons for their decisions, these reasons included history, culture, and perceptions about the status and character of the other people involved (all of which may be subjective and incompletely understood);
- the test of narrative rationality is based on the probability, coherence and fidelity of the stories that underpin the immediate decisions to be made; and
- the world is a set of stories from which each individual chooses the ones that match his or her values and beliefs.

This does not deny that there is a system of formal logical reasoning. But, following Michel Foucault, such systems are formed through the *savoir* and *pouvoir* of the hierarchies that control access to the discourses. Hence, criteria for assessing the *reliability* and *completeness* of evidence, and whether the pattern of reasoning is sound are not absolutes, but defined diachronically by those in positions of authority. This will be particularly significant when the process of reasoning admits values and policy in addition to empirical data.

Fisher proposes narrative rationality and coherence (fidelity and probability) as an *a priori* basis upon which to decide which are good or bad stories. He argues that human communication is something more than its rational form; that its cultural context, and the values and experience of the audience are as important. ... Fisher maintains that, armed with common sense, almost any individual can see the point of a good story and judge its merits as the basis for belief and action.” *Narrative Paradigm*. [Website], available from: < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative\\_paradigm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_paradigm) >.

29 Goldberg, 1982:12.

30 Curtis & Eldredge, 1997:39.

## 2.2 The limitations of narrative

Modernism with its optimistic rationalism and search for objectivism has labelled narrative a *fable*,<sup>31</sup> claiming it to be *fuzzy*: Stories do not appeal to universal reason<sup>32</sup> to legitimate themselves, and they are also regarded as falling prey to relativism where “everything goes” and to a “laissez-faire” ethics.

Besides, we need to keep in mind that the narrative approach does have significant limitations and is not the only instrument in the task of theology. There are other kinds of discourses that play and have an important role within the bigger picture of theology.<sup>33</sup> The narrative discourse cannot fulfil all the practical theological needs, but it does play a very important role especially for pastoral care.

Goldberg’s comment that the literature about narrative seems to have slightly different meanings in each proposal is well taken. It seems as if there is no consensus with regard to “narrative” and “story” and exactly what is being referred to in a narrative approach. He asserts:

In some cases it seems to be a broad category that includes a variety of different literary genres from poems to novels; in others it is used only to refer to a particular literary form, such as the parables. Obvious but difficult questions such as the relation between story and history and the criteria that might be used to assess in what sense a story is true are seldom discussed.<sup>34</sup>

Narrative, therefore, seems to have no fixed points of reference that ensure any kind of uniformity. Green supports this when he says that “...despite this renewed interest in narrative, however, no consensus has emerged about its implications for Christian theology”.<sup>35</sup> As might be expected, this does create somewhat of a problem when trying to formulate a narrative approach for practical theology, in that there seems to be no clear direction, and making it very fuzzy.

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31 “Modernity, then, appeals to science to legitimate its claims—and by ‘science’ we simply mean the notion of universal, autonomous reason. Science, then, is opposed to narrative, which attempts not to prove its claims but rather to proclaim them within a story.” Smith, 2006:65.

32 “Science, then, is opposed to narrative, which attempts not to prove its claims but rather to proclaim them within a story.” Smith, 2006:65.

33 Griffiths, 2001:229.

34 Stroup, 1981:72.

35 G. Green, 1987. *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*:x.

Then, Paul Cilliers also asserts that narrative is seriously criticised within the context of philosophy and science because it is claimed that, "...if all narratives have only local legitimation, the resulting fragmentation of the social fabric will relativise *all* knowledge".<sup>36</sup> It is held that because narrative has no external "check" on any particular discourse, narrative will lead to the isolation of individuals and communities, resulting in relativism. In other words it is claimed that a narrative approach will lead to a situation where "everything goes".<sup>37</sup> Narrative may not impart, therefore, the kind of knowledge sought after by those seeking absolute, objective and universal truth. As Yandell pointedly remarks: "When it comes to stating principles, elucidating a metaethic, or articulating and assessing ethical theories, systematic discourse is required and narrative must step aside."<sup>38</sup> Narrative is not able to provide or do justice to a systematic or dogmatic theology in a way that religious communities consider it to be important within modernism.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, for those looking for objective factual truth, narrative can come across as being too indistinct because of its open-endedness, especially for modernists. Lyotard points out that modernistic "Science has always been in conflict with narrative. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them [narratives] prove to be fables".<sup>40</sup> From a rational, logical perspective, when seeking some kind of absolute understanding, narrative tends to be very limiting as it is not able to establish confessional beliefs. The "hard" (rigid) scientific models, with their functional pragmatic appeals will experience narrative as frustrating and restricting. Because narrative is not static or fixated, and not expressing absolute truth, but relates to events from different perspectives, it is regarded as being "fuzzy", not able to nail down the facts, or to control or filter out the "noise" and "snow" (distortions) that are present in the text and context.<sup>41</sup> For many, in both the conservative and the progressive

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36 Cilliers, 1995:127.

37 Cilliers, 1995:127.

38 Keith E. Yandell, 2001a. *Faith and Narrative*:10. See also Yandell, 2001b. *Narrative Ethics and Normative Objectivity*: 231-260. Yandell also "...advocates nonnarrative approaches to ethics. He defends the claim that there is no possibility of an ethic not ultimately based on ahistorical moral principles, which in turn depend for their force on nonnarrative claims regarding human nature and ultimate reality. Narrative ethics (like narrative theology) is, by itself, relativistic". Yandell, 2001a:10.

39 Griffiths, 2001:231.

40 Lyotard, 2003:259.

41 The conservative all the way through to the progressive orientation tends to hold to a "conduit metaphor" when it comes to the biblical text and confessional truth. "The main concern of this conduit metaphor is to 'transmit' a message through a channel with the least possible 'noise'. This 'noise' as in a radio or 'snow' as on the television screen needs to be deleted so that

orientations, therefore, a narrative approach may be perceived as not having any value and may be severely criticised.

Then, there are also those proponents of narrative who claim that narrative is the only meaningful tool in understanding Scripture. There are those holding to an exclusively narrative approach, yet Griffiths points out that when they find themselves in "...tension with their agenda they do not make their claims narratively: They make them systematically".<sup>42</sup> Consequently, when they are challenged, or having to "prove" their point of view, they do not produce a narrative argument, but they rather move toward a systematic or proof text methodology. This indicates that narrative is not geared toward proof, directives, and principles, doctrinal or factual discourses.<sup>43</sup>

Whereas I will later discuss narrative and the Bible, it is important to note that Stroup indicates that not all of Scripture is in narrative format, and also that all narrative formats are not necessarily the same format; they are not all cut from the same common cloth. The Bible consists of different kinds of narrative forms, such as metaphors, parables, allegory, biographies and autobiographies.<sup>44</sup> This, of course, creates certain tensions and challenges when it comes to a narrative view of Scripture, as some narratives are, let us say, clearly biographical or parable, whereas others are not that clearly distinguished, and some areas are historical and others poetry.

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'real' messages can be heard. Shannon designated this 'noise' as 'equivocation'. It is a disturbance and it causes interference.

It is the task of the theologian to filter out this "noise" or "equivocation" so that the text can be transmitted in its purest form. "It is a **one-way** communication and only one perspective of a phenomenon or reading of a text is possible. There can thus be only one correct reading or understanding of a 'text'. How is this problem, of finding the one correct reading, solved? Van Niekerk says that this is solved by choosing the text with the '... least intrusions, distortions, interferences and misprints to 'prove' that it is the purest and thus the correct interpretation.'" van Wyk, 1999:82 & 83.

42 Griffiths, 2001:232.

43 In the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School quarterly (First Quarter 2006) Ron Flowers recommends "...a change of perspective in looking at Scripture". He then proposes a "family" perspective, thus a relational perspective. He also recommends a "family narrative" approach because the "Bible stories provide glimpses into people's lives. The accounts show, over the course of individuals' lives, they reap the consequences of their choices and grow in spite of setbacks. Through these stories we see how God abides with His people, even through difficult times." Then, however, moving out of the narrative he presents "*principles*" and "*directives*" for family living via a proof text method, claiming that the biblical stories have a purpose: "They instruct, inspire, correct, and train God's people in right living (*Rom. 15:4, 2 Tim. 3:16*)."<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, he claims that these *principles*, gained via a lexico-grammatical or scientific approach, are "The *universal* principles of emotions and relationships" observed by Solomon (*italics added*). See Flowers, 2006. *Family in the Family of God*:14-20.

44 Stroup, 1981:136 & 137.

Narrative, therefore, could be judged as being “careless” and not “objective”: thus, having both pros and cons (the advantages and disadvantages of things), both strengths and limitations. The thesis, thus, does not wish to propose that narrative is the “perfect” and exclusive approach to understanding and viewing Scripture. Having shortcomings, it is not the ultimate means of understanding God, Scripture or people, but it is a means that transcends confessionalism and opens up new vistas for the church when it comes to pastoral care and counselling.

### **3 Beyond Confessionalism**

It is imperative for the Adventist Church to move beyond modernism, which puts a high value on so-called objective truths and facts, and maintaining rationalism (making reason absolute), and, thereby being tempted to reduce its confessions to a mere collection of rationalistic propositions. Smith says that in modernism, knowledge is reduced, encapsulated and encoded into mere biblical information. If it cannot be reduced to “data” or simple “codes” it has been abandoned.<sup>45</sup> He is adamant that God’s revelation is not given as a “...collection of propositions or facts but rather within a narrative—a grand sweeping story from Genesis to Revelation”.<sup>46</sup>

#### **3.1 Narrative and context**

Vanhoozer says: “To be postmodern is to have a heightened awareness of one’s situatedness: in body, in culture, in tradition, in language.”<sup>47</sup> Whereas the Holy Spirit is speaking to us in and through the Bible, the Spirit’s voice is always heard within a specific social, cultural and historical context.<sup>48</sup> For a narrative approach the unique context of the person in need of counselling is very important.

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45 Smith, 2006:74.

46 Smith, 2006:74 He states: “Is there not a sense in which we’ve forgotten that God’s primary vehicle for revelation is a story unfolded within the biblical canon?”

47 Vanhoozer, 2005:73.

48 John R. Franke, 2005. *Christian Faith and Postmodern Theory: Theology and the Nonfoundationalist Turn*:114.



It is imperative for a narrative approach to take serious cognisance of the “situatedness” of people and their own “hurting” and pain, and not to be informed by a kind of universalised report on what these people are supposed to think and feel.<sup>49</sup> According to Pieterse, Gadamer has highlighted the importance of the context for the process of understanding.<sup>50</sup> How we understand the text of the past is connected with the context of the situation of the reader of the text, and every context is influencing how we understand the text, and, thus, it gives the text a different meaning.<sup>51</sup> We need to listen not only to people’s own stories about their pain, but as a pastoral counsellor, we need to listen to how they, from their own perspective, are *telling* “God’s story” and to the “story of the Bible”.<sup>52</sup>

Another reason why a specific context is important is that all theologies are being constructed within a particular context and are also addressing a specific context, even though theologians are allegedly trying to universalise their findings. Thus, though theology is limited, to a degree, by the constraints of that context, a wider context is being opened up. Gunton concludes: “To that extent, the context is one of the authorities to which the theologian must listen.”<sup>53</sup> It is important for a narrative approach to challenge the confessional approach to be confronted by the praxis and the contexts of people. The contexts of people need to deconstruct our own presuppositions and agendas that have often determined, in an unconscious way, the “nature” of the gospel we are proclaiming to others.<sup>54</sup> Stackhouse has come to the conclusion that “...various versions of the ‘pure gospel’ are more contextually influenced than their advocates recognize”.<sup>55</sup> Critics of the ethnocentrism, sexism, racism and colonialism of Christianity have often pointed out that what has often been propagated in the name of the “pure gospel” seems to correspond to the

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49 See also Johan Janse van Rensburg, 2003: 61 “New developments seem to favour a focus on life’s problems and people’s ability to cope with life’s challenges. This change introduces a shift away from a deductive approach to an inductive and hermeneutic one in preaching. One of the greatest influences of such a shift must surely be post-modernism.”

50 Pieterse, 2007:122

51 Pieterse, 2007:122.

52 Jerry H. Stone, 1995. *Narrative theology and religious education*:262, says, “Narrative theology moves beyond the canonical, or biblical, story to include the believer’s personal life story within the context of the Christian community story”.

53 Gunton, as quoted by Franke, 2005:205

54 Damsteegt, 2006:31. According to Damsteegt E.G White says that the new light that God gave to Adventists should “...lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures, and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold”. Deconstruction does not operate with a “critical” but rather with a differentiated approach because a critical approach most often leads to the creation of binary oppositions.

55 Stackhouse, 1986:86.

prejudices of the time, gender, race, and geographical and social location of those who talked in such spirited terms about the “pure gospel”.<sup>56</sup> If there is a danger of reading the Bible through the lens of our context and presuppositions, there is an equally great danger of listening to the stories of people through our own view of Scripture or via our own theological constructions. Unfortunately, this is not given serious consideration by the confessional approach. Derrida’s deconstruction, “there is nothing outside the textuality” is, thus, “...related to the New Historicism’s ‘there is nothing outside contextuality’”.<sup>57</sup> Both the text and the subject need to be situated. Vanhoozer claims that postmodern exegesis is always situated: always “from below”, never “from above”.<sup>58</sup>

Julian Müller says that a social-constructionist approach

...forces us to firstly listen to the stories of people struggling in real situations, not merely to a description of a general context, but to be confronted with a specific and concrete situation. ...The practical theologian in this case, is not so much concerned with abstractions and generalisations but rather with the detail of a particular person’s story.<sup>59</sup>

He continues and states that

“This is a welcome feature amidst the past grandiosity of many theological enterprises which have sought to control and order the world rather than to understand it and to set particular individuals and communities free.”<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps, even more importantly, people, both the client and the counsellor, need not only to hear their own story, but to hear the Spirit’s voice, integrating their stories with “God’s story”. (I will discuss this in more detail later). In this regard Grenz states:

The ultimate authority in the church is the Spirit speaking through Scripture. The Spirit’s speaking through Scripture, however, is always a contextual speaking; it always comes to its hearers within a specific historical-cultural context. ...the Spirit’s ongoing provision of guidance has always come, and now continues to

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56 Stackhouse, 1986:86.

57 K.J. Vanhoozer, 2003b. *Scripture and Tradition*:160.

58 Vanhoozer, 2003b:160. He states that “...neither the production nor the reception of texts is ahistorical: ‘Texts are caught up in the social processes and context out of which they emerge’”.

59 Müller, 2004. [Website]. Although Müller cannot be accused of falling prey to this view, he point there are some social constructionists that “...argue that the world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are first and foremost the product of social processes. Neither God nor individual consciousness but society itself is the prime mover, the root of experience. It is the social reproduction and transformation of structures of meaning, conventions, morals and discursive practices that principally constitute both our relationships and ourselves”. See also David Nightingale, and John Cromby, 1999. *Social Constructionist Psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*:4.

60 Müller, 2004. [Website].

come, to the community of Christ as a specific people in a specific setting hears the Spirit's voice speaking in the particularity of its historical-context.<sup>61</sup>

Here, is possibly the greatest challenge for the pastoral counsellor: *To tell his/her story and "God's story" in such a way that the Holy Spirit may become the Great Story Teller to "hurting" people.*

### 3.2 Beyond absolutism and objectivism

Murphy and Kallenburg maintain that the "Cartesian anxiety" resulted in the quest for foundations by all disciples.<sup>62</sup> Theology, following this search for foundations, developed a *theological prolegomena*: How can our theological statements be universally valid.<sup>63</sup> Grenz acknowledging that although foundationalism was at the heart of the Enlightenment, there is now a widespread rejection of the foundationalism that used to characterise the Enlightenment epistemology.<sup>64</sup>

Both the liberal approach, searching for a foundation behind the history of the text, and the fundamentalists, with their inerrant view of Scripture and their accurate representation of the meaning of the text, have fallen prey to Descartes rationalism and foundationalism. The conservative confessionalists, in particular, with their "timeless and contextless praxis" denigrating contemporary experience and "situatedness", find themselves very much in line with the Cartesian foundationalism.<sup>65</sup>

A narrative approach needs to reject the Cartesian foundationalism, with its subject-object-split, based on rationalism and absolute certainty of knowledge.<sup>66</sup> Erickson, however, states

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61 Grenz, 2000:209.

62 Murphy and Kallenberg, 2003:30.

63 Murphy and Kallenberg, 2003:30.

64 Grenz, 2000:185-188. Most Scholars have rejected Descartes' approach to establish "the foundations of knowledge by appeal to the mind's own experience of certainty". Van Huyssteen states that "Whatever notion of postmodernity we eventually opt for, all postmodern thinkers see the modernist quest for certainty, and the accompanying program of laying foundations for our knowledge, as a dream for the impossible, a contemporary version of the quest for the Holy Grail". Wentzel van Huyssteen, 1998. *Tradition and the Task of Theology*:216.

65 See Van Wyk, 1997:35. "...the past (divine texts), as understood and interpreted by theologians, was the norm for contemporary experience. Even when a particular cultural custom was allowed, it was referred to as a 'lesser sin'. Because the Bible is regarded as supra cultural, local culture is not taken seriously; the tendency is to try and force cultural universals onto other cultures."

66 Meyer, 2003:49-59.

that not all foundationalist's views needs to be rejected.<sup>67</sup> He says

Future evangelical theology will be based on a foundationalism of this latter type, (*referring to the work of Plantinga and Wolterstorff - my inclusion*), foundationalism that regards some conceptions and propositions as basic, from which other propositions derive their validity, but without claiming indubitability as did classical foundationalism."<sup>68</sup>

From a modernist perspective, however, rejecting “absolute” and “objective” knowledge is being regarded as compromising “truth” and falling prey to relativism. Adventist, and specifically fundamentalist-orientated conservatives, operate with modernistic binary oppositions and emphasise the objectivity of the Bible and its interpretation. They, however, have not motivated how “objective” theological statements can be formulated. Hasel maintains that although we all have a “preunderstanding” and we cannot use an “empty-head” principle, nevertheless, we should “seek to be objective”.<sup>69</sup> Most often this objectivity is motivated by claiming the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and being shielded by fideism.<sup>70</sup> Hasel states:

In interpreting symbols the guiding principle is to let the Holy Spirit, who provided the symbol, be also the guide in identifying the symbol.<sup>71</sup>

Erickson's position, seeking to transcend the so-called classical objectivism, can be of some help for a narrative approach:

One important feature of the theology we are proposing will be that it returns to an emphasis on objectivity, but not the type of relatively naïve objectivity that modernism thought it had attained.<sup>72</sup>

He rejects the pragmatic theory and wishes to hold onto metaphysical realism, namely that our world does exist independently of our perception of it, “...deriving its ultimate reality from God”.<sup>73</sup> Erickson, however, admits that our perception of our world is not what things are in reality and that postmodernism has reminded us that we are not “truly and fully objective”. All of us are affected by our situation in life, by the social and cultural conditioning that has helped us to be the type of persons we are.<sup>74</sup>

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67 Erickson, 2004. *On Flying in Theological Fog*:330-331. Erickson speaks of a “Neo-foundationalism” and refers to the work of Alson, Audi and Triplett. He also refers to the “modest foundationalism” of Plantinga and Wolterstorff.

68 Erickson, 2004:331.

69 Hasel, 1974:169.

70 Hasel, 1974:169-170.

71 Hasel,1974:177.

72 Erickson, 2004. *On Flying in the Theological Fog*:328.

73 Erickson, 2004:330.

74 Erickson, 2004:335.

He believes that in a post-postmodern world there will be a return to an emphasis on objectivity, but he admits it will not be the same type of relatively naïve objectivity of modernistic thought.<sup>75</sup> The “objectivity” that Erickson has in mind will be “impartial” in a sense of being “open-minded”, looking at all the evidence at hand.<sup>76</sup> Erickson’s statement about this new kind of objectivity seems to be important:

It will be important to acknowledge this diversity, and not try to explain away the minority evidence, but come down on the side of the greater preponderance of evidence, all the while continuing to hold it in tension with the opposing evidence.<sup>77</sup>

His views on this new “objectivity” may have some positive implications for a narrative approach, similar to getting involved with cross-cultural dialogue.<sup>78</sup> It, however, seems that the theologian, and by implication the pastoral counsellor, is still viewed as the “authority” and “expert” and that the person in need is but a mere spectator. A narrative approach does not wish to reduce its subjectivity, like Erickson suggests, but rather confront it, and to come to know what influence it had on his/her own pastoral theology, without making it the norm for a practical theological discussion.<sup>79</sup> Stahl, from a feminist perspective, may also provide us with further clarity regarding this issue. She states that we need to reject the “objective-subjective” dichotomy. This is where “...the detached and abstract have been valued over the relational and concrete”.<sup>80</sup> Keller, quoted by Stahl, speaks of a dynamic “objectivity”.<sup>81</sup> This is where we provide the world with “independent integrity”, however, always emphasising our connectedness with this world. Traditional objectivity has fostered the notion that our confessions are the only truth and we devalue every other belief. By rejecting a subjective approach she pleads for a “mitigated relativism”, where “contextuality” and complexity play an important role.<sup>82</sup>

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75 Erickson, 2004:328.

76 Erickson, 2004:334 & 335.

77 Erickson, 2004:335.

78 Erickson, 2004:335. He also refers to Rorty’s terminology in this regard, “...‘solidarity’ the obtaining of a wider agreement, rather than ‘objectivity,’ the establishing of relationship between a belief and something outside the community”.

