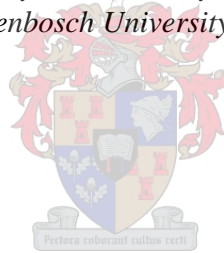# Imagining Human Flourishing?
A Systematic Theological Exploration of
Contemporary Soteriological Discourses

by
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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof, that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: December 2015

Opsomming van proefskrif (Afrikaans)

Die vraag na die aard en vorme van menslike geluk is tans aan die orde in 'n verskeidenheid van akademiese dissiplines. 'n Opbloei in gelukstudies gaan gepaard met 'n ondersoek na die *retoriek* van geluk. Teoloë benader hierdie ondersoek vanuit 'n verskeidenheid van uitgangspunte, maar daar blyk 'n doelbewuste skuif te wees vanaf *die retoriek van geluk* na *die retoriek van menslike florering*. Die intuïtiewe tuiste van so 'n ondersoek is die soteriologie, met die verlossingsleer se fokus op die goeie nuus van die evangelie. Derhalwe benader hierdie studie ook die ondersoek na geluk vanuit die landskap van verlossing, by wyse van teologiese karteerwerk, en word drie kontemporêre diskoerse daarin geïdentifiseer.

'n Eerste diskoers beeld verlossing as versoening uit, en het daarmee hoofsaaklik 'n *forensiese* interpretasie voor oë. Johannes Calvyn, Friedrich Schleiermacher, en Willie Jonker word as drie invloedryke van hierdie diskoers voorgehou. *'n Soteriologiese logika van geloof* speel binne hierdie diskoers 'n sentrale rol, ook uiteindelik in die uitbeelding van menslike florering as vroomheid, vreugde, en troos. 'n Tweede diskoers beeld verlossing as bevryding uit, en het daarmee hoofsaaklik 'n *etiese* interpretasie ingedagte. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Mercy Oduyoye, en Russel Botman word as drie invloedryke tipes van hierdie diskoers voorgehou. *'n Eskatologiese logika van hoop* funksioneer binne hierdie diskoers, ook uiteindelik in die uitbeelding van menslike florering as 'n vervulde lewe, genesing, en waardigheid. 'n Derde diskoers beeld verlossing as transformasie uit, en het daarmee hoofsaaklik 'n *estetiese* interpretasie ingedagte. Serene Jones, Ellen Charry, en Denise Ackermann word as drie invloedryke tipes van hierdie diskoers voorgehou. *'n Skeppingslogika van liefde* is aan die orde binne hierdie diskoers, ook uiteindelik in die uitbeelding van menslike florering as genade, geluk, en seën.

Sáám funksioneer hierdie drie logikas binne triadiese verband om op die vrae en uitdagings van die dag te reageer. Kontemporêre diskoerse oor verlossing het, ten slotte, in al drie die vorme wat in hierdie studie uiteengesit word te make met menslike florering – hetsy as vroomheid, vreugde, of troos; as 'n vervulde lewe, genesing, of waardigheid; as genade, geluk, of seën.

Abstract of dissertation (English)

An inquiry into the nature and manifestations of human happiness is evidently today an important focus for many academic disciplines. The contemporary revival in happiness studies is accompanied by studies on the *rhetoric* of happiness. Theologians approach such inquiries from a variety of perspectives, but it would appear as if a deliberate shift from *the rhetoric of happiness* to *the rhetoric of human flourishing* is taking place. The intuitive location of such an inquiry is soteriology, because of the doctrine of salvation's focus on the good news of the gospel. Therefore this study approaches the inquiry into happiness from the landscape of salvation, by way of theological cartography, wherein three contemporary discourses are identified.

A first discourse portrays salvation as reconcilitation, wherein a *forensic* interpretation plays a pivotal role. John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Willie Jonker are examined as three influential types of this discourse. *A soteriological logic of faith* is identified as a central pattern within this discourse, also in portraying human flourishing as piety, joy, and comfort. A second discourse portrays salvation as liberation, wherein an *ethical* interpretation plays a central role. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Mercy Oduyoye, and Russel Botman are held up as three influential types of this discourse. *An eschatological logic of hope* is identified as an important pattern within this discourse, also in portraying human flourishing as a fulfilled life, healing, and dignity. A third discourse portrays salvation as transformation, wherein an *aesthetical* interpretation plays a core role. Serene Jones, Ellen Charry, and Denise Ackermann are employed as three influential types of this discourse. *A creative logic of love* is inextricably wound into this discourse, also in portraying human flourishing as grace, happiness, and blessing.

Together, these three logics function within triadic form in order to respond to the questions and challenges of the day. In conclusion, contemporary discourses on salvation appear to have, in all three of the forms outlined in this study, to do with human flourishing – whether as piety, joy, or comfort; as a fulfilled life, healing, or dignity; as grace, happiness, or blessing.

Table of contents

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struggled to find my way to a constructive interpretation of human flourishing in his work. Professor Keith Clements' suggestion that I look at his work on joy, in his *Christmas Eve,* was very helpful, and I gratefully followed his advice. Moreover, I am indebted to Dr Olle Kristenson for his suggestions on my interpretation of Gustavo Gutiérrez, to Reverend DP Carelse for his suggestions on my interpretation of Russel Botman, and to Professor Günter Thomas for sending me the published doctoral dissertation of Christiane Bindseil.

For the financial support by Stellenbosch University, also by way of the HB and MJ Thom bursary, I am thankful. Moreover, for the financial assistance provided by the Dutch Reformed Church (and the Curatorium in particular) throughout this study, but also in the years prior to this study, I am indebted. I thank both of these institutions and the people within them that made this possible.

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Although he had explicitly forbidden me to thank him here, I will nonetheless do exactly that. Monty Sahd read through all of my work and corrected a great number of my mistakes throughout. For his careful attention to my formulations and the many times that I would need corrections on my subject-verb agreements, I am indeed very thankful!

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Foreword

This study began as an interest in many things, but in particular as a commitment to the Hope Project at Stellenbosch University. For this reason I was interested in working on a topic that would fall within the scope of this broader vision, and even more specifically within the human dignity focus of the Faculty of Theology. This is my context, wherein I have grown up, as it were, as a theologian. In the interests of clarification, I discuss two matters.

There have been suggestions, firstly, that a focus on happiness within an affluent context such as that of Stellenbosch would be considered problematic because it appears to perpetuate the idea that such an academic study of happiness is a luxury that does not speak to South African realities. However, exactly because my research context is that of the Hope Project – which has in mind the repositioning of Stellenbosch University as a public asset, in service of communities and their challenges – and my research focus is on salvation – which has everything to do with human misery and the realities of human suffering, sin, and evil – this study can surely not imply this. Moreover, I have chosen to include three South African theologians in this study, all of whom spent their final teaching years at Stellenbosch University and shaped the Faculty of Theology in innumerable ways, in order to 'ground' my work within the context in which I have worked. Together, these attempts to participate in the vision of hope that the late Professor Russel Botman articulated are not arbitrary.

Secondly, I have published a number of academic articles in peer reviewed journals that are based on research in this dissertation. I have indicated all of these in the bibliography, as well as in footnotes throughout. Almost all of these articles were presented at conferences before publication, and all of the published articles are dependent upon sections that I wrote in 2013. This is in line with the Yearbook (General) of 2015, wherein it states that such articles may be included in doctoral research "provided that only articles [and creative outputs] that originated after the student registered for the Doctoral study may be used" (sections 6.9.5.2 and 6.9.5.3; pages 156 – 157). However, this does not mean that this dissertation is a dissertation by articles; but I have still decided to declare all articles that are dependent on the research in this dissertation, as these articles were published during the course of this study. Again, this is in line with the Yearbook, which I carefully examined before I submitted any articles for publication. I hope that this provides clarification on both of these matters.

Chapter 1

Exploring Human Flourishing

1.1   Introduction

The world is obsessed with happiness. The desires for fulfillment, meaning, fullness, well-being, living life to the full, drive the choices and sacrifices that consumers – the *homo economicus* – are willing to make in satisfying these desires. It is therefore wholly unsurprising that much attention is paid to *obtaining* or *achieving* happiness, not least by marketing campaigns – be they religious or secular – that proclaim the salvation that lies in health and wealth. The *pursuit* of happiness, as much as happiness itself, is the good news to all – namely, that anyone may *pursue* happiness and *obtain* happiness, if only they are willing to become the ultimate consumer. The most devastating theological critique against the contemporary happiness craze lies exactly herein, namely in pointing to the deficiencies and dangers of equating human flourishing with health and wealth as the measure of true happiness. A classic example of the problematic consumerist rhetoric of human flourishing is that of the marketing campaign of a leading South African bank.

In South Africa, the largest retail bank launched an advertising campaign wherein they have aligned all of their marketing material and banking services around the concept 'prosper'. Interestingly, in their Afrikaans marketing campaign they employ the word 'floreer', which is more accurately translated as 'flourish'. In all of their advertising material for this campaign – ranging from radio and television to printed material – they ask one question: what does prospering (or flourishing) mean to you? Following this, the bank offers their clients and prospective clients a range of services, from home loans to personal loans to vehicle and asset finance, that are supposed to respond to the expectations of clients and South African demand for banking services. Their 'prosper' video illustrates this aptly.[1]

In a similar way, believers, theologians, churches, and faith communities are thinking about what flourishing may mean; today and in this life and this world; in the bible, in doctrines, traditions and practices, and public life. Theologians like Ellen Charry, Brent Strawn, and

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[1] The video is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfKOJcJ29BE&app=desktop.

Heinrich Bedford-Strohm argue that theology is not exempt from responding to this critical question. Exploring the questions raised by the renewed focus on happiness is of the utmost importance, if the rhetoric of human flourishing is not to be abandoned to religious and secular prosperity gospels. Theological engagement in the ever expanding world of new questions – regarding what human flourishing means – is therefore pertinent. Perhaps it is exactly from the landscape of soteriology that a new world of meaning, wherein the contours of theological 'flourishing talk' can be mapped, may emerge.

1.2   The revival of happiness studies

1.2.1   A revival accross disciplines

A contemporary revival in happiness studies is evident across a variety of disciplines, recent publications, lectures, public addresses, and newspaper articles. The popularity of self-help books and motivational speakers in the Western world testifies to the pertinence of the question: what do we mean by human happiness? Indeed, a myriad of definitions and evaluations of happiness abound, and various disciplines – including psychology,[2] sociology,[3] politics,[4] economics,[5] and philosophy[6] – have grappled in different ways with the revival of

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[2] In *psychology*, this question has been deeply embedded in positive psychology (cf. for instance *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Lopez & Snyder, 2009)), although a variety of psychologists have responded to this question. A number of evolutionary psychologists, following Charles Darwin, have for instance argued that "human beings display an undeniable tendency to quickly accommodate themselves to their pleasures – to grow bored – and then become anxious or uneasy in their satisfaction" (McMahon, 2006:422), which is sometimes called 'the tragedy of happiness'. Others, like Harvard psychology professor Daniel Gilbert, point to the problems in measuring happiness, especially when memories are recalled and when happiness is extrapolated into the future (Basset, 2008:85). The work of Virginia psychology professor Jonathan Haidt (such as his *Flourishing* (Keyes & Haidt, 2003) and *The Happiness Hypothesis* (Haidt, 2006)) and Ilona Boniwell (such as her *Positive Psychology* (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011) and *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell* (Boniwell, 2012)) are good examples of the combinations of academic and popular versions of happiness studies that is emerging from the discipline of psychology.

[3] In *sociology*, it has been pointed out that there are important positive correlates between religion and personal happiness (Stark & Maier, 2008:120 – 121). Stark and Maier examine the claim that research conducted on the correlates of happiness include eight generalisations, of which the first (that "[t]here is a significant, non-spurious, positive relationship between religion and happiness" (2008:120)) and the last (that "[t]he effect is stronger for religious participation than for religious beliefs" (2008:120)) are particularly interesting. In their own verification of these generalisations, they come to the conclusion that these two generalisations are at least partly correct. They conclude their research with the remark that religion has the capacity to "provide happiness" and that "religious people enjoy better mental and physical health" (Stark & Maier, 2008:125). Sandra Levy-Achtemeier's *Flourishing Life* (2012) similarly traces the significance of religion, and the Christian faith in particular, for 'living a coherent life'. Theologians have also acknowledged this link between flourishing and faith – indeed, "[c]oncern with human flourishing is at the heart of the great faiths, including Christianity" (Volf, 2011:63).

[4] In *politics*, this question is associated with democracy and human rights. For Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University and research fellow there, government can learn from new research on well-being (2010) –

happiness studies (notwithstanding more popular explorations of happiness).[7] Yet such a search for happiness, and what happiness means, is by no means novel. Dartmouth historian

especially with an eye to formulating policies to better the living conditions and well-being of populations (Renick, 2011:24). For Bok, the question within politics would therefore be: how can government best serve to promote and maximise human happiness? (Renick, 2011:22). Martin Seligman notes, moreover, that "what government is about… is in creating human flourishing" (2010:241). In the United States of America's Declaration of Independence, for instance, 'the pursuit of happiness', together with life and liberty, is an inalienable, basic human right. Heiko Oberman adds that the *achievement* of this right is part of the 'American Dream' (1993:280:86), and therefore closely related to how the question of human happiness has been approached in economics. Indeed, "researchers have pointed out that economic growth, freedom of choice, respect for human rights, and social tolerance all contribute to greater happiness" (Bok, 2010:9; referring to Inglehart et al, 2008). An interesting development in this regard is the emphasis on flourishing in leadership studies, wherein the focus falls on *Virtue Practices to Flourish* (which is the telling subtitle of a book on leadership by Marius Ungerer, Johan Herholdt, and Janne le Roux (2013)). See also Martha Nussbaum's *Not For Profit,* with the telling subtitle: *Why Democracy Needs The Humanities* (2010).

[5] In *economics,* this question has to do with capitalism's market forces of supply and demand, where consumers choose products and services which enables them to get what they want (desire satisfaction) of getting what they most want (preference satisfaction) (Martin, 2012:15). Economic studies, in particular, often make use of desire satisfaction theories or definitions, notes Mike Martin (2012:15). Martin Seligman argues that "[t]he point of wealth is to increase well-being" (2010:242). Advertising plays a particularly assertive role in "perpetuating the prospect of perpetual pleasure" (McMahon, 2006:465). Indeed, "[i]f advertising can be said to be the business of selling dreams, the dream now is often a variation on the theme of happiness – at all times, in all places, in all things" (McMahon, 2006:465). Advertising and marketing is, according to McMahon's description (2006:465), an invitation to experience pleasure and fulfillment. This is also a point of critique for many, such as Mindy Makant (2010:291), who argues that human beings (wrongfully) seek fulfillment, well-being and happiness through the act of consumption, within a consumer culture. However, there are also a number of other studies – such as Robert and Edward Skidelsky's work on happiness and money (2012), Michael Sandel's work on markets and morals (2012), and Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi's work on the GDP as a measurement for quality of life (2010) – that illustrate the increasing importance of economic approaches to studying happiness and the good life. A particularly interesting recent development in this regard is the rise of the 'new field' of "happiness economics", with a call for a shift of focus from measuring Gross Domestic Product to measuring Gross Domestic Happiness according to a 'well-being index' (Skidelsky & Skidelsky, 2012:96 – 97).

[6] In *philosophy*, this question of what constitutes happiness would resurface again and again. As Darrin McMahon points out (2006), for a number of philosophers – including Aristotle, Epicurus, Kant – happiness was a central point of inquiry. The philosopher Sissela Bok (2010:39) describes human flourishing as being well, living well, and doing well. Happiness would often, for the philosophers, be closely related to virtue and morality, which the classic study by Julia Annas, entitled *The Morality of Happiness* (1993), emphasises. However, individual philosophers would sketch the relationship between morality and happiness in different ways. For instance, for Aristotle moral limits are part of the definition of happiness – indeed, "virtue or character… [is] necessary for people to be called happy" (Bok, 2010:175); whereas for Immanuel Kant goodness and happiness would also be inextricably linked (McMahon, 2006:251). And yet for others, there would be a greater separation between morality and happiness, in that happiness would increasingly be separated from moral values and action, and increasingly be linked to pleasure and the fulfillment of desires. Miroslav Volf attributes this to a shift in the late twentieth century, wherein "[h]uman flourishing came increasingly to be defined as experiential satisfaction" (2011:59).

[7] Earlier popular books include those by Sigmund Freud (entitled *Civilization and its Discontents*) and Bertrand Russel (entitled *The Conquest of Happiness*), both published in 1930 (Bok, 2010:132 – 133) – indeed, "[b]oth books continue to enjoy an enthusiastic readership" (2010:133). In a chapter entitled "Is lasting happiness achievable?", Sissela Bok (2010:132 – 154) compares Freud and Russel on their definitions and delimitations of happiness, and concludes that "Freud held a narrowly hedonic view" whereas Russel held an "eudaimonic view of happiness" (2010:134). A more recent example of a popular exploration of happiness from a Christian point of view is the book by the Jesuit priest James Martin, with the significant subtitle *Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* (2011). Therein he, for example, explores biblical texts (such as Psalm 65 and 1 Thessalonians) and biblical figures (such as Nathaniel, in the Gospel of John) that are expressive of happiness and joy within the Christian faith. Yet another example of a popular exploration of happiness from

Darrin McMahon points out, in his history of happiness (2004), that "[t]he search for happiness is as old as history itself" (2004:1).[8] The Harvard philosopher Sissela Bok traces the fascination with happiness from antiquity (2010:2 – 3), but similarly notes that the modern focus on happiness displays a renewed vitality in explorations of happiness.

A basic question underlies contemporary happiness research spanning various disciplines, namely: what do we mean by happiness? What *is* happiness? (Strawn, 2012:11)[9] This is the main question for the philosopher Sissela Bok in her explorations on happiness (Renick, 2011:22). Sissela Bok identifies two ways in which happiness has been evaluated by various thinkers, namely objective evaluations and subjective evaluations (2010:37 – 38). For Aristotle, happiness could only be evaluated 'from the outside', that is to say, objectively (Bok, 2010:37 – 38; see also Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (2009) and *Eudemian Ethics* (2011)). For Thomas Merton, happiness has to do with what we need ("the 'one thing necessary'"), and is therefore wholly subjective (Bok, 2010:39). Many contemporary psychologists and philosophers employ some combination of subjective and objective interpretations of happiness.[10] Therefore (Bok, 2010:155)

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within the Christian faith, among a myriad of examples!, is the television sermons by the renowned Dutch theologian Okke Jager, which was published in book form and entitled *Wij mogen van geluk spreken* (those who may speak of happiness) (n. d.).

[8] However, according to Ellen Charry (2006:36), *Christianity's* thinking on happiness is silenced within many historical treatments of the subject. Darrin McMahon, for instance, regards Christianity's greatest contribution to the discussion on happiness as the added idea of hope in some future, eschatological happiness when temporal happiness in the here and now eludes us, writes Charry (2006:36). Yet perhaps there is also a rationale for such portrayals of happiness. For instance, Ellen Charry, Darrin McMahon, and Sissela Bok agree that "Western Christian theology is skittish about temporal happiness… because happiness has been primarily construed in terms of eschatology (Charry, 2010:ix) and that theologians have often been found guilty of contrasting earthly suffering and misery with heavenly bliss and happiness (Bok, 2010:8). Still, the Christian tradition *has* been engaging the subject of happiness, especially through such figures as Saint Augustine of Hippo (Charry, 2010:3) and Thomas Aquinas (Charry, 2010:ix).

[9] Exactly this question is the title of a book by philosopher Fred Feldman, namely *What Is This Thing Called Happiness?* (2012), wherein he explores the nature and value of happiness. In an earlier book, entitled *Pleasure and the Good Life* (2006), he writes about the natures, varieties, and plausibility of hedonism (also evident in the subtitle of this particular book).

[10] Indeed, Bok points out (2010:39 – 40), "[c]ontemporary philosophers disagree sharply about whether or not happiness should be defined from a purely subjective point of view." Others, such as John Kekes and Jonathan Haidt, combine subjective and objective views on happiness, in that "outsiders evaluate what individuals say about their own happiness" (Bok, 2010:40 – 41; Strawn, 2012:22; footnote 76). The underlying question in the debate between subjective and objective notions of happiness therefore is: are people the best judges of their own happiness? (Bok, 2010:39). Bok herself sees little sense in choosing between subjective and objective perspectives, but attempts to combine the 'insider's perspective' and the 'outsider's perspective in order to reach a fuller understanding of happiness – even if she herself believes that "the subjective experience of happiness must have priority" (Bok, 2010:43).

[i]t is natural, given the vast consequences that adopting one view of happiness rather than another can have for individual lives and for institutions, that some should wish to single out what constitutes 'true' or 'real' happiness. For many in politics or religion it comes to matter utterly to believe that one view of happiness is the only correct one and to warn against the snares and delusions of those who peddle different perceptions.

Not only does Bok's warning (2010:155) point to the seriousness of the question as to what happiness entails, but it also speaks to the need for a continued consideration of various perspectives on happiness. Ellen Charry agrees that (2010:277) "[t]he scope of this vision of happiness has not been containable in carefully delineated vocabulary." There may well be a relativising element in any attempt to explore the conceptual significance of these many descriptions of happiness. In a chapter called 'Discordant Definitions', Sissela Bok (2010:35 – 58) consequently asks whether defining happiness is a futile effort. For her, however, the answer is a definite no (Bok, 2010:36), even as "the different conceptions of happiness clash with respect both to the end state of happiness envisaged and to the means required for achieving this end" (Bok, 2010:37). Whether satisfying needs and desires (Aristotle) or limiting needs and desires (Seneca),[11] whether indulging in pleasures (Epicurus) or denying pleasures, various understandings of happiness have attributed different roles to satisfaction, pleasure and even virtue in achieving or gaining happiness (Bok, 2010:37 – 39).

Yet even in the midst of a startling variety of descriptions of happiness – whether "[b]liss, joy, elation, contentment, pleasure, euphoria, happiness, ecstasy" (Bok, 2010:11) – *experience* shapes the rhetoric employed, so that often "how people describe their experience of these states of mind is so much more vivid than efforts to define or explain them" (Bok, 2010:11). Indeed, apart from the various *perspectives* on what is meant by happiness, there may well be various *kinds* of happiness, argues Bok (2010:45), for "[t]he notion that there should be one kind of happiness… is needlessly restrictive, considering the variety of human experiences of happiness, of purposes for which people seek it, and of factors thought to contribute to its achievement."[12]

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[11] Desire is an important category for several studies in well-being, albeit with distinct accentuations within different disciplines. For instance, in psychology the study of preferences and 'desire formation' (Olsaretti, 2006) abounds; in philosophy, the focus may fall on 'hellenistic ethics' as the therapy of desire (Nussbaum, 1994); and in theology, the study of wisdom and wisdom literature has to do with 'desiring God' (Ford, 2007).

[12] Others, such as Mike Martin, also make the point that there may well be "varieties of happiness" (2012:9) which are shaped into many different kinds or forms according to what he calls 'ingredients' (2012:9 – 10), 'pathways' (2012:10 – 11), 'emotional styles' (2012:11 – 12), 'degrees' (2012:12 – 13), 'domains' (2012:13), 'aspects' (2012:13 – 14), and 'segments' (2012:14). Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi distinguish, furthermore, between *various* positive experiences by way of holding pleasure and enjoyment apart (2000:12).

However, the focus on happiness, with its accompanying emphasis on well-being and "experiential satisfaction", may very well not be enough (Volf, 2011:62 – 63), for "we [may] need a better account of human flourishing than experiential satisfaction" (2012:63).[13] An important contribution in this regard is the focus on 'the good life'[14] with its accompanying public manifestation, 'the common good' (Brümmer, 2004:3; Volf, 2011:ix – xvii). The South African philosopher Vincent Brümmer points out that different religious traditions have various ways of describing what 'the good life' entails, and how ultimate happiness can be sought and obtained (2004:4).[15] Indeed, "[t]he most robust alternative visions of human

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Pleasure, they argue (2000:12), "is the good feeling that comes from satisfying homeostatic needs such as hunger, sex, and bodily comfort"; whereas *enjoyment* "refers to the good feelings people experience when they break through the limits of homeostasis – when they do something that strecthes them beyond what they were – in an athlectic event, an artistic performance, a good deed, a stimulating conversation." They conclude that it is "[e]njoyment, rather than pleasure... [that] leads to personal growth and long-term happiness" (2000:12).

[13] Marcel Sarot notes (2000:1019) that happiness would lose its objective sense by the time of the Reformation, as well as its connections to salvation and the meaning of life, and would instead increasingly come to be equated with 'being satisfied' (2000:1019). He points out that this would culminate in Immanuel Kant's critique against the pursuit of happiness (2000:1019): "Seit der Reformation verlor er iedoch zunehmend seinen objektiven Bedeutungsgehalt; »glücklich sein« wurde mit »befriedigt sein« gleichgesetzt. Diese Entwicklung erreichte ihren Höhepunkt in der von Kant erhobenen Kritik des Strebens nach G[lück/Glückseligkeit]; er konnte → Pflicht und G. nur darum in der für ihn kennzeichnenden Weise gegeneinander stellen, weil er G. mit Vergnügen und Befriedigung gleichsetzte. Als Folge dieses Bedeutungswandels verlor der Begriff G. Zug um Zug seine zentrale Stellung in der Theol., und an seine Stelle traten Begriffe wie → Heil und (seit dem 19. Jh.) → Sinn des Lebens."

[14] Studies such as that of Rebecca Todd Peters, which examines the ethics of globalisation with a view to 'the good life' (which is also the title of her book), make the point that the question of the good life "is one of the quintessential questions of Christian ethics" (2004:22). Moreover, the concern for *human flourishing* specifically "is particularly important from the point of view of Christian social ethics, which has historically concerned itself with seeking a vision of human flourishing in which all God's children are cared for" (2004:28). The concern for the good life is, however, embedded in Aristotle's concern for the link between virtue and happiness, where living well and doing well were inextricably linked in conceiving of human happiness (Bok, 2010:38).

[15] Vincent Brümmer argues that theistic religious traditions (like Christianity and Islam) have often pursued ultimate happiness in the enjoyment of the love of God (2004:4). For him, a main proponent of this view is Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who advises that human beings seek ultimate happiness in the love of God "since that cannot be taken from us against our will" (Brümmer, 2004:4 – 5). This view, as Brümmer points out (2004:5), has also stood at the core of how various mystics (like Bernard of Clairvaux) have interpreted union with God: "The *via mystica,* the route along which the mystic seeks ultimate happiness, culminates in the enjoyment of a loving union with God" (2004:5). According to Brümmer (2004:11), the love of God for human beings forms the proper context for the flourishing of human beings (or 'ultimate happiness'). He makes three points in this regard. Firstly, doing the will of God out of love (and not merely "[r]ealizing the good in our individual lives as a duty imposed on us from outside", which cannot make us ultimately happy) – in other words, "realizing the ultimate good in our individual lives" – is, for Brümmer (2004:11 – 13), ultimate happiness. Secondly, ultimate happiness has to do with being valued and loved as an individual person. For Brümmer (2004:16), this means that "God alone knows me well enough to consistently treat me as an irreplaceable individual and hence to bestow individual identity and value on me as a person. Thirdly, human beings anchor their identity and self-esteem in the love of others, which is to say that human beings flourish in fellowship and love, but since human love is finite and fallible, God's love of human beings is "the only dependable anchor for our ultimate happiness" (Brümmer, 2004:18). For Brümmer, then, ultimate happiness can only be found in the love of God (2004:17).

flourishing are embodied in the great faith traditions" – including the Christian faith, which shares the "[c]oncern with human flourishing" (Volf, 2011:63).

1.2.2   A revival within theology

Theologians are engaging in their own ways with the great upsurge in happiness studies[16] – including in South Africa[17] – of which some have ventured into this particular landscape in order to explore possible theological orientation points within the rapidly expanding interest in happiness. A classic example of such a foray is that of Ellen Charry's *God and the Art of Happiness* (2010), which "explores the idea of happiness in the Christian tradition"[18] by "reviewing the history of the theological conversation about happiness" (Charry, 2010:cover). Yet already in the prequel to this book, in her *By the Renewing of Your Minds* (1997), Charry argues "that classical doctrinal theology is pastorally motivated and that its end is *human flourishing*" (2010:ix; my emphasis – NM). This means, for her, that "knowing and loving God… [promotes] genuine happiness" (1997:18). The study of happiness is, for theology, therefore both a pastoral concern *and* a doctrinal concern, she argues. For this reason, she chooses to address "the concern for academic theology by asking how the doctrines shape a way of life that forms people for living their lives excellently" (Charry, 2010:x). In other words, the grammar or patterns of doctrinal *loci* may therefore very well have a role to play in shaping the theological rhetoric of human flourishing.

Theologians are, however, not only exploring happiness individually, but also within a variety of international projects and conferences, often in collaboration with other disciplines – which testifies to the academic fascination with and strategic importance of the study of happiness

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[16] This is exactly Heinrich Bedford-Strohm's point, in an article on happiness in theology (2011a:7): "Wenn das so ist, wie könnte dann die Frage nach der Glück-Seligkeit in einer bedrohten Welt zum Nebenthema werden? Wie könnten Kirche und Theologie stumm bleiben, wenn sich ein gesellschaftliches Klima ausbreitet, in dem persönlicher materieller Wohlstand, beruflicher Erfolg und ein harmonisches Familienleben zur zentralen Signatur dieses großen Begriffes des »Glücks« werden? Und wie könnte es Christenmenschen kalt lassen, wenn immer deutlicher vor Augen tritt, wie desaströs das Scheitern an einem solchen Glücksideal sich in den Biographien der Menschen auswirkt!" He writes here as chairperson of the Gesellschaft für evangelische Theologie – a German academic society for Reformed theology – who also explores the question of happiness in a publication entitled *Glück-Seligkeit* (Bedford-Strohm, 2011b), wherein a number of well-known German theologians – icluding Jürgen Moltmann, and the South African Reformed theologian Piet Naudé – would engage theologically with happiness studies.

[17] South African theologians Piet Naudé and Johan van der Merwe have each recently published an article on happiness, respectively entitled "Models of 'happiness' – A South African Perspective" (Naudé, 2011) and "Happiness – a primer for theological engagement" (Van der Merwe, 2015).

[18] Cf. http://cslr.law.emory.edu/publications/publication/title/choose-life-god-and-the-art-of-happiness/.

for tertiary institutions. Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion has, for instance, established an interdisciplinary project, funded by the John Templeton Foundation and the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, on the Pursuit of Happiness, with the focus on Scientific, Theological, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Love of God, Neighbour and Self (Charry, 2010:viii). The project is described on the website of Emory University's Centre for the Study of Law and Religion as follows (http://cslr.law.emory.edu/research/the-pursuit-of-happiness/):

Recent developments in positive psychology have brought the idea of happiness back to public attention. The CSLR launched "The Pursuit of Happiness Project" in 2005 to put religion and science in conversation, focus on the relation between altruistic love and happiness, retrieve some of the rich traditional teachings captured in this ideal, and ultimately reconstruct the idea of happiness in light of the new findings of the human and social sciences and of the new liberties of constitutional democracies.

Various book publications are forthcoming from the theological side of the project, such as Stephen Pope's *Better to Give than to Receive: Service, Virtue and Ethics in Christian Happiness*, John Bowlin's *Counting Virtues: The Difference that Transcendence Makes*, Sidney Callahan's *Moral-Theological Reflections on the Psychology of Happiness*, and Phillip Reynolds' *Thomas Aquinas and the Discovery of Bliss: A Study of Christian Eudaimonism.* A number of books have, however, already been published. Among these are Brent Strawn's *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness* (2012), Sidney Callahan's *Called to Happiness: Where Faith and Psychology Meet* (2011), and Ellen Charry's *God and the Art of Happiness* (2010).

Theologians are evidently addressing human happiness from a variety of approaches and concerns. Even Pope Francis' long awaited encyclical on creation, *Laudato Si',* would make mention of human beings' "right to life and happiness" (2015:31).[19] Interestingly, for systematic theology, theologians do not yet treat happiness as a Christian doctrine in and of itself, argues Ellen Charry (2010:275). Moreover, the systematic theological *locus* of happiness studies is also not altogether clear. Indeed, happiness studies have been mainly focused on eschatology – in particular, "on future eschatology at the expense of temporal

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[19] It is worth quoting the encyclical at length here: "Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity" (2015:31). Yet Pope Francis has a particular understanding of happiness in view here, in that "[h]appiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer" (2015:163). Ultimately, however, he places happiness within an eschatological framework (2015:176): "At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude."

happiness" – argues Charry (2010:x). She points out the inherent tension between eschatology and soteriology within theological thinking on happiness, which is why she herself chooses to approach her study on happiness "by proposing that happiness is a realizing eschatology with salvation centered in sanctification" (2010:x). Ellen Charry, for one, attempts to reopen the theological discussion on happiness by way of restoring a link between happiness and soteriology, "not only for Christians who may have ceded the term to the marketplace but also for those who seek spiritual *flourishing*" (2010:xii; my emphasis – NM).[20] There are, in other words, attempts to approach happiness studies from the doctrine of salvation, and thereby locate such studies within the *locus* of soteriology.

Happiness studies are alive and well, with a variety of different approaches, different *foci*, and different definitions of happiness shaping such studies in definitive ways. Theologians are also increasingly involved in such studies, which further enriches the engagement with the question as to what happiness means. However, there has also been marked resistance to using *happiness* as a description for a good life, a full life, an abundant life within the Christian faith. The rhetoric of human flourishing has come into its own in contemporary theology, not only as an alternative to speaking about happiness – as will be pointed out below – but also as a way of engaging the experiences of human beings in a more coherent and less divisive way. The relationship between happiness and soteriology, in particular, necessitates a broader, deeper, more meaningful engagement with living and being well – hence the rhetoric of human flourishing has come into its own within a variety of contextual theologies, including liberation theology, feminist theology, ecological theology, and disability theology.

1.3   The rhetoric of human flourishing

1.3.1   A shifting rhetoric: from happiness to flourishing

Subtle but significant rhetorical shifts are taking place within happiness studies. This is, for example, evident in the work of Martin Seligman, who is widely regarded as the father of

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[20] Others have also noted the close relationship between happiness and salvation. In his concluding chapter Darrin McMahon writes about Samuel Beckett's famous play *Waiting for Godot*, in which two men, Vladimir and Estragon, are forever waiting on the arrival of the illusive Godot. He points to this story to make the point that the attainability of happiness is, in the play as well as in die modern world, connected to the hope of some form of salvation (McMahon, 2004:456).

positive psychology.[21] In his Tanner Lectures (on human values, entitled "Flourish: Positive Psychology and Positive Interventions") Seligman describes his "intellectual development about well-being" as a shift from focusing on happiness (as worked out in his *Authentic Happiness* (2002)) to focusing on flourishing (as worked out in his *Flourish* (2011)) (2010:233 – 234).[22] The reason for this shift, he writes (2010:233 – 234) primarily had to do with rhetoric (although he himself describes this as the *target* of positive psychology): happiness was associated with "what mood people were in" and reduced life satisfaction to positive emotion. *Flourishing,* however, enabled Seligman to approach well-being – seeing as "[p]ositive psychology is about the concept of well-being" (2010:236) – in a broader and more meaningful way. In short, happiness was too focused on *individual* life satisfaction, emotion, engagement, and meaning – whereas flourishing *broadened* this focus to include positive relationships, belonging ("to and serving something that you think is bigger than you are"), and accomplishment (2010:234).

