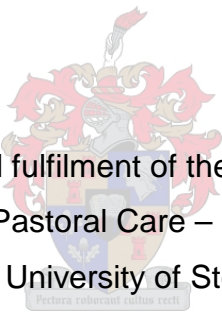


# Terminal Care as Life Care - A Pastoral Approach to Death and Dying

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at the University of Stellenbosch.

The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered behind the text. It features a shield with a blue and gold design, topped with a red and white crown. The shield is flanked by two red lions. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto 'VERITAS LIBERABIT VOS A TUTA'.

Supervisor: Prof Daniël J Louw

December 2007

**DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date: 28 August 2007

## Abstract

The thesis introduces a spiritual understanding of terminal care as life care within a pastoral approach to death and dying. The presupposition is that life and death are unavoidably connected, and that a meaningful approach to death and dying in terms of a Christian theological hermeneutics needs to start with the question “What is life?”

The concept of a *theological hermeneutics* serves as an overall paradigm, which is implied within the interplay of life and death. The aim of a hermeneutical approach is to find meaning in living and dying in the fundamental God-human relationship. The eschatological perspective plays a significant role, as it emphasises the *already* and *not yet* of eschatology that become evident in every life event.

An analysis of the theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions behind a widespread “*psychology of death and dying*” shows that the phenomenological, client-centred models suffer from an overreliance on inner human potentials in coping with dying. Although these models provide valuable insights into the needs of the dying, they fail to equip individuals with a meaningful paradigm that lasts despite the reality of death.

As a result, I propose a “*theology of death and dying*” that opts for a much more holistic approach to terminal care. Based on the impact of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology on a pastoral approach to terminal care, I argue that we do not have to cope with dying by ourselves but can trust in the faithfulness of God who will keep us strong to the end (1 Cor 1:8). As fear of death can effectively only be coped with by caring for life, pastoral care to the dying needs to emphasise the fundamental God-human relationship that guarantees life in spite of death. A unique stance of hope follows from a Christian spiritual understanding of life that overcomes the paradigmatic gap left by psychological approaches to death and dying, and makes us aware that the new life in the Spirit is a quality that we *already* possess.

Eventually, the life care approach is applied to a pastoral *prevention strategy* in the context of the HIV pandemic. I argue the thesis that prevailing

HIV prevention programmes suffer from a lack of an overall frame of reference from which to reflect on the necessity for behavioural change. To fill this gap, a spiritual life care approach to the HIV pandemic emphasises the development of a Christian ethos based on an internalised assurance of the purpose and destiny of human life, which can function as an overall paradigm behind a prevention strategy. This pastoral prevention strategy is based on the assumption that positive change, the anticipation of a better future and true hope derive from an understanding of who we are as human beings before and in relationship with God.

## Opsomming

Hierdie tesis stel 'n spirituele begrip van terminale sorg as lewensorg binne 'n pastorale benadering tot dood en sterfte bekend. Die voorveronderstelling is dat lewe en dood onlosmaakbaar verbind is, en dat 'n betekenisvolle benadering tot dood en sterfte in terme van 'n Christelike teologiese hermeneutiek met die vraag "Wat is lewe?" 'n aanvang moet neem.

Die konsep van *teologiese hermeneutiek* dien as 'n oorkoepelende paradigma, wat geïmpliseer word binne die wisselwerking van lewe en dood met die doelwit om betekenis te vind in lewe en dood in die fundamentele God-mens-verhouding. 'n Eskatologiese perspektief speel 'n beduidende rol, aangesien dit die *alreeds* en die *nog nie* van eskatologie beklemtoon, wat in elke lewensgebeurtenis duidelik word.

'n Ontleding van die teoretiese paradigmas en filosofiese voorveronderstellings rakende die wydverspreide "*sielkunde van dood en sterfte*" toon aan dat die fenomenologiese, kliëntgesentreerde modelle gebrek lei as gevolg van hul heftige aanspraak op die innerlike menslike potensiaal om sterfte te hanteer. Alhoewel hierdie modelle kosbare insigte ten opsigte van die behoeftes van die sterwendes bied, faal hulle daarin om individue toe te rus met 'n betekenisvolle paradigma wat volhoubaar is, afgesien van die werklikheid van die dood.

Ek staan dus 'n "*teologie van dood en sterfte*" voor wat 'n veel meer holistiese benadering tot terminale sorg meebring. Gegrand op die impak van 'n Christelike, spirituele konsep van lewe en 'n pastorale antropologie op 'n pastorale benadering tot terminale sorg, argumenteer ek dat ons nie nodig het om die dood op ons eie te hanteer nie omdat ons op die getrouheid van God, wat ons sterk sal hou tot die einde (1 Kor 1:8), kan vertrou. Aangesien die vrees vir die dood slegs deur die omgee vir lewe hanteer kan word, is dit noodsaaklik dat pastorale sorg aan die sterwende die God-mens-verhouding, wat lewe te midde van dood waarborg, beklemtoon. 'n Unieke gesigspunt van *hoop* volg vanuit 'n Christelike, spirituele begrip van lewe, wat die paradigmatische gaping wat gelaat word deur psigologiese benaderings tot dood en sterfte vul. Dit maak ons bewus dat die nuwe lewe in die Gees 'n kwaliteit is wat ons *alreeds* besit.

Die lewensorg-benadering word uiteindelik in 'n pastorale *voorkomingstrategie* in die konteks van die MIV-pandemie toegepas. Ek argumenteer in die tesis dat heersende MIV-voorkomingsprogramme gestrem word deur 'n tekort aan 'n algehele verwysingsraamwerk, vanwaar oor die noodsaaklikheid van gedragsverandering nagedink kan word. Om hierdie gaping te vul, stel ek 'n spirituele lewensorg-benadering voor, wat die ontwikkeling van 'n Christelike etos beklemtoon, gegrond op 'n inwendige sekerheid van die doel en bestemming van menslike lewe, wat as 'n algehele paradigma vir 'n pastorale voorkomingstrategie kan funksioneer. Hierdie voorkomingstrategie is gegrond op die veronderstelling dat positiewe verandering, die verwagting van 'n beter toekoms, en ware hoop voortspruit uit 'n begrip van wie ons as mense voor en in verhouding met God is.

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## 1. Introduction

O Herr, gib jedem seinen eigenen Tod.  
Das Sterben, das aus jedem Leben geht,  
darin er Liebe hatte, Sinn und Not.

Rainer Maria Rilke, "Todes-Erfahrung" (quoted in Koch 1987:7)

Tomorrow we shall meet,  
Death and I –  
And he shall thrust his sword  
Into one who is wide awake.

Dag Hammarskjöld (1993, quoted in Louw 2004:2)

Without any doubt, human life and death are inevitably connected. Perhaps one could say that we are born to die. Not that death is the purpose of our being born, but we are born toward death and "in each of our lives the work of dying is already underway" (Neuhaus 2000:1).

Louw refers to death as the very landscape "in which one draws the profile of life" (2004:1). Even though it is sometimes more difficult for human beings to live than to die, the art of living "always takes place within the realm of death" (Louw 2004:1). We might live in the illusion that we can control death, but death remains a decisive and inescapable attribute of human existence. The real challenge to human beings is to continue living meaningfully and with soulfulness, despite the reality of death.<sup>1</sup>

In *Mechanics of the Human Soul: About Maturity and Life-Skills* (2004), Louw quotes Lance Armstrong, who in 1996 was diagnosed with stage-four

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of the thesis, the term *soul* refers to "a qualitative principle determining our human quest for meaning and dignity" (Louw 2004:9). Based on the scriptural expressions *nēfēsh* and *psyché*, which refer to life, its quality and purposefulness, soul should be interpreted as "the quality of life within the presence of God" (Louw 2004:14). The Hellenistic dualism of body and soul, which perceives soul as a substance differentiated from the body, is rejected. Louw asserts, "one does not have a soul, but one *is* in every fabric of one's being human soul" (2004:14). He suggests that, in terms of a theological hermeneutics, soul should be interpreted within the paradigmatic notion of eschatology, i.e. the *already* of our new stance in Christ as well as the *not yet* of salvation (Louw 2004:14).

The term *soulfulness* describes the quality of soul and interlocks with "the art of coping with the demands of life" (Louw 2004:10). Within the complexity of networking and systemic relationships, it designates a certain approach to the different happenstances in life and "reveals the quality of one's soul" (Louw 2004:10). For further explanations regarding soul and soulfulness, consult *Mechanics of the Human Soul: About Maturity and Life Skills* (2004) by Louw.

testicular cancer and in 2004 won the Tour de France for the sixth time: “That is the essential truth that you learn. *People die*. And after you learn it, all other matters seem irrelevant” (2001, quoted in Louw 2004:1).

The inevitability of human death points to the realisation that “What is indeed relevant is the art of how to live life purposefully despite the reality of death” (Louw 2004:1). According to Louw, “Death landscapes and demarcates the human soul. The demarcation of soulfulness and the meaning of life is determined by our encounter with death” (2004:1). What correlates with the reality of death in human life is the *art of living*, as it deals with meaning-giving, purposefulness and the challenge to discover the true pace of being human (Louw 2004:1).

In a broader sense, death does not only refer to physical limitation regarding the extinction of life, but also relates to the destruction of human relationships, i.e. the exposure to loneliness, isolation, rejection and loss (Louw 2004:2). In his late work *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard points to the significance of *disrelationship* in relations (1954, quoted in Louw 2004:2). The emotional state of despair caused by rejection equals a form or mode of non-existence, as it “extinguishes the vividness of life and the soulfulness of the spirit”, Louw (2004:2) argues. Furthermore, concerning the phenomenon of death in life, he writes, “The deepest pain in suffering is the fear of being rejected for who one is without any guarantee of unconditional love” (Louw 2004:2).

It becomes clear that within the landscape of human life, which is shaped by the existential realities of death, despair, loneliness, the fear of rejection and our exposure to suffering and indignity, the human soul needs to discover meaning and significance and regain dignity (Louw 2004:3). This does not only imply the art of living meaningfully, but also involves a life-long journey and process of learning and the development of wisdom (Louw 2004:3).<sup>2</sup> This

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of the thesis, the term *wisdom* refers to “a deep or insightful understanding of life achieved through experience” (Hunter 1990:1325), which is to be won through struggle and effort over time. Wisdom is marked by qualities such as self-knowledge, maturity, perspective, judgement, a sense of the whole and a capacity to find a certain dialectical wholeness in the paradoxical aspects of experience, for instance in the question of good and evil (Hunter 1990:1325).

process of discernment should be guided by the following two essential questions: “For what *purpose*?” and “Who am *I*?” (Louw 2004:3). Hence, the realisation of death essentially points toward the purposefulness and meaningfulness of life and the crux of our being human.

In a like manner, Jüngel proclaims in *Tod* (1971), “Wer vom Tode reden will, muss etwas vom Leben verstehen” (1971:25). In search of an authority that can provide reliable knowledge on the issue of death in terms of an epistemology, Jüngel argues, “Das menschliche Leben kommt dafür in Betracht, weil es sich als Verhältnis zum Tode vollzieht und zur Erfahrung bringt” (1971:24). Death can be understood for what it really is only against the horizon of and in relation to life. Jüngel states, “Der Tod zehrt vom Leben” (1971:24).

Taking the meaningful interplay between life and death seriously, my basic assumption is that one’s personal understanding of life and being alive will surely impact on one’s perception and, consequently, experience of dying and death. Conversely, an individual’s understanding of death and dying will certainly determine the awareness and general appreciation of life and what it means to live the limited time span of human life. Barton emphasises that a “psychology of death” (1979:23) is characterised by the necessity to give up and let go in its entirety what has been achieved, whereas simultaneously to continue life and keep a sense of aliveness (Barton 1979:15). The *paradox* concerning human death and dying, i.e. that dying is essentially about living, is stressed again by Barton and should be regarded as the central starting point of the thesis.

In line with this argument, I propose that effective terminal care needs to start with life by assisting people to live meaningfully. The terminal stage is often experienced as a challenging time in which pastoral support is indispensable in order to assist individuals in meaningfully coming to terms with their imminent death and the paradox of having to let go and wanting to keep a

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Most significant is the understanding that from a theological perspective, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10; Pro 9:10; 1 Cor 1:18ff) (Hunter 1990:1325f). One needs to truly love and seek wisdom, and ground it in fundamental reverence for and faith in God in order to being granted it as a gift from God (Pro 2:6) (Hunter 1990:1325). The development of wisdom is closely connected to the goals of pastoral care, which may also be regarded as sapiential (Hunter 1990:1326).

sense of aliveness of themselves in the face of death. Without denying the agony of dying, pastoral care to the terminally ill cannot be effective if it only focuses on the painful and distressing experience of dying. From a pastoral perspective, coping with dying is therefore viewed as a process of learning, spiritual growth and the development of wisdom.

As a result, I want to argue for a much more holistic approach to terminal care in terms of life care that emphasises the crucial interrelation between life and death, which is based on a spiritual perspective on life and our human identity before God. The objective is to explore the vital reciprocal relationship between human life and death in terms of a theological hermeneutics and its potential implications for a pastoral approach to terminal care.

Starting from a hermeneutical perspective that highlights the fundamental God-human relationship and the significance of Christ's death and resurrection for the whole of human existence, a pastoral approach to terminal care aims to provide a theological paradigm from which to reflect on the vital interrelation of life and death, which will enable individuals to approach both their living and dying more meaningfully. It will be illustrated how a Christian spiritual understanding of life and our being human before God can positively influence an individual's perception of death and dying, and a pastoral approach to terminal care in terms of life care.

### **A Pastoral Hermeneutics Applied to the Interplay of Life and Death**

The term *pastoral hermeneutics* serves as an overall paradigm, which is implied in the interplay between human life and death, and refers to the implications of a specific understanding of life on an individual's attitude towards dying and death.<sup>3</sup> The central aim of a hermeneutical approach to terminal care is to achieve a transformed understanding of life and death through maturity in faith.

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<sup>3</sup> In the context of the thesis, the term *paradigm* refers to those normative categories and fundamental concepts that are used to interpret reality (Louw 1998:13). A paradigm is described as "a theoretical and working model of a world view according to which a person, group or institution understands and operates in a normative way" (Burton 1988, quoted in Louw 1998:13).

Following Louw in his choice of a hermeneutical paradigm in pastoral theology, the thesis starts from the presupposition that a paradigm shift is needed in pastoral theology away from a mere description of God's being in terms of metaphysical attributes and *transcendancy*, toward a more metaphorical and dialogical model of God emphasising God's *condescendence* (1998:82-83). A hermeneutical paradigm in

Louw defines pastoral hermeneutics generally as theological reflection on how to live and practise faith within the context of the congregation and the contemporary social and cultural situation (1998:5). The term is not prescriptive but intends to shed light on the process of “understanding faith within the framework of the quest for meaning and the development of a mature faith” (Louw 1998:5). In the context of existential human life issues, a pastoral hermeneutics aims to “identify theological categories in the narrative of the cross and the resurrection which can be used in the process of interpretation and spiritual direction” (Louw 1998:16).

Generally, the term hermeneutics relates to the transfer of meaning in a communication process, which is the event of *hermeneuein* (Louw 1998:98). The Greek term indicates the process of interpreting, explaining, or translating (Rossouw 1980, quoted in Louw 1998:98). As a result, a theological hermeneutics tries to interpret and translate the praxis of God in terms of human and existential life issues (Louw 1998:98).

Louw describes theology as a discourse about God in connection with the encounter between God and human beings, and the interpretation of God’s salvific intervention in the world (1998:101). This process of interpretation and encounter implies that the most appropriate paradigm for doing theology is hermeneutics, as it “illuminates the movement of understanding and communication between two entities or texts” (Louw 1998:102). These two entities are the text of Scripture and tradition within the church and the text of human beings within different contexts (Louw 1998:102). Accordingly, one should speak of three texts that impact on the encounter between God and human beings, which is subject to theological enterprise: the biblical *text*, the human *life text* and the cultural *con-text*. The circle of understanding consists of three elements: the pre-text, the text and the con-text, which symbolise a message, a source and a situation (Louw 1998:102).

Consequently, hermeneutics relates to a process of *understanding* regarding the meaning of the encounter between God and humanity, a process

of *change* referring to renewal and transformation, as well as a process of structural *analysis*, which is the assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and actuality of the ecclesial practices (Louw 1998:98). The hermeneutical model is helpful in practical theology, as it emphasises the meaning and significance of the covenantal encounter for the whole of human life and creation (Louw 1998:96).

A theological hermeneutics plays a vital role in terms of the main objective of the thesis. The hermeneutical process lies at the very heart of the investigation how a Christian spiritual understanding of life can assist to comprehend terminal care as life care by explicitly viewing death and dying in the context of a spiritual interpretation of life and what it means to be alive.<sup>4</sup> This understanding points toward a pastoral hermeneutics, since it relates to the process of discovering meaning in the God-human encounter, the development of wisdom, as well as an individual's active engagement in the practise of faith and the striving for transformation.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of a theological hermeneutics, two essential aspects will have to be explored concerning their transforming impact on a widespread understanding of death and dying: (1) a Christian spiritual concept *life* and what it means to live; and (2) a pastoral *anthropology* and the particular identity of a person in Christ's death and resurrection both in living and dying. The question is how the painful experience of the threat of non-existence in the face of death

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<sup>4</sup> This points to the understanding that being alive and the experience of spiritual welfare and well-being are not necessarily identical with physical health and bodily wholeness. Even in the face of imminent death, individuals can experience spiritual health and well-being. Louw argues, "To see health only against the background of illness is a one-sided view. Health is more than the absence of infirmity" (1994:8). The normative factor is spiritual maturity, not illness or health *per se* (Louw 1994:8).

<sup>5</sup> As regards the interrelation between faith and life, Ebeling proclaims that faith radically transforms the human life situation (1979:84). He states, „Er [i.e. der Glaube] verhält sich nicht neutral zur Frage von Sein und Nichtsein, sondern geht auf sie ein, indem er sie sowohl in aller Schärfe stellt als auch mit Entschiedenheit beantwortet“ (Ebeling 1979:84). Faith's relation to life manifests in a certain life situation by bringing out the general human condition and illuminating and transforming the present situation (Ebeling 1979:108). Ebeling argues that it is indeed a tautology to speak of faith's connection to life, since faith is essentially a relation to life and "lived faith" is nothing else but "believed life" (1979:109). Life itself is the subject of faith (Ebeling 1979:109).

In a like manner, Härle emphasises that faith, which has the character of a certain disposition regarding human acting and behaviour, is related to doing and not-doing in terms of an individual's life style (2000:64). He refers to faith as "*daseinsbestimmendes Vertrauen*" (Härle 2000:64), which does not perceive the failure or success of the believers' existence as depending on their own efforts and strength but on what was intended for them and has been bestowed on them by God. Ebeling depicts faith as "ein Sich-Verlassen auf das wahrhaft Verlässliche" (1979:88). According to Härle, faith demonstrates its "Echtheit gerade in schwierigen, »ausweglosen« Leberssituationen" (Härle 2000:64).

can be responded to appropriately by pastoral care and whether Christian faith can offer any consolation in terms of the art of living meaningfully in the face of death.

Keeping the findings of a theological hermeneutics in mind, it will be assessed whether such a hermeneutical interpretation of the interplay between human life and death can impact positively on widespread theories of a “*psychology of death and dying*”, like those of Kübler-Ross in *On Death and Dying* (1969) and Barton in *Dying and Death: A Clinical Guide for Caregivers* (1979). The aim is to identify not only the theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions behind a psychology of death and dying, but also how these impact on an individual’s understanding of life, the process of care and the coping strategies in the terminal stage. In connection with that, I will argue the thesis that the phenomenological, client-centred approaches of a psychology of death and dying suffer from an overreliance on individuals’ inner potential in coping with dying. Although the models provide valuable insights into the existential experience of dying, they fail to equip individuals with a meaningful paradigm that lasts despite the painful reality of death.

Within the context of a psychology of dying and death and a theological hermeneutics, the central objective of this thesis is to propose a “*theology of death and dying*”, which explicitly perceives terminal care as life care. The central question will be how from a pastoral perspective the issue of death and dying can be more meaningfully approached in order to shift the emphasis of terminal care toward a more effective care for life. The focus will be on terminal care as life care in the particular sense that it does not only serve the dying to view their parting in the context of their specific identity and aliveness in Christ, but also assist the living to perceive their whole existence, including their future death, in the context of their unique identity in Christ.

My main argument here will be that we do not have to cope with dying by ourselves, but can trust in the faithfulness of God who will keep us strong to the end (1 Cor 1:8). As fear of death can only effectively be coped with by caring for life, pastoral care to the dying needs to emphasise the fundamental God-human relationship, which guarantees life despite death. In connection with that, I will argue the thesis that a unique stance of *hope* follows from such a Christian spiritual understanding of life that overcomes the paradigmatic gap left by

psychological approaches to death and dying, and that makes us aware that the new life in the Spirit is a quality that we *already* possess.

Finally, I intend to explore how a life care approach can meaningfully be applied to a pastoral *prevention strategy* in the context of the HIV pandemic. An analysis of current care and counselling models for the HIV pandemic, like those of Uys and Cameron (eds.) in *Home-Based HIV/Aids Care* (2003) and Van Dyk in *HIV/Aids Care and Counselling* (2005), will show where their emphases are and whether they can be improved in terms of a pastoral hermeneutical approach. I will argue that existing HIV prevention programmes fail to provide an overall frame of reference that allows for the general enhancement of the quality of human life and effectively assists individuals in coping with basic life issues, including healthy decision-making and reclaiming life in the context of the HIV pandemic.

In terms of a pastoral prevention strategy, I opt for a spiritual approach to prevention care based on an understanding of who we *already* are in Christ, which aims to enhance individuals' general appreciation for life. I argue that a spiritual approach to prevention care based on the development of human *ethos* will prove more fundamental in the context of the HIV pandemic than prevention efforts that emphasise merely the importance of behavioural change due to ethical and moralistic considerations.

### **From Denial to the Art of Living in the Face of Death**

As regards the rationale that gives rise to the thesis, it needs to be emphasised again that human life and death are inevitably connected. Jüngel reminds us of the obvious, "*alle Menschen sind sterblich*", and refers to death as "*das Ureigenste*" of human identity (1971:11, 16). Nonetheless, even though all of us theoretically know that we have to die, we do not believe it (Jüngel 1971:12-13). Jüngel quotes Freud saying, "Im Grunde glaubt niemand an seinen eigenen Tod" (Jüngel 1971:13). The classical syllogism on human mortality is most difficult to grasp for human beings in the full flux of life: "Alle Menschen sind sterblich. Ich bin ein Mensch. Also bin ich sterblich, und so muss auch ich, wenn »sterblich sein« soviel heisst wie »sterben müssen«, irgendwann irgendwo irgendwie einmal sterben" (Jüngel 1971:13).



The outstanding document in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that pays attention to the meaning of death in human existence, is Heidegger's fundamental work *Sein und Zeit* (1927). A pastoral approach to death and dying cannot ignore his existential analysis of human being-in-the-world, as it addresses the dreadful reality of human suffering, anxiety, despair and death explicitly by relating it to the search for meaning. Heidegger points out that a meaningful philosophy, which helps life to gain a true understanding of itself, essentially springs from finality being an intrinsic part of human being-in-the-world.

Heidegger proclaims that dying is reduced to an event, which generally concerns human being-in-the-world, but does not affect anybody personally (1986<sup>16</sup>:253). Death appears as a well-known event in the world that remains in the characteristic discreetness of everyday happenings (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:253). People acknowledge in the form of the unsuspecting "they-self" that, eventually, all of us will have to die, but, initially, fortunately remain unaffected (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:253). By means of what Heidegger refers to as the "*man stirbt*"-expression, death is perceived as "ein unbestimmtes Etwas, das allererst irgendwoher eintreffen muss, zunächst aber für einen selbst noch nicht vorhanden und daher unbedrohlich ist" (1986<sup>16</sup>:253). The "they-self" takes care of the continuous consolation regarding the threat of death in human existence (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:253).

In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), Tolstoy depicts the feelings of the deceased Ivan Ilyich's closest friends in a literary way: "the very fact of the death of someone close to them aroused in all who heard about it, as always, a feeling of delight that he had died and they hadn't" (2006:3). Thinking about the three days and nights of agony that preceded Ivan Ilyich's death, Pyotr Ivanovich feels a "momentary pang of fear. But immediately he was saved, without knowing how, by the old familiar idea that this had happened to Ivan Ilyich, not him, and it could and would not happen to him" (Tolstoy 2006:11).

The avoidance of death is so prominent that even the dying themselves are often assured by their immediate surroundings that they will certainly escape death and return to the comforting atmosphere of everyday occurrences (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:253). Tolstoy illustrates this common inability to face the unavoidable as follows:

Ivan Ilyich's worst torment was the lying – the lie, which was somehow maintained by them all, that he wasn't dying, he was only ill, and all he had to do was keep calm and follow doctor's orders. ... It was this living a lie, all around him and within him, that did most to poison the last days in the life of Ivan Ilyich (2006:73).

Heidegger confirms that our everyday being toward death is a permanent escape from it: "Schon das »Denken« an den Tod gilt öffentlich als feige Furcht, Unsicherheit des Daseins und finstere Weltflucht ... [und wird] überdies als Schwäche ausgegeben, die ein selbstsicheres Dasein nicht kennen darf" (1986<sup>16</sup>:254).

In line with Heidegger and Tolstoy, Jüngel comes to the conclusion that death as "das uns Ureigenste" of human identity is simultaneously also "das uns *Fremdeste*" (1971:16). Despite theoretical knowledge, death remains strange to us, something we cannot grasp in its final unavailability and predictability from a positivistic and rationalistic perspective. Jüngel claims it a truth that "der Tod als ein mein eigenes Leben beendendes Ereignis mich unendlich *befremdet*" (1971:14). It is the certainty that there is no escape, which makes it so difficult for us to deal with death. Even though death appears mysterious and indefinable to human beings, it is perhaps the precise definiteness of its eventual coming that makes it so indefinable for us (Jüngel 1971:11). Human beings who create rational solutions and see possibilities in most circumstances in life are left entirely helpless and powerless facing their own mortality. Jüngel points out, "Der Mensch ist ohne Ausweg dem Tod gegenüber nicht erst, wenn es zum Sterben kommt, sondern ständig und wesentlich" (1971:14).

It is important to acknowledge the far-reaching implications of the human inability to grasp the phenomenon of death rationally, as well as the tendency to avoid the topic overall for the practise of terminal care. Our being disconcerted regarding our own death not only strongly relates to prevention efforts in the context of the HIV pandemic, but also to the way we approach and care for those who are dying. This is significant as, from an ethical perspective, the process of dying constitutes a twofold obligation for the believer, including the willing acceptance of dying and accompanying others in their parting (Henning 2004b:1724).

The inclination to keep death and dying discreet is a danger in that terminally ill individuals are deprived of the opportunity to prepare for and await death with the essential support of their immediate environment. The well-meant disregard of their surroundings often sustains denial, so that even the dying themselves might want to avoid being cared for in a caring institution like a hospice, fearing that they go there to die and might never return home, even when death is indeed immanent. Death avoidance might also lead to the bereaved being left alone with their loss, because of the strong need for covering discretion in their environment. This is especially the case in the context of the HIV pandemic where dying is connected to a considerable degree of stigma.<sup>6</sup> In terms of prevention care, death denial leads to a general suppression of the reality of dying that, amongst others, also manifests in the phenomenon of HIV-fatigue. As regards caregivers, the deep-seated human urge to avoid confrontation with death encourages burnout, because working with dying individuals on a daily basis does require coming to terms with the reality of death to some extent.

Taking this into consideration, the inevitability and finality of death connected with the human inability to grasp it from a positivistic, rationalistic stance is the precise point of departure of the thesis. The question that pastoral care is concerned with is to deal meaningfully with the phenomenon of death, enhance the quality of people's lives despite the reality of death and eventually improve the process of care for the dying. The central hypothesis to be verified in the course of this thesis is that, in contrast to phenomenological, client-centred models, a hermeneutical approach from the perspective of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology encourages a relational approach to death and dying, which surpasses the limitations of our rationalistic and positivistic abilities of comprehension and enables individuals to face death more meaningfully. In terms of possible outcomes, this hypothesis most likely has implications for the pastoral practise of terminal and prevention care in terms of a more fundamental care for life.

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<sup>6</sup> For further reading on stigma and stigmatisation consult: Ackermann, D. (2005) *Engaging Stigma: An Embodied Theological Response to HIV and AIDS*, in *Scriptura*, 2005:2(89):385-395.

The personal interest that gave rise to the thesis also needs to be understood in the context of a search for meaning and purposefulness in life and death. Taking into account that death deals with both the most vested yet still strangest element of our being human, Jüngel confirms that we only ask about death when we start the intimate endeavour to understand ourselves (1971:17). He claims, “Die rätselhafte Frage nach dem Tod ist ernster. Sie rührt an das Geheimnis des Lebens” (Jüngel 1971:17). The attempt to come to terms with the inevitability of death in essence deals with the true secret of life and is closely related to the development of spirituality.<sup>7</sup>

The striking irony that the topic of death and dying is something that not only concerns every human being without exclusion and in total irrevocability, but that it is also extremely difficult to grasp on a positivistic, rationalistic level made me want to explore the issue further. We certainly know that all of us have to die, but in the end we cannot comprehend our mortality and feel helpless whenever we encounter death – our own and that of others. Seeing loved ones die, we are confronted with the need to find meaning in what seems final, cruel and meaningless. Also caring for those who are intimately confronted with the reality of death in the context of the HIV pandemic, death seems to be a constant companion stirring questions and demanding answers.

Jüngel confirms, “Was ist der Tod? Diese Frage ist mit unserer Existenz zugleich gegeben. Man kann sie zwar verdrängen, aber sie ist da” (1971:16). Death being such a fundamental part of human life, asking about it takes us back to the very essence of human existence. It is often the things that we like to suppress from our conscious awareness that lead us closer to the meaning and essentials of life.

As pointed out earlier, the struggle with the reality of death is also central to the understanding of Heidegger’s lifelong enquiry into the “meaning of being” (Kraus 1998:98). After the devastating shock of World War I, which caused vast

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<sup>7</sup> In the context of the thesis, *spirituality* is essentially perceived as a search for meaning. From a theological perspective, it deals with the task to link deep human life issues with transcendency, i.e. to relate existential life issues to the question of God and the quest for meaning. Louw uses the so-called “telic model” (1998:7) to describe spirituality. Telic derives from the Greek term *teleion*, which in Scriptures denotes “the task of preparing one to appear before, and to live in, God’s presence” (Louw 1998:7). The model encompasses the idea of a mature faith and the development of spirituality, which should also be regarded as the focal point of a hermeneutical model in pastoral care (Louw 1998:7, 96).

numbers of deaths and extensive suffering, the meaning of the unity of the being-wholeness of the entire being drives Heidegger's endeavours (1986<sup>16</sup>:232). Understanding his view on death is the key to understanding his philosophy of being, since death is closely related to the "Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein" (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:247).

Heidegger approaches the quest for an understanding of being through a study of the human way of "being-there", i.e. *Dasein*, and through an analysis of the structures of this "being-there".<sup>8</sup> He makes the famous distinction between authentic and inauthentic modes of *Dasein*. The *authentic* mode of being can be described as "signifying that individual character of human being that is compromised by submersion in conventional behaviour and forms of life" (Kraus 1998:98), which is the result of inherited social structures. To be *inauthentic*, therefore, means to live merely according to these pre-determined structures and behave in accordance with everyday conceptions of appropriate social intercourse (Krause 1998:98).

As regards the significant meaning of death in human existence, Heidegger asserts that authentic *Dasein* accepts that authentic death is not an occurrence that will happen sometime in the future, but is "a fundamental structure inseparable from Being-in-the-world" (Kraus 1998:99). He believes that the authentic and ontological awareness of *Dasein* can only come from a true awareness of the meaning of death (Gelven 1970:137). What we can take from this is that the issue of death deals with the authenticity and existential aspect of living, i.e. the core of being human. Thinking about death leads us closer to an understanding of the enigmatic nature of life. Therefore, I am

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<sup>8</sup> Central to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) is the relationship between the study of "the ways in which a human being exists", i.e. existential analytic, and "what it means to be", i.e. fundamental ontology (Gelven 1970:140). This relationship can only be discovered by working out "the essentials of the way in which one does indeed exist" (Gelven 1970:140). Heidegger argues that closely connected to the more ontological aspect of being are the three major issues death, authentic existence, and time (Gelven 1970:140).

Essential in this regard is also the question of the totality of human existence. Heidegger argues, "Im *Dasein* steht, solange es ist, je noch etwas aus, was es sein kann und wird" (1986<sup>16</sup>:233). This perspective necessarily includes the end of human being-in-the-world, which is death (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:233). "Eine ständige Unabgeschlossenheit" (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:233) is, therefore, part of the basic condition of being human. As long as the human "being-there" *is*, it will never attain its totality (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:233). When the "being-there" reaches its totality, the benefit turns into the loss of the human being-in-the-world *per se* (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:233).

excited to see where an exploration of the issue of death and dying will lead me in my spiritual understanding of the meaning and essence of life.

Nevertheless, we need to acknowledge that everything that we say about death is necessarily inadequate (Neuhaus 2000:19). We are dealing with things that we cannot understand fully since they are beyond our experience and capacity: “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor 13:12).<sup>9</sup> To find answers of faith to the various questions that arise in connection with our own death and that of others is always in danger of being false consolation concerning the harshness of the inevitability of death and the suffering and pain connected to it.

Jüngel argues, “Der Tod ist stumm. Und macht stumm. Soll man über ihn reden können, muss das Wort dazu von weiter her kommen” (1971:7; Manser 1977:226). This understanding is most helpful, as it once again draws the immediate focus away from death, its finality and inevitability that leave us in despair, towards something that surpasses human understanding. In awareness of the limitations and challenges, I intend to approach the matter of death and dying sensitively, and search for answers that are offered by Christian faith, as it claims to have heard such a “word from further away” and promises to guide us truthfully in the exploration of the topic.

### **A Message of Hope and Life in the Context of the HIV Pandemic**

The HIV pandemic, not only in Africa but worldwide, demands further systematic and focused research on the issue of death and dying. Taking the extreme suffering that often accompanies a death due to AIDS into consideration, the crucial question that terminal care as life care within the HIV pandemic is concerned with is how to assist people to die with human *dignity*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> If not indicated otherwise, all biblical references or quotations in the thesis are taken from: Holy Bible. New International Version [NIV] (2005) Wellington, South Africa: Lux Verbi. BM.

<sup>10</sup> Human dignity is concerned with the interplay between freedom and responsibility (Louw 2006:257). Louw argues, “Humans are not merely free from, but free to and free for” (2006:257). Generally, human dignity is enhanced by solidarity, compassion, empathy, as well as equal and fair treatment (Louw 2006:257).

Louw offers the following qualitative criteria for the assessment of human dignity in the context of health care: *equality* (i.e. people have equal value, which sometimes demands different treatment in order to be fair, e.g. of the handicapped or disadvantaged), *equity* (i.e. principles of fairness and impartiality), *merit* (i.e. issues of worthiness and quality), *human needs* (i.e. physical, psychological, social, political,

Although in general HIV has become more of a chronic treatable disease rather than a progressive fatal one, due to more advanced antiretroviral therapy and an improved general management of HIV infection and opportunistic infections, this is less the case in sub-Saharan Africa (Van Dyk 2005:iii). UNAIDS estimates that there were about 39.5 million adults and children living with HIV worldwide in 2006 (UNAIDS 2006:65); 24.7 million of which were living in sub-Saharan Africa, representing more than 60 percent, even though the region only holds about 10 percent of the world's population (UNAIDS 2006:65). Deaths due to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa represent 72 percent of global AIDS deaths, i.e. 2.1 million of a total of 2.9 million worldwide in 2006 (UNAIDS 2006:10, 67). Adults and children worldwide are dying in their millions from conditions related to AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa, almost every family grieves for one (or even more) family member who had died of AIDS. HIV infection rates are still on the increase, with about 2.8 million newly infected adults and children in sub-Saharan Africa in 2006, of a total of 4.3 million worldwide (UNAIDS 2006:66).

South Africa's HIV epidemic has now reached the stage where increasing numbers of people are dying of AIDS (UNAIDS 2006:11). About 320,000 deaths due to AIDS have already occurred (UNAIDS 2007). The increasing death toll has driven average life expectancy below 50 years (UNAIDS Update 2006:11). There are about 5.5 million people living with HIV and about 1.2 million AIDS orphans in South Africa (UNAIDS 2007).

In the context of the HIV pandemic, it is commonly stated that there are only two options: one is either *infected* or directly *affected* by HIV and AIDS. Already in the 1980s, Russel-Coons claimed, "We All Are Living With AIDS" (1989, quoted in Akoto 2004:99). There is, in the words of Cecil Williams' book, *No Hiding Place* (1992) (Akoto 2004:100). The incomprehensibility of death in such vast numbers calls to mind the words renowned South African author JM Coetzee places in the mouth of his protagonist in *Elizabeth Costello*: "[S]everal million people were put to death ... These are numbers that numb the mind. We have only one death of our own; we can comprehend the deaths of others only one at

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educational, economic needs etc as related to self-esteem, safety, acknowledgement, care and validation), *spiritual needs* (i.e. intimacy, freedom, hope, fulfilment of life competencies, support in response to existential life issues), and *justice* (i.e. safeguarding of human rights) (2006:256).

a time. In the abstract we may be able to count to a million, but we cannot count to a million deaths” (2004:63).

The HIV pandemic confronts us directly with human mortality, its inevitability and bitterness, which is the reason for this thesis. In times of powerful medical and technical achievements, HIV forces us back to the confines of life: death (Louw 2006:341). It brings us face to face with human fallibility, fragility, weakness, mortality and fear of death (Louw 2006:341). The terrifying vision of immanent death is perhaps the first picture that comes to a person's mind when she or he is informed of a positive HIV-status. The thought of death is certainly present in a person living with HIV in the last stage of the disease. Coming to terms with the disease and with one's own personal death and life issues connected with it is the fundamental challenge with which people in the last phase of the infection must cope. The same is true for significant others who are affected by the vast impact of the disease on their lives. Seeing their loved ones die, they are left with many questions about the meaning and purpose of life and death.

In this context, pastoral care is about transmitting a powerful message of “a *hope and life* which could exceed the barriers of human potential” (Louw 1994:170) in order to enable individuals to live and die with human dignity. Such a message of hope might enable not only those individuals dying from AIDS-related illnesses to experience their suffering in the context of Christ's death and resurrection, but also assist persons living with HIV to perceive and value both their living and future dying differently. The greatest challenge of pastoral care is to assist people living with HIV to continue living in hope. Hope does not refer to the well-meant yet cynical promise that everything will soon get better or an optimistic denial of the reality of death altogether, as illustrated by Tolstoy and Heidegger. *True* hope in the Christian sense wants to empower individuals to face the inevitable while still maintaining hope in the living God. This message of hope and life might also help grieving family members to change their personal perceptions of the painful experience to accompany a loved one to death. Therefore, to enhance the quality of life both in the face of the inevitability of death and the context of the HIV pandemic is the overall goal of a pastoral life care approach.



Moreover, the continuing expansion of the HIV pandemic demands a thorough exploration of the theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions in the prevailing literature on HIV. Taking a close look at prevailing HIV care and prevention models, I will argue that prevailing prevention programmes are characterised by a lack of a broader moral frame of reference from which to reflect on behavioural change in the context of the HIV pandemic. From a pastoral perspective, the urgent need for such a theoretical paradigm and frame of reference behind a prevention strategy arises to improve the effectiveness of existing prevention efforts.

The hypothesis argued in the thesis is that a spiritual life care approach based on human *ethos* appears more fundamental and that the significant gap in existing HIV prevention programmes can be filled by a pastoral life care approach. In terms of an internalised assurance regarding the origin and destiny of human existence, i.e. *ethos*, a life care approach based on an understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology can be applied to an HIV prevention strategy for pastoral care that is directed toward the preservation and enhancement of human life. My main argument here will be that positive change, the anticipation of a better future and true hope derive from a transformed understanding of who we are as human beings before and in relationship with God.

## **1.1. Methodology**

The research design is of a theoretical nature because the thesis is a hermeneutical literature study, which makes use of the wealth of existing philosophical, psychological and theological research in the field of death and dying. The methodological emphasis is thereby on philosophical reflection and analysis concerning existing models of a psychology of death and dying, prevailing HIV prevention strategies and the development of a life care approach that can be applied to the pastoral praxis of both terminal and prevention care.

Concerning the engagement with sources, Louw's hermeneutical approach in practical theology in terms of research and methodology has been applied. Four main phases in the research process can be identified (1998:98). The first phase is that of *description* and observation, which entails problem

identification and an exposition of the phenomenon of study (Louw 1998:98). This has been done by means of a broad and thorough literature study concerning terminal care and theological reflection on death and dying.

The second phase is characterised by critical *analysis* of data gathered from the literature, using “a process of critical reflection where an interaction is established between the applicable theological perspective and research data” (Louw 1998:98). This process was applied particularly to the literature on existing models of a psychology of death and dying. The theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions of these models were critically analysed in the light of a pastoral theological hermeneutics.

The third phase entails critical *reflection* and systematising. The question of the theological meaning and impact of data is posed at this stage. According to Louw, this part also entails “the phase of theory formation” (1998:98). The aim of this specific phase was twofold: 1) to identify whether the hypothesis concerning terminal care as life care posed in connection with the thesis could be supported by the literature consulted; and 2) to identify how the hypothesis could be developed further in terms of theory formation.

The last phase deals with *design* in order to generate models for ministry and develop strategies to influence or transform the context (Louw 1998:98). Louw refers to this as the phase of “strategic planning” (1998:98), during which the outcome of the literature analysis has been applied explicitly to the pastoral praxis in terms of both terminal care and a prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic.

### **The Chalcedonian Pattern: The Asymmetrical Relationship of Theology and Psychology**

In connection with the quest for an applicable methodology in pastoral theology, Louw refers to the asymmetry of the “Chalcedonian Pattern” described by Van Deusen Hunsinger (1995). The model serves to explain the interdisciplinary relationship between theology and the human sciences (Louw 1998:100).<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> This is done by means of a reference to a so-called “Barthian perspective” (Van Deusen Hunsinger 1995, quoted in Louw 1998:101) on the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) where the divine and human

concept of asymmetry implies that no material equivalence exists between theology and psychology, i.e. that one cannot move freely back and forth between the two disciplines without a loss in meaning (Louw 1998:107). In pastoral care, one should take care not to translate inadvertently theological categories into psychological ones or vice versa (Louw 1998:107). The essential subject matter and perspectives of theology and psychology are fundamentally different and their “modes of discourse are conceived as existing on different levels” (Louw 1998:107). Accordingly, the complex relationship between the two disciplines should be described by the following terms: “indissoluble differentiation”, “inseparable unity”, and “indestructible order” (Van Deusen Hunsinger 1995, quoted in Louw 1998:108).

“*Indissoluble differentiation*” refers to the unique scientific identity of each discipline. Theology and human sciences are “related without confusion or change” (Louw 1998:108). In contrast, the occurrence of the two entities without separation or division is described by the term “*inseparable unity*” (Louw 1998:108). This dimension is presupposed by the notion of the encounter between God and human beings as a correlative unity of co-existence (Louw 1998:108). With regard to the relationship between theology and psychology, this means that theology needs to include the findings of the human sciences in its reflections, and vice versa. The last term, “*indestructible order*”, entails that “in and with their differentiated unity, the two are asymmetrically related, with the one term having logical precedence over the other” (Louw 1998:108). This includes the understanding that transcendence is given methodological priority over human history and revelation over observation (Louw 1998:108).

The same Chalcedonian Pattern applies to the relationship between the concepts “salvation” and “healing”, “forgiveness” and “change”, respectively “growth”, in pastoral care (Louw 1998:108). The theological concepts “salvation” and “forgiveness” are related to the terms “healing”, “change” or “growth”, which are commonly used in psychological praxis, by means of the aforementioned

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natures of Jesus Christ have been defined. The Council conceded that the two natures of Jesus Christ exist “without separation or division” and yet “without confusion or change” (Louw 1998:101). According to Barth’s interpretation of Chalcedon, there is, however, a conceptual priority assigned to the divine over the human nature (Louw 1998:101).

conditions: “indissoluble differentiation”, “inseparable unity” and “indestructible order” (Louw 1998:108). The model of asymmetry should be viewed as a conceptual framework for understanding and interpretation in a theological methodology, as the asymmetry is due to the tension between the *already* and the *not yet* of eschatology, which becomes evident in every life event (Louw 1998:109).

### **The Eschatological Perspective of the Convergence Model**

The notion of the *already* and *not yet* clearly points toward the “Convergence Model” suggested by Louw, which aims to practise pastoral theology from the perspective of eschatology. This model plays an important role in the methodological base of the thesis. Louw argues, “by incorporating a convergence model, in which pastoral care is practised from the faith perspective, ... the unique identity of pastoral care should be sought within the *God-human* relationship” (1998:8). The aspects of salvation and grace become essential elements of therapy in a pastoral approach (Louw 1998:8).

As practical theology is to maintain its theological character, it should choose a Convergence Model “in which the eschatological perspective fulfils a normative and regulative function” (Louw 1998:95). Louw further argues, “in this model, theology is defined as: human reflection ... and interpretation (by means of faith) of the meaning of the covenantal encounter between God and humankind as revealed in Scripture” (1998:95). The Convergence Model reflects on the implications that this encounter has for our being human (Louw 1998:95), which Louw summarises as follows: “in short, theology is faith seeking to understand meaningfully the God-human relationship” (1998:95).

What follows from this is an understanding of practical theology that places the God-human relationship in the centre by emphasising the eschatological dimension of God’s salvific intervention in the world. This will surely have to be kept in mind when searching for an alternative pastoral approach to terminal care as life care.

### **The Empirical Dimension in Practical Theology**

The methodological base of the thesis also requires acknowledgment that practical theology is generally involved in a conflict between rationalistic and

empirical models, i.e. the dichotomy between the scientific need to be verifiable and the experience of subjectivity (Louw 1998:86). Louw argues, “the eschatological character of salvation means that pastoral care cannot be conceived merely as an empirical event with verifiable facts” (1998:86). Theology cannot exchange faith for empiricism, otherwise it might “lose its unique character as interpreter of the meaning of the Gospel” (Louw 1998:86).

On the other hand, despite the fact that salvation cannot be verified empirically, the empirical component in theology cannot be denied either (Louw 1998:86). The relation between human experience, respectively empirical observation, and revelation is crucial in pastoral theology.

Consequently, the decision to apply the term “empirical” to theology is motivated by two reasons (Louw 1998:88). Firstly, it is an attempt to focus theology on real *life issues*. Secondly, it is an attempt to “enhance the process of understanding and interpretation” (Louw 1998:88). The presupposition is that human knowledge about God is never pure, but always reflects human life experience (Louw 1998:88).<sup>12</sup> According to Louw, “God is not the direct object of theology. The direct object is our human experience of God” (1998:89). This view underpins the preference for a *hermeneutical* methodology, i.e. the investigation of how to link existential life issues to our human quest for meaning by means of the method of networking.

In the context of the thesis as a hermeneutical literature study, the empirical dimension refers to the realities of life as formulated by existential philosophy. The empirical or experiential dimension of both human life and God plays an important role, although this does not include the performance of an empirical method as such, i.e. quantitative or qualitative empirical social research. Louw points out that the term “»empirical» refers to the existential and contextual implications of faith within the God-human interaction process”

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<sup>12</sup> Here the question arises concerning the interaction between individuals’ life experience and their *God-images*. The general assumption is that “a person’s concepts and images of God are crucial in the process of developing spiritual maturity” (Louw 1998:12). Accordingly, a life care approach to terminal care evolves around the presupposition that a pastoral approach to death and dying is about “developing a constructive concept and understanding of God in order to encourage growth in faith and to impart meaning and hope” (Louw 1998:12).

(1998:89). Pastoral assessment and diagnosis are fundamentally empirical issues, as they deal with experiences of life and faith (Louw 1998:90).

The empirical point of departure of this thesis will therefore be twofold. On the one hand, the research will work on the assumption that the following five basic life issues are at stake in human existence: *anxiety, guilt, despair, helplessness* and *frustration* (Louw 2006:44). By means of philosophical reflection, the “human text” will serve as resource for an existential analysis to base the thesis on real life issues and human experience.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the empirical aspect of the thesis also comes into play concerning the research done by Kübler-Ross and Barton. Their findings about a psychology of death and dying help us to base a theology of death and dying on substantiated knowledge of authentic human experiences in the process of dying and the needs of individuals in the terminal stage.

As regards structure, in the following section, I will first focus on the concept “life” in a psychology of death and dying based on Kübler-Ross’ *On Death and Dying* (1969) and Barton’s *Dying and Death: A Clinical Guide for Caregivers* (1979). The next step will be to take a close look at a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology with the aim to develop a meaningful theological hermeneutics. On these grounds, a theology of death and dying that focuses on terminal care as life care is developed. Subsequently, the meaning of life care in a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic is explored based on current care and counselling models for the HIV pandemic, like those of Uys and Cameron (eds.) in *Home-Based HIV/Aids Care* (2003) and Van Dyk in *HIV/Aids Care and Counselling* (2005). I will close with findings and some concluding remarks.

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<sup>13</sup> As regards an *existential analysis*, Louw emphasises that all human beings wrestle with the following basic life issues: anxiety, guilt, despair, helplessness and frustration (2006:44). These five existential dimensions of life need to be addressed in a pastoral hermeneutics, as they are vital for a theological understanding of Christian spiritual healing (Louw 2006:44). In a hermeneutical model, the attempt is to interpret God in terms of these existential life issues, i.e. to use God-language with a reference to our human condition and existential plight (Louw 1998:3).

## 2. The Concept “Life” in a Psychology of Death and Dying

Before focussing on the concept “life” in a psychology of death and dying, we need to take a short look at the phenomenon of fear of death as it serves as the starting point of a psychological approach to death and dying.

Fear of death is a prevailing phenomenon in our present cultural and social contexts. Heidegger believed that human being-in-the-world generally implies an essential amount of death anxiety (Louw 1994:167). The biblical Scriptures refer to human beings held in slavery by their fear of death (Heb 2:15). Death and the fear of it affect everyone, regardless of social or economic background and origin (Sirach 40:1-4).

From a perspective of thanatology, we need to distinguish between the fear of one’s own death and that of others (Wittkowski 1978:64). The fear of one’s own death refers to the irreversible wiping out and destruction of the individual, the disintegration of worldly relationships and the inability to continue with goal-directed activities (Wittkowski 1978:64). It is related to the fear of the unknown and the concern for loved ones that stay behind (Wittkowski 1978:64).

The fear of the death of others comprise the loss of personal relationships and bonding, the lack of stimulation and enrichment, as well as the ending of one’s own goals and purpose in life connected to the deceased (Wittkowski 1978:64). The fear of the dead also plays an important role. The sight of a corpse points toward the possibility and certainty of one’s own death and frequently makes people feel uncomfortable (Wittkowski 1978:65). In thanatology, this phenomenon is referred to as *death avoidance*, i.e. the refusal to stay close to a dead body or touch it, as well as the aversion to any situation that reminds one of death (Wittkowski 1978:65). Tolstoy describes this predicament of being close to a body as follows:

Pyotr Ivanovich entered the room [where the dead man lay], and hesitated, as people always do on these occasions, not knowing precisely what to do. The only thing he was certain of was that in this situation you couldn’t go wrong if you made the sign of the cross. Whether or not you should bow at the same time he wasn’t sure (2006:4f).

The fear of death must be distinguished from the fear of dying, whether of oneself or others (Wittkowski 1978:65). The fear of one's own dying is related to the anticipation of pain and suffering, as well as the anxiety connected to helplessness and dependency in the terminal stage preceding actual death (Wittkowski 1978:65).

The fear of the dying of others is basically identically with the fear of one's own dying. It deals with the fear of representative suffering, co-suffering and general uncertainty and helplessness in dealing with terminally ill and aged persons (Wittkowski 1978:66).

Louw argues that modern cultures suffer less and less from an actual fear of death, but rather from an anxiety about the loss of material security (1994:167). Our real crisis is not mere death anxiety but "death denial and suppression" (Louw 1994:167). According to him, "the present optimistic culture with the accent on achievement ethics and a consumption mentality pays attention to death only when it is sensational and has commercial value" (Louw 1994:167). Otherwise, due to death avoidance and denial, death has seemingly become "a borderline event, no longer part of reality" (Louw 1994:167).

Tolstoy has vividly illustrated the eventual tremor and collapse of the phenomenon of social avoidance and suppression of death in his account of Ivan Ilyich's death. What he describes closely resembles the destruction of the so-called "unsuspicious they-self" referred to by Heidegger, which includes the painful realisation that eventually one will have to die but one initially remains unaffected (1986<sup>16</sup>:254). Tolstoy describes death as unwanted social trouble, almost a tactlessness that the public should be kept from (Heidegger 1986<sup>16</sup>:254). Ivan Ilyich experiences the torment of plain death-denial in modern Russian society as follows:

And he was the only one who knew it; the people around him didn't know, or didn't want to know ... This was what tormented Ivan Ilyich more than anything. He could see that his family, especially his wife and daughter, whose visiting season was in full swing, had no inkling; it annoyed them that he was not much fun and asked so much of them – as if he was to blame. Despite their efforts to hide it, he could see that he was in their way (2006:49).

As regards an existential, phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon of death and dying, it becomes clear that the process of dying as well as the



support of and care for a person in the terminal stage are very challenging experiences. Both stimulate a deep-seated fear and avoidance of death and dying. As a result, the process of dying is characterised by a number of different responses from individuals, who try to come to terms with dying and deal with the various feelings and needs connected to it. In terms of a psychology of death and dying, the research of Kübler-Ross, Barton and others has demonstrated this strikingly.

The aim of this section is to identify and critically analyse the theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions behind a psychology of death and dying prevalent in contemporary approaches to death and dying. It will furthermore explore the notions of “life” and the anthropology these approaches, which start from a phenomenological, client-centred point of view, advocate. How they influence the process of care for the dying and the coping strategies of individuals in the terminal stage are central questions in this exploration.

## **2.1. The Psychology of Death and Dying According to Kübler-Ross**

The best-known contribution to the field of a psychology of death and dying is the stage-based model put forward by the Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. In *On Death and Dying* (1969), Kübler-Ross reported the results of a series of interviews that focused on psychosocial reactions in dying persons. She developed a model of five stages in such reactions that she understood as coping or defence mechanisms, which “will last for different periods of time and will replace each other or exist at times side by side” (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:142).

Kübler-Ross understands dying individuals as being in a stressful situation that requires them to employ or develop a number of different responses to cope with that situation. These emotional responses are divided into the following five stages, which are still widely accepted: shock and *denial*,

*anger, bargaining, depression* (reactive and proactive) and, eventually, *acceptance* (Kübler-Ross 1969:34-121).<sup>14</sup>

Although her research creates an important framework for a better understanding of the process of dying, there is considerable criticism of Kübler-Ross' model, especially concerning the collection and analysis of data (Davidson 1990:264; Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:143-46). It has also been pointed out that these stages do not necessarily occur in dying individuals as outlined. More than one stage may be present at once or the individual may be observed to move back and forth in the sequence (Barton 1979:20).

It has been argued that the process of coping with dying, as described by Kübler-Ross, should be understood in terms of a dynamic circular motion rather than a rigidly linear movement from denial toward acceptance (Herzig 178:16). In this understanding, an earlier stage still remains the prerequisite for the next. However, the transition from one stage to the other takes place smoothly, i.e. no phase is sharply distinguishable from another (Herzig 178:16). Additionally, it appears that in dying individuals there is significant repetition of earlier questions in different shape and anticipation of later questions in earlier stages (Herzig 178:16). It also must be emphasised that different people cope in different ways and that there are not only five ways in which to react to dying (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:144).

Nevertheless, Kübler-Ross' approach draws our attention to the human aspects of *living* with dying, the strong feelings experienced by those who are coping with dying and to what she calls "unfinished business" (1969:241) that frequently makes people hang onto life. Additionally, Kübler-Ross maintains that "the one thing that usually persists through all these stages is *hope*" (1969:122). She emphasises that hope is an essential component in the therapeutic process and argues that it is this "glimpse of hope, which maintains them [i.e. the terminally ill] through days, weeks, or months of suffering. It is the feeling that all this must have some meaning" (Kübler-Ross 1969:123).

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<sup>14</sup> For more detailed information on Kübler-Ross' five stages, consult Kübler-Ross, E. (1969) *On Death and Dying*, or Leming, MR & Dickinson, GE. (1998) *Understanding Dying, Death, and Bereavement* (198).

Kübler-Ross' approach is helpful in refocusing our attention on the terminally ill individual as a human being in order to include her or him in dialogues and decisions concerning care, and learning more from the dying about the final stages of life with all its anxieties, fears and hopes. According to Corr, three vital lessons follow from Kübler-Ross' approach for those caring for the dying (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:143). First, those who are coping with dying are still *alive* and have (unfinished) needs that they want to address (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:143). Second, we cannot become more effective providers of care unless we listen attentively to those who are coping with dying and identify together with them their *needs* (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:143). Third, we need to learn from those who are coping with dying in order to better come to terms with our *own* mortality, finiteness, limitations and vulnerability (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:143).

Despite the fact that Kübler-Ross' approach is so useful in helping us understand the situation and needs of the dying, from a theological perspective the question that arises concerns the prevailing theoretical paradigms behind her model. Which philosophical presuppositions underline a psychology of death and dying according to Kübler-Ross, and which general concepts of life and being human are being advocated? Furthermore, are these philosophical paradigms meaningful from a pastoral perspective or do they need to be challenged or improved?

As pointed out earlier, central to Kübler-Ross' approach to a psychology of death and dying is the understanding that dying *per se* is a stressful situation that requires the application and increase of *defence* or coping mechanisms (1969:11). Kübler-Ross argues that "death is still a fearful, frightening happening, and the fear of death is a universal fear" (1969:4). In this, she agrees with Wittkowski and the findings of a thanatology that emphasises the existence of a deep-seated human fear of death and dying.

From an existential, client-centred perspective, there is no doubt that fear of death is part of our being human and requires the employment of defence mechanisms to deal with our anxiety. However, from a pastoral perspective, the need for various coping or defence mechanisms that effectively beat back the deep-seated fear of death might no longer arise, as we can rely on other means to defeat the power of death. The capacity of Christian faith to provide dying

individuals with a different perspective on death and dying, and what this perspective might be, are discussed in a later section.

Kübler-Ross observes that dying people pass through various *stages* in the process of dying, which eventually lead them to the acceptance of immanent death. From a pastoral perspective, the question arises whether “the language of stages and the metaphor of a linear theory” (Corr, Nabe & Corr 2000:145) are adequate as a basis for dying meaningfully, especially considering that some people appear to “get stuck” in certain stages and never reach the final stage of acceptance (DEACSA Public 2004:32).

Since dying and death are essential aspects of our being human, a more holistic approach to explain the interrelation between human life and death seems required. Is coping with death a challenge that occurs only in the terminal stage or is it an essential element of our human existence that requires attention much earlier in life? From a pastoral perspective, coping with dying refers to a process of learning, spiritual growth and the development of wisdom that accompanies us throughout life and leads us to a transformed understanding and acceptance of death during our lifetime already.

Taking note of the aspect of meaning, Kübler-Ross refers to death as the “final stage of *growth*” (Leming & Dickinson 1998:359). She believes that everyone who faces death experiences a process of growth (Herzig 1978:16). This process is connected to a “sense of great loss” (Kübler-Ross 1969:75), which dying individuals have to endure, i.e. amongst others the loss of their body image, independency, loved ones and eventually life itself. To deal with the various losses connected to the process of dying is undoubtedly the central challenge that terminally ill individuals face.

However, pastoral care that views terminal care as life care is in need of a different approach. Kübler-Ross suggests that the main message that should be communicated to the dying person is “that all is not lost” (1969:26). However, how can this be communicated in a meaningful way to a person in the terminal stage without being false consolation? I believe that in order to accomplish this, a total paradigm shift in which human life and death are viewed more holistically is required. From such a more holistic perspective of faith, death is perceived as an integral part of human life and its acceptance is part of a spiritual growth process that does not only start in the terminal stage. The

various losses connected to dying are then not viewed in the light of an attitude of “letting go” only, which aims to counter individuals’ desperate clinging to life, as proposed by Kübler-Ross, but in the light of the Christian revelation.

As regards the concept of *acceptance* in the last stage of the process of dying, Kübler-Ross claims that, at the deepest emotional level, acceptance of death is possible (Bregman 1990:262). According to her, acceptance of death requires “the de-cathexis (withdrawal) of emotional bonds with the living, and an overall non-defensive posture of »letting go«” (Bregman 1990:263). She perceives the stage of acceptance as “the final rest before the long journey” (Kübler-Ross 1969:100), a condition in which the pain has gone and the struggle is over (Kübler-Ross 1969:100). Acceptance is not a simple process but rather a series of stages in itself. Kübler-Ross argues that in this last stage of dying, the person “has found some peace and acceptance” (1969:100).

Unfortunately, Kübler-Ross does not specify the kind of acceptance and final peace of mind to which she refers. How can people achieve this desirable condition of dying in peace, acceptance and dignity (Kübler-Ross 1969:101)? Kübler-Ross states that the kind of acceptance she has in mind is a state beyond stoic resignation; it is not “a resigned and hopeless »giving up«, a sense of »what’s the use« or »I just cannot fight it any longer«” (1969:99). Nevertheless, it remains unclear what exactly acceptance of death means and, more importantly, how it can be facilitated in terms of pastoral care. Acceptance seemingly refers to the person’s contented understanding that the immanence of death is now inevitable, which is no longer accompanied by a rebellious struggle but an attitude of goodwill. According to Kübler-Ross, acceptance of death is accompanied by a necessary withdrawal of emotional bonding and an attitude of “letting go”.

For pastoral care, there are questions concerning the meaning carried by this form of acceptance in the face of death, how it is motivated and why it needs to be accompanied by emotional withdrawal from loved ones and an attitude of “letting go”. This gap in Kübler-Ross’ argument points to the importance of a spiritual approach to life and death issues, as it helps to develop a more fundamental reason for and understanding of the acceptance of death. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul proclaims, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55). The impact of this

central statement on a Christian spiritual understanding of life and death from the perspective of the resurrection will be explored, as it opens doors toward a different kind of acceptance of death and dying before God.