79 Erickson, 2004:335.

80 Wanda J. Stahl, 1997. *Congregations as the Center of Knowing: Shifting from the Individual to the Communal in Knowledge Formation*:302.

81 Stahl, 1997: 303.

82 Stahl, 1997:303-304.

A second important question we need to answer is, does the pastoral counsellor have a source of reference, in this case the Bible, which is a real and true source of knowledge, or is there nothing substantially real in the Bible?

According to Stone "...most narrative theologians agree that the biblical narratives contain historical truth"; they, however, disagree on the nature of that truth.<sup>83</sup> It may be helpful to listen to Van Huyssteen's critical realism, without fully accommodating it. He argues in his critical realism that our language indeed refers to some reality, thus placing a limit on relativism. According to Meylahn this gives "...academic research a certain critical foundation once more".<sup>84</sup> Van Huyssteen attests:

The most fundamental claim of critical realism is therefore that while all theories and models are partial and inadequate, the scientist not only discovers as well as creates, but with good reasons also believes that his or her theories actually refer.<sup>85</sup>

*We have no direct access to reality, but biblical texts are always metaphors of reality.*<sup>86</sup> These metaphors are not merely useful fictions, but need to be taken seriously; "...for although they refer in an ontological or cognitive sense, they are always partial and inadequate".<sup>87</sup>

Hard postmodernists, on the one hand, do not only reject a theologising that seeks to be objective, but rejects the possibility that the Bible or this world has realities. For them everything is only a construction. In this regard Vanhoozer states that

Stout, Rorty, and Fish, all pragmatists, subscribe to something like the following credo: 'We believe in using texts for our own purposes, not in discovering their

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83 Stone, 1995:258. Stone differentiates between "pure" narrative theologians, like Stanley Hauerwas, believing that the story of the Bible is so interwoven with our stories that we can hardly separate it. The "impure" narrativists, like Julian Hartt, on the other hand, believes that "...believers make faith assertions about the truth of the objective historical events to which the stories point..." Stone, 1995:260.

84 Johann-Albrecht Meylahn, 2006. *Postfoundationalism, deconstruction and the hope that motivates research in practical theology*:986.

85 Huyssteen, 1997a:134.

86 Meylahn, 2006:987.

87 Van Huyssteen 1997a:134. According to Meylahn, Van Huyssteen moves beyond this vicious circle by introducing the concept of root metaphors to overcome relativism. Whereas there may be different models of interpretation all models in their own way "...probe the 'inner limits' of the texts, or to use Paul Ricoeur's metaphor, to probe the *itineraries of meaning* which are contained in the text itself". Because there is a process of "metaphorization" within the texts we are restricted in the number of interpretations deduced from texts. Meylahn, 2006:987. "As such reading and interpretation is in a sense rule-governed and is in fact guided by a productive imagination at work in the text itself." Van Huyssteen, 1997a:150.

‘true’ nature (they have none).’ Meaning is not contained in a text like a nut in its shell; meaning is whatever it is that interest us about a text.<sup>88</sup>

Vanhoozer contends that Rorty is but replacing the pursuit of knowledge with the art of rhetoric and that “...there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones”.<sup>89</sup> Although it is of utmost importance for a narrative approach to be in solidarity with people, the above-mentioned pragmatism, where the stories of the Bible are merely a construction, needs to be rejected.

On the other hand, fundamentalist-orientated scholars do not only believe in an “objective” Bible, but they regard their own view of Scripture as absolute and objective. Gulley, operating with a view of Scripture close to a fundamentalistic position, fears Thompson’s statement, “knowing the Bible is but knowing God”, because, according to him it “...replaces the objectivity of the Bible’s being its own interpreter...”, and we may be left “...with too subjective a norm (experience) as the interpreter of Scripture”.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the thesis also needs to reject a view of Scripture that provides “objective” truths by way of a mechanistic reading of Scripture.

It is important to distinguish relativism from the position of relativity within a narrative approach.<sup>91</sup> Choosing a position of relativity, instead of relativism, a narrative approach needs to employ the notion of an “inter-subjective construction”, and, thus, giving due credit to the complexity of relationships. Relativity points to the fact that things are in some or other way related, and in this sense we may speak of relational truth. In this way, we are in the process of, referring to all (if possible) relations that exist and how they relate to each

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88 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 1998. *Is there a meaning in this text?:*103. Postmodernists can be regarded as relativists, believing that there are no absolutes and no norm to determine whether our beliefs are right or wrong. Here, a narrative approach needs to reject the views of Neo-pragmatists, like Rorty, who believes that we are not inquiring into “the way things really are”, but simply one interpretation among others in a larger conversation about what interests us about our world. Concepts do not mirror nature or represent how the world really is; they are simply tools humans use for certain purposes. Vanhoozer, 1998:55.

89 See Rorty, 1982. *Consequences of pragmatism:*165, as quoted by Vanhoozer, 1998:55. Vanhoozer, 1998:26, maintains that, “The ‘hermeneutic realist’ holds that there is something prior to interpretation, something ‘there’ in the text, which can be known and to which the interpreter is accountable. By contrast the hermeneutic nonrealist (e.g. Derrida, Fish) denies that meaning precedes interpretive activity; the truth of an interpretation depends on the response of the reader”.

90 Gulley, 1992:79.

91 Jeff Astley, 1994. *The philosophy of Christian religious education:*257.

other and to the challenge of determining “pointers” to truth.<sup>92</sup> In this regard Du Toit is convinced that from an ontological perspective a relational ontology provides us with a better kind of truth than a substantial ontology.<sup>93</sup>

Consequently, a narrative approach is compelled to ask, and needs to try and answer, the following: Have Christians, and in particular Adventist pastoral care, following a narrative approach, fallen prey to subjectivism? Has the narrative approach, which rejects classical foundationalism and employs particular postmodern thoughts, fallen prey to “anti-foundationalism” with its relativism or even nihilism? Could it still formulate “beliefs” that could be rationally defended, serving as “present truths”—or “pointers” to truth?

### 3.3 A “perspective” approach

Instead of focusing, like confessional scholars, on the text of the Bible, or like liberal theology making human beings and their religious experience the object of their study, Van Niekerk suggest a different approach. Theology should rather be seen as the theory of faith, but then faith as both *fides qua creditur* (the act of faith) as well as *fides quae creditur* (what I believe). Here, faith looks at history, reality, the documents of the church, the OT and NT texts, different societies and their local stories, and their operational theories.<sup>94</sup>

A narrative approach departs from a “perspective” way<sup>95</sup> of reading Scripture and its stories, and how it is being experienced and construed by different people from all possible positions.<sup>96</sup> It, however, rejects the Nietzschean perspectivism that has no norms of what is right or wrong. A narrative approach wishes to opt for a position that has openness to the complex relationship of things, and here the focus is on “relationships” that even make room

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92 Cornel du Toit, 1995. *Navorsing en waarheid? Aanpassings in die sistematiese teologie in die lig van veranderde kontekste*:8.

93 Du Toit, 1995:9

94 Van Niekerk, 1980:154-155. In the Adventist confessional approach, even more than the conservatives, the focus is on the text of the Bible. Theology is about God, and the Bible is the textbook concerned with human thinking about God. Theology cannot really be about this world or about humans; that would be humanistic. Van Niekerk, however, states that theology as a reflection on God flourished in Greek philosophy, where “...Plato and Aristotle were the prime influences”. Van Niekerk, 1988:154.

95 See also Merold Westphal, 2005. *Onto-theology, Metanarrative, Prespectivism, and the Gospel*:151. He states that postmodern philosophers can be described as perspectivist.

96 Gottfried Oosterwal, 1982. *Converting entire people*:2. Spectrum, 12(3). He notes that within an approach that focuses on “correct doctrine” the target audience has been forgotten, namely the very object of God’s mission. In this sense the message can either become an alien message or it can end in syncretisms.



for a limited meaning of the word “relativity”. A perspective approach rejects pastoral theology’s efforts to make particular beliefs and morals universal in the name of “timelessness” truths and truths outside culture (“cultureless” truths).<sup>97</sup> It does mean, however, that a phenomenon can be observed from different angles and different viewpoints,<sup>98</sup> but it does not support the view that all positions are equally correct or beneficial.<sup>99</sup> Westphal notes that because “we are not God” we cannot have an absolute, all-encompassing point of view.<sup>100</sup> From a “perspective” approach the same data is observed, but from different perspectives.<sup>101</sup> These different perspectives are important in challenging our own local stories and in creating “episodic” stories (as “present truths”), however, it cannot be captured by one individual, or even by group of people. The aim of a “perspective” approach is not to establish final and objective truths, but rather it is to construct “episodic pointers” which guide a narrative story-telling.<sup>102</sup> This needs to point the way forward for pastoral theology and pastoral care, not to consensus and the “antagonism of identity”, but rather to “solidarity”, and even to the “agonism of difference” (striving to overcome a strained difference). It can never ignore the “fact”, however, that we are continuously telling and retelling the stories of the Bible, but only within the limits of “present truth”. Whereas modernism opts for the levelling of differences, a narrative approach prefers the networking of differences.<sup>103</sup>

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97 Paulsen, 2008:8-9.

98 Vanhoozer, 2005:88, states that we can describe the same occurrence from a variety of levels and also from different aspects. See also Cilliers in footnote 358 of chapter four of the thesis.

99 A perspective approach needs to be differentiated from perspectivism—believing that every perspective has equal value. Groome, 1997:211, says that the most satisfying answer to both relativism and absolutism can be found in the writings of the feminist theorist, Sandra Harding. Her “standpoint epistemology” “...begins with the conviction that all knowing is from some perspective—from a context, interest, and politics—in other words from a standpoint. Then knowledge engages critical self-reflection to realize and name its own perspective—where one is ‘standing’ in constructing knowledge—and then to recognize why and how this standpoint shapes what is known.” It however, needs a multiplicity of other perspectives to make it more reliable. He maintains that this “... ‘standpoint epistemology’ epitomizes a humanizing way of knowing and can serve as a model for emancipatory knowing from other perspectives”. Groome, 1997:212.

100 Westphal, 2005:151.

101 Vanhoozer, 2005:88 states that we can describe the same occurrence from a variety of levels and also from different aspects.

102 Van Wyk, 1997:32 says that at most we can speak of relational truth, as a third way between objectivism and subjectivism.

103 See A. Gerhard van Wyk, 2000:105. See also Van Niekerk, 1995.

Grenz, in rejecting the classical foundationalism, proposes a non-foundationalist approach that is not anti-foundationalism.<sup>104</sup> He constructs his non-foundationalism on some of the notions of Pannenberg and Lindbeck, and in particular on the post-foundationalism of Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, which seems to be more helpful signposts for him.<sup>105</sup> Plantinga and Wolterstorff do not deny the validity of the foundationalist search for basic beliefs categorically. Actually, Plantinga goes so far as to agree that certain beliefs are basic. What these thinkers reject as arbitrary and indefensible is the Enlightenment foundationalist restriction on which beliefs can count as properly basic, a restriction that assigns religious beliefs to the realm of a “superstructure”.<sup>106</sup> Erickson, referring to Moreland and DeWeese, is also of the opinion that it is possible to construct a future foundationalism that will regard some conceptions and propositions as basic, from which other propositions can derive their validity, but without claiming indubitability, (certainty beyond question, dispute or doubt), as did classical foundationalism.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.4 Narrative and learning theories

Pastoral care is confronted with the question as to how “hurting” people, the pastoral counsellor and even the community of believers come to “know” “God’s story” and their own story; and how can people be transformed or changed by way of “knowing”?

Within modernism, and particularly within Adventism, to “know” is very much concerned with cognitive knowing. Within Adventism, to a large extent, John 8:32: “And you shall know the *truth*, and the *truth* shall make you free”, (italics added), is understood as *cognitive understanding* of confessional truths. Groome states that “...the human desire for truth,

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104 See Grenz, 2000: 184-217. It is also important to look to Wentzel van Huyssteen’s postfoundationalism. He states: “Over against the alleged objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of most forms of nonfoundationalism, postfoundationalism in theology and science wants to fully acknowledge contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that traditions shape the epistemic and nonepistemic values inform our reflection about God and our world. At the same time, a postfoundationalist notion of rationality would want to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture toward a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation.” J.W. Van Huyssteen, 1997b. *Should we be trying so hard to be postmodern? A response to Drees, Haught, and Yeager*:580. Müller’s (HIV/AIDS) social-constructionist approach is founded on Van Huyssteen’s postfoundationalism. Müller, 2004. Pieterse, 2007, also incorporates the postfoundationalism of Van Huyssteen in his methodology.

105 See Grenz, 2000:195-199 for a further discussion on Pannenberg and Lindbeck.

106 Grenz, 2000:200-201. Grenz states that “Plantinga claims unequivocally that belief in God ought at times to be viewed as properly basic.”

107 Erickson, 2004: 331.

always at the base of the will to know, was gradually limited to a rabid quest for rational certainty". The Western world was marked by the "... 'triumph of the mind,' and even of the Cartesian 'mind' as reason alone".<sup>108</sup> This has determined the role of imagination and memory in knowing and has excluded "...the corporeal, the affective, the aesthetic, and the relational".<sup>109</sup> Postmodernism also rejects the notion of an objective dispassionate observer. The so-called "expert", therefore, is being called into question, as well as "expert cognitive knowledge" simply being *applied* to a situation or a person as is often the case in confessionalism.<sup>110</sup>

*The thesis maintains that a narrative approach is a better way to let "hurting" people experience their identity or new identity, their own meaning-making and healing.* Dennis Rader and Jan Rader are convinced of the following:

Narrative is the larger relational whole within which facts reside. It is the ongoing story of a person, a community, a culture, an idea, or a study. It is the evolving context within which intellect and judgment determines the meaning of particular events or realities. Narrative is static in that it includes history (though the interpretation of that history may not be), and it is fluid, for it also includes the actualizing of potential, the evolution of both intention and capacity. It is the ever-restless bed within which stories flow and change direction.<sup>111</sup>

Whereas the narrative approach rejects rationalism that seeks to prove and make objective knowledge, it does not abandon the powers of reason.<sup>112</sup> We still need good reasons as well as justified reasons that our Christian and Adventist faith provides adequate interpretations and explanations for our experience of God, our belief in the Scriptures and Christian values.<sup>113</sup> A mere cognitive learning that focuses on "facts" about something, however, does not really contribute to fulfil the need for belonging and meaning that is so important for "hurting" people. In this regard Conradie contests that theology, as a form of faith, should be "...afgegrens moet word van 'n verselfverstandiging van die kognitiewe moment van geloof". ("...set apart from an independent cognitive aspect of faith" – own translation). He continues and states that such a "...verselfstandiging van die kennisstrewende veronderstel nie

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108 Thomas H. Groome, 1997:207.

109 Groome, 1997:207. See also in this regard point 3.3.1 of Chapter four of the thesis.

110 Clive Beck, 1993. *Postmodernism, Pedagogy, and Philosophy of Education*. [Website], available from: < [www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93\\_docs/BECK.HTM](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/93_docs/BECK.HTM) >.

111 Dennis R. Rader, and Jan Rader, [s.a.]: *The Three Little Pigs in a Postmodern World*. [Website], available from: < <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed98/drader.html> >.

112 Van Huyssteen, 1997b:574.

113 See van Huyssteen, 1997b:574.

*meer in sigself 'n aktuele heilsrelasie tussen God en mens nie*". ("...an independent striving for knowledge does not in itself assume a relevant redeeming relationship between God and a person" – own translation).<sup>114</sup> Falling prey to this theology means losing its "*aktuele karakter*". ("relevant character" – own translation).

Instead of focusing on the concepts of "knowledge" and "cognition" we should rather emphasise the notion of "wisdom" and "becoming wise".<sup>115</sup> According to Groome,

'Wisdom' and 'becoming wise' pertain to who and how people are, namely, to their identity and agency in the world. Wise people will have knowledge of one kind or another; but far beyond that, such people are wise in their very being, and this includes their thoughts, desires and choices.<sup>116</sup>

A narrative approach, therefore, needs to move, not only beyond objectivism and subjectivism, but also beyond cognitivism (the discipline of understanding) towards intersubjectivity, and the inclusion of the *affective and conative dimensions*. As Beck attests, "The interaction between expert and no-expert, teacher and taught, is often best seen as a dialogue or 'conversation' (to use Rorty's term), in which there is mutual influence rather than simply transmission from one to the other".<sup>117</sup>

In chapter four I noted that postmodernism has moved beyond individualism to a "holistic" approach. Based on the work of Bloom, Piaget and McKeachie, Pierre and Oughton indicate that a holistic approach requires that the cognitive, psychomotor (movement or muscular activity associated with mental processes) and affective domains be attended to in the educational curriculum.<sup>118</sup> In times past the emphasis in education and within theology has been

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114 Conradie, 1990:15.

115 Groome, 1997: 216.

116 Groome, 1997: 216. He states that although wisdom includes knowledge it avoids the liabilities of the dominant Western *episteme*.

117 Beck, 1993.

118 Eleanor Pierre, & John Oughton, 2007. *The Affective Domain: Undiscovered Country*:2. College Quarterly 2007 10(4): 1-7. [Website] available from: < [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/41/7e/76.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/41/7e/76.pdf) >. Lee in regard to a holistic concept asserts that "It certainly is valid to speak of a sphere of personal activity called 'cognitive' which can legitimately be distinguished by virtue of its functional characteristics from another sphere of personal activity called 'affective.' However, it is not valid to speak of cognitive activity as ever being untouched by the human organism's affective and psychomotor functions. Cognitive activity is never unaffected. In short, every human behaviour has its cognitive component, its affective component, its psychomotor component, and so forth. What makes one activity cognitive and another affective is the basic mode and axial thrust of the particular human behaviour or set of behaviours". James Lee, 1985. *The content of religious instruction. A social approach*:131.

focused very much on “behaviorism” and “cognitivism”<sup>119</sup> to the exclusion of the “*affective*” domain. According to Pierre and Oughton the affective domain has been severely neglected within the modernistic approach and they indicate several reasons for this negligence. There is the dichotomy “...between ‘body’, the emotions traditionally considered to stem from the heart, and ‘mind’”, where the heart is viewed as less trustworthy. There is also a large variation within the affective outcomes, causing them to be difficult to measure and making them “messy” and unpredictable.<sup>120</sup> The affective domain is also “...less predisposed to classification. While a considerable body of material existed with which to evaluate performance and achievement in the cognitive domain, only marginal work is available in the affective domain”.<sup>121</sup>

For this reason “...the affective content so frequently depicted in the Bible is typically ignored by religious educators who seem to regard biblical content basically in terms of cognitive knowledge of theological (cognitive) meaning”.<sup>122</sup> Lee supports this notion when he says that

One of the tragedies in the history of religious instruction is that persons have been sucked into the erroneous rationalist belief that somehow cognitive content represents absolute and certain truth, and that cognitive content suffices to set a person on the sure path to beatitude.<sup>123</sup>

Lee goes on to indicate that *however important the cognitive content may be it can never function independently of the affective processes*. He asserts that the “Cognitive content is important in religious instruction because it is indispensable to it”.<sup>124</sup> It, however, is “...the degree of ‘passionate commitment’ which a person has toward the knowing process [that] is directly related to the depth and the daring of his cognitive functioning”.<sup>125</sup> According to him this “commitment” belongs to the affective domain. Lee pointedly remarks that,

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119 “Cognitive content refers to any kind or type of intellectual content. It encompasses both the process content of intellectualizing and the product content which is yielded by the intellectualizing process. It should be underscored that cognitive content embraces all the diverse ways in which persons think as well as all the various intellectual fruits obtained from basically different modes of intellectualizing.” Lee, 1985:129.

120 Pierre & Oughton, 2007:3.

121 Pierre & Oughton, 2007:3.

122 Lee, 1985:197.

123 Lee, 1985:133.

124 Lee, 1985:134.

125 Lee, 1985:133.

One task of the religious teacher is to enable the learner to more consciously perform his cognitive functions in deliberative concert with the other noncognitive aspects of his personality. Holistic functionalism indicates that the more a person performs his cognitive functions in interactive harmony with his affective and psychomotor activities, the more subjectively and objectively fruitful these cognitive functions will thereby be rendered.<sup>126</sup>

Beck is in harmony with this notion when he attests that “We must employ reason *as well as* feeling, intuition, direct social influence, and so forth”.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the affective content is also of great value in education as well as in pastoral care, for as Lee asserts, “...a person is a cognitive and an affective animal”.<sup>128</sup>

Yet, Lee goes even further to indicate that despite its importance the affective content is not equipped to provide people with the fullness of meaning. It is his contention that the richness of meaning experienced by people can only come “...by the coordinated and integrated activities of his [her] cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and lifestyle behavior”.<sup>129</sup> To just “feel” something emotionally is by far not enough.

The “conation” is also of great value in coming to “know”.<sup>130</sup> The intentional, deliberate, striving towards and involvement in certain aspects of behaviour is essential in the learning process. As it is referring “...to the emotional interpretation of perceptions, information, or knowledge”, and associated with one’s attachment and relationship (positive or negative) to others, objects and ideas, it plays an important part in

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126 Lee, 1985:134.