Over the last century, theologians – and particularly liberation theologians, feminist theologians, disability theologians, and ecological theologians – have also increasingly employed the rhetoric of human flourishing in their work. This is evident in a variety of

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[21] Positive psychology arose as a corrective, within psychology, to an almost exclusive focus on pathology – "on repairing damage within a disease model of human functioning" – because the latter neglected "the fulfilled individual and the thriving community" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). The *aim* of positive psychology, writes Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (20005), is "a change in the focus of psychology... [from] repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities." As such, the *field* of positive psychology has to do with "subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). In short, positive psychology is a reminder to the field of psychology that it pertains not only to "pathology, weakness, and damage" but that it also has to do with "strength and virtue" (2000:7); not only "fixing what is broken" but also "nurturing what is best" (2000:7). In short, positive psychology is the "quest for what is best" (2000:7). Elsewhere Martin Seligman writes (2010:232 – 233) about how the field of positive psychology came into being: "[In 1998,] when I was president of the American Psychological Association, my job was to look around at what psychology did well and what it did badly. What psychology did well was misery. What it did not do very well was what made life worth living. It was with that in mind that I gathered together under one large tent some of the leading people... who worked on the positive side of life, and tried to create a field in which we asked the question, 'What makes life worth living, and how can we build it?' In this framework, psychology is just as concerned with strength as it is with weakness. It is just as interested in building what makes life worth living as it is with repairing pathology."

[22] A comparison with Ellen Charry's work on happiness reveals, curiously, a *reversed* shift. Whereas Martin Seligman shifts his rhetoric from happiness to flourishing (evident when his *Authentic Happiness* (2002) and *Flourish* (2011) are read together), Ellen Charry shifts her rhetoric from flourishing to happiness (evident when her *By the Renewing of Your Minds* (1997) and *God and the Art of Happiness* (2010) are read together). However, in Charry's rhetoric this is not a complete shift of substition of 'flourishing' with 'happiness', in that she appears to include 'flourishing' within her focus on developing a Christian doctrine of happiness. Possibly this could also have to do with the publication dates of these respective sets of books, seeing as Seligman's *Flourish* appeared in 2011 and Charry's *God and the Art of Happiness* appeared in 2010.

consultations and conferences, publications, ecumenical documents, and even by studies of the rhetoric of biblical texts.

Firstly, theological conferences and consultations are increasingly focused on the theme of human flourishing. One example of this is the "Gender and Human Flourishing" conference that took place at Stellenbosch University (in 2014), organised by a chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Another example is the flagship project of the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture, with the theme "God and Human Flourishing".[23] The project is described on the website of the Yale Centre for Faith and Culture as follows (http://faith.yale.edu/god-human-flourishing/god-human-flourishing):

Concern for human flourishing is at the heart of Christian proclamation. Theologians have long proclaimed that the very heart of a Christian's hoped-for-future, which comes from God, is the flourishing of individuals, communities and our whole globe… In coordination with the Life Worth Living, Adolescent Faith and Flourishing, and Theology of Joy Projects, the God and Human Flourishing Project seeks to return foundational questions regarding the shape and constitution of a truly flourishing life to the center of intellectual inquiry in the church and theological academy.

This project fulfills its mission by way of a series of consultations of "the world's leading theologians" on a variety of subjects – including "God's Power and Human Flourishing" (in 2008), "Desire and Human Flourishing" (in 2010), "Happiness and Human Flourishing" (in 2011), "Joy and Human Flourishing" (in 2012), "Respect and Human Flourishing" (in 2013), "Christ and Human Flourishing" (in 2014), "Expectation and Human Flourishing" (in 2015), and "Birth and Human Flourishing" (in 2015).

Secondly, recent ecumenical documents make extensive use of the rhetoric of human flourishing. For example, the World Council of Churches recently published the long awaited document on mission and evangelism, entitled *Together towards Life*, edited by Jooseop Keum (2013). Herein a reoccurrence of phrases such as 'fullness of life' (2013:3, 14, 17, 25, 34, 37, 39, 44), 'abundant life' (2013:4, 37), 'wholeness' (2013:19 – 20), 'affirmation of life' (2013:34, 37), and 'flourishing life' (2013:5) is evident. The triune God is 'the God of life' (2013:3), the economic trinity is 'God's economy of life' (2013:13), the Creator is 'the giver

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[23] Cf. http://faith.yale.edu/god-human-flourishing/god-human-flourishing. See also Miroslav Volf's forthcoming book, entitled *Flourishing: Why we need religion in a globalized world* (due 2016).

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of life' (2013:43), the Spirit is 'the breath of life' (2013:7), Jesus brings 'the fullness of life' (2013:25), and the gospel is 'for the sake of life' (2013:36, 40). This document goes so far as to claim that "[a] denial of life is a rejection of the God of life" (2013:5), and that the God of life leads all of humanity and all of creation into fullness of life (2013:3).

Another example of a study within the ambit of an ecumenical organization – the World World Communion of Reformed Churches – is published in an edition of the *Reformed World,* wherein an entire volume of this journal is dedicated to the theme of human flourishing (edited by Volker Küster, 2009). A variety of public issues are addressed in this volume – including migrant churches (Jansen & Küster, 2009), social transformation (West, 2009), Jewish-Christian dialogue (Kirn & Houtman, 2009), euthanasia (Boer, 2009b), voluntary service (De Roest & Noordegraaf, 2009) – but the main question that this volume addresses is: "What can Protestant goods contribute to human flourishing?" (Küster, 2009:148)

Thirdly, a number of studies have focused on the variety of images, stories, descriptions, and language used within biblical texts in order to sketch a picture of the flourishing of human beings (see for example Ford, 2008a:7 – 24). This is evident in the translation of such (biblical) concepts as *asher,*[24] *shalom* and *eirene,*[25] *makarioi,*[26] and *eudaemonia.*[27] Heinrich Bedford-Strohm argues that happiness (*Glück*) is an old biblical theme, and that it would be irresponsible to ignore how (often) the bible speaks of happiness (2011a:7).[28] He mentions

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[24] This is sometimes translated with 'happy', and at other times with 'blessed' (Charry, 2010:xi).

[25] Nicholas Wolterstorff describes these two concepts together; not *only* as 'peace', but as that which "goes beyond peace, beyond the absence of hostility" – namely, "flourishing" (2013:114). The flourishing that he has in mind is "flourishing in all dimensions of our existence – in our relation to God, in our relation to our fellow human beings, in our relation to ourselves, in our relation to creation in general" (2013:114).

[26] This would be translated as 'blessed' (by a range of bible translations, such as the New International Version, as well as a number of theologians, such as Coenie Burger (1989:27)), or 'happy' (by a number of theologians, such as Heinrich Bedford-Strohm (2011a:7)), or 'fortunate' (by historians, such as Darrin McMahon (2004:3)), or 'blessedness', 'bliss', or 'the abode of the blessed after death' (by philosophers, such as Sissela Bok (2010:38))

[27] This is "variously translated as 'well-being,' 'flourishing,' or 'happiness'" (Charry, 2010:3), or "translated as human happiness, well-being, thriving, or flourishing" (Bok, 2010:38), or even as indicating "a flourishing, favored life" (McMahon, 2004:3)).

[28] There are, moreover, interesting etymological links between salvation and happiness. The German word *Glückseligkeit* (*geluksaligheid* in Afrikaans) expresses this in a helpful way, in combining happiness (*Glück*) with salvation (*Seligkeit*). In a German book with this title (edited by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm , 2011b), at least three articles deal with this particular theme: namely those of Piet Naudé (with the title "Modelle von Glückseligkeit") (2011:119 – 127), Jürgen Moltmann (with the title "Glück-Seligkeit") (2011:128 – 130), and Gerdi Nützel, Heino Falcke and Ulrike Bundschuh (with the title "»Woran erkennen wir – durch Glück öder

that happiness as a theme is particularly evident in the beatitudes (2011a:7; see also the description of 'Seligspresungen' in the RGG (Frenschkowski, 2004)). Coenie Burger agrees, in a series of reflections on the beatitudes entitled *Vreemde Geluk* (or "strange happiness"; 1989), but adds that the beatitudes entail much more than a new recipe for happiness (1989:21). The beatitudes, writes Burger (1989:21 – 25), are about much more than joy or blessing or happiness – they are about new possibilities of life, or human flourishing. An excellent study of the rhetoric of happiness in and happiness concepts within biblical literature is that of Christiane Bindseil (particularly her chapter entitled "Das Glück im biblischen Sprachgebrauch"; 2011:48 – 84).

Yet the focus of this study is *not* primarily biblical texts, nor is the point here to engage in an in-depth description, analysis or comparison of various biblical concepts. This study does, however, trace three contemporary discourses on salvation – namely, salvation as reconciliation, salvation as liberation, and salvation as transformation – and therein describe, analyse, and compare an *own* set of interrelated concepts, in response to its research question, that portray human flourishing as piety (John Calvin), joy (Friedrich Schleiermacher), comfort (Willie Jonker), fullness of life (Gustavo Gutiérrez), healing (Mercy Oduyoye), dignity (Russel Botman), grace (Serene Jones), happiness (Ellen Charry), and blessing (Denise Ackermann). It should be noted from the outset that this does not mean that such groups or sets of concepts can be treated as mere synonyms or analogues (Charry, 2010:277). Rather, these concepts are landmarks within the landscape of soteriology, and markers within the world of meaning of human flourishing, that point the reader to a variety of ways in which contemporary theologians imagine (and could imagine) human flourishing.

1.3.2   Flourishing as blossoming and thriving[29]

The observation *that* the rhetoric of human flourishing is alive and well – as evidenced in consultations and conferences and publications with this theme – raises the question as to

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Unglück – dieser Seligkeit entgegen gehen?« Predigt über drei Aspekte des Glucks") (2011:131 – 137). See also the description of 'Seligkeit' in the RGG – from the perspective of the religious sciences (Horyna, 2004), philosophy (Steinmann, 2004), dogmatics and dogmatic history (Stock, 2004a), and ethics (Stock, 2004b) – and the description of 'Glückseligkeit' in the RGG – from the perspective of the religious sciences (Gilhus, 2000), philosophy (Steinmann, 2000), theology and dogmatics (Sarot, 2000), and ethics (Lange, 2000).

[29] A paper based on the material in this section was published in a book entitled *Jong teoloë praat saam… oor God, gemeentes en geloof*, with the title "Fully Alive? On God and Human Flourishing" (Marais, 2015a).

what human flourishing is. Stated somewhat differently, the prevalence of flourishing rhetoric ought to be accompanied by reflections on the meaning of such flourishing. Indeed, one may ask (Küster, 2009:148): "What kind of human flourishing are we talking about in the first place?" Few, if any, theologians have responded to this question as systematically as the Yale theologian David Kelsey. I have indicated in previous research (Marais, 2011; 2015a) that the notion of flourishing – on borrowed breath (or faith), on borrowed time (or hope), and by another's death (or love) – is central to his theological anthropology (cf. Kelsey, 2009). His explanations of human flourishing, both what flourishing *is* as well as what flourishing *is not*, is a classic response to the abovementioned question regarding the meaning of human flourishing.

The context in which David Kelsey embeds his understanding of human flourishing is that of his proposal that the triune God relates in a threefold manner – in creation, redemption, and consummation – to human beings. 'Flourishing' is therefore grounded in two claims in Kelsey's work, namely that the triune God relates to all that is not God in three interrelated ways and that human beings derivatively express God's glory. Stated somewhat differently, this latter claim states that the glory of a human being is a flourishing human being, who reflects the glory of God – "the full richness of God's reality" (Kelsey, 2009:310). Indeed, for Kelsey living is not truly living without flourishing (Marais, 2011:139) – and flourishing in faith, hope, and love has a clear theocentric focus (Marais, 2011:142).[30] However, Kelsey also clearly delineates what flourishing *is not.* For him, the flourishing of human beings ought not to be confused with *well-being*, nor ought the flourishing of human beings to be conflated with *blessing*.

Firstly, Kelsey maintains a clear distinction between flourishing and *well-being*. Where he writes about the appropriate response to God relating to draw human beings into eschatological consummation (part 2 of his tripartite project), Kelsey warns that the practices that the appropriate response – hope – calls for ought not confuse the expectation of eschatological flourishing with improving the well-being of the world around them. In other words, where human beings work toward making the world a better place without hoping for and trusting in God's liberation and transformation of the world, their hope is misplaced

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[30] In Kelsey's tripartite project, "[e]ach part explores what counts as appropriate response to one of the three ways God relates – namely, in faith, in hope, and in love" (2009:836), so that truly flourishing (human) life "is eccentrically shaped by faith, hope and love" (2009:856).

(Marais, 2011:153). For Kelsey the dignity and value of living beings are not necessarily tied to their well-being, but rather to their glory – that is to say, their flourishing. As urgent and important as it may be to counter injustice and practices that violate the integrities of created beings, theocentric hope is anchored not in the socio-culturally determined norm of "well-being", but in God's creative blessing and eschatological blessing (Marais, 2011:154).

Secondly, Kelsey maintains a clear distinction between flourishing and *blessing*. He identifies two types of blessing: creative blessing and eschatological blessing. With a view to the tripartite structure of his project, this means that he deliberately chooses to omit any consideration of redemptive blessing.[31] With 'creative blessing' Kelsey refers to God's relating to living beings that enables them to be what they were created to be – namely, to live and to bring forth life. With 'eschatological blessing' Kelsey refers to God's relating to living beings eschatologically that enables them to be how they were created to be – namely, to be transformed by the promise of new creation; "a new age of justice and communion with God" (2009:442). For Kelsey, God commits Godself to both creative blessing ánd eschatological blessing simultaneously (2009:450), although the two types of blessing are separated by the time it takes for them to be actualised. Both types of blessing are freely given, and require no effort on the part of the living beings that God creates and draws into eschatological consummation. Eschatological blessing goes beyond creative blessing, however, in the sense that it does not only involve the powers and capabilities of created beings (to live and to bring forth life), but goes beyond creaturely capacities: eschatological blessing is fully actual but not yet fully realised; created beings can be transformed in this life, but not yet fully so. Eschatological blessing is also reliant upon creative blessing, even though creative blessing is not dependent on eschatological blessing (Kelsey, 2009:549).

Yet such an elimination of both well-being *and* blessing as possible alternatives within the rhetoric of flourishing does raise the question as to David Kelsey's own understanding of what human flourishing means. In short, David Kelsey interprets flourishing in a twofold sense, namely as (1) 'to blossom' and (2) 'to thrive'.

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[31] Perhaps this can be explained by way of footnote 88 in my Masters thesis (Marais, 2012:135). There I point out that, for Kelsey (2009:447 – 450; who refers to Claus Westermann's analysis of the uses of 'blessing' in Scripture), acts of blessing are not conceptually tied to acts of deliverance. Kelsey understands 'blessing' to be both particular (related to specific persons, situations, communities, and so forth) ánd universal in scope.

Firstly, 'to blossom' is "to manifest the type of beauty of which a given life is capable by virtue of God's relating to it" (2008:2; 2009:315). Kelsey extends the metaphor of flourishing as a blossom by claiming that this may also provide 'fruit' (that may nurture and support the flourishing of others) and 'seed' (that may determine the lives of subsequent generations).[32] Blossoming and blooming therefore have implications for both present neighbours (fruit) and future neighbours (seed) (2008:2; 2009:315).

Secondly, 'to thrive' is "to have oneself in hand" (2008:3; 2009:315). Kelsey does not have much regard for the metaphoric extensions that include the meanings of 'to grow luxuriantly' (because "it unqualifiedly reintroduces health as a metaphor") or 'to prosper' (because "it introduces wealth and achievements as metaphors definitive of human flourishing") (2008:3; 2009:315). Rather, he emphasises the sociality (in that human flourishing "is inseparable from the flourishing of all creatures") (2009:315) and responsibility (in that human beings "take charge of themselves wisely for their own well-being" and of their contexts) (2009:319) of human flourishing. Thriving therefore has implications for human persons themselves, for non-human neighbours and for the broader context in which human beings live.

Accordingly, flourishing is the expression of the glory and the beauty of God's relating to human beings. This has social and relational, present and future implications that stretch wider and deeper than the life of an individual, single human being. Yet Kelsey further qualifies his interpretation of human flourishing by way of a number of characteristics of human flourishing that reflect and shape his theological vision and language. Aside from the twofold definition that Kelsey works out, at least five characteristics of 'human flourishing' can be identified from Kelsey's work, namely that: (1) flourishing is contextual and concrete; (2) flourishing is not functional or self-referencing; (3) flourishing is a gift; (4) flourishing is relational and responsive; (5) flourishing is eccentric.

A first characteristic of Kelsey's understanding of flourishing is that "what counts as 'flourishing' is relative to what flourishes" (2009:314). There is no abstract, ideal, vague, generalised, absolute, or standard way of understanding flourishing against which the

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[32] Kelsey consistently excludes the metaphorical connotation with 'maximal good health', because "health is problematic as an index of human flourishing" (2009:317) in that 'health' and 'unhealth' are understood functionally and self-referentially. This runs against the grain of the logic of his larger anthropological argument, namely that human beings are *not* finally to be understood in relation to ourselves, but excentrically, in relation to God and therefore 'outside' of ourselves (2009:317).

flourishing of each and every human person can or should be measured. No such a standard exists, argues Kelsey, in that 'flourishing' as theological concept is, at its heart, "a highly relative concept" (2009:316). Instead, the flourishing of a human life must be understood contextually (in terms of the networks of relationships in which a human life is embedded) and concretely (in terms of the individual powers and capacities of each human being) (2009:316).

A second characteristic of Kelsey's understanding of flourishing is what it is not or must not be equated with – namely 'human well-being' and 'good health' (2009:511). Kelsey is highly critical of modern academic theology that construes human flourishing as well-being, because it is "framed in terms of a human subject's relating to itself by an interior subjective act" (2008:9). Where 'flourishing' denotes 'happiness', 'health', 'self-fulfillment', 'self-realisation', 'full actualisation' or 'well-being', it is defined in terms of human beings' internal functioning and our ability to adapt to larger contexts (2008:9). Well-being and health are, however, inadequate and problematic synonyms for 'flourishing', in that these are "functional and self-referencing terms" (2009:511).[33] For Kelsey, 'flourishing' is not functional (that reduces human beings to that which they are able to think or to do) or self-referencing (in that it is only concerned with itself).

At this point, after the first two characteristics of human flourishing, the basis of flourishing becomes particularly complex. David Kelsey deals exclusively, from here on, with what he simply describes as 'God relation'. This covers two kinds of relations: (a) "God's relations to human beings"; and (b) human beings' relations to God" (2008:20). He distinguishes, at this point, between two broad kinds of human flourishing understood theocentrically, namely 'type A flourishing' (which deals with God's relating to human beings) and 'type B flourishing' (which deals with human beings' relating, or appropriate responses, to God) (2008:21). The third characteristic deals with Kelsey's 'type A flourishing', the fourth

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[33] Although Kelsey has no problem with defining 'well-being' in terms of 'health', and even in affirming that "well-being as health is surely part of the content of a theological account of human flourishing" (2008:14), he notes that "it is a good deal more problematic theologically to define human *flourishing* as human well-being understood as 'health'" (2008:15; original emphasis). The criteria or significance for a *theocentric* account of human flourishing, however, "lie in the dynamics of human beings' relations to God and God's relations to them" (2008:15). For Kelsey, the fundamental difference is this: human well-being ("understood as various kinds of health") is not necessarily defined (only?) in relation to God (although it is defined in relation to everything else: "themselves, to fellow creatures, and to their shared social and natural contexts"), whereas human flourishing is defined only in relation to God (which includes both "God's relations to human beings" *and* "human beings' relation to God") (2008:19 – 20).

characteristic deals with Kelsey's 'type B flourishing', and the fifth characteristic treats 'type A flourishing' and 'type B flourishing' together.

A third characteristic of Kelsey's understanding of flourishing is its giftlike character. This characteristic deals with Kelsey's 'type A flourishing', in that it affirms the graciousness and givenness of God's initial threefold relating to human beings. There are, in this regard, three distinct varieties of 'type A flourishing': flourishing in God's relating to create, flourishing in God's relating to draw to eschatological consummation, and relating to reconcile (2008:21). This leads him to focus on what it means for human beings to flourish as those who are created (cf. 2009:314 – 332), eschatologically consummated (cf. 2009:510 – 524) and reconciled (cf. 2009:703 – 726). Yet, human beings flourish "simply in virtue of God's relating to them in three different ways" (2009:46) and must therefore be understood theocentrically, from the perspective of God relating to human beings. Flourishing, in this view, is the sheer graciousness and givenness of God's threefold relating (2009:511).

A fourth characteristic of Kelsey's understanding of flourishing is that it is responsive, and therein a responsibility, in enacting appropriate responses to God and neighbour (2009:510). This characteristic deals with Kelsey's 'type B flourishing', in that it affirms the flourishing of human beings in our enactment of what Kelsey calls 'appropriate responses'. Human beings flourish when we respond faithfully – in trust and with loyalty – to our living on borrowed breath (2009:510), when we respond with joyous hopefulness – including thanksgiving – to our living on borrowed time (2009:510), and when we respond with love – a passionate desire for communion with God and neighbour – to our living by another's death (2009:1031). Human beings flourish "as they act intentionally" (2009:319) and therefore, in short, when we respond in faith, hope and love to God and neighbour. The practices of faith, hope and love are, however, shaped by the first characteristic of flourishing, namely the 'concrete particularities' of the context in which we live and the human (and non-human) beings that we are in a relationship with. The flourishing of a human life is, in this view, relational (in terms of God's relating to human beings and our relating back to God and to one another) and responsive (in terms of our appropriate responses to God and neighbour).

A fifth characteristic of Kelsey's understanding of flourishing is that human beings flourish 'eccentrically'. This characteristic is expressive of both 'type A flourishing' *and* 'type B

18

flourishing', in that it affirms the eccentricity (which includes God's relation to us and our relation to God) of human existence. The triune God's three ways of relating to human beings together constitute a theocentric picture of the eccentricity of our existence. The central claim of Kelsey in his book, *Eccentric Existence* (2009), is that all that is not God is to be understood ex-centrically, outside of itself, within God's ways of relating to all that is not God. For Kelsey, "the result of that is that the basis for human reality and the basis for human value both lie, so to speak, outside of human beings – because it finally lies outside in God. So 'eccentric' means having your centre outside yourself. And 'existence' simply means living as a human being" (Westminster John Knox Press Radio interview with David Kelsey, 2009). The appropriate responses to God and neighbour are therefore not merely faith, hope and love, but *eccentric* faith, *eccentric* hope, and *eccentric* love.

Human beings that are 'fully alive' blossom and thrive. Human flourishing expresses God's glory and manifests the beauty of God relation not in its functionality or self-referentiality, but in its contextuality and concreteness, gracious givenness, relationality and responsiveness, and eccentricity. It is this glory and this beauty that is the ground of the intrinsic dignity and value of human beings (2009:570).

1.3.3   Objections to the rhetoric of human flourishing

The rhetoric of human flourishing is, however, also highly problematic. The philosopher Charles Taylor critiques modernity's increased emphasis on 'flourishing' and ascribes this to its exclusive humanism which denies any kind of transcendence, and therefore any thinking that is imbued with meaning 'beyond life'. Herein the research *problem* of this study becomes clear – namely, in Charles Taylor's argument that the rhetoric of human flourishing betrays the modern lack in 'transcendental outlook' or 'vision'. Indeed, "Western modernity is very inhospitable to the transcendent" (Taylor, 2011:177); a relationship which he would come to describe as a "conflict between modern culture and the transcendent" (2011:174). He identifies the development of modern notions of freedom with a rise in what he calls "exclusive humanism" ("based exclusively on a notion of *human flourishing*") wherein there is no sense in which "human life aims beyond itself" (2011:172; my emphasis – NM).

19

The rhetoric of such an exclusive humanism may have dangerous implications, argues Taylor. One danger he identifies is the abovementioned negation of transcendence in (or beyond) human life. For Taylor, transcendence (that which is 'beyond life') means that "the point of things isn't exhausted by life, the fullness of life, even the goodness of life", the affirmation of "something that matters beyond life, on which life itself originally draws" (2011:172 – 173). He notes that the language of human flourishing has often been taken up in the various theologies of different religions, in an attempt to combine transcendence ("aiming beyond life or opening yourself to a change in identity" (Taylor, 2011:174)) and human flourishing, in which a flourishing self assumes a stable identity (2011:173). Modern theology, and Protestant theology in particular, employs the rhetoric of human flourishing without necessarily being aware of the limitations or dangers that accompany this. And indeed, as Taylor notes (2011:173), "[f]or Christians, God wills human flourishing".

Even if theology should renounce and not affirm human flourishing, the focus on humanity's flourishing will still be retained, argues Taylor (2007:17; 2011:174). Moving the focus from flourishing to transcendence, from human life to God, does not hinder the inevitable turn to flourishing also in this relationship, because "renunciation decenters you in relation with God, God's will is that humans flourish, and so you are taken back to an affirmation of this flourishing" (Taylor, 2011:174). This is particularly evident in theological engagements with God's power and human flourishing.[34] For theologians who think and write about human flourishing, the suspicion – for which Friedrich Nietzsche is often regarded as a spokesperson – that "Christians magnify God and God's power and dominion by systematically minimizing human beings, making them small, weak, and servile" (Kelsey, 2008:1), is particularly important, for it sketches the relationship between (God's) power and (human) flourishing as mutually exclusive, mutually limiting, competing goods.

David Ford notes that Charles Taylor's description of "how Christianity relates to human flourishing" is embedded in "Taylor's portrayal of our secular age, [which he] centered on human flourishing" (2008a:4 – 5). The critical difference between religion, also the Christian

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[34] "The Christian faith is from beginning sacrifice: sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit, at the same time enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation" (Nietzsche, III:46 of *Beyond Good and Evil*; 1974:57). Such an account of the Christian faith, by way of the famous critique of 19th century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, has captured the imagination of contemporary theologians for some time. See in particular the papers presented at the Yale consultation on "God's Power and Human Flourishing" (2008), and specifically those by David Kelsey ("On Human Flourishing"), David Ford ("God's Power and Human Flourishing"), and Nicholas Wolterstorff ("God's Power and Human Flourishing").

faith, and the 'exclusive humanism' of which Taylor warns lies in transcendence (and, more particularly, in "the reality of a transcendent, personal God") (Ford, 2008a:4). Taylor's story of how 'the secular age' came to be ("between 1500 AD and today") has, as its main theme, how "Western culture has moved from taking religion for granted as the overall framework of reality to having no such framework at all" (Ford, 2008a:2). Human flourishing therein becomes "the common reference point of the extremes between which Taylor sees our culture stretched – transcendent religion and exclusive humanism" (Ford, 2008a:3). Charles Taylor's accusation that the language of human flourishing leans too far *toward* exclusive humanism and too far *away from* any transcendent framework is therefore a major objection to a theological rhetoric of human flourishing.

Miroslav Volf also engages Charles Taylor's critique against the notion of human flourishing, and agrees that 'an anthropocentric shift' (or "the gradual redirection of interest from the transcendent God to human beings and their mundane affairs") during the eighteenth century has led to the emergence of "a different account of human flourishing... in the West" (2011:58 – 59). Such an anthropological turn would also become evident in theology, and particularly in soteriology. Exactly this would appear to be Taylor's concern, namely that the rhetoric of human flourishing has been untethered from God. The good news of the gospel is anchored in a transcendent outlook or vision that safeguards human flourishing. Taylor does not seem to oppose a focus on human flourishing as such, but is concerned for how a theological account of human flourishing is approached and anchored within the Christian faith. His objection to the rhetoric of human flourishing raises the question, however, of whether theologians are indeed guilty of untethering flourishing from soteriology, and whether modern or contemporary theologians have not found language for human flourishing that is embedded in soteriology.

1.3.4   A soteriological approach to human flourishing

The rhetoric of human flourishing is rooted in the good news of the gospel, in the affirmation that human beings may live full lives, abundant lives, good lives, by the grace and salvation that the triune God grants. Yet this further complicates, not simplifies, what is meant by human flourishing. The message of salvation – the good news of the gospel – stands at the heart of the Christian faith, but as a message, salvation is communicative, in that "[l]anguage

was and still is the carrier of the message of salvation" (Van der Watt, 2011:1). As Jan van der Watt indicates (2011:1), this is not an exclusive hallmark of contemporary soteriologies, for already in the New Testament accounts "the Christian message of salvation was contextualized in language that was accessible to ordinary people" by way of "[i]magery, metaphors and comparisons that these early Christians could understand and relate to" (Van der Watt, 2011:1). The "nature and power of salvific language" would therefore remain a core concern of soteriology (Van der Watt, 2011:1). Indeed (Van der Watt, 2011:505),

[t]he soteriological landscape of the New Testament exhibits a rich texture, diverse and powerful. This complex landscape does not lend itself to being diminished into précis form… [As such,] a truly diverse soteriological landscape is birthed as individual situations play a decisive role in how the message of the Christ-event is expressed.

Soteriology – as "the doctrine about salvation and the life and being given by this salvation to the Christian (church), of the human being in a more general sense, and furthermore, of the world" (Kim, 2008:211) – may therefore have many meanings. What salvation *cannot* become, however, is abstract or generalised, argues David Kelsey (2005:7). Salvation is "an act of relating that makes a difference to the person or situation being related to", and therefore the situations in and from which human beings may need to be redeemed are endless (2005:14 – 15). Indeed, God relates to human beings "in concrete circumstances that are in need of redemption" (2005:10). Such an open-ended and dynamic range of meanings may therefore involve "different metaphors or images[35]… used to express the process and dynamics of salvation" (Van der Watt, 2011:512). This study is interested in a variety of soteriological discourses that may be traced by way of exploring different metaphors and images of salvation – not in the biblical texts, but in the work of selected contemporary theologians. In short, a systematic theological exploration of the landscape of contemporary soteriological discourses, wherein and whereupon human flourishing is 'patterned' or 'coded' in different ways, stands at the heart of this study.

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[35] Jan van der Watt notes (2011:518) that such "images play an important role in expressing soteriological ideas in the New Testament." Moreover (2011:518 – 519), "[t]hese images are taken from a variety of backgrounds, for instance, forensic, economic, social, political, and apocalyptic. It is therefore imperative to ask questions about the functionality and semantic potential of this variety of images. For instance, do images describe or create reality?" He affirms (2011:519) that "in a sense both happen" for "[w]ithout language people will not be able to understand or talk about a particular reality... [Images] make it possible for people to imagine such a (spiritual) reality."

1.4   Inquiring after human flourishing

1.4.1   Interpreting human flourishing

The research *context* of this particular study is that of Stellenbosch University's Hope Project, which was launched in July 2010.[36] The Faculty of Theology has chosen, within this broader vision of The Hope Project, to focus on the promotion of human dignity. In the Faculty's presentation to the Overhead Strategic Planning committee of the University, it chooses to focus on human dignity because, it argues, all Christian theology has to do with human dignity (*Menswaardigheidsvoorlegging,* 2008:1).[37] In this presentation, it is pointed out that the motto that the glory of God is situated within the well-being of human beings is core to influential theological traditions: as in, for instance, Irenaeus of Lyon (*gloria Dei, vivens homo*; the glory of God is the life of a human being) and John Calvin (*ubi cognoscitur Deus, etiam colitur humanitas*; where God is known, that which is human flourishes or is cultivated, cherished, promoted) (*Menswaardigheidsvoorlegging,* 2008:2).

The research *paradigm* within which this study functions is that of the interpretive (cf. Hennink et al, 2011:10 – 11) or interpretivist[38] paradigm.[39] Interpretivist approaches to human

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[36] In the late Rector and Vice-Chancellor Professor Russel Botman's words (2011:18; original emphasis): "[Stellenbosch University] is a place where knowledge is pursued *and* communicated *and* applied with a view to making the world a better place; thus an institution that creates hope amidst despairing conditions in the surrounding society full of problems related to human health and dignity, peace and security, democracy and human rights, as well as the environment and economic development."

[37] In the selfsame presentation on human dignity, four *foci* are identified as core elements of the self-critical consciousness that the Faculty espouses (*Menswaardigheidsvoorlegging,* 2008:3 – 4): (1) conceptual questions about the relation between theology and perspectives on human dignity, theology and understandings of progress, theology and visions of healing; (2) principal questions about the role of religion, and specifically the Christian faith, tradition and community in societies, especially today; (3) critical-historical questions about why the church and theology did not and do not promote the well-being, dignity, quality of life, or flourishing of human beings in (South) Africa; (4) questions concerning the content of theology that traditionally stands at the center of faith and theology's self-critical reflection, as to central faith questions about suffering, hope, forms of human need, different representations of well-being, happiness and salvation, personal identity, community life, and forms of solidarity and belonging, past and future, remembrance and expectation.

[38] Interpretivism is distinguished from both positivism ánd constructivism (although some regard interpretivism and constructivism to be virtually synonymous) (cf. Schwandt, 1998; Terre Blanche et al, 2006; Hennink et al, 2011). However, both interpretivists and constructivists "focus on the processes by which... meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified" (1998:225). The notion of 'the interpretive turn' (Schwandt, 1998:250; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979) "refocuses attention on the concrete varieties of cultural meaning, in their particularity and complex texture, but without falling into the traps of historicism or cultural relativism in their classical forms" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:4). Interpretive work need not be 'social science' work, however, and could therefore be ideally suited to theological inquiry – and indeed, "some of the best interpretive work has been done by people who would never describe themselves as social science researchers" (such as Antjie Krog and Steve Biko) (Terre Blanche et al, 2006:274). There are, however, at least four problematic issues in

inquiry "steer[s] the reader in the general direction of where instances of a particular kind of inquiry can be found" (Schwandt, 1998:221). Meaning is of primary importance to interpretivists (1998:225), as well as understanding the particular *worlds* of meaning that are embodied in language and rhetoric (1998:222). However, interpretation is necessary in order "to construct a reading of these meanings" (1998:22). The *activity* of interpretation is what Charles Taylor describes as 'hermeneutics', or "a particular exegetical method for identifying and explicating… [various] meanings" (Schwandt, 1998:227; cf. Taylor, 1979). "[I]nterpretive inquirers watch, listen, ask, record, and examine" – but do not necessarily make use of particular methods in doing this (1998:222). As such, interpretivists are concerned with "the uniqueness of human inquiry" (1998:223, 250) as a means of "harnessing and extending the power of ordinary language and expression to help us understand the social world we live in" (Terre Blanche et al, 2006:274). In short, the term 'interpretation' is used in a "deliberately broad [way], intended to cover the kinds of explanation found in the natural sciences as well as the hermeneutical procedures of the humanities and social sciences" (Green, 1989:66). Interpretation is therefore 'unavoidably hermeneutical' (Taylor, 1979:25).[40]

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interpretive work, notes Thomas Schwandt (1998:246 – 249): (1) the problem (or even absence) of criteria by which to judge the quality of interpretive work; (2) the lack of "critical interest or the abiity to critique the very accounts they produce"; (3) the danger of the "authoritative stance of the interpreter" in whom authority and control of the interpretation may be vested; and (4) the tension between individual interpretation and the public, shared, social nature of knowledge production. As such, interpretivists have to be aware of a varety of 'interpretive dangers', including 'solipsism', 'relativism', 'descriptivism', and 'nihilism' (Schwandt, 1998:246 – 250).