The question of acceptance closely relates to Kübler-Ross' statement that the one thing, which endures throughout the five stages, is *hope* (1969:122). According to her, hope is closely connected to the intense feeling "that all this must have some meaning" (Kübler-Ross 1969:123) and "that all is not lost" (Kübler-Ross 1969:26). Kübler-Ross reports that for terminally ill persons hope includes both the hope for a new "wonder drug" and "that all this is just a nightmare and not true" (Kübler-Ross 1969:123). She also mentions the need for a "special mission in life" (Kübler-Ross 1969:123) as a form of rationalisation or partial denial that enables people to maintain hope and endure the anguish of dying.

Even though the concept of hope that Kübler-Ross describes closely relates to the intrinsic need to find meaning in dying, it is essentially the hope for physical recovery within a medical paradigm. From a pastoral perspective, the need arises for a lasting and more resilient kind of hope that endures throughout the various challenges that life poses, including death. The crucial question is: How can the understandable hope for a medical wonder drug within a psychological-medical paradigm be supplemented by a concept of hope that lasts despite the reality of death? How can fear of a never-ending nightmare be opposed by hope that does not require rationalisation or denial to withstand life's abysses, but truly comforts us throughout death?

Louw confirms Kübler-Ross' assertion that hope forms an essential part of coping with dying. Hope essentially "affects the human capacity to be able to cope and to anticipate" (Louw 1998:457). According to him, an ontology of hope comprises three central areas affected by hope as the ability for anticipatory behaviour. First, hope directly affects the quality of a person's life, i.e. human *identity* (Louw 1998:457). Second, hope is linked to the "nature and quality of the person's most important *relationships* in life", i.e. the support system (Louw 1998:457). Third, hope affects a person's "*perspective* and vision in life" (Louw 1998:457). This we need to keep in mind as regards the fundamental role of hope within a theology of death and dying.

Nevertheless, hope must not be wishful thinking, but “form part of the person’s ability to view a situation realistically” (Louw 1998:457). True hope should be linked to relationships that communicate “security, sensitivity, care, comfort and understanding” (Louw 1998:457). Where this kind of trustworthy and empowering relationship that generates hope can be found will be discussed at a later stage in the thesis.

As regards the need to find *meaning* in dying, which is closely related to the experience of hope in the terminal stage, Kübler-Ross states correctly that the death denial of modern society has “given neither hope nor purpose but only increased our anxiety” (1969:14): “The belief has long died that suffering here on earth will be rewarded in heaven. Suffering has lost its meaning” (1969:13). She furthermore argues that, “If we are no longer rewarded in heaven for our suffering, then suffering becomes purposeless in itself” (Kübler-Ross 1969:14). Fewer people believe in life after death, “in itself perhaps a denial of our mortality” (Kübler-Ross 1969:13). Nevertheless, Kübler-Ross is still convinced that dying individuals live in a fundamental hope, as they have a natural understanding of the meaning and purpose that can be found in their terminal experience.

Wittkowski claims that “nur derjenige im Tod einen Sinn zu erkennen vermag, der auch in seinem Leben Bedeutung gesehen hat bzw. sieht” (1978:99). In other words, death can only have meaning for someone if life in itself has meaning and purpose. It therefore appears that the experience of hope in the terminal stage is closely connected to the experience of meaning and purpose in life. According to Kübler-Ross, “The older patient who feels at the end of his life, who has worked and suffered, raised his children and completed his tasks. He will have found meaning in his life and has a sense of contentment when he looks back” (1969:105).

This is similar to the concept of “life satisfaction” being emphasised by Wittkowski in connection with the findings of thanatology (1978:98). Wittkowski argues that life satisfaction is constituted by the meaning that one attaches to one’s life and results in an anxiety-free attitude toward death (1978:98).

The question of meaning and purpose clearly plays a significant role in both living and dying, and it therefore forms the core of the thesis. However, the concept “life satisfaction” used in thanatology leaves many questions

unanswered. What bestows meaning and purpose to human life, and how can life satisfaction be achieved? Is it truly only the experience of a long life, success with regard to work, family life and the completion of life tasks that imply a high life satisfaction and allow a person to die peacefully? What then gives meaning or purpose to the life of an individual who lacks some or all of these attributes? How do we regard the short life of a terminally ill child and find meaning in her or his death? This thesis consequently considers the question whether suffering has indeed lost its meaning which is, as Kübler-Ross suspects, connected to a reward in heaven.

In this regard, Kübler-Ross' concept of the "*unfinished business*" also plays an important role (1969:241). According to her, unfinished business is closely connected to the satisfaction a person feels or misses at the end of life, because it indicates how she or he has lived their life. In the situation of imminent death, we feel that something is left uncompleted that should have been finished (Kübler-Ross 1969:241). The concept forms an essential part of a widespread understanding of life, in which the completion of certain tasks relates to the satisfaction that is experienced at the end of life and almost serves as a justification of death. Behind this understanding, there is a specific expectation about what should be achieved in order to complete one's life mission and to experience oneself as being successful.

However, the concept of unfinished business that forms an essential part of Kübler-Ross' model shall be challenged in the thesis. From a Christian spiritual perspective, the value, quality and success of human life is measured neither in terms of finished or completed business nor in the length and outcome of life. Based on the understanding that human life has been radically transformed, Nouwen argues that "the value of life is not dependent on the hours, days, or years it is lived, nor on the number of people it was connected to, nor on the impact it had on human history" (1998a:56). From a perspective of Christian faith, the value of life is life itself (Nouwen 1998a:56).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The South African singer and songwriter Nianell takes up the understanding of life itself as a gift of God in her song *Life's Gift* (2006): "Now I'm awake, I can finally see / Life's gift to me is just to be / High on the wings of an angel I fly / Small is the world from up here in the sky / Small all my fears and how precious



Nonetheless, the awareness of the origin of a feeling of unfinished business can assist people to grow spiritually, not only in this last stage of life but throughout life. The concept offers individuals the opportunity for spiritual learning, growth and the development of wisdom by pointing to the fact that human life in its beginning and ending is a valuable gift, which needs to be cherished at all times. Nouwen bears witness to this in connection with his own experience of being close to death after a life-threatening accident: "What most prevented me from dying was the sense of unfinished business, unresolved conflicts with people with whom I live or had lived. The pain of forgiveness withheld, by me and from me, kept me clinging to my wounded existence (1998b:151).

Nouwen confesses that in the face of death it was not love that kept him clinging onto life, but unresolved anger (1998b:152). The real struggle in the face of death was not to leave loved ones behind, but those whom he had not forgiven and who had not forgiven him (Nouwen 1998b:152). In the situation of imminent death, he realised, "Love, real love flowing from me or towards me, sets me free to die. Death would not undo that love. On the contrary, death would deepen it and strengthen it" (Nouwen 1998b:152). This is an important realisation regarding unfinished business at the end of life, i.e. that we should become free to love others and exercise true forgiveness.

Eventually, I would like to focus on one last aspect of Kübler-Ross' psychology of death and dying. She claims that we should perceive the dying as our *teachers*, with regard to their needs and the general experience of the terminal stage, but also our own appreciation for life (Herzig 1978:16). Kübler-Ross states in her preface, "We have asked him [i.e. the terminally ill individual] to be our teacher so that we may learn more about the final stages of life with all its anxieties, fears, and hopes" (1969:preface). Death education should not only be useful in coping with dying and death situations, but should also improve the quality of our living (Leming & Dickinson 1998:10). Kübler-Ross for example points out that relating to the dying does not depress her, but rather makes her "more appreciative of each day of life and thankful each morning that she

awakes with the potential of another day” (quoted in Leming & Dickinson 1998:10).

A psychology of death and dying, according to Kübler-Ross, is most valuable in terms of refocusing attention on the needs and emotions of dying individuals. We can also “learn from him [i.e. the terminally ill individual] the strengths and weaknesses of our hospital management of the patient” (Kübler-Ross 1969: preface). However, the emphasis here should not be on an appreciation of life, which is based on a fear of death. Undoubtedly, life and being alive is to be appreciated and enjoyed in itself and not only in the face of death. Our being grateful for every morning we awake and live should not come from our fear of non-existence and the threat of death. Life and death should be viewed as integral aspects of the *one* human existence, which is ours and has been granted to us. From that perspective, we start to appreciate our being human in its wholeness and completeness, which includes our living and dying, each in its own time. This holistic view on life, which includes the understanding that there is a right time for everything, is confirmed in Ecclesiastes: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die” (Ecc 3:1-2).

With this in mind, one can reassess Kübler-Ross’ statement that the dying can serve as teachers to the living from a pastoral perspective. A psychology of death and dying helps us to get to learn more about the phenomenon of death as it appears in human life, as well as the fears, anxieties and hopes connected to it. Whether the dying themselves can really serve as an authority concerning a deeper knowledge of death will be considered at a later stage.

Kübler-Ross argues that in exchange for the knowledge of the dying, “we can help them die by trying to help them live, rather than vegetate in an inhumane manner” (1969:19). She primarily seems to refer to the important task of terminal or palliative care, which aims at assisting people to die in a humane and dignified manner by soothing the pain of dying. However, this statement also strongly relates to the basic assumption of the thesis that terminal care evolves around a care for life. This points toward the need for terminal care to develop a true understanding of what it means to be alive and who we are in

our living and dying from a perspective of faith. Hence, in essence it is life and our understanding of it that can teach us how to die meaningfully.

To summarise, I give a general overview of what I consider to be the prevailing theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions in a psychology of death and dying according to Kübler-Ross. In her introduction to *On Death and Dying*, Kübler-Ross explicitly stresses what she believes to be the central aim of death education and terminal care, which is “to keep the focus on the patient’s experience, his needs, and his reactions” (1969:7). She thus published the findings of her research with the intention of concentrating terminal care on the dying persons’ feelings, wishes and opinions in order to safeguard individuals’ humanity and dignity until the end. Kübler-Ross furthermore states that her book is intended neither as a complete study of the psychology of the dying nor as a textbook on how to manage dying individuals (1969: preface). However, her research continues to have a strong impact on approaches to death and dying in various fields of study, including the praxis of pastoral care and counselling.<sup>16</sup>

Starting with the intention to tell “the stories of [her] patients who shared their agonies, their expectations, and their frustrations” (Kübler-Ross 1969: preface), Kübler-Ross’ model is characterised by a strong focus on the individual and her or his needs. In terms of a psychological anthropology, the approach shows agreement with what Louw describes as a *phenomenological* and *client-centred* model in care and counselling (1998:139). As regards anthropological presuppositions, a client-centred model explicitly focuses on the individual and her or his interests and concerns. The model puts a strong emphasis on the person’s inner potential, with an orientation toward growth based on the autonomous and independent self-image of the individual (Louw 1998:139). The main objective of a client-centred approach in care and counselling has therefore been depicted as “*self-realization*” (Louw 1998:139). Due to the important methodological and therapeutic means of empathy and

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<sup>16</sup> The DEACSA (Death Education and Counselling South Africa) publication *Dying, Death, and Grief: A Guide for the South African Context* (2004) claims that Kübler-Ross’ approach “remains the single most effective and influential empowerment tool (theory and approach) on death and dying to date” (DEACSA Public. 2004:26).

acceptance, the person ought to achieve self-insight, self-help, self-confidence and self-integration (Louw 1998:139).

As regards Kübler-Ross' approach to a psychology of death and dying, any caregiver who shows empathy and acceptance towards the dying person can manage the therapeutic part of caring for dying individuals. She believes empathy, acceptance and understanding to be the central prerequisites for a person to achieve the final terminal stage of acceptance: "If a person has had enough time ... and has been given some help in working through the previously described stages, he will reach a stage during which he is neither depressed nor angry" (Kübler-Ross 1969:99). Under the prerequisite that the dying person is given this loving and understanding assistance by immediate caregivers, her or his own potential to work through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining and depression will enable them to eventually reach a state of acceptance in the knowledge that death is imminent. This process is what has been referred to as "self-realization" (Louw 1998:139).

Although Kübler-Ross' emphasis on needs is essential in terms of an *existential* analysis of the process of dying, from a pastoral perspective the mere focus on the human self fails to provide comfort that truly lasts in the face of death. The need arises for an external factor that acknowledges human needs, fears, frustrations and hopes in the face of death, but simultaneously holds the power to comfort us sincerely by surpassing the mere sphere of human abilities.<sup>17</sup> Louw maintains that the motivation and readiness for true change and discernment must come from an external factor (2004:39).

The situation of a terminally ill person and the acceptance of death in this context points in a different direction than Kübler-Ross' approach does. Instead of emphasising the inherent potential of the individual for self-realisation, Louw's

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<sup>17</sup> With regard to the need for *externality* in coping with life's predicaments, Ebeling points out that from a perspective of faith the struggle for life is not merely an internal self-motivation for life, the achievement of a new quality of life, the progress to an enhancement of life, or the decision to start a new life (1979:110). Faith's relation to life is essentially perceived as external relation, as Paul put it, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21), or "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2:20) (Ebeling 1979:110).

From a perspective of faith, human life has been radically transformed by having an external position finding, by finding its centre outside of itself (Ebeling 1979:110). Ebeling proclaims, "Und das neue Leben im Glaubenden ist nicht dessen eigenes Leben, sondern sein Teilhaben an dem Leben, das in Christus erschienen ist" (1979:110).

model stresses the need for an external factor that initiates a process of true change and acceptance within a person. He claims that in the case of Christian maturity, “the external factor is eschatology: who we *are* in Christ and who we can *become* in the power of the Spirit” (Louw 2004:39). He argues that “these are the determinants for intended and future change” (Louw 2004:39). This understanding of change, which is most helpful in terms of terminal care as life care, shall be further explored in one of the subsequent sections.

## 2.2. The Psychology of Death According to Barton

Another stage-based model of a psychology of death and dying is that of the American psychiatrist David Barton. In *Dying and Death* (1979), he proposes a model in which “psychosocial aspects of death and dying are ... closely tied to medical events” (Barton 1979:20). Barton’s approach helps us to view “psychosocial adaptation as being intertwined with the disease process and the process of medical care” (1979:20).

Barton suggests the following more extensive staging in the process of dying, in which medical events appear closely connected to psychosocial needs. In contrast to Kübler-Ross’ model, Barton opts for a wider perspective on the process of dying, starting from the state of health, throughout the decline of health, to the reaction of the immediate environment on the death that occurred (1979:20): 1. State of *health*; 2. Perception of *symptom* or sign of illness; 3. *Approximation* with the health care system; 4. The *diagnostic process*; 5. Reporting of *results*; 6. The *treatment phase*: a) Treatment out of hospital, b) Treatment in hospital or institutional setting; 7. State of *relative health*; 8. *Decline*; 9. *Loss*, incapacitation, and debilitation; 10. Acceleration *toward* death; 11. *Lingering*; 12. *Death*; 13. *Pronouncement* of death; 14. *Immediate* response of survivors; 15. *Prolonged* response of survivors.

Barton’s model is especially useful in making us aware of the fundamental connection “between the biological aspects and the psycho-social dimensions of dying” (Louw 1994:169). Each of the stages suggested by Barton is characterised by a variety of psychosocial responses and concerns (1979:21). From a psycho-medical perspective, a worsening of the physiological condition is accompanied by a multitude of feelings, thoughts and responses in

the individual. Barton argues that, as in other stages of the life cycle, the individual reacts to the stresses and changes involved “in terms of his own psychological makeup, his interactional field, and his aspirations of the future” (1979:21).

Barton stresses what he calls the “psychology of death” (1979:23), referring to the psychosocial needs of the dying and their process of adaptation. He claims that during the period of dying, “the primary struggle is characterized by an attempt to continue living while at the same time giving up life” (Barton 1979:15). The *paradox* in the dying process is that “whatever is gained must be given up in its entirety” (Barton 1979:15). He further claims that the period of dying “is a life stage characterized by growth through the process of letting go and adaptation to the gradual giving up of life, by learning to live with an increasing sense of loss and being directly in contact with the threat of non-existence” (Barton 1979:15).

The crux of the process of adaptation to dying lies in the individual’s “attempt to establish some sense of *aliveness* and continuity of themselves in the face of death” (Louw 1994:169). Barton is convinced that the increasing confrontation with death and potential non-existence generates a certain kind of activity, i.e. feeling, thought, or behaviour in the person, which is aimed toward “seeking out personal significance and a sense of aliveness in the moment” (1979:25). The strivings of the dying person are explicitly directed toward any activity that may generate a feeling of personal significance or meaning and lead to a sense of aliveness. This strongly relates to the need for a “special life mission”, as described by Kübler-Ross (1969:123), which dying individuals seek to follow in order to establish some sort of meaning and maintain hope in the face of death.

As regards prevailing philosophical paradigms behind the “psychology of death” put forward by Barton, it is essential to acknowledge the enormous influence of Kübler-Ross’ research on Barton’s endeavours (1979:xii). In the preface to *Dying and Death*, he states that the works of Kübler-Ross and others “have had a profound impact on [his] thinking and their thoughts have found their way into both many parts of [his] book, and [his] work in the area” (Barton 1979:xii). It is therefore understandable that Barton’s model starts from the same central presupposition that in order to develop effective approaches to

caring for the dying one needs to “be able to discern and respond appropriately to the myriad of needs” (1979:ix). The emphasis on the dying person’s *needs* is, therefore, central to both Barton’s and Kübler-Ross’ approach to a psychology of death and dying.

It has been pointed out earlier that, from the perspective of a pastoral hermeneutics, the emphasis on existential life issues and human needs is not only necessary but also an obligation in order to relate pastoral care to the real issues of human existence. However, as regards a more meaningful paradigm in pastoral care, there is the need for an approach to terminal care that surpasses the mere sphere of human needs and emotions, and offers true comfort regarding existential human life issues without merely dwelling upon emotions and needs.

The general structure of Barton’s model, like Kübler-Ross’ model, also follows a *sequential* approach that incorporates both medical events and psychosocial responses and needs in connection with the progression of the disease process. Barton concedes that “dying occurs over varying periods of time” (1979:21). This temporal dimension of dying markedly affects the way in which a person adapts to dying and death (Barton 1979:21). Barton thus refers to the time span between the subjective state of health and the occurrence of actual death. However, starting from the presupposition that meaningful adaptation to death is a process that occurs over a more extensive period, starting much earlier in life, the concept of a limited linear sequential approach to coping with dying is challenged in the context of this thesis.

Barton emphasises that the concept of *caring* is central to the design of his approach to a psychology of death and dying (Barton 1979:ix). He defines caring as the ability of the caregiver, regardless of the discipline, to remain in an “approximated relationship with the dying person” to “ascertain needs over time and utilize sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate a reasonable level of adaptation for all concerned” (Barton 1979:ix). This understanding of caring for the dying focuses on the time when death is immanent, throughout the decline of health toward actual death. During this time, Barton wants to respond sensitively to the needs of the dying individual and explores appropriate medical *knowledge* and caring *skills* that will assist the person in the dying process and ensure best possible adaptation.

Barton helps us by emphasising the need for proper knowledge and skills in addition to a close, caring relationship in the process of care for the dying. This is of vital importance, especially with regard to the praxis of palliative care, which specialises in easing the physical agony of terminally ill persons. However, as regards a pastoral approach to death and dying, the concept of care should include a wider and more holistic approach.

Caring as it is understood in the context of the thesis has two major aims. First, care for the dying needs to start with care for life, long before the time when the extensive staging of Barton's model sets in, by assisting people to live meaningfully. Since death is an essential part of the human life cycle, effective terminal care needs to create an awareness of death and find meaning in it at an early stage in life. When death can be accepted as the natural ending of human existence, the process of adaptation to dying takes place holistically throughout the life cycle and not only in the terminal stage when death is imminent.

Second, and this is strongly connected to the first argument, caring in the context of the thesis will be understood from a more spiritual perspective. The presupposition is that coping with dying can only be achieved on the basis of a powerful spiritual paradigm, which meaningfully responds to existential human needs, fears and hopes evoked by death as the threat of non-existence. The understanding is that a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology will serve as a good foundation to a more spiritual perspective on caring.

It is important to note that Barton believes that "the process of caring itself forms the very matrix from which we generate our *meaning*, our hope, our personal and professional significance, and our sense of aliveness in our confrontation with death" (1979:x). He argues that "we are dependant on caring interactions with others to affirm our sense of aliveness" (Barton 1979:x). This is similar to Kübler-Ross' understanding that the final stage of acceptance of death can be accomplished when the process of adaptation is supported by the experience of empathy and acceptance of the main caregivers (1969:99).

The assumption that meaning can be generated from the process of caring itself is generally supported by a pastoral approach. However, it is not the mere factor of human attention and support that generates meaning in the



face of death. What creates meaning and purpose is rather the fact that, via the process of caring in the context of human existence, something can be conveyed of God's unique pathos and caring for human beings.

As regards scriptural perspectives on care, four central metaphors referring to both content and style of care can be identified (Louw 1998:39). The four metaphors serve the useful function of developing sensitivity, i.e. the *shepherd* metaphor, conciliation and woundedness, i.e. the *servant* metaphor, discernment and insight, i.e. the *wisdom* metaphor, as well as support and empowerment, i.e. the *paracletic* metaphor (Louw 1998:39). According to Louw, the function of the metaphors in the context of pastoral care is to connect God's purpose for human existence with real life issues (1998:39).

A pastoral metaphor of care therefore aims to convey the vital connection between faith and human lives (Louw 1998:39). Although pastoral caregivers have a significant interpreting and facilitating function, they should be alert that, "nevertheless, the secret of care and comfort resides more in the pastors' *being-functions* than in their knowing- and doing-functions" (Louw 1998:39). In a pastoral encounter, it is more the caregiver's being with the dying person that metaphorically conveys something of God's presence than the theoretical knowledge and practical skills emphasised by Barton. From a pastoral perspective, we are not dependant on others' caring interventions to affirm our sense of aliveness in the face of death, but the process of care will help us to truly feel and become aware of God's unique caring interventions on our behalf. An understanding of the way God cares for and brings healing to human beings lies at the very centre of the concept of caring that is presupposed in this thesis.

Like Kübler-Ross, Barton points out that the dying and death of a person evokes "basic *anxieties* and fears related to our finiteness" (1979:ix). He perceives dying as a fundamental crisis event in a person's life (Barton 1979:19). The strong correlation between biological aspects and psychosocial dimensions is the most fundamental presupposition in Barton's psychopathological model. It is based on the belief that physiological decline and suffering are necessarily connected to an emotionally stressful experience, including challenging psychosocial feelings, thoughts, concerns and reactions.

The fundamentally different assumption of this thesis is that the process of dying does not necessarily have to be a spiritually constraining experience,

since physical illness can be accompanied by spiritual well-being. Likewise, good health can go along with spiritual illness. Louw's spiral model of the *health-sickness continuum* is helpful to understand the complex relationship between health and sickness (2006:17). According to his understanding, the two concepts "health" and "sickness" are impossible to separate and related in a dynamic "continuum of personal responses, the human development, and psycho-physical processes of growth throughout all stages of life" (Louw 2006:17). Since good health comprises more than the absence of sickness and sickness should not merely be regarded as the antithesis to health, the dynamics between health and sickness should rather be perceived "within the context of mature behaviour, the quality of disposition, attitude, and aptitude" (Louw 2006:17).

Louw defines sickness as "a state of being and a more comprehensive understanding of a person's total existential reactions and coping skills (a state or condition of being) according to medical pathology" (2006:17). Illness describes the "experiential level of feelings, reactions, and emotions connected to a specific disease" (Louw 2006:17). He points out, "One is sick but feels ill" (Louw 2006:17). In terms of a spiral model, the dynamics between health and sickness are determined not merely by physical aspects but by a person's life style, reactionary behaviour, quality of maturity or spirituality, and the ability to grow, learn and adapt (Louw 2006:18).

In the context of the thesis, this understanding of the dynamic relationship between health and sickness plays an important role. A pastoral approach to terminal care focuses on a person's reactionary behaviour and the development of spiritual maturity in order to assist individuals to develop a healthy disposition toward dying, which is not based on mere anxiety and fear related to human finiteness. The thesis aims to explore a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology regarding their liberating impact on the experience of death and dying and the establishment of well-being.

Barton claims that every individual reacts to the stresses and changes involved in the process of dying in terms of her or "his *own* personality, his interpersonal and situational circumstances, and his aspirations for the future" (1979:41). Internal reactions and concerns are related to "past psychological

development, current life circumstances, and aspirations for the future” (Barton 1979:31).

From a pastoral perspective, this statement is very ambiguous. Although it is true that our emotions, thoughts and reactions are generally determined by who we are, i.e. our personality, including past psychological developments, life circumstances and hopes and objectives for the future, from the perspective of Christian faith, we have been freed from these constraining factors. With regard to the final definition of our human *identity*, who we are has essentially been transformed in Christ. Accordingly, it is the task of this thesis to assess in which way a Christian spiritual understanding of life and a pastoral anthropology can affect individuals’ perception of their identity, circumstances and aspirations for the future in a positive fashion. Since Barton confirms that people respond to the stresses involved in the process of dying in terms of their understanding of the self, the positive impact of a Christian spiritual approach to our being human on coping skills during the terminal stage will be investigated.

Barton points out that the process of dying, because it is experienced as a crisis, “awakens *unresolved key problems* from both the near and distant past. Problems of dependency, passivity, narcissism, inadequacy, identity, and more are all reactivated” (Barton 1979:19). Like Kübler-Ross, Barton stresses that it is not only the problem of imminent death, but also the burden of unresolved feelings from one’s lifetime and conflicts related to that, which strain the dying person (1979:19).

The question arises whether we can prevent this last painful struggle with unresolved feelings or unfinished business, which makes people cling desperately to life. A pastoral approach to terminal care as life care that focuses on the development of wisdom and spiritual maturity could certainly play an important role in this regard. In an attempt to assist individuals to live meaningfully, life care includes an attitude of living consciously and not avoiding the distressing problems of human existence.

Nonetheless, we need to acknowledge that as humans we can never completely free ourselves, as we are limited in our human potential for self-realisation. Often we are aware of certain emotional or behavioural inadequacies that we however fail to overcome. This is where the external factor emphasised by Louw plays an essential role. Eschatology as the external

factor of faith generates the motivation and readiness for true change (Louw 2004:39). Eschatology makes us human beings, who we sometimes indeed seem unchangeable, change (Louw 2004:39). The fundamental role eschatology plays in a pastoral approach to terminal care as life care will be the focus of a later section.

Besides the unresolved key problems, it is a basic notion of Barton's approach that the primary struggle in dying is one of an "attempt to *continue* living while at the same time giving up life" (1979:15). Barton states that an individual's awareness of deathliness is experienced in various feelings, like terror, urgency, timeliness, transience, despair, disintegration or non-wholeness, isolation, alienation and estrangement (1979:25). As a reaction to these feelings, the individual aims to affirm her or his "personal significance and his sense of aliveness in the here and now" (Barton 1979:25). Meaning or a sense of personal significance is viewed as the basis of this sense of aliveness (Barton 1979:25).

According to Barton, dying individuals find meaning in a unique activity or combination of *activities*, i.e. feeling, thought, or behaviour (1979:25). At the basis of these activities lies the specific "need to continue to feel some sense of aliveness and participation" (Barton 1979:33). Deriving meaning from these activities fulfils this fundamental need of the dying, since they enable a person to continue experiencing herself or himself as being alive (Barton 1979:33). These meaningful activities in the face of death can be divided into three dimensions: the *biological* dimension, i.e. a sense of physical aliveness, *psychological* dimension, i.e. a sense of psychological and social well-being, and a *spiritual* dimension (Barton 1979:33).

In order to feel alive, the terminally ill individual must be able to utilise biological, psychological and spiritual activities in such a way "that the sense of aliveness persists even when confronting dying and death" (Barton 1979:33). The feeling of aliveness must be able to overcome the overwhelming sense of despair, helplessness and hopelessness (Barton 1979:33). For Barton, *hope* is closely associated with meaning (1979:34). He defines hope as an "anticipated sense of continued availability, endurance, and persistence of an activity which will provide meaning over time" (Barton 1979:34). The maintenance of hope is

closely related to the need to seek out aliveness and continuity, as it deals with accessibility, survival and perseverance.

Unfortunately, Barton does not elaborate further on these activities that generate meaning and personal significance in the face of death, nor does he give concrete examples. What kind of activities, whether biological, psychological or spiritual, could restore an enduring feeling of aliveness in the context of suffering, dying and the threat of non-existence? Louw argues that, "When Barton says that for the dying person, hope encompasses all those meaningful activities which have sustained the sense of aliveness until death, that kind of hope is very limited" (2006:429).

Louw's understanding of hope, as quoted earlier in connection with Kübler-Ross' concept of hope, encompasses more than meaningful activities (1998:457). In terms of an ontology of hope, by focusing on the quality of a person's identity, the nature of central relationships, an individual's perspective and vision in life, it includes the perspective of continuity and endurance in spite of death. According to Louw, hope is essentially linked to relationships that communicate security, sensitivity, care, comfort and understanding (1998:457). From that perspective, true hope in spite of death is connected to continuity and a sense of aliveness by being based on a relationship with the living and trustworthy God. With regard to the limited hope, which could be generated by human activities in the face of death, Louw makes the following observation: "The sense of aliveness to which Barton refers and which could give meaning to the dying process, however, does not lie in man's ability to adapt. Nobody can cope with dying by him-/herself" (1994:170).

This remark is of central importance in the context of the thesis, because the argument presented by Louw takes a heavy burden from us by liberating us from the need to cope with dying by ourselves. In contrast to both Kübler-Ross' and Barton's models of a psychology of death and dying, which focus on the development of the human self in order to cope with dying, a pastoral approach starts from the basic assumption that we cannot and need not adapt to dying by ourselves, but that we can trust in the one God who promised life to us in spite of death.

Eventually, according to Barton, dying is a life stage characterised by *growth* through the process of letting go and adaptation to the gradual giving up

of life, “by learning to live with an increasing sense of loss and being directly in contact with the threat of non-existence” (1979:15). Unlike in earlier stages of development, where the achievements are incorporated as part of the person’s life experience, in this final stage of life the accomplished growth cannot be fully integrated, since it results in the factual non-existence of the individual. Barton asserts that the main *crux* inherent in dying is that “whatever is achieved through growth and maturation by the dying person is simultaneously accompanied by a sense of transition and diminution” (1979:15). The central human predicament in the process of dying is characterised by a striking irony: whatever is gained will be lost in its entirety (Barton 1979:15).

This paradox is true not only for the potential growth in the period of dying, but the whole of human existence. Eventually, everything that human beings strive for and achieve in their daily existence will be lost. How can this fatalistic truth be responded to meaningfully from a pastoral perspective? The spirituality of giving up and letting go is a process that needs to be learned throughout life. It cannot be achieved easily in the face of death, but requires continuous practise and spiritual exercise over a lifetime. This includes the understanding that death is the natural ending of human life, a gift by God just as life itself.

Barton confirms that “dying and death are integral parts of the *circle of life*” (1979:15). What causes the challenge that death poses are the aspects of living, which are disrupted in the process of dying (Barton 1979:15). In the preface of *Dying and Death*, he summarises this understanding as follows: “A central theme in ... the book is the concept that those problems and conflicts involved in adapting to dying and death are largely related to the problems and conflicts related to living in the context of dying and the threat of death” (Barton 1979:xi).

Barton emphasises the fact that “adaptation to dying and death is an integral part of living” (1979:16) as the recognition and acceptance of dying are integral parts of living (Barton 1979:23). He concludes, “a person dies as he has lived or wishes to live” (Barton 1979:19). Generally, Barton refers to adaptation as an active process, which occurs over time and involves modification and change (1979:34). Various psychological mechanisms and coping strategies

are employed that provide an “increased acceptability of the unacceptable” (Barton 1979:35).

Louw states that Barton’s argument makes it clear that “the crux of the problem of dying is not so much death itself, but the question: ‘*What is life?*’” (2006:429). In the same manner, Heidegger points out, “Überdies gibt eine Psychologie des »Sterbens« eher Aufschluss über das »Leben« des »Sterbenden« als über das Sterben selbst” (1986<sup>16</sup>:247). How one has lived, one’s stance toward life and who one is are decisive for the quality of one’s dying process, the recognition and acceptance thereof (Louw 2006:429). In line with Barton’s argument, Louw stresses that “it is important for pastoral care to help people to live, before they die” (2006:429), since they die as they have lived. Consequently, an understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology plays a decisive role in connection with a pastoral approach to terminal care as life care, which concentrates on assisting people to live meaningfully despite the reality of death.

To summarise the prevailing theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions in a “psychology of death” according to Barton, it becomes clear that the model also follows a *phenomenological, client-centred* approach to terminal care. Barton’s model focuses on the existential experience of dying, including emotions, thoughts and psychosocial responses connected to medical events. In the preface to *Dying and Death*, he proclaims that in order to develop more effective approaches to caring for dying individuals in terms of knowledge and skills, “one needs to be able to discern and respond appropriately to the myriad of needs of the person” (Barton 1979:ix). As emphasised earlier in connection with Kübler-Ross’ model, the realisation that terminal care needs to respond to the dying persons’ *needs* is of vital importance. Regarding an existential analysis, the importance of an awareness of needs in dying for the efficiency of terminal or palliative care cannot be overemphasised.

Louw confirms that a psychology of death and dying is significant insofar as it provides immeasurable insights into the basic needs of dying individuals (2006:430). He identifies four areas of basic needs of the dying, which in one way or another have also been named by Barton and Kübler-Ross (Louw 2006:430). The recognition of these basic needs is essential for all types of care for the dying, independently of the discipline.

First, dying persons have biological and *physical* needs that are relevant to pain and the fear of deformation and discomfort (Louw 2006:430). Second, the *psychological* needs of the dying deal with the continuation of life and the adaptation to the inevitability of death (Louw 2006:430). The psychological process alternates between contact and separation, continuing and ending, and is characterised by two central emotional reactions: denial and anxiety related to loneliness and isolation during the process of dying (Louw 2006:430). According to Louw, “The crux of the psychological crisis is helplessness” (2006:430) and fearing the loss of control. Therefore, “what the dying fear the most is not death itself, but the process of dying” (Louw 2006:430). Third, the *social* needs of the dying revolve around the need for understanding people to be near (Louw 2006:430). The dying have an explicit “need for stable relationships and the expression of love, tenderness, and intimacy” (Louw 2006:430). Being there and available for them is vital (Louw 2006:430). Eventually, the *spiritual* needs of the dying revolve around the desire to die with dignity and hope, and to enter into death meaningfully (Louw 2006:431). Louw states, “Central to the spiritual crisis is doubt and despair” (2006:431), as well as anxiety worsened by acknowledging the absence of a future.

Manser points out that the phenomenological, client-centred models help us to realise that the human experience of *finality* reaches its clearest concretisation in the experience of death (1977:226). The radical concretisation of finality in death as a basic condition of human existence carries predominantly a negative connotation (Manser 1977:226). The negativity of death becomes evident in phenomena like decline, dwindling, disappearance, destruction, threat, loss and brutality, and death announces itself as the ending of the natural and personal side of human beings, their being dragged out of the deep rootedness in the world and human community (Manser 1977:226).

However, besides its negative implications, the phenomenon of death also has a positive character as it makes the limited time span of human life incredibly *valuable* (Manser 1977:226). This positive side of human finality includes the enjoyment of every moment to the fullest and attaches irreplaceable uniqueness to every decision (Manser 1977:226).

Nevertheless, the strong focus on the individual and his or her needs in the phenomenological and client-centred models of Barton and Kübler–Ross



involves the danger of an “optimistic overestimation of inner potentials” (Louw 1998:135) and neglects the motivational and liberating power of the external factor. Louw argues that a client-centred model leads to fundamental theological problems as it “unilaterally emphasises the human affective, cognitive, and conative abilities” (1998:135), while overlooking the divine foundation as the normative component of living and dying. A phenomenological and client-centred approach to a psychology of death and dying on a descriptive level deals with the emotions, thoughts and responses of the dying and asserts that individuals can cope with dying themselves. Such an approach intends to identify intrinsic human potential and facilitate coping skills in order to enable people to die in a humane and dignified manner.

Consequently, in a client-centred model, “therapy becomes more associated with holistic »healing« and less with salvation” (Louw 1998:136). Healing within therapy is perceived in psychological and social terms only; the external salvific factor becomes incidental and irrelevant (Louw 1998:136). According to Louw, “»Salvation« becomes a general health concept or a condition of psychological well-being” (1998:136) that aims at the homeostasis of the *self*, which has been achieved out of a human person’s own inner potential. This is true for both Barton’s and Kübler-Ross’ model of a psychology of death and dying.

It became evident that Barton’s and Kübler-Ross’ models of a psychology of death and dying are generally characterised by a phenomenological, client-centred approach that bases the praxis of terminal and palliative care on a vivid understanding of the experiential phenomena of death and dying. An understanding of the complex *experience* of dying, including emotions, thoughts, responses and needs connected to a strong belief in inherent human potential for growth and *self-realisation* form the core of such an approach.

However, a mere analysis of the phenomenon of death will eventually fail (Manser 1977:226). This becomes evident in the moments of dismay and sublimity, and the general mystery of death that can hardly be put into words (Manser 1977:226). A phenomenology of death cannot comprehend the full depth of death (Manser 1977:226) and provide individuals with a meaningful paradigm to come to terms with dying. In order to truly relativise death in its seriousness and mystical character, it needs to be supplemented by a theology

of death and dying (Manser 1977:226; Louw 2006:430). As a result, a pastoral approach to death and dying attempts to surpass the mere analysis of phenomena and to go beyond that which is directly given in our human experience.

As stated earlier in the methodological section of the thesis, “the eschatological character of salvation means that pastoral care cannot be conceived merely as an empirical event with verifiable facts” (Louw 1998:86). A theological hermeneutics of death and dying seeks to meaningfully embrace human experience, needs and responses, but adds onto it the dimension of salvation, which leads us away from the arduous need for self-reliance and self-liberation. Salvation liberates us from the painful experience of having to deal with dying by ourselves.

Steffensky’s exposition on Romans 8:16, “Der Geist selbst gibt Zeugnis unserem Geist” (LUT), can be most enlightening in this context because he reminds us that there are things that human beings cannot achieve themselves, whether through intensive search, self-enhancement or self-intensification (2006:13). He states that we cannot intend ourselves without simultaneously missing ourselves (Steffensky 2006:13). Jüngel confirms that from a biblical perspective the human “I” threatens itself by exclusively searching for itself (1971:164). We do not have to confirm and testify to our own existence through our experiences, but can rely on the truth that we are daughters and sons of God, and that our lives are saved in God (Steffensky 2006:14). We do not have to witness us to ourselves – what a great life relief (Steffensky 2006:14). As regards the life-long struggle to find ourselves, Steffensky confesses, “Wir brauchen uns nicht selber zu suchen; denn wir sind gefunden, ehe wir suchen” (2006:14).

Jüngel states that responsible talk on death needs to identify the authority that can be asked about death (1971:18). Kübler-Ross and Barton choose to consult the dying for a competent response to the question about death. It is true that dying individuals might be prepared and capable to give reference on their specific closeness to death. However, this provides neither knowledge about death itself nor about its significance in relation to life (Jüngel 1971:19). Jüngel states, “Denn der Sterbende mag zwar dem Tod – existentiell

– vielleicht! – näher sein als die Lebenden, die man mit einigem Recht noch nicht »Sterbende« nennt; aber er *lebt* noch” (1971:19).

Despite their closeness to death, the dying are still far more distanced from the dead than they are from the living (Jüngel 1971:20). For, as long as we die, we live (Jüngel 1971:20). The dying do not know death yet, in spite of their closeness to it and therefore should not be favoured as a reliable authority on knowledge of death above the living who are not yet dying (Jüngel 1971:20). The living dying should be regarded as an authority concerning knowledge on death – together with *all* the living and human life on the whole (Jüngel 1971:20). Taking this into consideration, in the following section we will focus on a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology in order to gain a new perspective on death and dying from the viewpoint of human life on the whole.

### 3. The Concept “Life” in a Pastoral Anthropology: A Theological Hermeneutics

Wir alle haben in der Zeitspanne, die wir das Leben nennen, bestimmte Lektionen, die wir lernen müssen. In der Arbeit mit Sterbenden tritt dies besonders klar zutage. Sterbende lernen am Ende ihres Lebens sehr viel, doch meistens ist es zu spät, diese Lehren umzusetzen.

(Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:9)

This appears as the life conclusion of an aged Elisabeth Kübler-Ross who, marked by illness, died three years after the publication of *Life Lessons* (2001). Kübler-Ross believed that the crucial life lessons that we need to learn contain the final truth about human life and are in themselves the mystery of life (2003:9). Hence, in the face of her own death, she wanted to write a book not on death and dying but on life and how one should live (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:9).

Kübler-Ross, having spent her professional life engaging with the dying and their families, encountering innumerable accounts of people’s lives and deaths, at the end of her own life comes to the same conclusion on which this thesis is based, i.e. that only life can teach us about death. She chooses, however, a different and more phenomenological, client-centred approach to unravel the mystery of life. In response to the question, “How to live a fulfilled life?” (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:10), she proposes a number of life lessons related to *authenticity, love, relationships, bereavement, power, feelings of guilt, time, anxiety, anger, playfulness, patience, entrustment, forgiveness and happiness*, which are aimed at curing both oneself and others through healing the human mind and spirit.

Kübler-Ross believes that learning these life lessons is what makes us truly human (2003:9). She states that people often only learn these life lessons when they are confronted with imminent death, when it is often too late to put them into action (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:9). She emphasises that the aim of her efforts is to help people to live life *truly* and to prevent them from struggling with unresolved issues at the end of their days as a consequence of neglecting and failing crucial life lessons (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:10). She

points out that unfinished business does not refer to death but to *life* (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:10).

Kübler-Ross' emphasis on life and life lessons is significant for the general enhancement of the quality of life in an attempt to live consciously in awareness of inevitable death. However, as became clear in earlier reflections on the theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions behind a psychology of death and dying, Kübler-Ross' phenomenological, client-centred approach to the *right* living suffers from an over-reliance on human potential for self-liberation. Her approach to both living and dying is based on a high regard of inner human potential and a strong belief in self-liberating, self-healing and self-improving qualities.

Kübler-Ross' approach is based on high expectations of the individual's achievement of a "good life". The understanding that one can contribute to the success of one's life by following certain life lessons may result in performance anxiety and eventually hamper the quality of a person's life. There is a need for an overall moral frame of reference that can be applied to the concept of life lessons. Based on a broader understanding of the origin and destiny of human life in terms of a Christian ethos, Kübler-Ross' life lessons on authenticity, love and relationships will appear in a different light. This will be discussed in a later section because of its high significance for a pastoral approach to the HIV pandemic.

In light of Steffensky's reflections on Romans 8:16, the question whether a fulfilled life or a "good death" is something we can achieve with human effort or whether it is granted to us graciously is pertinent. In contrast to Kübler-Ross, Steffensky emphasises that we are not human to fulfil a certain purpose (2006:218). The disabled, aged or terminally ill teach us that human beings are not justified by the significance of their actions, strengths, or efficiency (Steffensky 2006:218). They teach us what grace is – that human beings may indeed *be there* without need for justification (Steffensky 2006:218).

The same is true for a pastoral approach to the question of right living and dying. Steffensky, himself advanced in years, claims that it the greatest art of living to have learned that we do *not* need to justify ourselves by ourselves any longer (2006:219). He describes the experience of dying as follows: "Das Sterben ist die Einsamkeit, die allen misslingt und mit der niemand fertig wird.

Es ist die Stelle, an der alle Souveränität verloren geht. Der Tod ist die letzte große Unverschämtheit des Lebens” (Steffensky 2006:223).

At the end of our life, we lose the sovereignty that we built all our trust on during our lifetime (Steffensky 2006:223). We do not have sufficient resistance to offer against our own death – no strength, no virtue, no equanimity (Steffensky 2006:223). Steffensky further points out, “Ich werde mir mit nichts mehr helfen können” (2006:223). We cannot overcome death with our own strength, but need to acknowledge our defencelessness. This point of last and absolute neediness results in a final surrender to God. In connection with that, Steffensky raises the vital question, “Könnte es sein, dass ich dort am meisten bei Gott bin, weil ich am wenigsten bei mir bin?” (2006:223).

In contrast to Kübler-Ross’ life lessons, which focus on individual growth and the improvement of the human self, Steffensky believes that it is our last life dedication to literally become lonelier, to let go of what seems to constitute us, to refrain from ourselves (2006:223). He sets us thinking, “eine Schönheit könnte noch gelingen: dass man es aufgibt, sich durch sich selber zu rechtfertigen” (Steffensky 2006:223). Hence, it is not the implementation of certain life lessons that will prevent us from struggling with unresolved life issues at the end of our days, but a submissive handing over of ourselves to grace.

These thoughts might serve as a first allusion to the following section on the uniqueness of the concept life and a pastoral anthropology within a theological hermeneutics. As regards a pastoral approach to death and dying, Christian faith exposes us to a completely different perspective on our being human than the phenomenological, client-centred models of Kübler-Ross and Barton do.

### **3.1. The Concept “Life” in a Theological Hermeneutics**

Before taking a close look at the concept “life” in a theological hermeneutics, it seems appropriate to consider the concept “life” from a *philosophical* viewpoint. As a philosophical approach is essentially concerned with the search for meaning, the use of a philosophical perspective as a starting point can help us to gain first insights into the process of generating meaning in life in spite of

death. Moreover, it might help to differentiate a theological view from a philosophical one in order to obtain a better understanding of the distinctiveness and unique value of a theological approach as regards finding meaning and purpose in human life.

The most influential philosophical movements concerned with the essence of life are broadly referred to as life philosophy or *vitalism*. These philosophical movements also influenced theological reflection on the issue (Albert 1990:580). Dating back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these movements were concerned with the very core of the issue of life and temporarily received high attention (Albert 1990:580). While Schlegel with his lectures on a *Philosophy of Life* (1827) is regarded as the forerunner, the foundations of the modern philosophical movements concerned with the essence of life were laid by Nietzsche, Dilthey and Bergson (Gander 2002b:158).

The zenith of life philosophy in the narrow sense was reached in the time before World War I when the youth were literally carried away by a feeling of liberation from the burden of the mechanistic worldview that had determined philosophical approaches to life (Albert 1990:580). The real experiential and emotional world was given back to the realm of philosophical thinking and reflection (Albert 1990:580; Ebeling 1979:91). The various kinds of life philosophies take as a starting point a concept of life that is experienced as a natural and immediate power or formation process in which *becoming* accentuates itself towards *being* (Gander 2002b:158).<sup>18</sup>

Nietzsche argues that the foundation of meaning lies solely in the process of life, i.e. life itself becomes the central means for knowledge (Gander

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<sup>18</sup> Life as a philosophical issue has traditionally been the concern of a philosophy of nature, which aims at the descriptive understanding of life phenomena and their explanation in terms of general principles, or philosophical ethics that deal with the value of life (Gander 2002a:139). In its many-faceted historical development, the philosophical concept of life experienced, for example, a teleological orientation towards God or the world soul (Bruno), was interpreted in mere mechanistic terms with the intent to enlighten (Voltaire), became the all-connecting bond that cannot be explained further (Herder, Goethe), originated in God as the absolute *per se* (Schelling), or was understood as the divine itself (Feuerbach) (Gander 2002a:140).

In some way, vitalism perpetuates this conceptualisation of life as the divine itself by assuming a teleological motivated metaphysical principle of life (Driesch, Von Hartmann) (Gander 2002a:140). Increasingly, the life problem was dealt with in the individual sciences while remaining relevant for ethical reflection as question concerning the "right living" (Gander 2002a:141).

2002b:158). In the same manner, Dilthey depicts the dominant impulse for his philosophy in the aim to understand life out of itself (Albert 1990:583). Life is the beginning, foundation and aim of philosophy (Albert 1990:583). Dilthey finds clear examples of life philosophical thinking in, for instance, the literary work of Tolstoy. Reflection on life in the twofold meaning of the life of the individual person and life in general in its totality will help to reveal the meaning of being, which is the new approach of philosophy at that time (Albert 1990:583). As became evident in Tolstoy's account of Ivan Ilyich's death, the writer follows a phenomenological approach that perceives existential human life experience as the central means to reveal the essence of life.

Henri Bergson's life philosophy is concerned with a differentiation of the cognition of space and time (Albert 1990:583). Space, the external world and matter, on the one hand, are identified by the *intellect*, while time, the inner world and life, on the other hand, are recognised by human *intuition* (Albert 1990:584).<sup>19</sup> Bergson emphasises that both abilities, intellect and intuition are essential and the nature of human beings could be perfect if there was equilibrium between the two abilities (Albert 1990:584). He believes that the modern human being has almost totally suppressed the intuition in favour of the intellect (Albert 1990:584). Consequently, the aim of his phenomenological life philosophy is to combine intellect and intuition in the specific way that the intuition as immediate inner experience of life constitutes the basis of philosophical reflection, while the intellect functions as controlling body over the intuition in order to put immediate experience, i.e. *unmittelbar*, into words and make it accessible, i.e. *mittelbar* (Albert 1990:584).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> According to Bergson, time is commonly misunderstood quantitatively like space, as *temps*, while it can only correctly be understood qualitatively as *durée* or *temps réel*, which refers to a heterogeneous, virtual variety, a flow of moments (Albert 1990:584; Rudolph 1998:1315). As a result, Bergson objects to the tendency to interpret temporal processes like life, movement, thinking and acting merely in terms of quantification (Rudolph 1998:1315). He believes that it lies in the nature of quantities to be dividable and available without losing their essence (Rudolph 1998:1315). In contrast, qualities like the various kinds of temporal processes such as life lose their essence through division and are not available or at human beings' disposal (Rudolph 1998:1315).

<sup>20</sup> Consequently, Bergson strongly objects to the methods of psychoanalysis, neurophysiology, a mechanistic evolution theory, as well as a physical objectivism in the scientific way of thinking of modern age that focused on the objectification, quantification and intellectualisation of all dynamic temporal processes that would better be captured in qualitative and intuitive terms (Rudolph 1998:1315). He criticised a general tendency toward "Entzeitlichung" (Rudolph 1998:1316), which manifests in biological evolutionism that tries to explain life's varying processes in terms of the mere logic of reproduction.



A basic concept in Bergson's *philosophie de la vie* is the term *élan vital*, the basic life-force, energy or swing (Albert 1990:584). The *élan vital* describes the inside of everything that is (Hübner 1990:535). Bergson's main proposition of a creative evolution, i.e. *l'évolution créatrice* (1907), which objects strictly to a positivistic biological evolutionism, aims to demonstrate that the reductionist doctrine of the finalistic and mechanistic beginning and development of life based on mere physics of life fails to recognise the *élan vital* as creative energy (Rudolph 1998:1316; Gander 2002b:159). The establishment of a dynamic connection between a philosophy of immediate experience and the biological life problem is considered Bergson's most important move (Albert 1990:589). Since the *élan vital* cannot be grasped rationally, it is only human intuition that understands the *évolution créatrice* of life (Gander 2002b:159).

In the field of theology, Bergson's life philosophy had a considerable effect on the theologian Teilhard de Chardin and the so-called "Catholic Modernism" (Albert 1990:592). Teilhard de Chardin used Bergson's teaching to connect the Christian idea of creation with the scientific concept of evolution and perceived the human being as the end of the dynamic motion of life (Albert 1990:592). Additionally, Bergson also influenced attempts by the Roman Catholic Church to adapt religious doctrines to the discoveries of modern sciences, the so-called "Catholic Modernism" launched around 1900 (Albert 1990:592).

Although Bergson's life philosophy takes position against a positivistic biological determinism, he opts for a *phenomenological* approach to human life, which perceives human beings as divided into two main spheres, i.e. intellect and intuition. Life's dynamic temporal processes are perceived as being of a qualitative nature, which can be grasped phenomenologically by human intuition. Even though Bergson stresses the existence of an *élan vital* as a creative energy that constitutes the progress of life, he does not presuppose the necessity for an external factor in Louw's sense in order to understand the essence of human life. Applied to the question about the meaning and purpose of life, Bergson believes that human beings can find the truth of life within themselves. Intuition will guide them towards a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of their existence. Life itself takes the central position and

is independent of any external factor regarding its self-interpretation and self-improvement.

Concerning the unrestricted centrality of the concept life in a life philosophy, Sparn makes the following objection:

... rückt in der Lebensphilosophie das »Leben selbst« in die Stelle von Religion ein, jedoch so, dass die Komplexion von Unmittelbarkeit und Vermittlung des Lebens in den quasi-religiösen Glauben an das deutungsunbedürftige Werden und Sich-selbst-Steigern des Lebens aufgelöst wird (2002a:138).

The belief that life can be understood out of itself and does not require any external factor to its interpretation and mastery neglects the true complexity and paradox of human life and attaches to it the meaning of a quasi-religion (Sparn 2002a:138). The various challenges that life poses cannot be mastered by human intuition alone, but point to the necessity of an external factor to approach the enigmatic nature of human life. Reality shows that many people fail to cope with living by themselves and extract the meaning of life out of itself. From a pastoral perspective, human intuition does not necessarily prove to be a trustworthy guide in matters of existential life issues.

In a like manner, the theological model of Teilhard de Chardin based on life philosophical considerations proclaims a concept of life that perceives the rational and intuitive human being as the centre and final point of God's creation. In contrast to Steffensky, Teilhard de Chardin does not stress absolute neediness and final surrender to God as the central purpose of human life, but holds onto a very optimistic belief in human reason and intuition as marks of our being the summit of creation.

### **Towards an Understanding of the Owedness of Life**

Keeping in mind the insights into life philosophical endeavours to unravel the miracle of human life, we now turn to *religious* attempts to engage with questions about the meaning and purpose of life. In the context of a pastoral approach to death and dying, the aim is to find out what religion has to offer as regards meaningful assistance to people who try to cope with existential life issues.

Grünschloß points out that, according to the so-called *coping-theory*, religious ideas and rites deal with this life and the hereafter, i.e. seek to come to terms with life and death (2002a:133). Despite great varieties in the history of religions, recurring aspects in religious approaches to life can be identified (Grünschloß 2002a:134). Due to its numinous origin, life is mostly considered owed or “*verdanktes Leben*” (Grünschloß 2002a:134). Since human life is existentially threatened, it needs to be preserved ritually or spiritually (Grünschloß 2002a:134). Human life also appears as being weaved into larger cosmic contexts and transcends individual life cycles (Grünschloß 2002a:134).

Sundermeier points out that at the beginning of all enquiries into a religious concept of “life”, the focus should be on *natural* or tribal religions, as they formed the basis of all modern belief systems (1990:514). Against this backdrop, the concepts of “life” prevailing in modern religions become comprehensible (Sundermeier 1990:514). Exemplarily, Sundermeier singles out the African traditional religions and identifies certain characteristics of their understanding of life that are not subject to mere reflection, but experienced living (1990:515).

As regards universal characteristics of African traditional religions, life is perceived in *continuity* as essentially being one (Sundermeier 1990:515). Every generation forms a single link in a long chain of human life, so that the individual is embedded in a flow of life, which constitutes families, clans and ethnic groups (Sundermeier 1990:515). The so-called Western idea of the limitation of human life is not known (Sundermeier 1990:515). Life in African traditional religions is *repetition* (Sundermeier 1990:515). It is not believed to be unique or irreversible but, by means of an awareness of the presence of the ancestors, life’s repeatability becomes plausible (Sundermeier 1990:515). Consequently, death loses some of its misery (Sundermeier 1990:515). Life is fundamentally *communality* and the individual lives because of the community (Sundermeier 1990:515). Life is characterised by *interdependency*, as human beings, animals and their environment live in a continual exchange of energies and powers that can be described as a mutual dependency (Sundermeier 1990:515). Life aims at *potentiality* and its meaning becomes evident in growth and the increase of powers (Sundermeier 1990:516). Eventually, life is regarded as being

*ambivalent* and indefinite between the possibilities of the two poles of good and evil (Sundermeier 1990:516).

Sundermeier comes to the conclusion that at heart African traditional religions are convinced of an uninterrupted union of life that neither originates from a definite end nor moves toward a distinctive aim (1990:516). Like a helix, life turns around the present time and has its very centre in the currently living generation (Sundermeier 1990:516). Consequently, death is a matter of repulsion and disregard (Sundermeier 1990:516). Abundance of life now – that is the essence of all traditional religions (Sundermeier 1990:516).

As regards these first insights into the concept “life” from a religious perspective, African traditional religions underline the fact that human life is not as centred on the individual as we sometimes believe it to be. The individual life of a human person appears as not only intimately interwoven with the lives of fellow human beings, but also part of a larger whole that includes the cosmos and everything in it. Like in an unlimited chain of continuing lives, human beings are connected to those who walked before and will come after them.

African traditional religions confront us with the truth that life in its variety, including its potentiality and the all-pervasive tension between good and evil, is something that we do not have to master by ourselves. We are part of a greater whole, which relates us to our fellow human beings throughout history and the whole of the cosmos. Moreover, life and death appear as unavoidable elements in the uninterrupted union of life. Keeping this in mind, we shall now approach the unique Christian concept of “life” as depicted in the Old and New Testament scriptures.

### **A Variety of Biblical Concepts of “Life”**

Approaching biblical findings on human life as the basic quality of existence, it needs to be emphasised that there are several and varied Hebrew and Greek terms that are generally translated as “life” (Van Voorst 2000:809). Before I concentrate on the specific views on life in the writings of the Old Testament, I will shortly pay attention to the variety of expressions generally referring to human life in the biblical scriptures.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term *hayyim*, “life”, often refers to the time span of human existence or the general circumstances of life (Van Voorst 2000:809; Seebaß 1990:521).

The term *néfesh*, usually translated as “soul” or “life”, makes a body, may it be human or animal, into a living being (Van Voorst 2000:809). *Néfesh* connotes breath, exhalation, the divine principle of life (Louw 2004:11). Louw argues that “soul is a dynamic life-giving principle within our existence” (2004:12), closely connected to the affective and cognitive principles of being. He quotes Anderson, “*Néfesh* does not say what a person has, but who the person *is* who receives life” (2003:30, quoted in Louw 2004:12; Hopkins 1990:86; Seebaß 1990:522). It is an “embodied principle for purposeful life, as an embodiment of a life force” (Louw 2004:12). Albertz understands *néfesh* also in the meaning of intentionality, “ein Ausgerichtetsein auf Gott” (1992:466), as preservation and fulfilment of life against the threat of death. As such, *néfesh* can also refer to the human will and instinct for life (Albertz 1992:466).

In the New Testament, the Greek term *bios*, “life”, connotes the natural order and life in its earthly appearance (Van Voorst 2000:809; Dautzenberg 1990:526). It takes a strong ethical meaning, referring to the manner or way of life (Link 1976:474; Dautzenberg 1990:526). Link emphasises that *bios* also contains a temporal meaning concerning the duration of life (1976:474f). In that sense, *bios* serves as a Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *hayyim* (Dautzenberg 1990:526). It can also take the concrete meanings of wealth and fortune by referring to livelihood (Link 1976:475; Dautzenberg 1990:526). With only about ten occurrences, *bios* is surprisingly uncommon in the New Testament (Link 1976:475; Dautzenberg 1990:526).

*Zōē*, on the other hand, refers to God’s life and “the salvation that entails eternal life” (Van Voorst 2000:809). It tends to mean life as a vital, natural force, but also refers to “that fellowship with God that men enjoy as a special gift from God himself” (Link 1976:474). *Zōē* connotes life in contrast to death, eternal life, and the life of the faithful originating in God and Christ (Dautzenberger 1990:526). It is the Greek term for life that occurs most often in the New Testament – about 135 times (Link 1976:475; Dautzenberg 1990:526).

*Psyché*, i.e. “soul”, “life”, strongly corresponds to the Hebrew *néfesh* (Van Voorst 2000:809; Dautzenberg 1990:526). Both *psyché* and *néfesh* refer to life

and its quality (Louw 2004:12). *Psyché*, which occurs about 103 times in the scriptures of the New Testament, refers to the life of the individual, vitality and soul as the bearer of life (Dautzenberg 1990:526). Louw states that *psyché* “signifies that which is vital in a human being in the broader sense” (Louw 2004:11).

In classical Greek, the term *psyché* refers to “the essential core of man which can be separated from his body and which does not share in the body’s dissolution” (Dunn 1998:76). This is the origin of the belief in the immortality of the soul, i.e. the continued existence of a hidden, inner part of the human person after death (Dunn 1998:76). Paul’s usage of *psyché*, however, strongly relates to the Hebrew understanding of *néfesh*, which denotes the whole person (Dunn 1998:76). Nevertheless, *psyché* is threatened by death and essentially requires *zōē* to live (Dautzenberg 1990:526). This significant relationship between *psyché* and *zōē* is, for instance, expressed in the asymmetrical relationship between psychology and theology in terms of the “Chalcedonian Pattern” (Louw 1998:100), which assigns logical precedence to salvation over and against life in psychological terms.

In some places in the New Testament, soul can also be connected to *pneuma*, i.e. “spirit”, “wind” and “breath”, as there is an interconnectedness between soul and spirit in the human person (Louw 2004:13). The Hebrew equivalent of *pneuma* is almost always *rûah*, the “blowing wind”, which has God as its immediate cause (Kamlah 1978:690). The meaning of *rûah* as “the outward expression of the life-force inherent in all human behaviour” (Kamlah 1978:690) is also of significance in connection with the human spirit. *Pneuma* often implies an inner dimension and the awareness of the ultimate within human existence (Louw 1998:166).

Additionally, there is a connection between the human spirit and the work of the divine *pneuma* as it links human existence to our salvific condition in Christ and the reality of resurrected life (Rom 8:16f) (Louw 1998:166).<sup>21</sup> For

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<sup>21</sup> Dunn affirms that the most frequent use of *pneuma* in the New Testament is a reference to “the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, that power which is most immediately to God as to source and nature” (1978:693). The human spirit, as one end of *pneuma*’s extended spectrum of meaning, denotes human beings in their

Paul, the Gospel “is not about an innate spirituality awaiting release, but about the divine Spirit acting upon and in a person from without” (Dunn 1998:76f). In other words, the spirit is that dimension of the human individual by which the person relates most directly to God (Rom 1:9; 8:16) (Dunn 1998:77). This understanding is of vital importance in terms of a pastoral anthropology.