127 Beck, 1993.

128 Lee, 1985:199. Lee attests that a person’s conduct is not determined by either the cognition or the affect, but by both. “Berard Marthaler reminds us that social-science research suggests that cognitive content is necessary but not sufficient for yielding morality, and I might add, for yielding effective Christian living. Affective content is so essential that there can be no true or authentic religious lifestyle without it. Cognitive content brings to Christian living an intelligence, a reflective awareness, an understanding and wisdom, and a descriptive view of what phenomena are and what the world can be and ought to be. For its part, affective content endows Christian living with a human and humane feeling-tone, passion, attitudes, values, and a personal immediacy and significance. Both contents are essential, just as both act as complementary reinforcers of each other as well as checks against each other.” Lee, 1985:201.

129 Lee, 1985:208.

130 W. Huitt, 1999. *Conation As An Important Factor of Mind*. [Website], available from: < <http://teach.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/regsys/conation.html> >, says that “Cognition refers to the process of coming to know and understand; the process of encoding, storing, processing, and retrieving information.” Referring to R. Snow, (1989). *Toward assessment of cognitive and conative structures in learning*, Huitt states that “One reason that the study of conation has lagged behind the study of cognition, emotion, and behavior is that it is intertwined with the study of these other domains and often difficult to separate”.

storytelling.<sup>131</sup> It does not only ask, how do I feel, but, “How do I feel about this knowledge or information?”<sup>132</sup> *The dimension of conation that explains how knowledge and emotion are translated into behaviour is very much lacking in the confessional pastoral care movement.*<sup>133</sup> Huitt says that if an individual is going to be successful in engaging “self-direction and self-regulation”, that individual needs motivational and proactive aspects of behaviour.<sup>134</sup>

Postmodernism has not only declared the death of the spectator, but also the introduction of the *participant*. Sassower maintains that scientists, from the year 1600 and onward, have viewed themselves as “spectators”. Postmodern scientists regard themselves as “participants” in the study of this world.<sup>135</sup> In a narrative approach to pastoral care not only does the counsellor become a participant, but also “hurting” people, by telling their stories.

Much in life is learned from active involvement. Beck asserts that for education to be meaningful there is a need for people to go out into society, homes, and schools, because “...philosophy is not a theoretical key that unlocks practice. Theory must be fundamentally rooted in practical experience if it is to be of value”.<sup>136</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger have also postulated that meaningful learning involves a process of engagement in a “community of practice”.<sup>137</sup>

In this regard Beck asserts that this calls for a dialogical approach to teaching, and I would add, and pastoral care.<sup>138</sup> He attests that “We must think increasingly in terms of ‘teachers

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131 Huitt, 1999.

132 Huitt, 1999.

133 Huitt, 1999, referring to R. Bagozzi, 1992. *The self-regulation of attitudes, intentions, and behaviour*:178-204.

134 W. Huitt, 1999.

135 R. Sassower, 1993. *Postmodernism and Philosophy of Science. A Critical Engagement*:434.

136 Beck, 1993.

137 “The term ‘community of practice’ is of relatively recent coinage, even though the phenomenon it refers to is age-old. The concept has turned out to provide a useful perspective on knowing and learning. A growing number of people and organizations in various sectors are now focusing on communities of practice as a key to improving their performance.” Etienne Wenger, [ca 2007]. *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. [Website]. available from: < <http://www.ewenger.com/theory> >.

138 According to Beck “We should work *with* students (and parents, as far as possible) in a dialogical manner, identifying outlooks which are an appropriate combination of old and new elements”. Beck, 1993.

and students learning together,’ rather than the one telling the other how to live in a ‘top-down’ manner”.<sup>139</sup> Siejk in support of this notion indicates that “Real dialogue requires real listening: an openness to one another and the recognition that another person has ‘something to say to me’, (Gadamer 1975, 324)”.<sup>140</sup> According to her this dialogue opens up spheres of “difference”, wonder and mystery, “...the ‘otherness,’ of people and things in our world. It drives us to explore and give voice to our life experiences”.<sup>141</sup> Thus, moving away from the notion of an “expert”, away from an applied methodology toward a relational one where both the “expert” and the “non-expert” enter into the “agonism of difference”, in order to discover meaning and healing.<sup>142</sup> According to Beck this should not simply be a “pooling of ignorance”, but rather, “To be effective, dialogue requires strong input of many kinds: information, examples, stories, feelings, ideas, theories, worldviews, and so on”.<sup>143</sup> In this way both theory and practice are brought into play.

Consequently, for pastoral care to have any kind of value we also need to consider the affective content and enter into a dialogical interaction between the pastoral care giver, the client and “God’s story”. A narrative approach is also biased toward the affective content and predisposed toward dialogue.

### **3.5 Narrative and metaphor**

We need to look closer at “religious language”, being the genre of Scripture, as we build further on chapter four’s discourse on language; we reflect on the Bible, pastoral care and an approach that moves beyond confessionalism, especially a narrative approach. Language is very much a part of how people formulate and give expression to their experiences and

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139 Beck, 1985.

140 Kate Siejk, 1995. *Wonder: The Creative Condition for Interreligious Dialogue*:230.

141 Siejk, 1995:231.

142 “The model of the dispassionate individual intellectual who discovers universal, unconditioned truth has been replaced by the idea that truth is historically and culturally conditioned and therefore relative to the group of which one is a part. Truth is social rather than individual. The method of arriving at the truth is not simply through rational investigation, but includes such affective factors as emotions and intuition. The optimistic hope of overcoming all society’s problems by the use of technology has been replaced by a concern about the economic and ecological future of our country and our globe.” Erickson, 1998:88-89.

143 Beck, 1993.



understanding of meaning.<sup>144</sup> Thus, “religious language” is very much a narrative view of, or approach to, the Bible.

A narrative approach to pastoral care needs to progress further than a mere literal reading of Scripture and also reads “Scripture as metaphor”, particularly within a narrative pastoral care context.<sup>145</sup>

As discussed, in chapter three, both the grammatical-historical and historical-critical methods have limited potential, particularly for a narrative approach.<sup>146</sup> Although Derrida’s deconstruction is a much needed method to reinterpret our beliefs, it, and in particular his grammatology, leaves us without “tools” to construct our stories and the biblical stories.<sup>147</sup> The thesis asserts that metaphor is just such a “tool”.

Van Huyssteen indicates that “...metaphor is more than a mere literary or poetic device”. He asserts that “TeSelle states rightly that ‘metaphor follows the way the human mind works’.

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144 “Crossan says that reality for human beings is found neither in the mind nor out in the world. Rather, reality is found in language, which is the intersection of both the mind and the world. Reality found in language takes its expression in the form of story. Crossan says that story takes different forms, depending upon its intent. Story takes its expression on a continuum from ‘myth’ to ‘parable.’”  
“A story which is told as myth has the purpose of reinforcing the legitimacy of a person’s present situation, protecting the status quo. Crossan concentrates on parabolic stories, both in literature and in the Bible. Parabolic stories, as Crossan understands them, have the intention of creating a contradiction in the world situation or world view of a person. The plot of a parable with its contradictory situation moves to a situation of reconciliation, creating a new order in the world.” Williams, 1986:10.

145 “In theology it offers exciting possibilities for examining our religious language as a direct expression of our religious experience. Moreover, when Max Black says that ‘metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight,’ and Sallie TeSelle says that ‘assertions are always implicit in metaphor,’ metaphor is seen as offering us a key to the theological cognitive processes as well as material for the ultimate formulation of adequate criteria for a creditable systematic-theological conceptual model. At the same time it becomes clear that any theory reducing metaphor to mere comparison, verbal transference, or linguistic ornamentation can offer no satisfactory or valid models for meaningful statements about God. It would be equally impossible to answer the question of metaphoric truth in direct, literalistic, or positivistic terms.” J.W. van Huyssteen, 1989. *Theology and The Justification of Faith: Constructing theories in systematic theology*:134.

146 Whereas the thesis does not wish to reject these methods totally, it has noticed the limited use of methods like the grammatical-historical method.

147 See in this regard Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 1998:111-112. *Is there meaning in this text*. He says, “Derrida coins the term ‘grammatology’ as the name for a study of ‘writing’ no longer governed by logocentrism. ...The text is not a lamp unto our feet that lights our path, but an unending labyrinth that leads everywhere and nowhere at once. ...grammatology insists that the meaning of texts is undecidable: there is more than one way to skin a text”. In addition, on page 12: “Grammatology is the undoing of any interpretation that treats its text as a seamless garment. The grammatologist teases out the loose threads, the opposing forces that crisscross the text itself.”

In this sense, metaphoric speech is as fundamental as thought”.<sup>148</sup> That is to say people are “wired” that way. McFague, therefore, asserts that what makes metaphorical statements within Scripture “...so powerful is that they are in continuity with the way we think ordinarily”.<sup>149</sup> Rice goes so far as to assert that metaphor and experience go hand-in-hand, claiming that “...metaphors are part and parcel of our experience from the outset. In other words, experience itself is metaphorical through and through”.<sup>150</sup> Metaphors, therefore, “...play an essential role in the way we experience. They give our experience shape and determine its emotional tone”.<sup>151</sup>

The function of metaphor according to Rice, is that, “We never simply *see*, we always *see-as*. ... We look at one thing as if it were another”.<sup>152</sup> Metaphor is a form of figurative speech where the obscured, or lesser known, or the unknown are viewed in the light of something else. McFague expresses it in this way:

Most simply, a metaphor is seeing one thing as something else, pretending ‘this’ is ‘that’ because we do not know how to think or talk about ‘this,’ so we use ‘that’ as a way of saying something about it.<sup>153</sup>

Metaphors help us to see the world in new ways by setting the familiar in the context of the unfamiliar. To make sense out of nonsense our imagination needs to follow the “semantic

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148 Van Huyssteen, 1989:134.

149 Sallie McFague, 1982. *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*:16.

150 Rice, 2002:89.

151 Rice, 2002:89. See also McFague, 1982:32. She draws our attention to the idea that “Metaphor is as ultimate as speech itself, and speech as ultimate as thought. ... Metaphor appears as the instinctive and necessary act of the mind exploring reality and ordering experience”. She goes on to assert that metaphor is not only for the learned, it is indigenous to all humans, from the simplest to the most complex.

152 Rice, 2002:89. “Metaphor has been defined as saying one thing and meaning another but, more accurately, it is speaking ‘about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.’ The metaphor is not one word or another but words acting together. ... In Black’s interaction theory, he understands metaphor to call up the ‘associated commonplace’ of the different words involved, so that one ‘filters and transforms’ the standard configuration of the other.

At the same time, the two regions do not collapse into one another. The two frameworks of meaning continue to be distinct. In this sense, metaphor must be both affirmed and denied.” D.R. Stiver, 1996. *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sing, Symbol, and Story*:115 & 117.

153 McFague, 1982:15. “From the time we are infants we construct our world through metaphor; that is, just as young children learn the meaning of the color red by finding the thread of similarity through many dissimilar objects (red ball, red apple, red cheeks), so we constantly ask when we do not know how to think about something, ‘what is it like?’ ... metaphor is ordinary language. It is the way we think.” McFague, 1982:15.

“Metaphor has long been recognized as a literary device that enables us to depict well-known things in striking and focused ways; in other words, metaphor adorns what we already know in dashing new clothes. Philosophically speaking, what is important about metaphor is that it can do more than embellish; it can direct us to what we have never seen before. The primary reference is negated only to open up reference at another level, ‘another power of speaking the world.’ As Ricoeur puts it, metaphor possesses an ‘ontological vehemence’ that leads us to redescribe reality.” Stiver, 1996:117.

direction of the metaphor”.<sup>154</sup> Metaphors, according to Ricoeur, therefore, are intentional category mistakes: “...things that do not normally belong together are brought together, and from the resulting tension a new connection is discovered that our previous ways of classifying the world hid from us.”<sup>155</sup> Hereby metaphor breaks the distance between remote ideas, and thus constructs similarities from dissimilarities.

Whereas metaphorical truth does not describe the literary nature of things it does re-describe what things are “like”. Herewith Ricoeur appeals to the tension between the literal sense and its metaphoric meaning. Metaphors signify that both a thing “is not” and “is like”. Ricoeur regards the verb “to be” as the heart of a metaphoric statement. We need to take cognisance of the “not” in the “is not”, without losing the “is”. The “is” should not be weakened, however, to an “as if”. “In mediating these two extremes, Ricoeur believes he does better justice to the ‘tensional’ character of the metaphorical ‘is’ and to metaphorical truth itself.”<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, the “truth” within Western modern thought is regarded as “what is” and the correspondence of mind to actuality. In this world of empirical objects “being” is limited to the here and now, whereas metaphors refer to a world that is deeper, thus enlarging the concept “truth”. Metaphor enlarges our vision of the world by expanding the real to include the “possible”. Ricoeur’s metaphorical truth needs to be seen as “being as” in the sense of “seeing as” and here he expands the real to also include the “possible”. Whereas “scientific language” attempts to take away the ambiguity of language, poetic language with its search

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154 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 1990. *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A study in hermeneutics and theology*:65.

155 Vanhoozer, 1990:64. Although the thesis finds it helpful to take notice of Ricoeur’s views on metaphor it does not accommodate his hermeneutics and view of Scripture without serious critique. Within the scope of the thesis it is not possible to discuss either Frei’s or Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and approaches to narrative, however, it is important to note that Frei and the Yale school’s approach stand in sharp contrast to Ricoeur’s biblical narrative. George Lindbeck, Hans Frei and David Kelsey believe that Ricoeur does not find himself within a Barthian hermeneutics—“faith seeking understanding” but rather within the paradigm of “faith seeking foundational intelligibility”. Frei asserts that, Ricoeur is fitting the Bible and its story into this world, rather than incorporating our world into the story of the Bible. Whereas Frei regards the Gospel stories as “history-like” or “realistic” and has an “intratextual” approach, he accuses Ricoeur’s view of the Gospel as mythological and even Gnostic and the literal specificity of the historical Jesus is replaced by his metaphorical reference. Vanhoozer, however, states that ultimately both Frei and Ricoeur’s views of the Gospel stories are inadequate (In this regard see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 1990. *Biblical narrative in the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A study in hermeneutics and theology*).

156 Vanhoozer, 1990:69.

for creative meaning regards polysemy (the ambiguity of a word to express two or more different meanings) as a virtue. Ricoeur

...suggests that the “mathematization” of nature which is the legacy of the Galilean and Copernican revolutions leads to a similar exigency for exactitude in the language of science.<sup>157</sup>

*By ignoring the metaphor we reinforce the prejudice that literal language is the only adequate relation between reality and language.* The relationship between us and others, or this world is not, however, adequately articulated by instrumental and descriptive language. Because literal language cannot express the possible—“what must be”, or “what might be”—consequently, it fails to serve humanity.<sup>158</sup> Vanhoozer says Ricoeur is linking the expansion of language to the expansion of being. The poetic capacity of metaphor to create meaning needs to be regarded as a capacity of being and in this sense metaphor refers to the “creativity of being itself”.<sup>159</sup> Metaphor, however, does not refer to the real as it is static, but as it is becoming, “as in act” and it enables an expressing of an “eschatological vision of the world”.<sup>160</sup> According to Van Niekerk metaphors present “*Neu-beschreibung*”,<sup>161</sup> it creates new meaning; with metaphor we experience the metamorphosis of both language and reality.

Ricoeur believes that metaphors serve as a unique cognitive instrument; it is not vulnerable to literal paraphrasing, but it tells us something new about reality. Metaphors bring a “surplus” of meaning and it always says more than paraphrasing. Thus, Ricoeur states, “I will consider metaphor as the touchstone of the cognitive value of literary works ...”<sup>162</sup> He agrees that metaphors “break” the relation between a thing and our language; however, this relation is restored, but on a higher level. In line with other scholars, therefore, he maintains that scientific discoveries are preceded by metaphorical imagination, indeed, for him all human discoveries are made possible via metaphoric invention. By doing away *with* the descriptive reference this enables metaphors to refer to reality in a new way: “...metaphor is that strategy of discourse by which language divests itself of its function of direct

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157 Vanhoozer, 1990:59.

158 Vanhoozer, 1990:61.

159 Vanhoozer, 1990:70.

160 Vanhoozer, 1990:71.

161 Anton A. Van Niekerk, 1985. *Die kognitiewe status van teologiese taalgebruik as analogiese taalgebruik*:513.

162 Paul Ricoeur, 1976. *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning*:45.

description in order to reach the mythic level where its function of discovery is set free.”<sup>163</sup> Vanhoozer states that Ricoeur has made the most important statement about metaphor, namely that, *as a rhetorical process it unleashes the power to describe reality anew*.<sup>164</sup> He is here also supported by Gerhart and Russel who maintain that metaphor “invents ideas,” and enables us to look to the world in a new way.<sup>165</sup>

According to Vanhoozer, Ricoeur’s thoughts on metaphor forms part of his project to restore the creative imagination—believing it is the “essence” of our “humanizing capacity”.<sup>166</sup> Although scientific language may be precise and “clear”, it is not existentially nourishing. Language that does not address the existential also does not speak to us, or open up new meanings, and it is committing the “original philosophical sin”.<sup>167</sup>

There is also this mistaken notion about poetry and the imagination, namely, that

...‘the poet nothing affirmeth’ that is, the idea that because poetry does not describe the actual world it does not say anything about reality. It is Ricoeur’s thesis that though poetry yields no *information* about the world, it does indeed reach and express another ‘layer’ of reality.”<sup>168</sup>

Some philosophers also disregard “feeling”. According to Ricoeur, however, we need to see feeling as much more than simply emotion. Feeling orientates us in a different way than mere knowledge can. Feeling also plays an important role. We do not only “see as”, but also “feel”, and this helps us to overcome the distance created by thoughts of objectifying. Feeling overcomes the existential distance between us and the known subject. Whereas feeling “involves” us with things—albeit on another level, knowledge is inclined to create a distance from the so-called object. This involvement is not only on a subjective level, but it is a profound connection to the Being and beings.<sup>169</sup> Feeling, unlike the objectifying methodology of literal language, and in particular, the grammatical-historical method, does not alienate us from the world, but presents a belonging. Vanhoozer came to the conclusion

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163 Paul Ricoeur, 1978. *The rule of metaphor*:247.

164 Vanhoozer, 1990:67.

165 See Mary Gerhard and Allen M. Russel, 1984. *Metaphoric process: The creation of scientific and religious understanding*:108.

166 Vanhoozer, 1990:56.

167 Vanhoozer, 1990:59.

168 Vanhoozer, 1990:61.

169 Vanhoozer, 1990:61

that for Ricoeur, “Metaphors, therefore, not only yield new insights into reality, but also suggest new ways of orienting oneself in the world”.<sup>170</sup>

In this regard a narrative approach is in line with Vos that Paul Ricoeur’s views on language, metaphor, and narratives have important implications not only for preaching,<sup>171</sup> but it also challenges pastoral care and its reading of Scripture and story-telling. We also need to agree to some extent with Janse van Rensburg, however, that the interaction between the reader and the context “...could elicit a new narrative that does not always concur with the realities of Scripture”.<sup>172</sup> *Consequently, one has to take note of the potential of a narrative approach to pastoral care within Adventism, and has to incorporate it in a limited and critical way.*<sup>173</sup>

Müller, referring to pastoral therapy, points out that the therapeutic task takes place via language, and supports the idea that language is metaphorical by nature.<sup>174</sup> He says “...*dat taal die voorwaarde vir verstaan is en dat taal fundamenteel metafories is*”. (“...that language is the prerequisite for understanding and that language is fundamentally metaphorical” – own translation).<sup>175</sup> McFague supports this notion and claims that language stands between us and reality, “...it is the medium through which we are aware of both our relationship to ‘what is’ and our distance from it”.<sup>176</sup> In harmony with this Van Huyssteen

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170 Vanhoozer, 1990:66.

171 C.J.A. Vos, 1996. *Homiletiese flitse in die hermeneutiese spieël van Paul Ricoeur* (2):77.

172 Janse van Rensburg, 2000:86-87. He is convinced that Ricoeur’s constructivist hermeneutics does open the door to “a postmodern frame of mind”. Janse van Rensburg is often thinking of postmodernism in terms of radical or hard postmodern.

173 See Janet M. Soskice, 1985. *Metaphor and Religious language*:84-90. She states that Ricoeur thoughts on metaphor comes “perilously close” to a kind of “dual meaning” and “dual truth” indicating that the literal meaning is seen as “false” whereas the metaphorical sense is believed to be “true”. Secondly she also raises the problem of the nature of metaphorical reference and this may, by implication, questions the viability of Ricoeur’s view on metaphor for a theological realism. She rejects Ricoeur’s views that metaphor is not a form of descriptive language. She maintains that Ricoeur regard, for example, the parables as merely human experience. See also Vanhoozer, 1990:75. He states that “Ricoeur’s mediation of the ‘is’ and ‘is not’ of metaphor results in the ambiguous notion of ‘being as.’ The question remains whether Ricoeur’s view of metaphor does not in the end slide down the ‘slippery slope’ towards the ‘as if,’ into the arms not of Bultmann but Vaihinger”.

174 “Hoewel Gadamer in sy boek, *Truth and method*, min oor metafore as sodanig sê, maak hy die volgende belangrike opmerking: (“Although Gadamer states little about metaphors as such in his book, *Truth and method*, he makes the following important statement:” - own translation). ‘It is obvious that the particularity of an experience finds expression in metaphorical transference and it is not at all the fruit of a concept formed by means of abstraction. But it is equally obvious that knowledge of what is common is obtained in this way.’” Julian C. Müller, 1998. *Die Waarde van Metafore Binne die Hermeneuties-pastorale Sisteem*:64.