[39] Monique Hennink et al (2011:11) notes that what is often called 'the interpretive paradigm' really consists of a *variety* of paradigms, including "symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, dramaturgy and dramatism, ethnomethodology, ethnography and phenomenology." Paradigms are 'models' or 'frameworks' or 'perspectives' or 'ways' of understanding, which includes ways of observing reality as well as ways of organising such observations (Hennink et al, 2011:11). The interpretivist paradigm emerged in the 1970s as a corrective to 'the positivist paradigm' with its "emphasis on objective measurement" (both in social issues and as "the foundation for the natural sciences") (2011:14). It is characterised by a number of 'distinguishing features', argues Hennink et al (2011:14 – 15), including: (1) the emic or 'inside' perspective (which "seeks to understand people's lived experience from the perspective of people themselves"); (2) the recognition that reality is 'socially constructed' ("as people's experiences occur within social, cultural, historical or personal contexts"); and (3) the 'inherent subjectivity' of interpretation which acknowledges the possibility of a variety of perspectives on reality (in that "people's perceptions and experiences of reality are subjective"). This includes the acknowledgment that "the researcher's background, position, or emotions are an integral part of the process of producing data" (Hennink et al, 2011:19). In short, "*inductive* reasoning... [is] typical of the interpretive paradigm" (Hennink et al, 2011:24; my emphasis – NM). Stated somewhat differently, the 'interpretive turn' signals "a return to this human world in all its lack of clarity, its alienation, and its depth, as an alternative to the continuing search for a a formal deductive paradigm in the social sciences" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:8).

[40] It is worth quoting Charles Taylor at length here (1979:25): "Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory – in one way or another, unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense." Therefore (1979:27) "[a] successful interpretation is one which makes clear the meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, cloudy form."

If "[i]nterpretive research… tries to describe what it sees in rich detail, and present its 'findings' in engaging and sometimes evocative language" (Terre Blanche et al, 2006:274), then an interpretive inquiry into human flourishing can take many forms. The choice in this study is for *exploration* (of the landscape of contemporary soteriological discourses) by way of *mapping* and *remapping* the rhetoric of human flourishing, or 'the world of meaning' of human flourishing, as it is shaped by soteriology. The research question gives impetus to this particular inquiry, whereas an accompanying set of five sub-questions directs this particular inquiry to the specific kind of theology, understanding of the nature and function of Christian doctrine, methodological strategies employed, interpretation of salvation, and notion of human flourishing that emerges from the scope of the various theologians' corpuses.

It makes little sense, however, to embed a systematic theological exploration such as this in a research question that performs *ceremonially* – in that it is asked only because a research question must be included in doctoral research – wherein the final response to such a question is pre-emptively evident, with minor adjustments made when research is concluded. When this is the case, the critical work of such research comes to bear not in an authentic response to the research *question*, but rather in authentic response to the research *problem*. Therefore, after a consideration of many different types of questions, I have opted for an open research question that does not pre-empt the research that must follow it, namely:

How do contemporary theologians imagine human flourishing?

A research question such as this is deliberately broad, and therefore requires further delineation. The delineation in mind here involves a combination of two types of inquiry, namely a broader inquiry (into three discourses) and a detailed inquiry (into three theologians per discourse, and nine theologians in all). In other words, the interpretive inquiry outlined above really consists of two types of inquiry. Together, these two types of inquiry guide a *systematic unsystematic theological exploration* of the landscape of contemporary soteriology.

1.4.2   A broader inquiry

The first type of inquiry entails a *broader* inquiry into three possible discourses on salvation, which represents three collections of contemporary soteriologies that signal different portrayals of human flourishing. Herein, the notion of *discourse* becomes important. For Paul Ricoeur, "discourse is about something other than itself" and is "brought to clarity by the notion of the text" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:11).[41] Discourse is public and performative, in that "it is intersubjective and therefore open to interpretation" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:11). Discourse, in other words, "refers to a world which it claims to describe, to express, or to represent" for "[i]t is in discourse that the symbolic function of language is actualized" (Ricoeur, 1979:75). In short, discourse projects, describes, constructs, and explores 'a world of meaning'[42] (Ricoeur, 1979:75 – 79).[43] As such, discourse is "a project, that is, the outline of a new being-in-the-world" (Ricoeur, 1979:79) which is addressed to "[a]n unknown, invisible reader" (Ricoeur, 1979:80).

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[41] There are, however, particular conditions to be met in the interpretation of texts (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:11 – 12), namely: (1) "[t]he text must be treated as a whole; only then can the parts make sense" (even if this means that "one must begin by guessing or approximating what that whole might be"); and (2) "[t]he text is prulivocal, open to several readings and to several constructions", and must therefore be understood as such; and (3) the text is a human project, which is to say that "[t]o understand a text is to follow its movements from sense to reference, from what it says to what it talks about." Texts have 'dynamic meaning' and therefore "the power of disclosing a world" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979:12).

[42] I opt for this description because it satisfies the threefold criteria for meaning that Charles Taylor (1979:32 – 33) lays out. Firstly, meaning is "for a subject but it is not only for *a* subject, and cannot be understood in a vacuum, for it is embedded in "a subject, a specific subject, a group of subjects, or perhaps what its meaning is for the human subject as such" (1979:32). Secondly meaning "is something" in that there is a distinction between "a given element – situation, action, or whatever – and its meaning" (1979:32 – 33). Thirdly, and most importantly in the use of 'world of meaning', "things only have meaning in a field, that is, in relation to the meanings of other things" (1979:33). "This means," argues Taylor (1979:33), "that there is no such thing as a single, unrelated meaningful element; and it means that changes in the other meanings in the field can involve changes in the given element. Meanings cannot be identified except in relation to others... The relations between meanings in this sense are like those between concepts in a semantic field." In short, three characteristics of meaning are in view here (Taylor, 1979:25): (1) "it must have sense or coherence"; (2) "this must be distinguishable from its expression"; and (3) "this sense must be for a subject."

[43] Moreover (Ricoeur, 1979:78; my emphasis – NM), "[w]ith *written* discourse, the author's intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide... [which does not mean] that we can conceive of a text without an author... [but rather that] the tie between the speaker and the discourse is not abolished, but distended and complicated." In other words, "the text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author" for "[w]hat the text says not matters more than what the author meant to say, and every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has borken its moorings to the psychology of its author" (Ricoeur, 1979:78). In short, this means that the texts of the nine theologians are distended into three soteriological discourses that may or may not be the horizon of meaning that the author originally had in mind, but which nonetheless contributes to shaping the meaning of human flourishing.

It is with this understanding of 'discourse' that three discourses are outlined in this study, namely (1) salvation as reconciliation, (2) salvation as liberation, and (3) salvation as transformation. However, the relationship between the various discourses is not fixed or static, but dynamic and restless. There is, therefore, nothing *normative* to the particular order in which the discourses are presented – although the order of presentation is rhetorically of significance. The notion of the 'theological triad', as developed by David Kelsey and Russel Botman, will be employed in the last chapter to explain the rhetorical significance of the specific order of such discourses. Herein the interchangeability of these discourses will be explored, and the rationale for the specific order of discourses – as it is set out in this study – explained. Yet this first type of inquiry, namely a broader inquiry in various discourses, does not stand alone but necessitates a second type of inquiry, namely a detailed inquiry.

1.4.3   A detailed inquiry

The second type of inquiry entails a *detailed* inquiry into the rhetorical patterns and subtleties of theological portrayals of human flourishing by nine individual contemporary theologians. A close reading and interpretation of nine theologians' work is presented in chapters 2, 3, and 4, which is guided by a set of sub-questions with the twofold aim of (1) providing *focus* amidst the complexities and richness of possible ways of exploring this question, and (2) enabling *comparison* in doing systematically unsystematic theology. The choice for 'theologians', instead of 'theology' or 'theologies', is deliberate, for in it is contained the assumption of a particular context or situatedness or rhetorical embeddedness that has shaped a specific soteriology in distinct ways. The choice, in short, is *for* particularity and *against* abstractness. However, in and of itself this research question may be particular but not concretely specific. For this reason – namely, in order to provide focus and enable comparison – a collection of five sub-questions are addressed to each of the theologians that were studied, namely:

1. How could the particular theologian's theology be described?
2. Which descriptions of the nature and function of Christian doctrine could be identified within such a theology?

3. Which methodological strategies does this theologian employ in order to interpret Christian doctrine?[44]

4. How does the particular theologian portray salvation?[45]

5. How could human flourishing be imagined from within the particular theologian's soteriology?

This collection of five sub-questions guides a detailed inquiry into the research question. Together, a broader inquiry into contemporary discourses and a detailed inquiry into individual theologians *within* these various discourses may be described as an exercise in systematic unsystematic theology.

1.4.4   Systematic unsystematic theology

A systematic theological exploration which consists of a combination of two types of inquiry, namely a broader inquiry (into three discourses) and therefore a detailed inquiry (into various theologians that are illustrative of the three discourses), is not *only* systematic, but also open and dynamic – and therefore *unsystematic*. The approach that this study follows in its twofold inquiry regarding human flourishing is therefore best described as 'systematic unsystematic theology', which was developed by the Yale theologian David Kelsey. David Kelsey, like Ellen Charry (2010:ix – x), prefers to combine aspects of what he calls two types of theology – systematic theology[46] and pastoral theology[47] – in his book on redemption (2005:87).

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[44] A "descriptive study of some of the methods some theologians employ in doing theology" (Kelsey, 1975:4) is in view here – albeit not necessarily as fully developed methodologies in and of their own accord, but instead as methodological moves or shifts or strategies. Another form of this question could read (in following the WCC's *Together towards Life* document) "what can we imagine salvation to be?" (Keum, 2013:11).

[45] Although this question is embedded in Christian doctrine (content) and methodological strategies to interpret doctrine (method), salvation is not described or analysed as a neatly delineated and coherent doctrine on its own, but rather as a theological *locus*. Indeed, as David Ford writes, salvation within Christian doctrine is a pervasive topic (1991:1) in that "[s]alvation is not really one doctrine at all in most works of Christian theology… [but]… is distributed through treatments of God, creation, human being, sin, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, atonement, justification, sanctification, vocation, church, ethics and politics, worship, sacraments, spirituality, ministry and eschatology: in fact, through all topics."

[46] Systematic theology, which Kelsey describes as theology that "seeks to throw light on the meaning and truth of beliefs that are inseparable from the practices that make up the life of communities and persons of Christian faith" (2004:87), involves a logical, formal progression of thoughts on the complex ideas about God and all realities that are not God (2004:87).

[47] Pastoral theology, which Kelsey describes as theology that "seeks to throw light on the theological content, rationale, and criteria of truly faithful Christian ministry" (2004:87), involves "critical reflection on the entire range of practices that make up both the common life of communities of Christian faith and the lives of individual persons of faith" (2004:87).

Kelsey opts for a combination of elements of these two types of theology in what he calls "systematic unsystematic theology" (2004:92), which makes use of systematic arguments and analyses without resorting to formulating systematically worked out Christian doctrines. Indeed (Green, 1989:148; original emphasis),

[t]he hermeneutical function of Christian theology implies that its proper form is not "systematic" in the philosophical or foundational sense; that is, theological propositions are not deduced from axioms or derived from first principles. Rather, theology as an interpretive discipline ought to be "local" or topical, the elaboration of specific *loci,* whose relationships to one another are ad hoc rather than a priori, and whose character and content are relative to the questions being asked at a particular time and in a particular situation… Christian theology is systematic in the way that the grammar of natural language is systematic rather than in the sense assumed by foundational philosophies.

An approach which combines a broader inquiry and a detailed inquiry does, however, raise the question as to the relationship between the three discourses and nine individual theologians, or between a broader inquiry and a detailed inquiry. A choice was made for three theologians per discourse – or nine theologians in all – as a middle ground between presenting either a detailed inquiry *or* a broad inquiry. In other words, in the choice between the study of an indefinite number of theologians and the study of overarching trends and currents, a convergence of both a detailed *and* a broader inquiry is sought. The choice for the exact number of theologians is, however, somewhat arbitrary – although a deliberate choice was made to include neither one theologian per discourse (as a single figurehead of a particular discourse, which endangers the distinctiveness of both detailed inquiry *and* broader inquiry by collapsing these two modes of inquiry into a single mode of inquiry), nor two theologians per discourse (as two opposing representatives of a particular discourse, which endangers the cohesiveness or coherence of holding a detailed inquiry and a broader inquiry together), but three theologians per discourse as a means of avoiding both the dangers of collapse and incoherence. Possibly an even greater number of theologians could have been discussed within each discourse – and also not necessarily the same number of theologians per discourse. However, within this study I have chosen to study no more than three theologians per discourse, not only in order to avoid the dangers of collapse and incoherence, but also to avoid the danger of needless repetition.

The issue of the rationale for the choice of theologians and the relationship between individual theologians within these three discourses may also raised. Herein the choice is,

again, somewhat arbitrary. I have sought out classic[48] examples of theologians who represent contemporary theologies, contemporary theology)[49] and Friedrich Schleiermacher (who would signify the *completion* of the transition to contemporary theology).[50] A variety of mothers and fathers of various theologies (such Gustavo Gutiérrez, Mercy Oduyoye, and Ellen Charry – as well as John Calvin and Friedrich Schleiermacher) follows, but also includes other classic figures such as Serene Jones and Willie Jonker. Furthermore the choice was made to include one South African theologian within each of the three discourses – namely, Willie Jonker, Russel Botman, and Denise Ackermann respectively – and to place these South African theologians at the end of each discourse.[51] The reason for this is the

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[48] 'Classic' is neither a neutral nor an accidental descriptor within this study, and is employed throughout as referring to both the demand for "constant interpretation" as well as the recognition of "a certain kind of timelessness – namely the timeliness of a classic expression radically rooted in its own historical time and calling to my own historicity" (Tracy, 1981:102). This means that "the classic text is not in some timeless moment which needs mere repetition. Rather its kind of timelessness as permanent timeliness is the only one proper to any expresison of the finite, temporal, historical beings we are" (Tracy, 1981:102). This means that such a text's "real disclosure is its claim to attention on the ground that an event of understanding proper to finite human beings has here found expression. The classic text's fate is that only its constant reinterpretation by later finite, historical, temporal beings who will risk asking its questions and listening, critically and tactfully, to its responses can actualize the event of understanding beyond its present fixation in a text" (Tracy, 1981:102). In short, "[e]very classic lives as a classic only if it finds readers willing to be provoked by its claim to attention" (Tracy, 1981:102). Therefore "later interpreters [such as myself] will come with their own questions, their own history – including the history of the effects of those very classic texts, events, images, persons, symbols. Their new questions will open anew the subject matter of the text by venturing to interpret its questions and responses. In that manner only will they understand it" (Tracy, 1981:102). This is so because "all interpretation of classical texts heightens my consciousness of my own finitude, my own radically historical reality" (Tracy, 1981:102 – 103). Therefore, concludes David Tracy (1981:103), "I can never repeat the classics to understand them. I must interpret them."

[49] Karl Barth, in his book on John Calvin's theology, argues that Reformation theology would introduce a decisive turning point in theological thinking (1995:13 – 68) – even to the point of describing this turning point as a new age and a new world, a new spirit and a new work (1995:21). Yet the distinction between so-called Medieval theology and Reformation theology could not clearly be separated or, for that matter, contrasted (1995:25). Therefore he describes "[t]he Reformation was the expression of a crisis that secretly ran through all the Middle Ages" (Barth, 1995:50). The reformers, inluding Calvin, were not only engaged in this crisis – a crisis brought about by Medieval theology's 'theology of glory' (cf. Barth, 1995:25 – 39) – but were, argues Barth, aware of standing at a turning point in theological thinking (1995:20).

[50] David Ford, on the one hand, describes modern theology as "theology since the end of World War I (1914 – 1918)" (2008c:viii). He notes that "Christian theology since 1918" –in other words, contemporary theology or modern theology – "has been immensely varied" in its variety of approaches, conclusions, and differences to Christianity, modernity, and theology (2008b:1). For him, contemporary theology has to do with a set of interrelated questions (2008b:2): "What is the significance of modernity for the content and method of theology? What is the importance of Christianity for a proper appreciation and response to modernity? And might it be that a religion with the discontinuity of the crucifixion at its heart enables a creative way of coping with the novelty and disruption of modernity?" Karl Barth, on the other hand, reaches farther back into the history of theology and traces modern (Protestant) theology from "the time of Schleiermacher onwards" (1972:15). His rationale for this lies in the observation that "[t]he time of Schleiermacher and his followers is all too pressingly related to our own time; their problems, questions, and answers reach all too openly into our own" (1972:18).

[51] It should be noted that a number of theologians have done in-depth work on (South) African soteriological discourses. Two examples of such studies is the excellent doctoral dissertation by Gerrit Brand, entitled *Speaking of a Fabulous Ghost* (2002) and Ronald Nicolson's work on *Jesus and Salvation in South Africa* (which is the subtitle of his book *A Black Future?*; 1990). I enter into conversation with these and others, throughout this

concern to embed each of the discourses within the South African context of this study – for not only do each of these South African theologians embody different theological traditions in South Africa, they also represent different theological legacies of Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology. All three of these theologians spent the final years of their teaching careers here, and shaped this faculty in significant ways. In this way, this study is not only a study of significant non-South African (and particularly American and European) theologians, but also an attempt to embed these various discourses within the context in which this study originates.

Apart from the choice to place each South African theologian at the end of each discourse – as a way of 'opening' the discourse into the South African context of this study – the order in which the remaining two theologians per discourse are presented is according to historical progression. Therefore Calvin precedes Schleiermacher (in the first discourse), Gutiérrez precedes Oduyoye (in the second discourse), and Jones precedes Charry (in the third discourse). There may also be a sense in which the latter (such as Schleiermacher and Oduyoye) are in some ways dependent for the development of their theological arguments on the former (such as Calvin for Schleiermacher, or Gutiérrez for Oduyoye), but this does not mean that *no* other order could have been used, nor that *no* other division of theologians into discourses could make sense. For instance, Serene Jones might have been an equally good addition to the first discourse, and Mercy Oduyoye an equally interesting contributor to the third discourse, and Denise Ackermann an equally important figure within the second discourse. Within an *interpretive* and *imaginative* account of the rhetoric of human flourishing in the landscape of contemporary soteriology, such (and other) alternative possibilities remain open and dynamic.

1.5 Imagination, interpretation, and inquiry

1.5.1 Why imagination?

Systematic unsystematic theology provides a broader description of this study's approach, wherein imagination, interpretation, and inquiry play important roles. This study's title has in

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study, but decided against including theologians other than Willie Jonker, Russel Botman, and Denise Ackermann into the group of nine theologians that form the focus of this study.

mind David H. Kelsey's book by a similar title, *Imagining Redemption* (2005),[52] especially with the intention of exploring a set of three contemporary soteriological discourses, which I initially considered placing within the theological framework that he provides in his book, *Eccentric Existence* (2009), which was the main focus of my Masters research (cf. Marais, 2011).

Yet why this choice for imagination? While imagination plays an important role in David Kelsey's work, it is the important focus on *rhetoric* in this study that necessitates a specific description of how doctrinal 'patterns' or the 'grammar' of faith function within a theological landscape, such as soteriology. In short, "because *religion* is imaginative… and *theology* is hermeneutical… [i]ts job is to *interpret* the metaphorical language of religious life and faith" (Green, 1989:134; original emphasis). Indeed, theology "[performs] the task of critical interpretation" (Green, 1989:134) – and "[o]ne of the chief advantages of defining the theological task in relation to the problematics of imagination is its fruitfulness for reconceiving a broad range of specific theological issues, both systematic and practical" (Green, 1989:148 – 149). In short, "*particular Christian doctrines can be reformulated systematically in terms of imagination*" (Green, 1989:149; my emphasis – NM). This pertains also to the doctrine of salvation, for "[t]o save sinners, God seizes them by the imagination" (Green, 1989:149). Imagination can therefore form, perform, inform, reform, transform contemporary soteriologies – and therein play an important role in imagining human flourishing.

How should imagination be understood, however? David Kelsey, Garret Green, and John De Gruchy provide interesting and important theological expositions of what 'imagination' means, which shapes this study's understanding of imagination. For instance, David Kelsey – by employing the verb 'imagining' – means to describe the attempt "to grasp the whole of something in its singular and concrete particularity rather than by abstracting various aspects of it, concept by concept"; indeed, "[w]hile the verb *imagine* can mean 'to make up' or invent, it can also mean 'to grasp a concrete particular as some kind of whole'" (2005:43 – 44;

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[52] David Kelsey, again, is indebted to Garret Green (*Imagining God,* 1989) for this title of his book (Kelsey, 2005:98). By chance the title of this study is the same as from one of the projects within Emory University's bigger *Pursuit of Happiness* project, namely that of Old Testament scholar Carol A. Newsom's project "Imagining Human Flourishing? Good and Evil in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity". Cf. http://cslr.law.emory.edu/research/the-pursuit-of-happiness/imagining-human-flourishing-good-and-evil-in-ancient-judaism-and-early-christianity/.

original italics). Kelsey opts for this second sense of 'imagination' and the act of 'imagining'. For Kelsey, 'imagining' is not employed to formulate that which is 'imaginary': "fantastical, unreal, or false" (the first sense) (2005:97).

Rather, 'imagining' points to that which is 'imaginative': "insightful, advancing knowledge of the truth, or deepening understanding of reality" (the second sense) (2005:97). It is unnecessary and misleading, he argues (Kelsey, 2005:98), to oppose reason and imagination, scientific inquiry and theology. Following Green (1998:65 – 66), Kelsey shows that there are three levels of philosophical inquiry into 'imagination': namely, as it relates to (1) experience, (2) perception and (3) interpretation (2005:98). Imagination is a human ability, argues Kelsey (2005:98), and, as such, involves "the capacity to recognize the pattern in a complex whole that makes it the whole it is, and the capacity to use that pattern in several ways."

1.5.2   Patterns of imagination

In short, imagination involves patterns; and because imagination involves patterns (which is more abstract than pictures – which reproduce a complex whole – or images[53] – which exemplify a complex whole), imagination is paradigmatic: "Imagination is the means by which we are able to represent anything not directly accessible, including *both* the world of the imaginary *and* recalcitrant aspects of the real world; it is the medium of fiction as well as fact" (Kelsey, 2005:101; quoting Green, 1998:66). Paradigmatic imagination, in short, entails the heuristic use of patterns to make sense of a complex whole. For Kelsey, the exercise of paradigmatic imagination is inherent in the theological practices of Christian faith communities and individual believers, which include practices of theological reflection (2005:101).

Imagination indeed has do to with human stories shaped both by common experiences ("of grieving and wonder, suffering and love, struggling and hope, of beauty, truth and goodness, as well as evil") *and* own personal lived experiences ("of reality, the way in which we think and act, our awareness of the world around us"), writes John de Gruchy (2013:25 – 26).

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[53] Images play an important role in imagination, as the work by Jean-Paul Satre makes clear (entitled *The Imaginary* 2004)) – and is also a significant dynamic in systematic theology, as the theologians Paul Fiddes (in a paper entitled "Concept, Image and Story in Systematic Theology" (2009)) and Robert Vosloo (in a paper with the subtitle "Oor die rol van beelde en verbeelding in die Christelike morele lewe" (regarding the role of images and imagination in the Christian moral life) (2004)) have pointed out.

Imagination does not only have to do with a vision of and for the future, however, but also with living fully and meaningfully in the present and remembering the past in appropriate ways (De Gruchy, 2013:26). There is particularly fascinating relationship between the act of imagining and the act of remembering, for De Gruchy, in that remembering requires the power of imagination: "our memories are retrieved through our imagination" (2013:26 – 27). Stated somewhat differently, "without imagination we are unable to process memories whether in planning for the future, reflecting on the state of the nation, expressing love, doing theology and scientific research, or myth making" (De Gruchy, 2013:27). At the same time our imaginations, as "the distinctively human capacity to envision multiple alternative realities, scenarios, and outcomes" (Hogue, 2003:44 in De Gruchy, 2013:27 – 28), is simultaneously embedded in (the 'tyranny' or 'constraints' of the) present, past and future. Imagination is 'essential' in being human as well as journeying into mystery, argues De Gruchy (2013:28):

> Without imagination we would not be able to avoid danger, think about life, deal with depression, or consider the mystery of life and death. Without imagination we would not be able to see the world through the eyes of those who are suffering and therefore find ways to help them. Without imagination faith itself would be impossible, for in believing we internally constitute another world 'that expands our own being in the world'. Imagination is, in sum, the capacity to organize memories of past and recent life experience into patterns of contemporary symbolic significance. As such it is an essential ingredient to our being human, the key to creative art, scientific endeavor and religious insight, and essential for the journey into mystery.

Yet that does not mean that "everything we imagine is possible, good or true" (De Gruchy, 2013:27). Indeed, how we imagine (or use our imagination) is of great importance for De Gruchy (2013:28). Imagination is deeply connected to and shaped by human reasoning and bodily experience (De Gruchy, 2013:27), as well as tradition and culture (De Gruchy, 2013:28). Important as these are, admits De Gruchy, imagination must risk transgressing boundaries and should refuse to be boxed in by limitations and conventions, if it is to lead to genuine insight (2013:28). It is therefore the task of theology,[54] writes De Gruchy (2013:29), to transform tradition through insightful theological imagination. Imagination gives birth to words and deeds that speak to human realities and "cry for *the flourishing of life*" (De Gruchy, 2013:29; my emphasis – NM). Such an imagination plays an emancipatory role, in that it "enables us to retrieve memory in order to re-describe and give fresh and meaningful form to

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[54] See also Kathryn Tanner's *Theories of Culture* in this regard (1997), and in particular her chapter on "the nature and tasks of theology" therein (1997:61 – 92). Herein she is critical of a distinction "between second- and first-order theology" because such a distinction is too sharp – it assumes that these two components operate "on substantially different planes or levels" (1997:72).

human experiences of reality, to find the words and images necessary to express meaning that derives from seeing things differently" (De Gruchy, 2013:28). Such an imagination – and imagination that has to do with the flourishing of life – calls for responses to reality that are 'creative', 'open', 'healing' and 'socially transformative'. Insightful imagination, in short, has to do with the experience of being led into mystery (De Gruchy, 2013:28).

1.5.3   Forms of imagination

John de Gruchy distinguishes between different *forms* of such imagination (2013:30), however, which expresses something of the rich and diverse possibilities for employing the verb 'imagining' in this study. *Historical imagination* has to do with the relationship between past and present, for De Gruchy (2013:30), or with the way in which the past is reconstructed in relation to the present by way of reading texts (including biblical texts) in different ways and from different perspectives. *Theological imagination* has to do with images of God, "in relation to ourselves and the world in dialogue with the biblical texts, the history of tradition, and the contemporary context" (De Gruchy, 2013:30). *Prophetic imagination* has to do with power, or challenging hegemonic (and unjust) power structures and systems by generating, evoking and articulating alternative images of reality (De Gruchy, 2013:30). *Poetic imagination* has to do with the vision of flourishing, both in expressing personal experience and in working towards the well-being of society (De Gruchy, 2013:30). Poetry or poetic imagination "is an expression of faith struggling with experience before reason tries to analyse it" and therefore involves a theological exploration of mystery (De Gruchy, 30 – 31). Imagination is herein of 'heuristic value' for theology (Green, 1989:66) in that "the logic of imagination" provides patterns for "thinking, knowing, and interpreting experience" (1989:66).

Interpretive imagining, however, is 'the highest level' or 'most complex form' of the act of imagining, argues Garret Green (1989:66, 159; footnote 7), and therefore "directly pertinent to theology" (1989:66). Interpretive imagination may be especially suited to a systematic theological exploration, and "shows theological promise" in that it is able to present "a subject matter that is not available to direct observation [but that] is mediated by selective and integrating images" (Green, 1989:66). These images are "drawn from our experience of reality that *is* immediately accessible… [in] what can be directly seen, heard, handled, felt"

(1989:66). Interpretive imagining therefore includes "[t]he integrative function of imagination in apprehending patterns of meaning externally [which] allows an integral response on the part of the imagining subject" (Green, 1989:151).

Imagination, and the act of imagining, is a core element of dealing rhetorically with an exploration of soteriology. Garret Green warns (1989:98), however, of "[t]he challenge facing the contemporary interpreter of [doctrines]" entails "[bridging] the interpretive gap between biblical and contemporary idiom, both linguistic and philosophical." Indeed, David Kelsey notes that "at the root of a theological position there is an imaginative act in which a theologian tries to catch up in a single metaphorical judgment the full complexity of God's presence" (1975:163). Yet Green also points to the power of interpretation, in that "the most powerful way to change the world is precisely by interpreting it" (1989:152). This study therefore makes use of a close reading of selected theological literature – as part of "the hermeneutical task" of an interpretive imagination (Green, 1989:126) – which pertain the soteriologies of nine classic theologians who are representative of three contemporary soteriological discourses. The research methodology of the proposed study will entail doing theological cartographical work, which makes a systematic theological exploration of the landscape of contemporary theology possible.

1.6   The art of theological cartography

1.6.1   Mapping and remapping

The research *methodology* which this study employs is that of theological cartography, or mapping and remapping. Feminist theologian Serene Jones develops theological cartography as a theological methodology in her *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* (2000; see Marais 2015:80 – 82).[55] Here she "undertake[s] the task of 'mapping'" (2000:viii) by 'tracing the terrain' or 'sketching maps' of "two worlds of reflection", namely feminist theory and Christian theology (2000:viii – ix). Her intention in doing this is "to lay out central concepts

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[55] However, she is by no means the *only* person to employ cartographical work as a hermeneutical method. James Smith, in his reading of Charles Taylor (2014), also makes use of the metaphor of mapping and remapping throughout his book (see for instance his sections entitled "mapping this present age" (2014:1 – 3) and "remapping the tensions; or, dilemmas for everyone" (2014:05 – 111). However, he does introduce new notions into the metaphor, such as that of a 'road atlas' (2014:2 – 3).

that structure these two worlds and to draw lines that show the interconnections between them" (2000:viii).

Even more specifically, she endeavours to place or lay feminist theory over the landscape of Christian doctrine – not with the aim of developing a new landscape of faith (2000:19), but to identify travelling markers and directions that may point to new ways and new landmarks within an existing or established landscape of faith (2000:19). These landmarks or beacons orientate believers and enable believers to navigate the complexities of life, argues Jones (2002:74). In this way she plays the role of cartographer (2000:19), and thereby hopes to explore contemporary theological landscapes that may enable her readers to identify both seen and unseen dimensions of such a landscape, and thereby develop new ways to travel through established terrain (2000:19). In her words, "maps help us figure out the 'lay of the land' in areas where we might otherwise be lost" by "[giving] us directional guides that allow us to negotiate unfamiliar terrains" (2000:viii). The metaphor of cartography entails the dynamic interchange between "mapping and remapping" (Jones 2000:19) – of interpretation and reinterpretation – wherein new perspectives, new orientations points, and new routes may continually emerge.

However, cartographical work also has its limitations. An important limitation is "the one-dimensional lines of cartographic art" which may struggle to encompass and reflect the fullness and complexity of the landscapes that it presents, and render the rich texture of such worlds in static and distancing terms (2000:viii). Another limitation may lie in the ways in which "maps can hide or obfuscate dimensions of the worlds they try to order" (2000:viii). Moreover, in and of itself such cartographical work may be exciting but confusing or even pointless, if it does not opt for distinct 'markers' or 'coordinates' which may guide ventures into or explorations of the landscape of salvation.

1.6.2   Three approaches, three coordinates

A collection of three approaches – namely (1) an historical-descriptive approach, (2), a conceptual-critical approach (3) and a systematic-comparative approach is employed in the exploration and interpretation of the landscape of contemporary soteriology, and spans the detailed and broader inquiries outlined above. This threefold collection of approaches

functions as three distinct but interrelated theological 'coordinates' that guides exploration of the 'world of meaning' of human flourishing *within* the landscape of contemporary soteriology.

The historical-descriptive approach is a first theological coordinate, which attends to the corpus, scope, and context of a particular theologian's soteriology. Therefore each of the nine soteriologies are situated within a particular theological world or trajectory, in order to trace – often derivatively – the soteriological rhetoric that comes to shape a particular notion of what it means to flourish. This approach is primarily descriptive, and therefore presents each theologian by way of detailed quotes and descriptions of their theologies, the nature and function of Christian doctrine in their work, methodological strategies employed, their particular soteriology, as well as a description of human flourishing – which, in each instance, is the culmination of the sections that precede it. The context and the broader corpus within which a specific theologian and particular soteriological discourse is situated is the focus of this approach. However, this approach does not primarily account for the life and experiences of a particular theologian (although some experiences, that are crucial to understanding a central concept or argument, have been included by way of footnotes). Nor does this approach include a nuanced and carefully delineated description of the historical development of each theologian's theological work and thought – for example, no differentiation between the earlier and later Schleiermacher is made, although such a concern for the historical development of thought is undoubtedly important. In order to explore the 'worlds' of human flourishing and contemporary soteriology, the corpus of a particular theologian is approached as a coherent whole, instead of as a collection of different 'stages' or 'moments'. The aim of the historical-descriptive approach is the portrayal of the theological 'patterns' or 'grammar' of contemporary soteriologies, which emerges individually and collectively within the three discourses.[56]

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[56] The *presentation* not only of individual theologians, but also of the three theologians per discourse merit a side remark here. While it is true that it may appear as if there is little convergence or conversation between the three theologians in a particular discourse, with separate sections that clearly delineate one theologian from the remaining two figures, the point here is not presenting each discourse as a coherent whole. Rather, I have opted for three distinct descriptions of theologians within a discourse exactly because each of these theologians *typify* the particular discourse in distinct – or a set of comparable and incomparable – ways. As such, the transitions between these descriptions may be somewhat (rhetorically) abrupt. In the choice *against* a linear, historical overview and *for* an exploration of it is the patterns, grammar, or logics of each discourse that I am primarily interested in here.

The conceptual-critical approach is a second theological coordinate, which pays particular attention to the rhetoric employed by a particular theologian. This approach includes an analysis of core concepts or terms or notions, both in describing important elements of these theologians' distinct thought and rhetoric *and* in identifying a primary concept, among many others, that emerge as an indication of how human flourishing could be understood or described or portrayed within the 'world of meaning' of each of these theologians and each of the three discourses. However, not only individual concepts, but also the proximity of related concepts and contrasting concepts is outlined in order to make sense of the connections and interchanges in such theological rhetoric. However, this does not mean that this approach merely intends on identifying a series of 'synonyms' or 'analogues' for human flourishing, that is readily interchangeable and substitutable however the need arises. Moreover, this approach also does not reduce the exploration that this study embarks on to a comparison of words, which treats each theological corpus merely as a set of texts (not necessarily *theological* texts) and which therefore need not attend to either the theological context of a theologian, nor their understanding of doctrine, nor their methodological strategies, nor their interpretation of salvation. Only the last section and last question – regarding human flourishing – is then asked for. The aim of the conceptual-critical approach is the focus on theological rhetoric as it is embedded in a particular and distinct theological fibre or texturedness, wherein central concepts emerge or come forward by way of a close reading of the various theological texts of a particular theologian.