When used in connection with the human body, *psyché* and *pneuma* form a unity representing “life in the fear and consciousness of the presence of God” (Louw 1998:165). Both terms express the original identification of “breath” as the central human life force (Dunn 1998:77). Paul uses *psyché* and *pneuma* alternatively, both indicating “human natural life and earthly existence subject to death and transience (Rom 11:3; 2 Cor 2:13)” (Louw 1998:165). Dunn clarifies the relationship by stating that *pneuma* denotes more the Godward dimension of our being human, while *psyché* is limited to the vital life force itself (1998:77).

In connection with *kardia*, “heart”, and *nous*, “mind”, which form a natural pair in the New Testament, soul refers to “the seat of life or even life itself” (Louw 2004:11; Dunn 1998:73). The two terms are essential for an understanding of the uniqueness and personhood of human beings (Louw 1998:165). In Pauline writings, *kardia* often indicates the innermost dimension of the human person referring to the seat of emotions but also thought and will (Dunn 1998:74f). Heart denotes the “experiencing, motivating I” (Dunn 1998:75), where the experience of God’s grace penetrates the innermost depths of an individual. Paul proclaims that God searches human hearts (Rom 8:27) (Dunn 1998:75). Consequently, *kardia* is “the instrument for exercising faith (Rom 10:10)” (Louw 1998:165; also Dunn 1998:75) as an expression of deeply felt commitment.

The term *nous* is referred to as the centre for human orientation and personal reaction (Louw 1998:166). Paul believes that it is essential for the

belonging to and interacting with the spiritual realm, i.e. the aspect of being human through which God most immediately encounters human beings (Rom 8:16) (Dunn 1978:693).

In Pauline theology, *pneuma* takes the connotation of the eschatological Spirit as “the power of the new age already broke into the old” (Dunn 1978:701), which enables the believer to live in and through the old age in the power and light of the new (Rom 8:23). Dunn states, “the Spirit’s activity in the present age is marked more by *hope* than by fulfilment or complete victory” (Dunn 1978:702). In John’s theology, the new life of the Spirit is described by means of the metaphor of a (re)birth from above (Jn 20:22) (Dunn 1978:703).

human reason to correspond to the mind of God (1 Cor 2:16) and to be transformed by the Spirit “by the renewing of the mind” (Rom 12:2) (Louw 1998:166). Dunn confirms that *nous* refers to the typically Greek assessment of reason or rationality, “as that which relates to the divine, as of a piece of the divine, as the divine in humanity” (Rom 1:20) (1998:74). *Nous* represents human thinking, reasoning, volition, as well as decision-making, and describes the human inner ability to self-direction (Louw 1998:166). It plays an important role in making ethical decisions (Rom 14:5) through “the integration of rationality within the total transformation of the person” (Dunn 1998:74).<sup>22</sup>

It is important to note that for Paul the human being is neither only rational nor just “a bundle of feelings” (Dunn 1998:75), but both. The concept “mind” certainly distinguishes the human being from the beast (Dunn 1998:75). However, rationality, emotion and volition interact in the human person in the concept of the human heart (Dunn 1998:75).

### **Life in the Old Testament: Living in Close Relationship with God**

As regards general considerations of the concept “life” in the Old Testament, all life comes from and is sustained by Yahweh (Van Voorst 2000:809). Life originates in Yahweh and is an individual *gift* from the God of creation (Liess 2002:135; Seebaß 1990:523). Unlike traditional African religions that perceive life to be repeatable and reversible, the Old Testament describes human life as individual and unmistakable (Seebaß 1990:521). Life is primarily perceived in terms of duration, i.e. the days of a person’s life, “which are granted him by Yahweh, the Lord of life” (Gen 25:7) (Link 1976:478).

*Néfesh*, God’s life-giving breath, gives life to both human beings and animals and makes them living beings (Gen 2:7; 6:17; 7:15) (Liess 2002:135; Link 1976:478). Seebaß identifies two quasi-divinatory expressions concerning life in the Old Testament: “breath” is close to life (Gen 2:7) and *néfesh* is said to be found in the blood or to be synonymous with blood (Lev 17:11; Deut 12:23) (1990:521).

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<sup>22</sup> Louw claims that the organ through which pastoral care aims to change and transform human beings is the *nous*, which needs to enjoy preference in a therapeutic approach (1998:166). He points out that human beings receive a new identity as a result of the transformation of their hearts and reason (Louw 1998:166).



Whenever God withdraws God's breath, living beings die (Ps 104:29) (Liess 2002:135). Yahweh has the power over life and death, "The Lord brings death and makes alive" (1Sa 2:6; also Deut 32:39). Yahweh is the founder and preserver of life as "the living God", the only being who is truly alive (2Ki 19:4; Ps 42:2). Human life can truly be understood only out of the aliveness that emanates from God (Manser 1977:233). Yahweh is referred to as "the fountain of life" (Ps 36:9; Jer 2:13) and "the stronghold of my life" (Ps 27:1) (Liess 2002:135; Van Voorst 2000:809).

Human life comprises more than mere physical existence – it is the central gift of salvation and does not only refer to being and staying alive, but is mostly positively qualified as a long and fulfilled life (Pro 3:2) (Liess 2002:135; Van Voorst 2000:809). Constitutive for the concept "life" in the Old Testament are praising Yahweh and living in community with Yahweh. Liess puts it as follows: "Leben heißt Loben" (2002:135). She quotes Von Rad, "Der Lobpreis wird zum elementarsten Merkmal der Lebendigkeit schlechthin" (1992:381, quoted in Liess 2002:135). In death, the praising of God falls silent (Ps 6:5; 88:10) (Liess 2002:135).

Essentially, life is a *relational* concept as it is only possible in community with Yahweh and social interaction (Liess 2002:135; Manser 1977:236). In this life-giving partnership scattered through isolation or God-forsakenness, the term death is already used in this life independently of physical death (Ps 88) (Liess 2002:135). Manser argues, "Jedes Abwenden Gottes vom Menschen [and vice versa] bedeutet deshalb ein Ausgeliefertwerden an den Tod" (1977:233). True life always needs to be searched for and lived close to God.

Means and way to life is fundamentally the *law*, i.e. the keeping of the Torah (Liess 2002:135). Deuteronomy connects the promise of a fulfilled life to the keeping of the commandments (Deut 30:15-20) (Liess 2002:135; Seebaß 1990:522). In Leviticus 18:5, it says, "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them". Proverbs demands the adherence to and appreciation of the wisdom teachings and appeals to human reason and understanding in dealing with the environment (Pro 3:21f; Pro 9:6) (Seebaß 1990:522).

Characteristics of a fulfilled life and synonyms therefore are salvation, health, peace (Pro 3:17), happiness, joy and blessing (Deut 30:15; Ps 133:3)

(Liess 2002:135).<sup>23</sup> Being the first, life-enabling creative act, Barth described the “light” as the inmost embodiment and symbol of life (Liess 2002:135). Whoever lives, “walks before God in the light of life” (Ps 56:14; also Job 33:30) and enjoys or sees the light (Ps 33:28; Ps 36:10) (Liess 2002:135). The dead do not see the light of life (Ps 49:19) (Liess 2002:135). The metaphor of the light becomes especially meaningful in connection with the idea of the light of God’s face that shines upon the faithful and creates and sustains life (Ps 4:6; 31:16; 67:1) (Liess 2002:135). This experience of the life-giving presence of God in the *Gottesschau* even seems to outbid the value of life, “Because your love is better than life” (Ps 63:3) (Liess 2002:135).

As regards the interaction between life and death, human life is experienced as fundamentally limited, threatened and non-lasting, like the grass, a flower, a dream, a fleeting shadow, a sigh or a fast runner (Ps 90:10; 102:11) (Liess 2002:136; Seebaß 1990:521). Therefore, life is the highest good and needs to be preserved by all means (Seebaß 1990:521). The Old Testament ideal is a long, fulfilled life with a dying “old and full of years” (Job 42:17; Gen 25:8), at “a good old age” and “in peace” (Gen 15:15) (Liess 2002:136).

Since life is characterised by physical wholeness, the disintegration of the body into his various parts is perceived as death in the midst of life (Liess 2002:135). The experience of a “good death” in old age was contrasted with a premature death in the midst of one’s days (Ps 102:25; Is 38:10) or a fundamental depreciation of life due to illness, predicament through enemies or captivity as expressed in the laments (Liess 2002:136). In the light of the great and manifold significance of life, every decrease thereof is perceived as “ein Überhandnehmen des Todes” (Manser 1977:236).

For the Old Testament believer, the territory of death deeply reached into the sphere of life (Liess 2002:136). Link puts it as follows: “The power of death ... invades human life in the form of sickness, hatred or loneliness” (1976:478).

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<sup>23</sup> Link argues that, “as to Orientals in general, the sheer vitality, concreteness and diversity of life were a source of utmost delight” (1976:478) to the Israelites. He points out that “life [was] synonymous with health, well-being and success” (Link 1976:478). In a like manner, Seebaß states that life was threatened by death, but simultaneously characterised by vitality and animal spirits, i.e. “Lebensfreude” (1990:521).

Therefore, healing from illness was perceived as rescue from death in the midst of life and described as revival (Ps 30:4; Is 38:16) (Liess 2002:136; Link 1976:479). Only scarcely in later texts, the Old Testament speaks about life after physical death as preparation for later statements concerning eternal life and the resurrection to life (Dan 12:2) (Liess 2002:136; Van Voorst 2000:809).

To summarise the specific Israelite or Old Testament view of life, Link claims that this is best expressed in the book of Deuteronomy (Link 1976:478). The Old Testament believer is faced with a *choice* between life and death: “The obedient are promised blessing, prosperity and life, while the disobedient can expect nothing but curse, adversity and death” (Deut 31:1-20) (Link 1976:478). The concept “life” in the Old Testament has a *moral* dimension that entails keeping God’s commandments (Van Voorst 2000:809). In Deuteronomy, Yahweh declares, “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses” (Deut 30:19). Accordingly, life and blessing are closely connected theologically by means of the dimension of obedience to God’s divine law.

For the people of the Old Testament, life lies completely in God’s hand – and this is not just a devout phrase (Seebaß 1990:523). True life can only be found in the *relationship* with God, as God is the creator and preserver of *all* life. Human life is fundamentally a relational issue that is not searched for or expected to be found outside of the relationship with the living God, the creator of heaven and earth. While human life is short and threatened, God is infinite, God’s Word remains to the end of time.

### **Life in the New Testament: The Total Reassessment of Human Life**

Early Christianity, which was strongly influenced by Old Testament and Jewish traditions, also perceived life as the limited and non-lasting time between birth and death that has been granted God’s creatures as the highest good (Zumstein 2002:136). God has the power over life and death and is regarded as the only source of life (Zumstein 2002:136). Again, true life can only be found in the right relationship with God by obediently accepting God’s Word (Zumstein 2002:136).

The New Testament generally continues the Old Testament meanings of life, “but the emphasis shifts to eternal life” (Van Voorst 2000:809). The *Synoptic Gospels* have most strongly recalled the Old Testament view of life

(Link 1976:480). Natural life appears as a possession of the highest value (Mk 8:37) (Link 1976:480). Frequently, Jesus is called upon to exercise his divine power, so that sick or dying individuals may be healed and live (Mk 5:23) or even to restore to life those that have already died (Mk 5:35ff; Lk 7:11ff) (Link 1976:480).

Similar to the Old Testament, temporal categories are used for life (Lk 1:75), which is regarded as dynamic, although still bounded and transient (Link 1976:480). Life, i.e. *zōē*, does not consist of the abundance of possessions (Lk 12:15) and *psyché* is more than food (Lk 12:23) (Van Voorst 2000:809). Life is described as something more than a natural occurrence, but an event that can succeed or fail by living in a god-fearing or dissolute way (Lk 15:13; 2 Tim 3:12) (Link 1976:480).

As in the writings of the Old Testament, true life originates in the Word of God (Mt 4:4, quoting Deut 8:3), while to leave God is described as being dead (Lk 15:24,32) (Link 1976:480). According to Link, similar expressions are used to describe the relationship between God and life in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels: “God, who can kill and make alive (Mt 10:28 ...), is ... the Lord (Lk 12:20 ...) and the embodiment of life; he is the living God (Mt 16:16; 26; 63) and the God of the living (Mt 22:32 ...)” (Link 1976:480).

Van Voorst adds, “Life (*zōē*) comes from keeping God’s commandments (Mt 19:17) and from giving up one’s own life (*psyché*) to follow Jesus (Lk 14:26)” (2000:809).

Above all, it is the question of the access to eternal life that occupies the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 10:30; Mt 19:16) (Link 1976:480; Zumstein 2002:136). Eternal life is attained as a gift from God who raises the dead (Mt 22:31f; Mk 12:26f; Lk 20:36) (Link 1976:481).<sup>24</sup> The future life is occasionally referred to by the use of *zōē* alone, i.e. without any qualifying phrase, which “indicates that such life is regarded as real and true, the very life of God Godself (Mt 18:18; Mk 9:43)” (Link 1976:481). This does however not imply a devaluation of earthly life as found in later Hellenism (Link 1976:481).

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<sup>24</sup> Link emphasises that in the Synoptic Gospels eternal life is not attained “by reason of the immortality of the soul” (1976:480). According to him, the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul is completely foreign to the New Testament (Link 1976:480-81).

On the contrary, the attainment of eternal life is, similarly to the Old Testament, connected to certain requirements like the keeping of the commandments (Mt 7:13f; Lk 10:28) (Zumstein 2002:136). Present-day conduct, such as the demonstration of one's reliability in times of temptation and doubt, decide upon one's participation in the life to come (Mk 9:43) (Zumstein 2002:136). By means of the in the person of Jesus already approaching kingdom of God, true life already manifests in the here and now (Zumstein 2002:136; Dautzenberg 1990:529). In the parable of the Last Judgement, the close relationship between the present and the future life is depicted impressively: the righteous will enter into eternal life, while the disobedient suffer eternal punishment (Mt 25:31ff) (Link 1976:481).

Both Paul and the Gospel of John interpret life from a Christological perspective (Zumstein 2002:136). In the letters of *Paul*, the *resurrection* of Christ from the dead completely determines the concept of "life" (1 Cor 15:4) (Zumstein 2002:136; Link 1976:481). The consequence is a total reassessment and reframing of human life, which is neither solely positive nor negative, but realistic in the sense that it is full of contradictions and paradoxes (Louw 2006:351). However, life can be lived through the Spirit in the hope of the resurrection (Louw 2006:351).

Paul views life as "coming through faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ" (Van Voorst 2000:809). The resurrection being an accomplished fact has proven the power of divine life over death (Rom 14:9) (Link 1976:481). Christ becomes the very embodiment of God's living power, conquering death and raising the dead (2 Cor 13:4) (Link 1976:481; Dunn 1998:318). According to Link, "Life means Christ's everlasting life, life from the dead and beyond the grave" (1976:481). Paul states that it is the electrifying truth that God has overcome death, which is the overwhelming result of Christ's death and resurrection. Thus, life "comes from and through death" (Link 1976:481). The resurrection entails the unconditional affirmation of life (Louw 2006:351).

As "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20) or "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), the risen Christ indicates the beginning of a *new eon* (Zumstein 2002:136). Christ became "the author of a new life for mankind (Rom 5:12ff)", the "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45) (Link 1976:481; Dunn 1998:260). The risen Christ is the symbol of God's living power, which manifests in "God's

abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness” (Rom 5:17), which results in the transition from the old, sinful life to new life under Christ’s lordship (Zumstein 2002:136). Paul assures the Corinthians, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22).

In connection with that, *baptism* is of central importance as in it the faithful participate in Christ’s death and resurrection: mediated through the Word and received in faith, the new life in Christ is freed from the power of sin and death (Zumstein 2002:137). The new life is in the sphere of influence of the life-giving Spirit (Rom 8:2) (Zumstein 2002:137). By means of baptism, Christ’s resurrectional life has already become the believer’s (Gal 2:19) (Van Voorst 2000:809). Link argues, “The life of Christians is not their own life but the life of Christ: Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20 ...), they live the life of Christ (2 Cor 4:10)” (Link 1976:481). In a like manner, Zumstein argues that, as the faithful do not live for themselves any longer but for God, for Christ, life received a new orientation that shows in sacrificial love for the fellow human being (Rom 13:8; Gal 5:13) (Zumstein 2002:137). The new Spirit-wrought life of believers manifests in responsible service to fellow human beings in all kinds of social circumstances (Van Voorst 2000:809).

The presence of the new life and its future eschatological fulfilment do not oppose each other (Zumstein 2002:137). On the contrary, the present existence of those who believe is determined by a life-giving eschatological tension between the *already*, which has been anticipated in Christ’s resurrection, and the *not yet* of eschatology (Zumstein 2002:137; Van Voorst 2000:809). Link puts it as follows: “there is a tension between present and future, indicative and imperative (Gal 5:25)” (1976:481). The believer’s new life already exists, but has not yet been fully manifested (Col 3:3) (Link 1976:481). Louw confirms that the new life is a *pneumatological* reality, which can be realised and experienced daily through the Spirit in the modes of faith, hope, love and peace (2006:351). Simultaneously, Paul beseeches the Roman congregation to realise that Christ’s resurrection is the pledge of their own future resurrection to an eternal life, “where death and all the imperfections of the present creation will be things of the past (Rom 8:18ff)” (Link 1976:481; Van Voorst 2000:809).

Even though the issue of human life was not of central theological interest in early Christianity, the *Johannine writings*, i.e. both the Gospel of John as well as the first letter of John, give detailed account on this question (Dautzenberg 1990:527). Like the Pauline writings, the Gospel of John interprets life consequently from the perspective of Christology (Zumstein 2002:137). To John, *Jesus* himself is the true life and it is imparted through him (Jn 1:4; 1 Jn 5:20) (Zumstein 2002:137; Dautzenberg 1990:527). This is indicated by the various “I am” sayings, like “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:35), “...the light of the world” (Jn 8:12), “...the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved” (Jn 10:9), “...the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25), “...the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6) (Link 1976:482).

In contrast to Paul, John does not believe Jesus to be the true life due to his resurrection and being raised from the dead, but his divine origin from above, his coming from God (Link 1976:137).<sup>25</sup> The quality of life, in fact the power over life and death, was initially part of the Father, but has been transferred to Christ, the mediator (Dautzenberg 1990:528). Jesus as the incarnated *logos* in Word and deed brings life by revealing himself and the Father (Jn 1:14) (Zumstein 2002:137). According to Zumstein, “Der Geber ist die Lebensgabe in Person” (2002:137). In a like manner, Link states, “The pre-existing Son of the eternal Father is sent into the world to give life to men both by his word and in his own person” (1976:482). Accordingly, Jesus says about himself, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6).<sup>26</sup> In faith in his *Word*, man receives eternal life (Jn 3:36) (Zumstein 2002:137; Link 1976:482).

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<sup>25</sup> John understands the Word as “being eternal life even before his [i.e. Christ’s] incarnation” (Link 1976:482). Accordingly, Link elaborates on John’s understanding of Jesus being the true life, “He has lived eternally with God and for the benefit of men (Jn 1:4; 1Jn 1:1), i.e. he is the source of divine life and power both in the old and in the new creation” (Link 1976:482).

<sup>26</sup> In connection with this pericope, Bonhoeffer argues in his *Ethics* (1949) that no Christian or philosophical reflection “can any longer ignore this claim and the reality it contains” (2005:249). Bonhoeffer points out that John 14:6 declares any “attempt to formulate the essence of life in itself as futile and doomed from the start” (2005:249). This understanding has vast implications for any phenomenological approach to life or death as proposed by Kübler-Ross or Barton. The question of *what* life is turns into an answer of *who* life is, for Jesus binds every reflection on life to his own person (Bonhoeffer 2005:249).

Bonhoeffer proclaims, “Life is not a thing, an essence, or a concept, but a person” (Bonhoeffer 2005:249). Life can never again be separated from the person of Jesus and needs to be recognised as “the life that we cannot give ourselves, but which comes to us completely from the outside, completely from beyond ourselves” (2005:251). This theological understanding fundamentally contradicts, for

With its Hellenistic background, the Gospel of John concentrates wholly on the present life (Link 1976:482; Van Voorst 2000:809). The “*realized eschatology*” (Van Voorst 2000:809) of the Fourth Gospel does not purely refer to life after death, but becomes a reality already in present time: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (Jn 5:24) (Zumstein 2002:137).<sup>27</sup>

Physical death becomes irrelevant, according to Jesus: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn 11:25-26; 8:51) (Zumstein 2002:137; Link 1976:482).

Death manifests in the separation from God, while life is perceived as the restored relationship to God (Zumstein 2002:137). This live-giving relationship becomes evident in peace, joy, brotherly love and remaining in Christ’s Word (Jn 14-16) (Zumstein 2002:137). According to John, the eternal life granted to believers expresses itself in *love*, which is the central criterion for true life: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death” (1 Jn 3:14) (Link 1976:482).

To bring the inventory on the New Testament’s various views on life to an end, the book of *Revelation* combines the Son of man tradition with the figure of a slain Lamb: “I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Rev 1:17-18) (Link 1976:482). Link points out that revelation goes back to Jewish traditions and “concerns itself exclusively with the life to come” (1976:482). Van Voorst confirms this argument as follows: “As fits the apocalyptic style and theology of this writing, life is eschatological and future” (2000:809).

instance, Kübler-Ross who believes that a fulfilled life can be achieved by ourselves through the exercise of so-called life lessons (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:9).

<sup>27</sup> Link emphasises accordingly, “John brings it [i.e. eternal life] right into the present and anchors it firmly to the word, the commandment and the person of Christ (Jn 17:3)” (1976:482). In the same manner, Dautzenberg claims that the Gospel of John schedules the total fulfilment of salvation, i.e. the transition to eternal life that is traditionally believed still to be fulfilled in the future, already for present time (Jn 5:24) (1990:529).



Van Voorst states that in the book of Revelation, life, i.e. *zōē*, is always connected to another, often symbolic word (2000:809). Symbols of the *fullness* of life in the “new city of God” are, for instance, the vision of the new Jerusalem and mystical, early Oriental pictures of the “tree of life” (Rev 2:7), the “crown of life” (Rev 2:10), the “book of life” (Rev 3:5) and the “water of life” (Rev 21:6), some of which are familiar from the story of the Garden of Eden (Link 1976:482; Van Voorst 2000:809).

The vision of the *new heaven* and the *new earth* is the most wide-ranging amongst the revelational promises (Link 1976:483). As emphasised by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:26, death, the last enemy, will be vanquished and we will live with God in perfection: “God himself will be with them and be their 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 21:3-4) (Link 1976:483). Thus, the concept “life” in the book of Revelation is strongly “linked to the Living One who has defeated death and is alive forever (Rev 1:8)” (Van Voorst 2000:809).

To summarise, it became clear that there are various views on life in the New Testament writings, which accentuate different aspects of the origin, purpose and quality of human life. The Synoptic Gospels emphasise that true life can only come from the *Word* of God and is found in the life-giving *relationship* with the living God. Eternal life, which is more a subject of the future, is of central importance and regarded as the very life of God Godself. It is attained by keeping the commandments, living an obedient, god-fearing life and following Jesus in discipleship. Owing to the kingdom of God, which in the person of Jesus already partly became a reality, the true life is already manifested in present time.

The Pauline writings emphasise that from the perspective of Christology new life has been achieved through Christ’s resurrection from the dead. The risen Christ indicates the beginning of a *new eon* in the presence in which human life has been transformed radically from sin and death, through the triumph over death, to new life. New life, according to Paul, means Christ’s everlasting life obtained through his own sacrificial death and subsequent *overcoming* of death. Through baptism believers partake in this new life, die and rise with Christ, so that Christ lives in them and they live in Christ, even when

they die. In terms of the eschatological tension between the *already* and the *not yet*, the new life and its final future fulfilment do not exclude but complete each other.

The focus of the Johannine writings concerning life lies, similar to Paul, wholly on the present life and Jesus' fundamental role in it. John believes *Jesus* himself to be the true life, which is imparted to believers through him. Due to his divine origin, Christ participates in the truth of the Word that was with him even before the incarnation. Through *faith* in his Word, man receives eternal life in present time, which manifests in a restored relationship with God.

The book of Revelation, eventually, is exclusively concerned with the life to come. True life as such is eschatological and futuristic. The concept life of Revelation manifests in vibrant, colourful visions concerning the utter perfection of the new heaven and the new earth to come. It paints a picture of the *eternal life* that awaits the faithful, which is characterised by a peaceful residing in the presence of God where all crying falls silent and earthly pain, suffering and death have been overcome.

It becomes evident that the biblical scriptures paint a different picture of the meaning and purpose of human life than the philosophical approaches to a life philosophy do. Characteristic of Bergson's life *philosophical* approach is a temporal, qualitative understanding of life. His phenomenological emphasis is on human intuition as immediate inner experience of life constituting the basis of philosophical reflection, while the intellect functions as controlling body over the intuition in order to make immediate experience accessible. Human beings are the centre of their own experiential world, and, if they are believed to be created like in Teilhard de Chardin's theological model, they are the final point of creation, seemingly having grown independent of their creator. Human beings do not depend on an external factor to grasp the essence of their existence. Consequently, in living and dying they can only rely on themselves and trust in their own intuition to guide them toward a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of human life.

The early religions' understanding of the owedness of life has fruitfully been continued and developed further in the *Old Testament*. For the people of the Old Testament, true life was to be found in the relationship with God, who is the undisputed creator and keeper of all life, and in the *Geborgenheit* of the

human community. The exclusion or breakdown of either relationship means death. Life and its vitality are exclusively owed to Yahweh who makes all things alive through *néfesh*, the life-giving breath and principle of purposeful life. Whenever God withdraws God's breath of life, all living things cease to exist. The Old Testament completely concentrates on the present life. Being a gift of God, it is the highest good that needs to be preserved by maintaining and nurturing the relationship to God who promises rich blessings to the obedient.

In the *New Testament* writings, the perspectives on life expand as visions of eternal life are included into the perception of human life. Jesus Christ becomes the focus of the question regarding the essence of human life. He offers ways to the true life by means of his person and teaching. Through Christ's resurrection from the dead, life in itself has been transformed radically into a completely new life. Generally, life in the context of the New Testament is perceived as *zōē*, the life of the faithful originating in God the Father and Christ the Son bestowed on the devoted through God the Spirit.

The biblical scriptures accentuate what has been prepared in a long history of religions – the fact that the individual human being and her or his life is nothing without God. The biblical revelation witnesses to the fact that true human life cannot be found outside of the relationship with God who bestows life on those who trust in God. As we read in the Gospel of John, “apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). In order to get insight into the meaning and purpose of human life in all its vulnerability, limitation and finality, we require the relationship with a living God. An exploration of our being human before God and the field of a theological anthropology follows.

### **3.2. A Pastoral Approach to a Theological Anthropology**

The questions “*Who am I?*” and “*What does it mean to be human?*” are as old as humanity's consciousness of itself (Moltmann 1977:11). Only humans ask about themselves and their being in this way (Moltmann 1977:11). Moltmann believes that it is especially in situations when the spontaneous-acting individual is thrown back and forced to think about the self that these questions come to consciousness (1977:11). Such a decisive situation can, for instance, be the

experience of loss and bereavement, imminent death or other hardship that confronts the individual with the finiteness and limitation of human life.

Since the human being is the one asking and responding at the same time, all answers that are given to us by ourselves or other human beings turn out to be insufficient and become the question once again (Moltmann 1977:12). Human beings happen to be the greatest mystery for themselves; caught in the dilemma between the need to know and the necessity to remain in hiding to themselves (Moltmann 1977:12).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, dealing with the question regarding the essence of being human, one needs to find a balance between fundamental human uncertainty and the answers that human beings give to themselves in order to create some sense of certainty (Moltmann 1977:14).

### **Various Approaches to an Anthropology**

Moltmann points out that the question “*What is the human being?*” can be asked in various ways and responded to from many perspectives (1977:15). He believes that it is a question that always involves a comparison, since it is never an absolute question, as little as human beings are standing isolated (1977:15).

The first evident comparison that might serve to answer the question “*What is the human being?*” involves the findings of a *biological anthropology*, i.e. the comparison of humankind with the animal (Moltmann 1977:15). From the perspective of biological perfection, the human being is a life form characterised by constant shortages (Moltmann 1977:16). While every animal species is limited to a certain genetically determined environment, one says, human beings have the world for themselves (Pannenberg 1964:7). Animals behave according to their environment and react instinctively, while human behaviour and experience are not exclusively limited to and determined by a certain environment (Pannenberg 1964:7). Human beings are essentially *weltoffen* not *umweltgebunden*, without a securing environment, suffering from stimulus satiation through the outside world and without trust in their instincts

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<sup>28</sup> With regard to this human dilemma, Moltmann argues, “Er [der Mensch] muß sich kennen, um zu leben und sich für andere kenntlich zu machen. Aber er muß sich selbst zugleich verborgen bleiben, um am Leben und in der Freiheit zu bleiben” (1977:12).

(Moltmann 1977:16).<sup>29</sup> From the perspective of biology, the human being can be referred to as a “vergleichsweise unfertiges Tier” (Moltmann 1977:16).

On the other hand, biological shortages are only the flipside of the unique position of human beings in the cosmos, which is due to the special gifts of mind and intellect (Moltmann 1977:18). Human unspecificity is the other side of creative variability, uncertainty of instinct the opposite of the ability to act consciously (Moltmann 1977:18). Human *Weltoffenheit* that deprives us of a distinct environment is the prerequisite for creating cultures. The biological incompleteness of the human being is only the flipside of comparative creative power and fantasy (Moltmann 1977:18).<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, biological anthropology certainly constitutes a significant point of departure regarding human self-knowledge, but not the only one (Moltmann 1977:19). There are aspects of the complex experience of being human that remain untouched by this approach.

A second comparison that might help to uncover the mystery of being human is the approach of *cultural anthropology*, which compares the human being with other human beings (Moltmann 1977:19). Human beings live together in families or clans and are sorted according to ethnicities and nations (Moltmann 1977:19). The encounter with people from other ethnicities and cultural backgrounds triggers the question concerning the essence of being human, “What is the human being?”, once again at a different level (Moltmann 1977:19).

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<sup>29</sup> *Weltoffenheit* refers to the unique human freedom to ask and move beyond all found regulations of existence, which has been revealed by modern age, especially in Max Scheler’s *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (1928) (Pannenberg 1964:6). *Weltoffenheit* aims to cover in one word the essence of being human, what differentiates humans from animals, and lifts them up against the natural world on the whole (Pannenberg 1964:6). Human *Weltoffenheit* means that human beings can continuously make new and new types of experiences and are flexible concerning their responses to the reality that they are aware of (Pannenberg 1964:8).

<sup>30</sup> The classic definition of the human being as *animal rationale*, as rational living being, sorts the human being into one broad natural category with animals and plants (Härle 2000:430). As regards the comparison of the human being with the rest of creation, Härle emphasises that it is, first of all, the physicality of the human being that relates us to all other created things (2000:430). Vitality is what ties the human being to other living beings, i.e. *anima vegetativa* (Härle 2000:430). What connects the human being only with many animals is the capability of sensation, i.e. *anima sensitiva* (Härle 2000:430). The one thing that differentiates the human being from all other living beings is human rationality, i.e. *anima rationalis* (Härle 2000:431). However, only the connection and unity of animality and rationality constitute the totality of being human (Härle 2000:431).

In certain cultures, the linguistic term for human being was only reserved for members of one's own ethnic group, while strangers were not referred to as humans (Moltmann 1977:19). Moltmann refers to this as the phenomenon of ethnocentricity, due to the lack of terms that could conceptualise the abstraction (1977:19).<sup>31</sup>

The idea of *humanitas*, which eventually overcame the borders of cultural exclusivity, is a relatively recent concept (Moltmann 1977:20). The Sophists in the Ancient World proclaimed the homogeneity of human beings due to their common nature: "Denn das Gleiche ist mit dem Gleichen von Natur aus verwandt" (*Hippias*, quoted by Moltmann 1977:21). Cicero put the new and higher ideal of the *homo humanus* against the old Roman ideal of the *homo romanus* (Moltmann 1977:21). By referring to the intellectually cultivated and morally sophisticated human being, the decisive contrast is now between humanity versus inhumanity – amongst Romans and barbarians in the same way, no longer between Romans and barbarians only (Moltmann 1977:21).

At the same time, in Israel and through Christianity a different vision of the one humanity developed (Moltmann 1977:21). If the God of the covenant is the creator and judge of *all* human beings, then all people and individual human beings stand in one common world history (Moltmann 1977:21). The anticipation of the coming kingdom of God covers all individual human destinies, the history of all ethnicities, and joins them together into one common world history (Moltmann 1977:21). In the Enlightenment, the combination of Greek and biblical traditions resulted in the formulation of general and irrefutable *human rights*, which are part of the constitutions of most modern states (Moltmann 1977:22).

One can say that through the historical encounter and understanding of other human beings and their cultures, human beings get to know themselves (Moltmann 1977:24). Cultural anthropology contends that human beings stand

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<sup>31</sup> Moltmann points out that there were terms for palm trees, oaks and cedars, but no term for "the tree" in general (1977:20). The same was true for the human being. Despite recognised cultural diversities, there was no term referring to "*the* human being" in general indicating human commonalities and universalities (Moltmann 1977:20). When Columbus came to America, for instance, the question arose whether the native Americans that he encountered could also be human beings (Moltmann 1977:20). Only the papal bull from 1537 by Pope Paul III declared that the native inhabitants of America were human beings, as they were capable of Catholic faith and the receiving of the sacraments (Moltmann 1977:20).

in a culture-historical process, which originates in their biological incompleteness and *Weltoffenheit* (Moltmann 1977:25). Human beings continuously try to complete themselves and fill the inner gap and restlessness that characterises their existence (Moltmann 1977:25). Whether this restlessness originates in biological incompleteness, the nothingness threatening them from both inside and outside or something divine challenging them exceeds the limits of cultural anthropology (Moltmann 1977:25). Consequently, the culture-anthropological comparison is only enriching as regards human experience with other human beings and cannot provide a comprehensive answer to the question of “What is the human being?” (Moltmann 1977:25).

A third comparison that might prove helpful in unravelling the mystery of being human is the comparison of human beings with the divine in terms of a *religious anthropology* (Moltmann 1977:25). Pannenberg asserts that the human disposition to religion is an inseparable aspect of being human, which is part of human nature and constitutive for being human (1988, quoted in Koch 1992a:544). Religious anthropology is concerned with the destiny and calling of the *homo religiosus* (Moltmann 1977:25; Grünschloß 2002b:1053).

The Apollo temple in Delphi showed the exhortation *Gnoti seauton* – Know thyself. In the presence of the everlasting, “Know thyself!” referred to the humble knowledge that you are human and do not resemble the divine (Moltmann 1977:26). In contrast to the *eternal* gods, human beings are only fleeting creatures of a single day, whom Homer described as “eines Schattens Traum” (Moltmann 1977:26). In the presence of the everlasting gods, human beings get to know their own profanity and inescapable finiteness, the destined transitoriness of life and the deadly atonement of human existence (Moltmann 1977:27). These painful realisations concerning human existence find their radical expression in Psalm 8:4: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Moltmann 1977:27).

As regards the religions of the world, the question about the essence of being human is mostly a question put to human beings by God, to which they are called to respond to with their whole life – but recurrently fail (Moltmann 1977:27). The question “Who am I?” is not a question that is simply posed for the sake of self-knowledge, but originates in the experience of *suffering* and the

need for divine intervention (Moltmann 1977:27). This relates to the coping-theory referred to by Grünschloß (Grünschloß 2002a:133). Individuals have painfully experienced being challenged in this way and subsequently failing, like Adam in the story of the Fall who needs to face God's call, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9), or Cain after the fratricide confronted by God with the appeal, "Where is your brother Abel?" (Gen 4:9) (Moltmann 1977:27).

From the perspective of religion, anthropology is a radical calling into question of our being human (Moltmann 1977:28). Religion does not try to answer the mystery of being human, but rather deepens it (Moltmann 1977:28). The burning question about our being human cannot be answered objectively any more by referring to biological shortages, creative power or the ability to establish cultures (Moltmann 1977:28). In the sphere of religion the question concerning the essence of being human becomes the personal question, "*Who am I, my God, before you?*" (Moltmann 1977:28).<sup>32</sup> The core of religious anthropology evolves around the human *Angesprochensein* by God.

Nevertheless, religious anthropology does not equal Christian anthropology (Moltmann 1977:30). General religious responses to the question "What does it mean to be human?" do not necessarily take account of the specific Christian understanding of our being human, which lays the foundation to a pastoral anthropology within terminal care as life care.

Against Moltmann's claim that there is always a comparison involved, from the perspective of a *biblical anthropology* the question "What does it mean to be human?" is not approached by means of any comparisons or contrasts, but by means of a *relationship*. The biblical view of the human being develops in the sight of unexpected, yet concrete divine calling and commissioning (Moltmann 1977:30). Janowski points out that the anthropological texts of the

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<sup>32</sup> Pannenberg concludes that human *Weltoffenheit* is essentially openness towards God, i.e. *Gotttoffenheit* (1964:12). He claims, "Die chronische Bedürftigkeit, die unendliche Angewiesenheit des Menschen setzt ein Gegenüber jenseits aller Welterfahrung voraus" (1964:11). This unlimited neediness of human beings presupposes a corresponding unlimited, infinite, otherworldly counterpart (Pannenberg 1964:11; Janowski 2002:1057).

The essential complementation that human beings are dependent on was given the name God, which can only be meaningful if it refers to the counterpart of human neediness (Pannenberg 1964:11). Otherwise, it becomes an empty phrase (Pannenberg 1964:11). Pannenberg infers from this that what is the environment for the animal is God for the human being: animal *Umweltgebundenheit* becomes the *Gottbezogenheit* of the human being (1964:13). This chronic neediness described by Pannenberg reminds of the absolute human neediness and dependency on God argued by Steffensky (2006:223).



Old Testament are characterised by their interactive and dialogic character, i.e. either human dialogue with God, like in the psalms or laments, or God's dialogue with human beings (2002:1057). Beginning with God as the One who gives human life meaning, biblical anthropology tries to understand human beings "both as they are and as they are called to be by God" (Hopkins 1990:85).

Moses calls onto God who speaks to him from the burning thorn bush and instructs him to liberate Israel from slavery in Egypt: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex 3:11). Jeremiah exclaims in the vision of his vocation, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child" (Jer 1:6). Peter admits in his encounter with Jesus, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Lk 5:8) (Moltmann 1977:30). These accounts illustrate the development of human self-knowledge that does not originate in a mere impression of the divine high above, but in the situation before God, *coram Deo* (Moltmann 1977:30; Janowski 2002:1057). Psalm 8 makes this point as a response to the question "What is man?", referring to God's mindfulness and care for human beings (also Ps 144:3; Job 7:17) (Janowski 2002:1057).

Human self-recognition develops where people in their individual lives are called by God and expected to realise something impossible (Moltmann 1977:31). In the situation before God, individuals get to know their concrete limitations and impossibilities (Moltmann 1977:31). Being called by God, they understand who they are supposed to be and who they should become, but cannot do so from their own abilities (Moltmann 1977:31). Divine vocation that expects a new being from individuals creates an insurmountable imbalance within them, which eventually cuts them off from themselves and involves them in a total change of identity called *conversion* (Moltmann 1977:31).

Concerning the biblical perspective on our being human, Janowski concludes, "Nur von Gott her läßt sich sagen, was oder wer der Mensch ist" (2002:1057). Moses' question on Mount Sinai, "Who am I?", is responded to by God in the strange, yet only meaningful way possible, "*I will be with you*" (Ex 3:12). The question about the essence of being human is not answered directly, but loses its urgency where God ensures God's presence and community in the way of life (Moltmann 1977:32).

The pressing question of human beings regarding themselves is responded to by God who presents Godself as, “I am who I am” (Ex 3:14) (Moltmann 1977:32). Moltmann asserts, “Hier wird also die Frage des Menschen nach sich selbst mit der Selbstmitteilung Gottes an diesen Menschen beantwortet” (1977:32). “*Do not be afraid. I will be with you in all that you do*”, “*Immanuel – God be with us*” – even though we are not divine but sinful, this is the answer to the question of human beings about themselves (Moltmann 1977:32). The answer does not give us detailed information concerning who we are, what we can or cannot do, or what we shall or shall not do, but it opens up for us a whole new history with a future that we are guided into by God’s vocation (Moltmann 1977:32).

We receive the possibility of a new being, a being in communion with God (Moltmann 1977:32). Enriched with hope and a certain task, we can leave the well-trodden way of the alleged certainty regarding all that we are or are not, and step out onto the path of freedom and danger, exposed to the “*Anfechtung der Welt und der Tröstung Gottes*” (Augustine, quoted in Moltmann 1977:32). Saved in the presence of God who does not only challenge us but promised to walk with and before us, we dare to let go of ourselves and the urgent search for the essence of our being human (Moltmann 1977:33).

Consequently, biblical anthropology is fundamentally *theological anthropology* as it presupposes and involves the understanding of the human reality, *anthropos*, in relation to the divine, *theos* (Janowski 2002:1057; Kline 1990:1259). Human beings find the answer concerning the essence of their being in the special relationship with God who promises to be with them.

### **Biblical Perspectives on Being Human: The Human Being Before God**

The most common Hebrew term used to describe the human being in the Old Testament is *ādām*, which appears about 562 times (Albertz 1992:464). The term depicts the human being as a kind referring to humanity as a collective (Albertz 1992:464). The single human being is referred to as *ben ādām*, the “son of man” (Albertz 1992:464). As regards cultural anthropology and the widespread lack of a term describing the abstract concept of a human being, it is vital to note that the Old Testament refers to *ādām* not as the first Israelite,

but the first human being (Moltmann 1977:20). The Old Testament scriptures refer to the human being as an abstract concept claiming general validity.

The Old Testament does not know any devaluation of the physical, no dualism between body and spirit or soul (Janowski 2002:1057; Albertz 1992:466). Anthropological terms in the Old Testament refer to a holistic view of the human being as a psychosomatic unity (Albertz 1992:465). Janowski points out that the various anthropological terms used, like *bāśār*, “flesh”, *leb*, “heart”, *néfesh*, “vitality”, “soul”, or *rūah*, “breath”, “wind”, “spirit”, refer to the whole human being, including all somatic, emotional, cognitive and voluntative functions and abilities (Janowski 2002:1057). A close connection and interaction is assumed between organic functions and emotional as well as cognitive experiential horizons of being human (Janowski 2002:1057). Emotional experiences can, for instance, cause physical pain or well-being (Pro 23:16), while references to organs like the heart can imply emotional or cognitive processes (Ps 73:21) (Janowski 2002:1057). This understanding is of vital importance as regards terminal care, since it points to the interconnectedness between physical condition and emotional disposition, and vice versa.

Generally, all anthropological terms of the Old Testament are open towards God, i.e. human beings are in their vitality and *joie de vivre* in various ways related to God (1992:467). The various Old Testament perspectives on the human being become especially known in three contexts: prehistory, individual psalms and wisdom literature (Janowski 2002:1057f). In the following section, each context and the unique outlook on being human advocated by them are considered.

The non-priestly *prehistory* in Genesis 2:4b-8:22, which in Genesis 2:5 starts off with the creation of the human being, is characterised by a general ambivalence regarding the basic condition of being human (Janowski 2002:1057). This includes, for instance, the breathing in of the divine breath of life (Gen 2:7) and the decrease of the quality of human life due to the trespassing of the divine law (Gen 2:16f) (Janowski 2002:1057). In contrast to the New Testament, human mortality appears as the *conditio humana*, which does not have a negative connotation, but is logically inferred from the creation out of dust from the ground (Gen 3:19) (Janowski 2002:1057; Albertz

1992:468).<sup>33</sup> In Genesis 8:21f, God gives the whole of creation, including the sinful human being, a promise and takes back the curse (Janowski 2002:1057).

The priestly prehistory, which depicts the human being as *imago Dei*, the image of God, and the ruler over the whole of creation, is characterised by a similar ambivalence regarding the human being (Gen 1:26-28) (Janowski 2002:1058). Elements of both a realistic outlook on human nature as well as the establishment of a special covenant between God and creation can be identified (Janowski 2002:1058). The final reduction of the prehistory, once again, intensifies the emphasis on death and sin (Janowski 2002:1058).

The *individual psalms*, such as the individual laments or the lamentations of Job, express the ambivalence of human existence before God (Janowski 2002:1058; Albertz 1992:470). In prayer, the very inside of human beings and their existence becomes visible (Janowski 2002:1058). Albertz argues that nowhere in the Old Testament does it show clearer how essential the relation to God is for our being human (1992:470).

The laments expose us to a realistic perspective on human beings who cannot exist outside of the relationship with God and their fellow human beings (Ps 13:2) (Janowski 2002:1058). The songs of praise and thanksgiving illustrate the way from disaster to salvation in the relationship with God (Ps 30; 116) (Janowski 2002:1058). The significant role of laments in terminal care shall be explored at a later stage.

The *wisdom literature* unfolds the question about our being human as a question about the meaning of life (Janowski 2002:1058). The wisdom literature speaks about human beings in the full range of their possibilities and threats, which are due to their ambivalent basic condition (Albertz 1992:471). The earlier proverbs emphasise social integration by means of the link between doing and enduring, i.e. the *Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*, and Yahweh's position in human life (Pro 15:11; 16:2) (Janowski 2002:1058). They paint a picture of the

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<sup>33</sup> Albertz states that in Genesis 2f the existential human finiteness due to death is not an explicit issue but is assumed as given (1992:471). Death at the end of a fulfilled human life is not experienced as a threat, and the fundamental temporality of human existence due to death is accepted as a given fact (Albertz 1992:471f).

human being as the responsible, freely deciding and – to a limited degree – autonomous partner of God (Albertz 1992:471).

The later wisdom literature perceives the development of wisdom itself as the mediating element between God and human beings (Pro 8:22-31). Ecclesiastes radicalises the question about happiness as the earnings of being human in the face of mortality (Janowski 2002:1058). Being human means to live toward death (Ecc 3:19). As a result, what remains as the lot of human beings is to enjoy what they do throughout their lifetime (Ecc 2:10; 3:22) (Janowski 2002:1058).

In the New Testament, the question “Who is the human being?” crystallises in the one human being Jesus of Nazareth (Moltmann 1977:33). God’s response and promise, “I will be with you”, which in the Old Testament has been made to Isaac (Gen 26:3), Jacob (Gen 31:3), Moses (Ex 3:12), Joshua (Josh 1:5), Gideon (Jdg 6:16), Jeroboam (1 Ki 11:31) and Isaiah (Is 43:2) when they were at a turning point in their lives, speak to us through the whole of Jesus’ proclamation of the Gospel, his death and resurrection.

Knowledge of God and the human self coincide in the knowledge of Christ, the living Son of God, who died on the cross and rose from the dead (Moltmann 1977:33). According to Bultmann, “Jeder Satz über Gott ist zugleich ein Satz über den Menschen und umgekehrt ... So ist auch jeder Satz über Christus ein Satz über den Menschen und umgekehrt” (1961<sup>4</sup>:192, quoted in Lichtenberger 2002:1059). In a like manner, Lichtenberger stresses that all New Testament references concerning the human being suggest something about the human relationship with God and Christ (2002:1059). Calvin referred to Christ as the “mirror” through which we get to know God and ourselves (Moltmann 1977:33).

Despite different accentuation, the New Testament scriptures agree that the human being is a creature of God, in need and worth of God’s care, called to place implicit trust in God (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). Due to the power of sin, human beings were estranged from God and God’s will for salvation (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). In Christ, human beings were liberated from the power of sin and called into discipleship toward a new life; destined to eternal life owed to Christ’s deed of salvation (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). Based on a Christological-soteriological foundation, human beings appear as who they are

in Christ before God (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). In the following section, the different accentuations regarding a New Testament anthropology in the Synoptic Gospels, the writings of Paul and John, and the book of Revelation will be illustrated briefly.

The *Synoptic Gospels* share the common image of human beings as God's creatures, emphasising human fallibility and being subject to the rule of daemonic powers that expose human beings to illness and death (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). In Jesus' Word and deed as the first visible signs of the approaching kingdom of God, the evil powers, however, have been overcome (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). The kingdom of God is associated with an opportunity for repentance and forgiveness and the radicalisation of the law in terms of the Double Commandment of Love (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). The commandment to love God and the commandment to love our fellow human beings, which finds its most radical expression in the love for the enemy, form the heart of true discipleship (Lichtenberger 2002:1059).

Once again, Jesus shifts the question about the human relationship with God to the centre of attention (Hegermann 1992:482). As God's beloved child who lives exclusively out of God's grace, the human being is created anew through the intimate relationship between Father and child, i.e. "*Abba-intimacy*" (Hegermann 1992:483). Jesus bases the human being solely on faith that persists in God's grace and faithfulness (Hegermann 1992:483).

As regards basic anthropological statements in Jesus' proclamation, we find different accents in the three Gospels (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). The Gospel of Mark emphasises the radical nature of discipleship through suffering (Mk 8:34-37) (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). Matthew highlights the promise regarding the participation of the marginalised in the kingdom of God (Mt 5:3-12), the care of the Father in heaven (Mt 6:9-13), the doing of the will of God (Mt 5:17-48), and the forgiveness of sins in the last supper (Mt 26; 28) (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). Luke focuses on the human being as the one who is able to repent and return to God, and who is gladly accepted back by God (Lk 15) (Lichtenberger 2002:1059).

The Apostle *Paul* views human beings who from creation on are chosen to represent the image of God in terms of their calling by and response to God (Hegermann 1992:484). The intimate relationship between God and human

beings is threatened because the divine call seeks the freely responding “Yes” of human beings (Hegermann 1992:484). This includes the creature’s gratitude for the amply experienced grace of the creator, the honour of God due to God’s magnificence expressed in a life style, which is characterised by the knowledge of God and a correspondence to God’s will (Hegermann 1992:484). From the very beginning, human beings have broken with God and so destroyed their existence (Hegermann 1992:484). Hegermann summarises Paul’s understanding as follows:

Aber schon immer halten die Menschen die ihnen offenbarte Wahrheit Gottes schuldhaft nieder, haben sie im Bruch mit Gott ihr Dasein zerrüttet und ihr Lebensrecht verwirkt; statt aus dem Gegenüber zum göttlichen Schöpfer zu leben, vergöttern sie das Geschaffene, haben die Wahrheit eingetauscht gegen Lüge und sind deren Macht verfallen (1992:484).

Obedient to God’s will, Jesus, on the cross, took the death of the sinner on himself on behalf of all human beings (Hegermann 1992:484). In this event *for all*, God proclaimed God’s universal and victorious love for the sinner and turned toward human beings by means of a purely gracious new creation of human beings in God (2 Cor 5:17) (Hegermann 1992:484).

Dunn states that the impact of divine revelation and grace on the human being form the heart of Paul’s theology (1998:51). The close connection between Christ’s cross and resurrection is of high significance for human life, for “Christ crucified is also he whom God raised from the dead” (Dunn 1998:235). Dunn asserts, “Without the resurrection, the cross would be a cause for despair. Without the cross, the resurrection would be an escape from reality. Unless the one died the death of all, the all would have little to celebrate in the resurrection of the one, other than to rejoice in his personal vindication” (1998:235).

The combination of Christ’s death and resurrection is determinative not only for Christ himself (Rom 6:7) but for those “united with him” (Rom 6:5) (Dunn 1998:236). All human beings were subject to the power of sin and doomed to die (Lichtenberger 2002:1059). In Christ, human beings were liberated from sin and death, and empowered to a new life in the Spirit in the presence of Christ, which endures through the Last Judgement and promises eternal communion with Christ (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 8:34) (Lichtenberger

2002:1059). It is important to note that Paul views this new humanity as *already* present in the earthly existence of the believer who virtually in midst of death lives out of the dead (Rom 6:12f) (Hegermann 1992:485).

As pointed out earlier, Paul uses certain termini to speak about the human being, for instance, *sōma*, “body”, which refers to human beings in their creatureliness, physicality, sinfulness and mortality (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). The human being does not have *sōma* but is *sōma*, which is why human sinfulness and mortality do not refer to one aspect of being human, like physicality, but to the whole of human existence (Lichtenberger 2002:1060; Dunn 1998:56).

Consequently, Dunn suggests the more comprehensive term *embodiment*, which includes *sōma* as the embodiment of the whole person in terms of “embodied existence” (Dunn 1998:61). *Sōma* is a relational term denoting the person embodied in a particular environment who relates to that environment, and vice versa (Dunn 1998:56). Dunn stresses, “*sōma* as embodiment means more than my physical body: it is the embodied »me«, the means by which »I« and the world can act upon each other” (1998:56).

Paul considers the human body as the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), and the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15) as well as the transformation of the living in the *parusia* (1 Cor 15:52) lead to a total new physicality (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). When Paul reminds the Corinthians that they *themselves* are members of Christ (1 Cor 6:14), he emphasises that humans as embodied beings in the totality of their bodily engagements indicate the quality and character of their commitment and discipleship (Dunn 1998:58). “The Holy Spirit in you” – that is not just the physical body, but the body as the embodiment of the whole person (Dunn 1998:58). From this derives the call to “honour God with your body” (1 Cor 6:20), which includes the enfleshment of discipleship not only within the physical body, but within social and corporate relationships (Dunn 1998:58).

Another important term used by Paul is *sárx*, “flesh”, which, similar to *sōma*, refers either to the general constitution of the human being or the specific human existence that is subject to sin and death (Rom 7) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). There is a common link between the wide spectrum of the Pauline usage of *sárx*, including human relationships, needs, weakness, desires,



imperfection and corruption, which denotes what might generally be referred to as human *mortality* (Dunn 1998:66).

Dunn states, “It is the continuum of human mortality, the person characterised and conditioned by human frailty, which gives *sárx* its spectrum of meaning” (1998:66). The problem with *sárx* is not that it is sinful *per se*, but vulnerable to the enticements of sin, which could be described as “the desiring I” (Dunn 1998:67). However, the power of sin in the flesh is broken through God’s deed of salvation in Christ, which through the Spirit empowers human beings to a new change (Rom 8) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060).

As regards the significant relationship between *sōma* and *sárx*, Paul seems to combine elements of Hebrew and Greek anthropology into a new synthesis (Dunn 1998:72). He affirmed the more holistic understanding of human embodiment depicted in the Old Testament, “with what that meant for the corporeality and corporateness of human existence as integral to being human” (Dunn 1998:72). Simultaneously, Paul emphasised something of the more negative Greek attitude to human existence (Dunn 1998:72). Consequently, the existence before and for God is challenged by “the ephemeral character of human existence as existence in desiring, decaying flesh” (Dunn 1998:72).

The *Johannine writings* emphasise the coming of the mediator Jesus into the world, the whole of the cosmos that shuts its heart to him (Jn 1:1-18; 1 Jn 1:1-3; 4:9f) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). The sinfulness of the world and the reality of salvation are frequently expressed in the dualism of darkness and light (Jn 8:12; 1 Jn 1:10) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). To John, *faith* is the fundamental and principal element of the new humanity founded in God (Hegermann 1992:489). This is due to the incomparable significance of the new revelation of Godself in the Son (Hegermann 1992:489). John believes that the presence of salvation in the Son of God leads to a *kairos*, which is the time for a differentiation between belief and disbelief, and subsequent participation in or exclusion from eternal life (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). Disbelief, which is generally regarded as not being able to believe, appears as the actual character of sin (Hegermann 1992:489). Only through a new birth from above in faith can human beings receive salvation (Jn 3) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060).

John asserts that in the person of Jesus resurrection and new life are at hand (Jn 11:25f) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). After Christ's ascension to the Father he is present in his congregation as the *paraclete* and protects believers against the predicaments of the world (Lichtenberger 2002:1060).<sup>34</sup> The commandment of love is the centre of Johannine ethics, as it represents the love of the Father to Jesus and the love of Jesus to those that are his (Jn 17:26; 1 Jn 2:7-11) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060).

Eventually, in the situation of the Roman claim to power and godlessness, the book of *Revelation* declares the final victory of God and the Lamb of God (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). As a result, the book calls believers into an uncompromising discipleship of the Lamb (Rev 2-3; 14:4) (Lichtenberger 2002:1060).

The New Testament on the whole proclaims the liberating message that the human predicament in the form of sinfulness and mortality has been overcome in Christ (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). In Christ, it became evident that human beings cannot create salvation and improve ethically out of their own efforts and an actualisation of the self (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). Human beings are in need of rescue from their forlornness that without Christ they are not even aware of (Lichtenberger 2002:1060). The intimate relationship between human beings and God, which crystallised in the Christ event, plays a fundamental role in the New Testament understanding of our being human.

### **Traditional Approaches to a Theological Anthropology**

As demonstrated earlier, *theological anthropology* as the theological teaching about the human being relates to other anthropological approaches, like philosophical anthropology and the findings of a biological, cultural, religious, sociological, psychological and pedagogical anthropology (Härle 2000:429).

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<sup>34</sup> As regards scriptural perspectives on care, Louw distinguishes four important metaphors referring to both content and style: the *shepherd* metaphor comprising sensitivity (1998:39), the *servant* or wounded healer metaphor symbolising pathos (1998:41), the *wise fool* metaphor aiming for discernment and understanding (1998:44). The *paraklesis* metaphor, eventually, describes the way God cares for and brings healing to human beings by "combining the shepherd mode of protective cherishing, the servant metaphor of sacrifice in suffering, and the wisdom of true discernment and admonition for change" (Louw 1998:50). The *paraklesis* metaphor expresses both the *indicative* component of care and comfort, i.e. justification due to Christ's reconciliatory work and victorious resurrection, and the *imperative* component of care, i.e. admonition and encouraging (Louw 1998:50).

However, it does not simply on the same level add further statements about the origin and nature of the human being, but reflects on being human, including all of these findings in terms of the *God-given* destiny of human beings (Härle 2000:429f). Härle points out, “Im Zentrum der theologischen Anthropologie steht deswegen die Frage nach der göttlichen Bestimmung des Menschen” (Härle 2000:430). Consequently, the significant asymmetrical relationship between theology and the human sciences in terms of the “Chalcedonian Pattern” (Louw 1998:108), becomes evident once again in an attempt to respond to the fundamental question of human beings about themselves.

The previous section illustrated that the biblical scriptures do not provide a systemic description or analysis of human beings, but rather a collection of landmarks and directive viewpoints (Louw 1998:122). As a result, the term theological anthropology does not involve the introduction of “a scriptural »doctrine of man«” (Louw 1998:122). In the attempt to develop a pastoral approach to a theological anthropology that does justice to the wide-ranging biblical perspectives on human beings, Louw opts for a *relational* approach “based on the assumption that Scripture depicts humans as having a need to have a relationship with God” (1998:122). From the viewpoint of a pastoral anthropology we seek to understand and interpret the human being generally from the perspective of her or his relationship with God, which can assist individuals in their quest for meaning in life (Louw 1998:126).

As regards the significance of a certain approach to a *pastoral anthropology*, Hopkins emphasises that a biblical anthropology shapes the goals of pastoral care and counselling and the attitude of the pastor, and can “provide both support for and critique of the psychological tools used” (1990:85). In a like manner, Louw argues that, in pastoral ministry, a specific anthropological approach is often implied; however, with no exposition offered “on how this anthropology influences counselling and therapy” (1998:123). The difference between the various pastoral models within pastoral theology can mainly be ascribed to the different perceptions and definitions of the essential characteristics of being human (Louw 1998:129). The same is true for a pastoral approach to terminal care as life care. Having identified the basic theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions behind a psychology of death and dying, now the aim is to develop a pastoral approach to terminal care

that is based on scriptural findings regarding a Christian spiritual concept of life and a relational approach to a pastoral anthropology.

Relating to the vital role played by a hermeneutical approach in pastoral theology, Louw emphasises that “a pastoral anthropology is interested in the issue of spirituality and how our Christian faith can play a role in coping better with life, contributing to a sense of purposefulness” (1998:126). A pastoral anthropology is not primarily concerned with human self-analysis, introspection and an attempt to understand oneself better from the viewpoint of an inner self-reflection (Louw 1998:126). It is also not focused on a mere phenomenological analysis of behaviour as regards ethical questions (Louw 1998:126). A pastoral anthropology mainly deals with an analysis of *faith*, i.e. “understanding people in terms of their relationship with God”, and an analysis of *ethics*, i.e. “understanding people in terms of ethos, normativity, and virtue” (Louw 1998:127).

I therefore opt for Louw’s pneumatological approach to a pastoral anthropology as presented in *A Pastoral Hermeneutics of Care and Encounter* (1998). In contrast to prevailing pastoral models that are based on human creatureliness, sinfulness or redemption, the pneumatological approach views the human being realistically and includes the notion of the human person as a pneumatic being bestowed with the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, which focuses on human self-actualisation as a realisation in the Spirit. However, before taking a closer look at a pneumatological approach to a pastoral anthropology, we need to attend to other traditional approaches to a Christian theological anthropology utilised as a foundation to pastoral models to fully appreciate the value of a pneumatological approach.

As regards traditional approaches to a Christian theological anthropology, the *doctrine of sin* has been most influential (Louw 1998:129). According to Augustine, due to the Fall, human beings are suffering from original sin and death as the legal liability resulting from that (Hopkins 1990:86). Only God’s grace can save the human sinners; however, these are but a few (Hopkins 1990:86). Augustine’s view has been modified and passed on, for instance, by Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, other Reformers and theologians like Karl Barth, and serves as a starting point for many classical Christian understandings of the human being (Hopkins 1990:86).

The traditional Reformed view of the human being in its various versions is dominated by the *kerygmatic* approach: *simul justus et peccator* (Louw 1998:129). The reality of sinful brokenness and guilt before God makes the human being a sinner before God who is subject to God's punishment and rage (Louw 1998:129). Only through Christ's expiatory sacrifice and God's gracious mercy can a person be freed from the general condition of human sinfulness (Louw 1998:129). A scriptural basis for the understanding of the corruption of the whole person is, for instance, Romans 3:23-24: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Louw 1998:130).