175 Müller, 1998:65.

176 McFague, 1982:34.

asserts that language is not merely the ultimate basis for, or precise expression of, experience, but it is also highly figurative and metaphorical.<sup>177</sup> According to him, this metaphorical quality of religious language moves toward “...a relational, reality-depicting, or referential character”.<sup>178</sup> He goes so far as to postulate that,

Throughout its long tradition Christian reflection has always been markedly conscious of the provisional and limited nature of our religious language, and thus also of the necessity for figurative or metaphoric language. ...Even the various biblical authors found an encounter with reality referred to in religious language so overwhelming that it was totally impossible for them to speak of it neutrally, reflectively, or with ‘objective’ detachment. And since it lies in the relational nature of religious language that it can never be seen as a mere expression of religious engagement, religious language is also most specifically concerned with the object of that engagement. And it is the disclosure of that object by metaphoric means that constitutes the structure of all religious language.<sup>179</sup>

Because the narrative approach makes use of “language imagery”, it paints vivid pictures that address the “whole” person. Within a narrative approach Booyesen asserts that imagery “...make things clearer and lift the everyday above the common place. Images take things that the senses cannot grasp and make it easier to interpret and aid in experiencing religion, as it takes the transcendental and makes it more earthly, and gives the earthly a deeper meaning”.<sup>180</sup> Metaphors are pre-rational and they influence us at “...a deeper psychological and emotional level than concepts alone could ever do”.<sup>181</sup> Scholars like Ricoeur, McFague, Van Huyssteen and Rice agree that religious metaphor does not only open up deeper meanings, but it shapes and give meaning to our experiences. It could be said that “...the attitudes and convictions that shape our lives depend on the particular metaphors with which we think and feel”.<sup>182</sup>

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177 “The language we use to articulate our most immediate religious experiences is not only the ultimate basis for confessional and theological language, but is usually also—precisely as an expression of our religious experience—figurative or metaphorical in a very particular sense. The metaphoric nature of all religious language also highlights the provisionality or limitations of that language. In this sense metaphoric religious language might also be described as limit-language: a language consisting of limit-questions and limit-answers about the crucial limit-situations of life.” Van Huyssteen, 1989:132.

178 Van Huyssteen, 1989:133.

179 Van Huyssteen, 1989:133.

180 Booyesen, 2002:38 & 39.

181 Rice, 2002:92.

182 Rice, 2002:90.

Metaphors, therefore, open the door for a “re-visioning” or a “re-imagining” of the Scriptures, and according to James, unleash “...the powerful possibilities and passion of our faith, to give a new look at the gospel and a new vision of God”.<sup>183</sup> McFague maintains that when poets speak of the great unknown—morality, love, joy, guilt, hope, and so forth—they use metaphors. For the same reason the Scriptures are especially rich in the use of metaphoric language.<sup>184</sup> Thus, it is understandable that Jesus’ teachings were steeped in parables, which are known as “extended metaphors”.<sup>185</sup> *A narrative approach, appreciating the dynamics of metaphor, can rediscover the enchantment, awe and wonder, which is so much needed for a pastoral care ministry. Metaphors empower meaning to be alive at the affective experiential level and also long after the “facts” are forgotten.*

Consequently, Eberhard Jüngel in his essay, “Metaphorical Truth”, departs from the point of view that religious language needs to do away with the control of literal discourse and must question its potential to refer to “actuality”.<sup>186</sup> Jüngel, according to Van Niekerk, states that although metaphor does not represent the “actual” in the sense of the correspondence theory, it does express truth.<sup>187</sup> Maintaining that religious language does not correspond to actuality, he researched the potential of metaphor “...as a form of religious language insofar as it

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183 Steven James, 2006. *Story: Recapture the mystery*: Back cover page.

184 “The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, is exceptionally rich in metaphor in all its literary forms. Since the Bible in virtually all its genres comes to us in narrative form the metaphoric and relational character of biblical religious language becomes all the more explicit. In fact, the Bible’s analogical language in terms of metaphor already provides the key to relevant and creditable statements about God.” van Huyssteen, 1989:134.

185 Goldberg indicates that, “By ‘parable,’ she [McFague] means an ‘extended metaphor,’ and she claims that our need for metaphor lies in the fact that ‘metaphor follows the way the human mind works. Metaphor is not only a poetic device for the creation of new meaning, metaphor is as ultimate as thought. It is and can be the source for new insights because all human beings to be the kind of creatures we uniquely are—‘the only creatures in the universe... who can envision a future and consciously work toward achieving it.’ ... In sum, the structure of both metaphor and thus the structure of human perceived reality as well”. Goldberg, 1982:162-163.

Sallie TeSelle (Sallie McFague). 1975. *Speaking in Parables : A study in metaphor and theology*:13. “A parable is an *extended* metaphor—the metaphor is not in discrete images which allow for a flash of insight (a purely aesthetic or intellectual ‘Aha!’), but it is a way of believing and living that initially seems ordinary, but is so dislocated and rent from its usual context that, if the parable ‘works,’ the spectators become participants, not because they want to necessarily or simply have ‘gotten the point,’ but because they have, as the new ‘hermeneuts’ say, ‘been interpreted.’ The secure, familiar everydayness of the story of their own lives has been torn apart; they have seen another story—the story of a mundane life like their own moving by a different ‘logic,’ and they begin to understand (not just with their heads) that another way of believing and living—another frame or context for their lives—might be a possibility *for them*.” McFague, 1974:634.

186 See the chapter of Eberhard Jüngel, 1974. *Metaphorische Wahrheit*:70-122.

187 See Van Niekerk, 1985:514. He refers to the work of Jüngel, 1974:105.



expresses *more* than actuality, that is, possibility”.<sup>188</sup> Like Ricoeur, Jüngel wants to take metaphor seriously and demands “...a realism capable of embracing the ontological force of possibility”.<sup>189</sup> For a narrative approach and story telling the language of faith must transcend the “actual” and reach for the eschatological. Vanhoozer came to the conclusion that metaphor is the “...indispensable expression of the passion for the possible”.<sup>190</sup>

#### **4 Pastoral care, narrative and dialogue: Four stories**

As I have indicated above, people relate with each other and to life via the affective, conative, as well as the cognitive content in and through narrative. A narrative approach advocates a type of dance, which engages the listener and the community into the story of the teller via “creative dialogue”, and from a Christian perspective, God too, is drawn into the relationship and becomes relevant in the story telling and retelling. As people interact with each other, becoming participants in telling and re-telling their stories and the story of God, *a new story is born, a story of hope and healing.*

In chapter four I indicated that communication within a narrative approach is more inclined towards a “toolmaker’s” paradigm where agonism of difference and networking are held in high regard. As indicated above, and in harmony with Fouché and Smit, we note the importance of *dialogue*,<sup>191</sup> in the sense of story-telling, rather than isolation and detachment to facilitate the interaction between the stories. Cilliers refers to this as the “agonistics of network”. Rather than being isolated and self-sufficient, narratives “...are in constant interaction with each other in a battle for territory, so to speak, where the provisional boundaries between them are the very stakes in the game”.<sup>192</sup> Fouché and Smit assert that

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188 Vanhoozer, 1990:73.

189 John Webster, 1986. *Eberhard Jüngel: An introduction to his Theology*:46.

190 Vanhoozer, 1990:77.

191 H.L. Fouché, & D.J. Smit, 1996. *Inviting Dialogue on ‘Dialogue’*.

192 Cilliers, 1995:128. “In the social network, discourses are similarly spread over many ‘selves.’ No discourse ‘represents’ some aspect of a metanarrative, there is merely the ‘pattern of activity’ over a large group of individuals exchanging local information. One should not make the mistake of assuming that a person is described by a single node in the network. A human is far more complex than that. Furthermore, each person is also part of many larger patterns. One can be mother, a scientist, a consumer, a political activist, an artist and a lover, all at the same time. The social network (similar to connectionist networks) is highly distributed. The argument that claims that postmodernism results in isolation misses the target completely. We only find—and define—ourselves within the rich and shifting patterns of social interaction, not as coherent, self-contained individuals.” Cilliers, 1995:128.

although dialogue is but one tradition among many, “...it must be extended *as no one has yet come up with a better idea*”.<sup>193</sup>

In this regard I suggest that there are four stories interacting one with the other—the client’s story, the pastor’s story, and the story of *Scriptures as told by the community of believers, and by the Holy Spirit*—a careful triangulation (triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon<sup>194</sup>). It is a setting where through “...dialogue different views and current opinions are *interwoven* in an ongoing process”.<sup>195</sup>

#### 4.1 The client’s story: “A living human document”

Every person has a voice, every person has a story, and every person is a dynamic creative human being. A person’s story, a person’s life and a person’s context are to be regarded as valuable.

All people have stories, which provide identity, meaning and value to their existence, as well as bestow uncertainty, fear and pain onto their lives. Their lived experience is also fashioned and moulded by the stories of others and their contexts. Gerkin maintains that, “The ‘story’ of an individual life begins with the earliest experience of being a self separate from other selves”.<sup>196</sup> Curtis and Eldredge propose that this human story consists of an “external” and “internal” story. They say that,

On the outside, there is the external story of our lives. This is the life everyone sees, our life of work and play and church, of family and friends, paying bills, and growing older. Our external story is where we carve out the identity most

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193 Fouché, & Smit, 1996:86.

194 “In the social sciences, **triangulation** is often used to indicate that more than two methods are used in a study with a view to double (or triple) checking results. This is also called ‘cross examination’. The idea is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result. If an investigator uses only one method, the temptation is strong to believe in the findings. If an investigator uses two methods, the results may well clash. By using three methods to get at the answer to one question, the hope is that a) two of the three will produce similar answers, or b) if three clashing answers are produced, the investigator knows that the question needs to be reframed, methods reconsidered, or both.” *Triangulation (social sciences)*. [Website], available from: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangulation\\_\(social\\_science\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangulation_(social_science))>.

195 Fouché, & Smit, 1996:86.

196 Charles V. Gerkin, 1984. *The Living Human Document*:20.

others know. It is the place where we have learned to label each other in a way that implies we have reached our final destination.<sup>197</sup>

It is a story fashioned by the expectations, values and norms of a society. It is the stories we live when in community with others. It is our public stories. Then, there are the secret stories:

The inner life, the story of our *hearts*, [which] is the life of the deep places within us, our passions and dreams, our fears and our deepest wounds. It is the unseen life, the mystery within ... It cannot be managed like a corporation. The heart does not respond to principles and programs; it seeks not efficiency, but passion. Art, poetry, beauty, mystery, ecstasy. These are what rouse the heart (*italics added*).<sup>198</sup>

The inner story is the secret story of love, dreams, wishes, desires, expectations, doubts, fears, uncertainty, memories and hurts. It is where pain, joy and secrets are nurtured; it is the story of the heart. Narratives are windows through which one can look, respectfully, into the heart and hear these secret stories.

It is these secret stories that need to be held in high regard and treated with the utmost respect, for these are the stories that God knows—"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me" (Psalm 139:1)<sup>199</sup>—*these are the stories pastoral care needs to relate to*. Curtis and Eldredge suggest that as people live their lives, "The true story of every person in this world is not the story you see, the external story. The true story of each person is the journey of his or her heart".<sup>200</sup> As people live and tell the external story, they reveal something of the internal story, but it is often masked and camouflaged within the external stories. It, therefore, can very often go unnoticed and is misinterpreted and disregarded by others, especially in the modernistic world where the focus is on objective facts and prescribed norms. Disregarding these internal stories is often experienced as an "invalidation",<sup>201</sup> or a rejection—it is a sense of, "no one cares for me", "no one understands me", and "no one

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197 Curtis, & Eldredge, 1997:5.

198 Curtis, & Eldredge, 1997:6.

199 See also the Psalm 139:2-24.

200 Curtis, & Eldredge, 1997:7.

201 By "invalidation" I mean the lack of acknowledgment, a lack of credit being given to the lived experience of another's feelings and thoughts; for example, a mother telling children on a cool cloudy day to put a jersey on. When the children protest, claiming they are not feeling cold, the mother responds emphatically, "I said put on jerseys". Consequently, the mother has invalidated the children's experiences; she does not take the children's feelings into account, but enforces what she believes to be the best for the children. Invalidation stands over against "validation". Validation is where the thoughts, feelings and experience others are given recognition, are acknowledged and respected, even if one does not agree with them. Validation means to attach value to the experience of another.

hears me”. It is these stories that the pastoral care giver needs to listen to, to nurture and to bring into the presence of God in a respectful way, as people search for meaning and healing in their broken and confused lives.

According to Morgan people are “interpreting beings”, constantly seeking to provide meaning to their experiences, with which they are confronted as they live their lives. As we have noted above, she points out that this meaning is the “Stories we ... create through linking certain events together in a particular sequence across a time period, and finding a way to explain or make sense of them. This meaning forms the plot of the story”.<sup>202</sup> The plot reveals the dynamic nature of the affective relationships people have with others, their environment and God. They reveal the individuality of each person’s experience of reality and the meaning they attach to this reality—not making it right or wrong—but different, recognising that people are creative beings. A narrative approach within a pastoral care ministry respects this individuality and attaches value to the plot of the story, (but it does not necessarily agree with it).

Some may question this notion as being relativistic, and granting too much authority to the individual’s story—with good reason. According to Rice, “Individualism is the nemesis of community, but individuality is not”.<sup>203</sup> He proposes that individualism is a product of the Enlightenment,<sup>204</sup> based on the assumption that individuality and community stand in opposition to each other.<sup>205</sup> He maintains, however, that “Individuality and community are

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202 Alice Morgan, 2000. *What is Narrative Therapy? An easy-to-read introduction*:5. “We all have many stories about our lives and relationships, occurring simultaneously. For example, we have stories about ourselves, our abilities, our struggles, our competencies, our actions, our achievements, our failures. The way we have developed these stories is determined by how we have linked certain events together in a sequence and by the meaning we have attributed to them.” Morgan, 2000:5-6.

203 Rice, 2002:152.

204 “Although concern for the individual has a long history, the sort of individualism we have been examining is a fairly recent phenomenon, according to some scholars no more than two hundred years old or so. It is the product of Enlightenment thinkers, who viewed the self as ‘a single atomic isolate, bounded by the skin, its chief value residing precisely in some core of individuality, of difference.’ Accordingly, we get to the true self by peeling away everything that connects us to other people. The real self is the unique, core self, which ‘values itself most for what is supposedly utterly different and unconnected about it.’ According to this view, the most important things about us, the center of our identity, consist of the features that separate and distinguish us from everyone else. ... Furthermore, Descartes identified the true self, the essence of the human person, as the self-conscious, self-determining soul. This understanding of human nature has an isolating, atomizing effect on human beings. It leaves each of us separated from everyone else in a cocoon of private thought.” Rice, 2002:153-154.

205 “Individualism rests on the assumption that individual and community are inherently opposed to each other.” “The distorted form of individuality is individualism; the distorted form of community is collectivism. Both individuality and community are essential to human fulfillment.” Rice, 2002:155 & 157.

not only compatible, they are also mutually supportive”.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, he maintains that “One of the great achievements of human history is the value we now place on the individual person”.<sup>207</sup> What is more is that Christianity affirms this individuality: “The Bible upholds the dignity and value of the individual person in various ways.”<sup>208</sup> It is individuals who are created and re-created in the image of God, and it is individuals that constitute the “community” or “priesthood of believers”, making up the church of God. It is these individuals who are confronted with unique experiences and attach certain meanings and values to these experiences in their lives.

Gerkin, developing Boisen’s image of the human experience, claims that, “To speak of a person as a living human document is to acknowledge [the] connection between life and language”.<sup>209</sup> Thus, in order to understand the “...other in the depth of that other’s inner world is a hermeneutical task”.<sup>210</sup> Consequently, this approach recognises that the hermeneutical task is a human activity and, thus, is an interpretive task in need of constant reinterpretation. The task for pastoral care, therefore, is to listen to these stories, interpreting and reinterpreting them to give them their rightful space and place; also to assist people to “reconnect” with God’s story, discovering the broader meaningful aspects of their own story.<sup>211</sup>

## **4.2 The pastor’s story: “Death of the spectator”, resurrection of the participant**

As we noted in chapter four the search for objectivity is reductionistic and promotes detachment from reality. Stephen Toulmin, on the other hand, presents a very strong argument against this objective “spectator” attitude of modernity. He claims that, “The

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206 Rice, 2002:159.

207 Rice, 2002:152.

208 Rice, 2002:152-153.

209 Gerkin, 1984:40.

210 Gerkin, 1984:40.

211 “In the changed situation, an overriding task of pastoral care is assisting persons to sustain that context of meaning in all aspects of their lives, individually and corporately. Said another way, a primary goal of pastoral care, as well as its overriding problem, becomes that of finding ways to help persons to live in the modern world with a sustaining consciousness of the Judeo-Christian narrative that tells them who they are and who they are to be.” Gerkin, 1986:30.

option of being mere spectators is no longer open to us: we are all of us, willy-nilly, agents in all that we observe”.<sup>212</sup>

Toulmin argues that by nature we are involved with our whole environment—the objects of our knowledge—and not disconnected or detached from it. For us to assume a detached, neutral, spectator attitude is not natural, it has to be a “learned skill”.<sup>213</sup> He pointedly states:

On the minutest level of scientific analysis, Laplace’s ideal of the scientist, as ‘an unobserved, uninfluenced observer’ studying the world of nature through a one-way mirror, is unattainable in principle for reasons of basic physical theory. There can be no simple, one-way coupling between a physicist and (say) the electrons that he [/she] selects as his [/her] objects of study. However delicate and minuscule our acts of observation on any subatomic particle may be, they will alter the particle’s existing position or momentum, and so limit the precision with which its current condition can be known.<sup>214</sup>

He gives an example of pedestrians being observed by a distant researcher, but at becoming aware of the observation taking place, the subjects tend to change their behaviour.<sup>215</sup> The observer, even though at a physical distance from the subjects, is not detached or neutral, but is having an influence on the behaviour of those being observed.

Consequently Toulmin observes that,

... science moves beyond the traditional Cartesian dichotomies, and reinserts humanity itself into the overall scientific world picture, the limitations of the spectator’s posture once again become clearly apparent. The complex relationships that are the concern of ecology, for instance, involve human beings as elements within networks and cycles of natural interactions—in food chains, predator-prey, and other such two-way relationships—and the investigating scientist can no more opt out from these reciprocal relationships than can the framer.<sup>216</sup>

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212 Toulmin, 1982:238.

213 Toulmin claims that “...any ability we may develop to set ourselves apart from our objects of knowledge, or to view them with the detachment of a pure onlooker, is secondary and derivative: it is an art that we learn only after a time, as we go along.” According to him, “We begin our lives by being emotionally involved, and caught up in reciprocal relations, with all that we know at all well or closely: we can achieve the peculiar objectivity of the intellectual spectator only by learning to detach (or abstract) ourselves from that reciprocal involvement with the objects of our knowledge”. Toulmin, 1982:246.

214 Toulmin, 1982:249-250.

215 Toulmin says that when it comes to the social sciences, “...the ‘coupling’ between the scientist and his research subject rarely goes entirely one way. A social scientist may approach this situation with humans by conducting a visual survey of pedestrians crossing the street at an intersection, by watching them from an upper-story window in a neighboring office block. But even that methodology is not infallible: if only those same pedestrians become aware of the social scientist’s observing eye, we all know how countersuggestible they may respond!” Toulmin, 1982:248-249.

216 Toulmin, 1982:250.

He states it rather emphatically, “the scientist as spectator is dead”. “From now on, the scientists’ conception of ‘theory’ can no longer be that of pure spectatordom (views of a spectator; *added by researcher*)...”<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, he is of the opinion that this is especially true of the social sciences. He claims that the research subject should not and cannot be treated as a mere object.

In this regard Dreyer supports Toulmin when he asserts that the “...view of the researcher as a detached observer, who stands outside the research situation and who has to control all subjectivities including his/her own”, has been challenged.<sup>218</sup> The search for understanding and meaning requires a different kind of approach. There is a need for “a *Verstehen* or *insider* approach”. The researcher cannot gain a meaningful understanding of the “life-world” of the subject through an objective stance. To gain meaningful insight the researcher needs an “entering into” the “life-world” of the subject as an insider.<sup>219</sup>

It is also important to note, however, that Dreyer indicates that there is a dilemma when it comes to the participant/insider and detached/outsider dualism.<sup>220</sup> Referring to Paul Ricoeur’s “dialectical thinking”, he proposed that we should not view these as diametrically opposed to each other, but rather that there is a dynamic tension between the researched and the researcher, the insider and the outsider. It is Ricoeur’s and Dreyer’s understanding that both sides of the dualism are focused on the same goal, in this way overcoming “ideologies”. They maintain that neither can be ignored, but that a hermeneutical dialectic between belonging and distancing needs to be entered into.<sup>221</sup> So, also theologians, pastors

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217 Toulmin, 1982:252-253.

218 “Today ‘traditional’ or ‘modernistic’ approaches (both quantitative and qualitative) to research are radically challenged from many sides. The devastating critique of the objectivistic view, the questioning of expert cultures, and more insight in the relation between knowledge and power has led to a questioning of the epistemological authority of scientific (academic) experts and the severe critique of and/or abandoning of the ideal of objective knowledge.” Dreyer, 1998:17-18.

219 Dreyer, 1998:17.

220 “It is at this point that I would like to introduce the theological ideas of Paul Ricoeur, a master of dialectical thinking. ‘Where others see only dichotomies, Ricoeur sees dialectics,’ writes Charles E. Reagan. Reagan however quickly draws attention to the fact that Ricoeur’s dialectical method never results in ‘lazy eclecticism’ or the mere combination of elements from both poles. The result of his dialectical analyses is not a Hegelian third term that renders the original poles useless. Instead, the tension of the original dualism is retained.” Dreyer, 1998:20.