The systematic-comparative approach is a third theological coordinate, which approaches each of the nine theological corpuses with a set of questions that directs both a systematic interpretation *and* a comparative evaluation of and between the various theologians' understandings of salvation. Moreover, this approach has in mind the collections of three theologians in a particular discourse, wherein both systematic and comparative portrayals contribute to the coherent representation of a particular discourse. Given this approach, a set of five questions are addressed to each theologian, and structures each contribution. However, this does not mean that a fully coherent, uncontested, and closed systematic account of each discourse and each theologian is given. Also, the repetitiveness of the structuring of each contribution may appear to be a 'false' or 'superficial' oversystematization of a particular theologian's work and thought that does not respect the inner tensions and contradictions and particularities of such a corpus, in that it may seem as if the rich complexities of these

theologies are 'reduced' to one, all-encompassing structure or pattern. These finer nuances and depths are undoubtedly important for a nuanced understanding of a particular theologian, and while it is true that any kind of superficial and superimposed structure ought not be imposed on such a rich collection of soteriologies, the aim of the systematic-comparative approach is enabling inductive work – so that the contours and landmarks of a particular 'discourse' may emerge from the comparison of sections. Therefore, what this *does* mean is that such an approach presents the opportunity to consider the formality of the relationship between theology, soteriology, and human flourishing in a systematic manner which may enable a comparison of discourses.

Together, these three approaches – description, analysis, and comparison – form a collection of three theological coordinates that guide exploration of what human flourishing means within the landscape of soteriology. There is no particular order in which they are held together, for as coordinates, they only maintain their meaning when they are 'read' or 'held' together. Therefore there is no separation, as well as no subordination, of and between these three approaches. Their coherence lies in functioning together, for together they guide the theological cartographical work undertaken in this study. The employment of these three approaches may also be described as an exercise in *secondary theology*,[57] which David Kelsey describes as "inherently and analytically descriptive, critical and revisionary practice" (2009:21). As such, this mode of doing theology describes, analises, and compares the soteriological logic[58] of each theologian's theological thought as well as each soteriological discourse.

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[57] Secondary theology "re-evaluates and re-interprets the claims and presuppositions of primary theology" (Marais, 2011:34; cf. Kelsey 2009:132 – 133). Elsewhere (2009:34; footnote 28) I describe the difference, for Kelsey, between secondary theology and primary theology – "Kelsey describes his book Imagining Redemption (2005) as an exercise in 'primary theology' (Kelsey, 2011:86). The following explanation of the difference of 'primary theology' and 'secondary theology in his own work is helpful in highlighting the different dynamics at work in the two approaches: 'I wrote [*Imagining Redemption*] while I was working on Part II of [*Eccentric Existence*] (the anthropological implications of God"s relating to draw all that is not God to eschatological consummation). Where reflection on the Christianly appropriate way to speak pastorally about a family suffering at the terrible illness of a child has usually been guided by reflection on the theological theme of the reconciling efficacy of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Part III of EE), *Imagining Redemption* explores what reflection on the eschatological significance of the resurrection of the crucified Christ might lead one to say to that family about its experience.'" For a similar argument by Kathryn Tanner, see her 'brief systematic theology' (entitled *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity* (2001); and for a similar argument by Michael Welker, see his contribution in the festschrift for Jürgen Moltmann, entitled *God's Life in Trinity* (Welker & Volf, 2006). See also Dirkie Smit's article entitled "In diens van die tale Kanaäns?" (2009b:393).

[58] The notion of 'logic' is used by David Kelsey to indicate "the formal relation among beliefs" as it emerges from secondary theology (2009:82). In this study 'logic' will refer the rhetorical patterns or grammar that structure and shape various soteriologies – and, derivatively, the various conceptual indications of human flourishing – in distinct and particular ways.

1.7   Conclusion

The revival in happiness studies has provided the catalyst for a renewed focus on happiness across a variety of academic disciplines. Theologians have and are also responding to the modern pursuit of happiness, yet struggle to find *theological language* for describing happiness. On the one hand, contemporary theologians are saying yes to happiness (in the words of Christiane Bindseil's doctoral dissertation, entitled *Ja zum Glück* (2011)). On the other hand, contemporary theologians are struggling to find theological language to speak about happiness in ways that do not succumb to the lures and promises of the various gospels of prosperity – whether religious or secular – *or* to a superficial rendering of happiness that is incompatible with suffering and vulnerability. Therefore, many theologians have made a conscious *rhetorical* shift from speaking about happiness to employing the language of flourishing. Even though the rhetoric of human flourishing is not exclusive to theologians, this way of speaking about the good life, the full life, meaningful lives of human beings, appears to be a move *away* from a superficial justification for or participation in the pursuit of happiness. Instead, the rhetoric of human flourishing represent a move *toward* critical engagement with own theological resources in the midst of secular modernity.

Theologians – such as Rebecca Todd Peters, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Miroslav Volf, David Kelsey, Grace Jantzen, Ellen Charry, but also many others – have, in the wake of positive psychology's shift from pathology driven therapy to strength based therapy, increasingly written about what it means for human beings to flourish. Indeed, a rich diversity of metaphors and images are employed in the 'imagining' of human flourishing. This focus on flourishing is not only an attempt to communicate the good news of the gospel coherently and contextually, but is arguably itself rooted in soteriology.

Yet is the link between flourishing and salvation necessarily self-evident? Marcel Sarot, for instance, argues that "a happy person does not necessarily flourish or experience salvation" (Sarot, 1996:8). Grace Jantzen goes even farther by setting up flourishing and salvation in oppositional terms (1996). She argues that whereas flourishing "is a strongly positive concept", salvation is a negative concept in that it "is a term which denotes rescue"

41

(1996:61).[59] Moreover, there are for her also different sources of *impetus* to these two concepts. Salvation, she argues (1996:62), "implies rescue by someone" who plays the role of saviour; flourishing, on the other hand, is 'luxuriantly self-sufficient' and requires no external impetus, but only "an inner impetus of natural energy and overflowing vigor" (1996:62). She admits (1996:62), however, that both salvation and flourishing are metaphors that "disclose new possibilities of thought" and that rely on a particular language or rhetoric. A theology of flourishing may have to be developed as a counterbalance to a theology of salvation, she argues (Jantzen, 1996:61); then again, the rhetoric of human flourishing may "reform the doctrine of salvation" (1996:61).

However, such arguments make clear that an anthropological turn within soteriology is evident – and not altogether unproblematic. Some, like the Roman Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, are suspicious of modernity's increased emphasis on human flourishing, with its accompanying lack of sense in which "human life aims beyond itself" (2011:172). Indeed, the 'exclusive humanism' with which human flourishing has come to be associated may make *any* theological attempt to engage seriously with the rhetoric of human flourishing suspicious, in that it may appear to *conflate* salvation with the pursuit of happiness or *confuse* salvation with physical and economic well-being (health and wealth).

In the light of Charles Taylor's accusation that theology sacrifices its transcendent core for a dangerous liaison with (exclusive) humanism when it employs the rhetoric of human flourishing, this study explores a variety of representatives of a variety of soteriological discourses in order to describe, analyse, and compare how contemporary theologians imagine human flourishing. The landscape of soteriology is therefore in view here, and the exploration of this landscape – by way of mapping and remapping, or theological cartography – invites a twofold inquiry, namely (1) a detailed inquiry into the soteriologies of nine theologians and

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[59] However, it should also be noted that Grace Jantzen does not take into account the possible negative aspects of the rhetoric of *human flourishing itself*: neither the consideration that human beings are anxious creatures (Kerkhof, 1992), nor the prevalence of what Alain de Botton calls 'status anxiety' (2004) – which has the "capacity to inspire sorrow" (2004:5) and work against human flourishing (2004:11). Daniel Haybron is even more sceptical of the so-called 'pursuit of happiness' – in a book entitled *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* 2008) – because, he argues, the ethical and political ideals that accompany this pursuit are rarely aligned with what is "at all plausible, achievable by human beings, reasonably applied to human beings, and otherwise compatible with a good life for a human being" (2008:19). In short, he argues that these 'ideals' do not "comport reasonably well with a correct picture of human nature and human flourishing" (2008:19). Herein an unqualified, over-optimistic "smiley-face psychology" (2008:27) abounds which has the *opposite effect* to its intended purpose – namely, that its unrealistic and unnuanced portrayal of human flourishing and human happiness is a major contributing factor to *un*happiness and *un*filfillment.

(2) a broader inquiry into three soteriological discourses, in which these various theologians partake. As a systematic (unsystematic) theological exploration, however, this journey into contemporary soteriology is by no means final, or normative, or exhaustive, or comprehensive, but an adventure within a landscape that is restless, moving, shifting, changing. Therefore any attempt to 'map' a theological landscape must always be provisional, incomplete, and in need of further 'remapping'; continually correcting and adjusting previous attempts at exploration, so that new ways and new landmarks and new routes into and within existing landscapes may be (re)discovered. In this exploration I too, like the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1989:17), have come to admit that

out of my answers there grew new questions, inquiries, conjectures, probabilities – until at length I had a country of my own, a soil of my own, an entire discrete, thriving, flourishing world, like a secret garden the existence of which no one expected.

Chapter 2

Salvation as Reconciliation

2.1   Introduction

The Reformation would signal the turn *away from* "the enchanted cosmos" and *toward* the "modern individual in the world" (Taylor, 2011:378). Indeed, this turn would give rise to "the growth and entrenchment of a new self-understanding of our social existence, one which gave an unprecedented primacy to the individual" (Taylor, 2011:378). Here, with the 'anthropological turn' and its "gradual redirection of interest from the transcendent God to human beings and their mundane affairs" (Volf, 2011:59), the modern focus on human flourishing effectively begins. Whereas *before* "the long movement of reform" (which would include the Reformation) the human drama unfolded in a social world that "was grounded in the sacred" and in "secular time" that was grounded "in higher time", *after* the turn to humanism all of this would be "dismantled and replaced by something quite different" (Taylor, 2011:376; 2007:61). This 'something quite different' would entail expressing "a profound dissatisfaction" with the equilibrium between the enchanted and disenchanted selves, between embedding human lives in God and centering human lives in the self-sufficient, self-sustaining individual self (Taylor, 2007:61; 2011:376).

Moreover, the story of the rise of what Charles Taylor calls 'exclusive humanism' is a *Christian* story, which began to emerge before the Reformation but which would gain impetus in the Protestant movement. Indeed, as Taylor points out "[s]omewhere along the line of the last centuries, the Christian faith was attacked from within Christendom and dethroned" (2011:171). In its place developed the notion of 'modern freedom', and the accompanying view that "human life is better off without transcendental vision altogether" (Taylor, 2011:172). "Modern humanism became exclusive by shedding the idea of human lives centered on God," notes Miroslav Volf (2011:59), and therein played a crucial role both in "the destruction of the old enchanted cosmos" and in "the creation of a viable alternative in exclusive humanism" (Taylor, 2007:63). The theological exploration of the landscape of salvation begins here – namely, at the story of the rise of modernity's exclusive humanism and the far reaching implications that this would have for contemporary theology's portrayals

of salvation. Understanding something of the (Christian) origins of modern humanism is indicative of a first contemporary discourse on salvation.

Herein John Calvin would play a pivotal role in signifying the *beginning* of the transition to contemporary theology and, indeed, the modern world itself. However, it is in Friedrich Schleiermacher that the *completion* of this transition to contemporary theology is found, and therefore both Calvin and Schleiermacher – in the distinct but decided ways in which they would shape and change the modern world – would give rise to contemporary theologies that would imagine human flourishing in different ways. There have been attempts – like that of Karl Barth in his *Theology of John Calvin* (1995) – to bring the theology of John Calvin into synthesis with the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher (according to George Bromiley) (Barth, 1995:ix). Yet each of these theologians would address a concretely particular context and propose an own set of theological methods in response to the demands of their time. Willie Jonker accompanies these two theologians as a classic exponent of Reformed theology in South Africa, as someone who has – similarly – shaped South African Reformed theology (and, indeed, post-apartheid South Africa) in deeply significant ways and in whose reflections a particular account of human flourishing may be found. Together, these three theologians present a first contemporary discourse on salvation, wherein salvation is portrayed as reconciliation.[60]

2.2   Piety? Salvation as union with Christ[61]
(John Calvin)

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[60] "Protestantism was born from the struggle for the doctrine of justification by faith", notes Dawn DeVries (2007:197), and therefore the metaphor of reconciliation – or "salvation pictured as a personal relationship [with God] restored through forgiveness and unconditional love" (2007:205) – has been a classic portrayal of salvation by Reformation theologians. Yet Paul Fiddes would describe the interpretation of salvation as reconcilitation or 'atonement' (which he uses interchangeably) as "the most distinctive feature of the Christian understanding of salvation" (and therefore as not being particularly limited to Protestantism) (2007:178). Still, Dawn DeVries maintains that there is a difference between the classical metaphors that are employed by Protestants and Catholics for salvation (and particularly the action of justification) (2007:204). Protestants primarily make use of forensic or legal images to portray salvation – "[t]he whole point of being saved is to be reoriented to God in a new kind of relationship" (2007:204) – whereas Catholics employ medical images to portray salvation "primarily in terms of a medicine that heals and transforms the person, making her fit for heavenly life" (2007:204). The interpretation of salvation as reconciliation therefore arises from "the old, classical Reformation-era debates" that "continue to be revisited by theologians in the literature today" (DeVries, 2007:204).

[61] A paper based on the material in this section was presented at the annual meeting of the Theological Society of South Africa in Potchefstroom, 18 – 20 June 2014, with the title: "Pious? A reappropriation of John Calvin's notion of salvation within theological thinking on human flourishing."

2.2.1   Introduction

John Calvin (1509 – 1564), "an enigmatic, brilliant and controversial figure" in Reformed theology (Conradie, 2012:203), has been described in a multitude of ways: as the "the great religious reformer of Geneva" (Jones, 1995:1), "the ideal churchman" (Jones, 1995:1), "a pastor for refugees" (Conradie, 2012:203), "man of faith" (Jones, 1995:1), "intellectual genius" (Jones, 1995:1), "ecclesiastical statesman" (Barth, 1995:x), "moral disciplinarian" (Jones, 1995:1), "revolutionary hero" (Jones, 1995:1), "controlled arbiter of doctrine" (Jones, 1995:1), and more recently as a "Christian humanist"[62] (De Gruchy, 2009a; cf. Compier, 1999:12).[63]

So too the French Catholic Calvin's legacy (also by way of Calvinism[64]) (Bouwsma, 1988:11) has been described in many ways, especially with regards to the Western world's transition to modernity – in which he has been variously credited as the "founder of capitalism" (Conradie, 2012:203), architect of a "concomitant capitalist morality" (or work ethic) (Jones, 1995:1), "the champion of socio-economic justice" (Conradie, 2012:203), the "revolutionary idealogue of democratic individualism" (Jones, 1995:1), "the intellectual father of the ecumenical

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[62] John De Gruchy emphasises the important shaping influence of the Renaissance on the Reformation (2009a:34 – 40), specifically *through* Calvin, for through him "humanism re-entered the Reformation, though in a chastened way and evangelical form" (De Gruchy, 2009a:40). Moreover, "Calvin's Christian humanism" would play an important role in his theological thought and reforming work (2009a:40 – 43, 100 – 102) These two – namely, Calvin as 'evangelical Reformer' and Calvin as 'Christian humanist' – cannot be divided, argues De Gruchy (2009a:28 – 34), just as "Calvin's role as the reformer of Geneva and as the theologian who wrote the *Institutes* cannot be separated" (2009a:100). John De Gruchy argues that by way of "the Renaissance humanists Calvin learnt the need to return to the sources of renewal; for him this meant both the classical authors and the Scriptures, though the latter were by far the most important. From the humanists he also learnt the importance of language and rhetoric in arriving at the trut hand communicating it to others in a persuasive manner... Calvin's Christian humanism... is evident not just in his scholarship and his approach to theology, but also in the substance of that theology itself" (De Gruchy, 2009a:41 – 42). See also André Biéler's *The Social Humanism of John Calvin* (1964).

[63] There may be many more descriptions that could be added here – for instance, Serene Jones remarks upon this striking variety of images that one encounters when considering the various portrayals of Calvin, and insists that the portrait of Calvin as artist has been notably, but mistakenly, absent (Jones, 1995:1). Some would even describe Calvin *not* as a "theologian by profession", but rather as "a deeply religious man who possessed a genius for orderly thinking and the impulse to write out the implications of his faith" (McNeill, 1960:li).

[64] Benjamin Warfield notes that 'Calvinism' is an ambiguous term that has had several meanings – ranging from 'the doctrinal system confessed by Reformed churches' to 'the entire body of conceptions (theological, ethical, philosophical, social, political) influenced by John Calvin that left a permanent mark on the thought, life-history, social order and political organisation of humankind' – but which has nevertheless left a twofold legacy: (1) "a specific religious attitude, out of which is unfolded.. a particular theology [and special church organization]"; and (2) "a social order, involving a given political arrangement" (1931:353 – 354). See the collection of essays on Calvin and Calvinism (as an 'elaboration of the theology of Calvin'), edited by Richard Gamble (1992).

movement" (Conradie, 2012:203), and "the person behind Enlightenment empiricism" (Jones, 1995:1).

For Calvin, "the center of Christian theology consists of both the glorification of God and the salvation of humanity" (Selderhuis, 2008:226). Yet, as Serene Jones notes, "it is difficult to find one conceptual framework, philosophical system, or systematizing principle through which Calvin organizes his thought" (1995:36).[65] John McNeill warns, similarly, that one would not find a "neatly jointed structure of dogmatic logic" in Calvin's work – rather, that one will encounter Calvin's "whole spiritual and emotional being" there (1960:li).

Still, Calvin himself would describe his theology – and particularly his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*[66] – in terms of piety and salvation; indeed, as "the whole sum of piety and whatever it is necessary to know in the doctrine of salvation" (in the words of his original title for the *Institutes*) (McNeill, 1960:li). McNeill (1960:li) notes that

[h]e calls his book not a *summa theologia* but a *summa pietatis*. The secret of his mental energy lies in his piety; its product is his theology, which is his piety described at length.

Moreover, for John Calvin piety "is unavoidably associated with doctrine" (McNeill, 1960:lii). There is, then, an intricate (albeit complex) link between Calvin's theology, Calvin's understanding of Christian doctrine, and Calvin's notion of piety. In order to analyse John Calvin's interpretation of salvation, the nature and function of Christian doctrine as well as the various methodological strategies that he employs will have to be considered.

2.2.2 Nature and function of Christian doctrine

For John Calvin, Christian doctrine[67] nurtures faith in pious believers (Jones, 1995:27). Calvin's use of Christian doctrine is therefore inseparable from (1) how theological language

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[65] Jones would rather identify two principles that "unify his thought", namely (1) "his struggle to follow faithfully the scriptural witness to God's revelation in history", and (2) "his practical concern to edify, uplift and defend the particular community of faith to whom he speaks" (Jones, 1995:36).

[66] The version of the (1559) *Institutes* that will be made use of in this study, in following Todd Billings (2009:428; footnote 1) and Randall Zachman (2009:466; footnote 1), is the translation by Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John McNeill (1960).

[67] See Victor D'Assonville's important work on how the concept 'doctrine' functions in Calvin's thinking and writing (2001).

is employed in his writing and (2) how the task of theology is addressed in his writings (Jones, 1995:5). Indeed, for John Calvin, "[d]octrine stated generally does not move us" (Commentary on Jeremiah 18:11 in Jones, 1995:11), and therefore the nature and function of Christian doctrine in John Calvin's thinking and writing cannot be separated from its rhetorical concerns – in short, in consideration of the audiences that it was to address. "John Calvin was an expert rhetorician", argues Don Compier (1999:12 – 13), and therefore Calvin's rhetorical concerns and priorities played an important role in the manner in which the theological language and theological task of Christian doctrine was formulated.

Firstly, in order to understand how Christian doctrine functions in John Calvin's writing it is important to understand "the extreme care he took in his use of language" (Jones, 1995:4). The language in which Calvin's discussion of Christian doctrine is cast is therefore integral in a portrayal of salvation in Calvin's thinking and writing. Language in Calvin's theology is "more than the mere ornamental adornment of truth" in that it molds or shapes Christian sentiments and experiences, argues Jones (1995:5). For Calvin, theological discourse has a double purpose: (1) "to witness to God's revelation in scripture", and (2) to move "the hearts, minds, and wills of its audience toward and ever-deepening life of faith" (1995:187). Serene Jones notes that close attention ought to be paid to 'the rhetorical tools' of Calvin's trade or art: his theological writing. Therein, she argues, we encounter Calvin's skill as a 'widely published author' and 'well-known public speaker', namely in his talent for shaping both the written and the spoken word which would persuade intellectually, emotionally and spiritually (1995:2 – 4). In short, "Calvin believed that good theology is practically useful and therefore eloquent theology" (Jones, 1995:28).

Secondly, in order to understand how Christian doctrine functions in John Calvin's writing, it is important to understand that the task of theology stretched beyond a mere presentation of propositional truth claims or abstract principles for Calvin (according to Jones, 1995:5). In Serene Jones' discussion of the nature and function of theology in Calvin's *Institutes,* she concludes that for Calvin "the theologian's task is inherently practical" in that it involves pedagogy: "teaching persons 'truths' that lead to faith... [which] is not based upon high-flown speculation but rather is rooted in the heart and manifest in the activities of daily living" (1995:27). In other words, "[t]he theologian's task is not to divert the ears with chatter but

48

strengthen consciences by teaching things true, sure and profitable" (*Institutes* §1.14.4).[68] Theology's task is, for Calvin, inherently persuasive in that it moves or shapes the disposition of its audience (Jones, 1995:35; cf. Compier, 1999:48).

Christian doctrines are shaped by Calvin's understanding of theological language and the theological task, in that it is meant to address not only the rational and intellectual, but also the affective and experiential dimensions of his readers and hearers. Theological discourse has the capacity to move and orient audiences dispositionally (Jones, 1995:30) by engaging and shaping an audience's 'habits of thinking', 'attitudes', 'beliefs', and 'dispositions' (Jones, 1995:48). Doctrines, then, are to lead to a faithful disposition in his hearers and readers by producing 'a certain play of mind'[69] (Jones, 1995:30). Indeed, Serene Jones notes that "Calvin was exceptionally skilled at taking traditional doctrines and rhetorically reworking them... for the shaping of Christian character" along with setting forth principles of faith (1995:32). Doctrines therefore have 'character-forming potential' for Calvin, argues Jones (1995:32).

Christian doctrine moves – forms, conforms and transforms – believers to become pious human beings in its practical, persuasive and public dimensions. This is particularly evident in Calvin's use of 'rhetorical hermeneutics', which he employs to offer an interpretation of human experience, church traditions, and the bible (Compier, 1999:63).

Firstly, Calvin's treatment of theological questions impact directly upon 'piety' and 'practice' (Selderhuis, 2008:258) and therefore has practical implications. Any inquiry into Calvin's

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[68] Here it is well worth the effort to consider Calvin's broader argument (the context here being his response to speculations concerning angels) regarding the theological task in interpreting Christian doctrine: "[L]et us remember here, as in all religious doctrine, that we ought to hold to one rule of modesty and sobriety; not to speak, or guess, or even to seek to know, concerning obscure matters anything except what has been imparted to us by God's Word. Furthermore, in the reading of Scripture we ought ceaselessly to endeavour to seek out and meditate upon those things which make for edification. Let us not indulge in curiosity or in the investigation of unprofitable things. And because the Lord willed to instruct us, not in fruitless questions, but in sound godliness, in the fear of his name, in true trust, and in the duties of holiness, let us be satisfied with this knowledge" (*Institutes* §1.14.4).

[69] A 'play of mind' is defined by Jones as "broadly understood to include the variety of mental and emotional activities through which the text leads its readers. At times, a text may require its readers to take an unprecedented conceptual leap aimed at not only opening up new intellectual possibilities but also evoking unprecedented affective reactions. At other times, the text may challenge its readers by deploying a startling metaphor or an unusual juxtaposition of images that forces them to perceive their world in a new way. The text may also reorient its readers' disposition by asking them to assume unfamiliar character roles in the hope that they may begin to experience previously foreign emotional states" (1995:24 – 25). Moreover, "[i]nducing a 'play of mind'," writes Jones (1995:41; footnote 43), "involved teaching the audience a certain mode of inquiry that might assist them in sorting a myriad of questions related to human intention, desire, and moral action." A play of mind is, in short, 'disposition-forming' and 'virtue-shaping' (1995:24).

understanding of salvation could therefore be placed within the framework of "practicing a certain lifestyle and spirituality" (Selderhuis, 2008:258), or what Van der Kooi (in Selderhuis, 2008:258) calls 'piety', namely:

[T]he attitude of love and respect for God that grows when man (sic) assesses his own lost condition, becomes aware of his adoption as a child of God through the mediation of Christ, and subsequently practices obedience and sanctification.

However, even more than Calvin's discussion or notion of Christian piety, Calvin's *rhetoric of piety* would reveal Calvin's concern with the *practices of piety*, which has to do with the conformation of the believer to Christ (Jones, 1995:4).[70] There is an important practical dimension to Calvin's treatment of Christian doctrine, in particular, in the emotional and experiential language that he employs. Calvin's discussion of piety, for instance, was cast in language (including images and metaphors) that spoke to the complexity of the lives of sixteenth century Genevans (1995:4). These 'practical and useful tasks' that human beings are to perform are, argues Compier (1999:71 – 72) "vital to the health of all". The practical dimension of Christian doctrine *forms* believers by cultivating a particular 'awareness' (of being 'adopted' or 'restored' in salvation) which leads to the cultivation of particular practices and virtues.[71]

However, secondly, the rhetorical bent of Calvin's writing and speaking on Christian doctrine is not only practical – evident in his use of emotional and experiential language – but also points to a persuasive dimension, in that "Calvin's concern was not only to teach a truth about God but also to give depth and sustenance to the spiritual lives of his vast parish of readers" (Jones, 1995:4). For Calvin, believers are edified by scripture and the Holy Spirit. In this sense scripture and the Holy Spirit play persuasive roles in the edification of believers. Yet theologians are to employ "their own persuasive skills as rhetoricians" in the edification of believers (Jones, 1995:27). 'The tools of rhetoric' are, in short, 'the tools of persuasion' (Jones, 1995:27). Well-constructed rhetoric is accommodative, and therefore doctrines that

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[70] Some, like Joel Beeke (2004:145; footnote 1) is highly critical of Serene Jones' rhetorical interpretation of Calvin, and claims that "Jones exaggerates Calvin's use of rhetoric in the service of piety."

[71] A 'godly mind' is formed to obey God "by a serious meditation upon the divine goodness towards itself" (Commentary on Romans 12:1 in Zachman, 2009:470). Moreover, "[t]his means that the primary pattern for the Christian life is the very grace of God freely given to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit, for our meditation on this grace should bring our lives into conformity with itself" (Zachman, 2009:470).

'move' "are doctrines that accommodate the linguistic and social expectations of the reader" (Jones, 1995:28).[72] Theological language appropriates itself to its audience(s) in order for its hearers and readers to be transformed into good people (Jones, 1995:28 – 29). It follows that the task of doctrine is to enable believers to recognise that "God has destined all things for our good and salvation but at the same time to feel his power and grace in ourselves and in the great benefits he has conferred upon us, and so bestir ourselves to trust, invoke, praise and love him" (*Institutes* §1.14.22). In other words, because God's word to us is "inherently persuasive and accommodative", theological rhetoric ought to be persuasive and accommodating (Jones, 1995:187). The persuasive dimension of Christian doctrine *conforms* believers to Christ[73] by the Word and the Spirit, by edifying believers in the knowledge of God.

Yet the nature and function of Christian doctrine is also not only practical (in which formation plays a key role) and persuasive (wherein conformation to Christ plays an important role), but also, thirdly, public. Calvin would consistently join "the great controversies of his age" and address himself "to its particular problems, argues Compier (1999:71).[74] Indeed, for Calvin, argues Jones (1995:5), "theological discourse cannot extricate itself from the power relations and broader social configurations of the culture to which it speaks." Christian doctrine in Calvin's writing therefore also functions in a transformative way, in that it has "the capacity to transform the disposition of its reading audience by inducing a 'play of mind' that leads to specific actions that the author intends to elicit" (Jones, 1995:6).[75] The public dimension of

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[72] This, Serene Jones points out, is particularly evident in Calvin's depiction of the beauty of creation, wherein God is cast as 'the Grand Orator' that communicates Godself in clear, comprehensible and familiar ways (1995:28). Randall Zachman writes that "John Calvin was passionately and increasingly interested in the self-disclosure of God in the universe that God created, orders and sustains" (2011:33) – and devotes a number of articles and chapters to the contemplation of God in creation (cf. 2011 and 2012). The universe manifests the powers and goodness of God in a way that is beautiful and compelling – so much so that human beings "are ravished with admiration and wonder for God" (2011:36).

[73] Christ is the image to which pious believers are to conform their lives, "for Christ as the image of the invisible God is the one who restores lost sinners to God" (Zachman, 2009:470). Christ himself "forms the pattern and example of the Christian life" for Calvin (Zachman, 2009:470).

[74] However, as Randall Zachman points out (2012:165), there is also a dark side to Calvin's rhetoric – especially here, where Calvin would be involved in controversies, for here Calvin often resorts to 'vicious and dehumanising rhetoric' to describe those who oppose him, especially in his reference to his opponents as animals: "[s]o Servetus is a 'frenzied person'… Lucretius is a 'filthy dog'… the Epicureans are a 'pigsty'" (2012:165). Moreover, Calvin will often "describe his opponents as aping monkeys, or as pigs or dogs who vomit forth their madness" (Zachman, 2012:165).

[75] Don Compier notes that "like his predecessors, Calvin considered rhetoric the ideal instrument for stimulating his contemporaries to vigorous transformative deeds" (1999:71).

Christian doctrine *transforms* believers into good people[76] by cultivating a particular 'play of mind', through which believers are enabled to work within their societies and cultures.

The nature and function of Christian doctrine in Calvin's thought can therefore be described as practical, persuasive and public, in that Calvin employs a particular 'theological rhetoric' which molds Christian sentiments and experiences (Jones, 1995:6). Moreover, Christian doctrine *forms, conforms* and *transforms* believers into pious human beings. The practical, persuasive and public dimensions of Christian doctrine as outlined above culminate in a number of methodological strategies in interpreting doctrine in Calvin's thought and writings.

2.2.3 Methodological strategies in interpreting doctrine

John Calvin arguably employs a collection of three methodological strategies, namely (1) pedagogical, (2) pastoral and (3) political. These strategies demonstrate his rhetorical skill and concerns, whereby the readers and hearers were to be formed and transformed (or conformed) into pious believers. These strategies were aligned and adjusted to accommodate the many audiences that Calvin was purportedly addressing: 'kings', 'nobles', 'French intellectuals', 'Roman Catholic apologists', students and colleagues (Jones, 1995:5). The methodological strategies outlined here can therefore be described as 'rhetorical' (Jones, 1995:6). Serene Jones notes that Calvin's rhetorical strategies would have been devised to address the needs and concerns of his various audiences, "and subsequently to upbuild this community of faith" (1995:70). As such, there can be many theological meanings of his writings for readers, which is shaped by these various methodological strategies (in which a variety of 'social functions' could be served) (Jones, 1995:73).

A first methodological strategy in John Calvin's formulation of Christian doctrine could be described as a pedagogical strategy, which is particularly evident in his commentaries, but also encountered in his *Institutes* (Jones, 1995:26). This strategy "brings with it a clear and concise style of presentation" (Jones, 1995:73). Serene Jones calls this 'a pedagogical rhetoric', and notes that Calvin's students were an important audience of Calvin's writing (also for his *Institutes*) and therefore 'a pedagogically accessible rhetoric' is particularly

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[76] The gospel, argues Zachman (2009:470), should transform us by becoming the very 'pattern for the right ordering of our lives' – in short, to transform us into the image of Christ.

evident in the *Institutes* (1995:70). Todd Billings points out that the very structure of the *Institutes* is meant to "prepare readers to profit from Scripture" (2009:433).

A second methodological strategy in John Calvin's formulation of Christian doctrine could be described as a pastoral strategy, which is particularly evident in his sermons, but also encountered in his *Institutes* (Jones, 1995:70 – 71). This strategy "offers solace and encouragement to a marginalized community in the face of persecution and does so by using rhetoric laden with biblical imagery and terms with devotional connotations" (Jones, 1995:73). Serene Jones calls this 'a consolatory rhetoric', and notes that the French reforming churches and communities (which faced political persecution and social marginality) were another important audience for Calvin's writing and preaching (1995:70). When Calvin appeals to this audience, "Calvin speaks in an exhortative voice, which gives the reader the sense that Calvin is preaching to them rather than simply lecturing" (1995:71). Thus, Christian doctrine in Calvin's writing has a 'consoling function' in which the reader is offered "a word of hope and encouragement to persevere in the midst of adversity" (1995:70). Indeed, Christian doctrine 'remedy' specific social 'sicknesses' (or afflictions) (1995:70).

A third methodological strategy that shapes John Calvin formulation of Christian doctrine could be described as a political strategy, which is particularly evident in his letters to and correspondence with public figures within the French nobility and French intellectuals (Jones, 1995:71 – 72). It is also evident in Calvin's polemical pamphlets and tracts that were smuggled into France (Jones, 1995:73). This strategy "resorts to a forensic rhetoric in addition to more subtle manipulations of the reader" as well as "harsh attacks and figurative caricatures" (1995:73). Serene Jones traces two rhetorics within this strategy, namely 'an apologetic strategy' ("required to convert others and convince them to join in [the] religious struggle") and 'a polemical strategy' ("designed... for fending off the accusations and attacks of its opponents") (1995:71 – 73). Serene Jones notes that "[a]n attentive reading of the text's rhetoric allows one to see the pervasive politics of Calvin's doctrinal treatments" (1995:5), which involved (1) converting possible allies (and in particular important political figures, such as Louis XII's daughter Renée de France) and (2) fending off attacks by opponents (1995:71 – 73).[77]

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[77] However, some theologians, like Roland Boer, have focused on the political aspects of Calvin's theology in a more radical way, by arguing for a 'revolutionary theology' in Calvin's thought (and the "radical possibilities of his theological system"). He summarises the argument of his book as follows (Boer, 2009a:xv): "John Calvin let

Many other methodological strategies may also be noted here, such as Calvin's close attention to both biblical exegesis *and* patristic studies (Billings, 2009:441). Andy et an outline of methodological strategies in Calvin's writings does not mean that parts of Calvin's writings can be neatly and clearly divided according to these strategies. Rather, as Jones notes (1995:74), Calvin's doctrines may involve a combination of different strategies. In this critical analysis of Calvin's understanding of salvation, these methodological strategies – pedagogical, pastoral and political – would play an important role in shaping an image or portrayal of salvation in Calvin's thought as 'union with Christ'.