Even though the sinful nature of human beings should not be neglected by a pastoral anthropology, especially with regard to human dependency on God's grace, from the perspective of a pastoral hermeneutics, the kerygmatic approach paints a rather *negative* picture of human beings. Louw points to the danger of elevating the Fall, "thereby completely distorting the notion of creation in a very negative and pessimistic way" (1998:130).<sup>35</sup> God's grace almost appears as a mere reaction to the Fall (Louw 1998:130). Human humanity and creatureliness remain central aspects of being human, while sin is only a secondary fact and "not the final word about man" (Louw 1998:130). It remains an open question whether the Fall can be the hermeneutical key to a theological anthropology, and to what extent sin has wiped out the aspect of human beings as the image of God (Louw 1998:131).

As regards the doctrine of soteriology and reconciliation, the kerygmatic approach views human beings primarily as powerless and miserable sinners (Louw 1998:136).<sup>36</sup> Louw states that the influence of the kerygmatic model on the doctrine of soteriology becomes evident in its emphasis on "the forensic

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<sup>35</sup> As regards the pastoral praxis, the perspective of human sin dominates older pastoral therapeutical models, for instance that of J Adams in *More Than Redemption* (1979) Grand Rapids: Baker (Louw 1998:130). Today scholars are reclaiming Gen 2-3 in different ways for New Testament theology (Hopkins 1990:87). In connection with the Fall, Westermann, for instance, emphasises that the Genesis narrative does not deal with the origin of human beings, but rather with the experience of limitations, like suffering, death, and sin (Hopkins 1990:87).

<sup>36</sup> Soteriological propositions are traditionally part of a Christian theological anthropology (Koch 1992b:549). The doctrine of soteriology, focussing on salvation and redemption, is concerned with the *new* human being in Jesus Christ who in faith is reconciled with God (Koch 1992b:549). These propositions are based on the assumption that the truth about humanity was revealed in the account and person of Jesus Christ (Koch 1992b:549).

character of justification” (1998:136). The significance of Christ’s expiatory work, him being the mediator, is sought in the salvific event of the cross as the transfer of guilt (Louw 1998:136). Consequently, human beings are dependant on God and God’s Word for salvation and “healing” (Louw 1998:136). Forgiveness becomes the key issue in a theological understanding of therapy (Louw 1998:136).

While it is true that salvation cannot be accomplished by human beings, the question remains whether soteriology does not have “a certain effect on the human psychological and social functions” (Louw 1998:136). Louw argues that “Reconciliation does not leave the human being untouched, neither does it exclude our human responsibility” (1998:137). Furthermore, “If the kerygmatic model’s emphasis on sin is chosen, then Christology is easily reduced to soteriology, and anthropology is reduced to *harmatology*” (Louw 1998:139).<sup>37</sup> In a like manner, Hopkins argues that “biblical anthropology can liberate human beings rather than simply lecture them as sinners” (1990:88). This we will certainly have to keep in mind when searching for an appropriate pastoral approach to a theological anthropology.

Other prominent schools in the field of a Christian theological anthropology have emphasised the human being’s creation in the *image of God* (Louw 1998:131). This framework presupposes a very *optimistic* view on human beings, which reaches back to creation, and within a pastoral model focuses on the rich psychological potential that human beings have due to their being created good in the image of God (Gen 1:31) (Louw 1998:131). This does however not mean that these schools completely ignore the component of sin (Louw 1998:131).<sup>38</sup>

In a theological anthropology based on the biblical concept of “image of God”, sin and judgement become secondary, while the presupposition of human

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<sup>37</sup> In connection with the problem of grace as a mere reaction to the Fall, Weber speaks of a “harmartiocentric theology” (1972, quoted in Louw 1999:30) that diminishes our creatureliness. Weber claims that in a theology which does not perceive God’s grace as totally embracing and pre-empting human sin, grace becomes a mere reaction to sin and receives a significance that it is not due to (1972, quoted in Louw 1999:29). He points out, “Eine »harmartiozentrische Theologie« will in Wahrheit gerade das Schlimme der Sünde verkennen” (Weber 1972, quoted in Louw 1999:29).

<sup>38</sup> Louw quotes Hiltner, “We must regard sin as crucial in many forms of serious impairment” (1958, quoted in Louw 1998:131). Nevertheless, this interpretation of sin risks diminishing sin to a mere obstruction or pathology (Louw 1998:135).

inner *potential* due to God's good creation in God's image is the key to all pastoral approaches (Louw 1998:131). As regards the application of this anthropological approach to the therapeutic praxis, Louw states that the notion of inner human potentials dominates the more phenomenological and client-centred models, like those of Rogers and Clinebell (1998:131).<sup>39</sup> The close association between those models and the approaches to a psychology of death and dying presented by Kübler-Ross and Barton has been pointed out earlier. Kübler-Ross and Barton highlight in a like manner the importance of the development of the human self out of inner human potential in the process of dying.

According to Louw, the client-centred models involve serious theological problems (1998:135). The most fundamental discrepancies involve the models' interpretation of the meaning of the image of God. Human self-actualising tendencies and potential are interpreted as "the exposition of the theological meaning of our being created in the image of God" (Louw 1998:135), as they are interpreted as the link between God and human beings. The phenomenological, empirical level of human emotions and needs becomes the main component of an image of God, while the self-actualising tendency appears as not affected by sin (Louw 1998:135). Grace becomes again only a supplement to the image of God, which does not affect, change or transform the human potential for self-actualisation (Louw 1998:135). This does not only lead to an optimistic overestimation of inner potential and weakens the principle of sin, but also "unilaterally emphasises the human affective, cognitive, and conative abilities" (Louw 1998:135). Within the client-centred models, therapy becomes more associated with holistic "healing" and less with salvation (Louw 1998:136). Louw argues that "salvation becomes a kind of general health concept or a condition of psychological well-being (*homeostasis*)" (1998:136).

Keeping the presupposition of the Chalcedonian Pattern in mind, Louw emphasises that "we cannot deny that there should be room in a pastoral epistemology for an »empirical approach in human sciences«" (1998:142). The

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<sup>39</sup> Consult, for instance, Clinebell. HJ. (1984) *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth*. Nashville: Abingdon, or Rogers, CR. (1942) *Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

knowledge of the empirical social sciences is of inestimable value for a theological anthropology, as it helps theology to understand human beings as persons within relationships (Louw 1998:142). Nevertheless, as pointed out earlier in a theological anthropology, like in practical theology in general, a merely empirical analysis of the person is insufficient (Louw 1998:143; compare Louw 1998:86ff). Louw quotes Weber, “»Christian experience«, as the only source of knowledge and foundation for an understanding of the nature of human beings, cannot satisfy a theological anthropology” (1972, quoted in Louw 1998:143).<sup>40</sup> A phenomenological approach “deals only with fragments and certain perspectives on the human being” (Louw 1998:144). With regard to an integrated understanding of being human and our God-given destiny, phenomenological, client-centred models cannot offer sufficient information (Louw 1998:145). Consequently, we need an external or “transcendental factor which reaches beyond phenomenological events” (Louw 1998:145).

Concerning the doctrine of soteriology and reconciliation, the client-centred, phenomenological and empirical approaches take human beings and their relational components as their point of departure by focussing on God’s incarnation and pathos (Louw 1998:137). They are also concerned with the effect and function of soteriology in human existence (Louw 1998:137). However, the emphasis is not on Christ’s expiatory death, but Christ’s death as example, as precursor, and its impact on our lives (Louw 1998:137). Soteriology then mainly focuses on transformation by changing people and their relations radically (Louw 1998:137). According to Louw, the emphasis is moved from Christ’s expiatory sacrifice on the cross to his identification with suffering (1998:137).

What we can take from a creational approach to a theological anthropology is that soteriology is significant and contains a “transforming

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<sup>40</sup> According to Weber, this is mainly due to four important circumstances. First, the essence of faith is impossible to express in an empirical model (1972, quoted in Louw 1998:143f). Second, Christian experience is full of paradoxes and, in the end, people do not believe on the grounds of their experience but in spite of their experience (Weber 1972, quoted in Louw 1998:143f). Third, the Christian categories of the “old” and the “new” person cannot be measured by experience, but are essentially determined *extra nos* (Weber 1972, quoted in Louw 1998:143f). Fourth, Christian existence has a limited character and human beings cannot reflect comprehensibly about their own birth or death (Weber 1972, quoted in Louw 1998:143f).



power, which enables people to act differently and thus to change surrounding circumstances” (Louw 1998:137). According to Louw, “Soteriology is indeed a functional and relational issue affecting our humanity” (1998:137). Still, what is important is not what Christ accomplished, but *how* he did it (Louw 1998:137). A functional Christology, which focuses mainly on the life of Christ, might degrade Christ’s mediatory work of salvation by means of a separation between person and work (Louw 1998:137f). The danger lurks that if the emphasis on human potential is chosen, Christology is narrowed down to incarnation and anthropology is restricted to ethics, i.e. the perfection of human beings through their own actions and humanity as the improvement of human life (Louw 1998:139).

Taking this into consideration, Louw contends that “the solution should probably be sought elsewhere” (1998:139) and suggests that pneumatology should play a fundamental role in the development of a pastoral anthropology. Before exploring a pneumatological approach to a theological anthropology more closely, however, we need to clarify a few basic components of a Christian theological anthropology that have only been touched on up until now.

### **Fundamental Elements of a Theological Anthropology**

Fundamental to any theological anthropology is the perspective of faith, the so-called *theonomous* approach, which assumes that “the ultimate destiny of the human person needs to be understood in the light of revelation” (Louw 1998:145).

This understanding has also been advocated by the biblical perspectives on human beings. Like Barth’s theistic anthropology that describes the human being from the perspective of a relationship with God, a theonomous approach argues that human beings can only truly be understood from an understanding of their *relationship* with God (Louw 1998:145). Koch argues as follows: “Die theologische Lehre vom Menschen hat nur ein Thema: dass der Mensch sich, wahrhaft vor sich selbst, nicht ohne Gott verstehen kann” (1992b:548).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Koch points out that there is a reciprocal relationship between human self-knowledge and knowledge of God (1992b:548). No true human self-knowledge is possible without a true knowledge of God, and vice

Accordingly, a theological anthropology describes “a certain vision and perspective on human beings” (Louw 1998:146), i.e. an understanding of human beings in terms of their being called by God’s grace.

A theonomous approach to a theological anthropology views human beings in their spiritual focus through faith in God, God’s involvement with them and their eternal and ultimate destiny, which is salvation and resurrection life (Louw 1998:146). This does not involve an abstraction, “but looks at human beings in the light of revelation concerning their *fundamental* identity: human beings seen as created by God and their eventual destiny” (Louw 1998:146).

As a result, a theonomous approach deals with the totality of our being human *coram Deo*, i.e. the meaning of human existence in the presence of God (Louw 1998:146f). The human *coram*-relation, which has been highlighted by Luther, is perceived as an ontological key component in a theological anthropology (Sparn 2002b:1066).<sup>42</sup> It is constitutive for being human to have and need a counterpart, a *vis-à-vis*, which makes us become who we are (Ebeling 1979:351). In terms of a theological anthropology, this counterpart of human existence is the living God.

Another aspect that deals with the fundamental structuredness of being human is our being created in God’s image, i.e. *imago Dei* (Louw 1998:147). Louw argues that it is clearly impossible to build an anthropology upon a single biblical statement (1998:147). Genesis 1:26-28 that depicts the human person as created in the image of God, and Genesis 2:7 that describes the human

versa (Koch 1992b:548). How a human being understands – or misunderstands – her- or himself, he or she in the same way understands or misunderstands God; how one perceives one’s fellow human beings, so is one’s God; and comprehends a human being her- or himself truly out of God, so she or he understands her- or himself totally new and transformed (Koch 1992b:548).

This means that the truth about human beings and the truth about God correspond to each other (Koch 1992b:548). Similarly, how a human being understands – or for that matter misunderstands – God impacts on a person’s self-image and perception of fellow human beings. This understanding points towards the essential importance of *God-images* in pastoral therapy, as emphasised by Louw (compare Louw 1998:12).

<sup>42</sup> The Latin *coram* refers to an intimate relation, which is determined by the face or the presence of a human being and results into a mutual interrelation (Ebeling 1979:349). Ebeling puts it as follows: “Befinde ich mich vor dem Angesicht eines anderen, so bin ich nicht in der Situation eines ungestörten Betrachters, sondern ich bin selbst angeschaut, spüre, wie die Augen des andern auf mich gerichtet sind” (1979:349). The theological significance of the use of *coram* in the Vulgata was interpreted by Luther as the expression of a certain biblical understanding of reality and had a great impact on the genesis of his Reformist theology (Ebeling 1979:349).

Ebeling differentiates between three *coram*-relations: being *coram Deo*, *coram mundo* and *coram meipso* (1979:353ff). Only the combination of all three *coram*-relations, i.e. before God, the world and oneself, articulates and structures the wholeness of Christian faith (Ebeling 1979:355).

being as a spiritual being, are traditionally viewed as starting points for a biblical doctrine of the human person (Louw 1998:147). However, it is doubtful whether this scriptural information intended to develop an extensive and systematic doctrine regarding a theological anthropology (Louw 1998:147; Härle 2002:1067).

In contrast to traditional anthropological approaches based on the concept *imago Dei*, Louw claims that the idiom needs to be understood in connection with *néfesh*, i.e. “living soul” (Gen 1:26-28; 2:7), which refers to “the uniqueness of human beings as this is determined by their relationship with the living God” (1998:147).<sup>43</sup> The *relational* approach to the concept image of God has also been proposed by Calvin and Barth (Towner 2005:349). *Imago Dei* in this understanding is of fundamental significance for the anthropology of the whole Hebrew Bible (Towner 2005:342). It points human relationships into three main directions: human beings as related to (1) God, their creator, (2) fellow human beings and (3) animals, plants and the rest of the created order (Towner 2005:349). Koch summarises the meaning of *imago Dei* as follows: “Im Gedanken der Gottesebenbildlichkeit ist die konstitutive Bezogenheit des Menschen auf Gott und Gottes Gegenwärtigkeit im Menschen, also die Einheit von Gott und Mensch, Thema” (1992b:563; also Härle 2002:1068).

Moltmann reminds us that, out of all creatures on earth, the human being alone was created in and destined to the image of God (1977:157).<sup>44</sup> In God’s image, the creator seeks to find a partner, an echo and the glory to God’s name (Moltmann 1977:157; Towner 2005:356). God’s image is called to represent God and act in God’s name, as in God’s image we shall encounter Godself and experience God’s glory (Moltmann 1977:157; Towner 2005:356). This points to the *responsibility* that accompanies our being the image of God. Moltmann argues, “Der Mensch kann sich in seiner Bestimmung zum Bilde Gottes nicht

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<sup>43</sup> This understanding is supported by the New Testament use of the term “image of God” (Louw 1998:147). In 1 Corinthians 11:7, human beings are described as image, i.e. *eikon* or *imago*, and glory, i.e. *doxa*, of God (Louw 1998:147). Human beings are also depicted as being renewed in the knowledge of their creator’s image (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) or created in God’s likeness (Jam 3:9) (Louw 1998:147). Christ himself is also referred to as the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:1-4).

<sup>44</sup> In the same manner, Härle emphasises that the expression of the image of God is the decisive theological statement about the human being which differentiates the human being from all other creatures, but also relates the human being to all other creatures (2000:434).

durch anderes vertreten lassen" (1977:158). Härle adds that the divine calling to God's image can only be responded to accordingly by means of unconditional trust in God and a life in justice toward God, which is devoted to the covenant (2002:1068; 2000:435).

Image of God refers to the human being representing God, while *néfesh* indicates that the source for human life is dependant upon God's creative action and faithfulness (Louw 1998:147). Consequently, both image of God and *néfesh* refer to the spiritual dimension of being human and have implications not only for the ultimate destiny of human beings, i.e. the *telic* aspect of existence, but also for human conduct in general (Louw 1998:147). Louw summarises the consequences of the close association between "image of God" and *néfesh* for a theological anthropology as follows: "This has ethical, moral, and doxological implications: the human person should focus upon God and display God's glory so that the entire creation may become aware of God's presence and grace" (1998:147). Human beings in their physical-spiritual wholeness are called to live in relationship with God and other human beings, which corresponds to the essence of God and is characterised by love (Härle 2000:436).

In line with the general biblical claim for stewardship in the Old and New Testament, *imago Dei* indicates "representation with special authority" (Louw 1998:148; Albertz 1992:469). Being explicitly a relational term, "image of God" describes the unique relationship between God and the human person, and proposes that the ultimate meaning of life should not be sought outside of this special relationship (Louw 1998:148; Albertz 1992:469; Härle 2002:1067). This understanding is in line with the biblical concept of "life", which has been explored earlier in the thesis. We can conclude that the anthropological qualification *imago Dei* describes the human being as totally dependent on God (Wentzel 1987:596, quoted in Louw 1998:148).

As regards the impact of the concept "image of God" for a pastoral anthropology, Louw elaborates on four essential aspects. The first dimension deals with "qualitative dissimilarity", i.e. human existence is unique and differs qualitatively from that of other creatures (Louw 1998:148). The human being being the image of God refers to an *ontic* status and implies that human beings are essentially dependent on God and have an eternal destiny (Louw 1998:148). The second aspect is closely related and includes a "*relational*

interpretation” of the term *imago Dei*, referring to the all-determining relationship with God (Louw 1998:149). The third element deals with “purposefulness and the dimension of the ultimate”, as *imago Dei* designates both *responsibility* and *responsibility* to human beings (Louw 1998:149). The fourth aspect contains a “Christological dimension” (Louw 1998:149). Jesus Christ as the image of God should not be perceived as a prototype for perfect humanity or a perfect type of person (Louw 1998:149). The fact that Christ himself is called the image of God implies that a person acquires a *new* status in Christ (Louw 1998:149). Louw argues that “Christ, as the image of God, thus reverts human beings back to their original destiny, so that they too can represent God” (1998:149). The restoration and new creation of God’s image happen in the communion of believers with Christ (Moltmann 1985:232). According to Moltmann, “Die wahre Gottebenbildlichkeit steht nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ziel der Geschichte Gottes mit der Menschheit” (1985:231).

Another fundamental aspect of a theological anthropology is concerned with the interplay between *Christology* and anthropology. Louw identifies four areas of impact of the Christ event on our being human. Firstly, he emphasises that Christology has a *relational* effect on anthropology: “The Son, as the image of God (Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-4), links our having been created in the image of God relationally to God Himself as our Saviour” (Louw 1998:153). Christ as the image of God (2 Cor 4:4) relates human beings to their salvation (Louw 1998:153). Christology functions as the hermeneutical key to a pastoral epistemology in the sense that “knowledge regarding our destiny is knowledge about our salvation” (Louw 1998:153).<sup>45</sup> Christology reveals human guilt, misery, existential needs and dependency on God, as a “theology of the cross” reveals human inability to save themselves (Louw 1998:154).<sup>46</sup> However, in their being lost, human beings can discover God’s care, pathos and

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<sup>45</sup> Paul, who turns to Genesis 1:26-28 to explain the unique link between Christ and his “pre-existence” (Louw 1998:153) with God, uses the expression “image of God” to elaborate on the difference between the first and the second Adam. A person being an image of the second Adam is of a different order than that of the first Adam (Louw 1998:153). Louw points out, “It is Christ, as the image of God, who enables the reborn person to share in the new order of peace and reconciliation which has been made possible through salvation” (1998:154).

<sup>46</sup> As regards further insights into a theology of the cross, consult, for instance, Moltmann, J. (1972) *Der Gekreuzigte Gott*. München: Kaiser.

unconditional acceptance, and so develop new self-esteem and positive self-acceptance (Louw 1998:154).

Secondly, Christology has a *transforming* effect on anthropology, as it transforms a human person into a completely new being (2 Cor 5:17) who is gradually transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18) (Louw 1998:154). Due to the eradication of sin and guilt on the cross, Christology restores human beings to their original ultimate destiny, which is to glorify God (Louw 1998:154). Accordingly, Christology has an *ontic* implication on our being human as it transforms a person into the new spiritual being in Christ (Louw 1998:154).

Thirdly, Christology also has a *restoring* function, as it reinstates human beings to their ultimate function before God and supplies a *telic* dimension, in which the human search for meaning can take place (Louw 1998:154). After having been restored to the original image of God, human beings' lives reflect true knowledge, justification and holiness (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) (Louw 1998:154). Redemption is expressed in a changed life style, which by means of the sanctification of life changes all human relationships and conduct (Louw 1998:154). Simultaneously, Christology provides people with a new destiny and "a horizon of meaning" (Louw 1998:154). According to Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:44-49, human beings now share in "the eschatological quality of life, so that their lives attain transcendental, heavenly, and ultimate meaning" (Louw 1998:154).

Fourthly, Christology's impact on our being human can be described by means of a *spiritual* dimension, which reveals that "people are more than mere bodies and souls: a human being is a spiritual being with a transcendental destiny" (Louw 1998:154).

Despite its strong impact, it is important to note that a meaningful theological anthropology cannot solely be based on Christology (Louw 1998:179). In such an anthropology, the sinful human being has little significance and the uniqueness of Christ's conciliatory work is diminished to a model of perfect humanity (Louw 1998:170). This includes the danger that Christ's mediation is reduced to the level of morality and Jesus' life becomes a model for perfectionism, representing how a human person should live and be (Louw 1998:170). As Christology operates within the dynamics of grace and our sinful human nature, the danger is that an anthropology based on Christology

does not consider the full implications of justification, i.e. the “reality of Christ’s victorious resurrection” (Louw 1998:170).

As a result, in contrast to both the kerygmatic approach, which emphasises human sinfulness and paints a rather pessimistic picture of being human, and the creational approach, which perceives human beings as created in the image of God and thus paints a rather optimistic picture of humanity, a pastoral model opts for an anthropological approach referred to as “biblical realism” (Louw 1998:155). The scriptural assessment of human beings is neither primarily pessimistic by viewing people only in terms of their guilt and transience, nor solely optimistic by ignoring sin and relying exclusively on inner human potentials (Louw 1998:155). According to Louw, “The biblical view of the human person is realistic. It uses the notion of salvation and empowerment to reveal to human beings who they are” (1998:155).

From the knowledge derived from the God-human relationship, a “dynamic ambivalence” concerning our being human develops in a person, so that the person can confess, “I have sinned and trespassed”, but simultaneously in faith feels liberated from this guilt and can give thanks to God (Louw 1998:155). Biblical realism concerning being human is a realism of faith, which results in thanksgiving and praise, i.e. doxology (Louw 1998:155). Louw points out that “Pastoral care addresses human beings in terms of this realism of faith” (1998:155).

The biblical view on the human being emphasises human dependency on God and the relationship with God in order to understand the essence of being human (Louw 1998:155). Scripture does not approach human beings solely in terms of their sin and guilt, but in terms of God’s grace and their new being in Christ (Louw 1998:155). The covenantal relationship with God that is characterised by grace becomes an eschatological reality in God’s fulfilled promises and, from the perspective of the resurrection, a victory over sin, including God’s sovereignty over all destructive powers (Louw 1998:155). Louw points out, “Eschatology makes it impossible to regard sin and human guilt as the primary point of departure for a theological anthropology” (1998:155). The point of departure for a pastoral anthropology is salvation, i.e. human beings should not be approached in terms of their negative and destructive qualities,

like sin and death, but in terms of grace, which is “the positive and transforming power of eschatology” (Louw 1998:155).

The central aspect of the biblical view on human beings is consequently their ability to react and respond to God’s loving care and devotion (Louw 1998:156). According to Louw, “The fact that human beings have been created in the image of God implies responsibility and *respondability*” (1998:156). He offers interesting insights into the etymology of the concept *responsibility*, which has “important implications for a pastoral context” (Louw 1998:156). The Greek root *spendoo* appears to be linked to “libation”, defined as confirmation of an agreement based on the shedding of blood, pledging by covenant, making promises and being committed to obligations (Louw 1998:156). A response is thus closely tied to commitments within relationships and the restoration of poor relationships (Louw 1998:156).

Louw quotes Brinkerink’s research, which argues that responsibility suggests a creative tension between an obligatory “must” and a potential “can” (Brinkerink 1976, quoted in Louw 1998:156). Due to the accountability that speaks out of the concept responsibility, in Scripture, human beings appear as moral beings who are responsible *to* but also responsible *for* (Louw 1998:156). Louw summarises as follows: “To be human means to be committed to someone and to live with a vocation to do something for someone” (1998:156).

Following Descartes’ philosophical dictum *cogito (ergo) sum*, which describes the human being as a thinking being, Heinemann develops the aphorism *respondeo ergo sum*, which contains the basic notion of a theological anthropology (1963:180, quoted in Louw 1998:156). The human being as an essentially *respondable* and *responsible* being “presupposes the covenantal context of human existence, within which people are addressed by God’s Word and are thus responsible to God” (Louw 1998:156). From a theological perspective, the human being is essentially a moral being with ethical obligations due to being addressed by God and living in a relationship with God (Louw 1998:156). This once again leads to the necessity of faith, which is fundamental to a theological anthropology (Louw 1998:156).

In this light, the notion of human *sin*, which is not ignored by a realistic biblical anthropology, is regarded as “the kind of conduct and disposition, which is directed against God, and which results in a distortion of our relationships



with fellow human beings” (Louw 1998:161). Sin should be understood as a problem of distorted relationships (Louw 1998:162). Even though sin and sinful deeds are the result of a life turned away from God in unbelief, they need to be assessed from the perspective of salvation and grace (Louw 1998:161). Since from a biblical perspective human sin is always interpreted within the broader framework of freedom from guilt, reconciliation and forgiveness, the basis of a theological anthropology is essentially positive, even though realistic (Louw 1998:162). As regards the evident ambivalence of being human, within a model of a biblical realism, people are not evaluated in terms of their sinfulness, but in terms of God’s grace, which accepts the sinner unconditionally (Louw 1998:162).

Another aspect that deals with the ambivalence and unity of our being human is the dimension of human physicality and *embodiment*.<sup>47</sup> As the body was created by God as the medium through which human beings exist and express themselves, human beings do not merely have a body, but *are* wholly physical (Louw 1998:162). The notion of embodiment, which, according to Louw, refers to the enfleshment of the human “I” and soul in a bodily existence, indicates the way “in which human beings, in their daily living, express their motives and goals through their bodily existence, and thereby reveal themselves within relationships” (1998:162). This understanding is of special significance in connection with a pastoral approach to a prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic, as it points to the need to embody the new being in Christ before God in our daily behaviour and interactions.

According to 1 Corinthians 15, human beings are already resurrected bodily, “so that their bodies will be clothed with a new quality of transience: a »spiritual body« is resurrected” (1 Cor 15:44)’ (Louw 1998:163). This new human body partakes in the qualities of the new eschatological reality: the *already* of eschatology (Louw 1998:163). The human body plays an important role in a theological anthropology, since it is given a moral and ethical value (Louw 1998:163). By means of the radical indwelling presence of Christ through

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<sup>47</sup> See also the exposition of the Pauline differentiation between flesh, *sarx*, and body, *soma*, earlier in this section on the biblical findings regarding a theological anthropology.

the Spirit, i.e. *inhabitatio Spiritus*, human physicality and sexuality receive a special place in God's revelation, as the body becomes the temple of the Spirit (Louw 1998:172). Dunn confirms that the Spirit is the "eschatological gift *par excellence*" (Acts 11:15f) (Dunn 1978:699). 1 Corinthians 6:19 asserts that a human person as an embodied being is the home of the Spirit, and harmony and unity should exist between the human "I" and their bodily existence, i.e. that the new person is obliged to honour God through her or his body (1 Cor 6:20) (Louw 1998:163). It is the indwelling of the Spirit, which enables human beings to transform to full humanity (Louw 1998:172).

The tension between the internal and external being (Rom 7:22; 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16), between body and soul, should not be regarded dualistically, but rather as two perspectives on being human (Härle 2002:1069; Louw 1998:163). The external being refers to the finite, created human being, while the internal human being is called by God into eternal communion with Godself and through faith lives in Christ (Härle 2002:1069). Louw argues, "The ambivalence and duality between body and soul forms part of the tension, which the eschatological factor intensifies: the »already« and the »not yet« of our salvation" (1998:163). In a like manner, Dunn states that the concept "already - not yet" is a way of summarising the recognition "that something decisive has *already* happened in the event of coming to faith, but that the work of God in reclaiming the individual for himself is *not yet* complete" (1998:466).

### **A Pneumatological Approach to a Pastoral Anthropology**

Concerning the fundamental elements of a theological anthropology discussed above, Louw comes to the following conclusion: "... as a result of the Christological basis for a person's new being and the pneumatological interaction between God and the human spirit, the notion of a person as a *pneumatic* being should play an decisive role in a theological anthropology" (1998:167).

The pneumatic dimension of a theological anthropology describes total submission, transformation and focus on God (Louw 1998:167). Louw states, "Such a person is moved and motivated by God in a way that transforms the person's volition and thoughts and enables the person to experience new life each day" (1998:167). In a pastoral anthropology, the "pneumatic person or

self” (Louw 1998:168) implies the renewed person in Christ who is utterly dependant on enlightenment and instruction by the Spirit of God. According to 1 Corinthians 2:13-15, insight into spiritual realities has been given to the spiritual person through the guidance of God’s Spirit (Louw 1998:168).

Chamblin argues that, in connection with a pastoral anthropology, the term *pneuma* designates the human self’s capacity for three kinds of knowledge (1993:47, quoted in Louw 1998:168). This includes, first, knowledge of the human self, i.e. the Spirit discloses an inner knowledge of the quality of the human person *coram Deo* (Chamblin 1993:47, quoted in Louw 1998:168). Second, *pneuma* discloses knowledge of other human selves, i.e. through the Spirit, human beings know each other through mutual fellowship (Chamblin 1993:47, quoted in Louw 1998:168). Third, *pneuma* is related to knowledge of God, i.e. the spiritual dimension of the human self through which the whole person communes with the Spirit of God (Chamblin 1993:47, quoted in Louw 1998:168).

Consequently, a pastoral anthropology is essentially concerned with the development of *humility*, which transforms us into sensitive, loving and empathetic human beings (Louw 1998:169). Philippians 2:6-7 reminds us of the fact that Christ’s incarnation is undeniably about humility: “... who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Louw 1998:169). Loving self-renunciation is the result of humility that creates compassionate human beings who are open to the needs of others (Louw 1998:169). Louw points out, “In pastoral anthropology, the pneumatic person is caring, and has been made sensitive by the indwelling Spirit of God. Hence, the quest for a pneumatology in pastoral anthropology” (1998:169).

As has been pointed out earlier, soteriology plays an important role in a theological anthropology as it is concerned with the *transformed* human being whose total nature has been changed from being a sinner, i.e. the old Adam, to being reborn in Christ’s death and resurrection (Louw 1998:169). Human beings are now defined by eschatology as a result of the “vicarious work of Christ, the Mediator” (Louw 1998:171), with God’s Spirit as the point of contact between God and our humanity. The role of pneumatology within a pastoral anthropology based on soteriology is to “concretise this new life in and through daily

behaviour and conduct” (Louw 1998:169). Being-functions become the very instrument that materialise the new life, as a person’s potential and abilities are viewed in the light of the work of the Spirit (Louw 1998:169). In contrast to the Greek ideal of an intellectually cultivated and morally sophisticated *homo humanus*, within a pneumatological approach, human beings find their healed and transformed *humanum* through pneumatology as a gift of the Spirit (Louw 1998:171; compare Moltmann 1977:21).

The focus and quality of the human *self-actualisation* potential within a pneumatological approach is essentially qualified by the Spirit and the salvific reality of Christ’s reconciliatory work (Louw 1998:171). Similar to prevailing phenomenological, client-centred approaches, the process of actualisation plays a decisive role in a pneumatological approach, and human beings are perceived as being created with the physical, psychic and social potential necessary to develop their full humanity (Louw 1998:171). However, human actualisation potential is not autonomous as posited in the psychological models, but *charismatic*, i.e. “human autonomy is, and remains, receptive by nature” (Louw 1998:171). It is the Spirit who “through faith, enriches, empowers, and develops our natural human potentials” (Louw 1998:171). Following Paul’s exclamation in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am”, Louw argues that “The Spirit does it all; people receive it all (salvation)” (1998:171).

Consequently, in a pastoral anthropology, the new human being’s potential is referred to as *charisma* (Louw 1998:172). In the light of pneumatology, human personality traits and physical components receive a new objective and destiny as they are now referred to as “gifts of the Spirit” (Louw 1998:172). The Spirit releases new possibilities in a person and initiates a process of transformation (Louw 1998:172). Loveless selfishness, for instance, is turned into service and love (Louw 1998:172). Louw argues that “the perspective of *diakonia* (service) imparts a new intention and goal to human potential” (1998:172), i.e. a willingness to sacrifice, orientated toward service that aims at realising the salvific gifts of the Spirit. The new human potential expresses the consequences of Christ’s mediating work through testifying or witnessing, i.e. *marturia*, joyful gratitude, i.e. *leitourgia*, and sacrificial charity, i.e. *diakonia* (Louw 1998:173). In a pneumatology, the human

potential for self-actualisation is used “in the service of God’s coming Kingdom and his justice” (Louw 1998:173).

As regards the impact of such a pneumatological approach on pastoral *therapy* as in a pastoral approach to terminal care, Louw elaborates on a few enlightening aspects (1998:173f). The Spirit creates a new dynamic and meaningful objective for human existence (Louw 1998:173). By means of self-denial as an acceptance of the self in the light of a new calling in life, anthropology attains a new dimension, namely self-transcendence through love and hope (Louw 1998:173). The development of a mature faith, which rests in the faithfulness of a loving God, is of central importance in a pastoral approach to anthropology (Louw 1998:173). Louw argues that “through eschatology pneumatology creates a telic dimension in life: faith is transformed by hope” (Louw 1998:174). In this connection, he quotes Rebel: “Pastoral care learns to discover how the Holy Spirit not merely renews, but under His guidance the human person discovers him-/herself as a person directed, guided and equipped for his/her ultimate goal: child of God” (1984, quoted in Louw 1998:174).

This new telic dimension in life implies a radical new pattern of life and change in behaviour (Gal 5:25) (Louw 1998:174). Louw states, “Behaviour is now characterized, not by self-centredness, but by God-centredness and other-centredness” (1998:174). The development of a person becomes more than what in psychological models is referred to as growth toward psychological maturity, i.e. self-responsibility, stability, self-assertiveness, integrated personality (Louw 1998:174). Within a pneumatology, the development of a person refers to the development of faith toward mature spirituality, i.e. Christian love, hope, gratitude, joy and sacrificial service (Louw 1998:174).

By means of the charismatic gifts of grace, which are *already* active in the human person and include love, joy, peace, patience, friendliness, kind-heartedness, faithfulness, humility and self-control, the person discovers a new morality that manifests in *diakonia* and service within the body of Christ (Louw 1998:174f). On the basis of this loving care for one another, believers become more sensitive to the needs of others and start functioning as a truly caring body of Christ (1 Cor 12:25; Gal 6:2) (Louw 1998:174).

As a result, therapy takes a completely new direction, which does not primarily include psychotherapy but is essentially about the development of a vivid *hope* based on God's promises (Louw 1998:175). In contrast to phenomenological, client-centred models such as those of Kübler-Ross and Barton, an individual's becoming a new person does not originate within the individual her- or himself, but in Christ's salvific work, his renewal, transformation, change and healing on all levels of life (Louw 1998:175). These dimensions of Christ's care for the human person are communicated by means of Scripture, prayer, the sacraments, *koinonia*, and pastoral counselling (Louw 1998:175).

A pneumatological approach to theological anthropology also influences the pastoral encounter. It is no longer solely the caregiver who enables therapy by means of perfect communication or empathic skills (Louw 1998:173). Through the Spirit, the Word of God judges a person's being, creates insight, brings about radical change and designs a new ultimate meaning for human life (Louw 1998:173). Pastoral diagnosis, a new vision and future perspective for life, an individual's transformation by means of *metanoia*, as well as the focus on eschatological issues in life are not brought about by human potential (Louw 1998:173). Instead, the new person is confirmed by the Spirit (Eph 1:13-14) (Louw 1998:173).

Louw refers to pastoral care as "an essentially paracletic event" (1998:175). The Spirit functions as the *paraklētos*, the comforter and consoler, who mediates salvation and determines the nature and character of the pastoral encounter (Louw 1998:175). As regards John's use of the term *paraklētos*, Dunn argues that he might have coined the term himself in order to express "in a single word the various functions attributed to the Spirit" (1978:704). As regards a suitable translation, Dunn suggests "Counsellor" as both sufficiently precise and comprehensive (1978:704). God's Spirit who acts as the Counsellor witnesses, reveals and interprets – including the recalling of teaching originally given (Jn 14:26) and the leading into new truth (Jn 16:12f) (Dunn 1978:704). The Spirit's task is to reinterpret the old by giving it contemporary significance and revealing the new in a way consistent with the old (Dunn 1978:704).

Accordingly, within wisdom-counselling, the Spirit functions as the central mediator of divine revelation and human transformation, while the pastoral

counsellor only facilitates the process. The pastoral caregiver's response is no longer dependent on the mere expression of empathy on an emotional level, but through *agapé*, i.e. the unconditional love of Christ, she or he communicates "Christ's sympathy to people" (Louw 1998:175). Louw states, "The person now acts in the name of Christ, and becomes an exponent of God's loving care" (1998:175).

To summarise, biblical anthropology confronts us with the truth that human self-knowledge is only possible by means of a knowledge of God and Christ. The centre of a biblical anthropology evolves around an understanding of who we are in Christ before God. According to Towner, "All biblical anthropology turns out to be theological anthropology, which means that a human being is defined by his or her relationship with God and God's other creatures" (2005:350). This understanding of a biblical anthropology corresponds to the biblical concept of "life", which emphasises that true human life can only be found within the relationship with God.

In the scriptures of the Old Testament, the question "What does it mean to be human?" is responded to with the divine promise "I will be with you", which accompanies our being called by God and gives us fundamental insights into who we are. Human beings in the totality of their physical, somatic and cognitive existence are being spoken to by God and are called to respond with their whole life. As a result, a pastoral anthropology is essentially theonomous and evolves around the question of our God-given destiny, which is to live *coram Deo*, i.e. in close relation to God, and act according to the responsibility to embody our being the image of God in our relationships. The crux of our being human is our fundamental dependence on God and being in need of God's love and care. From a pastoral perspective, human beings truly become human and fulfil their God-given destiny only by responding to God's call.

In the New Testament, the intimate relationship between God and human beings becomes evident in Jesus' proclamation of the Gospel and his vicarious death on the cross. As regards the impact of Christology on a pastoral anthropology, God's care and passion for human beings is emphasised again in Christ's life, death and resurrection. Christ's death and subsequent resurrection from the dead depict human beings as completely new beings, now defined by eschatology. The new person in Christ appears as a pneumatic being, moved

and motivated by God's Spirit, which includes total submission, transformation and focus on God. Accordingly, human beings are equipped with a self-actualisation potential called charisma, which is defined by the Spirit and enables human beings to become, who they, from the perspective of eschatology, *already* are. In terms of the development of maturity in faith, human beings are called to concretise in their being-functions who they already are eschatologically.

As regards the God-given destiny of human beings within a pastoral anthropology, Jüngel proclaims, "Er soll ontisch und existentiell ein »Hörer des Wortes« (Rahner) werden" (1980:291). Theological talk about the eschatologically new human being necessarily exceeds the kind of human self-awareness that can be achieved by means of a phenomenological, client-centred approach (Jüngel 1980:291). In contrast to Kübler-Ross' and Barton's growth-models, which are based on an optimistic overestimation of inner human potential for self-development, within a pastoral model, the tendency to found the human self on an individual's own self is perceived as sin, as it indicates a breaking away from the fundamental relationship with God (Jüngel 1980:299).

From the perspective of a pastoral anthropology, human identity in the form of mere self-identification indicates a human being who is in the process of losing her or his true self (Jüngel 1980:299). Jüngel states, "Denn der Mensch findet sich nach der Auffassung des Glaubens niemals bei sich selbst" (1980:299). Like Steffensky, he stresses that human beings can never find themselves in themselves (Jüngel 1980:299). Citing Mark 8:35, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life ... will save it", Jüngel argues, "Der Mensch kommt zu sich selbst, wenn er zu einem anderen, als er selber ist, kommt" (1980:299; also Steffensky 2006:13). Hence, from a perspective of faith, we cannot truly find ourselves and develop an understanding of the destiny and meaning of human life – unless we lose ourselves in the fundamental relationship with God.

This is of crucial importance also in connection with the development of a pastoral approach to terminal care as life care. What we can take from the exploration of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology is that the one thing that will truly assist people in establishing "some sense of aliveness and continuity of themselves in the face of death" (Louw 1994:169), is



to discover true life and the essence of being human in the relationship with God. In contrast to Kübler-Ross' and Barton's approach to a psychology of death and dying, a pastoral anthropology maintains that becoming "hearers of the Word" will bring the crucial transformation from death to life, in spite of death.

As regards Kübler-Ross' life lessons, questions arose concerning a broader frame of reference, which could enable human beings to become truly authentic beings, love unconditionally, be freed from guilt and anger, be patient, forgive others and oneself and, eventually, to live a fulfilled life (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:10). It has been established that, from a perspective of Christian faith, the essential foundation for true change and transformation is the God-human relationship. A theological hermeneutics maintains that human beings cannot liberate themselves. In the process of searching for the essence of human life within themselves, human beings are in danger of losing themselves. God as the external factor is perceived as the true foundation for love, forgiveness and freedom, and the answer to all questions and struggles regarding the purpose and meaning of human life and the destiny of being human.

In the following section of the thesis, the findings concerning a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology shall be utilised to develop a meaningful theology of death and dying, which can be fruitfully applied to the praxis of terminal care as life care.

#### 4. A Theology of Death and Dying – Terminal Care as Life Care

Is life the Nightmare death has when death is asleep?

Dambuzo Marechera (in Rasebotsa *et al.* 2004:39)

Keeping in mind the argument of the thesis thus far, the preceding quote from Marechera's poem "Which One of You Bastards is Death?" (1986) illustrates in a powerful image life's devastating impact on death. Marechera, who is regarded as one of Southern Africa's most innovative and important writers, died at the age of 35 of conditions due to AIDS (Rasebotsa *et al.* 2004:187). The poem was written during the last year of his life (Rasebotsa *et al.* 2004:187).

Even though Marechera knows of the empowering effect of life in the face of death, he experiences death as a real "bastard" who insidiously approaches a person escorted by various physically and emotionally straining conditions. Until imminent death shows its true face, one can never be sure whether a certain symptom or disease might be the fatal condition, which will eventually take one's life.<sup>48</sup> This is especially true in the context of the HIV

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<sup>48</sup> Ebeling points out that, according to the worldwide history of perceptions of death, *the death* does not exist. He argues, "Vor allem und immer wieder: *den Tod gibt es gar nicht*" (1984:52). The expression "the death" is principally unacceptable, even if practically necessary (Ebeling 1984:53). In essence, four basic differentiations distinguish "the death" from "the death": (1) the difference between death as *transition* and death as *end*; (2) death as *natural* occurrence and *cultural* fact; (3) *heteronomous* death and *autonomous* death; and (4) death of the *individual* and *communal* death (Ebeling 1984:53ff). All these differentiations help us doubt the unity of the various occurrences commonly referred to as "the death" (Ebeling 1984:58).

In some circles, another differentiation is being made regarding the one death. It is claimed that four types of death need to be differentiated in the context of the HIV pandemic: (1) preventable, (2) postponable, (3) reversible, and (4) inevitable death. Since an HIV infection is a preventable condition, the term *preventable* death indicates that any death due to an HIV-related illness could generally have been prevented. *Postponable* death indicates that, even though an HIV infection is eventually a fatal condition, individuals living with HIV can under certain conditions, such as good diet, healthy life style and antiretroviral therapy, live a long and prosperous life. *Reversible* death refers to the understanding that HIV positive individuals, who were believed to have entered the last and terminal stage of the infection process, have on antiretroviral medication recovered to such a degree that their viral load was undetectable. Finally, *inevitable* death refers to the type of death which is part of the general human condition and cannot be avoided.

Even though this differentiation is helpful in terms of an ontology of death and an understanding of the strong necessity for effective prevention strategies and the accessibility of treatment, it should not affect a pastoral approach to terminal care. Pastoral care to dying individuals does not differentiate between a death that is inevitable and one that might have been preventable. The prospect of a premature death, which might have been preventable, is certainly painful for both the dying individual in the earlier phases of the terminal stage, as well as for the bereaved, and should be taken up in pastoral care and counselling. However, in the actual process of dying when death is indeed inevitable, such a differentiation is not helpful. As became evident in the section on the biblical concept of life in this thesis, the quality of

pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa, where an HIV infection is still more of a progressive fatal disease associated with numerous symptoms and opportunistic infections.

### **The Possibility of a Good or Bad Death**

In the light of death as an insidious “bastard”, it is interesting to take note of Bradbury’s research on the possibility of a “*good death*”. Bradbury is concerned with what we mean when we say that a death was “good” (2000:59). As regards the development of a life care approach to terminal care, an understanding of what is commonly perceived as a good death might provide insights into the phenomenological, experiential dimension of a so-called good death.

Bradbury starts her exploration with an African understanding of a good death, namely that of the Ugandan Lugbara who perceive a good death as one in which the dying predict that their demise is imminent and prepare for it (Bradbury 2000:50). A good death happens when individuals demonstrate some kind of control over events (Bradbury 2000:59):

A man should die in his hut, lying on his bed, with his brothers and sons round him to hear his last words; he should die with his mind still alert and should be able to speak clearly even if only softly; he should die peacefully and with dignity, without bodily discomfort or disturbance; he should die loved and respected by his family (Middleton 1982, quoted in Bradbury 2000:59).

In contrast, “bad deaths” happen “at the wrong place at the wrong time” (Bradbury 2000:59), without any kind of control available to the dying individual. This relates to Marechera’s understanding of death as an insidious “bastard” who approaches people without them being able to exercise control over it.

Taking contemporary British society as an example of so-called Western cultures, Bradbury differentiates between three prominent types of “good deaths”, i.e. sacred, medicalised and natural good deaths, which she describes

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human life before God is not defined by the mere length or prosperity of an individual life, but by the all-determinating relationship with God. This is in a nutshell the truth concerning the *one* human death before God.

as strongly influenced by cultural heritage, personal biography, psychological state and the context of death (2000:62).

*Sacred* good deaths can be accompanied by “a sense of celebration or even joy” (Bradbury 2000:60) for those who have faith, for example, as afterlife is a reality. Within sacred good deaths, great emphasis is placed on the way in which the dying lived their lives and the manner of their death (Bradbury 2000:60). Being prepared and conscious of dying appear as key features for a sacred good death (Bradbury 2000:60).

*Medicalised* good deaths take place within a medical context of some sort and are characterised by the use of medical techniques for the prolongation of life or the easing of pain, which allow some control over death (Bradbury 2000:61). In this context, a good death is described as one in which the dying person is unconscious and free of pain (Bradbury 2000:61). According to Bradbury, “the locus of control shifted from the dying person to those who care for him or her” (2000:61).

Eventually, *natural* good deaths take two different appearances (Bradbury 2000:61). On the one hand, a natural good death is a “less-medicalised” death, in which terminally ill persons take control over their deaths by “becoming active agents in the illness” (Bradbury 2000:61) and being involved in decision-making concerning their treatment and care, often rejecting life prolonging medical interventions. Another form of a natural good death happens suddenly and unexpectedly, sometimes in some kind of “natural” setting or as a result of illness which struck during a leisure pursuit (Bradbury 2000:61). According to Bradbury, these deaths are perceived as good, since the deceased were “spared the stress and pain of a lengthy dying trajectory, something that many of us fear in times in which the dying process has become prolonged” (2000:61).

What we can take from Bradbury’s research is that a “good death” is commonly perceived as a death where either the dying themselves or their caregivers are to some degree in control. The remaining sense of *control* and agency in the dying process relates to the attempt to affirm “personal significance and ... [a] sense of aliveness in the here and now” (1979:25), as described by Barton. The sense of control also seems to be significant in the

context of easing the fear of death and the suffering that often accompany the process of dying.

A meaningful theological approach to death and dying needs to take note of the prevailing beliefs regarding a good or bad death, as they highlight underlying fears and needs related to death and dying. In terms of a pastoral approach to terminal care, however, we need to pose the question whether the deep-seated fear for death and dying can truly be set at rest by establishing a vague feeling of control over events. Human beings can never be in control of death – neither their own nor that of others. Our defencelessness in the face of death points to the fundamental human *neediness* described by Steffensky (2006:223). In order to ease the fear of death and safeguard human dignity in the process of dying, which deprives us of the illusory sense of control that we hold onto during our lifetime, we need to let go of our need for sovereignty and surrender to God who holds the true power over life and death.

Another question that comes to mind is concerned with Bradbury's assumption of the possibility of a "bad death". From a pastoral perspective, the appropriateness and usefulness of the concept in relation with terminal care is doubtful. What exactly constitutes a bad death? Can the death of a person where neither the dying person nor the caregivers are in immediate control over events really be called a "bad death"? Or an agonising death, in which the individual is not spared the suffering of a lengthy dying trajectory? Or the death of a person who cannot find the strength to prepare for it consciously but desperately holds onto life? Or the premature death of a child?

Whether the presupposition of a bad death is applicable from a perspective of Christian faith will be discussed at a later stage. The focus will first be on previous attempts to harness the power of death and come to terms with the deep-seated human fear of it.

### **Overcoming Fear of Death: From a Stoic Acceptance of Death to a Christian *Ars Moriendi***

How to overcome human fear of death and deal with it lastingly is an old question with which Stoicism was already concerned. Stoicism in the strict sense refers to an ancient philosophical school, which in its Roman form was led by writers such as Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius (Neuhaus

2000:66). The school emphasised “detachment from fear and longing, resignation to fate, and faithful performance of the duties given to one in the world” (Neuhaus 2000:66). The Stoics believed that in order to overcome fear of death one needs to think about death constantly (Neuhaus 2000:7).

Seneca compared the presence of death in human life to a “banquet from which we should retire graciously at the appointed time” or a “role in a play that should satisfy us when it is over, since that is all that the author wrote” (Neuhaus 2000:7). According to Neuhaus, this understanding is based on Plato’s famous proposition that philosophising means *learning to die* by communing with the eternal that never dies (2000:7). In line with this, the Renaissance thinker Montaigne declared in a Stoic manner, “all the wisdom and reasoning in the world do in the end conclude in this point, to teach us not to fear to die” (in Neuhaus 2000:67).

Marcus Aurelius expressed a similar philosophy: “Remember that no man loseth other life than that which he liveth, nor liveth other than that which he loseth” (quoted in Neuhaus 2000:7). The crux of dying, may it be our own or that of others, is the painful regret concerning that which was not to be (Neuhaus 2000:7). In the language of a modern psychology of death and dying, that which was not to be is referred to as “unfinished business” (Kübler-Ross 1969:241) or “unresolved key problems” (Barton 1979:19), which frequently make people hang onto life.

Aurelius argues that the person who lost the longest life and the one who lost the shortest life both lose the same thing (Neuhaus 2000:7). We can only lose what *might have been*, and true tranquillity comes from the understanding that there is no such “might have been” (Neuhaus 2000:7). In the final analysis, there is no need to mourn since nothing is lost (Neuhaus 2000:7). Neuhaus defines the Stoic understanding as follows: “What is *is*, what was *was*, and all is as it *must be*” (2000:7).<sup>49</sup> He states that in current models which illustrate the grieving process of dying, this realisation is sometimes called acceptance (Neuhaus 2000:7; compare Kübler-Ross 1969:99ff ).

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<sup>49</sup> Montaigne points out that no one dies before her or his time (in Neuhaus 2000:69). He states that the time one leaves behind “was no more yours than that was lapsed and gone before you came into the world ... Wherever your life ends, it is all there” (Montaigne, in Neuhaus 2000:69).

Montaigne argues that a clear knowledge of our coming death offers us not fear but freedom from fear of death (Neuhaus 2000:66). He urges human beings to always keep death in mind and fulminates against prevailing death denial: “The remedy the vulgar use is not to think of it, but from what brutish stupidity can they derive so gross a blindness?” (Montaigne, in Neuhaus 2000:67). As we cannot know where death awaits us, we should rather look out for it everywhere, because the “premediation of death is the premediation of liberty” (Montaigne, in Neuhaus 2000:68). Keeping ourselves “ready to dislodge” (Neuhaus 2000:68f), we can await death without regret and are no longer threatened by the many sorts of death that might take a hold of us. According to Montaigne, “is it not infinitely worse eternally to fear them all, than once to undergo one of them? And what matters it, when it shall happen, since it is inevitable?” (in Neuhaus 2000:69).

To the Stoics and those who follow their philosophical approach, death is part of the unchangeable order of the universe and inevitable for human beings. In its predictability and unavailability, death should be accepted and embraced. The Stoic approach that aims to overcome fear of death by accepting the inevitable is still prominent today and as demonstrated influences even contemporary models of a psychology of death and dying. Acceptance of the inevitable and finding full pleasure in the time that is ours appear as a common remedy for the fear of death.

The Stoic approach helps us to view death as a fundamental part of human existence in the same right as life itself. Human life, which is brought about by birth as the good beginning of life, is ended by death as its good limitation. To accept the wholeness of human life as it stretches between the two poles of birth and death can serve as a good foundation to a meaningful theological approach to death and dying.

However, from a pastoral perspective, we need to acknowledge that many individuals struggle with acceptance of death out of their own strength – may it be their own death or that of significant others. The Stoic approach rests upon an optimistic overestimation of the human mind regarding its capability to grasp the reality of death and come to terms with it. It has been established earlier in this thesis that human beings fail to fully comprehend the phenomenon

of death from a positivistic and rationalistic perspective. As Louw points out, “nobody can cope with death by him-/herself” (1994:170).

Keeping this in mind, we turn to Christian approaches to the achievement of a “good death” and coming to terms with fear of death by taking a short look at the rich tradition of an *ars moriendi*. Based on Platonic teaching on the soul’s separation from the body in death, a *meditation mortis* intends to make the individual conscious of her or his immortal soul (Moltmann 1990:361). In connection with the findings of a religious anthropology, Moltmann claims, “»Know thyself«, that is »remember that you will die«” (1990:361). As a result, a person’s *entire* life serves to prepare for death (Moltmann 1990:361). This is the origin of a Christian *ars moriendi* literature (Moltmann 1990:361).<sup>50</sup>

The beginning of the *artes moriendi* as an independent literature type is marked by Johannes Gerson who introduced the genre with his little tract *De Arte Moriendi* (1400/01) (Hamm 2005:313f).<sup>51</sup> Gerson’s tract, which dealt with the believer’s last phase of life on the death bed, belonged into the catechetical context of teaching of piety, covering the whole life of a believer (Hamm 2005:314). The Latin original was soon translated into the vernaculars and found wide distribution (Hamm 2005:314).

Typical of *ars moriendi* literature is the emphasis on pastoral care to the laity (Hamm 2005:316). The publications in the vernaculars addressed not only priests and members of the orders with less knowledge of Latin, but also lay people from the aristocracy and bourgeoisie who were receptive to a more

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<sup>50</sup> The *ars moriendi* tradition might also have impacted on the idea of a sacred good death, as described by Bradbury (2000:59). A person’s conscious preparation for death, based on a general life style and awareness of human death as traits of a sacred good death, broadly corresponds to the aims of an *ars moriendi*.

Louw points out that, with the rise of existential philosophy, the perception developed that death is an activity and human beings do not merely passively submit to death (2006:432). This understanding that dying is an action of self-realisation in theology developed into the view that death is a moment of liberation and was advocated by prominent theologians like K. Rahner (death as active completion) and L. Boros (death as last decision) (Louw 2006:432; Manser 1977:70ff). This also reminds one of the concept of a sacred good death. In contrast, Jüngel asserts that this interpretation of death is untenable from a biblical perspective (1971:117). In a like manner, Louw objects that it is doubtful whether death can ever be a deed of self-realisation (2006:432).

<sup>51</sup> The very first *ars moriendi* text came into being in France around 1270 when the French Dominican friar Laurent d’Orléans published a comment on dying, which was part of a comprehensive, multivolume Christian doctrine of life (Hamm 2005:317). Until Gerson’s tract next appeared, instructions concerning a good Christian death were always part of longer writings on the Christian doctrine of life and the development of piety (Hamm 2005:317). From the very beginning, the focus on laity was a central characteristic of the *ars moriendi* literature (Hamm 2005:317).



intensive formation of piety (Hamm 2005:316). The general objective is to impart a *scientia mortis*, which refers to the salutary knowledge of a right attitude toward death and dying, to lay people (Hamm 2005:318). Gerson states in the introduction to his tract,

Deswegen war es das Anliegen der vorliegenden Schrift, eine Art kurzer Vermahnung zu erstellen für diejenigen, deren letzte Stunde gekommen ist, die aber auch allgemein für alle Christen geeignet ist, sich eine Fertigkeit und Kenntnis des guten Sterbens zu erwerben (quoted in Hamm 2005:318).

The idea of an *ars moriendi* is to visualise death, be ready for one's own blessed dying and be prepared to help others on the road to a blessed parting (Hamm 2005:319). Despite the plague epidemics of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, which led to the collective experience of deaths in terrifying numbers, the strategy for pastoral care in late medieval doctrines on dying always assumed the normal case that their addressees suppressed the idea of death, imagined it to be distant, and lived unprepared from day to day (Hamm 2005:319). The *ars moriendi* literature sees it as its genuine task to bring death directly into the life of people and open people's eyes to the truth of the all-decisive death bed situation, so that they will pause and seriously prepare for a blessed dying (Hamm 2005:320).

Characteristic of *ars moriendi* literature is the extreme *finalisation* of life toward the omnipresent hour of death (Hamm 2005:320). The hour of death is supposed to develop into an always present and accessible image bearing witness to the drama of a personal decision (Hamm 2005:320). Due to three fundamental uncertainties, which include the time and kind of one's death, one's condition of grace before God and the outcome of the Last Judgement, one should not arrogantly have oneself be lulled into a false sense of security (Hamm 2005:320). One should rather start dying off from earthly things in humility and hope, and focus all one's senses and mind on the world hereafter (Hamm 2005:320). The teachings, admonitions and consolations of *ars moriendi* always focus on the final touch concerning a devout dying, which can be depicted as an ability or practical *skill* to die. According to Hamm,

Die erstrebte Vorbereitung auf den Moment des Todes besteht in der Vervollkommnung der christlichen Tugenden und in einer »kunstfertigen« Lebensformung, die in der Sterbestunde ihr höchstes Gelingen und Maximum des Verdienens und Genugtuns erreicht (2005:324).

*Ars moriendi* calls even healthy believers in the here and now to gain the necessary knowledge on death and learn how to die off and part from loved ones: “Schon jetzt muss der Gesunde wissen, worauf es ankommt bzw. nicht mehr ankommt, wenn er in den letzten Zügen liegen wird” (Hamm 2005:330).

The end of traditional *ars moriendi* came with the eschatological finality of justification, which was emphasised by the Reformers (Hamm 2005:333). The *Doctrine of Justification* principally objected to the prevailing understanding of human participation in divine grace and thus against any *ars*-conception, which emphasises the formation of virtues in the inner being reaching its highest outcome in the hour of death (Hamm 2005:333).

Even when Reformist authors take over selected elements of a late medieval *ars moriendi* literature, it receives a different meaning in the context of the Reformist understanding of justification (Hamm 2005:333). The essence of the genre remains a “bereytung zum sterben”<sup>52</sup>, as a being ready for death in midst of life, yet with no disposition of a doctrine of perfection concerning the good transition into the hereafter (Hamm 2005:333). Hamm points out that a Reformist *ars moriendi* in the strict sense does not exist (2005:333). Nonetheless, Luther’s *Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519) belongs to the most widespread and influential tracts on death and dying of the Reformation (Hamm 2005:311).

From the perspective of the Reformation, believers can be assured that they are accepted by God’s grace in the totality of their existence before all piety and good deeds (Hamm 2005:333). The eschatological dimension of justification includes the liberation from a desperate fixation on the hour of death and an “*Entängstigung*” (Hamm 2005:334) of life and death. Even the believer

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<sup>52</sup> See the first edition of Luther’s *Sermon von der Bereitung zum Sterben* (1519), which forms the basis for the sermon’s edition in D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Band 2, Weimar (WA 2) (680-697).

knows the feeling of being confronted by death in midst of life, but the power of sin and death has been shattered in Christ's resurrection from the dead (Hamm 2005:334). Hamm asserts,

... daß der auferstandene Christus die Macht des Todes, der Sünde und der Hölle gebrochen hat, so daß nun an die Stelle der Todes- und Höllenangst die freudige Lebens- und Seligkeitsgewißheit treten kann: »Mitten im Tode sind wir vom Leben umfängen« [Luther 1534/35] (2005:334).

Luther powerfully illustrated the dethronement and disarmament of death by referring to it as “mockery” or plain “sleep” (Hamm 2005:334). In one of his songs he even names Christ the “death-eater”, claiming that Christ scoffs at death, since it has been swallowed up by his victorious death and resurrection from the dead (Hamm 2005:335). Luther rejoices, “Die schrifft hat verkundet das, / wie eyn tod den andern fras. / Eyn spott aus dem tod ist worden”<sup>53</sup> (quoted in Hamm 2005:335).

Like the European plague epidemics of the late Middle Ages, which prepared the context of Luther's proclamation of the dethronement of death, the context of the HIV pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa confronts people in a similar way with the terrifying experience of death in vast numbers and demands a meaningful pastoral response to death and dying.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, a pastoral

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<sup>53</sup> See Luther's song “Christ lag ynn todes banden”, verse 4, in WA 35, 444, (10-12).

<sup>54</sup> A comparison of Martin Luther's reaction to the plague, which brought devastation to Wittenberg and parts of Northern Germany in 1527, with the present situation of the HIV pandemic in Southern Africa has been drawn by Scriba (2006:66ff). Scriba relates the response and advice given by Luther some 500 years ago to present-day challenges of the church concerning the HIV pandemic (2006:66). In his treatise *Ob man fur dem sterben fliehen muge* (1527/1528), Luther responds to the question of clergy whether it was right or not for a Christian to flee from this deadly plague (Scriba 2006:69).