221 “Can these hermeneutical principles, and more specifically the dialectic between belonging and distancing, help us to overcome the dualism implied by the researcher’s role as insider or outsider? My thesis is that the opposite poles of insider and outsider could be dialectically related on the basis of the dialectic between belonging and distancing. Why? Because the insider/outside dualism is tied to the

and caregivers can no longer have an attitude of being neutral observers and “proclaimers” of truth. Living and working in a postmodern world, we can no longer address theology or the real life stories of the congregation from a detached “pastor’s study”-perspective. It is time to move away from a mere proclamation-oriented approach to a dialogue between the insider and the outsider. There is a need to getting down into the dust of daily living, listening to people telling their own stories and getting involved with their struggles.<sup>222</sup>

Gerkin calls for pastoral caregivers to be “listeners”; “To listen to stories with an effort to understand means to listen first as a stranger who does not yet fully know the language the nuanced meanings of the other as his or her story is being told.”<sup>223</sup> There is a need to hear the inner story. Then he warns that as one listens to the story of pain, the temptation must be resisted and avoided to take the story for granted or to stereotype it: the urge must be resisted to tell the truth and set the record straight. So, the caregiver as an outsider needs to listen to the story and to move into the story, becoming an insider with his or her own story, respecting and valuing the story of the storyteller.<sup>224</sup>

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same science-ideology dialectic. The intention of both the insider/engaged participant and the outsider/detached observer perspective is to eliminate or at least to reduce ideology. From the insider/engaged participant perspective the aim is to eliminate or to reduce the researcher’s ideological (subjective) interpretations by stressing the importance of the interpretations of the research participants (the researched). The researcher therefore has to immerse him/herself in the lifeworld(s) of the researched (the moment of belonging) so that their voices (interpretations) are not muted by the researcher’s interpretations. On the other hand: from the outsider/detached observer perspective the aim is to eliminate or to reduce the ideological interpretations (‘false consciousness’) of the researched and of the researcher him/herself (the self-distancing which is implied by distanciation). The researcher therefore cannot take the interpretations of the researched at face value, but has to take a critical (objectifying) stance (the moment of distanciation).

The hermeneutical dialectic between belonging and distanciation is thus at the heart of the methodological dialectic between the insider/engaged participant perspective and the outsider/detached observer perspective. An insider perspective implies belonging to the lifeworlds of the research participants, and an outsider perspective presupposes distanciation. As with belonging and distanciation, we need both these methodological perspectives. If we let go of the insider perspective, if we fail to recognise the ‘primordial relation of belonging,’ the result is an *alienating distanciation* (*Verfremdung*). On the other hand, if we ignore the outsider perspective, we lose the possibility of a critique of ideology, with the danger of lapsing ‘into full relativism, into complete historicisms’ and a killing of research itself.” Dreyer, 1998:22.

222 “Far from being free to sit in the stands and watch the action with official detachment, like the original *theoroi* at the classical Greek games, scientists today find themselves down in the dust of the arena, deeply involved in the actual proceedings. They had thought of themselves as spectators; but they have been forced to doubt, at the very least, as team trainers and physicians.” Toulmin, 1982:252.

223 Gerkin, 1984:27.

224 “But if the pastoral counselor is a good listener, he or she will soon recognize that there are subtle differences in the way individuals within the same cultural milieu make use of language symbols and images. Private meanings that come from private interpretive experience permeate the telling of the story. So the pastoral counselor soon learns that he or she is living on the boundary, ‘looking over the fence,’ as it were, catching glimpses of the meanings, images, symbols, and mythic themes by which the other person is interpreting his or her experience.” Gerkin, 1984:27.



It should be remembered that as the pastor listens to the story of the “other”, he/she too has a story. The pastor also has experiences that are made up of “outer” and “inner” stories, sharing the human condition. The pastor also has stories of joy and suffering, peace and hardship from their own lived experience and encounter with God. Nouwen, therefore, maintains that “For a deep understanding of his [/her] own pain makes it possible for him [/her] to convert his [/her] weakness into strength and to offer his [/her] own experience as a source of healing to those who are often lost in the darkness of their own misunderstood suffering”.<sup>225</sup> He asserts that “...no minister can offer service without a constant and vital acknowledgment of his [/her] own experience”.<sup>226</sup> “Similarly, no revolutionary can avoid facing his [/her] own human condition, since in the midst of his [/her] struggle for a new world he [/she] will find that he [/she] is also fighting his [/her] own reactionary fears and false ambitions.”<sup>227</sup> The pastoral care givers also have stories to tell, not a frivolous display of their own suffering or a pious exhibition of their wellbeing, but a respectful acknowledgment of their own humanness.

As the pastor interacts with the storyteller, their stories begin to merge with each other. In a respectful, sensitive way the pastoral caregiver “...brings his or her own interpretation of life experience with its use of both commonly held symbols, images, and themes from the cultural milieu of the counsellor, and the private, nuanced meanings that have been shaped by the pastoral counsellor’s own life experience and its private interpretation”<sup>228</sup> into the present discourse. So, according to Gerkin, the caregiver and the client enter into a “dialogical hermeneutical process” where the two move back and forth across “the

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“If one is to hear truly what the other person has to say in its own integrity, there must be a breaking through of the barrier that stands between the language world of the hearer and that of the speaker. Stated more fundamentally, to ‘know’ another means to enter that person’s world in such a way that a merging of experienced reality can take place. ... To know another in the incarnation sense is to enter that other’s world and to have the other enter our world. Hermeneutically speaking, this is possible only because of and to the extent that we are able to enter the other’s language world, the world of the other’s meanings. In the same way, if we are to be known by the other person, the other must in some degree enter our world, the language of meaning which we bring to the encounter.” Gerkin, 1984:43.

225 Henri J.M. Nouwen, 1972. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*:87.

226 Nouwen, 1972:88.

227 Nouwen, 1972:19.

228 Gerkin, 1984:27. “The pastoral counselor as interpreter, like the reader of the New Testament, does not come empty-handed. He or she comes bearing a history and a language world. More accurately, he or she comes embedded in a personal and social history and immersed in one or more language worlds from which the images, symbols, and meanings are drawn with which to make an interpretation.” Gerkin, 1984:43.

boundaries of language worlds”<sup>229</sup> in search for meaning. The pastor is not the specialist, nor a spectator or a passive expert who gives *ad hoc*, simplistic answers to complex problems. He/she is interactively and relationally involved in the story of pain. Out of their own stories and from an introduction of God’s story relief and hope for the client is sought after.

### 4.3 “God’s story”: “The Word of God”

The thesis departs from the point of view that “God’s story” needs to be an integral part of this dialogical hermetical process and cannot be ignored. One of the most powerful ways for God’s story to enter into the dialogue is through the Scriptures—what is traditionally called, “The Word of God”.<sup>230</sup> For pastoral care in particular and in an “episodic” way, as I have already noted, the Bible is God’s “Story Book”. Green states that “...the chief point of imaginative contact with God is Holy Scripture, that epic of positivity whose narratives, poetry, and proclamation are able, by means of their metaphoric inspiration, to render God himself to the faithful imagination”.<sup>231</sup>

Scriptures are the *ultimate* “Story” of “...the history of how God created people, let them make choices (some good some bad), saw their weak condition, and rescued them through the death of his Son. That is the history that really counts for each of us. That is the true Story that changes lives forever”.<sup>232</sup> Thus, the narrative approach proposes a “relational” encounter with people, God and the Bible. As Richard Rice says, a narrative and more so a biblical narrative, “...moves people from one place in their experience to another”.<sup>233</sup> Consequently, Williams also reminds us that “...the gospels [are] a ‘narrative form’ which

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229 Gerkin, 1984:28.

230 “The Bible takes a central place not only in the contexts of religious experience and the church but also in theological reflection; and there, too, it has for nearly two thousand years provided a yardstick for adherence to the basic metaphor of the Christian religion: the credo that God has wrought salvation for this world through Jesus of Nazareth.

As the classic source document of Christianity the inherited and oft-translated text of the Bible has been and remains our only access to the Jesus of Nazareth in whom God finally reveals Himself to the Christian. In that sense the Bible is a book of faith means, quite concretely, that its wide-ranging and complex text provides written evidence of the rational manner in which believing people conveyed, in metaphoric religious language, their perception of God from a total religious commitment.” Van Huyssteen, 1989:177-178.

231 Garret Green, 2000. *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The crisis of interpretation at the End of Modernity*:185-186.

232 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004. *Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible*:ix.

233 Rice, 2002:142.

do not simply remember past events, but lead the reader to a ‘future orientation’”.<sup>234</sup> Thereby, she claims that as one reads the gospel narratives, one is enabled to participate in the gospel event, which influences one’s experience and future orientation.<sup>235</sup> Or, as Goldberg suggests: They invite you to “Live your life according to me [the gospel stories/Jesus]. Base your life policy—your life story—on this story, for insofar as this story is a true one, it offers a credible basis for the adoption of such a policy and story in your life”.<sup>236</sup> The reader, therefore, according to Williams, “...actively participates in the story, realizing the Kingdom present in Christ, and passing the story on to others. The reader is involved in the story because he or she knows the completion of the story is still to come, when the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God occurs”.<sup>237</sup> The story of God as revealed in Scripture, therefore, drags one, so to say, into the future, engendering hope in their present lived experience. For, as Gerkin says: “The story of God is the story of God who is active in the affairs of the world, most particularly in human affairs.”<sup>238</sup> It is through storytelling, therefore, especially the “story of God”, that we are healed.<sup>239</sup> To neglect or leave “God’s story” out of the dialogue ultimately leaves us with barren human constructions and ideologies.

#### 4.3.1 Why the Bible? Narrative and the authority of Scripture

As I noted in chapter three one of the most important topics of research within Adventism is the Bible, particularly its inspiration and its authority.<sup>240</sup> Adventist theology, determined by

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234 Williams, 1986:6.

235 “We understand ourselves and our world as a story. Story means the unfolding development of narrative meaning by which what is past becomes meaningful in terms of what is present and what is projected in future. Life is uncovered in our stories. Story is the mode of our being in the world. This unfolding of life in the mode of story is the ‘essence’ of truth. Truth is not *that which* is unfolded or revealed, but simply the unfolding process itself.” Du Toit, 1996:39.

236 Goldberg, 1982:47.

237 Williams, 1986:6.

238 Charles Gerkin, 1986, *Widening the Horizons. Pastoral responses to a fragmented society*:50. “To speak about the affairs of God and the affairs of humans in that manner is to resort to a story of an ongoing relational process moving, by the grace of God and the activity of God’s Spirit, toward fulfilment involving both humans and God—indeed, all creation and God— together.” Gerkin, 1986:50.

239 Du Toit, 1996:40. “The wreckage of history seems to leave us with nothing but barren structures, deprived of any final meaning. Regarded as text the field of historical action has lost uniformity and meaningful continuity. It seems impossible to approach history as the story of mankind. The notion of memory gives us access to an experience of history in its discontinuity. The redemptive power of the image is then to be traced back to what was not fulfilled, to what the directionality of historical action has forgotten.” Du Toit, 1996:39 & 40.

240 See in this regard the works of Gerhard, F. Hasel, 1980: *Understanding the living Word of God*; George W. Reid, (Ed.). 2006: *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist approach*; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, 1996:

the interpretation of the Scriptures, can be regarded as biblical theology. Firstly, it is important, therefore, for a narrative approach to construct some “pointers” in regard to its view of Scripture. Secondly, it is also important for a narrative approach to admit that its main source for doing pastoral theology is the Scriptures, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit and the “priesthood of all believers”.<sup>241</sup> The Bible has been meaningful and always needs to be meaningful and significant within the Christian narrative. The thesis departs also from the view that to remove the Scriptures and “God’s story” out of pastoral care is to deny everything “pastoral” care stands for, and it becomes nothing more than another scientific approach.

As already indicated, the thesis views the Bible, in the first instance, not as the “Word of God”, in the sense of written words that can be analysed, but as the “Story of God”. *The main focus will be on “story” and not on propositional knowledge.* The Bible as God’s “story book” involves the whole person: One’s intellectual, affective and conative dimensions. It does not simply link us to ideas or propositional concepts, but to the redemptive action of God within the context of people. Smith said:

The notion of reducing Christian faith to four spiritual laws signals a deep capitulation to scientific knowledge, whereas postmodernism signals the recovery of narrative knowledge and should entail a more robust, unapologetic proclamation of the story of God in Christ. This is why the Scriptures must remain central for the postmodern church, for it is precisely the story of the canon of Scripture that narrates our faith.<sup>242</sup>

The thesis, therefore, holds to the notion expressed by Lester that we are committed “...to a God who is out in front of us calling us into an open-ended future”.<sup>243</sup> This infers that the biblical story is extremely relevant and important for the pastoral care ministry. As Louw, in reference to pastoral care whose goal is to minister compassion, consolation and the empowerment of faith, points out that, “Its point of departure is salvation and the promises of God as these are revealed through Scripture”.<sup>244</sup> For he asserts, quoting Hunter, that the “Healing imagery as a metaphor for ministry has its roots in the Bible, principally in the

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*Receiving the Word*; Alden Thompson, 1991: *Inspiration*; Gordon M. Hyde, (ed.). 1974: *A symposium on biblical hermeneutics*; Ron du Preez, 2007: *Prophetic principles*; Frank Holbrook and Leo van Dolson, 1992: *Issues in revelation and inspiration*, and Fritz Guy, 1999a: *Thinking Theologically*.

241 This will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

242 Smith, 2006:75.

243 Lester, 1995:2.

244 Louw, 1999, *A Pastoral Hermeneutics of Care and Encounter*:366.

healing ministry of Jesus”.<sup>245</sup> The thesis, therefore, considers the Bible to be God’s redemptive story that administers healing to broken people.

Furthermore, Goldberg maintains that a narrative approach to Scripture is necessary as “...the religious convictions which are at the heart of theological reflection depend on narrative for their intelligibility and significance”.<sup>246</sup> This is so because: “Narrative is a perennial category for understanding better how the grammar of religious convictions is displayed and how the self is formed by those convictions.”<sup>247</sup> In this regard, as indicated in chapter four, Stroup supports Goldberg and postulates the following:

If theology is faith in search of understanding and if narrative indeed does illumine the nature of the understanding that faith seeks, then narrative may be much more than simply a propaedeutic to theology. Narrative theology may offer a different perspective on basic theological topics such as the authority of Scripture, the relation between Scripture and tradition, the nature of revelation, and the meaning of the term ‘Word of God’. From the perspective of a narrative theology these perennial theological topics may have a slightly different look about them, one which may make them more accessible to the contemporary believer. In any case, the decisive question which must be addressed to any theological proposal, narrative or otherwise, at this point in history is whether it speaks to the identity crisis which now besets the Christian community.<sup>248</sup>

Narrative, therefore, is not a structured or systematic construction of the Bible or the community, neither does it support the language of the Christian confessionalist belief systems.<sup>249</sup> Narrative, according to McClendon, has more to do with “...living convictions which give shape to actual lives and actual communities”.<sup>250</sup> Narrative is a kind of “common sense” reading of the Bible.

### **4.3.2 Narrative and views of Scripture**

As was noted in chapter three both the conservatives and to some extent the progressives, in their search for “correct confessional truths”, are reducing pastoral care merely to applied theology. Even when telling the stories of the Bible, the Bible is often being read from a

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245 Louw, 1999:368.

246 Goldberg, 1982:34.

247 Goldberg, 1982:11.

248 Stroup, 1982:97.

249 Stroup, 1981:85.

250 McClendon, as quoted by Stroup, 1981:76.

lexicographical methodology and constructed from a confessional stance, for example, the story of Jonah.<sup>251</sup>

It, therefore, cannot be ignored that a narrative approach, moving beyond modernism, will focus, to a large extent, on a specific reading of Scripture. In this sense it is imperative that we need to address some “pointers”, viewing Scripture from the perspective of a narrative approach.<sup>252</sup>

Penner states that it is his “...firm conviction that the traditional evangelical doctrine of Scripture needs to be retooled in the light of postmodern critiques of the modern philosophical framework in which evangelicals have situated their view of the Bible”.<sup>253</sup> By agreeing with Penner the thesis does not wish to reject any other reading or interpretation of Scripture, but it needs to emphasise that it is imperative for pastoral care to investigate, in a serious way, the possibilities of reading the Bible, not as a dogmatic script, or a book of confessions, but as a “Story book”—dealing with people’s experiences.<sup>254</sup> This narrative view of Scripture is affirming that the Bible is referring, mainly, to true historical stories, but this conviction also needs to agree with Penner that the inerrancy view of Scripture, in the first instance, is not so much wrong as it is wrong-headed.<sup>255</sup>

Reducing the Bible to a series of propositions we may “...dangerously distort the text with modern philosophical assumptions about the nature of truth and meaning”.<sup>256</sup> *Scripture contains far more than propositions*. In this regard Penner maintains that evangelicals need

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251 See Jo Ann Davidson, 2003. *The inside story of Jonah*. See in particular pages 151-160 and chapter fourteen.

252 By using the concept of “pointers” the thesis indicates that a narrative view of Scripture is not fixed but continually pointing to further possibilities.

253 Myron B. Penner, 2005b. *Bible, Theology and Postmodernism. A Kind of Conversation*. He says that a narrative approach wishes to move beyond a bibliopoly with its emphasis on the “...establishment of an authoritative epistemic basis for doctrine”. [Website], Available from: < <http://www.anewkindofconversation.com/?EK=57D893F8-B0D0-78C0-1F0277BFFDF97949> >.

254 Pointing to God’s creation and God’s incarnation, the Bible goes beyond the limits of all human paradigms and theologies. It needs to deconstruct all views of Scripture, therefore, I have chosen the metaphor of the Bible as God’s “more” book—it goes beyond my theories and confessions.

255 Penner, 2005b. It may also be important to construct the concept of “inerrancy”. See also Kevin Vanhoozer, 2009. *The inerrancy of Scripture*. [Website], Available from: < <http://www.theologynetwork.org/biblical-studies/getting-stuck-in/the-inerrancy-of-scripture.htm> >: “Inerrancy, positively defined, refers to a central and crucial property of the Bible, namely, its utter truthfulness.”

256 Penner, 2005b. This is not a denial that God speaks also in propositional form.

to adopt a “postpropositional” view of Scripture,<sup>257</sup> where Scripture is not regarded as a collection of infallible and universal propositions. From a postpropositional and narrative approach the Adventist (fundamentalist-oriented conservatives) with an almost fixated concentration on the inerrancy of Scripture and the grammatical-historical reading of Scripture, finds itself embedded within a Cartesian worldview, and a Newtonian mechanistic approach.

The Bible is not, in the first instance, about truth—objective truths and facts—that conquer enemies and win arguments, but it is about “the Word who became flesh” (John 1:14), and about Christ that is the Truth. It is about relationships: God’s relationship with us, and our relationship with this world. In this regard the “Word who became flesh” can be regarded as the great metanarrative that informs and deconstructs our view of the Bible. This Word can never be solidified, fully grasped or understood, neither by our own words, nor our emotions. They are only “pointers” to this “Word” who became flesh. Louw says

*...hierdie Woord is nie subjektiewe ervaringskennis nie, hierdie Woord is nie menslike bespiegeling of filosofiese konstruksie nie, hierdie Woord is nie belydenisskrif of tradisie nie, hierdie Woord is nie die Bybel nie. Alhoewel al hierdie woorde soek, verlang na, getuig van hierdie Woord, skiet dit kort. (...this Word is not subjective experiential knowledge, this Word is not human speculation, or philosophical construction, this Word is not a confessional script or tradition, this Word is not the Bible. Although all these words seek for, long for, and witness about this Word, they fall far short – own translation).*<sup>258</sup>

McFague reminds us that even although we are deeply religious and know our love of God is no illusion, our concept of God is limited and our words are inadequate “...to express the reality of God”. Furthermore, she asserts that this obsession with words, when trying to portray or confess the “Word”, or a transcendent God, “...becomes *idolatrous* because without a sense of awe, wonder, and mystery, we forget the inevitable distance between our words and the divine reality”. She goes even further and indicates that “It becomes *irrelevant* because without a sense of the immanence of the divine in our lives, we find language about God empty and meaningless”,<sup>259</sup> and even reductionistic. Our words and

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257 Penner, 2005b, says that “This is not a laissez-faire, free-for-all form of interpretation; neither is it a diminution of the role and status of Scripture as the ultimate source of theology. Rather, postpropositionalism is an attempt to take more seriously the voice of God in Scripture, acknowledging that the same Spirit who speaks in Scripture is vitally at work in our interpretations of it”. [Website].

258 Stefan Louw, 2005. *Die (NG) Kerk en sy tyd: Die debat oor Skrifgesag: Oor nuwe hervormers, charismate en tradisionaliste*.