2.2.4   Salvation as union with Christ

John Calvin's soteriology is complex, in that his understanding of salvation intersects with many doctrines or doctrinal *loci,* including creation, election, covenant, the law, the Trinity and the Christian life (Billings, 2009:428).[78] Moreover, "Calvin did not intend to present theology from the viewpoint of a single doctrine" (Beeke, 2004:127) or as a system of thought in which a 'central dogma' is assumed (Horton, 2012:72). Yet there is, arguably, also a core logic to Calvin's notion of salvation. Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ is "his greatest contribution to the development of Reformed soteriology," argues Mark Garcia (2009:415). "[I]t is undeniable," writes Michael Horton (2012:72), "that 'mystical union' is an important motif that plays a formative role in his explication of the application of redemption." Joel Beeke points out that Calvin's writings – sermons, commentaries, theological works – are itself permeated with the doctrine of union with Christ (2004:127).[79] The union between Christ and the believer is established by the Holy Spirit and taken up by the believer in faith (Jonker, 1983:66; cf. Billings, 2009:433 – 435). Moreover, this 'mystical union' (*unio mystica*) is possible because Christ became human ('historically', 'ethically' and 'personally'), therefore filling human nature and experience with virtue (Beeke, 2004:128).

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the radical *political* cat peek out of the *theological* bag only to try his hardest to push it back in and tie the bag up again" (original emphasis).

[78] Todd Billings attributes this to Calvin writing as an 'exegetical theologian' ("organizing his teaching into a series of topical common places (*loci communes*) in the *Institutes*, but deriving his teaching from exegetical expositions of Scripture through his commentaries") instead of his being a 'systematic theologian' ("placing one article of doctrine at the center, and deducing the rest from this point of doctrine") (2009:429).

[79] Even if, as Horton warns (2012:88), "Calvin never introduces union with Christ as a central dogma or even as an integrating theme for soteriology generally."

Salvation, for John Calvin, therefore comprises many doctrinal *foci* and images. However, there are two moments in his thinking on salvation – firstly, where he explains salvation by way of justification and sanctification, and secondly, where he sketches salvation as that which remedies sin and evil – that reveal his pedagogical, pastoral and political strategies.

In John Calvin's thought, salvation must be understood in a twofold sense, namely as justification and sanctification[80] - indeed, for Calvin "[s]alvation is a matter of union with Jesus Christ on the basis of justification and regeneration" (or santification) (Conradie, 2012:222). Justification and sanctification flow from the mystical (re)union with Christ (Jonker, 1983:66). Todd Billings describes salvation in John Calvin's writings as "the double grace of justification and sanctification accessed through union with Christ by the Spirit, received through the instrument of faith" (2009:429). This 'sum of the gospel' is 'the newness of life' and 'free reconciliation' which comes to the believer by union with Christ (2009:429). Union with Christ is, for Calvin, the link or the bond between justification and sanctification (Horton, 2012:89). Justification and sanctification provide, furthermore, a 'twofold cleansing' or purification: "[j]ustification offers *imputed* purity, and sanctification, *actual* purity" (Beeke, 2004:130; my emphasis – NM). Yet how did Calvin himself understand and interpret justification and sanctification, respectively?

Justification, for Calvin, is 'simply' "the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men [sic]" which consists of "the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness" (*Institutes* §3.9.2). Calvin contrasts justification by works (which is accomplished by those "in whose life that purity and holiness will be found which deserves a testimony of righteousness before God's throne... [and those who] can meet and satisfy God's judgment" by 'the wholeness of their works') with justification by faith (which is granted to

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[80] Willie Jonker notes that (Phillip Melanchton and) John Calvin distinguishes clearly between justification and sanctification – more clearly than Luther, for whom the concept *justificatio* was used in a general way to include both justification a*nd* sanctification. Jonker illustrates how Calvin moves beyond Luther's description of *justificatio* in two ways: (1) by emphasising sanctification, and (2) by distinguishing between justification and sanctification (1983:66). However, Todd Billings argues that it is in *Augustine* that one finds this one process – which includes both justification and sanctification, without sufficient clarity in distinguishing between these – and that in Luther (who follows Augustine in his 'strong theology of sin' combined with 'a robust theology of grace') there is the first moves to distinguish sufficiently between justification and sanctification (2009:430). Billings notes that Calvin "seems to share a great deal with Melanchton – and early Lutheranism – on the doctrine of justification" (2009:431). For a helpful and interesting (brief) description of the way in which Calvin's doctrines of justification and sanctification were shaped by his Reformed predecessors, see Billings (2009:430 – 431).

those who "[grasp] the righteousness of Christ in faith, and clothed in it, appears in God's sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man") (*Institutes* §3.9.2).

Yet Calvin is careful not to equate justification with faith[81] – rather, he would argue, "faith does not of itself effect justification, but embraces Christ by whose grace we are justified" (McNeill, 1960:lx). For this reason – that justification follows from grace, and therefore not from anything that human beings would accomplish – salvation is described as a juridical act of God, whereby justification is understood in terms of its forensic character (Jonker, 1983:62). Indeed, justification is the result of Christ's intercession on our behalf, whereby God's justice (or the conditions for salvation) is satisfied and our consciences are comforted (Beeke, 2004:130). Human beings are justified on the basis of the *unio mystica cum Christo* (the mystical unity with Christ), for Calvin, and therefore human beings are not only justified – we are justified *in Christ* (Jonker, 1983:64). Justification, then, is "the soil out of which the Christian life develops" and "the substance of piety" (Beeke, 2004:130).

Sanctification, for Calvin, is the process whereby believers are increasingly conformed to Christ, by "the continual re-making of the believer by the Holy Spirit" and "the increasing consecration of body and soul to God (Beeke, 2004:130). It is, for him, "that transformation of the soul which is called regeneration", argues McNeill (1960:lix), which involves "mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit". Here, also, salvation is expressed in our union with Christ, for we participate in Christ's death (mortification) and in Christ's resurrection (vivification) in our growth towards "a perfection that in this life is never fully attained" (McNeill, 1960:lx; cf. *Institutes* §3.3.3). Sanctification is nothing else, writes Jonker (1983:67), than the death and resurrection *with Christ* (*mortificatio* and *vivificatio*).[82] Indeed, "[w]hen we hear mention of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness!... [but rather, since] we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow

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[81] For Calvin, "faith is not a work meriting God's pardon, but the instrument for receiving God's mercy offered to sinners in Jesus Christ" (Billings, 2009:433).

[82] Willie Jonker notes, interestingly, that the emphasis on *mortificatio* is stronger than the emphasis on *vivificatio,* in Calvin's thought (1983:67). Yet this does not mean that the inability to live holy lives (or, as he states it, 'the shortcoming of sanctification') can endanger or question the justification of believers – exactly because justification is a gracious gift by God to believers, which cannot be earned or deserved and therefore also cannot be spurned or unmade (Jonker, 1983:67). See the doctoral dissertation by John Retief at Stellenbosch University, with the (translated) title "The relationship between mortificatio and vivificatio in the doctrine of sanctification in John Calvin" (1984).

whither he calls" (*Institutes* §3.6.2). Sanctification, then, is for Calvin "the process of our advance in piety" (McNeill, 1960).

Justification and sanctification belong together, in Calvin's thought,[83] especially where the faith of believers is concerned, for if "faith rests upon the knowledge of Christ" and "Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit" then "[i]t follows that faith can in no [way] be separated from a devout disposition" (*Institutes* §3.2.8). Indeed, Calvin insisted "that justification is inseparable from sanctification" (Billings, 2009:432). Yet no one should confuse justification with sanctification, argues Willie Jonker (1983:67), because justification logically precedes sanctification – even when both justification and sanctification becomes, in the grace of God bestowed upon sinners, part of the believer (Jonker, 1983:67).[84] Indeed, if justification is God's act in Christ, which human beings can receive through faith alone, then sanctification (which is every bit as much God's act in Christ as is justification) is also a work or an act or a deed in which believers themselves are called to partake. In short, sanctification is both indicative *and* imperative (Jonker, 1983:191).

The order in the relationship between justification and sanctification – or sanctification and justification – is therefore worth considering.[85] In the outline of the 1559 edition of the *Institutes,* Calvin first discusses sanctification and thereafter justification.[86] Yet for Calvin,

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[83] This is particularly evident in the *Institutes* §3.16.1 (and §3.16.2), where Calvin argues that justification and sanctification are distinguished but inseparable: "Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces [1 Corinthians 1:13]. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness."

[84] This can perhaps be illustrated by this remark on justification and sanctification (or 'regeneration') in Calvin's Commentary on Romans (Billings, 2009:434): "The truth is that believers are never reconciled to God without the gift of regeneration. Indeed, we are justified for this very purpose, that we may *afterwards* worship God in purity of life" (my emphasis – NM). Todd Billings notes that, in Calvin's commentary on Romans 6, "a logical (but not temporal) ordering of being 'justified' for the purpose that 'afterwards' the life of holiness lived" is evident here (2009:434).

[85] See the classic work by Tjarko Stadtland on justification and sanctification in Calvin (1972) as well as Billings (2009:439).

[86] Dirkie Smit points out that Calvin's own structure of thought is evident in the 'architecture of the 1559-*Institutes*' (2014:13), which may be helpful in understanding the relationship between justification and sanctification in the *Institutes,* but also admits that this is "a contested and deeply problematic approach". He notes the many nuances and complexities that need to be accounted for in an analysis of Calvin's structure of thought, also as it pertains to his thinking on the relationship between justification and sanctification (Smit, 2014:13 – 14; footnote 32): "Many scholars argue that one should not only use the *Institutes,* but also take the rest of Calvin's work into account – including his letters, sermons, commentaries, tracts and other works. Many

sanctification is not the basis for justification, argues Willie Jonker (1983:66 – 67), but the goal of justification. Jonker helpfully points out, firstly, that this structure cannot prove that sanctification forms the basis of justification for Calvin, and secondly, that this particular order – wherein sanctification is placed before justification – removes any uncertainty as to the understanding that justification through faith cannot leave the believer unchanged or untransformed (1983:66). Michael Horton argues that justification forms the basis for sanctification (2012:90) and the forensic basis for union with Christ (2012:91) in Calvin's writings.[87] Todd Billings notes that sanctification comes after justification as 'the second of the gifts of double grace' (2009:439; 446). Yet it must be added that "Calvin insists that all of our blessings – justification and sanctification – are found only in Christ, through the Spirit" (Horton, 2012:92; cf. *Institutes* §3.16.1).

Salvation in Calvin's thought and writings incorporates both 'forensic' *and* 'transformational' images of salvation (Billings, 2009:429). These (justifying and sanctifying) understandings of salvation in Calvin are inseparable yet distinguishable, argues Billings (2009:429) – indeed, to separate justification from sanctification "is to tear Christ in pieces" (*Institutes* §2.11.6 in Beeke, 2004:131) or "to rend Him asunder by their own mutilated faith" (Commentary on Romans 6:1 in Billings, 2009:435; footnote 29). The inseparability of justification and sanctification can be traced by way of one of Calvin's favourite images for salvation, namely adoption: one the one hand "one receives... the legal declaration of becoming a child of the Father (as one united to Christ)", and on the other hand one receives "the inheritance of adopted children by receiving the Spirit who conforms believers ever more into the image of Christ" (Billings, 2009:429). All of this, argues Billings (2009:429), happens within the context of 'union with Christ', even if there was no such theology or doctrinal *locus* within

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scholars argue that one should not only take the 1559-edition of the *Institutes* into account, since it is integrally part of its own historical development over decades. Many scholars argue that one should not take the 1559-edition as if it had been conceived and written as a single book, because many of the parts were written separately, were moved around, were even divided and used in different places… Many scholars deeply disagree about how one should understand the structure and architecture of the *Institutes*. It therefore remains problematic to draw strong conclusions regarding Calvin's intentions simply on the structure alone."

[87] "Taking root in the forensic soil of justification, from which it derives its effective power as well as its legal basis, union with Christ produces the life of Christ within believers" (Horton, 2012:91). Stated somewhat differently, sanctification is the response to justification, as "Spirit-empowered, voluntary gratitude rather than moral calculus" (Billings, 2009:446).

Calvin's writings. Rather, 'union with Christ' is expressed in a range of images, such as 'participation', 'ingrafting' and 'adoption'[88] (Billings, 2009:429).

Yet in Calvin's thinking salvation also follows sin and evil. Calvin's understanding of salvation is therefore *also* shaped by that which it responds or speaks to, namely sin and evil. For Calvin, sin and evil is that which we lack (Zachman, 2012:132); moreover, it is a 'disease' which can only be remedied by God's grace. This remedy involves a 'restoration to life' or 'reconciliation' (Selderhuis, 2008:229). Herein Jesus the Christ plays a mediating role as the one "who has stepped into the rift so that he has set aside that which justly separates us from God and thus reconciles humanity with God" (Selderhuis, 2008:230). In Christ, the one who accomplishes this, God is 'Emmanuel' ("which is another word for Mediator") (*Institutes* §2.14.5 in Selderhuis, 2008:230)). In his sending Christ fulfills a threefold office – as prophet (witnessing to the grace of God), priest (reconciling human beings to God), and king (distributing God's grace spiritually) – by which Christ mediates the remedy of grace to human beings. Sin, as "the active rebellion against the good", therefore also has a threefold form, for Calvin, in that it is "a contradiction of Christ as prophet, king, and priest" (Selderhuis, 2008:230). Sin is 'unbelief', acting 'self-satisfied', and 'arrogance' (Selderhuis, 2008:230). Sin scorns God's grace, by which it involves enmity against both God's glory[89] *and* God's goodness (Selderhuis, 2008:230). The justification or redemption of human beings takes place through Christ taking the place of sinners in order to suffer our condemnation (*Institutes* §2.16.6 in Selderhuis, 2008:230). Therefore "[a]ll are completely dependent on the promised grace of God" (Selderhuis, 2008:230).

In short, for Calvin salvation also acts as the remedy of God's grace in response to the sin of human beings. Yet we do not 'possess' the redemption that Christ accomplishes for us – "we

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[88] Todd Billings (2009:432) notes that "Calvin's exegesis of the epistle to the Romans was key for the expansion and development of his theology of union with Christ and the double grace" – and was key, in particular, for the use of these images of 'union', 'participation' and 'ingrafting' in describing union with Christ (2009:433). Moreover, Romans is understood as "an exegetical key to the rest of Scripture" as well as "a doctrinal key for the *Institutes*" in Calvin's thought (Billings, 2009:433).

[89] Nico Vorster notes that "Calvin's affirmation of the deep-rooted sinfulness of the human race not only serves as a tool to underscore the overwhelming nature of God's glory, sovereignty, omnipotence and goodness, but it also 'compels us to turn our eyes upward' by creating in us a sense of humility and vulnerability" (2015:2; cf. *Institutes* 1.1.1). Moreover, "[f]or Calvin awareness of sin is of the utmost importance for salvation, because without a sense of our predicament there will be no desire in us to seek God's mercy and grace" (Vorster, 2015:2; cf. *Institutes* 2.2.1). See Nico Vorster's excellent paper on Calvin's interpretation of sin and evil in this regard (2015).

have it alone in the form of promise", which we grasp when we embrace Christ (Selderhuis, 2008:232). This promise is the promise "in the expectation of is fulfillment" in which "our happiness and salvation are included" (Selderhuis, 2008:232). For Calvin, "the sum of our salvation" is that God "has abolished all enmities and received us into grace" (*Institutes* §3.2.25). As such, *a soteriological logic of faith* is evident in Calvin's interpretation of salvation. Justification and sanctification are a 'double grace', "received by those who partake in Christ in faith" (Selderhuis, 2008:288). Christ justifies no believer that he does not also sanctify (*Institutes* §3.16.1 in Jonker, 1983:67). Moreover, Christ's salvation is an 'applied' salvation that takes root in the justification and sanctification of believers. This application of salvation, which takes place by way of the work of the Spirit of Christ in us, is shown by our piety. Indeed, the heart of Calvin's understanding of piety revolves around communion with Christ and participation in the benefits of Christ (as an outflow of the union of Christ (cf. Beeke, 2004:130)).

The range of metaphors that Calvin employs for his explanation of 'union with Christ', coupled with his concern for a clear and coherent interpretation not only of justification and sanctification, but also for the relationship between these two doctrines, reveals his pedagogical, pastoral and political strategies in his thinking on salvation. It is important for Calvin to sketch the contours of salvation in a particular way (without, for instance, collapsing justification into sanctification and thereby portraying salvation as the result of good works) so that his audiences – and the pious believers that he has in mind, in particular – may not only have a clear and coherent understanding of what salvation means, but so that they may also be convinced and thereby comforted by this. Yet salvation that does not also lead to public, political, practical acts of service, in (grateful and obedient) response to God's grace, means that neither the depth of despair and misery from which human beings have been saved nor the extent of the comfort of salvation has been grasped. Calvin therefore also employs a political strategy in convincing his audiences of both the great comfort and the great responsibility that salvation in Christ lays upon believers.[90]

Salvation in Calvin's thought and writing is shaped by a collection of three methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine, namely pedagogical, pastoral and political.

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[90] Two books by Todd Billings provide treatises on the practical (political) implications of Calvin's notion of believers' 'union with Christ', particularly regarding (1) the critique that Calvin contrasts the holy God with unworthy sinners (2007), and (2) a reflection on theology and ministry for the church today (2011).

Salvation, for Calvin, has to do with imputed purity, the remedy of grace and newness of life, in the respective practical, pastoral and public dimensions of salvation as union with Christ. These culminate in the portrayal of salvation as restoration – in that (1) "God is carrying out what he has intended to do from the beginning of the world, from eternity"; and (2) "God compensates for what we have done wrong" in "the sending of God's Son" (Selderhuis, 2008:229). Indeed, "[t]his soteriological restoration does not set divine and human agency at odds with each other, but conceives of the uniting communion with Christ through the Spirit as involving the healing and activating of the primal, created nature of humans" (Billings, 2009:442). The image that Calvin employs to illustrate this, is therefore that of 'union with Christ' – from which the double grace of justification and sanctification flows. Calvin's understanding of salvation, as 'mystical union with Christ', is the 'profound root' or starting point of piety (Beeke, 2004:127). Salvation – together with the benefits with which we are imbued as those who belong to God and have been justified and sanctified – shapes, then, an understanding of happiness or flourishing in Calvin's thinking and writings, for (eternal) happiness comes from union with God (Zachman, 2012:168).

2.2.5   Pious human beings?

Pietas is a major strand in Calvin's theology (Beeke, 2004:125), spanning his *Institutes,* catechisms and commentaries (Beeke, 2004:125 – 126). John Calvin describes the pious Christian life variously as *reparatio, regeneratio, reformatio, renovatio* and *restitutio* (Beeke, 2004:141). Yet *pietas* has, above all, to do with knowledge of God (Jones, 1995:125), which includes "attitudes and actions that are directed to the adoration and service of God" (Beeke, 2004:125). Indeed, as John McNeill points out (1960:39; footnote 1), "[i]t is a favorite emphasis in Calvin that *pietas,* piety, in which reverence and love of God are joined, is prerequisite to any true knowledge of God." Yet (McNeill, 1960:lii)

[t]o the modern mind the word 'piety' has lost its historic implications and status. It has become suspect, as bearing suggestions of ineffectual religious sentimentality or canting pretense. For Calvin and his contemporaries, as for ancient pagan and Christian writers, *pietas* was an honest word, free from any unsavory connotation. It was a praiseworthy dutifulness or faithful devotion to one's family, country, or God. Calvin insistently affirms that piety is a prerequisite for any sound knowledge of God.

A rhetorical reading of Calvin's writings would however suggest that knowledge of God is more than mere 'content' or 'subject matter', in that it has to do with particular attitudes and virtues. Piety has to do with 'the right attitude' toward God, for "[k]nowing who and what God is (theology) embraces right attitudes toward him and doing what he wants (piety)" (Beeke, 2004:125). Therefore piety, as "true godliness", is a (religious) disposition to be developed within human beings (Jones, 1995:122). Stated somewhat differently, Calvin is interested "not only in telling the reader what she or he should experience but also in making 'the reader good' by rhetorically eliciting the very disposition he describes" (Jones, 1995:122). Piety as knowledge of God is therefore not an abstract 'knowing' or 'conceiving', but a 'moving' and 'shaping' knowledge (Jones, 1995:124). Piety, therefore, also has to do with a particular disposition. This disposition or 'religious attitude' would, for Calvin, involve gratitude, love and obedience (McNeill, 1960:lii).

Knowledge of God leads to pious believers' union with Christ. This communion or bond between Christ and believers comes to full expression in faith and in the work of the Spirit (Beeke, 2004:128 – 129). Faith, for Calvin, is defined as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (*Institutes* §3.2.7 in Selderhuis, 2008:289). Faith is 'grace received', but faith also testifies or responds to this grace. Faith, together with justification, has to do with "the appropriation of the grace of Christ", argues Herman Selderhuis (2008:288). Communion with Christ (in faith) is, however, "always the result of the Spirit's work... [t]he Holy Spirit is thus the link that binds the believer to Christ and the channel through which Christ is communicated to the believer" (Beeke, 2004:129). The pious believer 'possesses', 'grasps', 'grows', 'receives', and 'participates in' Christ by way of faith, in the working of the Spirit (Beeke, 2004:129 – 130). In short, the Spirit and faith is 'piety's double bond' (Beeke, 2004:128).

For Calvin, piety's supreme goal (along with that of the Christian life) is the glory of God. The purpose of (created) human beings is the glorification of God. This is not to be confused with 'impious self-seeking' or even the personal salvation of believers, since the glorification of God has, above all, to do with the things and concerns of God: "God's Word, God's authority, God's gospel, God's truth" (Beeke, 2004:126 – 127). John de Gruchy points out that the glory of God has been "the touchstone of Calvin's life and work" (2009a:159). Yet it

has been exactly this, what De Gruchy calls "the exaltation of God", which has been directly linked to "the denigration of humanity" by critics of Calvin. De Gruchy points to Ludwig Feuerbach, for whom God would become "the absolutely positive" and humanity "the absolutely negative" (2009a:159). Moreover, De Gruchy admits that "sometimes… in reading Calvin we get the impression that God is great, holy and majestic at the expense of us poor sinners who are nothing but miserable worms!" (2009a:160).

Still, "Calvin's God," writes De Gruchy (2009a:160), "is not a tyrant God of fate who treats humanity like puppets on a string. Nor is Calvin's emphasis on God's majesty intended to denigrate humanity as created by God in God's image."[91] De Gruchy makes a case for a God who, according to his reading of Calvin, "accommodates himself to our weakness in order that we should not be overwhelmed by his glory" (2009a:160). For Calvin, God is revealed in Jesus Christ, "who is truly and fully human like us" (2009a:160) and in whom "humanity is restored to its fullness" (2009a:160). Therefore, argues De Gruchy from Calvin (2009a:160), "anything that leads to the dehumanisation of men and women is un-Christian and idolatrous because, instead of giving God the glory, it is a besmirching of the very image of God." For De Gruchy, Calvin's understanding of the inseparable connections between God's holiness and glory, God's love and compassion, God's grace and forgiveness, and ultimately God's humanity in Jesus Christ, points to Calvin's deeply embedded theological humanism (2009a:160 – 161).

We glorify God primarily when we are obedient to God's Word, which means surrendering ourselves to God and his divine will, argues Beeke (2004:127). Herein our justification plays an important role, in that it enables us to worship God and live a holy life – to live piously, in short (Beeke, 2004:131). For those who "love righteousness", "long to live to God's glory",

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[91] Human beings were created in the image of God, Calvin would emphasise, by which he would mean that human beings share in God's goodness, God's life, God's wisdom, God's power, and God's justice (Zachman, 2012:35). Thus Calvin emphasises that "what is good in the human is not something earned but rather granted through grace" (Selderhuis, 2008:227). This grace is not a given but a gift, which 'adorns' human beings with 'the greatest glory' and enriches human beings with 'numberless blessings' (Commentary on Psalms in Selderhuis, 2008:226). This understanding of God's gracious bestowment of 'glory', 'blessing', 'goodness' upon human beings is, for instance, conveyed in Calvin's commentary on Psalm 8 (Commentary on Psalms in Selderhuis, 2008:226): "How is it that God comes forth from so noble and glorious a part of his works and stoops down to us, poor worms of the earth, if it is not to magnify and to give more illustrious manifestation of his goodness?" For Calvin it is true not only that God "nourishes us by his goodness", but also "supports us by his power", "governs us by his providence", and "attends us with all sorts of blessings" (*Institutes* §1.2.1).

and "delight to obey God's rule of righteousness set forth in Scripture", living piously is personal and practical (Beeke, 2004:139). If God is the focus of the Christian life, then piety has to do with prayer, repentance, self-denial and cross-bearing (Beeke, 2004:139). Prayer, firstly, is "the chief element of piety" in that it reveals God's grace to believers. Prayer 'communicates piety' communally and privately (Beeke, 2004:139). Repentance, secondly, stands at the heart of the Christian life and points to the restorative dimension of a life of piety, as 'inward grace' (Beeke, 2004:141). Self-denial, thirdly, is the 'sacrificial dimension' of piety as the fruit or product of the pious believer's union with Christ. Here a core aspect of Calvin's own thinking on *happiness* stands exposed (Beeke, 2004:142):

[For Calvin,] ...self-denial helps us find true happiness because it helps us do what we were created for. We were created to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves. Happiness is the result of having that principle restored. As Calvin says, without self-denial we may possess everything without possessing one particle of real happiness.

A pious life will include suffering, Calvin warns, and therefore cross-bearing, fourthly, 'tests piety'. In bearing hardships and suffering in a Christlike manner, pious believers are "roused to hope", "trained in patience", "instructed in obedience" and "chastened in pride" (Beeke, 2004:142). Obedience to God's will, lastly, is 'the essence of piety': the response to God's glory by private obedience (self-denial and cross-bearing) and public obedience (church discipline) (Beeke, 2004:143 – 144).

Pietas is not, however, a wholly individual and personal endeavour for Calvin, for it is to be 'rooted' in the Word and 'nurtured' in the church (Beeke, 2004:131). The church is the mother, educator and nourisher of every believer, and therefore the piety of believers is cultivated (or 'nurtured') within the church's ministries by the Word and the Spirit (Beeke, 2004:131). Piety cannot be imagined apart from the church, for Calvin, because "piety is fostered by the communion of saints" (Beeke, 2004:131). The Word – gospel and law – and the sacraments play a central role in the development or cultivation of piety in believers: the Word renews and heals believers and thereby promotes piety, and the sacraments nourishes believers and fosters faith as "exercises of piety" (Beeke, 2004:132 – 134). The development

or cultivation of piety in believers therefore moves us to respond in doxological awe[92] and obedience (or service).[93]

Pietas, for Calvin, has to do then with the flourishing and happiness of human beings, since the benefits of this life are a product of our union with Christ – stated somewhat differently, "the very life we enjoy right now comes from our participation in the life of God" (Zachman, 2012:122). Heiko Oberman argues that happiness was a particular interest of Calvin's, although the interest of Calvin scholars has often centered around three 'unhappy' authorities within Calvin's thought: Augustine (with his doctrine of original sin), the Stoic tradition (with their suspicion and suppression of emotions), and the Platonic tradition (with its elevation of the soul over the body) (1993:251).[94] For Oberman, however, "[i]n looking for the 'historical Calvin,' it would be a learned, but basic, error to find here a philosophical 'pessimism,' dictated by Platonic dualism" (Oberman, 1993:282). For John Calvin, human beings are born to pursue *felicitas*, or happiness, argues Oberman (1993:266). Oberman helpfully points out

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[92] Pious human beings are moved and shaped, firstly, by God's love and care by "being convinced of the personal benefits one gains from God's love and care" and by responding appropriately – in 'doxological awe' – to God's love and care (*Institutes* §1.1.1 in Jones, 1995:130). The self-revealed powers of God guide 'the pious mind' not to "dream up for itself any god it pleases", but to contemplate 'the one and only true God' (*Institutes* §1.2.2 in Jones, 1995:141). Moreover, the pious mind "exercises the utmost diligence and care not to wander astray, or rashly and boldly go beyond his will" (*Institutes* §1.2.2 in Jones, 1995:141). Piety therefore has to do with 'recognition', argues Joel Beeke – that we have been accepted by and engrafted into Christ (2004:125). Calvin's exposition of *pietas* therefore employs pedagogical and public methodological strategies in its move towards shaping the piety of believers (cf. Jones, 1995:129 – 131; 141 – 145).

[93] Pious human beings are moved and shaped, secondly, to respond graciously to God's love and care. Therefore true piety is characterised by obedience, in that pious human beings are persuaded by God's goodness and power(s) towards us 'give ourselves truly and sincerely to God in willing service' (*Institutes* §1.2.1 in Jones, 1995:131 – 133). Joel Beeke mentions, interestingly, that John Calvin would repeatedly describe the life of piety as 'sweet' (according to John Hesselink; cf. Beeke, 2004:144 & 151; footnote 149), whereby the audience is exhorted or persuaded to 'acknowledge God to be the fountainhead and source of every good' and to 'desire to cleave to God and trust in Him' (*Institutes* §1.2.2 in Jones, 1995:140). Calvin's exposition of *pietas* therefore also employs pastoral and public methodological strategies in its move towards shaping the piety of believers (cf. Jones, 1995:131 – 136; 136 – 141).

[94] Ellen Charry (2010:116 – 117) illustrates this well, in her assessment of Calvin: "Calvin mentions happiness in passing in book 3 of the final Latin edition of his *Institutes* (1559), where union with Christ is the basis for hope and energy. It remains an eschatological hope in the kingdom of God that 'will be filled with splendor, joy, happiness and glory'... However, Calvin warns that one should not even be too optimistic about that... In contrast to Aquinas, who encouraged readers to believe that eventually the blessed will know God utterly, Calvin warns against even that. Hard work in mundane matters and sobriety in spiritual ones remained the emphasis of Calvinism, and they certainly inspired a great deal of energetic activity. Mortification of self and vivification in Christ is a central spiritual dynamic in Calvin's theology, and self-denial is an important Calvinist virtue... [Yet], [w]hile vivification is the goal, Calvin highly values psychological suffering to motivate spiritual renewal. He might be nervous about discussions of happiness lest they downplay the importance of suffering and render vivification too accessible." Yet Calvin, like Charry herself, asks the question whether happiness is possible amidst suffering, especially in his thinking on the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He concludes that "[t]he patriarchs sought for everlasting life", which was (for them, Calvin argues) "a blessedness other than that of earthly life" (*Institutes* §2.10.12).

that Calvin appears to situate his thinking on *felicitas* within the narrative of God creating human beings. For Calvin happiness cannot be achieved by the attempt to become like God, which leads to alienation from God (Oberman, 1993:266). Nor can happiness be limited to the pleasures of this life (Oberman, 1993:280; footnote 280). Happiness has to do with being reorientated to God through Christ, as 'the living image of God', through the Word and the sacraments (Oberman, 1993:266). Oberman describes the human pursuit of happiness in Calvin by way of "the highest level of development", which can only be achieved 'in Christ': "through him, the soul reaches the stability and constancy which it never had in paradise" (1993:268 – 269). The tragic dimension of human beings' misguided attempts at pursuing happiness are, however, not absent in Calvin, writes Oberman (1993:277; footnote 79). Still, "[t]rust in the protection of God overcomes existential fear", which, in turn, leads to confidence – and "[t]his confidence provides happiness already in this life and is the most effective remedy conceivable" (Oberman, 1993:278 – 279; footnote 81). Happiness, for Calvin, "belongs to the original purpose for human life on this earth", but because it is no achievement (and therefore calls into question whether the pursuit of happiness could be regarded as a basic human right; Oberman refers to Calvin's doctrine of election in this regard), "there is no equal chance of attainment for believer and unbeliever", writes Oberman (1993:280).

Yet the pursuit of happiness is a complex matter in Calvin's writings. In Calvin's attempt to emphasise that every benefit, good and happiness comes from God alone, human existence is at times cast in a despairing light (cf. Vos, 1976). Not only is human existence a "veritable world of miseries" – and here descriptions like "ignorance", "vanity", "poverty", "infirmity", "depravity", "corruption" abound – but Calvin counsels that "we cannot seriously aspire to [God and the good things of God] before we begin to become displeased with ourselves" (*Institutes* §1.1.1).[95] In his discussion on the believers of the Old Testament, Calvin makes the

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[95] Calvin's theology has often been criticised for presenting a negative image of human beings that can (and does) "have disastrous effects on the development of a positive and healthy self-image" (Vos, 1976:78). This, in turn, is important in any consideration of happiness or human flourishing, for "[t]he self-image is certainly very much influenced by the values and standards which one holds to be important and worthwhile. That which contributes to the happy life, the true life, and how one see himself [sic] in relation to these values will have a deciding effect on his perception of himself [sic]" (Vos, 1976:82). Louis Vos points out that pious believers are portrayed in various ways by Calvin: saints (1976:85 – 86), children of God (1976:86 – 88), God's noble workmanship (1976:95 – 98), sinner or 'wretched worm' (1976:98 – 102) and new created being (1976:85 – 95). One of the most important reasons for the emergence of a negative self-image in the Reformed tradition, argues Louis Vos (1976:107 – 108), can be attributed to a skewed understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Here he refers to an understanding of sanctification which is severed from

point that "they were the most miserable of all men if they were happy in this life only" – indeed, they were to disregard earthly life and meditate upon heavenly life (*Institutes* §2.10.10). The complexity of Calvin's thought on the present and future life illustrates this well. The present life is "like smoke or a shadow": it is nothing in comparison to the life to come, for Calvin (Beeke, 2004:143). We, pious believers, "are crucified to the world and the world to us"[96] – and yet we, pious believers, are also to enjoy this (present) life ("albeit with due restraint and moderation", Beeke (2004:143) adds).[97]

We are promised happiness 'in Christ' – indeed, human happiness is perfected in the union with God, Calvin would argue (*Institutes* §1.15.6). Indeed, for Calvin the highest good for human beings is union with God (*Institutes* §3.25.2). Happiness is attainable in union with Christ – which expresses Calvin's thinking on salvation – but this happiness would not necessarily "consist of outward changes" such as "leading a joyous and peaceful life, having rich possession, being safe from all harm, and abounding with delights such as the flesh commonly longs after" (*Institutes* §2.15.4). "No," writes Calvin (*Institutes* §2.15.4),

our happiness belongs to the heavenly life! In the world the prosperity and well-being of a people depend partly on an abundance of all good things and domestic peace, partly on strong defenses that protect them from outside attacks. In like manner, Christ enriches his people with all things necessary for the eternal salvation of souls and fortifies them with courage to stand unconquerable against all the assaults of spiritual enemies (*Institutes* §2.15.4).