Luther avers that it is an honourable action in the case of any disease to stay and help one's neighbour out of love (Scriba 2006:70). Especially pastors and priests should stay and continue their pastoral duties in the face of death (Scriba 2006:71). He maintains that in the context of a deadly epidemic one should stay where one is, make preparations, take courage in the fact that we are mutually bound together in love and trust God in prayer (Scriba 2006:72f). Luther's well-known song “Ein veste Burg ist unser Gott” (1533) was written during this time (Scriba 2006:73).

With a similar intention, the artist Matthias Grünewald created an impressive triptychon altar for the suffering and dying in the “pest hospice” of Isenheim / Germany in 1513 – 1515 (Scriba 2006:73). The altar, which is regarded as a breakthrough in Christian art, shows the totality of the suffering of the crucified Christ. Christ is depicted with sores and boils, as if he himself had been a victim of the disease, speaking to the dying, “I am suffering as you do, I am with you, do not be afraid” (Scriba 2006:73). The realisation that Jesus Christ in his suffering is with us and that we can rely on God as our mighty fortress, is of great comfort even today in the context of the HIV pandemic – whether we are living, caring, or dying (Scriba 2006:80).

hermeneutical approach to terminal care differs from an *ars moriendi* insofar as it promotes awareness of who we *already* are in Christ before God, in both our living and dying. While an *ars moriendi* is based on the unyielding confrontation of people with the harsh inevitability of their death in order to encourage piety based on fear of death and the Last Judgement, a hermeneutical approach to terminal care as life care aims at a transformed understanding of life and death through the development of maturity in faith.

Jüngel perceives it as a tragedy when Christian faith has been misinterpreted as exclusively focusing on the ability to die (1971:161). He calls it a scandal to spend one's whole lifetime in preparation for death (Jüngel 1971:161). He points out that an *ars moriendi* as an art to die was developed only due to a heathen influence within Christianity (Jüngel 1971:162). In this understanding he corresponds to Moltmann who assigns the origin of an *ars moriendi* literature to the Greek "Know thyself", which reminds human beings that they differ fundamentally from the eternal Gods (compare Moltmann 1990:361; Moltmann 1977:26). Jüngel asserts, "Sterben-Können impliziert Leben-Können und umgekehrt" (1971:161). To be able to die presupposes a positive outlook on and the affirmation of life (Jüngel 1971:162).

In connection with a life care approach to terminal care, it is necessary to take note of the significant shift in emphasis that is characteristic of the Reformist understanding of an *ars moriendi*. A "good death" is no longer perceived as something that can be achieved by means of a believer's own potential, manifested in a perfected art of dying. Human death and dying is not determined by an individual's knowledge, capability or fearful readiness, but is described as having been transformed, eaten up altogether in Christ's death and resurrection.

Hence, meaningful preparation for death from the perspective of a pastoral hermeneutics does not refer to a total finalisation of life toward death or a permanent orientation of life toward the hereafter, but the development of wisdom and a living spirituality based on a deep-seated assuredness of life and a state of graceful blessedness. In terms of terminal care as life care, what is to be achieved as a meaningful "bereytung zum sterben" is the development of a theology of death and dying, which revives the implications of Christ's death and resurrection for the totality of an individual's existence. In the following

section, a biblical understanding of death and dying shall be explored in order to serve as a sound foundation for such a meaningful theology of death and dying.

#### **4.1. A Biblical Understanding of Death and Dying**

In the whole of Scripture, many seemingly contradictory understandings of death and dying exist side by side (Manser 1977:227; Jüngel 1971:75). Beliefs about death and responses to it vary significantly (Johnston 2002:24). Manser states that, given the variety of texts from different times, authors and editorial compositions, the question arises whether we can at all speak of *the* understanding of death in the Old Testament or the New Testament, not to mention the whole of Scripture (1977:227).

##### **Death in the Old Testament: Death Determined by the Quality of Life Before God**

The many attitudes to death in the Old Testament are owed to the manifold history of Israel's religion as well as the development of the Yahweh belief and its written tradition (Dirschauer 1979:58). The various views, attitudes and ways of speaking about death stand in a certain tension with each other and point toward an understanding of death that is much more *complex* and multi-layered than commonly expected (Manser 1977:229). Not even in one genre of literature, for instance the wisdom literature, do we find a homogenous response to the question about death (Lohfink, quoted in Manser 1977:228).

Generally, death in the Old Testament refers not only to physical death, but has a substantially more extensive and comprehensive meaning (Manser 1977:230). Weakness, illness, captivity, isolation and misery also illustrate qualities of what death could mean (Manser 1977:230). Manser points out, "Der Tod greift wesentlich tiefer in den Bereich des Lebens über" (1977:230).

As regards a few main traits of an Old Testament view of death despite all differentiation, death is portrayed as "a natural and peaceful event when it comes at the end of a long, happy, and fulfilled life" (Johnston 2002:26), as was, for instance, the case for Abraham and David (Gen 15:15; 1Ch 29:28). Manser points out, "Es ist für den alttestamentlichen Menschen selbstverständlich, dass er sterben muss" (Gen 19:31) (1977:231). Having enjoyed life to the full extent

of its goods and salvation, death at a high age and after a full of life is accepted as the *natural*, contented end of human life (Manser 1977:237).

Death as the natural end of life is, for instance, characterised by rich offspring, dying in one's home country and being buried there (Manser 1977:237; also Jüngel 1971:85).<sup>55</sup> Jüngel states, "Und wenn hohes Alter erreicht wird, dann ist der Tod an der Zeit, und es leuchtet ein, dass zu sterben der Weg aller Welt ist" (1 Ki 2:2) (1971:85). In Job, the theme of the peaceful death is expressed lyrically: "You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season" (Job 5:26) (Johnston 2002:26f). Ecclesiastes, which understands that there is a time for everything under heaven, "a time to be born and a time to die" (Ecc 3:2), asks, "Why die before your time?" (Ecc 7:17) (Johnston 2002:26f).<sup>56</sup> Tired, weak and filled with life, the believer can thank Yahweh for the providence of a long life and tranquilly expect the end thereof (Manser 1977:237).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Similar to the understanding of a "good death" cherished by the Ugandan Lugbara, the death of a devout man of the Old Testament is not only characterised by the reaching of old age, but also the being surrounded by sons and grandsons in the hour of death, as well as the certainty of a burial in the home country (Gen 47:29-31) (Wächter, quoted in Manser 1977:237f).

Johnston objects, however, that "the normality of death ... can be overstated" (2002:41). As the Old Testament is prefaced with the announcement of death as the result of human sin in the second creation account, with occasional further pronouncement thereof, even in normal circumstances death was not necessarily as natural or harmonious as it might seem (Johnston 2002:42). This points to the complexity of the Old Testament views on death.

<sup>56</sup> Krüger points out that Coheleth views the hope for a life after death as an illusion (2005:195). The knowledge of death as the final border of life and end of human control can already impact negatively on life before death (Ecc 2:12-26), i.e. in terms of exaggerated expectations for life (Ecc 1:12-2:11) (Krüger 2005:197). Ecclesiastes argues that intrinsic human finality becomes evident not only in death but already in life (Krüger 2005:198).

Ecclesiastes develops an alternative attitude to life, in which human beings accept the limitations of their ability to act and know, and calls upon human beings to perceive their finality as a chance and border for life style (Ecc 3:10ff) (Krüger 2005:198). The definite finality of human life is responded to by Ecclesiastes with the realisation that a good life before death can only be perceived as gift of God that is not at human beings' own disposal (Krüger 2005:214). Ecclesiastes stresses human trust in the understanding that even death and the negative sides of life in God's creation are beautiful in their time (Ecc 3:11) (Krüger 2005:214).

<sup>57</sup> In their research on words of farewell of the dying in the biblical literature, Bieberstein and Bieberstein point out that in the last words of significant dying men in Israel's early history, like Isaac (Gen 27), Jacob (Gen 47-50), Josef (Gen 50), Mose (Dt 32-34), Joshua (Jos 23f), Samuel (1 Sam 11f), and David (1 Ki 29), the relation to death and the hereafter is not made a subject (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:8). On the contrary, these last words of the dying are actually accounts of life (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:9).

Even though the important request for being buried in the home country is raised recurrently, the dyings' gaze is turned onto the subsequent generation, in order to give them the blessing of the parting (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:9f). The life concern of the dying is communicated to the offspring in concrete parenetical form as a last will, which includes a final interpreting review on the life that is now ending (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:19).

Therefore, the words of farewell of the dying in the Old Testament scriptures not only serve as parenetical instructions for the coming generation, but also, through visions of the future, as an extended final interpretation of the life story that is now coming to an end (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:22).

Death is also portrayed as a *friend*, “as rest, inactivity, welcome relief, and sleep” (Johnston 2002:27). This view becomes especially apparent in the book of Job, where he claims, “For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest” (Job 3:13) (Johnston 2002:28). Jüngel points out that even the self-assessment of the aged has a certain affinity to death as regards the aches and pains of old age (1971:86). Ecclesiastes, for instance, refers to old age as the time when “the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, »I find no pleasure in them«” (Ecc 12:1) (Jüngel 1971:86). Death provides rest from the unfairness and roughness of life: “Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver's shout. The small and the great are there, and the slave is freed from his master” (Job 3:18f) (Jüngel 1971:86).

It becomes clear that the positive views on death in the Old Testament are fully assessed from the perspective of the life that God has given (Manser 1977:238). Death is relativised in the sense that it is not something hostile and separate from human life, but rather seals it, almost like a fulfilment from God's side (Manser 1977:238). At the end of a blessed and fulfilled life, death is accepted as the natural and God-given end of human existence.

However, the Old Testament also refers to death as the bitter *enemy* of human life (Johnston 2002:28). Death is often described in personified terms as a hunter (Ps 18:4f; Ecc 9:12), “king of terrors” (Job 18:14), marauding shepherd (Ps 49:14), or insatiable glutton (Pro 30:15; 27:20; Hab 2:5) (Johnston 2002:28).

Especially, the premature death of a young person reveals death as the enemy of life (Is 38:10) (Manser 1977:239). Death is perceived as an “irresistible intruder who captures even the young and vigorous” (Jer 9:21) (Johnston 2002:29). In the Old Testament the conviction prevails that human beings first need to mature toward death (Jüngel 1971:85). While a long life gives insight into the meaning of salvation and is perceived as a blessing of God, early death appears as a feared form of death, deprived of God's blessing, unnatural and perhaps due to one's own making (Manser 1977:239). The

wisdom literature recurrently asks for the “Why?” of a too early death, and explores ways to avoid such a death (Pr 11:19; 13:14) (Manser 1977:239). Even though the relation between guilt and death is significant, there is no guarantee that the wise individual will not also fall prey to a premature death, since eventually not human beings but God has power over life and death (Pr 14:12; 16:25; 22:14) (Manser 1977:239). Still hidden in the account of the natural death in old age, which points toward human creatureliness, untimely death clearly illuminates the tension between the alienation from God and God’s sovereignty (Manser 1977:240).<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, death in the Old Testament takes a negative connotation, as it leads to the *separation* of the individual from the community and loved ones (Louw 2006:433; Johnston 2002:32). Being cut off from one’s people, for instance through captivity or exile, was experienced as a death sentence (Johnston 2002:32). Within cultures that perceive a meaningful life as one lived in a larger community, death and death-like situations are an especially negative and painful experience as they are connected to separation from one’s community.<sup>59</sup> This understanding has been reflected by Kierkegaard’s proposition of a disrelationship in relations. Louw also points toward the significant dimension of death in midst of life in the form of the destruction of human relationships through stigmatisation, rejection, isolation and loneliness (2004:2).

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<sup>58</sup> As regards death as part of human creatureliness, Genesis 2-3 points toward human intrinsic mortality (Johnston 2002:40). In Genesis 3:19, the sentence on human beings concludes, “until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Johnston 2002:40). The second creation account also ends with human death as a certain fact due to human sin (Johnston 2002:41). According to Johnston, this connection between death and sin is notably unique in ancient literature and rare even in the Hebrew Bible, for instance in the account of the flood (Gen 6:5-7), Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), disobedience after settlement (Lev 26:22), and general human sinfulness (Ps 90:7-9) (Johnston 2002:41).

<sup>59</sup> Manser points out that for the Israelites there is a comfort in death to know that after the end of one’s life one will, eventually, couch to one’s forefathers and one’s people (Gen 25:8; 8:29; Jdg 2.10; 2Ki 22:20) (Manser 1977:242). Consequently, it is perceived a hard fate to be buried in a foreign country far away from one’s home country (Manser 1977:242).

In a like manner, Johnston refers to death as *reunion* and points out that in the accounts of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, “each in turn »breathed his last and died ... and he was gathered to his people«”: (Gen 25:8; 25:17; 35:29; 49:33) (Johnston 2002:33). In the narrative accounts of many biblical kings, as well as Jacob and Moses (Gen 47:30; Dt 31:16), the verb “died” is replaced by the expression “slept with his fathers” (1 Ki 1:21; 2:10), which appears to be reserved for national leaders (Johnston 2002:34). Dirschauer confirms that the idea of dying at old age and full of life, and being assembled to one’s lineage is characteristic of the early phase of Israelite history and living in tribes (1979:59). Life is essentially characterised by the warmth and security given by one’s people, which remains important over the end of life into death (Dirschauer 1979:59).



It is also the loss of goods, which make life meaningful and are viewed as being identical with life to some degree, that denotes human death (Manser 1977:242). Death as *loss* manifests in helplessness, powerlessness, weakness, uncertainty, disaster, punishment, downfall and darkness (Manser 1977:242). The loss of vitality does not only include physical disintegration, but also the destruction of the whole person within her or his environment (Manser 1977:242).

However, Johnston claims that, “Even more importantly, death cut one off from *Yahweh*’ (2002:32). Death in the Old Testament is never perceived independently of the living God (Manser 1977:230). Manser points out that death is not regarded as a scientific phenomenon, but an event that is entirely determined by God (1977:242). He quotes Von Rad as follows: “Er [i.e. der Tod] beginnt dort wirklich zu werden ... »wo Jahwe einen Menschen verlässt, wo er schweigt, also da, wo immer sich die Lebensbeziehung zu Jahwe lockerte«” (quoted in Manser 1977:242).

Since the essentials of life are understood in relation to *Yahweh* and within the covenant community, “experiences of alienation from this source are death-like and are feared and lamented” (Migliore 1990:261). Life, which in the Old Testament is regarded as “covenantal life comprising essentially a relationship with *Jahweh*” (Louw 2006:432f), implies the challenge and opportunity to praise and glorify God. Louw claims, “Old Testament believers’ fear of death must be seen as a fear that they might be isolated from the covenant grace and mercy of the Lord” (2006:433).

Keeping in mind that in the Old Testament life is primarily perceived as living in relationship with God, death in all its facets needs to be understood as the result of the human urge to break this fundamental relationship (Jüngel 1971:99). According to Jüngel, “Insofern ist der Tod anthropologisch nicht nur und nicht erst am Ende des Lebens, sondern im Drang nach Verhältnislosigkeit als wirksame Möglichkeit jederzeit da” (1971:99). He describes the phenomenon of death in the midst of life as an attempt to alienate life from God and thus life from life itself (Jüngel 19971:100; also Louw 2004:2). Jüngel asserts that the perception that human beings are threatened by death in the midst of life is not to be understood mythologically, but anthropologically, i.e. that human beings are threatened by themselves (1971:100f).

The people of the Old Testament felt a deep gulf between the living and the dead (Manser 1977:243). The *sheol* as death's sphere of influence opposes the realm of life; the distance between the two is experienced as endless (Manser 1977:243). Even though there is no homogenous understanding of the *sheol* either, different images mostly with a negative connotation give insight into its character: *sheol* is the gloomy land of the dead from where there is "no return" (2 Sam 12:23; Job 7:9; 10:21), the "eternal home" of the dead or their eternal city (Ecc 12:5; Job 17:13) (Manser 1977:243f). There is nothing the human being can still do, in the *sheol* there is only silence (Ecc 9:10; Ps 94:17; 115:17); it is a mere vegetating away, no real life in the full sense of the word (Is 38:10; Ps 9:14) (Manser 1977:243f). In death-like situations, like accident, illness, captivity and hostility, death's dynamic sphere of influence is believed to threaten, attack and conquer the realm of life (Ps 89:48) (Manser 1977:246; Jüngel 1971:96).

The dead are believed to be deserted by both Yahweh and other human beings, and all relationships with them have vanished (Ps 88:13) (Manser 1977:244). Manser claims, "Der Mensch hat von der Welt und von den Mitmenschen für immer Abschied genommen, ja selbst von seinem Gott ist er fern" (1977:250f). This is where the bitterness and pain of death crystallises into one essential truth: in the *sheol* the believer is *excluded* from Yahweh's sphere of influence, it is the space of the alienation from God, with no possibility to glorify God and praise Yahweh's name (Manser 1977:247; Jüngel 1971:93).<sup>60</sup> It is in this context that the psalmist prays, "Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you? Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in destruction? Are your wonders known in the

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<sup>60</sup> This relates to the desacralisation and demythologisation of death beginning in the Old Testament (Manser 1977:248; Jüngel 1971:93). The Israelites rejected the images of death and its realm, i.e. the underworld, that existed amongst the surrounding cultures and only scarcely developed own ideas thereof (Manser 1977:248). Unlike the Babylonians or Egyptians, the Israelites did not practise any cult or invocation of the dead (Manser 1977:248). Manser claims, "Ihre Antwort konnte nur heißen, Jahwe hat und will nichts damit zu tun haben" (1977:248). Death and its realm are in no way related to the living God (Manser 1977:248).

According to Dirschauer, the desacralisation of death is closely related to the revelation on Mount Sinai, which represents radically new possibilities for life, as it becomes clear that God wants *life* (1979:60). Subsequently, death is interpreted totally from the perspective of life in Yahweh (Dirschauer 1979:61).

place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?” (Ps 88:10-12).

Nonetheless, Louw emphasises that the Old Testament “believer knows that death will not take place outside of the dominion of God”: “If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there” (Ps 139:8) (Louw 2006:433). In a like manner, Jüngel asserts that, even though it can be said about God that even God does not think of the dead any longer, it does not mean that God will forget about them forever (1971:88).<sup>61</sup> Manser concludes, “Jahwe ist doch der Herr über Leben und Tod” (1977:247; Jüngel 1971:92).

It is the elementary certainty of the Old Testament believer that at least the access to or denial of death is only at God’s disposal (Ps 139:8; 68:20; 1Sam 2:6; Job 14:13-17) (Manser 1977:247). Dirschauer confirms, “Der alttestamentliche Mensch weiss sich in der Lebens- und Todeskrise stets auf Gott gewiesen” (Dirschauer 1979:63). The understanding that God alone has the power over life and death is central to the Old Testament’s view of death (Manser 1977:231). The psalms even express the belief that God has the power to rescue the soul out of *sheol*’s sphere of influence (Dirschauer 1979:64).

To summarise, as regards the Old Testament’s complex view of death, Louw highlights two prevailing perceptions (2006:434). First, death is perceived as the *fulfilment* of life (Louw 2006:434). Louw claims, “In communion with God death implies the finishing touch and fullness of life (Gen 15:15; 25:8: 35:29)” (2006:434). The second essential element refers to death and the *parting* from life (Louw 2006:434). Louw argues, “Death was perceived as the meaningless breaking down of life – life being the opportunity to praise God and exercise love to all people” (2006:434). According to Johnston, “More generally, death is seen as separation from life, from community, and ultimately from Yahweh” (2002:46). As death threatens human life, it is understood as God’s wrath over sin and, thus, God’s curse (Gen 3:19) (Louw 2006:434). Nevertheless, death

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<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, the New Testament emphasises that the individual human being who has been called by her or his name by God (Is 49:1), belongs to God until eternity, “... you are mine” (Is 43:1) (Jüngel 1971:88).

appears as a misery only in succession of life as a good gift of God (Jüngel 1971:91).

What we can take from this is that death in the Old Testament cannot be considered independently of the prevailing concept of life (Manser 1977:231). Johnston states, “Paradoxically, the starting point for any discussion of death in the Old Testament is life itself” (2002:39). Eventually, the belief in God’s vividness is stronger than death (Manser 1977:231). Johnston points toward Jesus’ statement in Mark 12:27, “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (2002:39). Manser quotes Buber’s moving account of God’s aliveness, which also exemplifies the Old Testament understanding of the interrelation of life and death:

Der echte Glaube spricht: Ich weiss nichts vom Tod, aber ich weiss, dass Gott die Ewigkeit ist, und ich weiss dies noch, dass er mein Gott ist. Ob das, was wir Zeit nennen, uns jenseits unseres Todes verbleibt, wird uns recht unwichtig neben diesem Wissen, dass wir Gottes sind – der nicht »unsterblich«, sondern ewig ist (Buber 1965:259, quoted in Manser 1977:231).

For the Old Testament believer, Yahweh is the undoubted Lord of life, which is illustrated most significantly in Yahweh’s very name (Johnston 2002:46).<sup>62</sup> Life is one of the fundamental characteristics of Yahweh and the Yahweh faith (Johnston 2002:39). Yahweh is perceived as the giver and sustainer of life (Johnston 2002:46). Accordingly, death in the Old Testament is assessed entirely from this perspective of God as the Lord of life. Death is not primarily perceived as the counterpart of life, rather the boundaries between life and death are fluent (Manser 1977:241). Life and death are flexible and dynamic spheres of influence, which impact on and reach into each other (Manser 1977:241).

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<sup>62</sup> Johnston emphasises that it is widely accepted that the Yahweh name comes from the verb *hājā*, i.e. “to be” (2002:39; also Gollwitzer 1974:101). Even if the name has a different etymology, it is understood as being related to “being”, as in Exodus 3:14, “I am who I am” (Johnston 2002:39; also Gollwitzer 1974:101).

In a like manner, Gollwitzer states, “Zijn formulering: *ehje asjer ehje*, is door de Septuaginta vertaald met: »Ik ben de zijnde« en gedurende eeuwen, die daarop volgden met »Ik ben, die Ik ben«” (1974:101). Consequently, in the name it becomes clear that Yahweh essentially *is* life and *gives* life, as emphasized in all forms of Old Testament literature (Dt 30:19f; Job 12:10; Ps 36:9) (Johnston 2002:39).

As regards the complexity and partly antithetical nature of the Old Testament view of death, it leads us directly into the very heart of the *paradox*, which is generally characteristic of human living and dying. We often experience our own imminent death or that of a loved one as a striking paradox, whose contradictory elements are difficult to grasp. Death can be the welcome friend who calls somebody to a deserved rest after long illness and suffering, but it is at the same time the enemy who brutally ends cherished relationships. We understand that death is an essential part of our creatureliness, the good limitation of life, and that God will never let us down, not even in death. However, we also never struggle more with the threatening feeling of being estranged from God and being unable to relate to God than we do in times of loss and the ultimate letting go of life. This predicament has been put into words by Jesus Sirach:

O Tod, wie bitter bist du, wenn an dich ein Mensch denkt, der gute Tage und genug hat und ohne Sorgen lebt und dem es wohl geht in allen Dingen und der noch gut essen kann! O Tod, wie wohl tust du dem Armen, der schwach und alt ist, der in allen Sorgen steckt und nichts Besseres zu hoffen noch zu erwarten hat! Fürchte den Tod nicht! Denke an die, die vor dir gewesen sind und nach dir kommen werden. So ist es vom Herrn verordnet über alle Menschen. Und was wehrst du dich gegen den Willen des Höchsten? Ob du zehn oder hundert oder tausend Jahre lebst, im Tod fragt man nicht, wie lange einer gelebt hat (Sir 41:1-7; LUT).

Manser points out that the complexity of the Old Testament view of death helps us to understand that one can never in a general sense judge whether a death was good or bad, strange, incomprehensible, familiar or expected, friend or foe (1977:241). This can only be taken from the single individual's fate (Manser 1977:241). In a like manner, Jüngel claims,

Er [i.e. der Tod] wird ganz und gar vom gelebten Leben her erfahren und beurteilt, im Guten wie im Bösen. Aber eben deshalb ist der Tod, den man sterben muss, ohne sterben zu können, der nicht Befriedung, nicht an der Zeit, nicht rechtes Ende, kurz: nicht natürlich, sondern eben Bedrängung, unzeitig, Abbruch, kurz: widernatürlich ist, die Regel (Jüngel 1971:97).

The only indisputable statement that appears throughout all Old Testament scriptures is that human life finds its certain end in death (Manser 1977:240f). No one can escape this end, it is irrevocable and lamentable (Manser 1977:241). However, in the Old Testament the overcoming of death does not begin with a myth or theoretical considerations, but explicitly with faith in Yahweh (Manser 1977:253). The central realisation of the Old Testament is that the human being is totally dependant on God's gift (Von Rad, quoted in Manser 1977:254). Human beings are put into the situation of a *self-denying* waiting, which is of general significance as it helps them to perceive both life and death as a gift from the living God (Manser 1977:254). The understanding that both human life and death are eventually not at human beings' disposal, but a gracious gift from the God of life can help us to view both our life and death in the context of fundamental human limitations and neediness for God.

What becomes most evident in the book of Job, i.e. that the personal relationship with God surpasses one's own suffering existence, should be regarded as central to the Old Testament understanding of death (Dirschauer 1979:64; Jüngel 1971:82). Jüngel asserts, Job's trust that his miserable condition is not the last word spoken over him represents a first attempt to exceed the alternative between life and death (1971:84).

In this connection, Jüngel refers to Psalm 63:3, "Because your love is better than life", and claims that, even though life is generally perceived as the highest good, "der sich auf Gott beziehende und damit seinem Sich-selbst-schon-immer-Entzogensein entsprechende Mensch ist im Leben und im Sterben sich selbst *gnädig* entzogen" (1971:83). This also points toward the absolute neediness emphasised by Steffensky, and the understanding that we may come closer to ourselves by leaving ourselves behind and coming closer to God (2006:223).

### **Death in the New Testament: The Relativation of Death in Christ's Death and Resurrection**

Regarding the understanding of death portrayed in the scriptures of the New Testament, a more homogenous response to the question concerning human death is revealed (Manser 1977:254). Dirschauer asserts that the New Testament statements on death are altogether related to the victorious death of

Christ and fundamentally influenced by it (1979:65). They are closely associated with the whole account of Jesus Christ and culminate in his death and resurrection (Dirschauer 1979:65). Jüngel affirms, “Der Kampf, in dem Gott es mit dem Tod zu tun bekommt, in dem aber auch der Tod es mit Gott zu tun bekommt, ist die vom Glauben erzählte Geschichte Jesu Christi” (1971:103). However, this points to the truth that God’s victory over death first had to be gained and was by no means certain from eternity on (Jüngel 1971:103).

Resembling the Old Testament view of death, death in the New Testament is perceived as neither a merely natural process in terms of the biological-physiological end of human life, nor is it approached with a philosophical intention in terms of an existential interpretation (Manser 1977:255). The central horizon in which death is viewed in the New Testament is the God-human relationship (Manser 1977:256). Death appears in the context of the whole human person and a holistic understanding of life, which are both related to Christ and the way we speak of God in terms of our God-image (Manser 1977:255). Nonetheless, despite many commonalities between Old Testament and New Testament, a fundamental difference regarding the attitude toward death and dying, which originates in the fact that something happens with death itself, becomes evident (Jüngel 1971:76).

As regards continuity between Old and New Testament, the *desacralisation* and demythologisation of death started in the Old Testament are developed further in the New Testament (Manser 1977:257). Already in the Old Testament, but especially the New Testament, death in itself is something terrible, a horrible ending, all too often caused from outside, the termination of a life that remains unfulfilled (Manser 1977:258). Death remains a terrifying, feared event, which is only to be sought under the most horrifying circumstances (Rev 6:8; 18:1; Heb 2:15) (Manser 1977:257). Death as we find it is often not fulfilment of life, but devastation, destruction and despotism *per se*, which is not meant to be (Manser 1977:258). Instead of being mythologised, death remains a horrible experience for the individual (Manser 1977:257).

The desacralisation and demythologisation of death become most evident in the profanity and brutality of Jesus’ death on the cross (Manser 1977:257). Jesus does not die old and filled with life as the devout women and men of the Old Testament did (Manser 1977:257). His dying is not a heroic

triumph (Manser 1977:257). On the contrary, Jesus' work seems to have failed and – in contrast to the death of other great figures like Socrates – his defiance breaks in the sight of the brutal reality of death (Manser 1977:257). Jesus dies in utmost loneliness, let down by his friends and seemingly abandoned by God: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:47; also Ps 22:1) (Manser 19977:257). The impression that Jesus' death makes on his followers is not that of a heroic, tranquil, or mythologically embroidered death, but one suffered in all its force (Manser 1977:258).

Additionally, the relation between doing and *enduring*, which already appeared in the later scriptures of the Old Testament, becomes more significant in the New Testament (Manser 1977:259). The emphasis on the close relation between sin and death, already pointed out by the wisdom literature, is especially illustrated by Paul (Manser 1977:259).

Another aspect, which has its roots in the late scriptures of the Old Testament but is mentioned only randomly, finds its full expression in the New Testament and changes the understanding of death completely (Manser 1977:259). The hope for the *resurrection* of the dead is justified by the belief in the divine victory over death, which is given account of in the New Testament (1 Cor 15:12) (Jüngel 1971:103). Paul proclaims, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you” (Rom 8:11) (Manser 1977:271).

No longer should death be understood in isolation; its meaning becomes clear only from the perspective of Christ's death and resurrection (Manser 1977:259). Jüngel states, “Was es mit dem Tode letztlich auf sich hat, hat sich nach neutestamentlicher Auffassung im Tode Jesu Christi entschieden. Und was sich im Tode Jesu Christi entschieden hat, das wurde in der Auferweckung Jesu Christi von den Toten offenbar” (1971:103). Christ overcame “diesen Tod der das eigentliche Leben immer zum uneigentlichen Leben macht” (Manser 1977:259).

This new aspect of the transformation of death is concerned with two unique moments in a New Testament understanding of death, which cannot yet be found in the Old Testament (Manser 1977:259). First, death should be understood from the death of *one* unique human being, Jesus Christ (Manser



1977:259). Second, both life and death should be perceived from the fundamental human relationship with Christ (Manser 1977:260). While in the Old Testament death stands to some degree in contrast to the living Yahweh and is experienced as painful separation and isolation from God's grace, this contrast is entirely revoked in the New Testament (Manser 1977:260).

In the New Testament, a significant putting into perspective of life and death takes place: both life and death are *relativised* (Jüngel 1971:106). The relativation of death in faith is no mere speculation, but originates in a concrete event, i.e. the cross and resurrection of Christ and its impact on each individual human being (Manser 1977:261). While in the Old Testament life is perceived as the highest good as it allows for the glorification and praise of God (Is 38:18f), Christ can be glorified through both life and death (Phil 1:20) (Jüngel 1971:106; Manser 1977:260). In Christ, life and death are put into a new relation to each other, since both are fundamentally determined by Christ (Jüngel 1971:106; Manser 1977:260).

Louw asserts, "Christ's death radically revolutionises the nature and character of death; it becomes an event of salvation" (Louw 2006:434; also Manser 1977:266ff; Migliore 1990:261). Manser confirms, "Der Tod hat damit für den Glaubenden seinen entgeltigen Vernichtungscharakter und seine entsetzliche Grausamkeit verloren" (1977:268). Death in all its facets and manifestations in human life has been overcome by means of the salvific deed of God in Christ's death and resurrection (Manser 1977:269).

As regards the understanding of death in the biblical records on Jesus of Nazareth, the re-evaluation of death in life and life before death in the form of a confrontation of paradoxes concerning the common understanding of life and death plays a vital role (Ebner 2005:79). The reassessment of life and death in the *Synoptic Gospels* starts off from the experience that one can be "dead" within a living body, but in the midst of life also escape the forfeit to death, "rise" and become alive again (Ebner 2005:79).<sup>63</sup> The paradoxical relationship between life and death is, for instance, expressed in Mark 8:35: "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the

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<sup>63</sup> Compare Louw's comprehensive understanding of death as the destruction of relationships (2004:2).

gospel will save it” (also Mt 10:39; Mt 16:25; Lk 9:24; Lk 17:33) (Ebner 2005:79).<sup>64</sup>

Aphorisms such as this assign the binary oppositions of death and life to each other in a way that is against all common appearances in order to contextualise the terms anew (Ebner 2005:80). The gain of life is explicitly assigned to following Jesus (Mk 10:17ff) and is promised to those who are willing to let go of what is commonly judged as important (Mk 8:35) (Ebner 2005:83). It is no longer life and death *per se* that are significant for the relation to God, but the central and only criterion is Christ and *faith* in him (Jüngel 1971:106; Manser 1977:260). This putting into perspective requires a concept of life that is totally determined by Christ, and the conviction that death does not entail a separation from Christ, but communion with him (Hoffmann, quoted in Manser 1977:261). Only the relation to Christ in faith illuminates the true meaning of human life and death (Manser 1977:261).

In connection with faith as the central criterion for life and death, Dirschauer especially refers to the accounts of the raising of the dead in the Synoptic Gospels (1979:67). In Jesus’ reversal of a death that has already occurred, like that of the young man in the town Nain (Lk 7:15), the daughter of Jaïrus (Mt 9:24) and the boy who is possessed by evil spirits (Mk 9:26), God’s unbound reality becomes evident, which surpasses the limitations of a linear understanding of life and a punctual view of death (Dirschauer 1979:68). Mark ascribes the following expression to Jesus: “Everything is possible for him who believes” (Mk 9:23). It becomes clear that in faith even the seemingly fixed boundaries between life and death can be overcome, as the central criterion for life is faith in the One who *is* life.

Moltmann refers to the raisings of the dead as signs of the rebirth of life and portents of the recreation of all things in the context of faith (1997:68). In faith, God’s Spirit is experienced as the Spirit and power of the resurrection of Christ (Moltmann 1997:68). The raisings of the dead, which are given account

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<sup>64</sup> Ebner points out that these deep expressions of faith are, in a nutshell, firmly rooted in the tradition of Stoic philosophy (2005:79). These statements, which at first sight appear absurd or nonsensical, aim to turn established social standards of value upside down (Ebner 2005:80). They are only understandable to those who are accustomed to Stoic philosophy, respectively the Christian gospel (Ebner 2005:80).

of in the New Testament, serve as “Vorboten der Auferstehungswelt, die den Tod vertreibt” (Moltmann 1997:68) and belong to the sphere of the charismatic renewal of life that comes along with the kingdom of God.

Other biblical accounts illustrate in a similar manner Jesus’ radicalising attitudes toward life and death, revealing their dubious nature and limitations, and illustrating the new dimension of life experienced in the presence of God (Dirschauer 1979:68). In the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32), for instance, Jesus makes highly peculiar statements about human life and death by associating life with repentance (Dirschauer 1979:70; Ebner 2005:97). The father who prepares for a big feast does that with the words, “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Lk 15:24). What the son called life, i.e. to take the share of his father’s inheritance and leave his family’s house, was death in his father’s eyes (Dirschauer 1979:71). Instead, the father speaks of life when the son, after having lost everything and literally being at the end, seems dead but returns home (Dirschauer 1979:71).

It becomes clear that the semantic identification of the parable refers to dead as lost, and alive as found (Ebner 2005:97). Ebner points out that the parable interprets *active* repentance as *being found* and describes a dialectic process of active human change and divine initiative (2005:98). He claims, “Gott sucht den Menschen, bis er ihn findet. Der Mensch seinerseits lässt sich finden” (Ebner 2005:98). The son’s homecoming is interpreted as a transition to new life, as he finds his way back from death to life (compare Eze 18:32) (Ebner 2005:99). Dirschauer argues that the father’s merciful response not only *relativises* the life of the son, considered forfeit in the sight of the law of the Torah and of piety, but life and death generally become less important than God’s loving reality, which was demonstrated through Christ’s life and death (1979:72).

Other records on Jesus in the *Johannine writings* point to the understanding that the true mystery of life is revealed in Jesus’ own dying: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (Jn 12:24) (Ebner 2005:91). Ebner indicates that the way to death of the kernel of wheat is a well-known image in the ancient world regarding the necessary condition for the

sprouting of new life (2005:91). In John 12:24, it appears as associated with the concrete life of Jesus and in relation to Jesus' followers (Ebner 2005:91).

At the same time, the Son's coming down to earth and his death are viewed in the mirror of the secret of the kernel of wheat (Ebner 2005:92). It is the death of the Son, i.e. the explicit low point of his condescension, which appears as the indispensable prerequisite for his exaltation (Ebner 2005:92). Ebner points to the close correlation between John 12:24 and 25 (2005:92). The unexpected turning point from death to life in verse 24, which is expressed in the comparison of the dying kernel with the abundance of the resulting fruit, is taken up from an anthropological and eschatological perspective in verse 25 (Ebner 2005:92). In contrast to the love of life, which results in the eschatological loss of life, hatred of life in the light of the love for Christ leads to the eschatological preservation of life (Ebner 2005:92). From that it becomes clear that the bearing of fruit in terms of the gain of *true* life is only possible at the risk of one's life, i.e. death, in the discipleship of Jesus (Ebner 2005:93).<sup>65</sup>

As regards the *corpus paulinum*, argumentatively especially dense parts concerning the subject of life and death are Romans 5-8, 1 Corinthians 15:12-57 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (Strecker 2005:260). Despite the intensity and persistence with which Paul addresses human death and frailty, these passages illustrate that the sphere of death in many ways remains related to that of *life* (Strecker 2005:260). The central issue is not the dimension of death and dying *per se*, but its manifold interwovenness with life (Strecker 2005:260). Recurrently, Paul refers to the paradoxical life-giving and life-shaping dynamics of death and dying, which appear as closely related to the believer's baptism in Christ's death (Rom 6) (Strecker 2005:260). In Pauline theology, the vital power of death condenses into this very ritual, as many individual, socio-cultural, as well as cosmic-historical processes of

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<sup>65</sup> The emphasis on the individual gain of life in John 12:25 is congruent with the symbolic power of the kernel of wheat in various ancient mystery cults (Ebner 2005:94). In the image of the constantly regenerating vitality of nature, the followers of the mystery cults are called to find a symbol for the overcoming of their own fate to death (Ebner 2005:94). New life is only possible in the encounter with death and by means of an apparent destruction of life (Ebner 2005:94). Accordingly, in the symbol of the ear of corn, which rises and bears rich fruit precisely because it dies, the worshippers are promised an individual future beyond death (Ebner 2005:95).

transformation are established in baptism, which serve the gain of life or initiate totally new life (Strecker 2005:261).

Concerning the main emphasis of the exploration of death and dying in the Pauline writings, Strecker identifies six semantic fields (2005:273). First, by means of the image of “falling asleep”, Paul speaks rather neutrally about death as the *physical* end of life in the here and now (1 Thes 4:13ff, 1 Cor 7:39) (Strecker 2005:273). He also introduces death and frailty in a *mystical* tint as the basic condition of being human and the whole of creation due to the Fall (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21f) (Strecker 2005:273). In this connection, Paul refers to death as the “last enemy” to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26) (Strecker 2005:273). Death can also appear as *existential* figure referring to life being corrupted by sin or the human subjection to the power of sin (Rom 7:10ff; 2 Cor 7:10) (Strecker 2005:273). Death also plays an important role in Paul’s *juridical-eschatological* statements as the punishing consequence of a sinful life (Rom 1:32; 1 Cor 15:56) (Strecker 2005:273). Of central importance in the *corpus paulinum* is the *Christological* dimension of death, i.e. Christ’s death on the cross as the expiating, reconciling, liberating deed on behalf of all human beings (Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 5:7) (Strecker 2005:273f). Eventually, Paul can use death *soteriologically* in the sense that, through communion with Christ, which has been established in baptism, believers have died off from sin, cosmos and law (Strecker 2005:274). Individuals encounter the new life that has been opened up through Christ in the form of death, which is present at all times (Rom 6:2; Rom 8:36; 2 Cor 4:10ff) (Strecker 2005:274). The destructive power of death, according to 2 Corinthians 4:16, is only directed toward the “external being” of the believer, while the “inner being” is part of an opposite movement, which grants it constant renewal and new life every day resulting in total transformation of the mortal body (Rom 8:17ff; 1 Cor 15:12ff) (Strecker 2005:274).

What we can take from this is that Paul does not distinguish sharply between life and death, as they are both essentially relativised (Strecker 2005:274). The manifold dimensions of life and death overlap in such a way that the Apostle can simultaneously speak of death *in* life, life *against* death, which is the life of the believer that is still subject to death as the “last enemy”, and eventually of *eternal* life of the dead beyond death (Strecker 2005:274). It is

significant in the Pauline understanding of death that believers are perceived as being part of a salvation-dynamic movement, which entails that they have already died off from the concrete power of death, but are still subject to death in so far as the final eschatological defeat of death is still outstanding (1 Cor 15:26) (Strecker 2005:274). Strecker summarises Paul's understanding as follows:

Losgelöst von der alten Existenz unter der Herrschaft des Todes und zugleich jenes gänzlich neuen Status, der sich erst mit der Auferstehung einstellen wird, noch harrend, eingelassen mithin in eine vitale Wandlungsdynamik, die zwar angebrochen, aber noch nicht vollendet ist, verortet der Apostel das aktuelle Leben der Christusgläubigen insofern offenkundig in der Schwellenphase eines umfassenden Transformationsprozesses (2005:275).

According to Paul, the entry into the phase of transformation happens in *baptism* that opens up and marks a life in transition between the *already* and *not yet* of eschatology (Strecker 2005:275). This conviction is based on the strange proceedings in baptism (Rom 6-8), as it is said of baptised believers that they have already died, and have died alongside Christ (Rom 6:4) (Jüngel 1971:107). In baptism, the individual is taken into Jesus' death, dies together with him, without being spared actual death as the end of life (Rom 6:3-9) (Manser 1977:270). Accordingly, Jüngel argues, "Der Glaubende blickt auf seinen Tod bereits zurück, obwohl er noch sterben wird" (1971:107).

As the baptised are already looking back on their own death, their present life can no longer be their own: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20) (Jüngel 1971:107). Paul concludes, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him" (Rom 6:8) (Jüngel 1971:107). This new life that is throughout determined and owned by Jesus Christ differs fundamentally from natural human life in that it *comes out* of death instead of leading into death (Jüngel 1971:108). All those who belong to Christ and partake in his life already come out of death, even though they still have to die (Jüngel 1971:108). In a like manner, Louw claims that due to the resurrection of Christ, "our whole life attains a new direction: »we too might walk in the newness of life«" (2006:314). Our new *ontic* status through the new creation in Christ, i.e. the eschatological reality in which we live, is from a theological perspective linked to Christ and the work of the Spirit, i.e. the

pneumatological qualification of embodiment (Louw 2006:314). This incorporates a tremendous new understanding of the relation between life and death. Even in the deepest valley of death, we walk in the newness of life.

Furthermore, the sort of dying that the baptised still have to endure is fundamentally different from the death that human life leads to (Jüngel 1971:108). The death of the believer does no longer enter into competition with life (Jüngel 1971:108). Jüngel refers to John 11:25f, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (1971:108). In the same pointed language, John 5:24 promises, “whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (Jüngel 1971:108).

Baptism marks the transition from the Adamitic sphere of sin and death into the space of grace, justice and life opened up in Christ (Rom 6; also Rom 5:12-21) (Strecker 2005:276). The talk of the believer’s dying and being buried with Christ in baptism refers both to the termination of the old existence under sin as well as the passage and transition into a new sphere of life and power, i.e. “die Eröffnung einer Art Existenz im *Zwischen*” (Strecker 2005:276f). Presently, believers live as those who have already been buried with Christ in baptism in some kind of transition phase, which will be brought to an end in the coming resurrection from the dead (Rom 6:5) (Strecker 2005:278).<sup>66</sup>

Jüngel points out that here the language of faith dares to think and proclaim the outrageous, i.e. that the resurrection from the dead, which at best

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<sup>66</sup> Strecker points out that a classic three-phase-structure of thanatological rites of initiation and passage becomes evident in Paul’s argumentation concerning baptism, i.e. (1) *separation* from the former status; (2) phase of *transition* or transformation; (3) entry into a *new status* (2005:279). In many cultures, rites of burial are designed in extended, multistage processes (Strecker 2005:263). Most common is the phenomenon of the second interment (Strecker 2005:263). The first burial of the dead body is followed by a second interment, in which the remaining bones are buried once again (Strecker 2005:263).

The social significance of the intermediate phase concerning the coming to terms with the challenge, which the death of a socially integrated individual poses to every community, is noteworthy (Strecker 2005:263). The biological process of a degeneration to bones is associated with a complex dynamic of *transformation*, during which the dead person develops into a member of the community of the ancestors and the bereaved successively constitute themselves as new community without the deceased (Strecker 2005:263).

In this context, death does not merely refer to a moment of total destruction, but transformation on a personal and social level (Strecker 2005:263); hence, the connection to a rite of initiation (Strecker 2005:263). Strecker points out that, in the intermediary transition phase between the first and second interment, the dead do not live any longer but are also not yet fully handed over to death, i.e. the spheres of death and life dissolve in an “in-between”, a so-called “neither-nor” (2005:263).

is acceptable at the end of all things, has already taken place: “Jesus, getötet am Kreuz, lebt” (1971:109). New being is put into words, which generally cannot find any words (Jüngel 1971:109). If Jesus is believed to have been brought back to life from the dead, then this means the presence of the end of time in midst of time, i.e. Judgement Day in midst of the course of time (Jüngel 1971:110). Thereafter, the course of the world with all its further history and remaining time needs to be assessed differently, i.e. in terms of a new history, a new understanding of time in the light of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Jüngel 1971:110). Through Christ’s death and resurrection, death has lost its historical power, for God made death a place of revelation of God’s love and divinity (Manser 1977:268).

Due to the relativation of life and death in the *corpus paulinum*, it might seem that it does not matter whether we live or die (Jüngel 1971:107). On the contrary, to Paul death does not have the same or even a higher value than life (Jüngel 1971:107). If death appears welcome to him, it is only because dying does not commit the person into the hands of death, but under the lordship of the One who overcame death and lives (Jüngel 1971:107). Paul states, “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (Rom 14:9; also Rom 6:9) (Jüngel 1971:107).

Manser believes that the painful reality of death in the world leads to the question of the “Where from?” of death (1977:262). It has already become clear that, according to Paul, the sort of death that the believer has already died has a *negative* connotation (Jüngel 1971:111). This is the kind of death that one should fear, as it is the result of sin in form of God’s judgement: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23; also Rom 5:12) (Jüngel 1971:111; Louw 2006:434; Manser 1977:262ff). This relates to the juridical-eschatological dimension of death as described by Strecker (2005:273). This death is the consequence of sin as it results from the existential human urge to leave the life-giving relationship with God (Jüngel 1971:111). This corresponds to the Old Testament understanding of death, which in all its facets needs to be understood as the result of the human urge to break this fundamental relationship (Jüngel 1971:99).

Consequently, the death that the sinner has to die is characterised by forfeiting life and the divine right to live granted by God (Jüngel 1971:113). In



line with the mystical and existential dimension of death described by Strecker, the death that the believer has already died can be referred to as a death due to God's curse, which the New Testament describes as a reigning power that human beings are handed over to (Rom 5:14,17) (Jüngel 1971:113). This form of death is the death that human beings bring onto themselves (Jüngel 1971:113). According to Jüngel, "der Fluchtod herrscht in der Konsequenz unseres Tuns" (1971:113,120). As such, it is the end of human life in terms of a horrible ending, i.e. end as a breaking off from the relationship with God.

In baptism, this kind of death due to a curse has already taken place for the believer (Jüngel 1971:120). Jüngel claims that death does not have to be death due to a curse, that it can be an end without horror, even gain (1971:113). That is what is meant when Paul claims, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20): human beings have been released from the death due to a curse that human beings bring onto themselves as a consequence of their actions (Jüngel 1971:113; Dirschauer 1979:75; Reicke 1962:914). Christ cut the bond between sin and death by victoriously taking both on himself (Reicke 1962:914). Louw argues, "He died vicariously in our place and so redeems us, not only from the guilt and penalty of death under the wrath of God, but also from the power of death" (2006:434).

The victory of life over death was eventually proven in the resurrection, which deprived death of its finality and fatality (1 Cor 15:55f) (Louw 2006:434). The liberation from death due to sin in Christ's expiatory sacrifice results in a new founding of relations within which alone life is possible (Jüngel 1971:114; Manser 1977:267). The creation of these new relations refers to the *condition humaine*, which is a creational act that creates the human being anew based on a new relationship with God (Jüngel 1971:114). Paul claims, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17) (Jüngel 1971:114). We can say that the old being no longer exists (Rom 7:6; Gal 2:19; Gal 6:14; 2 Cor 5:15) (Manser 1977:270).

Jüngel states that it is part of these new relations that the end of human life is something else than a breaking off (1971:115). He asserts, "Gottes

schöpferisches Verhältnis zum Menschen schließt den Abbruch dieses Verhältnisses aus, nicht aber das Ende des menschlichen Lebens” (Jüngel 1971:115).<sup>67</sup> In addition to birth as the creative beginning, we will have to learn to perceive the end that God makes as a blessing too: “Das Ende, das *Gott* macht!” (Jüngel 1971:115). Jüngel points out that the end of human life, which is liberated from death due to curse, can be met in a *passivity* that is characterised by the activity of the creator (1971:116). There is a passivity, without which the human being would not be human (Jüngel 1971:116). The divine activity of “bringing to an end” fundamentally rules out human participation (Jüngel 1971:116).

As regards a pastoral approach to death and dying, it is essential to note that death as the divinely-ordained end of life is a fundamental part of human life, as its good limitation (Jüngel 1971:116). Steffensky speaks of dying as the situation of our last and absolute neediness, against which we by ourselves do not have any helpful resistance to offer (2006:223). The sort of human death, which is liberated from the curse of dying can now be regarded as *natural* death, in the sense that the end of being is part of being human (Jüngel 1971:117). The believer does not have to fear death, as it was deprived of its power in Christ’s death and resurrection.

To summarise the biblical understanding of death and dying, various attitudes toward death have been identified in the scriptures of the Old Testament that do indeed stand in some tension toward each other (Manser 1977:271). On the one hand, God is acknowledged as having the power over life and death; on the other hand, premature death appears as a consequence of the correlation between human doing and enduring (Manser 1977:271). The image of the good death at old age after a full and blessed life exists side by side with the understanding of the *sheol* as the absolute remoteness from God (Manser 1971:271). Death is perceived as both a natural and always a *human*

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<sup>67</sup> Jüngel elaborates on the important difference between *end* and breaking off (1971:115). An end differs theologically from a breaking off in the sense that nothing follows on a breaking off; beyond that which is broken off, there is only pure nothingness (Jüngel 1971:115). In contrast, the One who follows on an end is God (Jüngel 1971:115). Beyond that which is brought to an end, there is not nothingness, but the same God who was there from the very beginning (Jüngel 1971:115). It is essential to realise that the biblical understanding of the creator in terms of the creature entails both beginning *and* end (Jüngel 1971:115).

phenomenon. It is experienced as a painful and terrible disruption of relationships, while expected as the natural, sometimes even welcomed end of human life (Manser 1977:271). Altogether it becomes clear that for the Old Testament believer death never takes place outside of the dominion of God.

Death in the Old Testament appears as a lesson in human humility, which reminds us that life and death are not at our own disposal, but gracious gifts of God. Being put in the situation of a self-denying waiting for death, we are referred to the basic condition of our being human, i.e. essential *neediness* of the relationship with God. The biblical scriptures on the whole characterise human death more as a passive meeting of one's end of life, and less as a conscious action, which is in danger of turning into heroism (Manser 1977:272). The biblical understanding of death and dying points toward a passive surrender to God in dying, in which the radical seriousness of dying heralds its insoluble tension (Manser 1977:272).

Even the New Testament scriptures do not completely solve the mystery and enigmatic nature of death (Manser 1977:271). Even after the cross that revealed the brutality and agony of death and Christ's subsequent *resurrection* that is a sign of the victory of divine life over death, one needs to admit that in many aspects human death remains inexplicable, even for the believer (Manser 1977:272).

Nevertheless, the New Testament understanding of death should be valued as more than a possible, rather a true response to the question after death (Manser 1977:272). The accountability of this response lies in faith, as Jüngel proclaims, "Nichts ist verbindlicher als der Glaube an Gott" (1971:39). According to Jüngel, it became evident that the accountability of a possible answer to the question about death needs to be the accountability of faith, which is a special accountability in its own right, as unlike any other approach it is capable of offering a *liberating* response (1971:39).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> In connection with this, it is once again necessary to be aware of Louw's elaborations on the asymmetry of the Chalcedonian Pattern, which deals with the interdisciplinary relationship between theology and other disciplines within the humanities (1998:100).

As regards the liability of faith, Jüngel adds that it is characterised by a binding of the human consciousness in order to become aware of the subject of faith (1971:39). The liability of faith is an assurance, which *liberates* from uncertainty as well as false bindings and provides individuals with a

## 4.2. Life Care as the Outcome of a Theology of Death and Dying

From the comparison of prominent psychological and philosophical approaches to death and dying with biblical perspectives, it becomes clear that significant parallels exist between the three approaches at hand. In all three approaches, for instance, human death appears in the horizon of life, is taken absolutely seriously as a painful reality in human life and is not dealt with by means of a mystification of death (compare Manser 1977:273f).

Nonetheless, a theology of death and dying is aware of the considerable need for modification of both the psychological and philosophical approaches as regards, for instance, the strict contrast between life and death that is relativised before God, Christ's death on the cross that opened up the possibility for a death in salvation, the total transformation of death through the resurrection and the believer's anticipated dying alongside with Christ (compare Manser 1977:273f).

As a result, a relevant theology of death and dying continuously needs to take note of the findings of a psychology and philosophy of death and dying, as the encounter between God and human beings that presupposes the meeting of divine with human reality calls for a constant exchange between theology and the human sciences (Louw 1998:108). Simultaneously, theology needs to confront psychology and philosophy with the main characteristics of a biblical understanding of death, which is based on faith in God and God's faithfulness towards human beings as revealed in Scripture (compare Manser 1977:274). A theology of death and dying has the special responsibility to relate God to one of the most central events of human life, which is death as the inevitable end thereof (Manser 1977:275).

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liberating response to the question about human death (Jüngel 1971:40). This liberty of faith culminates in the liberating exclamation in 1 Corinthians 15:55: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (Jüngel 1971:41).

The central question that we are dealing with at this stage is how the previous theological outline and basic theories regarding a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology affect the view on terminal care. We need to reflect on the interplay between biblical findings regarding human life and death, theological anthropology and a pastoral hermeneutics, and the implications thereof on a theological understanding of terminal care as life care. In connection with that, first of all, we need to take a look at the experience of death and dying from a more spiritual perspective.

### **A Theology of Death and Dying: The Faithfulness of God Throughout Death**

Louw refers to the general crisis of the dying as their “parting crisis” (2006:426). He believes that the crisis of dying is essentially about parting from loved ones (Louw 2006:426). In a like manner, Gerkin states that the anguish experienced by the dying is often felt as *forsakenness*: “It is as if one has been left to die” (1979:95). Gerkin believes that what the dying fear most is to be abandoned to their fate (1979:95).<sup>69</sup> This has been confirmed by the research of Kübler-Ross, Barton and others (compare Gerkin 1979:100). The fundamental fear of being abandoned applies to loved ones, professional personnel in care, as well as to God (Gerkin 1979:95).

Jüngel emphasises that one should not misread fear of death as cowardice (1971:162). As has been pointed out earlier, it is rather an existential anxiety of the human being, who is concerned and worried about her or his threatened presence (Jüngel 1971:162). Fear of death is closely related to the human dependency on hope (Jüngel 1971:162). Many of the fears and questions raised by death directly reflect our concerns about the meaning and quality of life (Griffin 1990:647). Jüngel stresses that we should listen to our fear of death in order to overcome it, as it cannot be combated (1971:163). Faith is

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<sup>69</sup> It is worthy to take note of Buckman’s understanding that fear of dying is not a single but a blend of many emotions (2000:149). He states, “every human being will have a different and unique combination of fears and concerns in facing the prospect of dying” (Buckman 2000:149).

Amongst the common fears about dying he identifies fears about *physical* illness and *psychological* effects, fears about *dying*, i.e. existential fears and religious concerns, and *treatment*, fears that involve *family* and friends or *finances*, social status and occupation (Buckman 2000:150). These fears elaborated on by Buckman correspond to the needs of the dying illustrated by Louw (2006:430).

perceived as a most helpful approach to the fear of death as it neither excludes nor creates it artificially – but *responds* to it (Jüngel 1971:163).

Being called to respond in faith to the human fear of death is the critical watershed where the question of God's presence or absence in suffering becomes vital for the dying individual or those who care for her or him: "Where is God in this new and anguished situation?" (Gerkin 1979:95). Gerkin poses the crucial question, "On what basis or with what empowerment can the pastor (or others, for that matter) open himself or herself to the stark and unrelenting pain of living with the other toward death?" (1979:100).

The same question applies to dying individuals: On what basis or with what empowerment can the dying person open himself or herself to the stark and unrelenting pain of parting from loved ones and life itself? As illustrated earlier, common responses to that question in terms of a psychology of death and dying suggest that individuals somehow will have to come to terms with their own death, feel and think themselves through the anguish of their own death in some sort of anticipation in order to marshal the courage to enter the tight place of death with another person (Gerkin 1979:101). The expectation exists that even the dying themselves somehow will have to come to terms with their dying and find the strength to face death within their own inner potential. This standpoint is also maintained in Kübler-Ross' and Barton's client-centred approaches to a psychology of death and dying.

Gerkin argues, "From a theological perspective this seems indeed an inadequate proposal" (1979:101). He suggests that a more solid basis needs to be found in order to create the willingness and strength to suffer through somebody's death with another individual (Gerkin 1979:101). The same is true for the dying individual – the need arises for a more solid basis and stronger empowerment to face death and overcome the fear of dying, being abandoned and parting from loved ones. As pointed out by Louw earlier, "*Nobody* can cope with death by him- or herself" (2006:429), neither the dying themselves, nor their caregivers or the bereaved who are left behind.

Moltmann argues that the Spirit as the power of the resurrection is vastly superior to death, its terrors and all fears related to death and dying (1997:39). Against a client-centred presupposition that the courage to face death or accompany another person through the portal of death lies in the individual's

inner potential, Moltmann asserts, “Die Gewissheit, zu bleiben und nicht zu fallen, gründet nicht in der Seelenstärke der Glaubenden, sondern in der Treue Gottes zu seiner Berufung: »Er wird euch festhalten bis ans Ende« (1 Kor 1,8-9)” (1997:39). The courage and strength to face death lies in the faithfulness of God who will keep the dying and their caregivers strong to the end. In connection with that, Louw points out that the dying are essentially in need of “a *Friend*, Jesus Christ, who will meet them in the moment of departure and accompany them through death” (2006:426). In a like manner, Moltmann argues, “In dying, Christ, became the brother of the dying. In death, he became the brother of the dead. In his resurrection – as the One risen – he embraces the dead and the living, and takes them with him on his way to the consummation of God’s kingdom” (1996, quoted in Ackermann 2004:50).

Unlike what popular approaches to a psychology of death and dying propose, from a perspective of faith the “sense of aliveness” (Barton 1979:25) in the process of dying does not lie in a person’s ability to adapt (Louw 2006:429).<sup>70</sup> A sense of aliveness despite death that helps the dying to cope with the fear of parting can only originate in faith in the living God who has overcome death and freed “those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb 2:15). In contrast to a psychology of death and dying, in terms of a theology of death and dying, we do not have to cope with dying by ourselves, if we ourselves are dying, care for the dying or mourn the dead.

In connection with that, Manser claims that a relevant theology of death and dying has the unique opportunity to accept the painful mystery of death, which becomes evident in psychological approaches, but simultaneously offer hermeneutical means to fathom this mystery (1977:276). He suggests the development of a new kind of *ars moriendi* that combats death being put under taboo and challenges the widespread understanding of death as a sudden, unexpected catastrophe hitting human life, while offering assistance and support regarding the preparation for a good death (Manser 1977:281).

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<sup>70</sup> Louw’s general understanding of a theology of death and dying (2006:429ff) strongly builds on and develops further the research undertaken by Barton concerning a “psychology of death” (1979:23).

Even though the practice of a modified *ars moriendi* could teach us to perceive death as an inevitable fact of human life, Jüngel strongly objects to the assertion that the believer is an artist of dying (1971:162). The believer cannot be the maker of her or his own good death, for in an art of dying the human “I” is unbearably overestimated (Jüngel 1971:162). This strongly relates to the criticism of a psychology of death and dying that rests on an optimistic overestimation of inner human potential. Accordingly, Jüngel calls an *ars moriendi* the most sophisticated way of making oneself interesting to oneself, even in the mode of annulment (1971:162).

Althaus confirms that dying is primarily a *passive* suffering through, not the active deed of an autonomous self (1962:916). Once again, Steffensky’s claim that dying entails a last and final surrender to God, in which we get closer to God by leaving ourselves behind, comes to mind (2006:223). Althaus pursues Steffensky’s argument further by stating, “Aber Gott gibt uns die Möglichkeit, wie alles Erleiden, so auch dieses im Gehorsam gegen seine Führung anzunehmen und zu leben” (1962:916). Dying can, despite all passivity, be an active deed in the sense that we surrender to God and obediently hand ourselves over to God’s care and providence.

In a like manner, Härle defines death as the entry into and unlimited duration of the condition of complete *passivity* (2000:633). Against Jüngel’s assertion that death is the end of all relationships, i.e. “der Tod ist das Ereignis der die Lebensverhältnisse total abbrechenden *Verhältnislosigkeit*” (1971:145), Härle argues that death is only the end of all *active* possibilities, including all active relationships (2000:633). Consequently, dying is perceived as the process in which human beings let go or are deprived of their active possibilities (Härle 2000:633).

This element of a *passio* in death and dying refers to a significant closeness between death and faith (Härle 2000:633). Faith can be regarded as practice toward death in connection with still existing active possibilities, while dying as the ratification of faith considers all active possibilities as coming to an end (Härle 2000:633). The *passio* of death includes the end of all active human possibilities and activities, but not the loss of the relationship with God or being excluded from eternal life (Härle 2000:633). In death human beings reach the highest possible participation in divine life, since their total communion with God



cannot be disturbed any longer through high-handed human willing and choosing (Härle 2000:633).