259 McFague, 1982:2.

constructions tend to fragment and reduce the text or the “Word” to some mechanical simplistic concept to be obeyed, and, in this way, robbing the text of its dynamic experience and meaning in the life of the “believer”. The problem with this type of approach is that the words are very limiting in their comprehensive portrayal of God—who God really is, and what God is really all about—and the experience of those who have encountered God, especially when things have gone wrong in their lives. It is important to remember, therefore, that words by themselves are very inadequate to fully portray and describe a transcendent God; *they can scarcely portray God, who is above all things, with any real form of justification.*

Just as alphabetical letters are used to create words, but which, by themselves, have no meaning, so words are used to give expression to inner thoughts, ideas, intention, emotions, etcetera.<sup>260</sup> As Susanne Langer suggests, “...the source of language and its motivation initially lay in making inward feelings outwardly manifested in sound”.<sup>261</sup> Words are used in an attempt to convey emotion, thought, and the activity of people’s experience and, within spirituality, people’s encounter with a transcendent God.<sup>262</sup> A lexicographical approach, studying and analysing each word, does not provide the full extent and power of the emotion and experience. If we follow this approach, “We stop with the object. We are not transported through to the significance of the idea it symbolizes. We deny ourselves the experience of the spirit”.<sup>263</sup> This is similar to trying to make sense of a motion picture by studying each loose frame. The motion picture only makes sense when the frames are viewed in very fast succession, causing each still frame to move continuously, giving the illusion of movement. It is this movement that lets the motion picture come to life. Or, as Hans Frei says,

Reading a story, whether the Gospel story or any other, has been rightly compared to understanding a work of visual art, such as a piece of sculpture. We do not try to imagine the inside of it, but let our eyes wander over its surface and its mass, so that we may grasp its form, its proportions, and its balance. What it

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260 “In my mind are thoughts. As far as you’re concerned, they have no form. But when I take those abstract thoughts and put them into words, they suddenly become accessible to you. They suddenly assume meaning, shape, and form.” James Coffin, 2004. *Fellowship, our greatest witness*:5.

261 Haarhoff, 1998:243.

262 “Words don’t only represent what we construe as reality. They transform reality. Helen Keller, born deaf and blind, writes of the moment of epiphany when a teacher wrote in her palm the word ‘water’ and she connected it to the liquid substance. ‘I knew then that W A T E R meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. The living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free. Everything had a name and each name gave birth to a new thought.’” Haarhoff, 1998:243.

263 Haarhoff, 1998:244.



says is expressed in any and all these things and only by grasping them do we grasp its 'meaning.' So also we grasp the identity of Jesus within his story.<sup>264</sup>

The Bible, therefore, is not in the first instance about words—God's Words that need to be critically interpreted in exegesis, but it is rather about a story book—God's "Story Book"—that needs to be told and re-told.<sup>265</sup> Leland Ryken indicates that "According to a rabbinic saying, God made people because He loves stories. Henry R. Luce, founder of *Time* magazine, commenting on his magazine's interest in personalities, he quipped, '*Time* didn't start this emphasis on stories about people; the Bible did'".<sup>266</sup>

As already indicated, some may rightly argue, of course, that there is a lot of material in Scripture that are abstract, concepts such as in the letter of Paul to the Romans. Nürnberger, however, is convinced that Paul's abstract message can still be told in the form of a narrative, for example, as the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:ff. What we have here, according to Nürnberger, is "...theology in story form".<sup>267</sup> What he does not state, however, is that behind Paul's theology, with its abstract concepts, are the stories of people in search of salvation.

Deist formulates a functional analogy between the Bible and Jesus.<sup>268</sup> Jesus was God's *incognito*: "*God het geheel en al onherkenbaar geword in die mens Jesus van Nasaret.*" ("God became completely irreconisable in the person of Jesus of Nazareth" - own translation).<sup>269</sup> He was a Jew like all the other Jews, so much so that not even the priest and scribes recognised or understood Him. Without the intervention of the Holy Spirit not even His own disciples would have known His "true" nature. In this sense the Bible is an *ordinary book*, so ordinary that modernism's higher critics wished to destroy it, and to crucify it like the people did with Jesus. The Bible's ordinary language, Hebrew and *koine*

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264 Hans Frei, as quoted by John Patton, 1983. *Pastoral Counseling: A Ministry of the Church*:24.

265 Within Adventism the Bible is often regarded as a so-called "code book" or a "case book". Van Wyk maintains that we should rather regard it as a "more book" in view of the fact that our views of the Bible always needs to be transcendent. A. Gerhard van Wyk, 2006. *Adventism and Postmodernism. Part 2: Postmodern Challenges for Adventism*.

266 Leland Ryken, 1990. *The Bible as literature. Pt 2, "And it came to pass": The Bible as God's Storybook*:131.

267 Nürnberger, 2004. *Biblical theology in outline. The vitality of the Word of God*:48.

268 Ferdinand Deist, 1986. *Kan ons die Bybel dan nog glo? : Onderweg na 'n Gereformeerde Skrifbeskouing*:19.

269 Deist, 1986:19.

(common) Greek, with its ordinary and typical stories about human failure and shame, makes it a very ordinary book.<sup>270</sup>

Jesus, however, was no ordinary being, and, so, the Bible is not an ordinary book. As the theologians of His day were astonished about the young man Jesus, so too we may experience with awe and wonder the Bible as *God's great salvation "Story"*. If we, suffering with our own broken stories, allow the "Stories" of the OT and NT, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to cross our stories, the Bible does not remain an ordinary book, but becomes *God's dynamic "Story Book"*. Deist says that there is nothing "magies" (magical) about the Bible. It is a book printed with ordinary ink on ordinary paper. It is, however,

*...wanneer die Heilige Gees die leser aanraak, blom daardie selfde boek oop en hoor jy die stem van die lewende God daardeur spreek. So het Calvin dit al gesê: Die Bybel sal dooie letters bly as die Gees van God nie die leser verlig nie. (When the Holy Spirit touches the reader, that same book blossoms and you hear the voice of the living God speaking through it. Already Calvin has stated it this way: The Bible will remain dead letters if the Spirit of God does not enlighten the reader – own translation).*<sup>271</sup>

#### **4.3.3 The authority of the Bible as "God's story"**

From Deist's perspective the Bible's authority is its persuading authority. Jesus had seldom, if ever, "declarative" ("*deklaratiewe*") theology. Jesus mainly told stories to people. These stories confronted them with an open choice, either to decide for or against God. Deist prefers a "mild" authority rather than a "hard" authority. A hard authority tends to coerce people into not only accepting the Bible without errors, but also as "inerrant" ("*feilloos*").<sup>272</sup>

The Bible's authority, pointing to the "Word's" authority, is not found in textual games or arguments, but its authority is found in its *defencelessness and fragility*. Its authority is about "Hands" who touched the lepers, the blind, the lame and prostitutes. Louw says that

*Die Woord se gesag is en was nog nooit 'n teoretiese gesag of intellektuele argument nie. Dit was nog altyd die gesag van liefdeshandelinge. Dis die gesag wat nooit druk nie, maar trek, wat nooit dwing nie maar dring. (The authority of the Word is and has never been a theoretical authority, or an intellectual*

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270 Nürnberg, 2004:13. He even states the following: "...it is not just the profundity of the message which perplexes us, but also its complex and disorganized form. There are seemingly alternative versions of the same story, seemingly conflicting world views, seemingly contradictory statements, seemingly untenable scientific assumptions, seemingly unethical commandments, seemingly variable terminologies."

271 Deist, 1986: 23.

272 Deist, 1996, 85-87.

argument. It has always been the authority of the acts of love. It is the authority that never pushes, but draws, which never coerces, but always urges – own translation).<sup>273</sup>

The written Word as documented acts of love does not have primary authority, but derivative authority. It has *provocative authority*. It starts a movement, and brings about change: Its claim to authority is not words on paper, but words empowered by the Holy Spirit that acts in deeds of love, forgiveness and service. We can only make a start to understand the biblical text once we do not wish to explain the text, but when the text begins to interpret our lives.<sup>274</sup>

The Word of God also has *evocative power*. It does not only start actions of love, but brings us to a halt: Confronting us with awe, wonder and worship that transcends our insufficient reason and the poverty of our metaphors. It enables us not only to think, but also to sing. The Bible does not contain words with final answers, but when the Holy Spirit enlightens them, they become words empowering the minds and hearts of people to be participants in life's final answers.

For Jüngel the Bible's authority is that which leads people to be addressed by the Word of God and that which leads people to freedom and faith in God.<sup>275</sup> We may claim that God's Word, through the speech of Moses, "Let my people go, that they may serve Me (the Lord)", is calling people to this freedom that transcends all other claims.

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273 Louw, 2005.

274 Dirkie Smit, 2006. *Neem lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan*:68.

275 Charles Villa-Vicencio, 1981. *The use of Scripture in Theology. Towards a contextual hermeneutic*.

#### 4.3.4 A Narrative Bible is a communicative Bible

Dreyer says that the Bible is the product of dialogue—God’s dialogue with us.<sup>276</sup> The Bible is an invitation for us to become participants in this dialogue.<sup>277</sup> Within this dialogical nature of the Scriptures, we need to be aware that those who wish to protect the “objectivity” of the text, or plead for a clear and obvious meaning of the text, may face the danger of using this dialogue as monologue,

*...waarin hulle bepaal wat ‘die’ betekenis van die teks is, sodat die teks self, ten spyte van hulle bedoelings, tot swye gebring word. (...by which they determine ‘the’ meaning of the text so that the text is silenced despite their intentions – own translation).*<sup>278</sup>

Thus, according to Nürnberger, it is important to note that the Bible “... is a living address of the living God to living people through a living community of believers”.<sup>279</sup> This living communication is not rigid, but versatile and interactive.<sup>280</sup>

Ricoeur wishes to broaden the hermeneutics of Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer by stating that true dialogue does not leave us unchanged:

*In dié sin dat dialoog ons laat handel: dit beweeg en oortuig en motiveer ons, dit laat ons oorgaan tot dade, tot ‘n lewe wat pas by wat ons verstaan het - en eers dan het ons waarlik verstaan. (In this sense dialogue causes us to act: it moves, convinces and motivates us, it persuades us to go over to action, to a life that is in harmony with what we understand - and only then have we truly understood – own translation).*<sup>281</sup>

In searching for the centre or *Mitte* of the NT (and OT), the notion of the dialogue between God and people seems to be one of the most important. Eichrodt, Fohrer, and Vriezen indicated that a dialogue, or action and response exist between God and people. This dialogical relationship involves both the socio-political and personal sphere of life,<sup>282</sup> and is made possible by the Word that became flesh. Jesus “...practiced the ideals of God’s grace, love and righteousness, and demanded the same from his followers ... He demanded that

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276 D.J. Dreyer, 1984. “*So spreek die Here*”- *Die dialoog as openbaring struktuur*:142. Myron B. Penner, 2005b: says “A properly theological account of Scripture begins from the premise that God is a communicative agent, able to use language for communicative purposes”.

277 Here we may refer to the dialogue between Jesus and the woman at Jacob’s well, or with Nicodemus and the Rich Young ruler. According to Deist (Deist, 1986:114) this can enable the pastor not to speak “from above” but to open a conversation with people.

278 Smit, 2006:139.

279 Nürnberger, 2004:2.

280 Nürnberger, 2004:2.

281 Smit, 2006:68.

282 J.A. Smit, 1991. *New avenues: The Dialogical nature and method of Bible instruction*:41.

they too, live under the rule of God.”<sup>283</sup> This dialogue between people and the text is not a mechanistic process, but rather as the reader constructs the message of the text he/she is also transformed.

#### 4.3.5 The Bible as an open-ended “story book”

Challenged by postmodernism, a narrative approach is being confronted to read the Bible as an open-ended “story book”. The Bible calls us to live within its “story”, and implores us to continue it: “Far from being a closed book about a story that has ended, the Bible authorizes our faithful enactment of the Author’s purposes precisely in order to continue the story across the pages of history.”<sup>284</sup>

Nürnberger notes that although the text of the Bible is written and fixed, it is really wide open. Although not all the reading of Scripture is equally appropriate, we can, however, read the Bible in many very different ways.<sup>285</sup> As already noted in chapter three Thompson, a progressive Adventist scholar, suggests that we should rather regard the Bible as a “casebook” than a “codebook”. A casebook view of Scripture can, in view of the complexities of changing times, circumstances and context, provide the right framework for “...understanding the breadth of biblical material”.<sup>286</sup> A casebook does not mandate a clearly prescribed or single response like a codebook does: A casebook describes a “...variety of responses under varied circumstances”.<sup>287</sup>

In this regard Nürnberger does not wish to support the notion that there is no truth. He, however, believes that truth is not timeless, harmonious or universal, because the Bible’s truth is versatile, alive and on the move. “It addresses ever new situations in ever new ways. A static norm cannot act as a criterion for a dynamic process. If we want to find a norm for a movement, the norm itself *must be in motion*.”<sup>288</sup> He states that a Canon that is closed

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283 Smit, 1991:42.

284 Erickson, 1998:119. See also Middleton & Walsh, 1995:4.

285 Nürnberger, 2004:27.

286 Alden Thompson, 1991:100.

287 Alden Thompson, 1991:100. According to him a so-called codebook “...demands application rather than interpretation, obedient compliance more than thoughtful reflection. It anticipates a straightforward query from the inspector: ‘Did you follow the code?’ The answer is a simple yes or no. Proof of compliance is at hand and easily measurable”. Thompson, 1991:99.

288 Nürnberger, 2004:60.

cripples and chains the Bible, whereas an open Canon means that the Bible is recognised as “...the earliest surviving manifestations of a continuing process”.<sup>289</sup> Thus, as Van Wyk has indicated, the Bible is a “more-book”.<sup>290</sup>

The Bible as an open-ended story enables us to enter into a continuing and faithful enactment of this story. Middleton and Walsh state that as a group of actors would improvise an uncompleted Shakespearean play, so postmodern Christians are to live the stories of the Bible, but faithful to the script they possess.<sup>291</sup>

I believe that God communicates with us through the human discourse of Scripture. Although God speaks to us through the voices of different human authors, the Holy Spirit guides and enlightens us to understand and experience the divine intent of the Scriptures. Thus, when the Bible is interpreted literally, then the figures of speech and literary genres are discarded, robbing Scripture of its “religious language”.

#### **4.3.6 Reading the Bible as a “story”**

As we contemplate Scripture and retell its narratives, we can appreciate and comprehend them more fully when the emotions, thoughts and behaviour, especially those it awakes in the readers or narrators, are in play with each other—like a dance.<sup>292</sup> As we live our lives and read the Bible, “We turn various pieces of sensory data into the form of story in order to grasp its meaning. We bestow meaning upon the sensory data through the narratory principle”.<sup>293</sup>

It is proposed that a narrative approach provides “directionality” and “movement” for the biblical text and the stories of those who encounter God. The meaning is not found “...in the

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289 Nürnberger, 2004:65.

290 Gerhard van Wyk in a lecture to faculty members at Walla Walla University refers to the Bible as being a “more-book”. In this regard see Van Wyk, 2006. The Bible as a “more book” indicates that the Bible itself may be transcending our own views of Scripture. Since our view of Scripture cannot be fixed on a final and absolute meaning of Scripture, we need to admit that there may be more beyond our own views.

291 Middleton and Walsh, 1995:182-183.

292 “When I am absorbed in a novel that grips my imagination, I seem to lose consciousness of the words the writer is using, I connect directly to shared experience. Transported to exotic places, I make mental pictures. It is as though those words have moved aside and let me through. The words see, to be transparent. A window pane. The words exist to show me something beyond them.” Haarhoff, 1998:244.

293 Lester, 1995:32.

timeless propositions it contains, but in the story that it tells. That story affects even the canonical shape of the text”.<sup>294</sup> Thus, it is understood that “The Bible does not lay out its truth in disconnected facts or commands. Rather, truth is offered up within relationships and events—real life being lived by real people”.<sup>295</sup> Wood asserts, referring to Hans Frei,

...if a text functions narratively, to disclose a world in which its readers are invited to dwell, or to depict a character in relation to who, the readers are asked to see themselves, the logic of authorization is considerably different. The readers are brought into the narratives; it becomes a context for reflection and action. The insights, convictions, dispositions, and so forth that the readers achieve in their interaction with the text are, as Brown rightly maintains, the fruits of a struggle. What is achieved is not simply read off the text and accepted but is rather created through the engagement of the readers—who have their distinctive backgrounds and locations—with the text.<sup>296</sup>

In this way the gap between the transcendent God of the Bible and those who seek to understand it and gain hope and healing from it is made less prominent. Thus, this approach is offering a more enriching ministry for the church, especially when communicating the Gospel in a postmodern world.<sup>297</sup> The narrative approach in this way endeavours to view theology from a “relational” and “holistic” context, preserving community and experience, which includes fellowship, worship, beliefs and behaviour in an interrelated and integrated fashion—past, present and future. Thus, a narrative reading and a “Narrative theory offers

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294 Erickson, 1998:121. “A more honest and postmodern understanding of what living the Christian faith authentically in our contemporary culture involves is required. This, Middleton and Walsh propose, is best done by ‘indwelling’ or ‘inhabiting’ the story. This, in fact, is what faith really is: ‘Biblical faith is not abstract, contextless or timeless but is a personal and communal response to what God has done in the story.’

What is involved in indwelling the story, however, is to indwell it as canonical and normative. Walter Brueggemann is right: we are not so much called to interpret or apply it, but to submit our experience to it. When we do this, however, we find that the biblical text has an odd angularity to it. One way in which this can be handled is to reduce the Bible to a series of generalized theological ideas. This is not the approach to be followed, however, for ‘the transformative power of the Scriptures is precisely their ability to challenge us by the odd things they actually assert and narrate about God, the world, and ourselves.’ Erickson, 1998:118.

295 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004. *Chicken Soup for the Soul Bible*:ix.

296 Charles M. Wood, 1987. *Hermeneutics and the Authority of Scripture*:13.

297 “All of this means, according to Grenz, that evangelicals have done well in developing a vision of the Christian faith for the old ‘Star Trek Society.’ This, however, will no longer do, for our society is moving beyond that period and that orientation. A new paradigm for evangelicalism must be developed to fit this new and different situation. Western culture, all the way from pop culture to academia, is moving into postmodernity. The younger generation, who take for granted the information age, MTV, and channel surfing, are even more committed to the postmodern vision of reality. This generation is not so impressed as their predecessors with linear thinking, rational argumentation, and final answers. This is a clarion call to evangelicals to understand what is happening and to respond in the most appropriate way.” Erickson, 1998:89-90.

new perspectives for understanding religious experience”,<sup>298</sup> moving beyond the confessional approach.

A narrative reading of the Bible as “story” is an “...account that binds events and agents together in an intelligible pattern”.<sup>299</sup> It is narratives, biographies and autobiographies of impressive people in the Christian community that put flesh and blood on what might otherwise be an abstract and formal doctrine.<sup>300</sup> This kind of narrative theology will assist pastoral care to transcend a mere confessional and an applied theological approach.

#### **4.3.7 The Bible as a “caring story”**

Whereas the confessional approach is focused on proclaiming truths to people, a narrative approach wishes to emphasise the caring potential of the Scriptures. God has created us not to be alone; therefore, an encounter with others is of great importance. God is also a caring God. This needs to inspire people not only to care for their own communities, but for all “others”. Patton admits that the Bible does not tell us how to do pastoral care today, but it “...offers empowering themes for expression in the context for the care today”.<sup>301</sup>

Green states that “Not only is the overwhelming portion of the Bible cast as narrative, but even the lists of precepts (‘You shall...’) ...are rooted in the ongoing narrative of Israel’s life with God”,<sup>302</sup> for example, the fourth commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:8-11. God says with regard to the Sabbath: “...on it you shall not do any work, neither *you*, nor *your son* or *your daughter*, nor *your manservant* or *maidservant*, nor *your animals*, nor *the alien* within your gates” (italics added). This command is inclusive of everyone and everything. As God cares for people and their well-being everyone is to be treated equally; even the animals are to rest. This is not simply a commandment to be obeyed, but a narrative of families and communities which is standing in a relationship with each other as a whole.

The Scriptures abound with these narratives, stories of every kind, and these stories, “...like stories everywhere, can powerfully shape people’s lives—even when the story may seem

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298 Lester, 1995:27.

299 Stroup, 1981:79.

300 Stroup, 1981:85.

301 Patton, 1993:6.

302 Green, 2003a:13.



innocuous”.<sup>303</sup> The narrative approach of the thesis, as indicated above, regards the Bible not as a book of theological facts, in the first instance, but rather as God’s great open-ended “story book”, a “more-book”, addressing first of all relationships without ignoring the moral principles that a confessional approach might want to deduct from it.

#### 4.4 Pastoral care: The communities’ story

Important for a narrative approach is Grenz’ communitarian focus that wishes to return the theological reflection to the community, whereas the Enlightenment ideal has put it in the hands of the individual academics. This approach of Grenz views Christian theology as an activity of the community who are gathered around Jesus Christ. This has “far-reaching implications” not only for evangelical theology, but also for a narrative approach.<sup>304</sup>

According to Grenz

...evangelicals are storytellers; we readily recite our ‘personal testimonies’—narratives that recount our historical and ongoing personal encounter with God. And these are cast in the categories drawn from the biblical narrative, as well as its explication in the didactic sections of Scripture. As evangelicals, therefore, we have come to see the story of God’s action in Christ as the paradigm for our stories. We share an identity-constituting narrative.<sup>305</sup>

For Grenz theology must be communitarian—persons-in-relationships; (originally this term refers to one who was a member or advocate of a communalist society—especially loyal to your own group). Theology is not just of the individual, but always theology of the community. Communities supply us with the integrative thematic perspective whereby different theological issues can be researched and better understood. Kwabena Donkor states

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303 Gunn, & Fewell, 1993:1. In harmony with Holms the thesis recognizes that “Obviously everything in the New Testament [and Old Testament] is not story, just as everything is not *kerygma*”. Holmes III, 1976:184.