Pious believers may therefore have to "pass through this life with its misery, hunger, cold, contempt, reproaches, and other troubles"[98] and yet be "content with this one thing: that our

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justification, in that God's grace becomes equated with the efforts of human beings to live good lives, which effectively erases justification (by faith and in Christ).

[96] Randall Zachman argues that the conformity of pious believers to Christ "means that any and every hope believers have for earthly happiness will be taken away from them" (2009:477).

[97] Beeke notes (2004:143) that "Calvin was no ascetic; he enjoyed good literature, good food, and the beauties of nature. But he rejected all forms of earthly excess... [since t]he believer is called to Christlike moderation, which includes modesty, prudence, avoidance of display, and contentment with our lot."

[98] However, Calvin would, if pushed to choose between earthly life and heavenly life, unequivocally place the future, eternal life that awaits pious believers above the present, earthly life: "Let the aim of believers in judging mortal life, then, be that while they understand it to be of itself nothing but misery, they may with greater eagerness and dispatch betake themselves wholly to meditate upon that eternal life to come. When it comes to a comparison with the life to come, the present life can not only be safely neglected but, compared to the former, must be utterly despised and loathed. For, if heaven is our homeland, what else is the earth but our place of exile? If departure from the world is entry into life, what else is the world but a sepulchre? And what else is it for us to remain in life but to be immersed in death? If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison? If to enjoy the presence of God is the summit of happiness, is not to

King will never leave us destitute, but will provide for our needs until, our warfare ended, we are called to triumph" (*Institutes* §2.15.4). The triumph that Calvin envisions is the resurrection, in which the earthly happiness that human beings long for and desire will come to full fruition or be perfected (*Institutes* §3.25.2).

Still, earthly happiness is possible[99] in the assurance that we, pious human beings, 'possess salvation' and 'have obtained eternal life in God's benevolence or favour toward us'. Indeed, because God is favourable, "no good can be lacking" - for when God "assures us of his love we are abundantly and sufficiently assured of salvation" (*Institutes* §3.2.28). Calvin does not dispute that earthly, present happiness may be possible – that 'all things may prosper for us' or that we may have 'firm assurance of all good things' – which flows from the belief that God loves us. However, the assurance that faith gives, he argues, is more deeply rooted than the mere belief that this life should be easy and good and fulfilling for those who love God (*Institutes* §3.2.28).[100] The happiness or fulfillment or blessing or goodness that pious human

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be without this, misery?... Therefore, if the earthly life be compared with the heavenly, it is doubtless to be at once despised and trampled under foot" (*Institutes* §3.9.4). Yet he adds, importantly, that "[o]f course it is never to be hated except in so far as it holds us subject to sin; although not even hatred of that condition may ever properly be turned against life itself" (*Institutes* §3.9.4). Calvin's argument here makes an important point regarding the methodological priorities that he employs in shaping his argument regarding happiness and salvation, for here his concern is pastoral before it is political or pedagogical: pious believers who experience despair and misery within this life are to be comforted by the assurance that God wills their flourishing, albeit in the life to come.

[99] Even though pious believers are to be aware of the miseries and limitations of this life, we are also to be grateful for earthly life, Calvin argues: "But let believers accustom themselves to a contempt of the present life that engenders no hatred of it or ingratitude against God. Indeed, this life, however crammed with infinite miseries it may be, is still rightly to be counted among those blessings of God which are not to be spurned. Therefore, if we recognize in it no divine benefit, we are already guilty of grave ingratitude toward God himself. For believers especially, this ought to be a testimony of divine benevolence, wholly destined, as it is, to promote their salvation. For before he shows us openly the inheritance of eternal glory, God wills by lesser proofs to show himself to be our Father. These are the benefits that are daily conferred on us by him. Since, therefore, this life serves us in understanding God's goodness, should we despise it as if it had no grain of good in itself? We must, then, become so disposed and minded that we count it among those gifts of divine generosity which are not at all to be rejected… When we are certain that the earthly life we live is a gift of God's kindness, as we are beholden to him for it we ought to remember it and be thankful" (*Institutes* §3.9.3). Here, too, earthly life serves as preparation for eternal life (and, indeed, points toward the heavenly life) and therefore points beyond itself – and yet, Calvin argues, it is not to be discarded summarily, for this life is itself a blessing from God in which happiness may be possible, if limited.

[100] Oberman's assessment (1993:282) is helpful in illustrating the ambiguity of happiness in Calvin's thinking, especially as it pertains to the world in which he lived: "Calvin appears as a complex figure indeed. He advanced the theme of the pursuit of eternal *and* earthly happiness, but located it squarely within the context of the dark human struggle for self-determination *colîte que colîte,* whatever the cost. He combined this sobering account with the optimistic expectation that through the providence of God man (sic) is destined to grow – in rationality and morality – towards an enjoyment which far surpasses anything that the old story of creation associated with Adam in paradise. This "optimism" is considerably tempered, however, by the conviction that in actual life most people are destined not for lasting happiness but for eternal misery. He shared the humanist pride of living in a time of the rebirth of classical letters and biblical studies, yet he saw Europe in the grip of a spirit of greed and

beings receive from God is indeed broader in scope,[101] in that the blessings or flourishing or happiness in this life points beyond itself, as "a foretaste of the goodness of God we will more fully enjoy in eternal life" (Zachman, 2009:479).

Human flourishing may not have been an explicit focus in Calvin's thought and writing, but it is clear that the question of human happiness was addressed by Calvin, at different points of his *Institutes* in particular, in different ways. Happiness, for Calvin, is the product of the assurance of faith – namely, that from God every blessing and benefit comes to believers. Calvin is realistic about both the realities of sin *and* the realities of evil, and thereby argues that the fullness of this happiness can only be experienced in the eternal, heavenly life – even if earthly happiness may be possible for some, sometimes. Calvin's own discussion on happiness can, however, be further enriched by his thoughts on piety, which is the outflow of his arguments on salvation as restoration. Human flourishing, in Calvin, has then not only to do with the triumph and hope of heavenly happiness and bliss, but also with imputed purity, the remedy of grace, and newness of life that speaks to earthly happiness.

2.2.6   Conclusion

John Calvin, argues Joel Beeke (2004:144), strove to live a life of piety himself ("theologically, ecclesiastically, and practically") and thereby "shows us the piety of a warm-hearted Reformed theologian who speaks from the heart". Stated somewhat differently, "[p]iety was the keynote of his character" (Mitchell Hunter in McNeill, 1960:lii). Calvin's concern for piety and Calvin's understanding of happiness are not mutually exclusive but are mutually enriching. Indeed (Vos, 1976:103 – 104),

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exploitation as never before." Zachman is critical of Calvin on this point, however (2009:481): "Many of Calvin's struggles as a pastor in Geneva were related to his concern to rein in what he considered to be the excessive pride, ostentation and vanity of the Genevans. Indeed, Calvin's valorization of abstinence, sobriety, frugality and moderation has tended to eclipse his concern that we contemplate and ejoy the beauty and sweetness of the good gifts of creation."

[101] "[F]aith does not certainly promise itself either to length of years or honor or riches in this life, since the Lord willed that none of these things be appointed for us. But it is content with this certainty: that, however many things fail us that have to do with the maintenance of this life, God will never fail. Rather, the chief assurance of faith rests in the expectation of the life to come, which has been placed beyond doubt through the Word of God. Yet whatever earthly miseries and calamities await those whom God has embraced in his love, these cannot hinder his benevolence from being their full happiness. Accordingly, when we would express the sum of blessedness, we have mentioned the grace of God; for from this fountain every sort of good thing flows unto us… In short, if all things flow unto us according to our wish, but we if are uncertain of God's love or hatred, our happiness will be accursed and therefore miserable" (*Institutes* §3.2.28).

[i]n spite of all the presentations of Calvin as an austere and rigid sort of person, it must be said that Calvin promoted joyful living. Our happiness, he claims, is in the Lord. Our joy is to be restored to the right order of things – that is, living in thankful obedience to our Creator-Redeemer... Calvin had a healthy appreciation of things which God gives to man [sic] – things not only for his necessity but also for his delight and pleasure.

Theology, for Calvin, therefore does not only "exist for the sake of piety" (Leith, 1973:vii), but thereby also has to do with happiness and flourishing. Indeed, "for Calvin, the goal of theology was not intellectual comprehension, but growth in sanctification" (Holmes, 2009:377); not speculation or idle curiosity, but the edification of believers and their growth in piety (Leith, 1973:vii). Human flourishing, in John Calvin's thought, concerns more than happiness: it concerns imputed purity, the remedy of grace, and newness of life – in short, human flourishing has to do with piety.

2.3   Joy? Salvation as blessedness (Friedrich Schleiermacher)

2.3.1   Introduction

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834) was "an eminent classicist, philosopher, and theologian" (Marina, 2005a:1), best known for his theological contributions[102] but significant also for his contributions to philosophy (Marina, 2005a:1). Schleiermacher is regarded by many as a 'pioneer' (Clements, 1987:1) or 'father' (Marina, 2005a:1; Gerrish, 1984:xi) of 'modern' or 'liberal' theology (Clements, 1987:7), in that "he introduced many of the ideas at the forefront of nineteenth-century German liberal Protestant theology" (Marina, 2005a:1).[103] Some describe him as 'a prince of the church' (Gerrish, 1984),[104] in the sense of

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[102] According to Martin Redeker "[t]heology… was his major concern", even if the implications and contributions of his life and work would reach 'far beyond the sphere of theology as such' (1973:5). See also Inken Mädler's description of Schleiermacher's scientific legacy (2005:22 – 24), Michael Welker's description of Schleiermacher's agenda as the universalisation of anthropology (2009:33 – 82), and Jan Rohls' guest lecture on Schleiermacher and the scientific culture of Christianity ("Schleiermacher und die wissenschaftliche Kultur des Christentums", 2009) in this regard.

[103] However, already in 1830, when the second (and final) edition of Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* is published, Schleiermacher himself would protest against such descriptions that had, by that time, arisen. In his own words, in the preface to this edition (1928:viii): "I must protest most emphatically against the honour recently done me in some quarters of bringing me forward as the head of a new theological school. I protest against this, because I am without neither of the two requisite qualifications. In the first place, I have invented nothing as far as I remember, except my order of topics and here or there a descriptive phrase; and similarly in my thinking I have never had any other aim than that of communicating my thoughts by way of stimulus, for

being both a preacher *and* a professor – in other words, of being "both devout and intellectually honest" (Gerrish, 1984:xiii). Indeed, Barth himself considered him to be (1) "a pastor", (2) "a professor of theology", and (3) "a philosopher" (1982:xviii). Others point to his wider contributions to German academia (Clements, 1987:29 – 30),[105] politics (Clements, 1987:30 – 32),[106] and ecclesiastical activities (Clements, 1987:32 – 34).[107] Schleiermacher is

each to use in his own fashion. Further, it is only in this sense – not as a mine of formulae by the repetition of which members of a school might recognize each other – that I issue this book for the second and certainly the last time." It must therefore be pointed out that even if such descriptions as noted above has become standard in theological writing, Schleiermacher himself never intended to found or create a new theological school of thinking – and perhaps did not even agree that he had done so by his writing of *The Christian Faith*!

[104] Brian Gerrish (cf. 1984:67) makes use of this title for his book on Schleiermacher and modern theology by referring to a section from Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline in the Study of Theology,* quoted from Terrence Tice's translation from the second German edition (1966:21): "Imagine the concern for religion and the scientific spirit united, for the sake of theory and practice, in the highest degree and in the most perfect balance, and you have the idea of a 'prince of the church'."

[105] Martin Redeker refers in this regard, firstly, to his role as 'professor', 'founder' and 'organiser' of the University of Berlin (1973:4 – 5). Schleiermacher would play an important role (with such well-known figures as Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt) in the formation of the new University of Berlin, which opened in 1810, as part of Prussian renewal. After the publication of his *Thoughts on German Universities from a German Viewpoint* (1808), Schleiermacher would be appointed to the commission – led by Wilhelm von Humboldt – that would "[lay] down the basic pattern to be followed" for the University. This would reflect Schleiermacher's own convictions about higher learning, including: (1) "a broad, coherent understanding of learning, philosophically based, in which individual disciplines could be pursued on their own but with equal scientific rigour"; (2) "a combination of research and teaching"; and (3) "a guarantee by the state of freedom in research and teaching" (Clements, 1987:29). Schleiermacher would be appointed chair of theology, become the first dean of the theological faculty (1810), and later also serve as rector of the University (1815) (Clements, 1987:29). Redeker refers, secondly, to Schleiermacher's role as "a prominent member and secretary of the Berlin Academy of Sciences" (1987:5), regarded as "the most prestigious body of higher learning and research in Germany" (Clements, 1987:30), where, according to Adolph von Harnack, he would do "outstanding work for the Philosophical Division" and exercise 'seminal' and 'formative' influences upon the Academy (Clements, 1987:30). Thirdly, for Redeker (1973:5), Schleiermacher would distinguish himself as one of the foremost classical philologists and Plato interpreters of his time, particularly by way of his translation of the works of Plato (Clements, 1987:30).

[106] As a 'political figure' (Redeker, 1973:5), both officially and unofficially (Clements, 1987:30), Schleiermacher would also be influential in a wider sense. Schleiermacher would be particularly involved in "the rebuilding of education in Prussia", not only through playing a part in the formation of the University of Berlin, but also by serving as a 'cabinet advisor' for education in the Ministry of the Interior in 1810 (Clements, 1987:30; cf. Redeker, 1973:5). A proud Prussian, Schleiermacher would however also be involved in the 'rebuilding of Prussia' in other ways – for instance, as editor of the *Prussische Zeitung* (a newspaper advocating for reform in Prussia and criticising compromise with the French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, who occupied Prussia at the time) during 1813 and 1814 (Clements, 1987:31)

[107] His 'primary ecclesiastical activity' would be his sermons, as the official preacher of the University of Berlin, and confirmation classes taught at the Holy Trinity Church (destroyed in 1943) (Clements, 1987:32). Indeed, Keith Clements (1987:32) describes Schleiermacher's sermons "as among the chief influences he wrought on his time – the more so as many of them found their way into print." Martin Redeker adds (1973:5) that "for forty years he devoted himself to the service of the Christian community as a preacher of the gospel." Yet Schleiermacher was not only involved in the activities of this particular congregation, but also in wider ecumenical affairs, such as "a joint Reformed-Lutheran celebration of communion [that] took place in Berlin in 1817, in commemoration of the tercentenary of the Reformation" (Clements, 1987:32) – or a controversy over the liturgy in the Reformed-Lutheran celebration of communion, which brought him in conflict with the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III, who "desired a union of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches in Prussia" and who made his views in such matters heard (Clements, 1987:32).

variously described as a 'classical', 'brilliant' and 'charming' figure (Barth, 1982:xvi); a "church father and religious virtuoso" (Dietrich Ritschl in Barth, 1982:ix), "a theologian of the Word" (DeVries, 1996:4); a religious, ecclesiastical and theological 'genius' (Christian Lülmann in Barth, 1982:xv); and a 'gigantic personality' (Christian Lülmann in Barth, 1982:xvi). In short, Schleiermacher could be described as "the most brilliant representative not only of a theological past but also of the theological present" (Barth, 1982:xv; cf. Begbie, 2007:141).

So too Schleiermacher's (theological) legacy has been described and received in a variety of ways. Modern Protestant theology, writes Keith Clements (1987:7), effectively begins with Schleiermacher. Indeed, with his *summa theologia* (Clements, 1987:34)*, The Christian Faith* (1830), Schleiermacher "ushered in a new period of systematic theology" (Redeker, 1973:5). For Karl Barth – who is well-known not only for his 'suspicion' of Schleiermacher (Barth, 1982:xv) but indeed for his 'war' on Schleiermacher (Barth, 1982:ix; cf. also Mädler, 2005:15)[108] – theological reflection *must* engage with Schleiermacher's legacy, for "[w]ittingly and willingly or no, Schleiermacher's method and presuppositions are the typical ferment in almost all theological work" (1982:xiii).[109] Indeed, with Schleiermacher 'a new epoch' or 'new period' had begun, not only in dogmatics, but in all theological disciplines (Barth, 1982:xiv). Moreover, Schleiermacher's ("almost incomparable") influence on post-Reformation theology is to be noted (Barth, 1982:xv). According to Barth (1982:xiv), even "the school of religious psychology" (which was apparently well-known in the 1920's in Göttingen) claims to stand in the tradition of Schleiermacher! Yet how did Schleiermacher do and describe theology?

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[108] The heart of this critique is that in Schleiermacher we find an 'anthropological turn' in theology, which is a "turn to our own immediate experience and perceptions" and which is problematic not only because it makes the subject – namely, human beings – the centre and condition for theological credibility, but also because it makes only a specific aspect of part of human beings – namely, feeling – the condition or qualification for religious experience, and hence Christian faith (Begbie, 2007:142). See also Emil Brünner's well-known critique of Schleiermacher in his *Die Mystik und das Wort* (1924).

[109] Indeed, he adds (Barth, 1982:xiv), "[i]t has to be admitted that his impact is not by 'n long way exhausted or worked out, that there have been and are innumerable theologians who have never truly realized the real influence of the ideas of Schleiermacher even though they live in and by them." See also Barth's analysis of Schleiermacher as a Christian theologian, and in particular his assessment of Schleiermacher's apologetic endeavours, in *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century,* and in particular pp. 425 – 473 (1972).

2.3.2   Theology of consciousness[110]

For Friedrich Schleiermacher, theology arises from personal conviction, not from proof or argument, and is therefore a 'positive science'[111] ("whose organizing principle lies outside itself in the practical tasks for which the science exists") which prepares Christian leaders for service in the church (Crouter, 2005:113 – 114). The *content* of theology is "the summation of all scientific elements", while the *purpose* of theology was "the leadership of the Christian community" (Crouter, 2005:116). Moreover, the *challenge* that theology faced in Schleiermacher's time was "to effect a balance between ecclesial and scientific interests" (Crouter, 2005:125). The basic theme for Schleiermacher's theological work, "both historically and systematically", is therefore that of religion, or piety, or Christian self-consciousness (Barth, 1982:xiii). For Schleiermacher there would be an important distinction between piety, as the essence of religion (which is felt inwardly), and theology, as written dogmatic formulae or doctrinal statements (as an outward formulation) (Clements, 1987:17, 23) – and yet theology, as a 'science' (*Christian Faith* §1.1) or a 'discipline' (*Christian Faith* §2.1), *studies* piety because it forms the basis of the Christian church (*Christian Faith* §3) and because the Christian church forms the context for the study of theology (*Christian Faith* §2).

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[110] This is a borrowed description from Walter Wyman (2005), for whom the focus on consciousness is in line with Schleiermacher's 'methodological innovation' of interpreting both sin and salvation from his philosophical anthropology – wherein human beings are construed as those conscious of God and God's grace (salvation) and those conscious of alienation from God (sin), respectively (2005:129 – 130) – which will be discussed later in this study.

[111] It is, however, important to understand what Schleiermacher means by his description of theology as a 'science' and the task of theology as 'scientific'. "At the end of the eighteenth century rival theological camps staked out positions", writies Richard Crouter (2005:111) – wherein "theology as an intellectual discipline was poorly defined" and "its tasks and methods anything but self-evident" (Crouter, 2005:112). For some (whose position Crouter calls 'the Kantian view'), theology was equated with morality: "Jesus exemplifies the moral ideal of practical philosophy" and no store is set by "Christian doctrine, biblical theology, and the life of the church" (Crouter, 2005:111). For others (whose position Crouter calls 'a biblically based supernaturalism'), theology was equated with supernaturalism: Jesus' deity is proved by the bible's miracles (Crouter, 2005:111). And for yet another group (whose position Crouter calls 'speculative rationalism'), theology was equated with speculation: Jesus and the claims of theology were 'subsumed beneath a dominant philosophical truth' (Crouter, 2005:111). Schleiermacher took in position against all of these 'theological camps' by describing theology as a 'science', and therefore working out theology's task and methods in an intellectually disciplined way (Crouter, 2005:112). The claims of Christian theology can be described as 'scientific', according to Schleiermacher, insofar they are 'conceptually coherent' (Crouter, 2005:122), 'systematic' (Herms, 2005:212), 'consistent' (Herms, 2005:212), 'non-contradictory' (Herms, 2005:213), 'descriptive' (Herms, 2005:213), 'didactic' (Herms, 2005:213), 'disciplined' (Crouter, 2005:126) – or, in other words, 'academic' (Crouter, 2005:125). The reason why Schleiermacher uses the specific description '*positive* science' lies in his concern for knowledge that studies practical matters ("the interest in knowledge of the nature and actual state of practical affairs") – as opposed to '*pure* science', for which knowledge is pure reflection upon itself (the interest in knowledge is "the nature of knowledge itself and the practice of knowing") (Herms, 2005:210).

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Piety is therefore the subject matter of theology (and particularly dogmatics) (*Christian Faith* §3.1).

There are, however, three modes of human activity that determine scientific study of 'the human condition' (Herms, 2005:210), namely knowing, doing and feeling (*Gefühl*) (*Christian Faith* §3.3; cf. Begbie, 2007:146)). These modes of activity are driven by "an inner determination of the immediate self-consciousness" to 'symbolise' and 'organise' scientific (including theological) knowledge (Herms, 2005:210). The first of these modes, 'knowing', practices the activity of 'symbolising' (Herms, 2005:210) wherein 'knowledge is possessed' and the subject 'abides-in-self' (*Christian Faith* §3.3). The second of these modes, 'doing', practices the activity of 'organising' (Herms, 2005:210) wherein 'knowledge becomes real' and the subject 'passes-beyond-self' (*Christian Faith* §3.3). The third of these modes, 'feeling', is 'immediate self-consciousness' (*Christian Faith* §3.2) wherein the subject (as with the mode of 'knowing') 'abides-in-self' (*Christian Faith* §3.3). Knowledge, also theological knowledge, is shaped by "the totality of human activity" – in a combination of knowing, doing and feeling, in other words (Herms, 2005:209). Piety belongs to the realm of feeling, for Schleiermacher, but thereby also 'stimulates' knowing and doing (*Christian Faith* §3.4). Herein piety is safeguarded, namely in that it is not measured by *knowledge* of piety (whereby "the amount of such knowledge in a man must be the measure of his piety" [sic]) or the *practice* of piety (since "not only the most admirable but also the most abominable, not only the most useful but also the most inane and meaningless things, are done as pious and out of piety"), but by 'the strength of theological conviction' which resides in 'the immediate self-consciousness' (*Christian Faith* §3.4). The essence of piety is being conscious of being in relation with God or being absolutely dependent (*Christian Faith* §4; cf. Adams, 2005:38). In other words, piety "is a state in which Knowing, Feeling and Doing are combined" but which, "in its diverse expressions remains essentially a state of Feeling" (*Christian Faith* §3.5).[112]

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[112] Yet piety does not *only* involve feeling as 'immediate self-consciousness'. The 'essence of piety' is the feeling of 'absolute dependence' (*Christian Faith* §4). Religious feeling or emotions, as 'affective self-consciousness' are expressions of 'being absolutely dependent' or 'being in relation to God' (*Christian Faith* §15.1 & §4). The feeling of absolute dependence may reside in our 'immediate self-consciousness' but "comes from a source outside of us", for Schleiermacher, and therefore "to feel oneself absolutely dependent and to be conscious of being in relation with God are one and the same thing" (*Christian Faith* §4.4). Piety is therefore an awareness or consciousness of self in the same moment of being aware or conscious of God (*Christian Faith* §4.4).

The content of theology or dogmatics is scientific knowledge of this piety (*Christian Faith* §3.4) – more specifically, "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech" (*Christian Faith* §15). Before Schleiermacher's understanding of Christian doctrine or dogmatics is explored, however, one may ask where and how the study of Christian doctrine is situated within Schleiermacher's broader theological project.

Theology, argued Schleiermacher already in his *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* (in 1811 the 'blueprint' for his forthcoming editions of *The Christian Faith*, in 1821 – 1822 and 1830), is philosophical ("while avoiding undue dependence on any specific school of philosophy"), historical ("while not succumbing to historical relativism") and practical ("while placing its concern for lived religion squarely on the shoulders of a well-educated clergy") (Crouter, 2005:112). Together these descriptions of theology constitute a 'tripartite division of theology' for Schleiermacher, as part of an extensive "systematic program of theological inquiry" (Crouter, 2005:112). Christian doctrine is the focus of the second of these theological disciplines, discussed under what he calls 'historical theology' – but in order to explore Schleiermacher's interpretation of the nature and function of Christian doctrine an orientation will be needed regarding Schleiermacher's understanding of the distinct place and tasks of philosophical theology, historical theology and practical theology.

Philosophical theology is a *critical* discipline (Crouter, 2005:123) which investigates the 'essence' (or uniqueness, or identity) of the Christian life (Herms, 2005:211) and which could therefore be described as "philosophical reflection on the form and content of a religion in its givenness" (Courter, 2005:115; cf. *Brief Outline* §§32 – 68). This includes the tasks of apologetics ("which looks outward and locates the church with respect to its origins in history"; cf. *Brief Outline* §§43 – 53) and polemics ("which looks inward and analyses the community's aberrations and afflictions"; *Brief Outline* §§54 – 62) (Courter, 2005:115).

Historical theology is an *empirical*[113] discipline (Crouter, 2005:123) which "investigates the continuous change in Christian life as it manifests itself in concrete historical moments"

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[113] The 'empirical' position is "Schleiermacher's term for Enlightenment rationalism" and the one extreme which he seeks to avoid in his account of Christian doctrine (Wyman, 2005:129; cf. *Christian Faith* §100.3). The other extreme is the 'magical' position, which is "Schleiermacher's pejorative term for supernaturalism" (Wyman 2005:129; cf. *Christian Faith* §100.3). For him, the 'true mean' or middle way between these two extreme positions would be what he calls a 'mystical' position, which – Schleiermacher admits (*Christian Faith* §100.3) – is "so extremely vague that it seems better to avoid it". Yet he chooses to employ this term nonetheless,

(Herms, 2005:211; cf. *Brief Outline* §§69 – 256) and which could therefore be described as giving an account of "the reality of the Christian consciousness over time", reaching from 'the age of the apostles' through to 'contemporary dogmatics' (Courter, 2005:117). Historical theology consists of three parts: exegetical theology, church history, and dogmatic theology (Herms, 2005:212). Exegetical theology, firstly, "explores the foundational historical moments of Christian communal life through interpretation of the New Testament" (but, notably, not the Old Testament) (Herms, 2005:212; cf. *Brief Outline* §§103 – 148) with a particular focus on Christ, his disciples and the early Christian communities. Church history, secondly, explores the effects of these 'foundational historical moments' on the present historical moment, as it has been mediated through history (Herms, 2005:212; cf. *Brief Outline* §§149 – 194). Dogmatic theology,[114] thirdly,[115] "is the complete systematization of all statements of faith" which explores 'the evangelical faith' through reflecting "the essential expressions of Christian consciousness at each moment of its history" (Herms, 2005:212 – 213; cf. *Brief Outline* §§196 – 256). Dogmatic theology is again subdivided into two parts, namely Christian doctrine (which "systematizes *ontological*… expressions of the Christian faith") and Christian ethics (which "systematizes *practical* expressions of the Christian faith") (Herms, 2005:213; my italics – NM).

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because it could, in his view, keep the credibility and the essence of the Christian faith together (Wyman, 2005:130; cf. *Christian Faith* §100.3).

[114] It is worth mentioning two related controversial issues regarding Schleiermacher's dogmatic theology that arose in particular from Schleiermacher's lectures of 1831 – 1832 (as it is contained in his *Theologische Enzyklopädie*), namely (1) placement and (2) formulation. Firstly, the placement of 'dogmatic theology' within 'historical theology' was, even in Schleiermacher's time, contested. In Germany at the time the standard arrangement of theology followed a fourfold division, namely: exegetical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology (Crouter, 2005:120). Richard Crouter writes that "Schleiermacher was well aware of the novelty of placing this field of inquiry within historical theology" (2005:119) but that this choice reflects his concern for church life. Indeed, Schleiermacher's rationale for such a 'novel' move was the linking of "expressions of doctrine" to "the actual life of the church" (Crouter, 2005:120). Moreover, praxis informs theory (Crouter, 2005:125). Thought and practice belong together, for Schleiermacher, and therefore "matters of intellectual principle and foundational insight" and their "specific, embodied details" are not separate, but linked (Crouter, 2005:11). This is also the rationale behind the Schleiermacher's preference for the formulation 'dogmatic theology' over 'systematic theology', secondly. Whereas 'systematic theology' stresses, rightly so for Schleiermacher, the 'coherent interrelations of doctrines' (as opposed to "just an aggregate of theological insights"), it does not do justice to either the historical character or the practical concerns of Christian doctrines (Crouter, 2005:119). Therefore "dogmatics remains the preferred name for his craft" (Crouter, 2005:119).

[115] It is, however, important to note that Eilert Herms himself refers to this 'third member' or aspect of historical theology not as dogmatic theology, but as "knowledge of the present situation", and points out that this third subdivision of historical theology consists really of two parts: church statistics (which has to do with "taking stock of the current state of the church") and dogmatic theology (2005:212). However, others (like Richard Crouter) refer to this third subdivision within historical theology simply as 'dogmatics' (2005:118) and therefore, for the sake of clarity of argument, this study will follow Crouter in a generalised description of this third subdivision of historical theology as 'dogmatics'.

Practical theology is a *technical* discipline (Crouter, 2005:123) which "concerns the knowledge of rules" (Herms, 2005:211) – particularly "rules for application in the church" (Helmer, 2005:233) – and which could therefore be described as the communication of the Christian consciousness, manifested in or mediated by Christian faith communities (Courter, 2005:117; cf. *Brief Outline* §§257 – 338). This includes the tasks of church service (which "consists of the tasks of preaching… and liturgics"; cf. *Brief Outline* §§277 – 308) and church governance (which has to do with "the necessary participation of the pastor/theologian in the affairs of the wider church"; cf. *Brief Outline* §§309 – 334) (Crouter, 2005:124 – 125).

These three theological disciplines (and their many subdivisions and particular tasks) are differentiated and yet also tightly interwoven in Schleiermacher's thought. In other words, each of these disciplines stands as 'a distinctive mode of inquiry' and at the same time stands in 'dialectical' and 'reciprocal' relationships to one another (Crouter, 2005:117 – 118). Philosophical theology is the 'root' (*Wurzel*) of theology (Crouter, 2005:116; cf. footnote 18) without which neither historical theology nor practical theology can "make any headway in its subject matter" (Herms, 2005:213). Historical theology 'founds' or 'grounds' (as the *Begründing* of) practical theology and 'confirms' or 'protects' (as the *Bewährung* of) philosophical theology (Crouter, 2005:117). Practical theology is the 'goal' or 'crown' (*Krone*) of all theology (Crouter, 2005:116; cf. footnote 18), as "the place where the theologian's gifts yield fruit" (Crouter, 2005:123). With this portrayal of Schleiermacher's theological landscape in mind, two challenges to a study of Schleiermacher and the imagining of human flourishing have to be mentioned. A first major challenge in such an endeavour is the complexity of Schleiermacher's own systematic thought, particularly underlying his extensive theological methodology, and his 'rigorous self-reflexivity' (Crouter, 2005:111). It is with the second of these disciplines, historical theology, and more particularly with dogmatic theology, that this study will be concerned, even though these various disciplines cannot be separated or isolated from one another.

A second major challenge lies in the sheer volume and scope of Schleiermacher's written work. As a 'master teacher' (Crouter, 2005:111), Friedrich Schleiermacher has written (and taught) extensively – Jacqueline Marina would go as far as describing him as a 'polymath' (2005a:10) – ranging from Plato to Kant to the philosophy of religion to hermeneutics to

dogmatics to ethics (Marina, 2005a:1; cf. Clements, 1987:29), and therefore a wealth of (his own as well as secondary) material can and should be studied. However, this study will focus on his *magnum opus* (and major *dogmatic* work)*, The Christian Faith*,[116] supplemented where needed by necessary references to some of his other publications – since (1) this book is regarded "by competent thinkers" as "the most important work covering the whole field of doctrine to which Protestant theology can point" ("with the exception of Calvin's *Institutes*", adds Mackintosh and Stewart) (Schleiermacher, 1928:v), and (2) in this book "[f]aith in Jesus as the Redeemer is the determining principle for the whole, from the very first to the very last page" (Tice, 1967:119). Having outlined Schleiermacher's 'theology of consciousness', the nature and function of Christian doctrine can be considered in the broader context of his theological landscape outlined above.

2.3.3   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

For Friedrich Schleiermacher, "all doctrines properly so called must be extracted from the Christian religious self-consciousness" or "inward experience of Christian people" (*Christian Faith* §64.1). Dogmatic theology, in turn, describes "the formation of doctrine", "the bringing to clarity of the pious self-consciousness" and "the shape of the communal life" (Herms, 2005:212). More specifically, "[d]ogmatics is a *historical* discipline since it does not *construct* doctrines but merely *reflects* the essential expressions of Christian consciousness at each moment of its history" (Herms, 2005:212; original italics). 'The life of the church', in other words, determines which Christian doctrines are valid (Herms, 2005:212). For Schleiermacher, "[d]ogmatic [t]heology is the science which systematizes the doctrine prevalent in a Christian [c]hurch at a given time" (*Christian Faith* §19). Theology, also dogmatic theology, is "built on a living tradition of faith" (Crouter, 2005:118; cf. *Brief*

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[116] In following Walter Wyman (2005:147; footnote 1), Jacqueline Marina (2005b:169; footnote 3) and other authoritative Schleiermacher scholars, this study will make use of the authoritative translation by Hugh Ross Mackintosh and James Stuart Stewart (Schleiermacher, 1928). This work of Schleiermacher has been described as "a work of epoch-making significance, to be ranked with the *Institutes* by John Calvin… as one of the masterpieces of Protestant thought" (Gerrish, 1984:4). Indeed, Richard Crouter would argue that Schleiermacher exemplies "an equally bold ambition and similarly systematic cast of mind" as that of his 'preferred Reformation theologian', John Calvin (Crouter, 2005:111). For others, Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* can also be compared to Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (Marina, 2005a:11; footnote 1; Brandt, 2011:1) or Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (Brandt, 2011:1) "as among the great systematic expressions of Christian theology" (Brandt, 2011:1). In an address to the International Schleiermacher conference of 1984, Brian Gerrish would make the point that although many theologians have assumed that 'Schleiermacher and the Reformation' really means 'Schleiermacher and Luther', this relationship should be broadened to include 'Schleiermacher and Calvin' (1985:1).

Outline §81). Christian doctrine and Christian ethics, the two divisions of dogmatic theology, are, for Schleiermacher 'bearers' of this tradition in history (Crouter, 2005:119).