Härle believes that the self-denying surrender in love of faith is radicalised in the process of dying (2000:633).<sup>71</sup> Dying appears as the call to let go of everything that is dear to a human being – without any back-up security but completely trusting God (Härle 2000:633). The letting go of one's own life and the loved opposite is the greatest demand and challenge that death puts to love (Härle 2000:634). Härle proclaims, "Dass darin die Liebe den Tod überwindet ist die *eschatologische Antithese* zu der Vermutung des Unglaubens, dass der Tod das letzte Wort behalte – auch gegenüber der Liebe" (2000:634).

This becomes clearer when we take into consideration Louw's statement that *eschatology*, as the basic principle for pastoral care, serves as the crucial linkage between death and life, and hope and fear (1998:59). In the expiatory death of Christ, eschatology touches on the element of death and dying: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death" (Rom 6:4) (Louw 1998:59). The human being whose life was determined by sin and doomed to death has died alongside Christ in baptism. At the same time, eschatology deals with the dynamics of resurrection and life: "And God raised us up with Christ" (Eph 2:6) so that "we too may live a new life" (Rom 6:4) (Louw 1998:59).

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<sup>71</sup> Härle argues, in love that life praxis and life movement manifests, which corresponds to faith and by means of which salvation is experienced (2000:517). It is part of the mystery of love that, especially in the non-calculating love and service for another, true fulfilment is achieved and human beings find themselves (Härle 2000:517). Härle states, "Der Mensch erreicht seine Bestimmung zum Ebenbild Gottes, dessen Wesen die Liebe ist, indem er von der Fixierung auf sich selbst loskommt und gerade so sich selbst findet" (2000:517). Never are human beings more with themselves than when they care for another individual in a self-denying manner (Härle 2000:517).

Human beings need to be enabled to this kind of self-dying service by means of the unconditional love of God, which they cannot earn and do not deserve (Härle 2000:517). The individual who knows that she or he is loved, i.e. who lives out of the love that we have already received, does not have to worry about the self or one's salvation, but is freed to serve others, convey to them the experience of being loved, and find fulfilment in it (Härle 2000:518).

The whole of Christian life praxis can be summarised in love, namely love of God (Dtr 6:5) and love of the fellow human being (Lev 19:18), which merge in the Double Commandment of Love (Härle 2000:518). Eventually, the love of the human self is not commanded explicitly, but appears as the standard for the love of the fellow human being (Härle 2000:518). Within the love of the fellow human being, love of the neighbour (Mk 12:31), love of the enemy (Mt 5:43), and love of the brothers and sisters are distinguished (Jn 13:34) (Härle 2000:518).

The central importance of love in the context of terminal care is also acknowledged by Kübler-Ross and Kessler. In their life lesson concerning authenticity they write, "In der Auseinandersetzung mit Trauer haben die Menschen, mit denen wir gearbeitet haben, erkannt, dass die Liebe das Einzige ist, was zählt" (2003:19). They claim that love is the only thing that we can truly own, keep and take along (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2003:19). However, from a phenomenological perspective, it does not become clear what enables us to live this love and act it out.

As illustrated in the section on the concept life in the New Testament, the new life of the believer is determined not by death, but Christ's resurrection from the dead. God's loving salvation brings true life that overcame death and is determined by the resurrection of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15:20, Paul concedes, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (Louw 1998:59). However, "*But* Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Cor 15:20) (Louw 1998:59). Consequently, it is Christ's resurrection from the dead that essentially gives meaning to life (Louw 1998:59). Ackermann argues that "Life, death and resurrection all belong together – they make up the whole of life" (2004:48). A life based on hope in the resurrection will provide a continual process of faith development and growth (Louw 1998:59). Hope in the resurrection determines the believer's victory over death and imparts a future dimension to faith, based on the fulfilled promises of God (Louw 1998:59).

### **A Theodicy of Death and Dying: The Presence of God in Death and Dying**

At this point, it seems necessary to deviate and take a short look at the broad field of a theological *theodicy*, as far as its relevance in the context of a theology of death and dying is concerned. The close connection between the anguish of dying and the question about the presence or absence of God in suffering has already been pointed out earlier in the thesis (compare Gerkin 1979:95). A "theodicy of death and dying" is helpful in the sense that what has been argued regarding the significance of the God-human relationship in connection with a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology, merges in the question of the justification of God in the anguish caused by death and dying.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Louw defines theodicy, *theos dike*, as the aim to justify God in the light of evil and suffering in the world (2000:25). It is a human attempt to justify God's goodness and handling of affairs, as well as to believe simultaneously and with logical consistency that "God is omnipotent and benevolent, and evil is real" (Louw 2000:25). The necessity of the theodicy-question is based on the assumption that a sufferer's God image is fundamental to the way in which she or he works through suffering (Louw 2000:12).

Louw points out that suffering sets in "where our human power to manage and to understand is limited" (2000:17). Suffering, as a theological problem creates tension between the belief in God's sovereignty and power, on the one hand, and God's solidarity and pathos, on the other hand (Louw 2000:15). Accordingly, God is either perceived as too small or too big to deal with human suffering (Louw

Gerkin argues that it is the main task of pastoral theology to restore “a potent sense of divine participation in human life” (1979:310; also Manser 1977:275). This is especially true in the context of dying as the “primary paradigm of crisis experience” (Gerkin 1977:74).<sup>73</sup> In a like manner, Louw claims that the general aim of pastoral care is to link the terminal person’s painful and miserable situation to the faithfulness of the living God (2006:187). The providence of God has often become fused with a misleading idea of protection and a guarantee of the continuity of human hopes (Gerkin 1979:311). The belief has developed that faith in God will protect human beings from all evil and suffering in the world. However, Gerkin points out that the truth of divine participation in anguish lies in “the paradox of God’s presence *and* his absence in the suffering of death” (1979:322).<sup>74</sup>

It is most enlightening to take note of what Link says about the crisis of the belief in God’s providence, as it helps us to identify the essence of God’s involvement in human life and death. Link writes about the crisis of theological interpretation relating to the extent and limitation of permissible and responsible statements about God’s involvement in suffering (2005:415). He claims that the only justifiable response concerning God’s involvement in suffering does not infer knowledge of God from the experience in the world but, vice versa, uses its claim to the profession of faith for the interpretation of experiences that we make in the world (Link 2005:418). We cannot assume a causal model regarding God’s involvement with human suffering, but should rather opt for a *relational* model, which emphasises God’s empathy and care (Link 2005:422).

2000:15). Louw points out that a rational solution is impossible to find (2000:25). Therefore, theodicy’s real value lies in the revelation of *appropriate* and *inappropriate* God-images (Louw 2000:38).

At the same time, theodicy emphasises the enigmatic nature of suffering (Louw 2000:38). Theodicy can never explain suffering on a rational level, but can help to describe and express the complexity of suffering, as well as our human struggle to come to terms with it (Louw 2000:38). The paradoxical conclusion of an attempt to justify God in the light of evil and suffering in the world is that “on the one hand, God can be linked to suffering while, on the other, He is against it” (Louw 2000:38).

<sup>73</sup> Gerkin defines crisis as “the extreme or boundary situation in which persons become aware of their finite existence” (1979:74). This understanding compels the selection of death as the primary paradigm, since death is that furthest boundary of finite existence (Gerkin 1979:74).

<sup>74</sup> Concerning a comprehensive theological reflection on finding meaning in suffering consult, for instance: Louw, DJ. (2000) *Meaning in Suffering. A Theological Reflection on the Cross and the Resurrection for Pastoral Care and Counselling*. Frankfurt am Main / Berlin / Bern / Bruxelles / New York / Wien: Peter Lang.

According to Link, the relational character of God's providence manifests in God's being present in the world through the Spirit: "Dass Gott die Welt mit seinem Geist durchdringt, ihr, ob sie's merkt oder nicht, auch in ihren dunklen, uns unbegreiflichen Aspekten mit seinem Geist gegenwärtig zu sein vermag: dass lässt sich ... in Übereinstimmung mit den biblischen Schriften sagen" (2005:425).

This statement is not only consistent with the Calvinist tradition, but also relates to Berkhof's paradoxical expression of God's "defenceless superiority" (1986, quoted in Link 2005:425). Link argues that God's providence is expressed in biblical phrases like "by the Word" or "by the Spirit" (2005:427). He emphasises, "*Vorsehung* – das ist der von Gottes Wort und Gottes Geist ausgehende »Gegenwind« (Ritsch), der unseren Entscheidungen und Lebensentwürfen eine zukunftsfähige Richtung geben will" (Link 2005:427).

As regards the vital question of finding meaning in suffering, Louw points out that through faith people are enabled to view suffering as an opportunity to discover more of God's love, grace and mercy, and develop an understanding that God is indeed involved in their suffering (2006:201). People can find comfort in the knowledge that "in His covenantal *faithfulness*, God is in control" (Louw 2006:201). Having learned to trust in God's faithful providence, care and support, people can eventually let go of all autonomous attempts to find meaning in suffering, which are doomed to fail from the beginning, as suffering in the world often surpasses human potential to grasp and deal with it (Louw 2006:201).

In connection with finding meaning in dying, Louw emphasises that suffering could – despite shortening the length of life – indeed enhance the *quality* of life, as it teaches us to take responsibility for life and acts as a "process of purification and medium of education in which we, as His children, are supported by God" (2006:201). Suffering has the ability to bring about spiritual growth and maturity in faith, and opens us up toward being more willing to serve God and our fellow human beings (Louw 2006:201).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> In *Reaching Out* (1998), Nouwen gives a moving account of the spiritual experience of suffering a life-threatening accident, "My accident brought me into the portal of death and led me to a new experience of

By acknowledging our total dependency on God and God's being in control over life and death, we can discover God's faithful presence in the darkest of moments, which is the decline and termination of human life. Confronted with death and dying, we learn to depend on God and trustingly accept the truth that God alone sustains and holds human life, and that we can do nothing but rely on God's good providence and care (Jn 15:5). We let go of the belief that we can come to terms with dying by ourselves. Such a hermeneutical approach can enhance the quality of life – in spite of death. It will lead us toward spiritual maturity and enable us to serve God and our fellow human beings, empowered by the love, grace and mercy that we have *already* received by God through the Spirit.

### **Life Care: The Guarantee of Life on the Basis of God's Fulfilled Promises**

As regards the development of a relevant theology of death and dying, Louw claims that "from the perspective of the resurrection it is clear that fear of death could only be coped with by caring for life" (2006:435; also Jüngel 1971:163). Since fear of death is mainly fear for the severance of relationships, pastoral care can only truly be care if it cares for and emphasises a relationship that "*guarantees* life in spite of death" (Louw 2006:435; also Jüngel 1971:163). Accordingly, freedom from death is the liberation toward a new relation to God and a new relation toward oneself (Jüngel 1971:161). Freedom from the power of death can only be liberation to life *and* to death (Jüngel 1971:161).

From a biblical perspective, life generally refers to the particular quality of existence consistent with God's intention for humankind (Griffin 1990:647). In the Old Testament, life appears as a divine gift to be valued but not overrated (Griffin 1990:647). As became evident in the findings of a psychology of death

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God" (1998b:137). Faced with the possibility of death, he felt more than ever that what he was living then, he had to live for others (Nouwen 1998b:138). Nouwen claims that this interruption of life, which could have been the last one, gave him "a new knowledge of God that contrasted radically with what I had learned so far" (1998b:138).

He comes to the conclusion that we can speak about life as a long process of dying to the self in order to be able to live in the joy of God and give our lives completely to others (Nouwen 1998b:158). He concedes, "It was only in the face of death that I clearly saw – and perhaps only fleeting – what life was all about" (Nouwen 1998b:158), namely dying to oneself in order to be freed to live for God and fellow human beings.

and dying on the issue of “unfinished business” or “unresolved key issues” in the last stage of life, human appreciation for life often varies depending on circumstances, perceptions, achievements, expectations and the individual sense of self. From a perspective of faith, however, the meaning of life is not given by our experiences, may they be full and joyous or empty and joyless (Griffin 1990:647). The meaning and value of life is solely given by God’s purpose and caring for life and human life can only exist within the relationship to God (Griffin 1990:647). As regards the New Testament concept of life, the central message is that Jesus Christ brought new and true life to the world, which transcends the limits of natural life (Griffin 1990:647). This completely new quality of aliveness is God’s gracious gift in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, which is both a present possession and a future hope (Griffin 1990:647).

In the context of terminal care as life care, this realisation is of central importance, especially the understanding that the new life in the Spirit is a quality that we *already* possess. Griffin emphasises that pastoral care’s contribution is to help people to become “caught up in, and respond to, God’s gift [i.e. life]” (1990:647). Pastoral care encourages people not to see themselves and their own resources as the ultimate source of value or meaning for their life, but the fullness of life, which they have received in Christ (Griffin 1990:647).

According to Jüngel, “Leben und sterben zu können ist das Geschenk” (1971:161). Here we find the whole truth about dying. The central lesson is to learn to perceive both our living and dying as a gift from God. Romans 14:8 proclaims the good news: “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Jüngel 1971:161).

We can find comfort in the knowledge that both our living and dying takes place within the dominion of God. The art of living and dying includes obediently letting go of life and trustingly giving it away bit by bit in the understanding that life and death are both part of God’s gracious gift for human beings (Henning 2004a:1723). Henning states, “Unter dem Eindruck des Evangeliums tritt der Anschein tödlicher Strafe, der über dem Sterben liegt, zugunsten der Empfindung gnädiger Heimsuchung zurück” (2004a:1723).

Consequently, pastoral care to the dying needs to be the care for a life that is guaranteed by a living God on the basis of the guaranteed promise that

has been made in the resurrection of Christ (Louw 2006:435). The aim of “*promissio-therapy*” (Louw 2006:436) is to help the believer understand that through the resurrection death has been relativised. Those who die in Christ can indeed part peacefully as they see their entire lives as complete (Louw 2006:435).

Being bestowed with the fruit of the Spirit, pneumatology enables believers to concretise the new life, which has been initiated in Christ’s death and resurrection and passed on to them in baptism, and realise the salvific gifts of the Spirit in both their living and dying. The Spirit enables the dying believer to hand her- or himself over trustfully to God in the awareness that both life and death take place under the loving care of God. Empowered by God’s Spirit, the dying can live in a vivid hope, waiting for God’s gracious retribution. Ackermann argues, “The process of the resurrection of the dead begins in Christ, and continues in the Spirit »the giver of life« and will be completed in the raising of all the dead” (2004:48). We can proclaim the good news to the dying that death is not their end, as every life remains before God forever (Ackermann 2004:48).

In *Cura Vitae – Illness and the Healing of Life in Pastoral Care and Counselling* (2006), Louw elaborates on the concept of promissiotherapy as hope care (2006:204ff). He describes promissiotherapy as the communication of God’s promises regarding people’s desperate situation in order to assist them to understand better the presence of God and stimulate hope, which motivates the individual to move forward and orientate anew (Louw 2006:204). From this it becomes clear that the Christian concept “hope” takes a central position within terminal care as life care, as it motivates the dying believer to move forward and orientate anew. Death becomes more than a mere farewell, but rather the “entry into eternal life, hand in hand with the Host who annihilated death. Death becomes life in the fullness of an encounter with the risen Christ” (Louw 2006:435). Louw points out, “Pastoral care wishes to link believers by means of Scripture to God’s fulfilled promises (promissiotherapy) so that, out of gratitude, they can accept their illness [respectively dying] as a challenge to exercise faith” (2006:187).

This is the very core of terminal care as life care: the understanding that faith in the living God who remains faithful to God’s promises is the only true response to the suffering that individuals have to undergo at the portal to death.

In faith, the distress of dying becomes “an opportunity to live God’s victory and to demonstrate faith, hope, love, and joy” (Louw 2006:187). Accordingly, the central task of terminal care as life care is to achieve an understanding of our new being in Christ, for in faith we partake in God’s victory over death as gained in the resurrection of Christ (Louw 2006:187). The dying are truly comforted when they discover what their condition already *is*, through conciliation with God and Christ’s resurrection (Louw 2006:187). Louw points out that, “From the discovery that the absolute power of illness, sin and death, as well as the element of guilt, already have been relativised in Christ, patients’ entire lives are directed, via hope, towards a new future” (2006:187).

A life care approach to terminal care should not only start in the face of imminent death, but be carried much further into life itself (Manser 1977:281). Terminal care can only be effective when it enables people to *live* meaningfully and acknowledges the need to deal with dying early in life, without merely living toward death as within a traditional *ars moriendi*. In connection with the principle of a purposeful life, Gollwitzer remarks, “zin is leven” (1974:83). The close connection between life and the meaning that is found in the God-human relationship also becomes evident in his statement, “Waar zinloos geleefd wordt, is de dood al het laatste oordeel over het leven” (Gollwitzer 1974:83). Where there is meaning in life, death *in* and at the end of life does not have the final say about human life, but becomes meaningless and powerless.

The attempt to come to terms with death as the good end of human life in the light of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology will no longer result in a doctrine of the perfection of dying and the focus of all one’s senses and mind on the world hereafter. The acceptance of death as an inevitable fact of life and the God-given end thereof will help us to perceive death as the *good* limitation of human life, which does not happen outside of the dominion of God, but is given by Godself. This is especially true since, in the Christ event that Jüngel referred to as the battle in which God got hold of death (1971:103), death has totally been transformed. The power of divine life conquered death, so that there is nothing to fear for the believer.

In connection with a life care approach to terminal care, it needs to be emphasised again that this does not imply a denial of the reality and harshness of suffering in dying (Louw 2006:187). Manser states, “Das Bedrohliche und



Schmerzliche des Todes wird durch eine ständige Auseinandersetzung des Menschen mit dem Tod nicht nivelliert, sondern der Ernst des Todes kann erst dann in seiner vollen Schwere stehengelassen werden" (1977:281).

In a like manner, Louw stresses that the victory over death in the resurrection does not involve an underestimation of pain, anguish, worry, depression, despair or the feeling of guilt, which often accompany the process of dying (2006:187f). The divine victory over death makes one even more aware of the pain and anguish in dying, as it reveals the nature of suffering as related to evil (Louw 2006:188). The victory in the resurrection becomes a struggle in faith, which reveals an opportunity to embody the meaning of hope (Louw 2006:188). Louw concedes that death, as such, remains bitter and dark and "a meaningless experience of powerlessness" (2006:435). Yet, the promise of dying in hope is "a ray of light, i.e. the forgiving closeness of a living Christ" (Louw 2006:435).

### **The Concreteness of a Life Care Approach to Terminal Care**

In connection with the concrete design of a life care approach to terminal care, Louw refers to the "liturgy of life care for the dying" (2006:435). He points out that from a pastoral perspective terminal care should include two basic elements. The first element is the proclamation of the *victory* in the resurrection, which includes the prospect of eternal life (Louw 2006:435). Pastoral care that focuses on the "soteriological consequences of Christ's death for the believer" (Louw 2006:435) can proclaim a unique message of hope to the dying: "For in this hope we were saved" (Rom 8:24). In a life care approach, death is connected to the only "person who can impart meaning to it: Jesus Christ (Phil 1:21)" (Louw 2006:435). Accordingly, deathbed ministry includes the offering of hope and victorious life to the dying (Louw 2006:436).

The second basic element of terminal care as life care is a "*liturgy* of care for life" (Louw 2006:436). Pastoral care to the dying is essentially understood as liturgical support for life, including a "gratitude to God for life" (Louw 2006:436) in which the dying believer already shares in, expressed in prayer and witnessed in praise and worship. According to Louw, "Beside the mourning crape there is, for the believer, an aura of life in the death chamber" (2006:436). These two basic elements of a life care approach to terminal care within a

“liturgy of life care for the dying” will be explored and developed further in this section.

As regards the first basic element of terminal care as life care, i.e. the proclamation of the victory in the resurrection, Louw argues that the “liturgy of life care for the dying” evolves around two important concepts: hope and eternal life, respectively heaven (2006:436). According to him, the concept *eternal life* entails “a unique quality of life guaranteed by God’s faithfulness” (Louw 2006:437) as proved in Christ’s death and resurrection. Even though we do not exactly know what eternal life is and what it entails, it should not be dismissed as a mere “projection of our passion for permanence” (2006:437). Eternal life should be understood as eternal communion with God, i.e. participation in God’s own life (Vroom 1989, quoted in Louw 2006:437; Jüngel 1971:152). Jüngel argues, “In seinem Leben [i.e. Gottes Leben] wird das unsrige geborgen sein” (1971:152), and our hereafter is essentially determined by God. The identity of a believer hereafter is characterised by the covenantal relationship with the living God as promised in grace (Louw 2006:437). Following 1 Corinthians 13:12, Jüngel points out that only then we shall know fully that *already* now we are fully known by God (1971:153).

Eternal life is not determined by a characteristic physical shape, human self-consciousness or a continuing ability of the mind, but by a *relationship* (Louw 2006:437). Louw states, “immortality is not an inherent quality in man, but the continuity of life as guaranteed in God’s faithfulness, and embodied in the resurrected body of Christ” (2006:437). Consequently, eternal life is not visible but entirely different from temporal, earthly life (Louw 2006:437). Nonetheless, there is continuity all through death, which does not lie in a psychophysical state, but in the faithful love of the living God (Louw 2006:437).

Hübner points out that in the Christian tradition, namely in the Early Church, the biblical term “eternal life” meant participation in the risen Christ and his life, which has eventually overcome death (1990:531). Eternal life was perceived as a gift of the Spirit and pointed toward the true life that, according to Cyrillus of Jerusalem, was God Godself (Hübner 1990:531). Eternal life was the life that the believer lived right through individual earthly death, the end of the world and the Last Judgement (Hübner 1990:531). It appeared as futuristic and differed even in a moral sense from earthly life (Hübner 1990:531f).

In contrast, the Reformation emphasised that salvation begins in the here and now, in faith in the executed and risen Christ (Hübner 1990:532). At the centre of the Protestant conception of eternal life lies the conviction, “Der Heilige Geist wirkt das ewige Leben im Herzen durch das Evangelium” (Hübner 1990:532). The beginning of eternal life in faith in the present, earthly existence of the believer is the reason for the vital correlation between faith and life in the Protestant tradition (Hübner 1990:532).

The concept *heaven*, which is frequently used in Christian language in the context of terminal care, generally implies a dwelling place (Louw 2006:437). In Scripture, heaven is the place from where God reigns through God’s Word (Ps 89:2-7; 119:89), which is regarded as the ultimate objective of human life (Heb 11:16; 12:22; Phil 3:14; Col 3:1-4) (Louw 2006:437). Heaven is presented as an arch over the world supported by pillars referred to as the “above”, while the earthly and temporal is regarded as the “below” (Louw 2006:438). Heaven is described as the space determined by characteristics that are unique to God, such as love, grace, mercy and charity (Louw 2006:438). In contrast to human earthly, temporal and sinful existence, heaven is an indication of God’s living presence (Louw 2006:438).

Louw points out that the term “heaven”, similar to eternal life, profoundly refers to “a qualitative condition and *communion* with God” (2006:438). The idea that heaven is a place should be dealt with carefully (Louw 2006:438). Louw refers to the research of Houtman, saying that in the Old Testament the Hebrew term *shamajim*, “heavens”, does not indicate a specific form and image, but rather an area and sphere that spans the earth (Houtman 1993, quoted in Louw 2006:438). According to Houtman, the term needs to be understood within the specific biblical context in which it appears (1993, quoted in Louw 2006:438). However, it connotes Yahweh’s presence, sovereignty and omnipotence (Houtman 1993:7, quoted in Louw 2006:438). Houtman concludes, “Actually heaven is an indication of the effectiveness of Jahwe’s dominion (lordship) over the earth and his involvement in the life of his people (1993:368)” (Louw 2006:438).

As regards the New Testament perception of heaven, the qualitative condition and communion with God can be referred to as *conciliation*, as it became evident in Christ’s reconciling deed (Louw 2006:438). The only way to heaven is

through faith in Jesus Christ: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (Jn 5:24) (Louw 2006:438).

What we can take from this is that the biblical concepts “eternal life” and “heaven” in their core essence deal with the restored God-human relationship that prevails throughout death. Eternal life refers to a quality of life that is determined by God’s faithfulness and takes place in eternal communion with God, starting already in the here and now. In a like manner, the concept “heaven” gives an indication of God’s living presence, which manifests in God’s sovereign involvement in the life of human beings. Both concepts emphasise communion with God throughout death and strongly remind one of the biblical concept of “life”. The biblical understanding of life also emphasises that true life can only be found within the relationship to God. Once again, it becomes evident that the significance of human life and death lies in the God-human relationship and that meaning in life and death can only be found within this fundamental relationship.

The second important concept regarding the proclamation of the victory in the resurrection within a “liturgy of life care for the dying” is the perspective of *hope*. Kübler-Ross confirms that the one thing that usually persists through all the stages of the dying process is hope (1969:122). Yet, as Louw points out, the kind of hope that Kübler-Ross describes is closely related to a defence mechanism against reality (2006:439). Louw argues against a hope that is merely based on a medical model: “Hope for recovery and life is strengthened and kept alive by means of medication” (2006:439). The prevailing concept of hope that Kübler-Ross refers to is not a hope that persists despite the reality of death and enables the individual to hope throughout death, as it depends strongly on the positive outcome of medical interventions.

This form of existential hope is, psychologically speaking, not without value (Louw 2006:439). Existential hope can be described as an “optimistic attitude or positive expectation with regard to medication” (Louw 2006:439; also

Beißer 2000:1826), which is human and enables us to live.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, within pastoral care, existential hope should not be allowed “to be the only form of hope at the death-bed” (Louw 2006:439), as it becomes false hope when it tries to suppress the reality of true life and death. Hope vested in mere human potential will not be able to withstand the harsh and painful reality of death (Louw 2006:439). The danger lurks that a phenomenological kind of hope placed on human means of attainment will fail at the deathbed and in the form of disillusionment regress into despair (Is 32:9f; Amos 6:1) (Louw 2006:439; Lamp 2000:605).<sup>77</sup>

Moltmann insists that true hope for life neither originates in the thrilling feelings of our youth, where anything seems possible, nor in the objective possibilities of history that seem unlimited (1997:45). In a similar way, Nouwen reminds us that there is an important difference between being optimistic and hopeful (2000:27). Optimism refers to the concrete expectation that everything will become better in the time to come (Nouwen 2000:27). Hope in a Christian sense comprises more of a creative expectation with the focus on a vivid trust that God will fulfil God’s promises toward us in a way that will eventually led us to true freedom (Nouwen 2000:27). Nouwen asserts, “Der hoffende Mensch lebt

<sup>76</sup> Stone and Lester point out that prevailing understandings of hope have been strongly influenced by Kierkegaard’s existential understanding of human beings (2001:259). Kierkegaard described the individual as possessor of actuality, freedom and possibility (Stone & Lester 2001:259). All three elements are dimensions of the human self, and need to be in good balance in order to live an authentic existence (Stone & Lester 2001:259). Briefly, *actuality* primarily refers to the past, *freedom* to what we exercise in the present, and *possibility* addresses the future (Stone & Lester 2001:259f).

According to Kierkegaard, living as an authentic human being means to look beyond our immediate necessities and past liabilities, and anticipate the future with an awareness that we are free to realise who we ought to become (Stone & Lester 2001:260). Hope from an existential perspective essentially rests in those future possibilities, i.e. it “recognises actuality but also steps directly into the future by exercising freedom in the present – by taking action” (Stone & Lester 2001:260). As such, existential hope differs fundamentally from hope in a Christian sense of the word, which solely rests upon God’s faithfulness to God’s promises.

<sup>77</sup> As regards the phenomenon of hope, Hildebrand uses the twentieth-century method of phenomenology to prepare the grounds for a belief in immortality (Neuhaus 2000:83). He argues that in genuine love for another human being, “we find ourselves compelled to believe in the God who will preserve the one we love from nothingness and non-existence” (Neuhaus 2000:83). Hildebrand states, “My love can look beyond death and somehow know that my beloved cannot really die” (in Neuhaus 2000:84). Further, “It is, in fact, my own strong love which cries out, »You shall not die!«, and he admits, “The frightfulness of separation remains; an empty loneliness gazes at me” (Neuhaus 2000:84).

It has been shown earlier that Härle also believes love to be the true eschatological antithesis to the conviction of disbelief that death has the final say, even on love (2000:634). The difference to Hildebrand’s phenomenological approach lies in the fact that in faith love conquers death by trustingly letting go of one’s life and the love opposite (Härle 2000:634). From Hildebrand’s last sigh it appears that a phenomenological approach to hope in the face of death cannot provide lasting consolation. The greatest challenge that death puts to love has been overcome in faith in God’s faithfulness and fulfilled promises.

im Augenblick und in dem Bewusstsein, dass unser ganzes Leben in Gottes Händen liegt" (2000:27). True hope makes us trustfully walk into an uncertain future that we do not know (Rom 8:24). Therefore, hope in a Christian sense remains deeply realistic with the willingness to remain engaged and leave the sphere of security and predictability behind.

Moltmann points out that true hope for life is awakened and kept alive by means of the divine mystery, which is in us, above us and around us, and which we encounter in the great promise of our life and this world: "es wird nichts umsonst sein – es wird gelingen – es wird zuletzt alles gut werden!" (1997:45). We encounter this mystery in God's call to life, "I live and you shall live too" (Moltmann 1997:45). Moltmann makes clear that we are destined to this hope and that the divine call to hope often sounds like a demand: a demand to resist death and the power of death, to love and appreciate life (1997:45).

In the Old Testament, the various Hebrew terms meaning "to hope", like *qāwâh*, "to be stretched out toward something", *yāhal*, "to wait, long for", *hākâh*, "to wait", and *šābar*, "to wait", "hope", include most of all a confession of *assurance* (Hoffmann 1976:239). This is especially true of the psalms (Hoffmann 1976:239). The Hebrew verbs connoting "hoping" are closely connected to those of "trusting" (Hoffmann 1976:239). Consequently, the central testimony of the Old Testament is hope and trust in God, i.e. "to hope in Yahweh" and "to wait for Yahweh", which differs in content, basis and effects from any secular or existential hope (Hoffmann 1976:239). Yahweh is the subject, embodiment and guarantor of Yahweh's people's hope (Hoffmann 1976:239). People wait for Yahweh's name (Ps 52:9), Yahweh's word of forgiveness (Ps 130:5), Yahweh's arm (Isa 51:5) and Yahweh's salvation (Gen 49:18) (Hoffmann 1976:239).

Hoffmann points out that, as a subjective attitude, "the hope of faith, like existential hope, is a concrete personal expectation" (1976:240). The one who hopes trusts in God's faithfulness and lives in confident anticipation of God's gracious action (Hoffmann 1976:240). What stands out is the connotation of *patiently* waiting for God, which is carried by the Hebrew verbs for hoping. Through confidence and humility, hope turns into a patient, persevering waiting that endures anxiety (Hoffmann 1976:240). Hoffmann indicates that waiting for God does "indeed make man »still« but not inactive" (1976:240). In that sense,

Old Testament hope differs decisively from existential hope, which strives to drive human beings toward self-relying activity that aims at realising future possibilities.

In the New Testament, the main emphasis on hope is found in the Pauline writings (Hoffmann 1976:241). The New Testament usage of the verb *elpizō* and the noun *elpis*, which denote the act of hoping but also the object hoped for, always indicates the expectation of something *good*, never a fearful or vague anticipation (Hoffmann 1976:241). The New Testament witnesses agree that “through the coming of the promised Christ the situation described in terms of hope in the Old Testament has been fundamentally altered” (Hoffmann 1976:242). In Christ, the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises and hope manifests (Mt 12:21; 1 Pe 1:3) (Lamp 2000:605). Hope is such a fundamental part of the Christian condition that it can be referred to as a “rebirth to a »living hope«” (1 Pe 1:3; Rom 8:24) as it provides comfort and freedom, even from the fear of death (Eph 2:12; 1 Thess 4:13) (Hoffmann 1976:242). The Christian existence on the whole is qualified by hope (1 Thess 4:13) (Du Toit 2000:1825). Together with faith and love, hope essentially constitutes the Christian being (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3; Col 1:4-5) (Du Toit 2000:1825).

As regards the content of hope, it is always centred on God the Father and God the Son (Hoffmann 1976:242). Hope is based on the gracious work of God in Jesus Christ (Gal 5:5) and the present hope of the Christian appears as an eschatological *blessing* (Hoffmann 1976:242; Lamp 2000:605). In the New Testament, hope has the nature of a gift by the Father’s grace, which is caused by the Spirit and appeases human fear and desperation (Rom 15:13; Gal 5:5). Hope is a confident, sure expectation of God’s saving actions, which results in patient, disciplined waiting for and expectation of the Lord as the saviour (Hoffmann 1976:243). According to Hoffmann, “As the ship is safe when at anchor, our life is secured by hope, which binds us to Christ” (Heb 6:18f) (1976:243). Accordingly, in the New Testament hope serves as a synonym for trust too (Du Toit 2000:1825).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Pannenberg elaborates on the significant difference between security and *trust* (1964:22ff). Every day anew life turns into the task that we need to cope with (Pannenberg 1964:22). The reality that we live in

Hope in the Christian sense of the word does not have an antipol like secular or existential hope (Louw 2006:439). Hope in the resurrection in both life and death is connected to the content of faith, i.e. the faithfulness of God to God's promises (Louw 2006:439). Louw states, "The victory of God over nothingness, over anxiety, and death is essentially the only true grounds for hope" (2006:351). Hope is perceived as an inner assurance that takes place *today* (Beißer 2000:1826). It is in connection with the human need to die in dignity, which becomes most evident in the context of the HIV pandemic, that pastoral care is about transmitting a powerful message of "a hope and life which could exceed the barriers of human potential" (Louw 2006:430). Louw argues accordingly, "The link between our human quest for meaning and significance and our God images implies that our human search for meaning is fundamentally a spiritual issue. We are in search for a future, which guarantees security and human dignity. Even after death" (2000:12).

Instead of being strangled by memories of the past and the more life there was, dying should be a hopeful focussing on an awaiting life in the trust that our life is secured in God – "the further ahead in resurrection hope, the more life" (Louw 2006:426). The following theological statement about the close correlation between life and hope forms the core of pastoral care to the dying: Not only where there is life there is hope (Ecc 9:4), but where there is hope, life flourishes (Louw 2006:440).<sup>79</sup> Christian hope is not an antithesis to anxiety and

remains unknown, and the one thing that we prepare for can at any time end differently to what we expected (Pannenberg 1964:23). Therefore, we need to trust as we depend on something that we cannot know so fully as to be certain of it (Pannenberg 1964:23).

Only through trust can we relate to the unknown, which is our life (Pannenberg 1964:23). In the process of trusting, we expose ourselves and rely on the faithfulness and loyalty of the other whom we trust (Pannenberg 1964:23). Consequently, faith and trust are closely related (Pannenberg 1964:26). The striving for substantial security of our existence turns against the fundamental necessity for life out of trusting relations (Pannenberg 1964:28). To cope with life, human beings remain fundamentally in need of trusting relations (Pannenberg 1964:28).

<sup>79</sup> In connection with the conviction, "Where there is hope, there is life", Richardson elaborates that where there is "the promise of a future, a reason for living, people who care, there is life" (2000:75). He argues for a spiritual foundation for life and explores what he calls "the biology of hope" (Richardson 2000:75). He argues that hope can help individuals to live until they die, or to receive a "»second chance« at life" (Richardson 2000:80). Medical studies show that a lack of health does not necessarily compromise hope, but that positive emotions, like love, laughter and hope, can promote healing (Richardson 2000:76f). Richardson states that, when people find meaning, have affirming relationships, use their inner resources, live in the present and anticipate survival, hope can transcend illness and give life to the dying (2000:82).

Richardson's research can help us to become aware of the many environmental aspects that cherish hope from a phenomenological and biological perspective. As stated earlier, a theological approach always needs to consider the findings of other fields of study in order to stay relevant to human



it does not encourage people to ignore their suffering. According to Louw, “We do not hope because we are afraid of death” (2006:351). Rather, “In terms of Christ’s resurrection, we hope in spite of our anxiety” (Louw 2006:351).

In connection with the concreteness of a life care approach to terminal care, the vital question arises whether one can learn to hope (Moltmann 1997:45). Moltmann argues that, since human beings are not born with the true hope and life’s experiences perhaps make us wise but not hopeful, we cannot only but *need* to set out to learn how to hope (1997:45). He asserts that we learn to love when we have a positive outlook on life (Moltmann 1997:45). In the same manner, we learn to hope by having a positive outlook on the future (Moltmann 1997:45).

Moltmann concedes that this sounds easy but can be unbelievably difficult in the various circumstances of life’s realities (1997:45). Nonetheless, he insists that we experience the power of hope when we risk fighting against the apathy of our soul (Moltmann 1997:45). Hope keeps us alive, when we – despite poor chances – say “*nonetheless*” and dare to live (Moltmann 1997:45). According to the New Testament, hope is produced by endurance through suffering (Rom 5:2-5), but, at the same time, is the inspiration behind endurance and perseverance to the end (Lamp 2000:605). Even when future prospects look dark, to hope means to live and survive, and to work and fight for life (Moltmann 1997:45). Hope in the Christian sense includes acting in the light of a *paradox*. Moltmann puts it as follows: “Wir handeln dann im wörtlichen Sinne para-dox, das heisst: gegen den Augenschein und gegen die Erfolglosigkeit” (1997:46; also Beißer 2000:1827). This is especially true in the case of keeping a living hope at the deathbed.

However, in faith believers can be assured of their preservation and completion throughout death (Beißer 2000:1827). Hope that is based on the memory of Christ’s death and resurrection leads us to hope in a situation where there is nothing to hope in human terms, like imminent death. Hope changes an individual, since it opens up new possibilities, even where there seem to be no

possibilities (Moltmann 1977:168). This kind of hope in faith enables us to leave ourselves behind and completely be with somebody in love (Moltmann 1977:168). Thus, keeping Gerkin's reflections in mind, the vivid Christian hope based on the resurrection of Christ is the only empowerment that enables not only the dying individual to face death trustingly, but also the caregiver to accompany somebody to the portal of death in such a loving way that it represents God's loving care.

The Christian response to fear of death does not have to be flight or resignation, but can be hope "against all hope" (Rom 4:18). The believer takes death and dying seriously in its harshness and painfulness, but continues to hope in God's fulfilled promises. Moltmann states that the last grounds for hope in the face of death do not lie in what we want, wish or expect, but in the knowledge that we are wanted, welcomed and expected (1997:46). He proclaims,

Immer wenn wir unsere Hoffnung im Vertrauen auf das göttliche Geheimnis gründen, spüren wir es tief in unserem Herzen: Da ist einer, der wartet auf dich, der traut dir etwas zu. Wir werden erwartet, so wie der »verlorene Sohn« im Gleichnis von seinem Vater erwartet wird. Wir werden aufgenommen, so wie einer Mutter ihr Kind in die Arme schliesst und tröstet. Gott ist darum unsere letzte Hoffnung (Moltmann 1997:46).

The second basic element of terminal care as life care in terms of a "liturgy of life care for the dying" as determined by Louw evolves around a "*liturgy of care for life*" (Louw 2006:436). A liturgy for life at the deathbed aims to communicate the understanding that death has already been conquered in Jesus Christ. By means of the liturgical use of Scripture, prayer and the Holy Communion, for instance, a feeling is conveyed for the new life that the dying believer already shares into.

The careful use of *Scripture* and prayer is of outmost importance in connection with a "liturgy of care for life" (Louw 2006:221). Louw points out that the character of the biblical texts and prayer is not merely additional or "finishing off", but that their use is organically part of the pastoral encounter (2006:222). Biblical concepts, themes and *promises* serve as key elements in terminal care and "the explicit life view, anthropology, ethics, and content of Scripture are the

framework or scheme within which the implicit or indirect use of Scripture must function” (Louw 2006:222). It is essential that the use of Scripture grows naturally out of the concrete pastoral situation and is not insensitively imposed on the dying individual from the outside in form of moralising lectures or prescriptive sermons.

If the use of Scripture is implemented organically, the biblical text can serve as the medium through which “the believer’s entire being is revealed before God” (Louw 2006:222). Text and context are in interaction, and a “hermeneutical cycle of a Word-word communication” (Louw 2006:222) is formed between God’s Word in Scripture, the mediatory work of the pastoral caregiver and the individual’s response in feelings, needs and faith.<sup>80</sup> The Word-dimension is determined by God’s faithfulness and the fulfilment of God’s promises, and the believer’s obedient response in faith (Louw 2006:222). Theologically speaking, the fruitful encounter between Word and word is an act of God’s Spirit, which, once again, points toward the significance of pneumatology (Louw 2006:222).

Louw describes four different methods regarding the use of Scripture, which can be applied to communicate God’s fulfilled promises to an individual within a specific situation such as terminal care (2006:223). One method is *paraphrasing*, which assists individuals to make use of the content of a certain text in terms of the unique understanding of their own situation and language (Louw 2006:223). This is a unique hermeneutical method, “which helps the text to »incarnate« in the context of patients” (Louw 2006:223). A second method of making the biblical message relevant to a dying individual is *meditative reading*, in which a short sentence of the biblical text is memorised and repeated several times in spirit (Louw 2006:223). By meditating and pondering on the text, the person becomes aware of God’s comforting presence, for instance by repeating Isaiah 41:10, “I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you” (Louw 2006:224). A third method regarding the use of Scripture at the deathbed can be *narrative reading* (Louw 2006:224). Individuals discover their own spiritual

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<sup>80</sup> Compare Louw’s understanding of a “hermeneutical circle” (1998:102), which is formed between pre-text, text and context and was taken note of in connection with the methodological basis of the thesis.

journey within the experience of a specific character in Scripture (Louw 2006:224). Persons are encouraged to exchange their name with that of the biblical character in order to identify with the truth conveyed about God (Louw 2006:224). Such a passage could for instance be Jacob's struggle with God at the Brook Jabbok in Genesis 32:24-32, or the life and suffering of David as described in Psalms 28:1-2, 6-9.<sup>81</sup> A fourth method of conveying the biblical truth to a dying individual can be that of comforting and consoling *articulation* (Louw 2006:224). Here pastoral caregivers represent the presence of God and "their presence has a symbolic and metaphoric meaning" (Louw 2006:224). Louw argues that the intention is to "articulate patients' need for help as well as the presence of God through the text" (2006:224). Psalm 94:17-19 could for instance be used: "Unless the Lord had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. When I said, »My foot is slipping«, your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul" (Louw 2006:224). The importance of the pastoral caregiver's presence and specific manner of care at the deathbed will be taken up again at a later stage in this section.

As regards the role of *prayer* within a "liturgy of care for life", prayer provides the overall atmosphere of care and consolation besides the deathbed (Louw 2006:225). Louw argues, "The entire encounter is supported by the pastor's intrinsic attitude of expectation and hope; i.e. waiting on God in prayer" (2006:225). Prayer can be described as the instrument or medium through which both the praying individual and caregiver enter into the dimension of God's promises and the working of God's Spirit. Louw emphasises, "Prayer opens up a spiritual wealth – it actually grants us a share in God's fulfilled promises" (2006:226). Praying individuals devote themselves entirely to the trust in God and that God will guide them through the difficult time to come. Prayer plays an important role in promissiotherapy and the fostering of hope, as

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<sup>81</sup> Moltmann composed a moving personal reflection on Jacob's struggle with God at the Brook Jabbok (Gen 32:24-32) in connection with his own experience as a prisoner of war in the years 1945 to 1948 (1997:11-18). His personal reflection can serve as good example for the pastoral use of Scripture in terms of narrative reading. Like Jacob, Moltmann experienced the situation of the horrors of the end of war and the endless suffering of captivity as a struggle with God in order to survive in the abysses of meaninglessness and guilt (1997:11). He points out that like Jacob they emerged out of these years with a limping hip – but blessed (Moltmann 1997:11).

it reveals biblical truths within the specific context of the dying individual (Louw 2006:226).

Louw points to the significance of prayer, especially when individuals are no longer able to communicate (2006:225). It has been reported that words of prayer uttered during an acute phase of unconsciousness get through to the deeper consciousness levels and have been recited later by recovering persons (Louw 2006:225). The power of prayer on behalf of dying individuals should not be underestimated, as the Spirit is capable of penetrating the most profound levels of our being (Louw 2006:225).

In connection with the development of a “liturgy of care for life” to dying individuals who are still able to communicate, *lamentations* function as an important medium of communication and play a significant role in terminal care. At this stage, I want to take a closer look specifically at the meaning of lamentations and their liberating impact on persons in crises situations.

It is of central importance to realise that there is *nothing* in the life of the dying that cannot be verbalised and expressed to God in prayer (Louw 2006:230). As regards lamentations in the Old Testament and the contents of prayer, it appears that suppliants speak to God about their pain, suffering, fever, unrest, despair, anguish and pour out their feelings of rebellion and resistance before God without hesitation (Lam 3:1-19; Ps 88) (Louw 2006:230). Jeremiah cries out to God, “He has filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall. He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, »My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord«” (Lam 3:15-18).

The painful struggle with and resistance against God has also been expressed by Job: “Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors. Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply. How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin. Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?” (Job 13:21-24) (Louw 2006:230).

In Scripture, prayer often appears as a wrestling with God and an active resistance to the horrors of suffering (Louw 2006:230). Suppliants challenge God, asking “Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep?” (Ps 44:23f) and “Why, O

Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?" (Ps 88:14). Lamentations are the language of suffering filled with emotions and truth – but also with trust.

The expression of the resistance against God and calling God to account in great pain and suffering are a necessary prerequisite for *praising* God. Through the honest expression of their resistance in prayer, suppliants acquire rest and resignation in the sense of "an active clinging to God's faithfulness" (Louw 2006:231), which eventually often turns into praise (Ps 42:11; Ps 30:6ff; Lam 3:20ff). Accusing God and pleading for God's mercy, suppliants adhere to the belief that the covenantal God remains faithful (Louw 2006:231). An essential biblical truth is expressed in the lamentations: "God has not ceased being my God, despite the fact that I have been rebellious" (Louw 2006:231).

Once again, we encounter a significant biblical paradox that is so close to our human experience: in the act of rejecting and accusing God, believers hold tight to the conviction that the faithful God will listen to their pleas of vulnerability and hold them in God's preserving hands.<sup>82</sup> This Old Testament conviction has for instance been expressed in Romans 8:38f: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Gerstenberger points to the important differentiation between a lament and a complaint (1970, quoted in Louw 2000:22). A complaint hopelessly bemoans an irreparable tragedy and leads to disastrous resignation and stagnation (Louw 2000:22). The complaint is a destructive expression of resentment, self-rejection and self-pity (Louw 2000:22). A lament, on the other

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<sup>82</sup> Zenger points out that the psalms are an attempt to connect the daily encounter with the destructiveness of death and the inevitable experience of the limitation of human life with the faith in Yahweh, so that perspectives for a life despite of death may result from that (2005:63). The psalmists wrestle with God as the God of life to find meaning for life in the face of death; their only weapon the poetic prayer (Zenger 2005:64). The faithful struggle with God for life does not only include the threat of biological death, but all forms of death in life: this destructive power that threatens to destroy human life in various ways in form of sickness, hostility, helplessness and despair (Ps 88) (Zenger 2005:64; compare Ebner 2005:79; Louw 2004:2). Zenger argues that we should read the psalms as dramatic lamentations against the various faces of death in midst of life, including biological death (2005:66).

Accordingly, Zenger refers to the psalms as a "betender Kampf um das Leben – ein Kampf gegen Gott mit Gott" (2005:66), which bring the paradox of faith in midst of suffering to the point. The psalmists come to the realisation that Yahweh loves life and that God's life is stronger than death in life (Ps 30) (Zenger 2005:71). Eventually, they praise God who rescues them from death in midst of life, experience life in its totality as a gift from God and feel God's care, which embraces the believer's whole existence (Zenger 2005:71).

hand, is an active protest in the form of objection or petition (Louw 2000:22). It is an appeal for God's help in the midst of a dilemma, which expects that the situation can be changed and anticipates a more prosperous future (Louw 2000:22). The uniqueness of a lament lies in its hope for change, salvation and redemption (Louw 2000:22). A lament emerges from a profound trust in God, implies a confirmation of faith – even in anger – and is, therefore, never an indication of distrust in God's faithfulness (Brueggemann 1977, quoted in Louw 2000:22). Lamenting is more than mourning and carries an enormous transformative character.

In terminal care, the lament can become a valuable vehicle, "which people in pain should use to vent their anger and helplessness" (Louw 2000:23). Laments can assist to structure the grieving process within the terminal stage and work through the anger, which often accompanies the process of dying as pointed out by Kübler-Ross (Louw 2000:23).

Louw quotes Brueggemann, who comments on the difference between Kübler-Ross' approach to the process of dying and the lament in the Old Testament (1977, quoted in Louw 2000:24). Within a psychology of death and dying, persons in the terminal stage voice their complaints in a rather insecure environment, surrounded by medical staff and medical instruments (Brueggemann 1977, quoted in Louw 2000:24). In the medical environment, the focus is on the individual's physical improvement and hope is provided by means of distinct medical interventions that promise recovery. If physical recovery is impossible, as in the case of a person in the terminal stage, the medical approach fails to provide any further future prospect or hopeful consolation. A complaint of the dying in this context is exposed to unpredictability and uncertainty, and tends to become a monologue solely to the self, which fails to provide answers (Brueggemann 1977, quoted in Louw 2000:24).

In contrast, the lament in the Old Testament is expressed as a mode of trust within the context of God's faithfulness to the covenant and God's living presence amongst the faithful (Brueggemann 1977, quoted in Louw 2000:24). As such, it tends to be a dialogue that initiates change, growth and hope for the future (Brueggemann 1977, quoted in Louw 2000:24). Pastoral care to the dying should take notice of the lament as an active and constructive way of dealing

with deep-seated anger and grief in dying in order to further develop the underlying note of a complaint into a feeling a security and *Gehaltensein* (Louw 2000:23). It is of high significance to note that we need to lament first in order to truly trust and praise God.

The lament has the power to bind the dying to God by means of a strengthening of faith, which alone can ensure security in the face of death through God's presence and the fulfilled Scriptural promises. Not medical intervention, but "the victory of God over nothingness, over anxiety and death is essentially the only true grounds for hope" (Louw 2000:154). This is the result of a hermeneutics of the resurrection (Louw 2000:154).<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, lamenting also plays a significant role in care for the dying, as only the expression of the caregiver's devastating feelings toward God enables her or him to come to terms with the pain of caring and accompanying somebody through death in the knowledge of God's faithfulness and compassion. The undermining feelings that caregivers experience when caring for the dying need to be articulated to God in order to continue care meaningfully.

In line with what has been argued earlier concerning finding meaning in suffering, lamentations are not geared toward reasonable explanation, but

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<sup>83</sup> Louw also touches on the difficult question of praying for physical healing at the sick- or deathbed. He perceives the asking for physical healing as a manifestation of the suppliant's honesty and willingness, on account of the belief in God's faithfulness, to let their most important will to live and need for healing flow and "have them corrected by Christ's work of atonement" (2006:227). In Jesus' miracles and healings of the sick, God's kingdom is made known to the world, as they are first signs of the coming kingdom of God (Lk 4:18ff; 8:43ff; Mt 11:5) (Louw 2006:227). In this context, the suppliant's appeal to God for physical healing appears as a plea that God's victory over evil through the crucifixion and resurrection may be manifested in the suppliant's individual case (Louw 2006:227).

Louw argues that "the ill may and also must pray for physical healing" (2006:227), as the prayer for healing is a manifestation of the belief in God's fulfilled promises and God's sovereignty over evil. The pastor's prayer at the sickbed should be a positive one: "heal this patient on account of Christ's work of redemption" (Louw 2006:228). It is essential that the prayer is accompanied by a spirit of patience and humbleness, even if it takes the form of a command for healing (Num 12:13; Ps 41:4) (Louw 2006:228).

However, should physical healing not take place, this does not mean that God does not keep God's promises (Louw 2006:228). God is still at the person's disposal for support (Louw 2006:228). Louw avers that "the content of the promise of spiritual healing, i.e. a condition of redemption in Christ, is steadfast and infallible" (2006:228). This is especially true in the case of terminal illness, where the plea for physical healing is a narrow path between insensitive sustaining of false hope and steadfast remaining in the trust in God. It is most important that the prayer for healing at the deathbed does not take the shape of false consolation. The appeal for healing needs to be based on dependence and trust in God, i.e. the emphasis is on the God who heals and blesses and not on the healing and blessing itself (Louw 2006:229). Louw concludes, "Then the quality of prayer is not equal to the result thereof, i.e. healing, but Who God is to the supplicant" (2006:229). God remains the God who keeps and holds human beings, whether healing comes about or not (Louw 2006:229).



toward honest expression that trusts that God's providence will provide everything for the believer in the distressing situation (Louw 2000:24). Lamentations play a decisive role in the process of finding meaning in dying as they point to the meaning and purpose of death within our being human (Althaus 1962:915; Louw 2000:169ff). Lamentations assist to express human uncertainty and anger in the process of dying, and hermeneutically deal with the "*Wherefore?*" of death within the God-human relation, "Was bedeutet der Tod für mich als Mensch vor Gott? Was sagt und wirkt Gott durch den Tod?" (Althaus 1962:915).

In connection with a response to these vital questions in the context of terminal care, Link states that for human beings it remains to ask which impact God's living presence has on the threatening experience of dying and whether under the impression of God's loving care the situation – perhaps – *changes* (2005:427). To raise one's fears and begin to discover God's providence in suffering are the unique value of lamentations in terminal care.

However, we need to acknowledge that we sometimes need to endure speechlessness, especially at the deathbed (Link 2005:427). As Paul concedes, sometimes we do not even know what to pray for (Rom 8:26) (Link 2005:427). At times, we lack words to express our anguish before God. In the situation of speechlessness before God we can trust that "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom 8:26) (Link 2005:427; also Steffensky 2006:14). This intercession is part of God's providence and is perhaps its most important aspect, as the power of the Spirit works against fear, despair and resignation (Link 2005:427). Link speaks of God's therapeutic care that does not leave us alone with our suffering, but reorientates us toward Easter and lets us know that "aus dem Tod – schon heute – ein neues, verwandetes Leben hervorgehen soll" (2005:427).

The divine endowment of meaning neither takes away any of the horrors of dying nor artificially bestows meaning onto an in itself meaningless event, but results in a complete *transformation* of the meaning of death (Link 2005:427). Instead of clinging to the hopeless question "Why?", the focus turns toward the

“*Wherefore?*”, which allows for a new perspective and future prospect, despite death (Link 2005:427).<sup>84</sup> As it is true that God makes everything new (Rev 21:5), we can cling to this biblical experience (Link 2005:427). The fact that nothing can separate us from the incarnated love of God, not even in death, is the core of the belief in God’s providence, as is expressed in laments.

As regards meaningful rituals in connection with a “liturgy of care for life”, the ministry of the *Holy Communion* can be of great comfort to the dying (Louw 2006:436). Louw argues that the celebration of the Holy Communion at the deathbed can serve as “a palpable proof of God’s caring hand holding in love the anxious heart of the dying” (Louw 2006:436). It can function as a tangible proof of God’s faithfulness that will not let go of the dying individual (Louw 2006:436). Welker puts it as follows: “The Supper centers on a complex, sensuous process in which the risen and exalted Christ becomes present. The supper gives Christians a form in which they can perceive the risen and exalted Christ with all their senses’ (2000, quoted in Ackermann 2004:52).

This is true also for the terminally ill in the very last stage of their life. One should not underestimate the soothing and reassuring effect of the ministry of the Holy Communion to dying individuals who can experience it with all their senses. Additionally, the Holy Communion strengthens the bonds within the community of the faithful and supports the dying member of the congregation of Christ through an “awareness of this love-koinonia” (Louw 2006:436) that binds

<sup>84</sup> In connection with their research on the words of farewell of the dying in the biblical literature, Bieberstein and Bieberstein also comment on Jesus’ last words – or last scream – on the cross (2005:27ff). Jesus’ lament on the cross is familiar in the translation as “»Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?« which means, »My God, my God, *why* have you forsaken me?«” (Mk 15:34) (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:27). Thereafter, Jesus dies with a second unarticulated scream on his lips (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:27).

Bieberstein and Bieberstein point out that, according to Mark’s conception, Jesus holds onto the God who has promised life, even in this last desperate scream (2005:29). They argue that the Hebrew *lama* does not ask about the cause of an event in order to get an explanation, but rather focuses on the intention or immanent objective, the aim of a deed, “*Wherefore?*” (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:29).

This “*Wherefore?*”, which is also characteristic for the suppliants’ praying in the psalms and laments, looks into the future and asks for the objective of God’s acting (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:30). Accordingly, Bieberstein and Bieberstein suggest the translation “My God, my God, *wherefore* have you forsaken me?” (2005:30). Such a question holds onto the belief that this as dark and obscure experienced acting of God needs to have a meaning and challenges God Godself (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:30). Such a question illuminates the truth that an answer to the experience of suffering can – if at all – only come from God (Bieberstein & Bieberstein 2005:30).

It becomes clear, once again, that even if one cannot find a satisfying rational response to suffering in terms of cause and effect, God Godself is on the side of those helplessly concerned. Believers can recognise themselves in Jesus’ cry at the cross and find comfort in the knowledge that they can trustfully hold onto God and cry out for God’s help even in the darkest of all moments, which is death.

the members of the congregation together. The fear of being abandoned and feelings of loneliness of the dying can be alleviated through this experience of communion with Christ and the community of the faithful (Louw 2006:436).

In addition to the two mentioned elements of a “liturgy of life care for the dying”, i.e. the proclamation of the victory in the resurrection and a “liturgy of care for life”, I would like to emphasize the fundamental role of the pastoral *caregiver* in a life care approach to terminal care. Buckman points to the need for palliative care practitioners to improve their communication skills (2000:147). He claims that “effective symptom control is impossible without effective communication” (Buckman 2000:146). He identifies major obstacles to good communication with dying individuals and develops an “adequate working concept of the process of dying” (Buckman 2000:147). Buckman emphasises the need for knowing- and doing-functions within palliative care, i.e. basic listening skills, facilitation techniques and empathic responses as useful tools to improve communication with persons in the terminal stage (2000:155ff).

From a medical perspective, the demand for efficient communication with individuals in the terminal stage in order to enable effective medical care is indeed reasonable. It is important to acknowledge the value of effective symptom and pain control within palliative care, which can ease the physical agony that individuals in the terminal stage might have to endure. However, from a pastoral perspective, the mere implementation of medical interventions, facilitation techniques and empathic responses appears insufficient in terms of entering the tight place of death with another person. In order to enable individuals to die with human dignity, especially in the case of people dying from conditions due to AIDS, there is the need for more than elaborate communication skills.

In terms of pastoral care at the deathbed, the emphasis is on the sincere *presence* of the pastoral caregiver as a compassionate fellow human being who conveys something to the dying of God’s pathos and faithfulness. Louw points out that the most profound immediate need of the dying is to be treated with respect and understanding by another human being, who, with love and compassion, sustains and understands them (2006:181). He explains, “To »embrace« one so that the arms of God hold the person, is an effort, which requires giving of oneself” (Louw 2006:181). This entails more than basic

listening skills and empathic responses, even more than consolation, “but the willingness of another to wait with the love of God ... until the Word of God has an impact on the life of the sufferer” (Louw 2006:181).

True consolation in pastoral care is essentially God’s work, upon which caregivers can respond (Louw 2006:181). Consequently, accompanying a dying person into death requires more than words and communication skills. Brouwer warns against too many empty words besides the deathbed, “which are a discord in a room of sighs” (1968, quoted in Louw 2006:181). As emphasised earlier in connection with Barton’s assertion that meaning can be generated from the process of caring itself, the real secret of care and comfort lies in the pastor’s presence, her or his being-functions more than in practical knowing- and doing-functions (Louw 1998:39). The pastoral caregiver’s way of being with the person is of central importance concerning the mediation of God’s pathos and compassion for the dying person. Peberdy quotes Lunn, saying, “it is »me, this person« that is the vital answer and the authentic response while our words are only secondary” (Lunn 1990, quoted in Peberdy 1990:73).

Concerning the diaconate during support for the terminally ill, the pastoral caregiver fundamentally represents the care of Christ (Louw 2006:438). All the pastor’s deeds and words need to communicate God’s compassion for the dying person, like the quiet presence or holding of the hand of the dying (Louw 2006:439). Louw emphasises that care for the dying is more than empathy, but true sympathy and *identification* with the dying person on the grounds of Christ’s vicarious entrance into death (2006:439). Nouwen confirms that no one can help another “without becoming involved, without entering with his whole person into the painful situation, without taking the risk of becoming hurt, wounded or even destroyed in the process” (1972:72). A real danger within terminal care is the common aloofness of the pastoral caregiver who resists becoming involved with those who are in great need and remains distant even in the hours of death (Nouwen 1972:71).

In connection with the representation of the care of God, the *touching* of dying individuals plays a significant role. Buckman points out that, from a medical perspective, there is considerable evidence that the touching of patients is of benefit during a medical interview (2000:155). Even though one needs to be very sensitive to the person’s response, touching of dying

individuals should be considered a significant action in the context of terminal care (Buckman 2000:155).<sup>85</sup> Gentle touching, stroking or holding of the hand of the dying should be perceived as a metaphor for God's loving touch that comforts the dying person. The pastoral caregiver's touch or holding of the hand symbolises the touch of "a Friend, Jesus Christ, who will meet them in the moment of departure and accompany them through death" (Louw 2006:426). The caregiver's physical touch represents the comforting touch of the Friend who will await the dying and soothe the deep-seated fear of loneliness in the process of parting.<sup>86</sup>

To summarise, it became clear that a "liturgy of life care for the dying" evolves around two basic elements, i.e. the proclamation of the victory in the resurrection and the liturgical use of Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Communion in terms of a "liturgy of care for life". Here, the concepts "eternal life", "heaven" and "hope" are of central importance, as they open up a future prospect to the

<sup>85</sup> The importance to link emotional needs with physical intimacy has also been pointed out by Gilley in her research on *Intimacy and Terminal Care* (2000). She states that caregivers need to recognise a person's spoken and covert wishes about intimacy and to translate these into relevant arrangements for terminal care (2000:227). The ability to give and receive physical intimacy at all levels is a basic human need that may not be neglected in the terminal phase (Gilley 2000:227).