304 Grenz, 2000:201

305 Grenz, 2000:202. Grenz rejects liberalism that sought “a single, universal, foundational religious experience that supposedly lay beneath the plethora of religious experiences found in the various religious traditions”. Secondly, he takes seriously “the experience-forming dimension of interpretive frameworks”. Whereas with liberals this experience is preceding interpretation; in his approach experiences are always filtered by an interpretive framework—a grid—that facilitates their occurrences. Grenz also wishes to move beyond Lindbeck’s “cultural-linguistic” approach. He wants to go further: “There is no generic religious experience, only experiences endemic to specific religious traditions—experiences the occurrences of which are facilitated by an interpretive framework that is specific to that religious tradition. And any such interpretive framework is theological in nature, for it involves an understanding of the world that sees the world in connection with the divine reality around which that tradition focuses. More specifically, Christian experience is facilitated by the proclamation of the Christian gospel, inherent in which is a specifically Christian theological interpretive framework, a “grid” that views the world in connection with the God of the Bible.”:203

that the "...fundamental implication of this communitarian turn is that the Christian community becomes the matrix out of which theological expression is brought forth."<sup>306</sup>

A significant number of recent works by Christian theologians also endorse the importance and authority of interpreting communities.<sup>307</sup> Murphy and Kallenberg state:

For theologians after Wittgenstein, there is much work to do in order to free religious believers from the Cartesian bottle. ...what distinguishes human persons is not the possession of a little "I" inside the mind, but the practice of telling stories and having our stories told to and by one another. Thus, we are not persons yet, but persons on the way as our stories unfold. Moreover as Lash warns, "religious experience" is neither private nor self-identifying nor self-authenticating. What counts as "religious" experience can only be so identified and described once the communal gift of language is already largely in place.<sup>308</sup>

Potter also maintains that "the epistemological community is the primary agent for the production of knowledge...".<sup>309</sup> She bases her assertions on the connection between language development and acquisition of knowledge. Private language is not possible, for language is learned from a community of people in communication with one another, and the passing on of verbal symbols to each other. Knowledge formation happens in the same way.<sup>310</sup> Thus, Nelson identifies communities as the primary agent of epistemology.<sup>311</sup>

Vanhoozer emphasises that our search for truth should lead us to a dialogical encounter. The stories of the Bible can only be grasped by using more than one conceptual scheme.<sup>312</sup> To understand the "Story of Jesus" we need a quadrasonic witness as being told in the four Gospels.<sup>313</sup> A narrative approach, beyond a confessional approach, needs to restore the telling of different stories about God's stories. As already stated in this dialogical encounter, "contextuality" is important:

...one of the significant benefits of a nonfoundationalist theology is its inherent commitment to contextuality that requires the opening of theological

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306 Kwabena Donkor, 2004. *Postconservatism: A Third World Perspective*:202.

307 See in this regard Daniel Smith-Christopher, (Ed.). 1995. *Text and Experience: Towards a cultural exegesis of the Bible*, and Stanley Hauerwas, 1993. *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from captivity to America*. People from different cultures should read the Bible from the perspective of their own cultural situation.

308 Murphy and Kallenberg, 2003:35.

309 As quoted by Stahl, 1997:305

310 Stahl, 1997:305.

311 Lynn Hankinson Nelson, 1993. *Epistemological communities*:121-129.

312 Vanhoozer, 2005:88.

313 Vanhoozer, 2005:88.

conversation to the voices of persons and communities who have generally been excluded from the discourse of Anglo-American theology.<sup>314</sup>

Hauerwas states that individual readers cannot come to the “meaning” of the Bible by themselves. The church—the authorised interpretive community—needs to train the readers. In this regard Code’s ecological model may be helpful. He states that interdependence is important:

...an active, preservative respect for difference and diversity is central...Values centered on preservation, on living harmony with one another and the biosphere—not passively but creatively and communally—are accorded high esteem.<sup>315</sup>

This communitarian focus does not imply that the individual disappears within the community. We need to distinguish between individuality and individualism. An individual retains his/her independence within individuality, while retaining relationships, whereas individualism means to stand on one’s own, eschewing relationships. For a narrative approach the individual and his/her story cannot be replaced by some general view on how a particular community thinks and feels about issues. The individual, however, is not a self-sufficient person.

As previously stated, the role of the Scriptures and its contribution is also important for a narrative approach. Vanhoozer maintains that both Hauerwas and Fish regard the texts as products of interpretation. He states:

When it comes to the politics of interpretation, Fish and the Pope are on the same side; the church as an interpretive community alone has the authority to decide on values.<sup>316</sup>

In response to Fish’s above-quoted position, Vanhoozer raises the question about the authority of the community over the Word. If the community has authority over the Word then “...what is to stop the interpretive communities from becoming authoritarian?”<sup>317</sup>

Lindbeck suggest a Christ-centred reading of Scripture:

...it was Scripture—initially Hebrew Scripture read Christologically—which had the consensus, community, and institution-building power to make of these communities the overwhelmingly dominant and therefore Catholic church. It

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314 See Franke, 2005:112.

315 Lorraine Code, as quoted by Stahl, 1997:306.

316 Vanhoozer, 1998:173.

317 Vanhoozer, 1998:173.

does not seem farfetched to say that it was the Bible which conquered the empire in defiance of the normal laws of sociological gravity...<sup>318</sup>

Lindbeck, in arguing that the text is constructing social reality and not vice versa, has, according to Vanhoozer, "...found a way to escape the relativity of interpretive communities".<sup>319</sup> Grenz places the focus on the authority of the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Scriptures, as the ultimate authority.<sup>320</sup> The Spirit, however, speaking through the Bible is always speaking within a specific historical-cultural context. This makes the conversation with cultures, different contexts and other sciences important.<sup>321</sup>

Grenz believes that the Christian interpretative framework that is "basic" for theology is a departure from the Enlightenment foundationalism, however, it still maintains "central concerns of foundationalism"<sup>322</sup>:

The cognitive framework that is "basic" for theology is not a given that precedes the theological enterprise; it does not provide the sure foundation upon which the theological edifice can in turn be constructed. Rather, in a sense the interpretive framework and theology are inseparably intertwined. Just as every interpretive framework is essentially theological, so also every articulation of the Christian cognitive framework comes already clothed in a specific theological understanding.<sup>323</sup>

It is important for Grenz's nonfoundationalism that the coherency "principle" is not lost sight of. We do not obtain knowledge by the assembling of isolated factual statements directly deduced from so-called first principles. Christian doctrine is comprised of a "mosaic"—a system in which every belief is supported by each other, and, ultimately, by its presence

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318 George A. Lindbeck, 1989. *Scripture, Consensus, and Community*:78.

319 Vanhoozer, 1998:174.

320 Grenz, 2000:210 says that "To pit the Spirit's voice in culture against the Spirit speaking through Scripture would be to fall prey to the foundationalist trap. It would require that we elevate some dimension of contemporary thought or experience as a human universal that forms the criterion for determining what in the Bible is or is not acceptable."

321 Grenz, 2000:210. Taylor states that Grenz has moved the authority from the text of the Bible to the Spirit speaking through the Bible, See Justin Taylor, 2004. *An Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism and the Rest of the Book*:25. Wellum states that scriptural authority for Grenz and Franke has to do with the fact that, "...it is a vehicle through which the Spirit speaks". Stephen J. Wellum, 2004. *Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis*:177. See Stanley J. Grenz, and John R. Franke, 2001. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping theology in a postmodern context*:46-54.

322 Grenz, 2000:203.

323 Grenz, 2000:203-204. Grenz hereby wishes to overcome the neo-evangelicals "basic" foundations, where the Bible (inerrant) becomes "store-house of facts" systemised from loosely related facts into correct conclusions for this foundation. We, however, need to know that the church is not "basic" in theology, for this would lead to a new foundationalism of the Church, but what is "basic" for theology is the "specifically Christian experience-facilitating interpretative framework, which in turn is connected to the gospel, and by extension to the Biblical narrative". See page 214.

within the whole. “Theology is the articulation and exploration of the interrelated, unified whole of Christian doctrine.”<sup>324</sup> The construction of the belief-mosaic needs to be an ongoing conversation between the participants of the faith community.<sup>325</sup>

Whereas the Bible is the heart of evangelical theology, the Bible was “...all too readily transformed from a living text into the object of the scholars exegetical systematizing prowess”, according to Grenz.<sup>326</sup> In his nonfoundational approach the Christian community formed by the Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit become participants in reading and understanding the Scriptures and what the Word has to say about their concerns and needs.<sup>327</sup> As a specific Christian community we are also aware *that we have been participants* in this faith community right through the ages. This means that we have a heritage, a tradition in which we share. Our theological heritage, albeit playing a secondary role, provides a reference point for us. In this we have examples of how to solve problems, avoid pitfalls and warning us of dangers.<sup>328</sup> Our theological heritage, however, should not lead us into sectarianism and relativism because according to Tarasar, they are

...‘risk-free,’ for they can coexist without engaging in real dialogue. The tendency to relativism includes minimalism, indifference, and reductionism in matters of faith and belief—allowing that it is all right to let everyone ‘do their own thing,’ believe what they want, as long as ...we can work together.<sup>329</sup>

Stahl also points to the potential shortcomings of a communal model of inter-subjective knowledge. It is a great temptation for church communities to isolate themselves from others and become exclusive ecosystems. Erickson admits the important role of communities: We do not only need each other, but also the correcting influence of other people. He, however, believes that “...it has become apparent that communities carry certain liabilities”, such as becoming an authoritarian society.<sup>330</sup> The congregation needs to take responsibility for the larger ecosystem—the world.<sup>331</sup>

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324 Grenz, 2000:205.

325 Grenz, 2000:206.

326 Grenz, 2000:206.

327 Grenz, 2000:208.

328 Grenz, 2000:209.

329 Constance J. Tarasar, 1988. *The Minority Problem: Educating for Identity and Openness*:201.

330 Erickson, 2004:340. All his arguments against the creative role of communities can also be stated against theologians who can create a theology and an agenda that can influence a community. It is the conviction of the thesis that the greater the number of communities, and their differences, the greater the possibility to counteract such a one-sided agenda and theology.

331 Stahl, 1997:312.

There is a great need within Adventism to study the challenges of the context of the Bible and how it relates to our own context from different perspectives, and appreciate and evaluate the narratives of the priesthood of all believers.<sup>332</sup> In this way it opens space to once again hear the voice of God speaking through Scripture, and also to hear the voice of the previously silenced “other”.

In this regard, the infrastructure of the Sabbath School<sup>333</sup> within the SDA context with its worldwide lesson study, has opened the door and set the stage for just such an interpreting community. It is the place where the “community of believers” can tell and re-tell God’s story and their own story, with openness for the Holy Spirit to guide, just as the Spirit lead in times past when the authors of Scripture authored their stories. It is the place where the “priesthood of *all* believers” can agonise with the text of Scripture and the text of their own lives. Unfortunately, this has not been the case as theology is formulated by the “Bible Research Institute” situated at the GC, viewed by Koranteng-Pipim as the “*watchdog* of the church”.<sup>334</sup> Sadly, this does not allow for creative story-telling where the “agonism of

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332 See Pule Magethi and Thula Nkosi, 1991. *God of Apartheid*, and chapter 3 point 3.4 of the thesis.

333 “In 1853, only a few years after the first group of Sabbath-keeping Adventists was formed in Washington, New Hampshire, James White organized the first regular Sabbath School in Rochester, New York. In 1852, estimating an informal membership of about 1,000 in the state of New York, White had written a series of 19 lessons appearing in the new *Youth’s Instructor*.

From its inception the Sabbath School has focused on four emphases that are still prominent to this day: fellowship development, community outreach, Bible study, and foreign mission. A solid balance of these elements characterizes the most vital Sabbath Schools around the world.

Based on these four emphases, from its beginning in 1853, Sabbath School membership has exploded from a handful of believers in upstate New York to an estimated 14 million today. General Conference President Jan Paulsen has said that Sabbath School is like breakfast. For more than 150 years it has provided the spiritual nourishment that is needed to meet the challenges that arise during the rest of the week.” *Sabbath School*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.net/article.php?id=2> >.

334 The “meaning” of Scripture and the needs of people within the SDA Church are determined in academic institutions, committee meetings and at the GC sessions where the “brethren” claim to be the voice of those living under very difficult or different circumstances; for instance Koranteng-Pipim, who lives in an air-conditioned home in affluent North America, claims to be the voice of Africans who face violence, war, and starvation, on a daily basis, and live in very primitive conditions: “The reason for representing my African Division at these GC sessions is simple. Though based in the United States, I am still playing a very active role in our churches in Africa and overseas (where I’ve been instrumental in raising up African congregations in North America and Europe). I regularly go to Africa to teach theology courses to our students, conduct ministerial council meetings to train our pastors and laypeople, and to speak at various campmeetings. So I am really part of the African church, even though, in a sense I am like a missionary here in North America.” Furthermore, he asserts: “I am a member of Biblical Research Institute (BRI) Committee that’s called BRICOM. The Biblical Research Institute whose offices are at the General Conference has four members: a Director [Dr. George Reid] and three Associates [Dr. Angel Rodriguez, Dr. Ekkerhadt Mueller, and Dr. Gerhard Pfandl]. In addition to these standing members of the BRI, there is BRICOM, BRI Committee, which is much larger, 35 members or so if I can remember correctly. BRICOM meets twice a year, sometimes three times a year to discuss theological issues that involve the well-being of the worldwide church. The BRI and BRICOM serve as the theological watchdog of the church. When there is uncertainty over our doctrinal distinctives, the BRI clarifies it.” *In this way the voice of the local*

difference”, entertains the voices of those concerned about issues such as the ordination of women, abortion, homosexuality and the like. The Sabbath School Lesson could be a privileged time and place for the community of believers to discover “pointers” and “episodic” truth. It is the place where the church in worship and study can bring their questions, ideas, struggles and thoughts and agonise with one another and the Word of God towards clarity. To read the Bible as “God’s stories”, God’s “communicative acts”, where the Bible is viewed as “open-ended stories”, and “stories of caring”. Here, the community of believers can discover meaning in their lives, as well as their communities in the “Story of God”.

#### **4.5 The story of hope: A “conjoined story”**

When the church gets involved in mission it should not be “...to control and disempower others but to mediate God’s blessing and enhance the life and well-being of all creatures, *just as God did in creating the world*. ... Humans, as the *image and likeness* of this God, are to use their power and rule for the benefit of others”.<sup>335</sup> The church is to mediate “hope” for those overcome with trial and tribulation, those struggling with pain and disease, those hampered by grief and despair. Culbertson also reminds us that “People come to pastoral counsellors because they wish to be understood in a holistic way that keeps their spiritual life integrated with their emotional and intellectual lives”.<sup>336</sup>

As I indicated above, people who are experiencing problems, seeking help or counsel, usually have problem-saturated narratives about themselves, the lives they are living and their future. These narratives, however, are not the full or complete stories of their lives; they are the dominant narratives of pain and discomfort that are focused on at that moment in time. These stories are one-sided. When someone visits their doctor, for instance, the story they tell is the story that justifies their presence in the doctor’s consulting room. It

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*church members and the text are silenced*. What and how the church members believe is determined and controlled by the BRI Committee, the *watchdog* of the church. [Website]. *Special Report: Toronto 2000 GC Session Postlude. An Interview with Dr. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim*. Available from: <<http://www.greatcontroversy.org/documents/papers/pip-interview10july2000.html>>.

335 Erickson, 1998:116.

336 P. Culbertson, 2000. *Caring for God’s People: Counselling and Christian Wholeness*:257. “They come because they perceive that pastoral counseling can offer them four specific gifts: an understanding of human nature rooted in the goodness of God, a relational humanity patterned after the humanity of Christ, a respect for the dignity and autonomy of every human being and a deep commitment to the health and ultimate good of each member of the church.”

becomes the controlling or dominant narrative. There is also a myriad of current and past experiences, however, which can tell a different story, but they are not told. Very often, these untold narratives go unnoticed and they are “unstoried” as the “pain narrative” has over-shadowed these other narratives.

*By listening to the narrative of distress, a sensitive and skilled pastoral caregiver, led by the Holy Spirit, can also hear these “unstoried”, unnoticeable narratives.* Through gestures, expressions and language as these painful stories are told and re-told and merge with the caregiver’s and “God’s story”, the marginalised stories begin to emerge, becoming more and more visible.<sup>337</sup> As these stories of distress and hopefulness along with the pastor’s story, the communities’ story intersect with “God’s story”, a new narrative begins to emerge. Gerkin asserts that,

A new set of images emerges that structures a new, less painful and more hopeful story. The old raw experience, now gathered into new image meaning vessels and integrated with new experience provided by the counselling relationship, takes on new meaning and a way ahead is opened.<sup>338</sup>

The one seeking help, through the work of the Holy Spirit, begins to experience relief from the intensity of the story of trial, pain and despair, as a story of hope begins to surface.

“God’s story” is ministered through the Holy Spirit, the driving force and ultimate authority of the Christian experience. In this regard Meyer asserts that “...it is not through insight, empowering, clarity, detecting of the unconscious drives, changing of frameworks, dedication or rest that a person in pain is tentatively restored and enhanced to be ‘fully’ human, but only through the work of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>339</sup> He argues that it is only through the Holy Spirit that we encounter God, Christ, the Bible and the church and “...not through discursive reason, our experience of ‘nature’ or through meditating on our inner ‘spiritual’ being”.<sup>340</sup> According to Meyer, this does not replace interpretation so as to give “superhuman” certainty, rather the Holy Spirit “...empowers by way of accompaniment and enlarging perspectives within the historical, interpretational life of human praxis”.<sup>341</sup> He

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337 For a more detailed discussion in this regard see the works of Michael White, David Epston, J Freedmann & G Combs, Alice Morgan and many other scholars with reference to Narrative Therapy.

338 Gerkin, 1984:28.

339 Meyer, 2003:219.

340 Meyer, 2003:222.

341 Meyer, 2006:219.



argues that the Holy Spirit does not give us a “...God’s point of view, or a bird’s-eye-view...”,<sup>342</sup> but rather the Holy Spirit according to Rice “...directs the church’s mission into the world”.<sup>343</sup> It is the Holy Spirit that makes the church a dynamic reality, ministering through Christian counselling to bring about a merging of our pain-filled stories with God’s healing story.

An important question that now needs to be addressed, is: How can story-telling lead to the appreciation of other stories and ultimately lead to a new story? After the metaphysical shift away from the author and from Newtonian objectivity Vanhoozer, Gadamer and Ricoeur have tried to explain how interpretation and understanding is still possible.<sup>344</sup> Both Gadamer and Ricoeur reject the “either-or” approach that claims that either the text shapes interpretation or *vice versa*, and have accepted the “both-and” approach.<sup>345</sup> Vanhoozer says that understanding “texts” is not like understanding objects, as in the Cartesian epistemology,

...where the object is mirrored in the subject’s mind. The reader is not simply a detached, neutral observer of texts; meaning is not something that can be ‘explained.’<sup>346</sup>

Understanding takes place when the interpreter participates in the text or stories of others. We, however, are always limited by our total history and its interpretations. These cultural-historical standpoints are cited by Gadamer as “horizons”. Because we bring different standpoints to the “text”, meaning comes from the act of reading the text and, consequently, is the result of this interpretive fusion.<sup>347</sup>

Only in a limited and critical way can a narrative approach be supported by Gadamer’s concept of understanding as being a “*fusion of horizons*”.<sup>348</sup> Although the thesis departs

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342 Meyer, 2003:219.

343 Rice, 2002:196.

344 Vanhoozer, 1998:106.

345 Vanhoozer, 1998:106.

346 Vanhoozer, 1998:106.

347 Gadamer, however, stresses that this reading is not a “...*creatio ex nihilo* but a co-creation;” because the text does give something to the reader. Ricoeur maintains that although the text is independent of its author its structure still limits our interpretation. See Vanhoozer, 1998:107.

348 “The process of understanding is a *fusion of horizons* in which the horizon of the person understanding and the horizon of the text to be understood come to the fore as a single horizon and thus changes the understander and his or her horizon. This fusion of horizons is a *dialectical* event in which the interpreter discovers that what is to be understood is different to what had initially been assumed.” Fouché & Smit, 1996:81.

from the point of view that we are being captured by our horizons, it also maintains that we are not completely determined by these horizons, and are not wholly imprisoned by Hirsch's "radical historicity". It is possible, therefore, to come to "understand", via an open networking, something of other horizons. Vessey, while defending Gadamer, indicates that Gadamer uses the notion of "horizons" in a technical and limited sense, and, thus, there are always "gateways to something beyond".<sup>349</sup>

Vessey states that horizons fuse when we realise how the contexts of others or the subject matter can be viewed differently and, consequently, can lead to a different interpretation than the one initially arrived at. Vessey concludes:

Either new information, or a new sense of the relative significance of available information leads, at the very least, to an understanding of the contingency of the initial interpretation, quite possibly to a new understanding of the subject matter, and ideally to a new agreement between the two parties about the subject matter. In any case, the original understanding is surpassed and integrated into a broader, more informed understanding. One's horizons are broadened; we have a new perspective on our old views, and maybe new views as well. This is the meaning of the "fusion of horizons."<sup>350</sup>

An important element of this process is the notion of "alienation".<sup>351</sup> In this sense it means that what was once familiar to a reader becomes unfamiliar in some sense. This alienation and the struggle to make these things familiar again, may lead to the reconfiguring of our prejudices. The reader inhabits the world of the text, "...which may be like her actual world

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It is also already stated in the thesis that a narrative approach does not support the notion of consensus but rather of the "agonism of difference". Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" claiming that dialogue seeks resolution in a fusion of horizons, is also being criticised by scholars. See David Vessey, [s.a.]. *Gadamer and the Fusion of Horizons*. [Website], available from:  
< [http://www.davevessey.com/Gadamer\\_Horizons.htm](http://www.davevessey.com/Gadamer_Horizons.htm) >.