The relationship between Christian doctrine and Christian ethics therefore deserve attention, as the two expressions of dogmatic theology, but also because Schleiermacher wrote not only his well-known *The Christian Faith* (two editions)*,* but also his lesser known *Christian Ethics* (published posthumously in 1843) (Brandt, 2011:1). Both Christian doctrine *and* Christian ethics have, as their task, to 'systematise non-contradictory statements of faith' in a 'descriptive-didactic' manner (Herms, 2005:213). Christian doctrine and Christian ethics are therefore integrally related, in their common purpose of articulating 'the pious Christian life' (Herms, 2005:213; cf. *Christian Faith* §26) or of 'representing the whole reality of the Christian life' (*Christian Faith* §26.2). Moreover, both Christian doctrine *and* Christian ethics are directed toward God's redemptive relation to the world, albeit by way of different expressions – Christian doctrine contains "all expressions of the Christian faith that speak to this interest", whereas Christian ethics contains all expressions of the Christian faith that have to do with the incentive of Christian piety to action (Herms, 2005:215). Stated somewhat differently, Christian doctrine systematises *ontological* expressions of the Christian faith, whereas Christian ethics systematises *practical* expressions of the Christian faith (Herms, 2005:213). In short, then, "Christian ethics and Christian doctrine cover the same breadth of subject matter, but from two different perspectives" (Herms, 2005:215) – and so, even when they differ regarding *content,* Christian ethics and Christian doctrine are intertwined in that "they mutually presuppose one another" (Herms, 2005:216).[117]

Christian doctrine in particular, with its systematisation of what Schleiermacher calls 'ontological' expressions of the Christian faith, has to do with cosmology and anthropology (Herms, 2005:213), for it concerns itself with the feeling of absolute dependence or "the relation of the self to God" (Herms, 2005:216) and therefore with 'human existence' (*Christian Faith* §26.1). Stated somewhat differently, "doctrine is a record of all the common elements of the Christian consciousness" (*Christian Faith* §20.1).

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[117] In Schleiermacher's thought, Christian doctrine and Christian ethics therefore belong together – "[f]or it is inconceivable that a man (sic) should everywhere and always have in his self-consciousness the emotions which are expressed in the doctrines of the Christian faith, without also acting, everywhere and always, in the way set forth by Christian morals" (*Christian Faith* §26.2). And again, as argued elsewhere (*Christian Faith* §29.2), "we should… always keep in mind the fact that to a system of Christian doctrine, of whatever form, there essentially belongs also a system of Christian moral developing in harmony with it."

On the one hand, this means that all Christian doctrine is 'supra-rational', in that Christian doctrines or dogmas cannot be appropriated by way of 'scientific means' and therefore 'lie outside the realm of reason' (*Christian Faith* §1.11). Rather, writes Schleiermacher, Christian doctrines are based on an experience "apprehended by the love which wills to perceive" (*Christian Faith* §1.11). On the other hand, however, Christian doctrines or dogmas are at the very same time "subject to the same laws of conception and synthesis as regulate all speech" and can therefore also be described as entirely rational or 'according to reason' (*Christian Faith* §1.11). The supra-rationality of Christian doctrines is what makes doctrine particularly *Christian*, whereas the rationality of Christian doctrines is what makes doctrine *comprehensible,* able 'to translate the inward (religious) emotions into thoughts' (*Christian Faith* §1.11).

For Schleiermacher, then, an analysis of Christian doctrines is simultaneously also an investigation of language or communication (cf. *Christian Faith* §15). 'Real doctrine' (*Glaubenssatz*) is born of outward presentation of an inward religious feeling,[118] as it is made manifest in 'definite speech' (*Christian Faith* §15.1). The communicability of 'the Redeemer's self-consciousness' stands, for Schleiermacher, at the heart of scientific accounts of Christian doctrine, because (1) Christian doctrine has to do with the work of Jesus Christ[119] and because (2) Christian doctrine is also at the same time expressed through Christian preaching. It is this interest in 'the formation of religious language' which makes doctrinal formulation and dogmatic theology 'scientific' (*Christian Faith* §16.3).

The theological connections between Christian doctrine and Christian preaching are particularly important to Schleiermacher, because preaching has been the primary way by means of which 'Christianity has spread itself' (*Christian Faith* §15.2).[120] Indeed, 'the total

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[118] Although it should be made clear, particularly here, that "[b]y *Gefühl,* Schleiermacher does not mean merely an emotion. Feeling includes emotion, but it is wider and deeper, for it is a profound sense of the *whole* of us being in relation to the infinite" (Begbie, 2007:146).

[119] Here it should be noted that Schleiermacher himself "never says 'Jesus Christ'" in his preaching, which reflects his concerns regarding the theological mistakes embedded in the doctrinal formulations regarding the two natures of Christ. Rather, notes Terrence Tice, Schleiermacher uses 'Christ' or 'the Redeemer' or 'Jesus the only-begotten Son of God' (Tice, 1967:121).

[120] Yet Schleiermacher also qualifies his statements later in his *Christian Faith,* when he distinguishes quite clearly between Christian preaching and Christian 'teaching' or 'doctrine' (*Lehre*). Christian *preaching*, he writes (*Christian Faith* §18.3), has to do with "the utterance and presentation which have a directly rousing effect". Christian *doctrine*, however (*Christian Faith* §18.3), has to do with "that communication which employs

mass' of Christian doctrines 'arose' and 'were worked out' from Christ's own preaching (*Christian Faith* §18.1). He would go so far as to state that "the dogmatic procedure has reference entirely to preaching, and only exists in the interests of preaching" (*Christian Faith* §19.1).[121] Stated somewhat differently, for Schleiermacher the content of Christian doctrine and the communication of Christian doctrine are interdependent and interrelated. This leads to his distinction between three different modes of communication or speech, according to which Christian doctrine can also be sorted into three distinct doctrinal 'types' or 'spaces' (*Christian Faith* §15.2), namely descriptive spaces (expressed poetically), stimulative spaces (expressed rhetorically), and instructive spaces (expressed didactically).

Christian doctrine, firstly, occupies a descriptive space, which is expressed poetically. "The poetic expression," argues Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §16.1), "is always based originally upon a moment of exaltation which has come purely from within, a moment of enthusiasm or inspiration". This mode of expression, he adds (*Christian Faith* §16.1), is 'purely descriptive (*darstellend*)', in that it "sets up in general outlines images and forms which each hearer completes for himself (sic) in his own peculiar way". Doctrines are imaginative and creative expressions, in language, of internal events that bring forth new energy (enthusiasm) and new insight (inspiration), and are therefore spontaneously descriptive.

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the didactic form of expression" (whereafter he qualifies this last definition even further, by pointing to its twofold use – in (1) 'homiletic practice' and in (2) 'dogmatic schools'). He adds that, within dogmatic theology, Christian doctrines are first isolated in order to establish the 'clarity' and 'independence' of 'the idea', and then brought into relation with all other doctrines, in order to (ultimately) satisfy the need for 'a complete system of doctrine' (*Christian Faith* §18.3). Preaching itself benefits from "a system of doctrine elaborated with dialectical precision" because it not only has the concern of clear communication to attend to, but also itself take the form of 'popular teaching or doctrine' at times (*Christian Faith* §18.3).

[121] See Dawn DeVries' important study on *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (1996), wherein she argues that "[i]t is the Christ present in the proclaimed Word (the *Christus praesens*) that is the center of both Calvin's and Schleiermacher's preaching" (1996:ix). For Schleiermacher in particular, his theology of preaching and his theory of religious language are inseparable (1996:48). On the one hand, "[p]reachers, like Christ, exercise an efficacious influence on their hearers" (1996:63) by being "active in communicating" (and by having an audience that are receptive to their act of communicating) (1996:63). On the other hand, the communication of preachers "is the transparent medium through which their hearers encounter the living Christ" (1996:63). Moreover, DeVries notes that despite their differences in the interpretations of texts, Calvin and Schleiermacher have 'similar homiletic strategies' (1996:89): "Neither is particularly curious about the history behind the texts, although both of them seem to presuppose the historicity of the events narrated. Neither of them can bear to say only what the words and narrative structure of the text would permit, for they both constantly translate their texts from stories to general principles, doctrine, or applications to present experience. And both preachers state explicitly that the proclamation conveys not mere information about Christ, but the very presence of the Redeemer himself."

Christian doctrine, secondly, occupies a stimulative space, which is expressed rhetorically. Rhetorical expression, argues Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §16.1), is based "upon a moment whose exaltation has come from without, a moment of stimulated interest which issues in a particular definite result". The rhetorical form of doctrine can, in turn, be subdivided into a further four forms, according to its respective 'inward' or 'outward' directions or *foci*. Inwardly, doctrine that takes on a rhetorical form may be either 'disciplinary' or 'challenging'. Outwardly, doctrine that takes on a rhetorical form may be either 'combative' or 'commendatory'. Rhetorical expression aims at 'significance' – 'the highest degree of significance', even – and thereby takes the context or circumstances or audience seriously within its communication (*Christian Faith* §15.2). Doctrines are purposive and calculating expressions, in language, of external events that bring forth new engagement (stimulated interest) and new focus (with a definite result in mind), and are therefore strategically stimulative.

Both poetic and rhetorical expressions of Christian doctrine are 'indefinite' and therefore decidedly 'unscientific', for Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §17.2), which means that the descriptive and stimulative expressions of Christian doctrine must be augmented by greater 'definiteness' and 'precision' in accounting for its dogmatic propositions.[122] Christian doctrine therefore, thirdly, also occupies an instructive space, which is expressed didactically. Didactic expression is distinct from poetic expression and rhetorical expression, for Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §16.1), in that it is "less preaching than as confession". And yet he also regards didactic expression as being made up of poetic expression and rhetorical expression 'put together' (*Christian Faith* §16.1). Didactic expression stems from "contemplation of the Christian self-consciousness" in 'a critical way', rather than in 'a heuristic way' (*Christian Faith* §17.2) and occurs (like poetic and rhetorical expressions) within 'the realm of language' (18.2). Doctrines, in other words, are critical and self-reflective expressions, in language, of the Christian faith as it is manifested in both internal *and* external events, and are therefore purposively instructive.

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[122] Interestingly, for Schleiermacher Christian doctrine is 'primary' and 'original' when it is communicated poetically (or 'descriptively') and rhetorically (or 'stimulatively'), but 'derivative' and 'secondary' when it is communicated didactically (or 'instructively'). Schleiermacher associates primary expression of Christian doctrine with preaching, and secondary expression of Christian doctrine with Christian confession (*Christian Faith* §16.3).

In short, Christian doctrines or 'dogmatic propositions' have to do with "logically ordered reflection upon the immediate utterances of the religious self-consciousness" (*Christian Faith* §16.3) that may be expressed poetically, rhetorically and didactically. This means that no Christian doctrines arise from mere speculation or 'speculative activity' (*Christian Faith* §16.PS)[123] even if the way in which Christian doctrines may be expressed vary. In order to distinguish clearly between speculative propositions and dogmatic propositions, Schleiermacher points out two characteristics of all Christian doctrines, namely: (1) dogmatic propositions have their origin in "the original self-proclamation of Christ"; and (2) dogmatic propositions expressed poetically and rhetorically are crucial to the development of didactic language, and yet do not by themselves go far enough to constitute 'dogmatic language' (*Christian Faith* §16.PS). Indeed often, he argues (*Christian Faith* §16.PS), "the dogmatic definitions were called forth by contradictions to which the rhetorical expressions had led". Therefore 'theology' and 'philosophy' need to be clearly distinguished and separated, if Christian doctrines are to maintain "the distinctive form of its dogmatic propositions" (*Christian Faith* §16.PS). In other words, Christian doctrine has as its focus or 'material' "the Christian condition of the soul that is formed by the redemptive activity of Christ" (Herms, 2005:220).

This leads Schleiermacher to point out that Christian doctrines have a twofold value, namely an ecclesiastical value and a scientific value (cf. *Christian Faith* §17). The ecclesiastical value of Christian doctrine lies in its reference to or assumption of 'religious emotions' or 'religious feeling', and particularly to "the reference to Christ as Redeemer" (*Christian Faith* §17.1). Indeed, for Schleiermacher "the ultimate purpose of all Christian theology, [d]ogmatics included" is "for the advancement and guidance of the [c]hurch" (*Christian Faith* §19.PS). The scientific value of Christian doctrine lies in (1) the precision or exactness with which concepts are employed within dogmatic propositions as explanations for figurative expressions, and (2) how well dogmatic propositions harmonise with kindred propositions

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[123] Here Schleiermacher warns particularly of the dangers of conflating theology with philosophy (*Christian Faith* §16.PS). He writes that the separation of theology and philosophy is "of the greatest importance" so that speculations will not be 'offered' as dogmatic propositions and so that "the distinctive form of… dogmatic propositions does not depend on any form or school of philosophy" (*Christian Faith* §16.PS). And yet he again qualifies this warning later in this chapter (*Christian Faith* §19.PS), wherein he deals with the definition of dogmatics, by pointing out that dogmatics depends (more so than any other theological disciplines) on philosophy, particularly because "philosophy makes frequent new beginnings" and creates "new expressions for the field from which [d]ogmatics draws its vocabulary" (*Christian Faith* §19.PS). Herein, in the relationship between philosophy and dogmatics, lies both danger and promise for Schleiermacher.

(*Christian Faith* §17.2). In other words, the scientific value of Christian doctrines lies in their (combined) conceptual clarity and coherence, in (1) accurately conveying or translating the meaning of poetic and rhetorical expressions in didactic (theological) language and (2) maintaining the self-contained whole of the realm of dogmatic language. Without *both* the ecclesiastical 'interest' *and* the scientific 'character' (in its twofold sense), dogmatic propositions may risk losing either their 'religious' *or* their scientific character, and may therefore finally cease to be dogmatic propositions (*Christian Faith* §17.3).

In summary, Schleiermacher would outline at least a fourfold purpose or task of Christian doctrine that is poetic, rhetorical and didactic, in the interests of clarifying not only the *nature* but also the *function* of Christian doctrine (*Christian Faith* §19.4). Firstly, he argues, Christian doctrines express a public, ecclesiastical understanding of faith (cf. *Christian Faith* §19.3). Secondly, Christian doctrines 'present' the system of dogmatic propositions, and must therefore be coherent and systematic – both individually *and* collectively (cf. *Christian Faith* §19.4). Thirdly, Christian doctrines go back to 'religious affections' or arise from 'the religious self-consciousness' (cf. *Christian Faith* §19.4; §19.PS). Lastly, Christian doctrines are derived from the self-proclamation of Christ – which is its 'only source' (cf. *Christian Faith* §19.PS). Dogmatic theology, in other words, has as its 'task' or its 'work' the 'purifying' as well as the 'perfecting' of Christian knowledge and, in turn, of Christian doctrines (*Christian Faith* §19.PS).

Whether descriptive, stimulative or instructive, Christian doctrines must therefore be 'relevant' (*Christian Faith* §19.1), 'profitable' (*Christian Faith* §19.1), 'diverse' (*Christian Faith* §19.2), 'public' (*Christian Faith* §19.3), representative of the church's 'common piety' (*Christian Faith* §19.3), and open to 'improvements' and 'developments' (*Christian Faith* §19.3). As a historical discipline, "[t]here is a certain sense… in which all dogmatic statements are historically contingent" (Herms, 2005:228). *How* Christian doctrine may practice or embody these various characteristics will therefore depend on the methodological strategies employed in interpreting Christian doctrine in his thought.

2.3.4   Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

"Every system of doctrine," writes Friedrich Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §20), "is a self-contained and closely-connected whole of dogmatic propositions". There must, for him, be (1) 'a rule' for their inclusion and (2) 'a principle' for their arrangement (*Christian Faith* §20). Christian doctrine contributes to the 'healthy' and 'diseased' 'conditions' of the Christian church (*Christian Faith* §21.1) and therefore 'the natural heresies' within Christianity – namely docetism, nazareanism, manicheanism and pelagianism (cf. *Christian Faith* §22) – must be avoided.

Yet for Schleiermacher not only the (negative) methodological move of considering what ought to be *excluded* from the realm of Christian doctrine would be of importance. There would, arguably, also be a (positive) methodological move wherein Schleiermacher makes various approaches to Christian doctrine itself clear (cf. *Christian Faith* §27.4).[124]

His argument regarding 'the formation of the dogmatic system' (*Christian Faith* §§27 – 35) begins by making clear that Christian doctrine appeals, in the first place, to 'evangelical confessional documents' (or 'symbols'), and only thereafter to the New Testament.[125] Indeed, the direct appeal to 'Evangelical' or 'Protestant' confessions implies the indirect appeal to the New Testament – but "not the Bible in general"[126] (*Christian Faith* §27.1; §27.3). A first

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[124] For some, such as Ellen Charry (2006:162), Schleiermacher "systematized, or tidied up, an exhaustive treatment of Christian doctrines and wrapped them around a single doctrine" (Charry, 2006:162). Charry points out that Schleiermacher reduced all doctrines to a single principle (2006:162), namely "that all Christian doctrines promote piety" (Strawn, 2012:230). If one does consider Schleiermacher's focus on Christian piety to be his chief methodological strategy then it must also, however, be pointed out that piety does not arise independently within an individual "but only out of the communion and in the communion" (*Christian Faith* §24.4). If piety is indeed the pivotal concept in Schleiermacher's interpretation of Christian doctrine, then it is of a communal piety, such as is found in the Christian church. Others, such as David Strauss, would agree that for Schleiermacher (at least in his *Christian Faith*) there is but one doctrine, but he would identify this not so much as piety as the person of Christ (Gerrish, 1984:23). And yet others, such as Brian Gerrish, would agree with Strauss that the doctrine of the person of Christ "dominates Schleiermacher's theological reflection from beginning to end" (1984:25), but would warn that this does not mean "that everything in his theology is deduced from a single centre" (1984:45). It seems as if Schleiermacher's methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine are indeed varied, and consequently that any single overarching and sweeping description of his dogmatics may prove to be inadequate.

[125] He adds that "the general custom of appealing in dogmatic systems to the dicta of other teachers, from the Church Fathers down to the most recent" may have value (although "not always the same value") but is 'non-essential' to the formulation of Christian doctrines, and therefore he is "completely silent" as to this 'custom' in his exploration of the sources for formulating Christian doctrine (*Christian Faith* §27.PS).

[126] Schleiermacher is quite clear about why he only appeals to the New Testament and deliberately excludes the Old Testament in formulating Christian doctrine (*Christian Faith* 27.3): "[E]veryone must admit that if a doctrine had neither direct nor indirect attestation in the New Testament, but only in the Old, no one could have

reason for this is *particularity* – namely, that Protestant confessions shape Christian doctrines that are particular to the Protestant community or tradition or history, and therefore are not in a general way 'religious' or even 'Christian', even if these broader descriptions are thereby included (*Christian Faith* §27.1). A second reason for this is *significance* – namely, that Christian doctrines that go back to confessional documents have the advantage of having 'ecclesiastical status' (*Christian Faith* §27.1). Having made his own position and use of sources in formulating Christian doctrine clear, there may be at least three methodological strategies – apologetic, dialectical and aesthetic – that can be outlined from his written work.

A first strategy that Schleiermacher arguably employs, as is evident in his *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799)[127] (as well as propositions in the introduction of his *Christian Faith*), is that of an apologetic approach (Crouter, 2005:115; Clements, 1987:22). It would, for Schleiermacher, be important to locate the Christian faith – and the Christian church, in particular – within its modern context and, thereby, to "give it intellectual definition" (Crouter, 2005:116; cf. Begbie, 2007:142). This means that theology, like philosophy, "must not smooth over controversy artificially" but must be able to "rigorously defend its claims" (Crouter, 2005:121). Dogmatic theology should therefore be 'argumentative' and able to 'defend the theological nature of its inquiry' (Crouter, 2005:121). An apologetic strategy has in mind the public of the church, but also the broader public of society and other religions (Crouter, 2005:115 – 116), and therefore responds to the *rhetorical* function of Christian doctrine. As such, Schleiermacher's apologetic strategy may be 'combative' or 'commendatory' in the attempt to "clarify and elucidate the ecclesial witness

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much confidence in regarding it as a genuinely Christian doctrine; whereas if a doctrine is attested by the New Testament, no one will object to it, because there is nothing about it in the Old. Hence the Old Testament appears simply a superfluous authority for Dogmatics." Interestingly, he anticipates the critique that an appeal to the New Testament does not guarantee doctrinal coherence or clarity, and therefore adds that "New Testament passages can demonstrate no more than that a proposition or doctrine is Christian" (*Christian Faith* §27.3). And yet it is important for him that "go back to Scripture itself" in formulating dogmatic propositions because this is "a thoroughly Protestant mode of procedure", even if he warns that "the Biblical vocabulary should itself [not] be adopted in the system of doctrine" (*Christian Faith* §27.3). Merely quoting "some passages of Scripture under each proposition" is not only become 'hurtful' (he adds 'in many ways') to dogmatics, but also to scriptural exegesis, he argues (*Christian Faith* §27.3). "The relating of particular passages of Scripture to particular dogmatic propositions can therefore only be done indirectly", he writes (*Christian Faith* §27.3). For an interesting and informative analysis of Schleiermacher's contribution to New Testament scholarship in his time, see Christine Helmer's article "Schleiermacher's exegetical theology and the New Testament" (2005).

[127] Brian Gerrish (1984:32 – 33) describes the context for this influential book of Schleiermacher as follows: "[The book] was addressed to those modern men and women whose education has interested them in just about everything except religion... Schleiermacher's astute defence of religion argues that in actual fact to be religious is also a necessary part of what it means to be human; and the human spirit, in which the cultured despisers so rightly rejoice, is sadly impoverished if the religious side of it is denied, ignored, or suppressed."

of the Christian consciousness" (Crouter, 2005:120). Christian doctrines are ideas that are located in history, and therefore dogmatics may employ a 'great variety' or display great *diversity* in its expressions (*Christian Faith* §27.4), if it is to take on different forms or make use of different approaches in the attempt to formulate the Christian faith outwardly.[128]

A second strategy that Schleiermacher arguably employs, evident in his *The Christian Faith* (1830), is that of a dialectical approach. This means that Christian doctrine is marked by 'dialectical language', which "consists simply in its being formed in a technically correct manner" (*Christian Faith* §28.1) and aims at a level of *unity* among Christian doctrine without insisting on *uniformity* (Crouter, 2005:121). Doctrines are, within this approach, also expressions of 'the religious feeling', but make use of a language that "gain a higher degree of clearness and definiteness" (*Christian Faith* §28.1). Schleiermacher admits that "the suitable management of language in dogmatic presentation [is] a most difficult problem" and yet insists on the importance of (1) "the dialectical character of [dogmatic] language" and (2) "the systematic arrangement" of doctrines – for it gives dogmatics "the scientific form which is essential to it" (*Christian Faith* §28). The task of dogmatics, argues Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §28.2), is to clear up and to prevent misconceptions that may arise from theological miscommunication. A dialectical approach has the *didactic* function of Christian doctrine in mind, and therefore both 'dialectically formed vocabulary' and 'strict and systematic arrangement of the subject matter' are core concerns for this approach (*Christian Faith* §28.2). Indeed, "the dialectical language and the systematic arrangement [of Christian doctrines] require… and promote… one another", which serves to remove speculation and

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[128] Herein Schleiermacher distinguishes between four 'forms' or 'kinds' of dogmatics, namely (1) scriptural, (2) scientific, (3) symbolic and (4) practical. Firstly, for 'a *scriptural* dogmatic' reference to the bible predominates in the formulation of doctrines, whereas "the appeal to the confessional documents" falls into the background (*Christian Faith* §27.4). Dogmatic arrangement and "the dialectical development of ideas" are not valued highly, and instead this approach "goes back to the often indefinite and ambiguous language of the Bible" (*Christian Faith* §27.4). The danger of this approach entails that its formulations of Christian doctrine might be incoherent, unclear and poorly arranged. Secondly, for 'a *scientific* dogmatic' the clarity of "some recognized principle points" and "its orderly sequence" is valued highly, whereas reference to both the bible *and* the confessions is placed on the background (*Christian Faith* §27.4). The danger of this approach is that it might employ 'speculations' for principle points and thereby cease to be distinctively *Christian* in doctrine. Thirdly, 'a *symbolic* dogmatic' associates or 'attaches itself' primarily to confessions "without going back to Scripture" *or* "linking up everything more closely by strict arrangement" (*Christian Faith* §27.4). The danger of this approach is that it has "a certain approximation to the Roman Catholic Church, since it lays the whole stress on every detail being recognized by the Church" (*Christian Faith* §27.4). Fourthly, 'a *practical* or *popular* dogmatics' falls, for him, outside the realm of dogmatic, because this approach to Christian doctrine entails "compromises between a system of doctrine and a catechism" or an adaptation of doctrine "to homiletical ends" (*Christian Faith* §28.PS). Moreover, this approaches dispences not only with systematic arrangement but also with dialectical language, and therefore is too 'superficial' to be able to put forth 'a scientific argument' (*Christian Faith* §28.PS).

prevent misunderstanding from 'forcing its way into the system of doctrine' (*Christian Faith* §28.2).

A third strategy, evident in his *Christmas Eve: A Dialogue on the Celebration of Christmas* (1827), is that of an aesthetic approach. Brian Gerrish notes that this particular dialogue "marks an apparent shift in Schleiermacher's method, or at least in his strategy" (1984:35), which can perhaps be described as the shift from trying to describe "the nature of ultimate reality" to expressing or evoking "an experience of that reality" (Marina, 2008:226). If "[Christian] doctrines are not," for Schleiermacher (Gerrish, 1984:13), "the essence of religion but simply the result of reflection upon religious feeling", then Christian doctrine may also have to be appreciated in an aesthetic way. This approach understands doctrine as 'religious experience' which is expressed "in aesthetic symbolic elements that point past themselves to the transcendent" (Marina, 2008:226). Theological reflection, in other words, only makes sense when it is framed by "a life of spontaneous piety" (Gerrish, 1984:18); moreover, 'true religion' has to do with 'a sense of the infinite', which is evident in "the cultivation of art and the imagination" (Gerrish, 1984:33).[129] Theology, as "the study of external human expressions that have emerged from *pious* states of human consciousness", is an "expressive, creative activity" and therefore an art – if art is indeed "the creative external expression of an internal state of human consciousness" for Schleiermacher, as Thandeka suggests (2005:289 – 290). Even though some would argue that Schleiermacher was wary of "dealing imaginatively with aspects of doctrine" (Tice, 1967:104) lest it lead to speculation, others have argued that Schleiermacher also – particularly in his sermons – made use of "imaginative theological improvisation" (*Fantasie*) (Thandeka, 2005:296).[130] Art, or the aesthetic approach which are born of religious feeling or affections, therefore speak to the *poetic* function of Christian doctrine. Indeed, this approach "captures some of the most

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[129] Terrence Tice notes that Schleiermacher would, for many years, consider doing aesthetic work but that he would gradually decide "to let the dream go" (1967:103). And even though, moreover, "Schleiermacher was a full-fledged member of the romantic poetic circle" he was neither 'a poet' nor 'an aesthete' – evident, for instance, "from his own unfinished poetic efforts undertaken at the prompting of his friends" (Redeker, 1973:33).

[130] Indeed, for Schleiermacher "true religion is not just the dogmas and usages... but a 'sense of the infinite'... [and therefore n]othing is more effective in freeing the choked-up springs of religion... than the cultivation of art and the imagination" (Gerrish, 1984:33). Schleiermacher employs this focus on 'the artistic sense' very strategically and deliberately in his *Speeches,* argues Brian Gerrish (1984:33), for the audience that he would purportly be addressing (namely, 'the cultured despisers' who has no interest in religion) valued and cherished 'the artistic sense' most highly. Jeremy Begbie would argue (2007:146) that Schleiermacher was indeed "deeply affected by the Romantic movement" and therefore "warmed to their fascination with the imagination, immediate intuition and feeling, and... their high regard for music."

essential features of Schleiermacher's understanding of religion", argues Jacqueline Marina (2008:227)

There may be many more methodological strategies that shape Schleiermacher's interpretation and presentation of Christian doctrine. The apologetic, dialectical and aesthetic approaches outlined above – which correspond with the rhetorical, instructive and poetic expressions of Christian doctrine – would play an important role in shaping an image or portrayal of salvation in Schleiermacher's thought as being and becoming blessed.

2.3.5   Salvation as blessedness

Salvation or redemption plays a pivotal role in Schleiermacher's theology (Gerrish, 1984:25; Wyman, 2005:129). In the analysis of Christian doctrines, dogmatic theology "may begin at any point" – writes Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §18.PS) – "wheresoever the requirements most demand it". Yet, for Schleiermacher, "the distinctive essence of Christianity consists in the fact that in it all religious emotions are related to the redemption wrought by Jesus of Nazareth" (*Christian Faith* §22.2). In short, Christian piety has to do with God-consciousness.

Christian piety is marked by the double movement of being conscious of alienation from God (an act that 'originates within ourselves') through *sin* and being conscious of fellowship with God (an act that originates through "communication from the Redeemer") through *grace* (*Christian Faith* §63). Both sin and grace "are valid ideas only on the basis of redemption and on the assumption that it has been appropriated" (*Christian Faith* §63.2). Sin and grace both rest on an appropriate understanding of salvation – moreover, sin and grace are not to be regarded as 'separate moments' that can 'be kept absolutely apart' as 'mutual incompatible' (*Christian Faith* §63.3). They are, as it were, 'always conjoined in every moment of the religious life of the Christian' – and yet Schleiermacher thinks it wise to separate the two subjects (and more specifically 'the consciousness of sin' and 'the consciousness of grace' (*Christian Faith* §64.2)) in any exposition of salvation (*Christian Faith* §64). Schleiermacher discusses first sin (*Christian Faith* §§65 – 74), then grace (*Christian Faith* §§86 – 91), in his exposition of salvation, which furthermore consists of two doctrines, namely regeneration (*Christian Faith* §§107 – 109) and sanctification (*Christian Faith* §§110 – 112). Moreover, "Christian piety traces everything at all connected with the God-consciousness either to sin or

to grace" (*Christian Faith* §70.1), whereby the God-consciousness or religious consciousness of Christians is portrayed as consisting of two 'elements': (1) the consciousness of sin (wherein human beings recognise that "sin is inevitable to us") and (2) the consciousness of grace (which is "determined by the Redeemer") (*Christian Faith* §§86.2 – 86.3). However, "[a] clear understanding of how Jesus redeems first presupposes a grasp of what it is that humans need redemption from, namely, sin" (Marina, 2008:211) – and therefore (the consciousness of) sin is the logical starting point for a critical analysis of Schleiermacher's understanding of salvation.

The consciousness of sin, as the first element of Christian piety, is synonymous with "our need of redemption" for Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §86.2). Sin is "our inability to do what our God-consciousness requires us to strive after" (*Christian Faith* §89.1). More specifically, *misery* precedes the discussion of grace for Schleiermacher because sin expresses human beings' need for redemption (*Christian Faith* §63.1). Misery marks our 'natural state' as human beings (*Christian Faith* §86), which involves both sin and evil[131] (*Christian Faith* §87.1). Sin is a 'state' of a human being in that human beings "have the consciousness of sin", which involves the experience of pain (*Unlust*) in the interaction between God-consciousness and self-consciousness (*Christian Faith* §66; cf. Wyman, 2005:132). Walter Wyman identifies three characteristics of Schleiermacher's exposition of sin: (1) Sin is subjective (because "sin and the consciousness of sin coincide") (2005:133); (2) Sin is 'God-forgetfulness' and can therefore be described as 'painful' insofar as the consciousness of sin is marked by "a sense of incompleteness, mental discomfort, of things somehow out of joint, of the world lacking in religious meaning" (2005:133); (3) Sin predominates where 'the flesh' (as the "lower powers of the soul" (cf. *Christian Faith* §66.2)) is set over 'the spirit' (as "the higher self-consciousness") (2005:134).

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[131] Schleiermacher distinguishes clearly between sin and evil, even as he takes also the connections between sin and evil seriously (Wyman, 2005:137). He discusses the doctrine of evil where his interpretation of sin is widened to include 'the world' (cf. *Christian Faith* §75). Evil arises with sin (*Christian Faith* §75.1) and is therefore an inevitable consequence of sin (*Christian Faith* §75.3). Indeed, "the measure in which sin is present is the measure in which evil is present" (*Christian Faith* §75.3). Evil, in other words, is present within 'the sphere of the world' and thereby entails "the corporate suffering of the [human] race" (*Christian Faith* §75.3). Stated somewhat differently, "[i]n Schleiermacher's theology of consciousness, evil is a matter of how you look at reality" (Wyman, 2005:137). Evil is, however, the 'result' or 'punishment' of sin (Wyman, 2005:138; cf. *Christian Faith* §76), whether directly (in the form of 'social evil') or indirectly (in the form of 'natural evil') (*Christian Faith* §76).

Schleiermacher presents a threefold explanation as to how sin arises in human life, namely (1) a developmental account (cf. *Christian Faith* §67), (2) an intellectual account (cf. *Christian Faith* §68) and (3) a social account[132] (cf. *Christian Faith* §69) (Wyman, 2005:134). He argues that consciousness of sin has its source partly 'in ourselves' and partly 'outside our own being' (*Christian Faith* §69). This qualification leads Schleiermacher to distinguish between 'original sin' (as that which "is present in an individual prior to any action of his (sic) own, and has its ground outside his own being") (*Christian Faith* §70) and 'actual sin' (as "those cases in which our sinfulness breaks forth externally in actions perceptible by others as well as by ourselves", and which has its ground in ourselves) (*Christian Faith* §73.2). There is also a definite order of accounts of sin, for Schleiermacher, for actual sin follows from original sin (*Christian Faith* §73). Two characteristics of Schleiermacher's account of sin involves (1) the universality of sin (Wyman, 2005:135; cf. *Christian Faith* §71) and (2) sin as 'the incapacity for good' (as determined by 'the God-consciousness') (Wyman, 2005:136; cf. *Christian Faith* §70.2). Redemption is 'the only thing' that can remove this incapacity for good, argues Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §70.1). The consciousness of sin plays an important role in Schleiermacher's account of redemption, for it paves the way as it were for redemption by creating a longing or capacity or receptivity in human beings for salvation (*Christian Faith* §89.1).

The consciousness of grace, as the second element of Christian piety, is synonymous with our "fellowship with God" for Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §91). Grace or 'the state of blessedness' consists of two moments, namely wherein (1) misery is removed and wherein (2) the experience of 'blessedness' begins (*Christian Faith* §87.1). Stated somewhat differently, Christ's redemptive (*erlösende*) activity (cf. *Christian Faith* §100) consists of reconciling (*versöhnende*) activity as well as the state of blessedness (*Seligkeit*) (cf. *Christian Faith* §101) (Wyman, 2005:139). This does not mean that redemption and reconciliation are equated in Schleiermacher's thought. Rather, as Walter Wyman makes it clear (2005:139), 'redemption' points to "a fortified God-consciousness" whereas 'reconciliation' points to the experience of blessedness. *Salvation* is herein portrayed as a 'state of blessedness' (Wyman, 2005:138).

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[132] Dawn DeVries and Brian Gerrish note that in this particular interpretation of sin – namely "that sin must be understood collectively as a social phenomenon, a contagious disease and not just an individual transgression" – lies the strength of Schleiermacher's interpretation of sin (2005b:199).