The need for intimacy is also closely related to the preservation of human dignity as physical strength fades. Daily chores of care for the dying, like personal hygiene, dressing and undressing, and feeding etc., should be executed in a manner which enhances human dignity in the process of dying. From a pastoral perspective, especially these daily routines can convey something of God's loving care and touch for the dying represented by the caregiver. The following moving account that Gilley gives concerning the loving care of a wife for her dying husband can witness to that: "Sometimes it was difficult to feel if he was breathing. She washed his lips with glycerine – he died quietly. ... If we extrapolate from the symbolism of this home we see its warmth adapted to his needs, moulded around him with love, as no doubt this woman could mould herself in her lovemaking" (2000:229).

<sup>86</sup> Under the headline "Waiting for tomorrow" (Nouwen 1972:51ff), Nouwen touches onto the issue of fear of death and an appropriate pastoral presence at the deathbed. He gives an account on the dying process of Mr Harrison who "was not prepared for a faithful act of surrender" (Nouwen 1972:59). In a situation where neither life nor death were Mr Harrison's preferred option, since "death may be hell, but life no less" (Nouwen 1972:60), Nouwen emphasises that the only right pastoral response to this condition of agony before death is "a human response from his brother" (1972:63) or sister.

The one response which can be truly consoling to a dying individual is a personal response by which one human being can *wait* for another in life as well as death (Nouwen 1972:63). Asking the vital question, whether anyone can change somebody's ideas, feelings or perspectives a few hours before death, Nouwen insists that the only things that can change the agony of dying is to become a person Mr Harrison could see, touch, smell and hear, and whose real presence could in no way be denied (1972:64). He states, "The emptiness of the past and the future can never be filled with words but only by the presence of a man. Because only then can the hope be born ... »Maybe, after all, someone is waiting for me«" (Nouwen 1972:65).

The care that Mr Harrison needed is the presence of a fellow human being with "a clear face who called him by his name and became his brother" (Nouwen 1972:64) in the hours before his death. Being there and leading another to tomorrow even when tomorrow is the day of the other's death is the greatest expression of faithfulness throughout death. Nouwen puts it as follows: "»I will wait for you« goes beyond death and is the deepest expression of the fact that death and hope may pass but that love will remain forever" (1972:69).

dying in spite of death. These concepts focus on the fundamental God-human relationship and emphasise eternal communion with God throughout death, which is based on biblical experiences of God's faithfulness to God's promises. The use of Scripture and lament prayers serves to assist the dying to identify with the biblical accounts of God's faithfulness and experience a vivid trust in God's loving care in the process of dying. The understanding that the terminally ill are essentially in need of a Friend, Jesus Christ, who accompanies them through death and soothes their fear of parting, manifests for the believer in prayer and the faithful reception of the biblical accounts that witness to God's dependable presence.

A "liturgy of care for life" serves the central purpose to assist the terminally ill to feel with all their senses what became evident in the theological reflection on death and dying: God will *never* let go of the dying individual. A self-denying surrender of the dying to God in love, which results from the understanding that both our living and dying take place within the dominion of God and that dying is essentially the good limitation to God's gift of life to human beings, can be encouraged through the sensitive use of Scripture and prayer in terminal care as life care by binding the dying person closer to God. Keeping the findings concerning a theology of death and dying and a Christian spiritual concept of life in a pastoral anthropology in mind, in the following section the life care approach will be applied to the question of a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic.

## 5. Life Care within a Prevention Strategy for Pastoral Care in the Context of the HIV Pandemic

if only I could stalk you from behind  
 and pull you down like a lion  
 if only I could throttle you  
 if I could jump you into the ground with my feet  
 then I would teach you a lesson  
 you, death'

Johanna Nurse Malobola, "Death"  
 (in Rasebotsa *et al.* 2004:171)<sup>87</sup>

The latest official mortality data in South Africa show that total deaths from all causes increased by 79 percent from 1997 to 2004 (UNAIDS 2006:11). By the year 2000 HIV was already the biggest single cause of death (Bradshaw & Dorrington 2005:419). HIV-related causes of death rank highest in the top twenty specific causes of death estimated for South Africa in 2000, with a total percentage of 29.8 percent (Bradshaw & Dorrington 2005:426). Especially the increase in young adult mortality in the late 1990s can clearly be attributed to AIDS and HIV-related diseases and provides compelling evidence of the impact of the maturing HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa (Bradshaw & Dorrington 2005:424). This trend continues, as the high peak of the HIV epidemic in South Africa has not yet been reached.

Keeping these startling data in mind, the focus of this last section of the thesis will be on the question how the life care approach can contribute positively to a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic in South Africa. How can pastoral care to people infected or affected by HIV utilise the valuable theological framework of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology in order to cope with basic life issues and enhance the quality of human life in the context of the HIV pandemic? How can

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<sup>87</sup> The cited passage from the poem "Death" by the South African writer Malobola, born 1959, has been translated from isiNdebele by Bhuti Skhosana and Antjie Krog (Rasebotsa *et al.* 2004:187). The poem appears in Antjie Krog's collection *Met Woorde Soos Met Kerse* as "Die Dood" (Rasebotsa *et al.* 2004:187).

the life care approach be utilised to assist people infected or affected with HIV to promote a positive management of their state of health, to live life in abundance and encourage a healthy life style?

Boniswa, a 35-year-old HIV counsellor who at the early age of 18 was infected with HIV by her husband who believed that he could be cured from his own positive HIV-status by having sexual intercourse with a virgin, contends, "There *is* life after infection" (quoted in Ackermann 2004:28). To assist people in reclaiming life after an HIV infection and enhance the quality thereof is the aim of the application of a life care approach to a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic. Ackermann emphasises, "The stories of people living with HIV and AIDS are not only stories of suffering. They are also stories of triumph, of resistance and of hope" (2004:42). Stories such as these need to be acknowledged by pastoral care in order to empower individuals to continue life meaningfully by interweaving individual life stories with the "real meta-narrative" (Ackermann 2004:42), which is the story of faith, the story of the living God.

The findings of the thesis regarding the fundamental significance of the God-human relationship within all aspects of human life have vital implications for a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic. The realisation that the whole of human existence has been transformed in Christ's vicarious death and his subsequent resurrection from the dead radically influences a pastoral approach to an HIV prevention strategy. How the transformed understanding of human death and dying in the light of the Christ event might impact on the general appreciation and awareness of life will be explored. The assumption is that an HIV prevention strategy that focuses on the general appreciation of life based on a meaningful understanding of who we *already* are in Christ in our living and dying might be more fundamental than an approach that merely emphasises the importance of behavioural change due to ethical and moralistic considerations.

Accordingly, this section is concerned with the development of a general *paradigm* and framework behind a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic based on the theological findings regarding a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology. The theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions behind existing prevention



approaches to the HIV pandemic will therefore be identified by analysing current HIV care and counselling models, like those of Uys and Cameron (eds.) in *Home-Based HIV/Aids Care* (2003) and Van Dyk in *HIV/Aids Care and Counselling* (2005).

The aim is to identify where the emphasis regarding the HIV pandemic in these models is and whether existing HIV prevention strategies can be improved in terms of a pastoral hermeneutical approach. Which concepts of life and anthropology these approaches advocate and how they influence people's understanding of life, the process of counselling and therapy to prevent further HIV infections and the coping strategies of people living with HIV will be explored. The hypothesis is that a spiritual life care approach to prevention care based on human *ethos* will prove more fundamental as regards the enhancement of the quality of life and coping with basic life issues in the context of the HIV pandemic.

### **A Significant Gap in Existing HIV Prevention Programmes**

To begin, we need to take a short look at existing HIV prevention strategies in South Africa and their strengths and weaknesses regarding the management and containment of the epidemic. From a theological perspective, the central question will be whether existing strategies to come to terms with the HIV pandemic are effective, not only in limiting the further expansion of the pandemic, but also in assisting people infected or affected by HIV to enhance the quality of their lives and cope with basic life issues.

As it has frequently been emphasised that *sexual behaviour* is the main driving force of the South African HIV epidemic, the government has distributed 360 million free male condoms in 2004 and 2005, with the aim to further increase the distribution to up to 450 million in the following years (UNAIDS 2007; Mathews 2005:143). Already in the 1980s, the conviction was that "the prevention of AIDS lies in the hands of every sexually active person when responsible choices are being made" (Knobel 1988, quoted in Louw 2006:340). More recently, Mathews stated that studies provide "sufficient evidence of the extreme urgency of reducing sexual risk behaviour" (2005:146). Accordingly, the emphasis of official South African HIV prevention interventions in terms of

identified outcomes is on the promotion of healthy life styles and the change of risk behaviour in order to reduce new infections (UNAIDS 2007).

After the implementation of a *National Strategic Plan for HIV, AIDS and STI* in South Africa from 2000 to 2005, this first strategic framework was in 2004 strengthened by the development of an *Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment* (UNAIDS 2007). UNAIDS states that significant progress has been made in HIV prevention through nationwide campaigns, such as *khomanani*, a government mass media campaign, *Soul City* and *loveLife* (UNAIDS 2007).

The well-known formula of the *ABC-approach* has widely been implemented in prevention programmes in order to respond to the pandemic by focussing on the reduction of sexual risk behaviour: A = abstinence; B = be faithful; C = condomise. In some circles, the more comprehensive formula *SAVED* has been developed, which includes other important factors of HIV prevention and management besides the reduction of sexual risk behaviour: S = safer practice; A = availability of medication and treatment; V = voluntary virus testing; E = education / correct information; D = diet / dialog and disclosure (Louw 2006:340).

As far as these approaches are concerned, Mathews argues that HIV prevention interventions based on behavioural and social theory can indeed reduce high-risk sexual behaviour (2005:154; also Van Dyk 2005:129). Increased condom use has been associated with changes in sexual risk behaviour (Harrison 2005:272). In the same way, (secondary) abstinence or a delayed onset of sexual activity have been contributing factors in the decline of HIV infections, for instance in Uganda (Harrison 2005:273). Success stories in HIV management as a result of rigorous prevention efforts have been reported not only for Uganda but also Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Van Dyk 2005:130).

Such a positive trend can however not be confirmed for the South African context (Harrison 2005:273). Although there might be evidence of an increase in secondary abstinence, which would suggest behavioural change in response to HIV prevention messages, it has frequently been stated that weak infrastructure and human capacity constraints are major challenges in expanding HIV and AIDS programmes in South Africa (Harrison 2005:273;

UNAIDS 2007). Therefore, it has been proposed that the national response to HIV needs to focus especially on the scaling-up of prevention programmes in order to reduce new infections, ensure that those who need access to treatment, care and support receive it, and strengthen the national health-care system (UNAIDS 2007).

The focus of common preventions strategies, which is to change sexual risk behaviour, turned out to be one of the deepest and most difficult problems of all (Mathews 2005:143f; Van Dyk 2005:129). This is due to the fact that human sexual behaviour is shaped by various personal, interpersonal, environmental, cultural and structural forces, and the truth that the HIV pandemic touches on one of the most intimate and compulsive aspects of our being human: sexual activity (Mathews 2005:143f; Van Dyk 2005:129).

HIV prevention remains a difficult task, since it is related to one of the most intimate and significant areas of human life, i.e. human interrelations and the expression and receiving of love. The tragedy is that trust in their partners' faithfulness, which is an essential element and prerequisite of well-working partnerships, often places individuals at high risk and leaves them with a positive HIV-status. Despite high theoretical knowledge on the HI virus, its mode of operation, transmission and prevention, the expansion of the pandemic continues and a preventable disease continues to destroy individuals and communities. The burning question in the HIV pandemic remains: *Why do people not behave accordingly, if they have all necessary theoretical knowledge at their disposal to prevent an HIV infection?*

It is important to note that those interventions that have shown to be effective have focused on personal and interpersonal risk factors (Mathews 2005:154). *Soul City*, for instance, which is "an extremely popular national, multi-media »edutainment« vehicle" (Mathews 2005:158) in South Africa, set out to achieve a reduction in sexual risk behaviour by affecting individual determinants of health and creating a supportive interpersonal, social and political environment (Mathews 2005:159). There is evidence on *Soul City's* effect at the individual level regarding an increased awareness and more accurate knowledge, the stimulation of interpersonal dialogue, increasing self-efficiency and a sense of empowerment, decreasing social pressure and

shifting attitudes and intentions sustaining healthier choices (Mathews 2005:160).

Nevertheless, as Harrison points out, the high level of knowledge and awareness amongst sexually active adolescents has “done little so far to contribute to a decline in HIV prevalence” (2005:268). She states, “Even where awareness and knowledge of reproductive health are high, and the risks of HIV and pregnancy are understood, decision-making and negotiation of safer sexual practises remains difficult” (Harrison 2005:274).

Moreover, despite these efforts, the use of *condoms*, which still remains the most effective way to prevent the transmission of HIV, varies widely between groups and is generally thought to be low in South Africa (Myer 2005:166). Myer points out that barriers to condom use include the social and economic disempowerment of women and perceptions that the use of condoms implies a lack of trust, fidelity and the possibility of infection (2005:166). There is a range of interventions that seek to address the common barriers to condom use in the South African context, like negative attitudes toward condoms, alcohol consumption and the poor availability and accessibility of condoms (Myer 2005:166). Among psychological factors that hinder condom use in terms of individual characteristics and behaviour, it has been shown that individuals who perceive themselves to be not at risk or who have less *hope* for their personal future are less likely to use condoms (Myer 2005:175).

Correspondingly, new prevention strategies also experiment with interventions for protection from HIV infection beyond behaviour modification and barrier methods, such as vaccines and microbicides, antiretroviral therapy and male circumcision (Abdool Karim & Baxter 2005:226). The efficiency of these prevention interventions is limited, currently still under study, inadequate or the means are not yet available altogether (Abdool Karim & Baxter 2005:226ff).

Even though HIV vaccines and other medical means to challenge the virus will probably appear soon, from a theological perspective the burning issue in the HIV pandemic is not merely the virus. The vital issues in the context of the HIV pandemic that we need to deal with in the long run are maturity, faithfulness, sexuality, our understanding of partnerships and relationships, kindness, compassion and human suffering. The unique contribution of theology

in the context of the HIV pandemic will offer guidance in these matters to enhance the quality of human life – even after the development of a vaccine against or a cure for the HI virus. The danger for pastoral care in the HIV pandemic is to get involved in the care of the ranks of the dying rather than to prevent people's death altogether by dealing with the real issues at stake in good time.

Consequently, a pastoral prevention strategy needs to go deeper and empower people beyond theoretical knowledge to oppose the HIV pandemic based on an assured and internalised knowledge of themselves and the quality of life, which will permanently impact on their understanding of faithfulness, sexuality, relationships, compassion and care for those that are suffering. The basic assumption of the thesis is that lasting and effective change of behaviour and attitude is deeply an ethical question and therefore a theological one too. As Ackermann points out, "It is simply not good enough merely to preach fidelity and abstinence in sexual relations" (2004:45). The real problem lies at a deeper level, which is concerned with the understanding of our being human before God.

In connection with other barriers to effective care in the context of the HIV pandemic, there remain significant obstacles to the effective use of services and appropriate use of antiretrovirals, of which adherence is the most important (Wilson & Fairall 2005:484). Inconsistent adherence to antiretroviral medication allows the HI virus to acquire resistance to all known classes of antiretrovirals with ease (Wilson & Fairall 2005:484), and therefore puts the management of the epidemic at risk. Inconsistent adherence is due to various factors in the individual (transport, food, unstable domestic environment, stigma, non-disclosure, traditional belief systems, etc.), antiretroviral treatment (pill burden, side-effects) and the national health system (shortage of skilled staff, overburdened health facilities, etc.) (Wilson & Fairall 2005:485).

As regards the personal factors in the individual and challenges of antiretroviral treatment that negatively impact on adherence, a pastoral approach to life care based on a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology can also be most helpful as it empowers individuals to cope with basic life issues and helps to enhance the general quality of life. However, a pastoral approach should not ignore the necessity to enhance general access to

services and the burden of poverty, which impacts negatively on individuals and their resilience in the context of the HIV pandemic.

The prevention strategy put forward by Van Dyk in *HIV/Aids Care and Counselling* (2005) overlaps in many aspects with the nationwide South African prevention programmes discussed above. Van Dyk quotes Osborne saying, “the Achilles heel of HIV is its dependence on behaviour that is voluntary” (1990, quote in Van Dyk 2005:91). Van Dyk claims, “There is only one weapon against HIV infection and AIDS and that is *behaviour change*” (2005:129). She refers to established behaviourist theories about how behaviour can be changed, like Bandura’s theory of social learning or Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour (Van Dyk 2005:92). On this basis, she identifies the following central components of any successful HIV prevention programme: (1) recognition of the *need* to change; (2) *identification* of the specific behaviour that needs to change; (3) intention or *commitment*; (4) positive *attitude* toward the aspired behaviour; (5) *support* of peer groups; (6) *self-efficiency*; (7) *knowledge* how to perform the aspired behaviour; (8) perception of the *benefits* and rewards of the aspired behaviour; and (9) necessary *skills* to perform the aspired behaviour (Van Dyk 2005:93ff). These components also serve as a helpful outline for a pastoral prevention strategy. Based on a general paradigm and framework in the form of an internalised Christian ethos, these components can meaningfully be facilitated by a life care approach.

As regards the declared aims of an HIV prevention programme, Van Dyk emphasises that the purpose of HIV education is not only to propagate information, but also to change attitudes and behaviour, equip individuals with the necessary life skills, empower them to prevent the spread of the infection and help them care for those who are already infected (2005:98). Besides condom distribution, she argues for a more holistic approach of counselling, education, support and care in the form of a *comprehensive* prevention programme, which addresses the various aspects of HIV and AIDS in the different contexts, like churches, schools, hospitals and tertiary institutions (Van Dyk 2005:100). “Voluntary HIV Counselling and Testing” (VCT) plays an important role in this regard and has been applied as a major strategy for prevention and care in the context of the HIV pandemic in South Africa (Van Dyk 2005:103). Knowing one’s status, it has been argued, is instrumental in

effecting behavioural change and the adoption of safe sex practices (Van Dyk 2005:103). Van Dyk stresses that participants in VTC frequently express the strong need for follow-up counselling and support, spiritual counselling and a comprehensive referral system (2005:105).

The promotion of physical and mental health, as well as the acquisition of *life skills* play a significant role in Van Dyk's model (2005:143). She believes that HIV education should empower individuals with the necessary skills to make the right health choices and improve the overall quality of their lives (Van Dyk 2005:143). An HIV prevention programme should not only enable people to prevent an HIV infection, but help them to enhance their lives on various levels (Van Dyk 2005:143). Van Dyk stresses that the following life skills should be facilitated by health care professionals and promoted in individuals: (1) *assertiveness*; (2) *self-efficiency*; (3) *strong self-concept*; (4) belief in the right to make own *choices*; (5) ability to *handle peer pressure*; (6) taking *responsibility* for self and others; (7) *problem-solving skills*; (8) *conflict resolution*; (9) *effective communication skills*; and (10) *negotiation skills* (2005:143).

From a pastoral perspective, Van Dyk's emphasis on the enhancement of the quality of life in an HIV prevention programme can generally be supported (compare Van Dyk 2005:143). However, the life skills promoted by Van Dyk focus strongly on the development of a tough, resilient and efficient self of the individual. I understand that the aim is to empower individuals to make the right health choices based on a clear understanding that they have rights and responsibilities towards themselves and others, and to safeguard their physical and mental health and that of others in the threatening context of the HIV pandemic.

Even though this approach is understandable and indeed appropriate, from a pastoral perspective, the question arises on what basis individuals can develop a strong belief in their ability to achieve a strong self-concept, self-awareness and the strength to defend their own rights and choices respectfully, without losing sight of the rights and choices of others. On the basis of which paradigm or broader framework can individuals lastingly be empowered to safeguard their own health and that of others by making responsible decisions in the context of the HIV pandemic? As proposed in this section, an understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology

can serve as a starting point for meaningful theological reflection on behavioural change and personal interactions, which enhance people's health, the quality of their lives and help to safeguard human dignity.

Van Dyk points out that schools as well as religious and civic organisations play an important role in HIV education and life skills training (2005:145). She states, "To make responsible decisions, a child must have *knowledge* that is firmly based on healthy *values, norms and attitudes*, and *skills* to implement these decisions" (Van Dyk 2005:148). In order for an HIV prevention programme to be successful, there should be a balance between information, promotion of life skills, values and attitudes (Van Dyk 2005:148). As regards essential attitudes and values that are important for the survival of individuals and communities in the context of the HIV pandemic, Van Dyk identifies (1) positive *self-concept*; (2) *respect* for self and others; (3) *self-control*; (4) right to *privacy*; (5) right to *protect* oneself; (6) right to say *no*; (7) *loyalty and commitment*; (8) *honesty*; (9) taking *responsibility* for one's actions; (10) respect for *life*; (11) *non-discrimination*; (12) *forgiveness*; (13) *loving and caring*; (14) social *justice*; and (15) *friendliness*, kindness and sensitivity (2005:149).

From a pastoral perspective, it is again necessary to ascertain what the foundation is for values like a positive self-concept, respect for self, others and human life in general, responsibility, forgiveness, loving and caring. Van Dyk's call for certain values and attitudes in the context of the HIV pandemic is significant and should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, the following questions remain: What exactly enables a person to have a positive self-concept despite unfavourable, threatening circumstances? What enables individuals to respect themselves and others in an environment where the value of human life generally seems not to be regarded highly? What empowers people in terms of a motivational factor to take responsibility for their own actions and forgive others their trespasses? What enables a person to truly love and care for others in a self-denying manner?

I believe that this significant gap in terms of an overall moral paradigm and frame of reference, which becomes evident in Van Dyk's model as an example of existing approaches to HIV prevention, can be filled with a pastoral approach to life care. A life care strategy for pastoral care based on an



understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life, a pastoral anthropology and an awareness of who we already are as human beings before God will truly empower individuals to fight the HIV pandemic, promote individuals' physical and mental health, and safeguard human life and dignity.

Uys and Cameron's (eds.) *Home-Based HIV/Aids Care* (2003) serves as a good example of an approach in the context of the HIV pandemic, which focuses more on the management of the HIV pandemic in terms of care and support for people who are infected or affected by HIV. Uys introduces a model for home-based care that is conducted as much as possible in the community, with hospitalisation only when necessary (Uys 2003:3). The concept of home-based care entails the provision of the needed health care by a primary caregiver to an individual or family at home (Uys 2005:4). The focus of home-based care is on the person living with HIV, the family or friend caregiver, as well as children living in the household (Uys 2003:4). Although the emphasis of home-based care appears to be on health care, Uys points out that the person living with HIV needs holistic care, including counselling and teaching, nursing care, emotional, spiritual and economic support (2003:4).

Uys opts for an *integrated* home-based care model, which aims to link all service providers, like community caregivers, clinics, hospitals, support groups, churches, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations, with the individuals and their families "in a continuum of care" (Uys 2003:5). All the care provided is given on palliative care standards and is aimed at preventing HIV infections through increased openness and understanding, and thereby changing behaviour (Louden 1999, quoted in Uys 2003:6). Uys claims that the integrated approach ensures that the persons living with HIV and their families "get all the help they need, from the day the diagnosis is made, through all that phases to terminal care" (Uys 2003:7).

The care identified by Uys divides broadly into two main fields: (1) *counselling and teaching*, and (2) *palliative care* (2003:7). She states that the tasks most often performed by the community caregiver are counselling and the giving of information (94 percent of visits), as well as giving psychological and emotional support (45 percent of visits) (Uys 2003:7). She argues, "Therefore, counselling and teaching are among the most important skills a CCG [i.e. community caregiver] has to have" (Uys 2003:7). As the objectives of

counselling and teaching, she identifies: (1) promotion of a positive *acceptance* of the diagnosis; (2) promotion of *disclosure*; (3) *understanding* of the illness and a healthy life style; (4) *preparation* for death, such as child care; and (5) dealing with *loss* (Uys 2003:7).

The palliative care Uys has in mind includes “comprehensive care of people with active progressive far advanced disease for whom the prognosis is limited and the focus of care is the quality of life” (Doyle 1993, quoted in Uys 2003:8). Through aspects such as hygiene (28 percent of visits), wound care (13 percent of visits) and symptom control (68 percent of visits), the quality of life of the person living with HIV and the family is to be improved by making the terminally ill more comfortable, improving the health of the person and lightening the care load on the family or friend caregiver (Uys 2003:8). Elements that, according to Uys, make up a “good death” include comfort, openness, completion, control, optimism, readiness and choice of location (2003:8).

Uys’ model helps us not to forget about the crucial physical side of care and support for people living with HIV or dying from conditions due to AIDS and their families (Uys 2003:12). It becomes evident again that, besides emotional and spiritual support in the terminal stage, there is the great need for professional medical care and support on the standards of palliative care, which allows for the easing of pain and more physical comfort in the terminal stage (compare Louw 2006:430). However, as illustrated in earlier sections of the thesis, from a pastoral perspective, the mere performance of symptom control and physical care will not suffice to improve the individual’s quality of life in the face of death and to cope with the fear of dying.

Uys does not elaborate further on the grounds on which paradigm or frame of reference effective counselling and psychological and emotional support should be performed to assist persons living with HIV in coming to terms with the diagnosis and improving the quality of their lives despite an HIV infection. The question that remains is: Within which overall framework and understanding of human life is a positive acceptance of the HIV diagnosis, disclosure, coming to terms with the various losses and eventually a meaningful preparation for death possible?

Defilippi points out that churches and faith-based organisations may have groups involved, or prepared to become involved, in providing care and support

for people living with HIV (2003:18). Besides clinical management, nursing care and social support, she emphasises the need for psycho-spiritual support, including stress and risk reduction, acceptance and disclosure of serostatus, coping in terms of positive living and planning for the future (Defilippi 2003:22). However, from a pastoral perspective, the weakness of the Uys and Cameron model for home-based care is that, although a holistic, integrated approach is chosen, which includes spiritual care (Marston 2003:121f), the concept of “total pain” (Gwyther & Marston 2003:102) and improvement of the quality of life (Marston 2003:126), the theoretical and philosophical foundation for the provision of these aspects of care is underdeveloped.

The holistic needs of the person living with HIV are mentioned and even included in the training curriculum for community caregivers, and still the vital role of faith in prevention, control and care is not developed further in the Uys and Cameron model (Cameron 2003:38ff). The model acknowledges that, besides medical interventions, spiritual care plays a significant role in people’s coping with living with an HIV infection. Nevertheless, only the general objectives of care are stated, while the framework or paradigm on which basis spiritual care and counselling can be provided is neglected.

Like Van Dyk, Knott emphasises the need for health care workers to have counselling skills in order to prevent the further transmission of HIV and provide support for those affected directly and indirectly by HIV (Knott 2003:63). One-to-one prevention counselling is aimed at assisting people to change their behaviour and deal with psychosocial and psychological stresses and uncertainties (Knott 2003:63). He identifies the following aims of effective HIV counselling: (1) provision of a *supportive* environment; (2) *management* of problems and issues; (3) *coping skills*; (4) *self-sufficiency*; (5) *knowledge* how to remain HIV-negative; (6) knowledge how to *protect* others; and (7) *behaviour change*, which should include the well-known options of the ABC-approach (Knott 2003:64).

Even though this kind of approach seems understandable and indeed appropriate, once again an overall framework and paradigm, which provides a solid base for effective and supportive counselling in this regard, are missing. From a pastoral perspective, the need arises for a valuable framework regarding the concept “life” and our being human, which will empower people

infected and affected by HIV to improve the quality of their lives and to cope with the various issues and problems that life in this context poses and enable caregivers to provide loving and compassionate care until the end.

To summarise, although the need for holistic spiritual care besides good nursing care and medical treatment is acknowledged in terms of objectives in the models for HIV care and counselling by Van Dyk, Uys and Cameron (eds.), the crucial question how these objectives are to be achieved remains open. From a pastoral perspective, there is the need for a framework and theoretical *paradigm* from which to reflect on both care and counselling, as well as individual behavioural change in the context of the HIV pandemic. The hypothesis developed in this section is that the fundamental gap in existing HIV prevention approaches can be filled with a life care approach to a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic as it provides such an overall frame of reference by means of an understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology.

Van Dyk in Van Dyk's *HIV/AIDS Care and Counselling* (2005) admits that spiritual counselling "remains one of the most neglected aspects of counselling, especially within the HIV/AIDS context" (2005:249). He makes the vital statement that the religious needs of people living with HIV should not be ignored, and points to the ironic situation that "many of the most urgent and troubling spiritual and existential questions that confront HIV-positive people often remain unanswered at a time when their need for spiritual comfort, consolation and understanding is more acute than it has even been at any other time in their lives" (Van Dyk 2005:249).

Bartel has argued that unfulfilled spiritual needs in life lead to *spiritual suffering* (2004:187). Just as physical pain signals an injury to the physical body, spiritual suffering is an indication that one or more spiritual needs are threatened or going unmet (Bartel 2004:194). Bartel states that spiritual suffering includes threats to one's beliefs and purpose in life, which is often experienced as a "spiritual dissonance" (2004:194) between one's faith and critical life events. This underlines the significance of spiritual support to people living with HIV. However, in reality those who seek spiritual counselling are often deeply disappointed because there is no space for their spiritual needs within the highly developed HIV care and counselling programmes, which

mainly focus on health care and the facilitation of behavioural change. Another reason why people's spiritual needs are neglected is that many religious leaders find it difficult to deal with people who are living with HIV due to the close correlation to sexual activity, which remains an avoided or negatively connoted issue within many faith communities.

Although Van Dyk's research is helpful in terms of an awareness of the need for spiritual care, a more critical look needs to be taken at his claim that the particular nature of the HIV pandemic has "undermined and eroded the most basic traditional features of spiritual counselling" (2005:249). Van Dyk states that the basic task of spiritual care, which is to deliver a message of hope, more precisely eternal hope, has been complicated by the emergence of the HIV pandemic (2005:248). The fatal nature of the HIV infection with its certain degeneration toward death, so it is argued, has diminished even the slightest hope for healing and recovery, which is even present for the terminally ill cancer patient (Van Dyk 2005:249). What Van Dyk calls a "»silent agreement« or complicity" between the patient and the spiritual counsellor includes the understanding that the "counsellor will continue to express *hope* – a hope that becomes a shared form of denial that binds the counsellor and the sick person together" (2005:250).

Keeping in mind the findings regarding a life care approach to terminal care and the fundamental role that hope plays in connection with a "liturgy of life care for the dying" (Louw 2006:435), I do not agree with the concept of hope proposed by Van Dyk. Hope in the context of life care does not serve as an encoded form of denial of either the painful reality or the severity of the illness that the counsellor shares in order to provide the individual with a steadfast optimism despite unfavourable circumstances. The message of Christ's death and resurrection provides us with a fundamentally different form of hope regarding its ground, content and objective. *Resurrection hope* refers to a form of hope that lasts in spite of death and against all hope.

Moxter refers to hope as a basic motivational power in human interactions (2000:1828). Christian hope overcomes its antagonists fear, despair and resignation, as it is based on faith (Moxter 2000:1828). He quotes Rendtorff, "Folglich manifestiert sich der »Hoffnungssinn christlicher Ethik« im Symbol des Reiches Gottes als einer »erfolgstranszendente(n) Ermutigung zum

Guten«” (1981, quoted in Moxter 2000:1828). This is of fundamental significance in connection with a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic. Keeping the research on psychological factors that hinder condom use and adherence in antiretroviral treatment in mind (Myer 2005:175; Wilson & Fairall 2005:485), the positive impact regarding the general enhancement of the quality of life of the Christian concept of hope in prevention care for individuals who have little hope for their personal future should not be underestimated.

Furthermore, I do not share Van Dyk’s generalised understanding of the fatality of the HIV infection, as it is evident that HIV infection can be more of a chronic-treatable disease rather than a progressive-fatal one (2005:iii). This is especially the case when access to antiretroviral therapy and general management of the HIV infection and other opportunistic infections are ensured, and the negative impact of unfavourable life circumstances in poverty-stricken regions are minimised.<sup>88</sup>

The aim of pastoral care to people living with HIV is to improve the quality of their life and assist them to cope with basic life issues in the context of the HIV pandemic. The primary objective is to empower people to resist the expansion of the infection and to equip them with the courage to live a positive life. In this regard, both the theological concept of hope, an understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology, i.e. who we *already* are as human beings before God, are crucial.

Consequently, a pastoral approach to HIV prevention and care should not get paralysed by the understanding that spiritual care and the transmission of a message of eternal hope has been “complicated” or even made impossible by the HIV pandemic. Christian hope refers to hope in spite of everything, a living hope against all hope (Rom 4:18). For pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic, it is essential to remember that hope in the Christian sense is an eschatological gift due to Christ’s resurrection from the dead, an *ontological*, already present aspect of our being human in relation to God. Paul writes to the

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<sup>88</sup> This relates to what in certain circles is referred to as “postponed death” versa “inevitable death”, in the context of prevention and management efforts regarding the HIV pandemic. For further information, see the four types of death referred to earlier in the thesis.

Roman congregation, “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Rom 8:24-25).

It is helpful in this context to take note of what Steffensky says about the dignity of the biblical texts, which resides exactly in their *immodesty* (2006:10). The biblical texts do not only say what can be said, and do not only hope for what can be hoped for (Steffensky 2006:10). They reach out far into the land of the unspeakable and unhopeable.

The prophet Isaiah used various images of the impossible to speak to the desperate people in Babylonian captivity: the desert will blossom, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the mute will speak and everlasting joy will be for all (Isa 35) (Steffensky 2006:10). This biblical desire for the impossible, for a land without life-deserts, we need to keep in mind when developing a life care approach to pastoral care and counselling in the context of an HIV pandemic, whose threatening facts and statistics often attempt to deprive us of all hope.

### **5.1. The Concept of a Christian Ethos within a Life Care Approach to the HIV Pandemic**

The term *life style*, which frequently occurred in the previous section in connection with a required change of life style or the development of a healthy life style, refers to an individual’s unique way of life, including particular priorities, environmental demands, cultural conditioning and the use of resources (Sullender 1990:651). Life style choices reflect certain values or beliefs held by an individual (Sullender 1990:651). As regards the aim of pastoral care within the context of the HIV pandemic, the main objective is to assist people to recognise the consequences of their life style choices, clarify underlying values and beliefs and reflect on these from a perspective of faith (Sullender 1990:651).

It has been pointed out that prevailing HIV prevention strategies also aim to make people aware of the consequences of their behaviour and inner human potential to combat or avoid these consequences in order to initiate behavioural change. However, most HIV prevention programmes opt for the modification of behaviour based on *external* moralistic demands to change the specific

behaviour that puts one's own health and that of others at risk. Widespread HIV care and prevention programmes, like the well-known ABC-approach and those proposed by Van Dyk, Uys and Cameron (eds.), aim to promote behavioural change based on general ethical and moralistic considerations. These see the solution to the HIV pandemic in primary or secondary abstinence, and the delayed onset of sexual activity, together with a call to condomise for those who cannot abstain. What is missing is a broader theoretical paradigm and philosophical framework that will help people to reflect on the moral issues at stake, the reasons for the necessity of behavioural change and the development of essential life and coping skills.

Consequently, from a pastoral perspective, an effective HIV prevention programme should focus on fundamental values and belief systems that motivate certain behaviour (compare Sullender 1990:651). The aim is to assist people to clarify and further develop underlying values and beliefs in order to initiate behavioural change and facilitate life skills, based not only on external moralistic demands, but also on deeply *internalised* convictions. In this context, the transformed hermeneutical understanding of life from the perspective of the resurrection in terms of care for life plays a vital role.

The hypothesis argued in this section is that the life care approach based on a Christian *ethos* can most constructively be applied to a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic. A deeply internalised Christian ethos, based on a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology, can function as a powerful claim for life that encourages the maintenance and enhancement of human life. Such a pastoral prevention strategy intends to move away from the mere concentration on sexual activity and stigma towards the general enhancement of the quality of life and relationships, and coping mechanisms. In terms of a life care approach, the central goal is to highlight what we generally care for in life in order to enhance the appreciation and preservation of life.

### **The Role of Ethos and Ethics in Behavioural Change**

Concerning a general clarification of terms, *ethos* refers to the type-specific manner of regulated interaction of human beings with their own kind and the challenges posed by their environment (Herms 1999c:1639). The principles of



the human encounter with the world and fellow human beings are somehow justified in the *inner* milieu of individuals' acting and interacting, as they follow certain rules of conviction or mindset (Herms 1999c:1639). Herms offers the following definition of ethos: "Menschliches Ethos ist dann: eine Interaktionsordnung, deren Regeln die Interaktanten aufgrund ... einer Gewissheit über Ursprung und Ziel des menschlichen Daseins, die den Affekt, den Lebenstrieb bestimmt, folgen" (1999c:1639).

As such, the concept ethos essentially deals with the foundation of a responsible, norm-based life style as it is concerned with an internalised certainty regarding the origin and destiny of human existence (Härle 2002:1071).

Prevailing theories concerning human ethos are divided by two main assumptions and understandings. One theory assumes that human beings are subjugated solely to the causality of the law of nature (Herms 1999c:1639). The other theory emphasises that the principles of human encounter in individuals depend on the determinations of both human self-knowledge and a broader *assurance* of existence (Herms 1999c:1639). These determinations can either be acknowledged or denied by any individual in freedom. It is the latter approach, which emphasises free will in human interactions based on an assured knowledge of being human and the general purpose of existence, that is supported by the Christian and other influential philosophical schools (Herms 1999c:1639).

*Ethics*, on the other hand, is concerned with the criteria of right actions and a moral life style (Herms 1999a:1598). Theological ethics is fundamentally a prescriptive science, rather than merely a descriptive one, and deals with morals, values and the *ought* of human behaviour (Louw 2006:233).<sup>89</sup> Ethics can be described as the conscious reflection of a responsible, norm-based life style, which is ethos (Härle 2002:1072). Härle argues,

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<sup>89</sup> Louw names the following important aspects regarding the aim and objective of a theological *ethics*: (1) applicable *knowledge* concerning the meaning and destiny of life issues, i.e. life styles and the quality of life; (2) *ought* of human behaviour; (3) tension between *good* and *evil*; (4) quality of responsible *decision-making* and value judgements; (5) *identity* and character of human ethos, i.e. characteristic traits of human behaviour, attitude, and aptitude; (6) promotion of human *dignity*, justice, and human rights; (7) understanding of the will of *God*, i.e. function and cause of human life in terms of purposefulness from the perspective of God's intention for human life (2006:234).

In dem Maße, wie dieses Ethos zum Gegenstand bewusster Reflektion wird, also z.B. auf seine Konsistenz, Kohärenz, Universalisierbarkeit und Lebensdienlichkeit hin überdacht und überprüft wird und damit die Gestalt der Ethik annimmt, erhöht sich die Bewusstheit und Eigenständigkeit menschlicher Lebensführung (2002:1072).

With regard to the question concerning the object of ethics, Herms confirms, “Dem Ethiker ist sein Gegenstand nur gegeben auf dem Boden eigener Teilhabe an einem Ethos für deren reflexive Wahrnehmung” (1999a:1598). Consequently, ethics is always part of a broader ethos (Herms 1999a:1598). Individuals can only become aware of an ethical question or moral problem when they themselves share in an ethos, which helps them to reflect on the moral issue at stake. Ethical behaviour results from an individual’s participation in an ethos, which provides the individual with an assured knowledge about being human and a general certainty of existence in terms of a moral framework of reference.

Herms states concerning this significant interrelation between ethics and ethos, “Keine Ethik kann sich ausserhalb eines Horizonts daseinsontologischer Leitannahmen (Annahmen über das Sein und Zusammensein der Menschen) bewegen” (1999a:1599). Based on the conditions of possibilities regarding human interactions grounded in internalised assurance and norms, which is ethos, pure ethics obtains the prerequisites for understanding and decision-making in terms of applied ethics (Herms 1999a:1600).<sup>90</sup> Ethics remain theoretical and neither produce any norms nor their acknowledgement and fulfilment (Herms 1999a:1600). Only within an ethos, do ethics become the expression of rationality and an intensified ability to act (Herms 1999a:1600). This is pertinent to the hypothesis argued in this section, since it confirms the

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<sup>90</sup> *Norms* refer to “basic criteria that help one to understand the truth (essence) regarding being qualities, the meaning of life, driving forces (motives) and the destiny or telos of things” (Louw 2006:234). As theological ethics entails a teleological dimension, norms help one to identify criteria in order to assess, distinguish and differentiate between good and evil (Louw 2006:234). Norms describe limitations and guidelines for decision-making and responsible moral choices with the aim to direct human behaviour (Louw 2006:234).

necessity of a broader moral frame of reference in order to encourage behavioural change in the context of the HIV pandemic.

Antes points out that religions teach human beings to perceive themselves meaningfully as part of a greater whole and to behave according to this structure of meaning (1999:1601). Religions do not only deal with issues of *Weltanschauung*, but in the same way with the right behaviour and its justification in connection with the overall principles of being (Antes 1999:1601). Although, principally, there can be ethics without religion and religion without concrete regulations of behaviour, it is important to note that the question “*What shall we do?*” is, from a perspective of faith, subordinate to the question of who we are (Antes 1999:1601).

We need to acknowledge that from a perspective of faith, ethos and ethics are neither prerequisites nor conditions of being human or for human dignity, but rather the results thereof (Härle 2002:1071). Louw points toward the necessity of a theoretical framework of reference in ethical considerations, i.e. ethos (2006:233). He argues that, whenever ethics is introduced, “the question of *paradigm* immediately surfaces, i.e. the patterns of thinking and their relatedness to norms and values” (Louw 2006:233).<sup>91</sup>

The priority for a pastoral approach to an HIV prevention strategy does therefore not lie in pure ethics, but ethical behaviour depends on the overall perception of life and who we are as human beings. The findings of this thesis regarding a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology are most valuable in this regard. The understanding that human life in its totality takes place and finds meaning in the relationship with the living and compassionate God, who will never let go of individuals, serves as the starting point for pastoral care to people living with HIV or in the context of the HIV pandemic. As regards the development of a healthy life style and the avoidance of risk behaviour, a life care approach grounded in the divine assurance of existence and human self-knowledge is perceived as more fundamental than

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<sup>91</sup> *Values* are norms internalised as personal guidelines for responsible behaviour and social interaction (Louw 2006:235). Norms, which have been internalised in form of values, have the status of morals as they serve as “guidelines for concrete action and behaviour within the ever existing tension of good and evil” (Louw 2006:235). Values that became an integral part of an individual’s moral character, indicating moral direction of attitude and aptitude, can be referred to as *virtues* (Louw 2006:235).

existing HIV prevention strategies, which focus on behavioural change based on external moralistic demands.

Prevention programmes that mainly focus on healthy sexual behaviour, the moralistic rejection of promiscuity and the encouragement of abstinence and a delayed onset of sexual activity are, even though appropriate, not dealing with the fundamental issues at stake. What is at stake in the context of the HIV pandemic is the central task to equip individuals with an overall moral framework of reference, which could guide them safely in the process of responsible decision-making and value judgement concerning the totality of human life, including sexual behaviour and relationships. From a theological perspective, this moral framework of reference is closely related to an internalised understanding of God's good will and intention for human life, i.e. ethos.

The HIV pandemic can serve as an opportunity to grow spiritually and develop maturity in faith by rethinking and rediscovering our status before God. According to Nouwen, "it has been the interruptions of my everyday life that have most revealed to me the divine mystery of which I am part" (1998b:137). Often it is the most painful experiences of life when we are faced with the possibility of death that force us to look at ourselves in a radically new way (Nouwen 1998b:146). The same is true of the HIV pandemic, which forces us to concentrate on the centre of our being human in relation to God.

### **The Ethos of the Bible as an Overall Frame of Reference**

What exactly does a Christian ethos entail? Ethical behaviour results from an individual's participation in an ethos, which is an internalised moral frame of reference that closely relates to a person's overall understanding of life and being human, rather than from external demands for moralistic behaviour. Consequently, we need to focus on the development of a Christian ethos that can be applied fruitfully to a life care approach to an HIV prevention strategy for pastoral care.

In *The Ethos of the Bible* (1981), Gerhardson identifies the primary constituents and characteristic traits of the biblical ethos. According to him, the ethos of the Bible has essentially a *religious* base, meaning that an individual's

faith determines the spiritual background for the interpretation of norms, values and the destiny of life (Gerhardson 1981:118).

The biblical ethos is *theonomous*, as it originates in an understanding of the will of God within the covenantal encounter of human beings with this God (Gerhardson 1981:118).<sup>92</sup>

The biblical ethos should be understood as a character ethos, i.e. *Gesinnungsethos*, which implicates an inner-directed behaviour that is due to a radical inner transformation of the individual (Gerhardson 1981:118f). This entails “more than a new attitude, a rethinking of and an inward conversion but concrete and specific obedience enacted in all spheres of life” (Schrage 1988:44, quoted in Louw 2006:236).

The biblical ethos includes a *social* ethos, which includes love for and attention to fellow human beings (Gerhardson 1981:119).

The *spiritual* aspect of the biblical ethos deals with the understanding that human beings are essentially spiritual beings, created in the image of God, and for the fellowship with God (Gerhardson 1981:120).

The ethos of the Bible is a “*telos ethos*”, which emphasises the purpose-driven, goal-orientated aspect of being human in terms of a God-given destiny (Gerhardson 1981:120). According to Louw, “In terms of the fulfilled promise of God, humans are orientated towards a new messianic and eschatological, determined future” (2006:236).

The biblical ethos presupposes faith in the *Spirit* of God, which refers to “the experience and conviction that God guides those who receive him” (Gerhardson 1981:121). Such a pneumatologically determined ethos includes the quality of spiritual life as determined by charisma, i.e. the fruits of the Spirit (Louw 2006:236). Regarding the guidance of God’s Spirit, the expression

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<sup>92</sup> Gerhardson makes the valuable qualification that the ethos of the Bible is neither *autonomous*, i.e. adequate norms for life are created by human beings themselves, nor *heteronomous*, i.e. norms for life are imposed on human beings from the outside by an arbitrary, foreign will (1981:118). This understanding is most valuable in the context of the search for an adequate approach to an HIV prevention strategy. A theonomous ethos liberates human beings from the necessity to create a moral framework of reference completely out of their own strength. It is also not imposed on individuals from the outside as an external moralistic demand, which does not find any ground in human beings themselves. A theonomous approach to a human ethos assumes that the basic framework for moral considerations emerges from the God-human relationship and expresses the deeper meaning of God’s intention for humanity and human life. This we need to keep in mind concerning a relevant HIV prevention strategy for pastoral care.

“walking in the Spirit” refers to life “within the realm of the presence of a living God” (Louw 2006:236).

The ethos of the Bible includes the dimension of *love*, which is not a mere feeling but an attitude toward God and humankind (Gerhardson 1981:122). In the form of unconditional, sacrificial love, *agapé*, love entails the “giving of oneself, self-sacrifice in obedience to the will of God and for the benefit of others” (Gerhardson 1981:123).

This dimension of the biblical ethos can be referred to as “*corporative ethos*”, entailing the conviction that the individual belongs to the family of God (Gerhardson 1981:133). Through fellowship, i.e. *koinonia*, and charity, i.e. *diakonia*, believers are connected to one another and called to reach out to the needs of the other (Louw 2006:237).<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, the ethos of the Bible includes the *imitation and presence of Christ* (Gerhardson 1981:124). This means that we are called to follow Christ and, through sanctification, act out his message within all relationships and concrete situations (Louw 2006:237).

The biblical ethos implies *affirmation of the world and sacrifice* (Gerhardson 1981:126). This relates to the believer’s tension of being *in* the world but not *of* the world (Jn 17:16) (Gerhardson 1981:126). The willingness to sacrifice, “to give generously of oneself, to share what one has, even – if God demands – to sacrifice everything, including one’s life”, this is the right attitude of the believer towards the world (Gerhardson 1981:126).

The ethos of the Bible is characterised by the significant dichotomy between *gift and demand* (Gerhardson 1981:130). Gerhardson points out that in

<sup>93</sup> Ackermann has pointed to the necessity to create *moral communities* in order to create an environment, which enhances and embraces the ethical behaviour of the individual (2004:45). A moral community can be defined as one, which “upholds the integrity of life, values the dignity of the human person, includes those that are on the margins or excluded, while not avoiding the reality of structural sin” (Ackermann 2004:46). In line with Gerhardson’s argument, Ackermann emphasises that Christian ethics are essentially communal ethics (2004:45). She states that the way people live with one another and faithfulness to God are two sides of the same coin (Ackermann 2004:45).

Ackermann refers to Brady’s *The Moral Bond of Community* (1998), saying, “Instead of a negative ethics of human sexuality which consist only of injunctions on what not to do, people’s stories can be countered with other stories – stories from our source book” (2004:46). She maintains that it is possible to use narrative as *the* medium of moral communication, where stories from the Bible and the faith traditions interact with people’s own stories (Ackermann 2004:46). By means of that, “moral consciousness, the ability to distinguish the »is« from the »ought« and the choices this involves, can be nurtured” (Ackermann 2004:46). The overall goal of such a moral community is to respect and enhance the integrity of human life before God (Ackermann 2004:46).

all ethical endeavours, “divine grace comes first as well as last; it precedes a person’s ethical endeavours, sustains them throughout and envelops them with its forgiveness” (1981:130). Grace becomes a demand as it is to create “thankfulness, thanksgiving, and a life of gratitude, praise and joy” (Louw 2006:238).

The ethos of the Bible also entails an *ecological* dimension, which includes human stewardship and ethical obligations toward creation (Gerhardson 1981:138).

Eventually, the biblical ethos does not neglect the aspect of *human fallibility* and fundamental sin (Gerhardson 1981:139). Louw argues, “Pride, selfishness and egoism are ingredients of human fallibility as well as the tendency to misuse freedom and power (violence)” (2006:238).

These valuable traits of a Christian ethos can serve individuals as an overall moral frame of reference as regards behavioural change in the context of the HIV pandemic. A life style that is directed towards the characteristics of a Christian ethos enhances the quality of life and assists people in coping with basic life issues on a daily basis.

### **A Paradigm for Ethical Behaviour in Pastoral Care**

As regards a life care approach to a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic, we opt for the same recreational and inhabitational paradigm to approach the formation of a Christian ethos, which has been used in connection with a life care approach to terminal care.

The *recreational* foundation for ethical reflections is based on the eschatological paradigm, which is coherent with the overall methodological framework of the thesis in terms of the “Convergence Model” that practises pastoral theology from the perspective of eschatology (Louw 1998:8). Louw points out that, due to many divergences, irregularities and a general diversity, creation can not be the norm for ethical reflection as such (2006:241). This is true also for matters of human sexuality, sexual behaviour and interpersonal relationships, which are in the limelight in connection with the HIV pandemic.

Is recreation the norm to reflect on ethical questions, God’s will and intention in matters of all human interaction, including human sexuality, sexual behaviour and interpersonal relationships, becomes apparent. Louw insists that

“for a telos ethos re-creation (salvation) sets the norm for creation” (2006:242). In the recreation, which is due to Christ’s cross and resurrection, human beings and the whole of creation received a totally new and transformed eschatological ethos and destiny (Rom 8:21) (Louw 2006:242). This is of fundamental importance for the development of a moral frame of reference, as it bases the attainment of ethical behaviour in the context of the HIV pandemic on an understanding of God’s will for human life as became apparent in the Christ event.

As regards the *inhabitational* foundation for ethical reflection, pneumatology points to the challenge not to imitate Christ, but to embody and en flesh the Gospel and the message of Christ through the charisma of the Spirit in everyday life (Louw 2006:242f). Louw states, “Discipleship and imitation is a pneumatological endeavour and not directly a Christological endeavour” (2006:243). The pneumatological approach assesses human beings realistically, in the sense that we are *already* new eschatological beings in Christ, bestowed with the fruit of the Spirit, enabled to embody God’s will for human life in our everyday behaviour (Louw 2006:243).

As regards, for instance, the embodiment of love in a Christian ethics in the context of the HIV pandemic, it has been pointed out that it is of fundamental importance to realise that, eschatologically speaking, we *are* love (Louw 2006:243). Love is now a being-function, nothing that we need to achieve or perform, but that we need to *be* according to the qualities of the new charismatic person (Gal 5:6) (Louw 2006:243). According to Louw, “The question is not how to attain love, but to pose the question: what are the hampering factors in one’s life preventing one from exemplifying the love of God and to act out the love in all human relationships” (2006:243).

Therefore, the act of love originates in the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), and the real challenge in life is to live by the Spirit and “keep in step of the Spirit” (Gal 5:25) (Louw 2006:243).<sup>94</sup> The same is true for all

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<sup>94</sup> Schrage argues that in the biblical scriptures, the Double Commandment of Love “is grounded in being loved and has the nature of a response” (1988:68). The priority of the law of love entails that love of God and one’s neighbour are no longer a mere series of requirements, but surpass all the other commandments and regulations in significance (Mk 12) (Schrage 1988:71). The unbounded character of



charismatic gifts and characteristic traits of the ethos of the Bible, as illustrated by Gerhardson. The problem is not how to achieve a *Gesinnungsethos* or corporative ethos in everyday ethical behaviour, but how to overcome the stumbling blocks that keep us from living out the Christian ethos in all human relationships.

As regards the subordination of the question “What shall we do?” to the question of who we are in terms of ethical considerations (Antes 1999:1601), we become once again aware of the central role of eschatology and who we *already* are in Christ. Our human identity is determined by salvation and grace, as we are accepted unconditionally by God for who we are (Louw 2006:244). Louw asserts, “not what we *do* is fundamental for the quality of ethos, but who we *are*” (2006:244).

Hermes points out that the New Testament testifies to Christianity as an ethos, i.e. as a way of life, which is justified and determined by the gift of a liberating assurance (Rom 8:38f; Jn 8:32) (1999b:1611). This assurance and certainty do not only include knowledge of the character of the creator in terms of grace and truth (Jn 1:14), but also of God’s creative intention and activity as love (1 Jn 4:8). It also corresponds to the freedom that results from this gift of assurance by means of a natural free usage of this freedom (Gal 5:1ff) (Hermes 1999b:1612).

Schrage points out that the experience of God’s grace and mercy is “the prerequisite, the basis, and the reason for merciful conduct toward others” (1988:38). This points to the correlation between gift and demand referred to by Gerhardson (1981:130). God’s deed of grace demands above all corresponding actions on our part, i.e. the correspondence between the indicative and imperative of salvation in terms of the eschatological dialectics (Schrage 1988:38f, 170; Louw 1998:178).

love points to the understanding that the biblical obligation to love has no limits (Schrage 1988:74). Schrage asserts, “Love does not follow the dictates of convention and prejudice but dares to ignore them” (1988:76). Love embraces even enemies and opens itself precisely to those that we naturally exclude from our love (Schrage 1988:77).

Love in the biblical sense of *agapé* does not count the cost or reward, is pure self-surrender, and takes the need of others as the measure (Schrage 1988:79). Schrage goes even so far to say that the love of our neighbour can be called “the concrete manifestation and proof of our love of God” (1988:82). In a like manner, Gerhardson writes, “Faith – when it is living – is »active in love«” (1981:124).

The eschatological *indicative* refers to the Christ event, i.e. the life but particularly the death and resurrection of Christ (Dunn 1998:629). Another key moment is the beginning of salvation, the total transformation of our being human (Rom 6:4) (Dunn 1998:629). The eschatological *imperative* emphasises correlating human responsibility indicating the two sides of salvation, divine (Phil 1:6) and human (Gal 3:3) (Dunn 1998:629). The aspects of the *already* and *not yet* of life translates directly into the indicative and imperative of a theological ethics (Dunn 1998:629). In Luke 12:48 this is stated clearly: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Schrage 1988:39).

Schrage claims that as the assurance of salvation is absolute, also the obligation to act accordingly is absolute (1988:39). What we have *already* received and who we already are determines what is demanded of us and what we ought to do. Schrage asserts that “nothing is required that has not been given already. The imperative does not appeal to Christian’s good will or ability but recalls what they have already received in baptism: freedom and a new lord” (1988:176).

What we also have already received in baptism is charisma, the fruit of the Spirit, which enables us to en flesh and act out this new status of our being in Christ. The Pauline paradox of indicative and imperative is best expressed by the ancient words of Pindar: “*Become what you are*” (Schrage 1988:169). While human beings do not share in the cause of salvation, they, nonetheless, have a responsibility regarding the application of salvation (Louw 1998:178). The concept “*pneuma- or faith-realization*” (Louw 1998:179) proposed by Louw in contrast to the in psychological models prevailing concept of self-realisation, plays a vital role in this regard. In terms of pneuma- or faith-realisation, individuals are not dependant on themselves for the development of their true identity and corresponding ethical behaviour, but realise what they have already received in faith.

The new attitude, which is demanded in correspondence to God’s offer of salvation in terms of a pastoral prevention strategy, is first of all fundamental and comprehensive *repentance* and conversion, i.e. a change of course and new orientation (Schrage 1988:41). The imperative “Repent!” is not so much a

demand but a chance for a new beginning and return to God, which is illustrated, for instance, in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11ff) (Schrage 1988:41). Earlier in the thesis it has been illustrated how repentance includes a change from death to life.

The central aspect of Jesus' message is the call to repentance, which is expressed in the renunciation of self-righteousness (Lk 18:10ff), the return to the Father (Lk 15:11ff), faith and self-denial (Schrage 1988:41). The coming of God's kingdom is the real motive for repentance, which gives proof of the God who in Jesus has come to bring God's final salvation, and not the apocalyptic end of the world or fear for it (Lk 19:11ff) (Schrage 1988:31).

It needs to be emphasised that Christian ethics is accordingly not based on fear or threats regarding the end of the world and the horrors of death. Christian ethics do not recall visions of the eternal purgatory in order to initiate repentance, but emphasise the realisation of God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ today. The misleading intentions of some HIV prevention programmes, which aim to initiate behavioural change based on fear of death, do not correspond to a Christian ethics. In the New Testament sense of the word, *metanoia* is not just a change of mind, but essentially "a change of attitude, of intention, of will, if not a total transformation of one's conduct and orientation" (Schrage 1988:42). This is the core of a Christian ethics: in an obedient and faithful recognition of God's gracious gift of salvation, we accept God's offer, which leads to a total transformation of our intention and orientation.

Consequently, in terms of Jesus' "ethics of intention" (Schrage 1988:43), what is of central importance for ethical behaviour is the human heart, the inward disposition or overall intention. Schrage states, "Jesus' will is not fulfilment of this or that new commandment but a new attitude, a new heart, not a way of acting but a way of being, not works but character" (1988:43). The crucial point of Christian ethics is the transformation of the whole individual (Schrage 1988:43). What is required is not "»that we *do* something, but that we *be* something" (Dibelius, quoted in Schrage 1988:43). This is the core of a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic.

As pointed out earlier, baptism appears as the focal point of individual and social transformation (Strecker 2005:283). Strecker asserts that in the

Pauline writings, baptism is connected to some fundamental transformations regarding personal life style and the configuration of the socio-cultural world (Strecker 2005:284). These transformations concern the level of *knowledge* and *actions* at the same time (Strecker 2005:284).

On a personal level, this newly opened up reality inevitably shifts conventional standards of value and daily patterns of living (Strecker 2005:284). The newness of life made possible in baptism results in a transformed life style, which is not orientated on conventional worldly standards of value but on God's standards that often contradict worldly principles (Strecker 2005:285). As regards social transformation, the baptised become part of a new community, which includes the annulment, respectively qualification, of all those ethical, social and sexual hierarchical dichotomies that are deeply imprinted in societal structures (Strecker 2005:291). This is significant in the context of the HIV pandemic as sexual behaviour is shaped by various personal, interpersonal, environmental, cultural and structural forces (Mathews 2005:143f; Van Dyk 2005:129).

Accordingly, baptism into the death of Christ has a clearly life-transforming and life-shaping power, which plays a significant role for ethical behaviour in the context of the HIV pandemic. The new life in transition due to baptism is not characterised by common patterns of living, thinking and exercising of power (Strecker 2005:295). As regards the Pauline understanding of this newness of life, Strecker points out, "die regenerative und befreiende Kraft des Christuserignisses als Ganzes [ist] eine Kraft, die zumal auch das jetzige Leben verwandelt und heilvoll durchwirkt" (2005:295). Therefore, the emphasis of a life care approach is not only on the transformation of life, but on *healing* of life due to God's salvation in Christ. This understanding plays a vital role in any pastoral approach to an HIV prevention strategy.

### **The Sanctification of Life in a Life Care Approach**

As became evident in earlier sections, human life is a gift and loan from God. A suitable response to this gift is thanksgiving and gratitude to God (Waters 1996:45). Especially since life is freely given to us by God out of love and grace, it is not a gift we can easily ignore, neglect or discard (Waters 1996:45). Life is a "sacred custody" (Waters 1996:45) handed over to human beings for

safekeeping. Waters states, "The giving and receiving of such a gift presumes high levels of trust and responsibility" (1996:45). Human beings are called to live life wisely, in accordance to God's creating, redeeming and sustaining ways and intentions for life (Waters 1996:46). This relates to the need for responsibility to God's will and intention emphasised by Louw.

To serve God in a life-sustaining way includes acting according to the characteristic traits of the ethos of the Bible. The biblical ethos aims to sustain human life in a way that safeguards God's intention and purpose for human life and prevents natural processes from becoming life threatening. Based on a hermeneutical understanding of the encounter between God and human beings, the ethos of the Bible serves as an overall moral frame of reference for ethical behaviour in specific life situations. Waters argues, "In order to be faithful caretakers of the gift and loan of life, the purpose and ends of our life must be formed or shaped by God ... Such faithful stewardship, however, is based on love, grace, and obedience, a perfect communion and friendship with God" (1996:47).

In connection with that God-given purpose of human life, Waters' expression of a "claim for life" (1996:46) points the way toward a meaningful HIV prevention strategy for pastoral care. In theology, this claim for life has commonly been referred to as *sanctification*, i.e. human correspondence with God and God's intention for human life (Moltmann 1997:53). Moltmann points out that, firstly, sanctification refers to a deed of God, which originates in God's own sacredness (1997:51). In the process of sanctification, God chooses something for Godself, makes it God's own, and allows it to participate in God's own essence, so that it corresponds to God (Moltmann 1997:51).