According to Vessey it is also important to take note of E.D. Hirsch's objection: "Hirsch thinks Gadamer's discussion of horizons immediately precludes something like a fusion of horizons. Hirsch argues that whatever we want to understand is either within our horizon or beyond our horizon. If it's the latter, then it can't be understood, as that's what it would mean to be beyond our horizon. But since it can't be understood there can't be a fusion of horizons. If it is within our horizon then there are not two separate horizons to be fused, and no fusion takes place. We should conclude, therefore, that if horizons are limits on understanding, a fusion of horizons is either impossible or unnecessary." Vessey, [s.a.]. *Gadamer and the Fusion of Horizons*. [Website].

349 Vessey, [Website]. "Specifically, a horizon as a limit is downplayed in the technical meaning in favor of a horizon as that which expands, that which we can see beyond with a little effort, and that which points toward something more. Although a horizon marks the limit of sight at any moment, it is not an insurmountable limit. Simply walking a short distance, or going to the top floor of a building can help us see beyond our previous horizon. In fact, most of us know quite well what lies beyond the horizon simply from past experience. Horizons might function as a limit at a particular time, but there are always also gateways to something beyond; it is the latter that Husserl emphasized in his 1913 *Ideas*."

350 Vessey, [Website].

351 It is important to note that "alienation" does not have a negative connotation in this hermeneutical process.

in varying degrees, and it is this interaction with a foreign world that allows her to integrate foreign ideas into *her* world after the journey is done and she returns home.”<sup>352</sup> Our home and the client’s home horizons are altered to a greater and lesser degree and some fusing of horizons have taken place, opening up the possibly for new meanings and new stories. Holms calls this a “conjoined”<sup>353</sup> story, a new broader story which may facilitate hope and meaning. According to Gadamer this fusion is what he calls a “...*dialectical* event in which the interpreter discovers that what is to be understood is different to what had initially been assumed. In this way existing opinions are thwarted”<sup>354</sup> and new horizons are achieved.

So, the hermeneutical process between the living human document seeking help and the caregiver, the community and the “story of God” administered through the Holy Spirit leads to a fusion of horizons—or the conjoining of the stories—as the four stories merge. This merging horizon gives birth to a narrative which goes beyond pain and suffering, and an alternative narrative of hope over and above the problem-saturated narrative begins to emerge. This approach stands over against a dogmatic, prescriptive approach where the caregiver gives directives so as to solve the problem of those in need.

## 5 A Story of Care

The thesis proposes: The biblical story is a story of a God who cares,<sup>355</sup> a God who loves the world, human beings and communities so much so that He got involved in the affairs of these people.<sup>356</sup> The narratives in Scripture portray not only a God who seeks to proclaim a heavenly kingdom to come, but a gospel where He is intensely interested and involved in the well-being of people as they live their lives, a kingdom present.<sup>357</sup>

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352 Shawn Rider, 1999. *Interpretation brings us together*. [Website], available from: < <http://www.wdog.com/rider/writings/silko.htm> >.

353 Holmes III, 1976:177-190.

354 Fouché & Smit, 1996:81.

355 I recognise that this is a statement of faith. “The spectacle of terrified men and women cowering in the presence of overbearing power does not appeal to us very much today. We prefer to think of God in much more familiar terms. We picture him as a reassuring presence, a kindly parent or a caring friend.” Rice, 2002:133.

356 “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” Psalm 8:4. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

357 I am of the opinion that the following stories are neglected within a proclamation-oriented framework:

The gospel narratives are not so much focused on proclamation as they are on the incarnation of God. God, who became one with human beings, touched their lives. Jesus ministered to the needs of people, healing their brokenness, bringing hope to their despair, relief to their hunger and freedom from their imprisonment. As people encounter the God who has healed their brokenness and gives them peace in time of trouble, they personally follow Him and become more like Him.<sup>358</sup> “The humanity of Jesus consists in the fact that he is for other persons. ...We are with our fellows as Christ was for us.”<sup>359</sup> As Christ ministered to a broken humanity, so we are to go and do the same.<sup>360</sup> It is well worth mentioning again what Oswald Chambers has said:

The institutional church’s idea of a servant of God is not at all like Jesus Christ’s idea. His idea is that we serve Him by being the servants of others. Jesus Christ actually ‘out-socialized’ the socialists. He said that in His kingdom the greatest

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“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard” (Isaiah 58:6-8).

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18, 19).

As Matthew draws our attention to the future and the climax of the gospel he relates a parable of Jesus who said: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom is prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was a prisoner and you came to visit me. ... The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Matt 26:34 - 40).

358 “‘Lord,’ they answered, ‘we want our sight.’ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and *followed him*” (italics added) (Matthew 20:33 & 34). “As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you. So the man went away *and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him*. And all the people were amazed” (italics added) (Mark 5:18-20). “Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. *They were all filled with awe and praised God*. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country” (italics added) (Luke 7:14-17). “Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. *Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God*. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and *they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him*” (italics added) (Acts 3:7-10).

359 Patton, 1983:28.

360 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:13-17).

one would be the servant of all (see Matthew 23:11). The real test of a saint is not one's willingness to preach the gospel, but one's willingness to do something like washing the disciples' feet—that is, being willing to do those things that seem unimportant in human estimation but count as everything to God. ...Jesus Christ's idea of a New Testament saint; that is, not one who merely proclaims the gospel, but one who becomes broken bread and poured-out-wine in the hands of Jesus Christ for the sake of others.<sup>361</sup>

Furthermore, in this regard, John Patton makes a very profound statement when he says that:

A Christian cannot do ministry without—at least implicitly—addressing the question of the nature and character of the Christ whom he or she represents. At this point in history, what has been most clearly apprehended and affirmed about Christ as a result of the ministry of pastoral counseling is his humanness in relationships—a relationship that binds and challenges in order to offer freedom. This is not a reduction of Christ's meaning to that which is most clearly apprehended about him as a result of the depth encounters of pastoral counseling. It is, however, an affirmation that something of the Christ may be seen more clearly as a result of this particular dimension of ministry.<sup>362</sup>

A very important, yet, most often much neglected aspect of the gospel is the caring ministry. *Modernism has moved the focus away from caring to correct doctrine of truth and proclamation.*

Postmodernism has reacted to this and as a “pointer” for a theology of caring. Patton draws our attention to the parable of the Good Samaritan and postulates that it,

...is central in the picture of who we are—persons who need to respond to the needs of others. We are neighbours by nature, not simply by proximity. Jesus' own life and his response conveys an affirmation that, in spite of its limitations, being human and being related by need to other persons is acceptable to God.<sup>363</sup>

The narratives of Jesus' incarnation and His own humanity are a statement that God is involved in our human “creatureliness” and seeks to bring healing and wholeness to our brokenness. Then too, the narratives of His ministry, being a servant to all, are a statement to our involvement in the lives of our fellow “sufferers”.

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361 Chambers, 1992. *My utmost for His Highest*: February 25.

362 Patton, 1983: 22.

363 Patton, 1983:25.

## 6 Summary

How does a narrative approach with its religious language influence the church as it moves forward and functions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The research recognises that as a narrative approach is proposed for pastoral care, there are many unresolved issues with regard to this type of theology. The thesis, however, still proposes, not as a final word, that a narrative approach within a practical theological framework has many “pointers” for a more meaningful caring ministry that moves beyond the confessionalism of modernism.

As Fritz Guy maintains and Stroup indicates that within a modern worldview, “Theology has been and probably always will be an intellectual activity based on discursive arguments and rational explanations”.<sup>364</sup> A pastoral care ministry with a narrative approach, however, has very much more of a different type of activity. It is more focused on the affective nature of people, where emotion, intuition and circumstances play more of an important role. “A narrative is simply not the same thing as a discursive argument and the two should not be confused.”<sup>365</sup> It is recommended that this shift away from the rationalistic intellectual activity is very significant *as it moves away from an applied theology to a practical theology*, especially as we are confronted with the challenges of postmodernism.

Paulien has pointedly remarked that: “Secular people today have an urgent need for genuine relationships. They long for real relationships with real people who care enough to be honest as well as loyal. ...not so much physical as emotional and social.”<sup>366</sup> The narrative approach has a unique outcome as it is not focused so much on the believing and behaving aspect of the Christian experience, but rather on relationships. It is a meaningful theological category as it is a powerful tool “...for understanding human identity and what happens to the identity of persons in that process Christians describe by means of the doctrine of revelation”.<sup>367</sup> Narrative is an approach which is more focused on community and fellowship, which gives birth to a sense of belonging, opening space for caring.

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364 Stroup, 1981:84.

365 Stroup, 1981:86.

366 Paulien, 1993:130.

367 Stroup, 1981:87.

## **Summation**

It has not been my intention as an anticipated outcome in the thesis to reduce all ministries within the church to pastoral care. I do think, however, that evangelism is important, but not at the expense, or to the exclusion, of pastoral care; rather they are of equal importance. It is my understanding that pastoral care should not be marginalised in favour of proclamation, but that ministry could be more effective if pastoral care is regarded as of equal importance, especially in a postmodern world.

During that terrible 2004-tsunami in Asia and the 2005-hurricane, “Katrina”, in America the Adventist Church was there within hours assisting the victims, and, most probably, were there long after interest in the disaster had dwindled. This is truly a great achievement and something to be proud of, however, the thesis contends that another question needs to be asked: What is being done for those facing the destructive nature of violence and violation within their families? How quickly are we responding when a family is devastated by the news of their child being arrested for possession of illegal drugs? What is being done when a teenager is pregnant and is contemplating abortion, or even suicide; or when a father has been retrenched and the family has no financial income, or when a person has been traumatised by a violent robbery? These disasters are not to be compared to the magnitude of a tsunami or hurricane, or even an earthquake measuring seven or eight on the Richter scale, but they are just as devastating.

In the research I have indicated, as Rudi Maier so aptly put it, people want to “see Christianity”, for they “can’t hear [us], [they are] too hungry”.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, according to Maier, Christian ministry has the tendency to reduce the problems and needs of people to one or two categories—spiritual and physical. Proclaiming the gospel of eternal salvation to people no doubt has been our highest priority. “But broken, suffering, and lost people listen to people who meet them where they hurt; who meet them with real palpable love.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, there is a real need to do more than seek new and better ways of “carrying out

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1 Rudi Maier, 2002. *The Gospel Commission Has Another Side: Responding to human need*:17 & 18.

2 Maier, 2002:17.

proclamation”, instead, the horizons need to be widened so as to develop a praxis approach within practical theology that addresses daily living.

Ron Flowers states that “...a change of perspective in looking at Scripture can help us see and appreciate old truths in fresh ways”.<sup>3</sup> Penner also claims that there is a “...need to rearticulate [our] thinking about Scripture so that we move beyond a bibliology whose primary focus and value is the apologetic establishment of an authoritative epistemic basis for doctrine”.<sup>4</sup> This is of paramount importance as postmodernism is introducing a whole new set of questions which conservatism and liberalism no longer address. Also, as “...we re-present classical Christianity to the postmodern culture [it] is not a call for a mere historical restitutionism, but a serious application of classical thought to a postmodern worldview”.<sup>5</sup> It is not to put new wine in old wineskins, but to re-view and re-vision our whole theological orientation. The church, therefore, seriously needs to question how it can be relevant without losing its uniqueness and identity in a postmodern world.

Sadly, so Ed Gungor tells us, we “Christians fail to recognize that we all come to the Bible with presuppositions (hermeneutics) that impact the way the Bible reads to us”.<sup>6</sup> We, however, approach “...Scripture as a body of divine teachings that are to be accepted, believed, and obeyed”.<sup>7</sup> Within the confessional approach it almost seems that faith in Christ has been replaced with faith in the Bible.<sup>8</sup> It is as Penner asserts: “We evangelicals often have a difficult time dealing consistently with the claims in John’s Gospel that Jesus is the *Logos* and that He is the way, the truth and the life.”<sup>9</sup> According to him, however, “*The point of the Gospel (according to the four evangelists, St. Paul and the rest of the New Testament) is not the Bible, but Jesus*” (italics added).<sup>10</sup>

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3 Ron Flowers, 2006:14.

4 Penner, 2005b. [Website].

5 Webber, 1999:12.

6 Gungor, 2007:58.

7 Wood, 1987:13.

8 Webber, 1999:189. “To make this point I sometimes say to my students, ‘You would think the Bible became incarnate, was crucified, and rose again for our salvation.’ By this statement I do not intend to demean the Bible. Instead, I want to put the Bible in its proper place. It is not the object of our faith or belief. We do not believe in the Bible for our salvation. We believe in Christ.” Webber, 1999:189.

9 Penner, 2005b.

10 Penner, 2005b.



Furthermore, Curtis and Eldredge emphasise:

For centuries prior to our Modern Era, the church viewed the gospel as a Romance, a cosmic drama whose themes permeated our own stories and drew together all the random scenes in a redemptive wholeness. But our rationalistic approach to life, which has dominated Western cultures for hundreds of years, has stripped us of that, leaving a faith that is barely more than mere fact-telling.<sup>11</sup>

Penner has remarked pointedly that, "...because of the continual evolving socio-cultural and personal contexts in which we read Scripture and in which God speaks to us through Scripture"<sup>12</sup> there needs to be a constant openness. The postmodern approach once again comprehends context, intuition, awe and mystery and brings them back into focus. We need to question seriously how God's "redemptive act" continues to minister in a secular world in a meaningful way.

The thesis portrays an "episodic" point of view and it concurs with Penner:

...the intentions of God expressed in His scriptural speech-acts are, in keeping with His being, potentially inexhaustible; but also ... the conceptual-linguistic form of God's revelation to us in Scripture means that we can never lock down its meaning in one exclusive set of timeless propositional truths.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, according to Penner this calls for the following:

- 1) sensitivity to the nuances of the text in terms of its canonical, literary, grammatical and historical context;
- 2) careful attention to the wider interpretative community, both locally and generally throughout Christian orthodoxy; and
- 3) a set of hermeneutical virtues, but above all the faith, hope and love required to recognize and respond in obedience to the illuminating presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

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11 Curtis, & Eldredge, 1997:45.

12 Penner, 2005(b).

13 Penner, 2005(b).

14 Penner, 2005(b).

To overlook or fail to take this into account, Curtis and Eldredge propose, is to lose sight of, what they call, “the larger story”.<sup>15</sup> To lose sight of the larger story, life, in this sense, becomes “...just a sequence of images and emotions without rhyme or reason”.<sup>16</sup>

They, therefore, go on to point out, in support of what Smith, regarding Lyotard<sup>17</sup> and Alden Thompson, has proposed,<sup>18</sup> “...the Bible is not primarily a doctrinal sourcebook”<sup>19</sup> or “codebook”, but rather a *narrative* book. In this sense it offers new opportunities for the Gospel in and through a pastoral care ministry, where people and God can tell their stories. Calling us “...to enter into the biblical drama, living as participants in the sensitivity to suffering and the creative intention of God. *The biblical story is to be considered an unfinished drama, however, of which we are to be contributors by continuing to write the plot by living out our lives*” (italics added).<sup>20</sup>

The thesis, therefore, proposes that a narrative approach or tool, with regards to Scripture and people’s stories, moves beyond a narrow modernistic confessional understanding. It endeavours to provide a different perspective, allowing for newness, and a fresh and novel understanding to emerge. It may broaden and deepen our ministry, especially within a postmodern world. It is as Webber states it: “How has it [–the Bible–] formed the people of God and transformed their lives from one age to the next? In this approach to the Bible we

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15 “Once upon a time the Western world had a story. Imagine you lived in the High Middle Ages. Your world was permeated with Christian imagery. You marked the days by the sound of Church bells and the weeks and months according to the liturgical calendar. You lived in *anno domini*, the year of the Lord. It wasn’t football season, it was Advent. Your role models were the saints, whose feast days were regular reminders of a drama greater than yourself. The architecture of the cathedral, the music, literature, and sculpture all gave you a vision of transcendence, reminding you of the central elements of that great story. Even the everyday language reflected the Christian understanding of life’s story, expressions like ‘God be with you,’ ‘upon my soul,’ and ‘by Christ’s blood.’ Birth and death, love and loss—all of your personal experiences would be shaped and interpreted by that larger story.

But you don’t live in the Middle Ages, you live in the Postmodern Era. For hundreds of years, our culture has been losing its story. The Enlightenment dismissed the idea that there is an Author but tried to hang on to the idea that we could still have a larger story, life could still make sense, and everything was headed in a good direction. Western culture rejected the mystery and transcendence of the Middle Ages and placed its confidence in pragmatism and progress, the pillars of the Modern Era, the Age of Reason. But once we had rid ourselves of the Author, it didn’t take long to lose the larger story.” Curtis & Eldredge, 1997:40.

16 Curtis & Eldredge, 1997:41.

17 Smith, 2006:74.

18 For Thompson’s postulations on the concept of “codebook” see Thompson, 1991:98-109.

19 Curtis & Eldredge, 1997:45. “To reduce revelation to principles or concepts is to suppress the element of mystery, holiness and wonder to God’s self-disclosure. ‘First principles’ may enlighten and inform; they do not force us to our knees in reverence and awe, as with Moses at the burning bush, or the disciples in the presence of the risen Christ.” Curtis & Eldredge, 1997:45.

20 Erickson, 1998:121.

are allowing the original presentation to cross into the horizons of other paradigms.”<sup>21</sup> It, therefore, allows not only for the intellect, but also the emotions to be present; thus, there is an affective interaction that facilitates meaning, growth and healing. The thesis, agreeing with Fisher, therefore, postulates that:

Narration affects every aspect of each individual’s life and the lives of others in every verbal and nonverbal bid for a person to believe or act in a certain way. Even when a message seems abstract, i.e. the language is literal and not figurative, it is narration because it is embedded in the speaker’s ongoing story that has a beginning, middle, and end, and it invites listeners to interpret its meaning and assess its value for their own lives.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, there are many stories—at least the story of the narrator, the story of the listener, the communities’ stories and “God’s story”—playing into a type of dance, emerging into new and sometimes different stories. This new story is what gives people hope and meaning more than dry modernistic facts could ever do.<sup>23</sup> Narratives and metaphors, according to Ricoeur, help us to understand and connect with each other and God, at an extremely intimate and profoundly personal level, sustaining lasting relationships.

Furthermore, in the book *Adventist Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Pardon Mwansa asks the following thought-provoking questions: “Is there a place for healings and miraculous signs in the Church? Is God as willing to listen to prayers for the sick today and heal them as He was in the Bible times?”<sup>24</sup> Very relevant questions, and in this regard Jon Paulien draws our attention to that oft-quoted statement of Ellen White.

Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men [/women] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘follow Me.’<sup>25</sup>

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21 Webber, 1999:190.

22 Narrative paradigm. [Website], Available from: < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative\\_paradigm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_paradigm) >.

23 “*Thus the truth of any religious narrative, sacred stories, can never be proven or demonstrated by any evidence outside of the story/narrative itself. The truth of the narrative lies within the narrative.* Thus the truth of narrative is essentially categorical. This truth needs to be distinguished from propositional truth which corresponds to reality, or symbolic truth which corresponds to reality, or symbolic truth which gives expression to a deeper abiding experience. Narrative truth makes such inner coherence that it ‘makes meaningful statements possible’ about what is ‘most important’ to the faith community” (italics added). Meylahn, 2003:138.

24 Pardon Mwansa, 1999. *Healings and Miraculous Signs in World Mission*: 125.

25 Ellen G. White, 1942. *The Ministry of Healing*: 143.

The emphasis is on mingling with people and desiring their good; to be involved with people in the community, ministering to their daily needs. The church, who claims to be the body of Christ, has an urgent need to reach out to struggling, “hurting” people.

Consequently, Paulien asserts that “...people today have an urgent need for genuine relationships. They long for real relationships with real people who care enough to be honest as well as loyal”.<sup>26</sup> He points out that in a high-tech society there is an increased need for genuine relationships, “...a corresponding need for the caring touch, not so much the physical as emotional and social”.<sup>27</sup>

*Thus, there needs to be serious future research in the following areas:*

- To research and develop *an Adventist theology of care from a perspective of practical theology and, particularly, a narrative approach.*
- Further research also needs to be done regarding *the SDA Church and its response to postmodernism, “postfoundationalism” and their implications, challenges and possibilities for Adventist theology, mission and ministry.*
- We need to *re-consider our view and use of Scripture, researching issues such as Scripture and metaphor, Scripture and narrative, and Scripture and the dynamics of the community of believers and even the wider community on its interpretation of Scripture and its implication for a ministry of caring.*
- There is a serious need for the church to *re-evaluate its “applied theological”-approach and consider the challenges of a “practical theological”-approach to ministry.*

As Adventism exists and functions within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to address the challenges posed by postmodernism: *can the church’s theology and mission sustain a “relationship”-oriented ministry?*

*How does the church encouraging and initiate a narrative pastoral care ministry that is contemporary, authentic and which bear fruit in its mission within a postmodern world?*

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26 Paulien, 1993:130.

27 Paulien, 1993:130.

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