As regards the close relation between sanctification and human conduct, sanctification then becomes the process through which the Spirit applies the implications of the new reality in salvation to daily human behaviour (Louw 1998:179). According to Louw, "Because the person is sanctified in Christ and God Himself is holy, he/she should become holy in all conduct (1Pt 1:15-16)" (1998:179). In that sense, sanctification implies the moral life style of the individual and the whole of the congregation (Eph 5:26f; Col 1:22) (Louw 1998:179). Sanctification labels human beings as moral beings who respond to salvation in terms of a vocation in life (Louw 1998:180).

Moltmann also points to the meaning of human self-realisation as pneuma- or faith-realisation. Those that correspond with God and themselves look for the correspondence with other human beings as God's image and children and with all life created by God and in which God's Spirit is present (Moltmann 1997:53). The sanctification of life on the part of human beings includes trust in God, high regard for one's own life and that of others, and respect for all living in which God is present (Moltmann 1997:53).

Sanctification that aims at human correspondence with God and God's intention for human life, which is actually the correspondence of human beings with themselves as the image and child of God, leads to the condition of true *happiness* (Moltmann 1997:53). Moltmann states, "In diesem Sinne führt die Heiligung zur wahren Selbstverwirklichung. Die mit Gott und sich selbst übereinstimmen, sind heilig und glücklich" (1997:53). Keeping in mind Kübler-Ross' life lessons, from a perspective of faith, becoming truly human and living a fulfilled life can only be achieved by engaging in the process of sanctification through which human beings learn to correspond to themselves and God's intention for human life, which is a *telos*-ethos.

Consequently, sanctification is closely related to healing, which is achieved when "life is empowered to accomplish the purpose for which it is created" (Waters 1996:48). Waters points out that "we are healed when we are empowered to fulfil our purpose to enjoy and glorify God and live in communion with the Creator, creation, and the creatures" (1996:49).

The success of life, i.e. "das *Gelingen* des Lebens", is therefore the hopeful intention of Christian ethics (Hübner 1990:544). A successful life is a fulfilled life, which is closely related to love as the affirmation of life, including all its ups and downs (Hübner 1990:544).<sup>95</sup> Since all of life originates and becomes alive in the creative Spirit of God as the source of life, it needs to be sanctified (Moltmann 1997:54). We can accomplish sanctification of life by encountering all aspects of living with the respect for God (Moltmann 1997:54), as expressed in the ethos of the Bible. Albert Schweitzer argued that ethics is essentially

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<sup>95</sup> In contrast to the Christian understanding of a fulfilled life, note Kübler-Ross' concept of the "unfinished business" (1969:241) that the dying struggle with, and the need for satisfaction experienced at the end of life.

respect for life, “*Ehrfurcht for dem Leben*” (quoted in Moltmann 1997:554), that has been created by God, the source of life. This statement depicts in a nutshell the overall goal of a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic.

The Christian concept *agapé* plays a vital role in sanctification as the correspondence with God’s intention for human life. Besides the love of God, the love of our fellow human being and the love of ourselves as incorporated in the Double Commandment of Love (Mk 12:28-34) are significant for all prevention efforts that seek to change daily human behaviour on the basis of a deeply internalised Christian ethos.

From a biblical perspective, true love of the *other* is paying attention to another human being for her or his good sake (Härle 2000:518). Härle puts it as follows: “Agape ist *die* Form der Zuwendung, die den anderen begleitet aber nicht vereinnahmt, die ihn freilässt aber nicht fallenlässt, die ihm auf der Suche ist nach dem, was für ihn gut ist – und das alles »von Herzen«” (2000:519). The realisation of the God-given purpose and destiny for human life, i.e. being made in God’s image, compels to a life out of love and in love and consequently is good for an individual (Härle 2000:519). To love somebody means to be for her and with him from one’s heart in order to enable the other to become a loving human being, or at least have the possibility of becoming (Härle 2000:520). This points to the understanding that, eventually, only love can enable another human being to become a loving individual and change behaviour (Härle 2000:520).

It is significant to note that *agapé* is not dependant on mutual love and should not be confused with sympathy or friendship (Härle 2000:521). Love is a way of *being* in human encounters that constantly calls on human life and fills it meaningfully (Härle 2000:521). True love for our fellow human beings plays a significant role in prevention care, as it impacts strongly on all human relationships, social interaction, sexual behaviour, disclosure, stigmatisation and care for those who are suffering.

True love of *oneself*, which is closely connected to the love of God and fellow human beings, is the individual’s attention to himself or herself for one’s own good (Härle 2000:524). Love for oneself is the expression and consequence of the love of God and essentially includes the love of others

(Härle 2000:524). Love of oneself means to attend to oneself in the hope of becoming a loving individual and courageously facing the inward struggles and suffering that is connected to this endeavour (Härle 2000:525).

Härle points out, “von daher zeigt sich, dass recht verstandene Selbstliebe untrennbar zu der Lebenspraxis gehört, in der Heil empfangen und gelebt wird – nicht ohne oder gegen, sondern nur in unaufhebbarer Einheit mit der Gottes- und Nächstenliebe” (2000:525).

This unity of the love of oneself with the love of God and love of fellow human beings also includes the significant aspect that we are enabled to true love through the Spirit as a response to God’s unbounded love for us. As Louw argues, in the new eschatological reality we do not have to achieve love, but *are* love, for fellow human beings as for ourselves (2006:243).

In the context of an HIV prevention strategy for pastoral care, love for oneself plays a fundamental role in safeguarding one’s own health status. The close interrelation between love of God, love of fellow human beings and love of ourselves internalised in a Christian ethos enables us to exercise responsible decision-making and ethical life style choices. These choices will serve us and others to realise our God-given human destiny, i.e. being made in the image of God, and en flesh God’s will and intention for human life in our daily behaviour and all relationships.

To summarise, the formation of a Christian ethos plays a fundamental role in a life care approach to the HIV pandemic. This is due to its central significance in connection with human interactions and ethical behaviour. A Christian ethos, which is expressed in deeply internalised convictions and a mindset concerning the origin and destiny of human existence, plays a key role regarding the enhancement and maintenance of human life, as it has striking “implications for the renewal of relationships between individuals and groups” (Schrage 1988:88).

An assured knowledge of human life before God, as expressed in a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology, serves as the necessary moral frame of reference that safely guides individuals in the process of healthy decision-making and ethical life style choices. Consequently, a pastoral hermeneutics regarding who we *already* are in Christ in both our living and dying can contribute more fundamentally to a prevention strategy within the



HIV pandemic than approaches that merely focus on behavioural change due to external ethical and moralistic considerations.

Based on the eschatological understanding that human life has been radically transformed, we are enabled by the indwelling Spirit of God to become what we already are and embody our new status in Christ in all human interactions, relations and daily behaviour, including sexual behaviour. The tension between the imperative and indicative of eschatology obliges human beings to en flesh what they have already received in their daily conduct.

The process of the sanctification of life can serve as a valuable claim for life in the context of the HIV pandemic, as it aims to bring human life in correspondence with God's will and intention for human life. Repentance as a change of heart entails acceptance of God's gracious offer, which leads to a total transformation of our intention and orientation, amongst others expressed in love of God, of our fellow human beings and of ourselves. Hence, individual human life is something that we are called to relate to and actively help shaping in freedom and responsibility toward what we have already received in baptism: "freedom and a new lord" (Schrage 1988:176). How the process of internalisation of a Christian ethos can be encouraged in terms of a living spirituality will be the topic of the next section.

## **5.2. The Role of Christian Spirituality within a Life Care Approach to the HIV Pandemic**

It has been pointed out earlier that the general objective and goal of a pastoral encounter can be described as the enhancement of maturity in faith and an intensified awareness of the *telic* dimension in human life (Louw 1998:182).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The process of the development of *maturity in faith* entails that "we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Eph 4:15) and "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13) (Louw 1998:53f). Spiritual maturity can be depicted as a development in Christian love, hope, gratitude, joy, and sacrificial service (Louw 1998:174). Mature faith begins with confession and conversion, through which an individual is "dramatically relieved of his/her false maturity and claims of a self-defined »adulthood«" (Louw 1998:182). Mature faith is, therefore, a result of salvation and needs to be understood not merely as an individualistic but a holistic and corporate concept (Louw 1998:183).

According to Louw, four main theological functions can be used to define the concept maturity in faith: (1) *soteriological* function, i.e. the redemption of the new person in Christ; (2) *pneumatological* and

This objective derives from the findings regarding a pastoral anthropology that depicts the human being as a spiritual, pneumatic being who is bestowed with the charisma of the Spirit (Louw 1998:184).

Linking up with what has been said about the telic dimension of being human in the section on the biblical concept of life, Louw points out that in Scripture the Greek term *teleion* is “associated with the presence of God and the quality of being” (1998:183). *Teleion* describes the process of growth and development of faith with the specific goal to bring people closer to God (Louw 1998:184). In the biblical Scriptures, the term is often used to describe “the process whereby the human heart turns toward God, binding itself in total surrender to God” (Louw 1998:184). What is of significance in terms of a pastoral prevention strategy is that *teleion* is closely connected to the conduct of life and has moral and ethical implications (Louw 1998:183).

In view of this, maturity in faith can be referred to as the full effect and unfolding of the gift of salvation as regards both the temporary, preliminary (1 Cor 14:20; Eph 4:13) and the eternal, ultimate (1 Cor 13:10; Phil 3:15) dimension of our existence (Ridderbos 1966:299, quoted in Louw 1998:183). In terms of pastoral care, the telic dimension of human life deals with the preparation of individuals to encounter God and live in God’s presence in order to correspond to the will of God (Goppelt 1989:582, quoted in Louw 1998:183). Within this encounter, “God desires to bring the implications of Christ’s salvific work to completion” (Louw 1998:185). Hence, maturity in faith entails the process of integration, devotion and sanctification, which allows an individual to meet God (Louw 1998:185).

The close connection between *maturity* in faith, *spirituality* and *sanctification* is of vital importance in pastoral care (Louw 1998:188), especially in a life care approach to an HIV prevention strategy. The two concepts of “maturity in faith” and “Christian spirituality” share a similar meaning, as both refer, amongst others, to the realm of human conduct and have “existential implications for our daily life-style” (Louw 1998:184). The two concepts are

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moral function, i.e. surrender to God and sanctification; (3) *eschatological* function, i.e. purposefulness and the dimension of hope; (4) *corporate* function, i.e. edification of the body of Christ (1998:186ff).

interrelated, since they are both concerned with the search for meaning and the development of wisdom, which are important prerequisites for the formation of a Christian ethos. In a like manner, sanctification refers to the process of corresponding to God and God's intention for human life and aims at becoming holy in all conduct. Consequently, the three concepts share the intention to bring human conduct into line with God's intention and purpose for human life.

The focus on maturity in faith, spirituality and sanctification, and therefore on Christian identity and integrity, is the unique contribution that pastoral care can make to counselling and therapy. This is even more so in the case of a life care approach to a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic, where the focus on maturity in faith, spirituality and sanctification can play a significant role in filling the gap that has been left by prevailing prevention programmes. In terms of the internalisation or *Zueigenmachung* of the divine assuredness concerning the origin and destiny of human existence, i.e. ethos as a moral frame of reference, the development of maturity in faith, spirituality and sanctification is of high value.

Another aspect, which plays a vital role in connection with the three concepts "maturity in faith", "spirituality" and "sanctification" as the central objectives of pastoral care, is the understanding that, in counselling and therapy, individuals *seek healing from* physical and emotional pain, and they also *seek for* a sense of wholeness and holistic well-being (Steere 1997, quoted in Sperry 2001:5). This is of significance especially in connection with an HIV infection, as physical cure remains impossible, although more holistic healing of the individual and the affected communities plays a central role in the maintenance of health, the prolongation of life and the enhancement of the quality of life. Pastoral care can assist individuals to find meaning, purpose and a sense of inner fulfilment in life by emphasising the development of a vivid Christian spirituality, which impacts positively on prevention efforts in the context of the HIV pandemic.

### **The Development of a Christian Spirituality: Living in the Spirit**

As regards the concept "spirituality", it is difficult to derive a general or commonly acknowledged definition (Köpf 2004:1590). There is a great variety of meanings referring to spirituality, such as religious attitude, mentality,

religiousness or piety (Köpf 2004:1590). Köpf refers to Christian spirituality as Christian experience on the whole, its theoretical form as well as ritual praxis (2004:1590). Generally, one can say that Christian spirituality, “als *Leben im Geist*” (Köpf 2004:1590), focuses on the divine Spirit as the subject of all spiritual life events and activities.

From the viewpoint of a philosophy of religion, the term spirituality deals with the life-giving power of introspection, i.e. “der lebensspendenden Kraft von Innerlichkeit” (Gräb-Schmidt 2004a:1593), and is concerned with the human ability to ask about the origin, identity, purpose and destiny of life. Christian dogma frequently understands spirituality as the acceptance of the free and unbound activity of the Spirit in faith (Gräb-Schmidt 2004b:1595). From a dogmatic point of view, the life conceptualisation of a Christian should therefore as a whole be shaped by the unbound and unlimited activity of the Spirit (Gräb-Schmidt 2004b:1595). As a result, Christian spirituality can be described as an attempt “to live a fully human life, a life after the pattern of Jesus ... our experience of being in personal contact with God in and through our commitment to such a fully human life – also in our inadequacies and failures in this commitment” (Dorr 1990, quoted in Louw 1998:4).

Steffensky broadly depicts spirituality as formed attention, i.e. “*geformte Aufmerksamkeit*” (2006:17). He points out that spirituality entails the recognition of God and God’s ways in the joy and suffering of human beings, the beauty of nature, and the success and failure of life (Steffensky 2006:17). Spirituality is not self-awareness, but rather self-obliviousness, which reads the traces of God in God’s creation and becomes an experience of the unity of life (Steffensky 2006:18). As regards a Christian spiritual perspective on human life, joy and suffering, Steffensky asserts, “Der Schmerz der Menschen ist nicht mehr nur, was er ist; die gebildete Aufmerksamkeit liest den Schmerz Gottes im Schmerz der Menschen. Das Glück ist nicht mehr nur, was es ist. Es sind die Spuren Gottes, die in ihm deutlich werden” (2006:18).

Spirituality can therefore be described as an “art of reading” – the ability to read the second face of things: the eyes of Christ in the eyes of a child, the winking of God in the radiance of things (Steffensky 2006:19). Transferred into the context of the HIV pandemic, this understanding of spirituality entails seeing God’s compassion related to the suffering of individuals dying from an HIV-

related condition, seeing the eyes of Christ in the eyes of an HIV-orphan, seeing God's faithfulness in the faithfulness of many African children and adults who all over the continent take care of those children who were left orphaned by the pandemic, seeing God overcome the sting of death in a person living with HIV who resists the stigmatisation and constraints of life and hopes in spite of everything.

Steffensky argues that the core of a living spirituality lies in the presence and attention in daily happenstances (2006:19). Christian spirituality can be understood as the search for existential meaning within life experiences, with reference to something other and wider than the self, i.e. God (Peberdy 2000:74). It describes a quest and movement toward our true self, which is dependant on God (Benner 1998:86). Benner refers to spirituality as "the human quest for and experience of meaning, God, and the other" (1998:87). It is an expression of "a yearning for meaning, identity, connections, and surrender" (Benner 1998:87,107), which we hope will clarify the meaning of our existence and secure our human identity and its fulfilment. As such, Christian spirituality can essentially be understood as the moving into a deeper relationship with God (Benner 1998:90).

Moreover, spirituality is fundamentally associated with an integration of *interior* life and *external* behaviour (Benner 1998:86). Spirituality explicitly relates to the totality of life and should affect all aspects of human life (Benner 1998:107). It is not an extra or superior dimension of existence, but infuses and permeates all aspects of our being human (Benner 1998:107). Benner asserts, "Our work, our play, our sexuality, our prayers, our humour, our passion, and our aggressions all are part of our spiritual life, this being a relationship with God that allows us to find our true identity, our meaning, and our life" (1998:107).

Sperry confirms that the moral and the spiritual dimension of human life are closely linked (2001:28). In a like manner, Louw points out that spirituality includes the notion of living ethically and moral character as the central driving force in life, which gives orientation and direction for human conduct (2006:250). He points out that spirituality represents a significant "»inward« realm" (Louw 2004:132) of human life, which describes fellowship and the encounter with God and human beings.

Being connected to *nēfēsh*, spirituality represents commitment and worship of God and is therefore closely connected to the happenstances of life and the realities of human relationships (Louw 2004:132). Based on Paul's call to exercise faith in the realm of life (1 Tim 4:8), spirituality should be perceived as "the awareness of the presence of God within all of life events" (Louw 2004:132). Accordingly, spirituality is not monastic asceticism but *praxis pietatis*, i.e. faith embodied and acted out within the practises of life events (Louw 2004:132).

In the New Testament spirituality is best described with the term *eusebeia*, meaning "devotion", "piety", "commitment" and "godliness", which should be perceived as significant components of faith development (Louw 1998:193). *Eusebeia* holds a strong moral meaning, since it indicates the believer's total attitude or disposition toward life as based on faith (Louw 1998:193). This new life style is exercised in the awareness of God's presence and entails not only care for faith, but for God's entire creation (Louw 1998:193). *Eusebeia* refers to faith in action, operational faith, faith as sanctification and transformation of life (Louw 1998:194). Louw points out, "A mature spirituality therefore denotes faith in action, and focuses on a person's life being devoted to God" (1998:194).

From this it becomes clear that spirituality is essentially linked to maturity, intimacy and the safeguarding of human dignity (Louw 2004:132). According to Louw, "It [i.e. spirituality] describes our human quest for meaning (soulfulness) and the attempt to link the ultimate with daily life experiences" (2004:132). Spirituality depicted as soulfulness should be perceived as an integrative process, which links faith with life, devotion with relationships, religion with social outreach, and church with community (Louw 2004:133). As soul is interpreted and assessed within the network of dynamic and interactive relationships, it indicates a mode of being, i.e. attitude, aptitude, habitus, position and being-functions, which can be interpreted within the "processes of meaning-giving and meaning-receiving" (Louw 2004:17).

In this context, it is significant to note that the Greek term for attitude, *phronēsis*, is closely related to the understanding of wisdom, *sophia*, in the Old Testament, deriving from knowledge of God's position (Goetzman 1976, quoted in Louw 2004:18). *Wisdom* in connection with the art of living meaningfully

involves a life-long journey and process of learning rather than a “»quick-fix« approach” (Louw 2004:3). More than knowledge and information is needed in order to differentiate between right and wrong, between the appropriate and the inappropriate, between what really counts and what does not matter (Louw 2004:4).

Louw points out that *phronēsis* indicates true discernment in an attempt to reckon with God in every choice and to embody God’s will (2004:18). He states, “Through positions and networking, God is represented within the happenstances of life ... it [i.e. *phronēsis*] refers to a totally new mode of being and living in this world” (Louw 2004:18). Accordingly, *phronēsis* can be understood as a “schemata of interpretation and paradigm which reckons with the will of God in decision-making” (Louw 2004:18).

Thus, *phronēsis* should be recognised as an important concept within a life care approach to prevention care in the context of the HIV pandemic, as it deals with a totally new mode of being in the world and human interaction as based on an understanding of God’s intention for human life. *Phronēsis*, true discernment, and the development of a completely new attitude due to repentance are fundamental to the enhancement of the quality of human life. Louw makes an important statement when he asserts that in pastoral care a shift is needed and “movement away from advice counselling towards wisdom counselling” (1998:14). Pastoral care as wisdom counselling leads away from external moralistic demands toward true discernment, based on an internalised moral framework of reference, which is ethos.

To summarise, in connection with the significant interrelation between maturity in faith, spirituality and sanctification in prevention care, faith should essentially be regarded as a matter of conduct as it functions within the eschatological tension between salvific truth and human life realities (Louw 1998:194). A living Christian spirituality denotes a changed life style, i.e. a new ethos, and therefore has ethical implications for the conduct of daily human life (Louw 1998:194).

Christian spirituality is the fulfilment of human life *coram Deo* and is linked to the notion of wisdom, which reflects “the quality of a personal stance in the presence of God” (Louw 1998:194). It therefore reveals a condition and

conduct that indicate the uniqueness of the believer's understanding of God (Louw 1998:195).

### **The Practise of Spirituality as Cultivated Attention**

As regards the role of a Christian spirituality within a life care approach to the HIV pandemic, we need to pay attention to the practical dimension or ritual *praxis* of a Christian spirituality. Steffensky points out that spirituality is not only formed, but also cultivated attention, i.e. "*gebildete Aufmerksamkeit*" (2006:19). In that sense, spirituality can be referred to as a craft that can be learned and developed (Steffensky 2006:20). Prayer as the very core of spiritual practice can assist in developing this spiritual attention (Steffensky 2006:20).

Louw makes the valuable statement that spirituality rather denotes the "quality of the *journey* itself" (2004:133) than the goal of life. According to him, spirituality is not a skill to be taught, but the art of soulfulness, which refers to the discovery of meaning in life as a life-long learning process (Louw 2004:133). He claims, "Spirituality is not a fixed entity to be classified, but a dynamic entity to be lived" (Louw 2004:133). It contains a dynamic process of development and movement, which leads to the transformation of the human "I" within the dynamics of systemic interactions of human relationships (Louw 2004:134).

Within a *systemic* approach, meaningful change in human behaviour does not only derive from emotions, self-insight and external moral demands, but a shift in position is due to a living spirituality, which has the ability to transcend reality and anticipate the new (Louw 2004:131f).<sup>97</sup> Louw poses the central question, "what motivates a person to move on, to anticipate positive change and to hope when everything gets stuck?" (2004:131). This question is of crucial in connection with a life care approach to an HIV prevention strategy. Many people infected or affected by HIV experience their life situation as "being stuck", the relationships as dysfunctional and they do not have any hope for

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<sup>97</sup> A *systemic approach* in pastoral theology derives from the assumption that the term human soul refers to "a collective identity within the corporate structures of life, i.e. marriage, family, clan, and society" (Louw 2004:13). As soul designates a qualitative stance in life, it reflects a network of social systems and spiritual forces (Louw 2004:13). Soulfulness essentially relates to space and position and reflects the way in which we represent God within the dynamics of human relationships and interaction (Louw 2004:16). According to Louw, soul reflects a "unique dimension of existential positioning" (2004:16), which is enfolded in a system of relationships and embodied in attitudes and aptitudes, i.e. positions.



their personal life or that of their families. In this situation, a life care approach focuses on the shift in position due to a living spirituality in order to enhance the overall quality of human life.

Thus far, the argument of the thesis has been that positive change, anticipation of a better future and true hope in life and death derive from an understanding of who we are as human beings before and in relationship with God. In this section, the aim will be to identify practical means to encourage a living Christian spirituality, which deepens the relationship with God and serves to enhance the understanding of our being human before God, and the formation and consolidation of a Christian ethos.

In terms of practical steps or “*soulful movements*” (Louw 2004:134ff) that bring about spiritual growth and a living spirituality, Louw identifies seven important aspects of embodied soulfulness in daily human actions and interactions. These movements help us to capture the meaning of spiritual growth and the development of a mature faith, and to practise it on a daily basis in our behaviour and relationships in the form of cultivated spiritual attention.

- The first movement and transformation of the human “I” entail the shift from loneliness to *solitude* (Louw 2004:134). The space of silence and solitude prevents a person from becoming dependant on others for meaningful living (Louw 2004:134). To make peace with oneself and life helps one to discover authenticity within oneself and to develop true integrity (Louw 2004:134). Nouwen describes solitude as follows: “... the place of the great struggle and the great encounter – the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self” (1981, quoted in Leech 1986:29).
- The second movement entails the shift from enmity and resistance to intimacy and *unconditional love* (Louw 2004:134). Spiritual growth takes place when fear of the other, prejudice and stereotyping is exchanged by acceptance, friendship and unconditional love for one’s fellow human being (Louw 2004:134). The real challenge for love is not the person one likes or loves anyway, but the one in one’s way, who irritates, frustrates and threatens one’s own existence (Louw 2004:134).

- The third movement entails the shift from the illusion of immortality to the *vulnerability* of grace (Louw 2004:134). The illusion of being immortal can hamper the movement from self-centredness to vulnerability and humility, because God is perceived as the One who needs to safeguard individuals against crises and suffering (Louw 2004:134). A stance of gratitude for life can develop where God is experienced as the One who responds to vulnerability with the gift of grace (Louw 2004:134). Life becomes an opportunity to reach out to the other in response to God's gracious gift (Louw 2004:134).
- The fourth movement that brings about spiritual growth refers to the vital shift from anxiety to *hope* (Louw 2004:135). Louw states, "Despair is the darkness of the soul when suicide becomes the only option for the future. Overwhelmed by nothingness, the soul starts to disintegrate into meaninglessness (desperation)" (2004:135). Hope indicates a new state of mind and being representing the faithful knowledge of God's covenantal promise: "I will never desert you – not even in death" (Louw 2004:135).
- The fifth movement entails the shift from anger to *peace* (Louw 2004:135). Anger develops when one becomes the victim of one's unfulfilled needs (Louw 2004:135). Existential frustration entails the conviction that life owes one something (Louw 2004:135). Anger turned inwards becomes projected onto everything around one (Louw 2004:135). Moving from anger to the acceptance of one's own shortcomings and that of others, spiritual growth sets in when we become at peace with limitations, vulnerabilities and the destitution of life (Louw 2004:135).
- The sixth movement entails the shift from achievement to vocation, devotion and *service* (Louw 2005:135). Soulfulness means the discovery of a vocation in life where one can sacrifice, give and share (Louw 2004:135). Moving away from a mere achievement ethics, the goal becomes the enrichment of the other, devotion and servitude (Louw 2004:135).
- The seventh and last movement refers to the shift from competition to *compassion* (Louw 2004:135). Compassion is about purposefulness and

woundedness (Louw 2004:135). When one becomes aware of the suffering and helplessness of the other, one's priority in life is no longer to compete but to sacrifice and share in order to become a "wounded healer" (Nouwen 1972, quoted in Louw 2004:135).

The soulful movements suggested by Louw that bring about spiritual growth and embodied soulfulness in daily human actions and interactions deal with the contentedness with life and inner peace, hospitality and unconditional love, the vulnerability of gracefulness, the anticipation of hope, the vocation of sacrifice, and the priority of compassion (2004:135).

Within a systems approach, these movements are perceived as central shifts toward maturity in faith, a living spirituality and the sanctification of life, which are of vital importance in connection with the enhancement and maintenance of human life in the context of the HIV pandemic.

### **An Integrative Model for the Praxis of a Christian Spirituality**

The argument of the thesis so far has been that the fostering and enhancement of human spirituality plays a fundamental role both regarding the *Zueigenmachung* of a Christian ethos as an internalised assurance concerning the origin and destiny of human existence as well as its external expression in terms of a moral and life-preserving life style. In order to go deeper into the praxis of a Christian spirituality within a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic, we now need to look at the development of spirituality and its specific *interplay* with the moral and psychological domain of human life.

In *Transforming Self and Community: Revisioning Pastoral Counselling and Spiritual Direction* (2002), Sperry highlights the importance to integrate the spiritual dimension of human life into the praxis of pastoral care and counselling. The significance of the development of a vivid spirituality is related to the general conviction that individuals "are seeking to achieve meaning and purpose in their lives, a sense of wholeness and well-being, and resolution of moral concerns" (Sperry 2002:2).

Nonetheless, he finds that present practices of pastoral care and counselling are ill prepared and not responsive to the spiritual needs and

expectations of spiritual seekers (Sperry 2002:4). As has been illustrated in connection with the analysis of existing prevention programmes in South Africa, this is especially the case in the context of the HIV pandemic. Even though the urgent need for spiritual support is acknowledged by most prevention models, there are problems with its practical implementation due to the lack of an appropriate theological framework on which to base spiritual care and support.

Sperry points to the danger of a general unilateral “*psychologization of spirituality*” (2002:3). This tendency gives rise to self-absorption, self-preoccupation and self-fixation, “even when the focus on the self is aimed at improving relationships with others” (Sperry 2002:3). Such a psychological reductionism with an over-reliance on and uncritical adoption of the concepts self-fulfilment and self-realisation may actually promote individualism and spiritual narcissism (Sperry 2002:3). The goal of attaining and maintaining an “autonomous self” may be misleading, as such a preoccupation with the inner self that is self-soothing, self-loving and self-sufficient may eventually lead to an “empty self” (Cushman 1990, quoted in Sperry 2002:74).

The major cost of such a unilateral “psychological reductionism” is that only one or two domains of human experience, i.e. the psychological and moral domain, are emphasised at the expense of another, i.e. the spiritual domain (Sperry 2002:20). The significant relationship between these three domains of human life has already been discussed earlier in the thesis in terms of its methodological basis, i.e. the “Chalcedonian Pattern”, with theology having logical precedence over psychology and other human sciences (Low 1998:100). In a like manner, Sperry quotes Cortright, saying, “the psychological and spiritual dimensions of human experience are different, though at times overlapping, with the spiritual as foundational” (1997, quoted in Sperry 2002:94). Amongst the five basic dimensions of human experience, i.e. psychological, social, moral, somatic and spiritual, the spiritual dimension is central to and integrally related to the other four dimensions (Sperry

2001:21ff).<sup>98</sup> This understanding is supported by the telic dimension of being human as described in Scripture.

In the context of the thesis, the psychologising tendency described by Sperry has been illustrated in connection with a psychology of death and dying according to Kübler-Ross and Barton. The “psychologization of spirituality” also becomes evident in connection with existing HIV care and prevention models. In most approaches the focus is on behavioural change based on the facilitation of life skills, which are mainly concerned with the development and strengthening of the autonomous human self.

As regards the importance of including the spiritual domain in the praxis of pastoral care, in various studies it appears that higher levels of spirituality are related to lower risks of disease, fewer medical and psychiatric problems, and higher levels of psychosocial functioning (Sperry 2001:25). On a *somatic* level, a living spirituality is related to lower prevalence of illnesses, a longer life, a stronger immune system and a better response to medical treatment (Sperry 2001:25). On a *psychological* level, the stimulation of the spiritual dimension of human experience is associated with higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction, less anxiety, including less fear of death (Sperry 2001:25). On a *social* level, spiritual activity tends to have a prophylactic effect on health and well-being, and individuals appear to adjust better to crises and problems (Sperry 2001:26). This is of central importance for any HIV prevention approach, as a well-balanced spirituality appears to have a positive effect on adjustment on various levels that are often affected negatively by an HIV infection, such as the somatic, psychological, as well as social dimension of human life.

Sperry discusses recent trends in spiritual direction and pastoral counselling that aim to assist individuals who are seeking meaning and purpose

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<sup>98</sup> In his cylindrical model, Victor Frankl also opts for a model in which the spiritual aspect of personhood takes a central position (De Vos 1995:244). Even though the spiritual dimension has a strongly unconscious colour, Frankl’s model indicates that human beings are fundamentally spiritual beings who have a will-to-meaning (De Vos 1995:245). Human beings have the spiritual ability to transcend themselves, which enables them to forget themselves, rise above themselves toward other human beings, and reach for meaning or truth, i.e. *logos* (De Vos 1995:245). According to Frankl, meaning confronts the individual from outside and self-actualisation takes place in the process of transcending the human self toward this meaning situated outside of ourselves (De Vos 1995:245).

in their lives; amongst these is the practice of *philosophical counselling* (2002:15). Philosophical counselling is concerned with a range of problems and issues involving morals, values and the meaning and purpose of life to which the technique of philosophical analysis is applied (Sperry 2002:15). In his book *Plato not Prozac: Applying Philosophy to Everyday Life* (1999), Marinoff describes this form of counselling as a process that involves a logical and analytic evaluation of the person's concerns (1999, quoted in Sperry 2002:15). Five components are fundamental to the process of philosophical counselling: (1) problem *analysis*; (2) constructive expression of *emotions*; (3) analysis of *options*; (4) considering and incorporating a *philosophy*, which assists in choosing and implementing the option; and (5) achieving a new *equilibrium* in life (Marinoff 1999, quoted in Sperry 2002:16).

Sperry argues that it is not surprising that philosophical counselling emerged to fill the gap regarding a focus on moral and ethical issues left by common practices of spiritual guidance and pastoral counselling (2002:16). By applying a philosophy that assists in choosing and implementing a new option, philosophical counselling provides such an overall moral frame of reference that is missing in most psychological approaches. Especially in a globalised world, where different belief systems exist side by side, philosophical counselling became popular due to its openness toward different belief systems. This form of counselling focuses on offering moral guidance, clarifying life's meaning as well as assisting individuals in making major life decisions (Sperry 2002:16).

Why then not opt for philosophical counselling as an appropriate model for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic in order to enhance ethical behaviour? Sperry points out that philosophical counselling is only partly responsive to the holistic needs of individuals (2002:19). The principal reason for this is its "reliance on reductionist models and theories which emphasise one or two dimensions of human experience to the exclusion of the others" (Sperry 2002:19). Theological critique on the discipline of philosophical counselling focuses on this over-reliance on philosophical constructs and methods, like philosophical analysis and moral philosophy, which neglect the spiritual dimension in human life in its approach toward healing and moral transformation.

In the light of this argument, Sperry argues for a more holistic and *integrative* model for the pastoral encounter, which balances moral guidance with compassion and empathy (Sperry 2002:4f). The dimension of meaning direction is fundamental to such an approach. The aim of a holistic approach is to offer moral guidance to individuals who are confused about moral choices or guide those who have violated established Christian norms through a process of forgiveness and restoration to the community (Sperry 2002:22). Sperry quotes Browning saying that, “entering »into sensitive moral inquiry with troubled and confused individuals without becoming moralistic is the major technical and methodological task for ... pastoral care in the future«” (1976, quoted in Sperry 2002:23).

In order to foster health, inner peace, resolution of a crisis or conflict, integration, as well as healing and wholeness, Sperry opts for a holistic and integrative model, which includes all three domains of human experience, i.e. spiritual, moral and psychological domain (2002:24). As regards the praxis of a Christian spirituality in the context of the HIV pandemic, an integrative model helps to balance the three domains emphasised by prevailing prevention programmes: development of spirituality, moral formation and individual growth. In the following section, we will take a closer look at each of these domains that play a vital role in terms of individual transformation in the context of the HIV pandemic.

First, an understanding of the *spiritual domain* of life and its relationship to transformation is essential for the practise of pastoral care as it relates to the development of a living spirituality (Sperry 2002:57). The spiritual domain includes “all religious and spiritual experiences, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about one’s relationship to God and all that may transcend one’s self” (Sperry 2002:57). It entails one’s beliefs and attitudes about the meaning of life, one’s vocation, relationships and resources, such as talent, money, time etc. (Sperry 2002:57). The spiritual domain of human life also includes rituals, spiritual disciplines and practices (Sperry 2002:58).

Walsh describes seven central spiritual practices that are consistent with “perennial practices” (1999, quoted in Sperry 2002:63; Sperry 2001:147ff) based on common beliefs and themes shared by all great world religions. Spiritual practices are disciplines that aim at developing central capacities of the

heart and mind, which are closely interrelated in a developmental sequence (Sperry 2002:63). In this context, it becomes significant to note that spirituality does not refer to a static condition, but a dynamic process of being-functions within life's journey.

As regards spiritual perspectives on transformation, a *taxonomy of spiritual practices* regarded as essential in the process of positive human transformation entails the following practices: (1) purify *motivation*; (2) cultivate *emotional wisdom*; (3) live *ethically*, (4) develop a *peaceful mind*; (5) cultivate *wisdom* and spiritual intelligence; (6) recognise the *sacred in all*; and (7) engage in the *service* of others (Sperry 2002:63-68).<sup>99</sup> These spiritual practices are directed at “fostering a transforming relationship between a person and God in Jesus Christ” (Sperry 2002:68), and are essential components within a holistic, integrative approach to pastoral care, which aims toward the total transformation of the whole person. These spiritual practices have the power to transform a person's daily activities into elements of a living spirituality and *praxis pietatis* (Louw 2006:250).

Second, the *moral domain* of human experiences is concerned with “ethical thinking, decision making, and actions involving all the relationships in one's life: self, interpersonal, work, family, community, and peers” (Sperry 2002:70). Based on the biblical concepts of repentance, conversion and transformation, moral theology has traditionally emphasised the development of moral character, i.e. “that which gives orientation, direction and shape to our lives” (McBrien 1994, quoted in Sperry 2002:70). Moral character is closely connected to the concepts of *ethos*, habit and virtue; habits are here understood as regular patterns of activity, virtues as perfected, rightly ordered habits (Sperry 2002:70).<sup>100</sup> Sperry suggests that “virtue should permeate all aspects of pastoral counselling and spiritual direction, including fostering the goal of

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<sup>99</sup> Concerning a detailed discussion of the seven spiritual practices, consult Sperry 2002:63ff.

<sup>100</sup> *Virtue* refers to a specific “disposition or attitude that moves an individual to sustain practises, which enable the agent to accomplish moral good” (Sperry 2002:72). Virtues are powers that enable the individual to establish and nurture life-giving, healthy relationships (Sperry 2002:72). A virtue also motivates individuals, brings about integrity, and represents enthusiasm for life (Louw 2004:137). It has the power to safeguard human dignity and “brings about a human space of moral soulfulness” (Louw 2004:137). It becomes clear that the promotion of virtues is of central importance within a life care approach to an HIV prevention strategy for pastoral care.



fostering virtues in clients and directees as well as in pastoral counsellors and spiritual directors” (2002:77). Virtues serve the aim to understand that directedness and morality are important aspects of soulfulness (Louw 2004:137).

As regards a *taxonomy of virtues*, Aristotle already proposed the four cardinal virtues, i.e. prudence, justice, temperance and courage, which are generally directed towards right actions (Sperry 2002:76). Aquinas added three explicitly theological virtues, i.e. faith, hope and charity, which are directed towards God and perceived as God’s gift to human beings (Sperry 2002:76). As regards moral perspectives on transformation, Sperry opts for a taxonomy of virtues that are indispensable to the process of pastoral care, including (1) *charity* and holiness; (2) *prudence*; (3) self-care and *compassion*; (4) *trustworthiness*; (5) *fidelity*; (6) *justice*; (7) fortitude and *courage*; (8) *temperance*; and (9) *physical fitness* (2002:79-89).<sup>101</sup>

It is important to note that virtue ethics focuses on morally good character, the establishment of identity and the development of moral maturity, followed by morally good actions, while rule and principle ethics merely focus on morally good actions (Sperry 2002:90; Louw 1998:214). This understanding is in line with what has been argued in the thesis regarding the importance of internalised ethical behaviour based on ethos and “ethics of intention”, in contrast to external moralistic demands for behavioural change in the context of the HIV pandemic. According to Sperry, “For virtue ethics the question is not: Is this action moral? Rather, it is: What kind of person am I becoming by doing this or that action?” (2002:90). Sperry helps us by making the central distinction between merely complying with an ethical code and becoming a virtuous individual (2002:91).

The taxonomy of virtues plays a significant role in a holistic, integrative model for pastoral care due to the role of virtues and values as a *motivating* factor in personality (Sperry 2002:91; Louw 1998:212). Louw quotes Augsburg as follows: “To exist is to choose” (1986, quoted in Louw 1998:213). This links up with one of the core anthropological presuppositions: *respondeo*

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<sup>101</sup> Concerning a detailed discussion of the nine virtues, consult Sperry (2002:79ff).

*ergo sum*. Virtues promote spirituality, a genuinely integrated life style, human dignity, as well as constructive behaviour as they provide a driving force in congruent human behaviour (Louw 1998:218).

Third, we need to integrate psychological perspectives on transformation into the integrative model for the praxis of a Christian spirituality in the context of a pastoral HIV prevention programme. The *psychological domain* of human experiences includes “all affective or emotional functioning and well-being, as well as all aspects of cognitive abilities and functioning” (Sperry 2002:93). Efforts called “positive psychology” try to retrieve psychology’s interest in character and virtue and emphasise a person’s strengths in terms of a development or growth model, rather than dwelling on human foibles and the disease or psychopathology model (Sperry 2002:101).

The psychological domain, even when viewed from a spiritual perspective, has traditionally focused on self-theory (Sperry 2002:109). This emphasis or over-emphasis has been the source of considerable criticism (Sperry 2002:109). This became evident also in the context of this thesis, where the over-emphasis on the human self, both with regard to a psychology of death and dying as well as existing HIV care and prevention models, was of concern and resulted in the option of a more spiritual approach.

Nevertheless, the construct of the human self is intimately related to character, also to moral character, and the development of a personalised ethos (Sperry 2002:109). Sperry points out that the most concrete aspect of the human self is self-capacities, which are “requisite abilities that are essential for adequate personal functioning and adequate functioning in relationships and in the community” (2002:109).

Taking this into account, it becomes clear that the focus of existing HIV prevention approaches on the self is not only justified, but to some degree even necessary in order to ensure the individual’s functioning in terms of identity, personality, relationships and broader community. This realisation is significant in the context of the HIV pandemic, which has a vast impact on whole communities. According to Sperry, “Individuals with a healthy real self are able to manage both the routine set backs in life as well as serious crises” (2002:109). Hence, the significance of the psychological perspectives on transformation.

Individuals with a healthy self based on a spiritual understanding of the human person, human potential and limitations, as well as a supportive relationship with God, are able to view personal, social, professional, financial and health crises as opportunities for growth (compare Sperry 2002:109). The impaired or false self often experiences paralysis or defeat in such crises situations (Sperry 2002:109), which frequently occur in connection with an HIV infection.

Accordingly, Sperry developed a *taxonomy of self-capacities* that correlate with the dimensions of transformation and the taxonomies of spiritual practices and virtues (2002:109). These self-capacities are: (1) *self-mastery*; (2) *spontaneity*; (3) *self-activation*; (4) *self-acknowledgement*; (5) *self-soothing*; (6) *self-continuity*; (7) *commitment*; (8) *creativity*; (9) *intimacy*; (10) *autonomy*; (11) *critical reflection*; (12) *critical social consciousness*; and (13) *self-surrender* (Sperry 2002:109-113).<sup>102</sup> The necessity for most of these self-capacities has also been acknowledged by existing HIV prevention programmes. The significant difference between an integrative model and existing prevention programmes is that it balances self-development with the enhancement of spirituality and moral development. Based on an internalised Christian ethos as an overall moral frame of reference, an integrative model focuses equally on all three domains of personal transformation.

Therefore, in pastoral care we opt for a life care approach to an HIV prevention strategy that views growth in a holistic way, including the spiritual, moral and psychological dimension of life (Sperry 2001:14). Sperry states, "The specific goal of spiritual counselling is promoting the process of transformation or ongoing conversion in all its spiritual, psychological, moral and somatic dimensions" (2001:14). Within a *conversion theory* perspective regarding the process of spiritual development in pastoral care, conversion is understood as "the decision to repudiate irresponsible behaviour and to take responsibility for the subsequent development of some aspect of one's own experience" (Gelpi 1998, quoted in Sperry 2001:45). Conversion in that sense refers to transformation and includes a continuous process of change (Sperry 2001:76).

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<sup>102</sup> Concerning a detailed discussion of the thirteen self-capacities, consult Sperry (2002:109ff).

Two forms of conversion can be distinguished, i.e. initial and ongoing conversion (Sperry 2001:45). *Initial* conversion includes moving from irresponsible to responsible behaviour in some dimension of human experience (Sperry 2001:45). *Ongoing* conversion entails the interaction between various dimensions of conversion and the continuous process of change throughout life (Sperry 2001:45). Ongoing conversion has an integral dimension, as it involves commitment to living out these fundamental changes in *all* areas of life, such as affective, moral, intellectual, religious, socio-political and somatic (Sperry 2001:45). As the concept of conversion plays a vital role in a pastoral prevention programme, the various dimensions of conversion within the process of spiritual development and transformation are explained further.

- *Affective* conversion entails taking responsibility for one's emotional life and requires a willingness to acknowledge and forgive past hurts (Sperry 2001:45). Moving from a self-orientated focus to that of love for others, affective conversion entails repentance, particularly the renouncement of rage, fear and guilt, which separate the individual from God (Sperry 2001:45). In faith, these negative emotions are brought to healing and individuals learn to own and express positive affects, like love, friendship, compassion, sensitivity and enthusiasm (Sperry 2001:45).
- *Moral* conversion requires a shift from the gratification of immediate personal needs to living by consistent ethical principles and an overall moral framework of reference, i.e. ethos, which helps one to deal with moral dilemmas (Sperry 2001:46). Ongoing moral conversion includes a dedication to the common good and the capacity to criticise false value systems (Sperry 2001:46).
- *Intellectual* conversion challenges an individual to understand and express her or his relationship to God in personally meaningful terms (Sperry 2001:46). This closely relates to the significance of God images in pastoral care (compare Louw 2000:12). Intellectual conversion also plays a significant role in the development of a balanced and consistent ethos.
- As regards *religious* conversion, within the Christian tradition the goal is unconditional commitment to the discernment of God's will for human life revealed in the person of Jesus and his vision of God's kingdom (Sperry

2001:46f). Ongoing religious conversion is over-confessional and entails the praxis of prayer and meditation, where applicable also fasting, spiritual reading and the reaching out to our fellow human beings in compassion (Sperry 2001:47).

- *Socio-political* conversion involves engaging social systems and political practises and to move beyond personal interests (Sperry 2001:47). This includes the principles of legal, distributive and commutative justice, challenges a life style of convenience and personal luxury, and enhances sensitivity to the needs of the poor (Sperry 2001:47).
- Finally, *somatic* conversion refers to the human body, body structures, bodily sensations and feelings, including sexual feelings and behaviour (Sperry 2001:47). Sperry states that somatic conversion involves “the physical expression or manifestation of an individual’s soul and spirit” (Sperry 2001:47). Somatic conversion is primarily about wellness, which is, as pointed out earlier, not synonymous with health, as it can coexist with chronic illness, disease, even terminal illness (Sperry 2001:47). Sperry argues, “Individuals with a high level of somatic conversion can be expected to experience a high level of wellness irrespective of their health status” (2001:47). Ongoing somatic conversion is required in order to experience high levels of wellness and vitality, including preventive measures like proper diet, exercise and sufficient sleep (Sperry 2001:47). Nevertheless, preventive measures do not guarantee wellness, since it is independent of the actual health status (Sperry 2001:47). A high level of somatic conversion is often accompanied by life-affirming attitudes toward the body and sexuality, as integrated into an overall ethos of life (Sperry 2001:48).

To summarise, the central aim of an interaction of the Christian concepts “ethos” and “spirituality” in the context of a life care approach to a prevention strategy for pastoral care is the development of an overall theory and theological paradigm from which to reflect on HIV and human interaction in the context of the HIV pandemic.

The concept “spirituality” is most helpful in connection with a life care approach to terminal care and prevention care in the context of the HIV pandemic as it deals with the purpose, meaning and appreciation of life. A vivid

Christian spirituality, shaped by the faithful acceptance of the activity of the Spirit in human life in connection with the formation of a Christian ethos as an inner mindset and divine assurance of existence, can be a trustworthy guide in matters of death and dying, as well as constructive decision-making about the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life in the context of the HIV pandemic.

The formation of an informed Christian ethos based on an understanding of the destiny and meaning of human existence, constantly renewed and enriched by a vivid spiritual life, are fundamental aspects of a care for life to both the dying as well as the living that are infected or affected by the HIV pandemic. In connection with the enhancement of maturity in faith and the sanctification of life, Christian spirituality intends to focus on the development of a Christian identity and integrity, which aims to integrate internal spiritual life and external behaviour. The concept “soulfulness”, *phronēsis*, and the development of wisdom play a decisive role in this regard as they help us to reckon with God’s will and intention for human life in every life decision in order to safeguard human life and dignity in all life situations.

As supplement to existing HIV prevention programmes, which are often characterised by a lack of a general framework or basic theory from which to reflect on the HIV pandemic, we opt for an integrative life care approach to a prevention strategy for pastoral care that aims to include the three main domains of human transformation, i.e. spiritual, moral and psychological. Only if these three domains are combined in a holistic manner by means of the development and simultaneous pursuance of spiritual practises, virtues and self-capacities, can individuals be empowered to resist the threats of HIV and safeguard human dignity in midst of an inhumane pandemic.

## 6. Findings and Conclusion

The starting point for the exploration of a spiritual understanding of terminal care as life care within a pastoral approach to death and dying was the presupposition that human life and death are unavoidably connected and that a meaningful approach to death and dying, in terms of a Christian theological hermeneutics, needs to start with the question “What is life?” In the course of the thesis, the vital reciprocal relationship between life and death has been developed further with the aim to generate meaning in the face of death and to enable individuals to die in human dignity. The initial understanding that coping with dying is a process of learning, spiritual growth and the development of wisdom has been validated by the literature consulted.

The basic assumption that one’s personal understanding of life and being alive will surely impact on one’s perception and consequently one’s experience of dying and death has generally been confirmed by the literature consulted. The paradox that dying is essentially about living has been verified, not only from a theological but also from a psychological and philosophical perspective.

Conversely, the original understanding that an individual’s perception of death and dying will determine the awareness and general appreciation of life has been augmented by the literature with a slightly different slant. Although a spiritual understanding of the meaning of death, including the final defeat of death, has the power to transform an individual’s understanding of death and to overcome the fear of dying, it is eventually the concept “life” that holds the central position in all considerations on a pastoral approach to death and dying. It has been highlighted that, in terms of a pastoral approach to terminal and prevention care, living is essentially about true living, and that the awareness and general appreciation of life in the face of death are determined by faith.

The concept of a *theological hermeneutics* served as an overall paradigm, which is implied within the interplay of life and death with the aim to find meaning in life and death through the God-human relationship. The aim of a hermeneutical approach to terminal care is to achieve a transformed understanding of life and death through the development of wisdom and maturity in faith. Thus, the eschatological perspective of the “Convergence Model” (Louw 1998:8) played a significant role in the overall design of the

thesis, as it emphasises the *already* and *not yet* of eschatology that become evident in every life event. In the course of the thesis, it has been demonstrated that finding meaning in life and coping with dying is only possible by means of the fundamental relationship to God, as it provides a specific understanding of life that impacts on an individual's overall attitude toward death and dying.

The identification of the theoretical paradigms and philosophical presuppositions in a widespread "*psychology of death and dying*" on the basis of Kübler-Ross' *On Death and Dying* (1969) and Barton's *Dying and Death: A Clinical Guide for Caregivers* (1979) confirmed the theory that the phenomenological, client-centred models suffer from an optimistic overreliance on inner human potential in coping with dying.

Although the psychological models provide valuable insights into the complex experience of dying, including emotions, thoughts, responses and needs, in terms of an existential analysis, they fail to equip individuals with a meaningful paradigm that lasts despite the harsh reality of death. As regards coping skills in the terminal stage, the client-centred models' strong emphasis on the individual's autonomous and independent self, and the intrinsic potential for self-realisation in the face of death neglect the divine foundation as the normative component of living and dying and the liberating power of the external factor.

The consulted theological literature confirmed that, due to the inevitable moments of dismay, sublimity and general mystery of death, a phenomenology of death and dying should be supplemented by a theology of death and dying. In order to find meaning in death, a pastoral approach to death and dying must surpass the mere analysis of phenomena and go beyond that directly given in our human experience. Salvation manifested in the *already* of eschatology liberates us from the painful experience of having to deal with dying ourselves.

As a result, I propose a "*theology of death and dying*" that opts for a much more holistic approach to terminal care in terms of life care. As regards theological considerations on the meaningful fulfilment of mortal life, a theology of death and dying takes up the challenge to demonstrate that life before and despite death gains a new quality in faith in the life-giving God. Being based on a spiritual perspective on life and an understanding of our transformed identity in Christ before God, the life care approach takes up the basic presupposition



that effective terminal care needs to start with life by assisting people to live meaningfully. An understanding of a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology proved indispensable in this regard, as it provides dying individuals with a meaningful paradigm and frame of reference, which influence a pastoral approach to death and dying on the whole.

The consulted literature on a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology emphasised that Christian faith exposes us to an entirely different perspective on our being human than phenomenological, client-centred models. Characteristic of the Old Testament concept of life is the understanding that human life is owed life, geared toward the fundamental relationship with God. True life cannot be found outside of the relationship with God who bestows life on those who trust in God. In the New Testament, human life is depicted as having been radically transformed into a completely new life through Christ's death and resurrection from the dead.

In a like manner, the centre of a pastoral anthropology evolves around an understanding of who we are in Christ before God. In the Old Testament, human beings in the totality of their existence are being spoken to by God and called to respond with their whole life. Old Testament anthropology is essentially theonomous and evolves around the question of our God-given destiny, which is to live in close relationship with God. The New Testament depicts the human being as a totally new being, now defined by eschatology due to Christ's death and resurrection. The new person in Christ is described as a pneumatic being moved and motivated by the Spirit. In contrast to client-centred models, human beings are equipped with a self-actualisation potential called charisma, which is defined by the Spirit and enables human beings to become, from the perspective of eschatology, who they *already* are.

The exploration of a biblical understanding of death and dying confirmed in a like manner the paradoxical notion that the starting point for any theological discussion of death is life itself. In the Old Testament, both life and death are viewed in the context of fundamental human limitations and neediness for God. In the New Testament, Christ's resurrection from the dead is regarded as a sign of the final victory of divine life over death.

Based on the complete findings on a Christian spiritual concept of life, a pastoral anthropology and a biblical understanding of death and dying, a life

care approach to terminal care proposes that we can find meaning in death only by means of the fundamental God-human relationship. The literature study explicitly confirmed the main argument and hypothesis that we do not have to cope with dying by ourselves, but can trust in the faithfulness of God who will keep us strong to the end (1 Cor 1:8) – even in the situation where all human possibilities come to an end.

As fear of death can only effectively be coped with by caring for life, pastoral care to the dying needs to emphasise the fundamental God-human relationship that guarantees life in spite of death and to highlight that the new life in the Spirit is a quality that we *already* possess. This is the whole truth about dying: victory over death has already been gained. In baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, the believer has died alongside Christ and was resurrected to new life. We do not have to fear death due to sin and God-forsakenness, as we have already died this death in baptism and been granted new life in Christ. As Paul proclaims in 1 Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God! He gives us the *victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The hypothesis that a unique stance of *hope* follows from a Christian spiritual understanding of life, which can overcome the paradigmatic gap that is left by psychological approaches to death and dying, has also been validated by the literature study. The concept "hope" that in terminal care derives from the divine victory in the resurrection is not the form of existential hope described by the phenomenological, client-centred models. True hope derives from a vivid trust that God will fulfil God's promises in a way that will lead us to true freedom. Being a synonym for trust, Christian hope that is based on the memory of Christ's death and resurrection enables us to hope in a situation where there is nothing to hope for in human terms, such as imminent death.

Finally, the life care approach is applied to a pastoral *prevention strategy* in the context of the HIV pandemic. An analysis of current care and counselling models for the HIV pandemic, like those of Uys and Cameron (eds.) in *Home-Based HIV/Aids Care* (2003) and Van Dyk in *HIV/Aids Care and Counselling* (2005), showed that these models emphasise the promotion of healthy life styles and the change of risk behaviour on the basis of external moralistic considerations. The study of existing HIV prevention programmes supported the hypothesis that, although the need for holistic spiritual care besides good

nursing and medical care is acknowledged in terms of objectives, there is a lack of an overall moral framework and theoretical paradigm from which to reflect on both care and counselling as well as individual behavioural change in the context of the HIV pandemic.

The hypothesis that existing HIV prevention programmes can be improved in terms of a pastoral hermeneutical approach and that the gap in an overall moral framework can be filled with a spiritual life care approach has been confirmed by the consulted literature. The main argument that positive change, the anticipation of a better future and true hope derive not solely from external moralistic demands, but an internalised understanding of who we are as human beings before and in relationship with God has been sufficiently illuminated by the literature study. A pastoral prevention strategy, therefore, aims to provide individuals with such an overall moral frame of reference from which to reflect on behavioural change, enhance the overall quality of people's life, cope with basic life issues and reclaim life in the context of the HIV pandemic.

In terms of deeply internalised convictions and attitudes regarding the purpose and destiny of human existence as formulated in a Christian spiritual concept of life and a pastoral anthropology, a Christian *ethos* can function as an overall paradigm behind a pastoral prevention strategy since it provides a powerful motivational factor for behavioural change that empowers individuals beyond theoretical knowledge. The literature study has confirmed the hypothesis that a pastoral prevention strategy based on the development of a Christian ethos proves to be more fundamental in the context of the HIV pandemic since ethical behaviour essentially results from an individual's participation in an ethos, which has striking implications for the renewal of everyday human relationships.

The study also showed that the enhancement of a living spirituality plays a vital role in a life care approach to the HIV pandemic, as it includes the notion of living ethically due to its close association with the enhancement of maturity in faith and an intensified awareness of the telic dimension in human life. The objective of a living Christian spirituality is therefore the integration of interior life and external behaviour. In terms of an HIV prevention strategy, this is significant as the internalised convictions and mindset of a Christian ethos need to be

translated into everyday behaviour and interactions, which serve to enhance and maintain the dignity and quality of human life on a daily basis.

As regards the proposed outcomes of the thesis, the option for a life care approach has vast implications for the praxis of both terminal care as well as prevention care in the context of the HIV pandemic. Having a meaningful theological paradigm at hand, the challenge is to apply the proposed life care approach to the practise of terminal care and within a prevention strategy for pastoral care in the context of the HIV pandemic.

As regards a pastoral approach to death and dying, the concreteness of a life care approach to terminal care makes the broader theological framework applicable to pastoral practise in order to enhance the process of care and safeguard human dignity in the terminal stage. The need might arise to improve and adapt the two basic elements of a “liturgy of life care for the dying”, namely the proclamation of the victory in the resurrection and the “liturgy of care for life”, to the actual demands of the pastoral practise. In terms of a pastoral prevention strategy in the context of the HIV pandemic, the proposed life care approach calls for the integration of a broader moral frame of reference and the specific promotion of a living spirituality in the pastoral practise.

As regards further research, the eschatological paradigm that served as a foundation to the thesis seems not only applicable to terminal care or prevention care in the context of the HIV pandemic, but to many other pastoral matters that call for the enhancement of the quality of life. A life care approach that is concerned with the fundamentals of human life before God can empower individuals in all kinds of unfavourable circumstances by safeguarding human dignity, emphasising the fundamental God-human relationship and highlighting the quality of the new life in Christ. Accordingly, to apply the life care approach to other subject matters of pastoral practise might be the focus of further research.

In addition, the question how a life care approach can be practised in more secular societies than the South African might be responded to by future research. As the life care approach is regarded as a powerful tool in empowering individuals based on their new identity in Christ, the question arises how the new status in Christ can meaningfully be conveyed to people who are less familiar with a language of faith.

To conclude, I would like to return to where the exploration of the topic led me in my own spiritual understanding of the meaning and essence of life, and review the personal journey on which I was taken whilst completing the thesis during the past one and a half years.

In the beginning, the question about terminal care as life care was purely an academic endeavour, guided by an interest in the praxis of terminal care. I wanted to know more about the phenomenon of death and how to care for the dying from a pastoral perspective. Initially, it was the irretrievability and finality of death that attracted my attention, so that I started the endeavour with the aim to find a meaningful theological paradigm for pastoral care from which to reflect on death and dying in order to ease the pain and find a way forward into life.

However, somewhere along the road I read an article by Lawbaugh who describes his own experience of and academic endeavours in death and dying, beginning with a Master's thesis in college (2005:17). Lawbaugh explains,

So I wrote at age 25, never having faced death up close and personal, not even the loss of grandparents ... it was like learning to swim by reading all you can on swimming without going near the water. A death in the family 22 years later shattered my life and merely brought me down (2005:18).

Like the young Lawbaugh, I had never really faced death. Reading his retrospective on 35 years of practical experience, I realised that it was a daring venture to write about death and dying and explore a life care approach to terminal care without having come close to death and dying myself. Certainly, academic endeavours cannot always be based on personal experience; yet I asked myself whether the theological paradigms and frameworks that fascinated me now would last when I myself was faced with caring for the dying or experience the loss of a loved one.

The situation changed when my aged grandmother died abruptly after long illness in December 2006. Everything that I had learned so far in the process of completing the thesis about the phenomenon of death proved to be true. Although generally expected due to old age and poor health, death came rapidly and cannot be grasped in its finality from a rational perspective. It leaves a gap amongst those who are left behind and many questions concerning the meaning and essence of life.

My grandmother died a “medicalised good death” (Bradbury 2000:61) in hospital care. My mother who did not leave her mother’s side during the last days of her life was moved by the sensitivity of care that my dying grandmother and she received from the caring staff. She was especially touched by the presence and care of a pastoral caregiver. In awareness that my grandmother did no longer have to suffer physical agony due to palliative care techniques, the opportunity to accompany her mother to death turned out to be a profound experience for my mother. Later, she told the minister who was to conduct the funeral that at her mother’s deathbed she experienced a peace of mind as never before in her life.

The experience of my own loss, the disappointment that I could not be present when my grandmother died and the personal accounts of my mother had a strong impact on the further process of completing the thesis. Death became more real to me and I developed a deeper understanding of the meaning, blessings and challenges of pastoral care at the deathbed. The pastoral caregiver who attended to my mother and encouraged her to feel free to address and touch her mother played a vital role in making my grandmother’s death a meaningful experience for those involved. She helped to create an awareness of God’s loving care at the deathbed, through which my mother and grandmother were enabled to share in that lucid moment of experiencing a glimpse of God’s peace in the face of death.

In the process of completing the thesis, my findings concerning a life care approach to terminal care helped me come to terms with my grandmother’s death. Her death encouraged me to judge academic findings against the painful reality of seeing a loved one die. I learned that God, even in death, does not stop *relating* to us (Jüngel 1971:139). A new relationship between God and human beings grows directly out of what is supposed to be the loss of relations caused by death (Jüngel 1971:139).

The initial question whether Christian faith can offer any consolation in terms of living meaningfully in the face of death has been confirmed by my own experience. As Louw points out, Christ’s resurrection restores basic trust in life and provides a feeling of *Geborgenheit* by opening up a new hermeneutics, which helps us to “experience the living God in every dimension of existence” (2006:352). In the process of completing the thesis, it became clear to me that

life in abundance is no empty religious promise, but an already effective and transforming reality now. How to live meaningfully in spite of death is the touchstone of a faith that claims to help living. Instead of basing ourselves and the meaning of life on ourselves, we trust and put our hope in God – even there where all our human possibilities come to an end.

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