Yet these moments are not only experienced individually, but 'grow' or 'contaminate' the entire humankind 'corporately' – for human beings are simultaneously embedded in a 'corporate life of sin' (originating in Adam) *and* belonging to 'the new corporate life' (originating in Christ, the second Adam) (*Christian Faith* §87.1). There is a dynamism and restlessness to Schleiermacher's emphasis on 'the corporate life' of believers, which is particularly evident in his portrayal of 'the new life' (*Christian Faith* §106.1): "Life thus comes under a different formula, making it a life that is new" wherein "this new life… presents itself as something in process of becoming" since "the new life can only, as it were, be grated on to the old". Therefore 'the growing blessedness' that human beings experience has its ground in "the God-consciousness newly awakened to life" (*Christian Faith* §87.2) through "the living influence of Christ" (*Christian Faith* §106.1) (Wyman, 2005:139). Christ's appearance "in history as the Redeemer is the condition of the possibility of redemption and reconciliation" (Wyman, 2005:139). In redemption, Christ reveals and represents a 'perfect' or 'powerful' God-consciousness (which Schleiermacher associates with the prophetic office of Christ; cf. *Christian Faith* §103) (Wyman, 2005.139).[133] In reconciliation, Christ's 'unclouded blessedness' is revealed in that he has no consciousness of sin, guilt or evil (which Schleiermacher associates with the priestly office of Christ; cf. *Christian Faith* §104) (Wyman, 2005:139).

Salvation cannot, however, take place outside of the corporate life which Christ instituted, argues Schleiermacher, as is the case in either (1) separatism (which individualises the state of blessedness in Christ) or (2) optimism (which declares Christ redundant in bringing about the state of blessedness) (*Christian Faith* §87.3).[134] Rather, blessedness "originated in the community" that Christ founded, which is the church, and "is perpetuated in it" (*Christian Faith* §88.2). Salvation in Christ, through whom "the absolutely potent God-consciousness" is

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[133] This, argues Wyman (2005:130), is consistent with Schleiermacher's 'theology of consciousness' wherein "[r]edemption does not depend upon the atoning death of Jesus of Nazareth but on the perfection of his God-consciousness" (Wyman, 2005:130).

[134] Jacqueline Marina (2005b:164) agrees that Schleiermacher's understanding of redemption rests upon an understanding of the corporate nature and effects of sin. In other words, sin is corporate and therefore (since redemption responds to the havoc wreaked by sin) salvation is corporate. In her words (2005:165): "It is because human beings are so interdependent with one another that the sin of one person implicates the whole race. More importantly, the converse is also true: it is just this interdependence of human beings on one another that makes it possible for the salvation of the whole race to be accomplished in the historical life of one person." Indeed, "[o]ur interdependence with other human beings is worked out in history. It is because of this interdependence that the sin of one implicates the whole human community; likewise it is through this interdependence that the perfect divine love of Christ can be mediated historically and redeem humanity" (Marina, 2005b:166).

effected within the community of believers, belongs both to "the personal consciousness" of believers as well as to "the common consciousness" of the fellowship of believers (*Christian Faith* §88.3). This community constitutes "the sphere of the redeeming activity of Christ" (*Christian Faith* §114.2) and thereby "the actual boundary of the Kingdom of Christ" (*Christian Faith* §114.2). "[A]ll regenerate people are always found" within the fellowship of believers, because "[a]ll that comes to exist in the world through redemption is embraced in the fellowship of believers" (*Christian Faith* §113). The community of believers therefore function in a redemptive way. This is a core aspect of Schleiermacher's logic of redemption, for it hinges on two claims (Wyman, 2005:141), namely that (1) "Christ redeemed and reconciled others by the direct personal influence of his perfection and blessedness" (cf. *Christian Faith* §101.4), and that (2) "now that he is no longer present, the community does the same" (*Christian Faith* §88.2). Christ's redeeming activity therefore takes place first through his own influence within a community of followers, and thereafter only through the fellowship within the community that he constituted.

Salvation is consequently inseparable from the person and work of Jesus Christ, for "the state of blessedness essentially includes a relation to Christ" (*Christian Faith* §87.1). For Schleiermacher, "the doctrines of the person and work of Christ are inherently related" and therefore Christology and soteriology are intricately bound to one another (Marina, 2005a:1; DeVries & Gerrish, 2005:199). The inseparability of Christ's person and work in Schleiermacher's interpretation of salvation safeguards redemption outside of human beings, and in the 'new corporate life' which Christ constitutes. If left to human beings alone, 'the corporate life of sinfulness' would propagate and duplicate itself naturally within humankind, rendering any salvation from misery impossible. However, since Schleiermacher does not regard Jesus "simply as a product of that life" but indeed as introducing the power of perfect God-consciousness from outside this sinful corporate life, the work of salvation from the sinfulness of this particular form of corporate life becomes possible and, ultimately, inevitable[135] (*Christian Faith* §88.4).

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[135] Dawn DeVries and Brian Gerrish make the point that Schleiermacher's "'vanishing contrast between the regenerate and the unregenerate' drives him necessarily toward universal salvation and the hope for a second chance after death" (2005:204; cf. *Christian Faith* §118). On the one hand, argues Schleiermacher, "we [as members of the church] stand opposed to all those in whom this consciousness [of grace] has not yet developed"; and on the other hand, "in virtue of the consciousness of sin we are on exactly the same footing as they" (*Christian Faith* §118.1). He concludes this section by arguing that "everyone who has lagged behind us is some time or another taken up into living fellowship with Christ" (*Christian Faith* §118.1). Walter Wyman (2005:146) agrees that Schleiermacher's "soteriology is exclusivistic: Christ is redeemer for all, not just for Christians." (cf.

Christ's redeeming activity works in a twofold way within the God-consciousness of believers. Through his "absolutely potent God-consciousness" Christ's "higher perfection" works in a "stimulating and communicative way" upon human beings, by (1) alerting or activating the consciousness of sinfulness in human beings in contrasting this with his own perfection ("Jesus awakens the God-consciousness" (Marina, 2005b:165)) and by (2) removing the misery of human beings by assimilation to his own perfection ("Jesus establishes the kingdom of God" (Marina, 2005b:165)) (*Christian Faith* §89.2). However, Christ's redemptive activity "is brought to perfection through gradual expansion" so that one finds in Schleiermacher frequent references to 'growing' and 'developing' blessedness (*Christian Faith* §89.2).

Salvation, in short, is for Schleiermacher the 'quickening' of the God-consciousness, whereas sin is 'Godlessness' or 'God-forgetfulness' (cf. *Christian Faith* §11.2) or the 'inhibition' of the God-consciousness (Wyman, 2005:130). However, Schleiermacher's interpretation of salvation also has to do with what Walter Wyman calls "the phenomenology of grace", or the question as to *how* redemption or "living fellowship with Christ" takes place in the experiences of believers (2005:143; cf. *Christian Faith* §106). This consists of two interrelated conceptions of salvation, namely 'regeneration' and 'sanctification' (*Christian Faith* §106).

Regeneration, firstly, refers to the transition from "the old life of general sinfulness" to "the new common life under grace" (*Christian Faith* §106.2). Regeneration (*Wiedergeburt*) thus emphasises the *discontinuity* between 'the old life of sin' and 'the new life of grace'. Regeneration assumes "a turning-point at which the continuity of the old ceased, and that of the new begin to be in process of becoming" (*Christian Faith* §106.1). Schleiermacher systematically distinguishes between 'conversion' and 'justification' in his doctrine of regeneration. Conversion, as the first element of regeneration, is "a changed form of life" (*Christian Faith* §107) marked by repentance (which consists of "regret and a change of heart") and faith (which consists of "the appropriation of the perfection and blessedness of

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Christian Faith §13.1; §121.3). Schleiermacher's interpretation of salvation as blessedness is arguably *apologetic* in its (outward) concern for coherence and consistency, which lead – through its focus on the corporate nature of sin and redemption – to an universalisation of salvation to include the whole of humankind. Salvation, in Schleiermacher's interpretation, is therefore *communal* and *encompassing*.

Christ") (*Christian Faith* §108). The individual is transformed 'in their innermost aspirations and endeavours' (Wyman, 2005:144; cf. *Christian Faith* §108.1) when conversion takes place, although Schleiermacher denies (against the pietists) "that a precisely datable conversion experience is necessary" and affirms (against those who deem conversion wholly unnecessary) that "everyone needs conversion" (Wyman, 2005:144; cf. *Christian Faith* §§108.3 – 108.4). Conversion, or repentance of sins (*Christian Faith* §108.2), takes place through faith, as "the resulting, abiding consciousness of being in possession" of Christ (*Christian Faith* §108.1).

Justification, as the second element of regeneration, is the transformation of a believer's relation to God, which includes the forgiveness of sins and the recognition of the believer as a child of God (*Christian Faith* §109). Schleiermacher follows "the classic Protestant doctrine of justification by faith" here, argues Wyman (2005:144), and thereby positions himself with the Reformation theologians by emphasising that "justification is not dependent upon works, upon progress in sanctification, but on faith alone". Justification is therefore not a 'declaratory act' in the sense of believers individually justifying themselves – rather, justification and conversion are both traced "back to the influence of Christ" and "thus referred entirely to Him" (*Christian Faith* §109.3). Regeneration, in short, describes the status of 'being blessed' and thereby being inaugurated into the new corporal life of grace, through conversion and justification. In this 'status of blessedness' the old corporate life of sinfulness, which is characterised by "the self-consciousness of guilt and merited punishment" makes way for a life of fellowship with Christ (*Christian Faith* §107.1).

Sanctification, secondly, refers to "the growing continuity of the new life" of grace with "living fellowship with Christ" (*Christian Faith* §106.1). Sanctification (*Heiligung*) thus emphasises the *continuity* between 'the new life of grace' and a life which reflects the Redeemer's 'perfection' and 'blessedness' (Wyman, 2005:144). Sanctification is the process of becoming holy, which includes "a striving for holiness" (*Christian Faith* §110.1), as well as "a deepening commitment to the kingdom of God" (DeVries & Gerrish, 2005:198). Sanctification is therefore not a 'finished state' (Wyman, 2005:145). This process entails "the transformation of individual lives", although this transformation is not instantaneously free from a struggle with sin after justification (Wyman, 2005:144). The doctrine of sanctification, like the doctrine of regeneration, involves faith – which produces 'good works' that are

"objects of divine good pleasure" (*Christian Faith* §112). Here, Walter Wyman would note (2005:147), "[t]he moral dimension of the human condition is apparently neglected". Schleiermacher stops short of exploring what these 'good works' could entail, but arguably – as Wyman also points out (2005:148; footnote 27) – expands on this in his *Christian Ethics*. Sanctification in particular belongs to the realms of both Christian doctrine (as 'the science of doctrine') *and* Christian ethics (as 'the science of moral'), argues Schleiermacher (*Christian Faith* §27.2).

There, in his *Christian Ethics,* 'the state of blessedness' features yet again, particularly in his distinction between 'emerging blessedness' and 'absolute blessedness' (Herms, 2005:217). *Emerging* blessedness (*werdende Seligkeit*) implies "that the goal of blessedness has not been achieved, and can be an incentive to action" whereas *absolute* blessedness (*absolute Seligkeit*) describes "the state of totally actualized communion with God" (Herms, 2005:217). All moments between these two 'states of blessedness' can be characterized in terms of pleasure ("insofar as the flesh willingly becomes the organ of the higher consciousness") or pain ("insofar as the flesh… strives against the reign of the God-feeling"), argues Eilert Herms (2005:218). The *beginning* of blessedness is "the putting on of Christ" which comes to expression in actions that is consistent with "being in the community of the redeemed" (Herms, 2005:219). Eilert Herms makes the point that, for Schleiermacher, 'the pre-Christian life' is the ethical life which is "in need of redemption" – whereas 'the Christian ethical life' is the ethical life which is the redeemed ethical life (2005:221). Jacqueline Marina argues that Schleiermacher "provides a coherent account of how it is that the self-expression of an historical individual [namely, Jesus Christ] can provide the actual *occasion* for the turning away from evil and the beginning of a new life" (2008:220). Herein lies the goal of blessedness as the 'transformation of the self through Christ' – or the sanctification of the believer.

Salvation, in other words, spans *both* justification (the state of being blessed) and sanctification (the process of becoming blessed),[136] as well as *both* his *Christian Faith*

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[136] Friedrich Schleiermacher deliberately deals with justification and sanctification in this order. He remarks that the previous section, wherein he writes about the kingly office of Christ (*Christian Faith* §105), "might of itself have led in the most natural way to a description of the new corporate life over which He holds sway" which is described by the doctrine of sanctification, which means that the order of discussion may as well have been sanctification-regeneration (*Christian Faith* §106.2). "But," he says (*Christian Faith* §106.2), "the other arrangement [whereby he means regeneration-sanctification] is equally correct" and perhaps even "more

(*Glaubenslehre*) and his *Christian Ethics* (*Sittenlehre*).[137] Indeed, "the justifying verdict" becomes true in the evidence that the Christian life bears to it – namely, because the Christian life "bears the new life within and lives by it" (Gerrish, 1985:1034). Salvation is "the blessedness of the being of God in Christ" in which believers share, individually and corporately, by way of "the pious Christian state of mind" (Marina, 2005b:165; Herms, 2005:219). Herein *a soteriological logic of faith* characterises his interpretation of salvation. Salvation can be interpreted apologetically, as communal and encompassing (see footnote 135), and dialectically, as eccentric and practical (see footnote 136). Yet the *aesthetic* character of salvation comes to full expression not in Schleiermacher's *Christian Faith*, but rather in his well-known novel, *Christmas Eve* (which 'resembles an artwork' (Thandeka, 2005:288)). Therefore the joy that the Christian faith's good news of salvation effects in believers, individually and corporately, will be explored in what follows in *Christmas Eve* – for salvation as blessedness also points to human flourishing, if "[i]n Christ the fullness of human nature is [indeed] perfected" (Marina, 2005b:168).[138]

2.3.6 Joyous human beings?[139]

suitable" for regeneration serves as a more logical bridge between 'the old life' and 'the new life' which sanctification elaborates on (*Christian Faith* §106. 2). Schleiermacher's interpretation of salvation as blessedness is arguably *dialectic* in its (inward) concern for clarity and logical arrangement, which is particularly evident in the order in which he presents the doctrine of regeneration in relation to the doctrine of sanctification (see footnote 29). Salvation, in Schleiermacher's interpretation, is therefore *eccentric* (as that which comes to human beings from outside ourselves) and *practical* (as that which may be embodied in 'good works' or actions in an indefinite number of changing ways).

[137] Indeed, "[b]oth the *Christian Ethics* and the *Christian Faith* have as their material the Christian condition of the soul that is formed by the redemptive activity of Christ" (Herms, 2005:220).

[138] Martin Redeker (1973:14) sees, in such a reading of Schleiermacher, reference to his Enlightenment roots and Romantic sympathies, for "Enlightened and Romanitc alike [would agree] that man's (sic) real business is to be true to his own nature, to be truly and fully human." In a well-known letter to his father, Friedrich Schleiermacher would respond to his father's "angry and anguished reply" (in turn to Schleiermacher's intentions of leaving the Moravian community to go to the University of Halle) by making exactly this point: "You say that the glorification of God is the end of our being, and I say the glorification of the creature; is not this in the end the same thing? Is not the Creator more and more glorified the happier and the more perfect his creatures are?" (Redeker, 1973:16).

[139] It must be noted at the outset that at least two other possibilities than the exploration of Schleiermacher's *Christmas Eve* could have been explored in an inquiry regarding his views on human flourishing. The first possibility is his notion of 'the highest good', wherein he "eliminated happiness" by subsuming or subordinating happiness to virtue (Marina, 2008:153). In his *Christian Ethics* and particularly in his essay *On What Gives Value to Life* (1792 – 1793), Schleiermacher "reaffirms Kant's idea of the heterogeneity of virtue and happiness, as well as the Kantian notion that striving for happiness must be subordinated to striving after virtue" (Marina, 2008:153). The earlier Schleiermacher as well as the later Schleiermacher, argues Jacqueline Marina (2008:154 – 156), is preoccupied with "the question of the laws connecting virtue and happiness" and agrees, in principle, with Kant that "happiness cannot ground moral action" – and therefore "cannot be the ground of the validity of a moral law that is universally binding on all rational beings." Here Schleiermacher relies on what he calls 'the principle of happiness', which he understands as "the injunction to act in such a way so as to derive the most

"Friedrich Schleiermacher's interpretation of Christmas was central to his entire theological viewpoint", argues Terrence Tice (1967:100). Schleiermacher's theological thoughts, particularly on salvation, comes to expression in his book *Christmas Eve: A Dialogue on the Celebration of Christmas* (1827), wherein different fictitious characters outline different theological positions but which is, however, not regarded as (or meant to be) an exhaustive and fully worked out theological treatise on Christmas or salvation (Tice, 1967:101, 109). *Christmas Eve* is regarded as "the middle period of his intellectual development" (Begbie, 2007:142) which "presents us with a portrayal of genuine religion as Schleiermacher saw it" (Begbie, 2007:145). This work has consequently been called a 'precious jewel of our modern theological literature' as well as 'the little work of the master' (William Hastie in the preface to *Christmas Eve*, 1890:xi).[140] Keith Clements describes this book as "one of the most humanly charming pieces of serious theology ever written, as it vividly portrays young and old, men and women, sceptic and pietist, enjoying music and conversation and sharing their thoughts on the significance of the joy of the Christmas season."[141]

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lasting satisfaction with one's existence and fulfil one's most important desires" (Marina, 2008:155). The second possibility is an exploration of his understanding of 'well-being' in his *Christian Faith,* which he discusses within the context of his exposition of the threefold office of Christ and specifically 'the kingly office' (*Christian Faith* §105). There he argues that "[t]he kingly office of Christ consists in the fact that everything which the community of believers requires for its well-being continually proceeds from Him" (*Christian Faith* §105). Yet it is with the interpretation of human flourishing as joy and joyousness, particularly as this is outlined in Schleiermacher's *Christian Eve,* that this study concerns itself, because it is here that the good news of salvation (and not virtue ethics, as with the first possibility, or divine power, as with the second possibility) forms the theological content of the flourishing of human beings.

[140] Terrence Tice writes that the idea for this dialogue (which some, like Carl Schwarz, would liken to Plato's *Dialogues* (Schleiermacher, 1890:75)) came as an inspiration after attending a concert on December 2, 1805, by the young, blind, preeminent flutist, Friedrich Ludwig Dülon (1967:100; cf. Thandeka, 2005:288). The young Schleiermacher had been grieving for weeks over the news that Eleanor Grunow, "his most cherished desire", would not divorce her husband and marry him (1967:100; cf. Thandeka, 2005:288). He had courted her, the wife of a Berlin pastor, for more or less six years and had, by his own admission, been influenced by her in numerous ways (Redeker, 1973:70 – 71; Clements, 1987:21). Schleiermacher was teaching at the University of Halle at the time (Clements, 1987:195) and had planned on preparing sermons in December 1805, but instead wrote *Christmas Eve* as a surprise, anonymous Christmas gift for his friends in that year (Tice, 1967:101; cf. Gerrish, 1984:14).

[141] Still more descriptions could be added to these, such as William Hastie's appreciative account in the preface to his 1890 translation of *Christmas Eve* (1890:xii): "Its light and airy grace, its natural simplicity and refinement, its sympathetic and tender individuality, its catholic comprehensiveness and breadth, its elevating points of view, and its deep spiritual insight, cannot fail to find and satisfy the earnest hearts that are at once lightened and brightened by the proper mood of the Christmas-tide. A more genuine Christmas book was never written; for no Christmas book has dealth more directly, or more thoughtfully, with the essential theme of the Festival. And its sweet blending of high thought and social feeling, of science and religion, philosophy and poetry, insight and joy, make it no unworthy of its subject or of the genius of its author. A geniune Christmas book unquestionably it is; but it is more, for it is an interesting and enduring contribution to Christian theology."

Christmas Eve is set in "the drawing room of a middle-class German home, gaily decorated for the occasion" (Gerrish, 1984:14) and involves many characters – the child Sophie, who is a central character in the story, as well as the men (Leonard, Ernest, Edward and Joseph) and women (Ernestine, Caroline, Agnes and Friederike) who participate, in a variety of ways, in the celebration of Christmas. The story spans at least three interwoven themes, namely music, childhood and women (Gerrish, 1984:14 – 15), but to these could be added other important and prominent themes, such as friendship (Hastie, 1890:75). 'The main theme' of *Christmas Eve*, argues Terrence Tice (1967:102), is that of "the love and joy that may be known in the Christian life."[142]

In the character of Sophie – who loves books (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:5) and music (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:6), and who consequently receives a book of music as a Christmas present (Begbie, 2007:143) – Christmas is explored as "the children's festival" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:7) and as part of "the history of Christianity" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:8). Sophie, the "precocious ten-year-old" of Edward and Ernestine, is both a singer and a pianist; both musical and religiously devout (Begbie, 2007:143). Moreover, it is in Sophie's thought that salvation through Christ is first portrayed as 'life' and 'everlasting joy' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:9) and Christmas is first related to 'deep feeling' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:9). The character Ernest observes that Sophie is deeply moved by Christmas joy, "as if she were bathing in a sea of the purest happiness", and is impressed with the beauty and fullness of such an 'intelligence of feeling' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:12). Others, such as the character Leonard, are alarmed by Sophie's "childish piety", for "[w]hen her feelings break forth, her soul sometimes appears to [be] like a bud that perishes before it has blown, from too strong an impulse in itself" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:13). And yet others still, like the character Ernestine (Sophie's mother), finds Sophie's spontaneity 'beautiful', 'noble' and 'heartfelt' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:15 – 16). It is with the child Sophie's *experience* of Christmas and *expression* of Christmas joy and happiness that the adults' dialogue and reflections on Christmas commences.

Much has been written on these dialogues, particularly on the final section of *Christmas Eve*, where "the men make speeches on the meaning of Christmas (Tice, 1967:101; cf. Niebuhr, 1964:21 – 71 & Barth, 1982:57 – 72), as well as on the many contrasts that the careful reader

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[142] For Karl Barth, "the true theological substance of this little masterpiece consists of music and 'the divine in woman'" (Begbie, 2007:332; footnote 33).

of *Christmas Eve* encounter (Begbie, 2007:143 – 145).[143] In particular, many commentators and exegetes have attempted to identify Schleiermacher himself with one or more of these characters (cf. Tice, 1967:104 – 110) – and even with a combination of *all* of the characters, including Leonard (as representative of 'historical criticism'), Ernest (as representative of 'religious feeling'), Edward (as representative of 'the speculative element'), and Joseph (as representative of 'the mystical element') (Carl Schwarz in *Christmas Eve*, 1890:77 – 80; cf. Begbie, 2007:332; footnote 14).[144] Interestingly, the theological responses of various characters arguably portray the methodological strategies outlined above in their interpretations of salvation, within the context of Christmas.

Firstly, a dialectic strand – which expresses the didactic function of Christian doctrine – is evident particularly in the explanations, questions and concerns presented by the lawyer and critical rationalist Leonard (cf. Begbie, 2007:143). Indeed, Joseph describes Leonard in this way himself, as "the thinking, reflecting, *dialectical*, over-intellectual man" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:73; my emphasis – NM). His first concern is with Sophie's expression of religious feeling, because he sees in her response the troubling possibility of her commitment to become a Roman Catholic nun or Moravian sister (the dangers of 'Romanism' and 'Moravianism' for pious women) (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:13 – 14). His second concern is with biblical interpretation, particularly by children, and the dangers of 'superstition' and 'fanaticism' accompanying Sophie's reading of the bible without adult commentary and guidance (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:20 – 21). Leonard then asks Sophie whether she would rather be 'happy' or 'merry' than sad – and her inability to answer to his satisfaction, even after repeating this question two more times, is his third concern (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:30 – 32). A fourth concern is again with biblical interpretation, in this case regarding Christ's life and person (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:53 – 60). The character of Leonard is particularly active in the narrative to respond dialectically to the various conversations and, in particular, to his and others' observations of Sophie's experience of Christmas. His explanations – which

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[143] For instance, ("[t]he musically gifted and pious) Sophie is contrasted with the ("reflective, analytical, intellectual") men; men (who "give boring speeches") are contrasted with women (who "tell stories, play and sing beautiful music, and penetrate intuitively to the heart of things"); songs ("expressing inward piety") are contrasted with ("dull and frigid") discourses; and ("lively and expressive") stories are contrasted with ("inflexible") reasoning (Begbie, 2007:145).

[144] A variation of a combined interpretation is the argument that the speeches (by the male characters) represent "a developing series of presentations of Schleiermacher's own point of view, from [Leonard's] historical-critical... to Ernst's emphasis on Christian experience, culminating in the... metaphysical speculation of [Edward]... but still further surpassed by [Joseph's] soaring into the sublime joys of the religious life" (Tice, 1967:106).

always accompany his questions and concerns – thereby portray a dialectic strategy in interpreting salvation.

Secondly, an apologetic strand – which expresses the rhetorical function of Christian doctrine – is present in the respective exchanges, particularly in apologetic responses to Leonard. Caroline responds apologetically to Leonard's concerns regarding women that dedicate themselves to the church by pointing out that Moravian Sister's Homes are not to be equated with Roman Catholic Monasteries (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:16 – 18). Ernest responds apologetically to Leonard's concerns regarding the historicity and history of interpretation of Christ's birth, death, resurrection and ascension by emphasising that the religious feeling that Christmas is meant to produce, namely joy, is 'the essence of the festival' (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:62 – 67 & Tice, 1967:107 – 108). Edward responds apologetically to Leonard's concerns regarding Christ as the historical person being commemorated in the festival of Christmas by pointing out that he prefers to understand Christ as 'the God-man' who presents to all humankind perfect God-consciousness (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:68 – 72). Various characters – including Caroline, Ernest and Edward – respond apologetically to theological concerns, and thereby portray an apologetic strategy in interpreting salvation.

Thirdly, an aesthetic strand – which expresses the poetic function of Christian doctrine – is evident in the various Christmas stories that Ernestine, Agnes and Caroline tell, in the merry and musical interludes and songs that interrupt the dialogue at strategic points (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:30, 37, 40, 46, 51 – 52), and in Joseph's concluding response to the various dialogues. Ernestine tells a first story of an encounter with a mother and her baby in a church, which reminded her of 'Mary and the Child'[145] and which filled her with joy and bliss. The woman, who would turn out to be her husband Edward's eldest sister, would exercise an important influence on the rest of her life (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:37 – 41). Agnes tells a second story of an encounter with a mother (her sister-in-law) and her baby that was baptised on Christmas eve by his uncle (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:41 – 45), which would be an occasion of joy and celebration not only because it was Christmas eve, but also because of the baptism. Caroline tells a third story of an encounter with a mother (a friend of hers) and her baby the previous year over Christmas, wherein the baby became very sick – so much so that everyone,

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[145] Jeremy Begbie notes (2007:143) that "[f]or the women, the center of the Christmas celebration is seen in the mother-child relationship of Mary and Christ."

including the mother, expected the baby to die – but then miraculously recovered (cf. *Christmas Eve*, 1890:47 – 51). Christmas is not always free from sadness, she points out, and yet Christmas is at the same time the "festival of the regeneration of the world" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:50). The mysterious character Joseph, on whom everyone waits until the very end of the narrative, arrives during the last of the dialogues. He concludes the narrative by urging his companions to experience the 'unspeakable joy' and 'beauty' and 'grace' and 'gladness' and 'glory' and 'delight' and 'enjoyment' of Christmas – indeed, he expressly refuses "to deliver a discourse" and, instead, calls upon everyone to sing together (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:72 – 74). Various characters – including Ernestine, Caroline and Joseph – respond aesthetically to theological concerns, and thereby portray a poetic or artistic strategy in interpreting salvation.

Christmas is indeed a 'happy event' which celebrates "the joys of the future" and 'proclaims new life for the world' so that "a wonderful festal feeling of high joy" takes hold of all (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:11). An appropriate expression of the Christmas feeling is "becoming young again, the return into the feeling of childhood, the cheerfulness of a joy in the new world which we owe to the Child who is thus celebrated" which orientates religious joy toward the exuberance of childhood (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:24). The mood that the festival of Christmas produces is joy (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:63). This includes the giving of presents, which is described as a 'beautiful practice' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:23 – 24) – even if the giving of presents is 'accidental' to Christmas, insofar as this too "produces this effect of joy" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:63). The joy of Christmas cannot be reduced to the effect of giving and receiving presents, however, because other celebrations – like 'birthday festivals' – would then be able to replace or stand in for the Christmas festival. What is unique to Christmas, however, is that Christmas produces not only an inward feeling of joy (which a birthday celebration could, for instance, also do) but "a widespread general feeling" of joy that is universal in a way in which no other festival could be (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:63). It is this universal joy that "inevitably communicates itself to the presents too" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:63). Christmas presents or gifts receive their 'peculiar value' only within the 'universal mood' of Christmas (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:64) for "the religious element is really the essence of the festival" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:67).

This 'universal mood' or 'festive feeling of joy' is communicated not only in the practice of gift-giving, but also in the practice of music, for "music is most closely related to the religious feeling" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:25). Jeremy Begbie (2007:147 – 149) identifies five ways in which music and religion are intertwined in Friedrich Schleiermacher's thought: (1) music, like religion, transcends words; (2) music, like religion, is concerned with "the inner world of self-awareness"; (3) "hearing or listening to music, as with religious experience, is essentially a receptive matter"; (4) music, like religion, "offers access to a universal plane of experience beneath or underlying particular things"; and (5) musical experience, like religious experience, entails "the permeation of our being by the infinite." In short, "music has particular powers to open up and express that dimension of human experience that Schleiermacher identifies as distinctively religious" (Begbie, 2007:147).

Indeed, music played an important role for Schleiermacher, not only in his *Christmas Eve* but also in his life as a whole (Thandeka, 2005:288; Gerrish, 1984:14; Begbie, 2007:142, 331; footnote 5) – since music, for him, plays a part in shaping human consciousness (Thandeka, 2005:289). In other words, sentiments, moods, feelings, or dispositions can be 'regenerated' or 're-enlivened' through music, for "music moves human feelings" (Thandeka 2005:288 – 289). Thandeka points out (2005:288) that, in Schleiermacher's thought, "[t]he art and science of the use of music to stir the affections" is called 'the doctrine of affections' (*Affektenlehre*), which consists of 'moments of affection' (*Affectionsmomente*). This, too, is the case with his *Christmas Eve* (Thandeka, 2005:297). Music, in *Christmas Eve* (1890:10), expresses beautifully "the joy and the feeling of being saved and humble devotion" whereas *religious* music produces, in addition to this, "a quiet satisfaction" and "retirement of soul". There is a mysterious, mutual bond between religious feeling and music, for Schleiermacher – on the one hand, religious communication comes alive in musical expression ("[w]hat the word has made clear, the tones of music must make alive"); on the other hand, musical expression comes to 'perfection' within the religious sphere ("the most religious tone… penetrates most surely into the heart") (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:26 – 27). Indeed, Christianity in particular and music "must both hold firmly to each other, because they glorify and elevate each other" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:27). And so, in *Christmas Eve*, music follows dialogues and stories alike, as expressive of the Christmas joy of salvation.

Friendship also played an important role for Schleiermacher, not only in his *Christmas Eve,* but in all of his life (Tice, 1967:103). Schleiermacher "is known to have possessed an extraordinary capacity for friendship all his life" and was interested in the personal characters, diversity of human personalities and many different people that he met (Tice, 1967:103). He had, in particular, a fondness for women and a "remarkable empathy with young women" specifically (Tice, 1967:103). It is therefore unsurprising that his *Christmas Eve* would be set in the midst of "an assembly of friends" which is marked by a collective mood of 'pure cheerfulness', 'freshly stirred love', 'joy', 'gladness' and 'playsome childlikeness' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:41).[146] Indeed, it is this line of thought which brings the characters of this narrative to point out that Christmas is a festival that "has been established among the children" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:59). This is significant, because it has "a Child as its chief subject" and therefore "it is also the children above all who exalt and maintain the festival" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:60). Stated somewhat differently, the birth of 'the divine child' is the source of Christmas joy and therefore Christmas joy is in a unique way appropriate "to the little ones" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:65). This 'divine child' is, however, none other than 'the Redeemer', and therefore the joy of Christmas is the joy of salvation (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:65).

The source of not only Christmas joy, but also "of all other joy in the Christian world", is the appearance of Christ, who is the redeemer or saviour of the world (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:64) – for with the birth of Christ "there was 'a new implanting of the God-consciousness,' that is, of man's (sic) capacity for conscious relationship with God" (Tice, 1967:120). The birth of Christ "is the only universal festival of joy" because "there is for us really no other principle of joy than our redemption" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:65). Joyous human beings have this joy not in themselves or in their festivals, in other words, but in Christ the saviour whose birth is the beginning of 'a new world' and the source for 'all joy in the Christian world'. The 'happiness' and 'overflowing gladness' that salvation produces is a "joy that blossoms up within us

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[146] Indeed, as Bern Oberdorfer notes (1996; 2000), for the 'young Schleiermacher' friendship and socialising was leading themes in the development of his early work, particularly in his reflection on the 'self' – including the person and morality (2000:13 – 15), person and biography (2000:15 – 16), person and self-awareness (2000:16 – 18), person and the law (2000:18), person and self-image (2000:18 – 19), person and sociality (2000:19 – 21), and person and religion (2000:21 – 23). For Schleiermacher, together the individual self and the public social self would contribute to an understanding of human beings as 'social individuals' (1996:430 – 434). See in particular Bern Oberdorfer's "Von der Freundschaft zur Geselligkeit" in this regard (1996). Michael Welker points out that Bern Oberdorfer's encompassing inquiry into the early work of Schleiermacher, as it is developed in the mentioned article (of Oberdorfer, 1996), develops friendship (*Freundschaft*) and sociality (*Geselligkeit*) as leading motifs in understanding the importance of relationships and communality in Schleiermacher's thinking (Welker, 1997:14 – 15). See also Michael Welker's article on Schleiermacher's earliest ethics (1999).

unchecked" and which can co-exist "with the deepest pain" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:25). Indeed, "such joy purifies and soothes the pain without being destroyed by it, so original is it and so directly grounded upon something that is imperishable" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:25). Schleiermacher himself employs music as a metaphor to describe the experience of being and becoming blessed, so that salvation is 'the attainment of harmony by redemption' and consequent 'removal of discord and division' (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:65).

In short, Christmas is entwined with theological reflection on salvation, and Christmas *joy* is an expression or portrayal of human flourishing. In an 1822 sermon Friedrich Schleiermacher would again ask (Tice, 1967:113): "What… makes Christmas the special festival of joy?" Human beings rejoice, Schleiermacher answers (Tice, 1967:113), in

that it is… the whole Redeemer… [that] has come into the world according to the foreordained decree of the Supreme Being – because it is the whole eternal Word, as it has in the course of time become flesh and dwelt among men (sic); because it is the whole glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, which radiates from his figure upon us; because it is the whole abundance of divine grace which lies within him, the whole fullness of thrust and power which is given him by the Father, the whole inestimable treasure of power and life which has been opened up to mankind in him. This it is that permeates our being and stirs us in holy joy. Through this whole experience of being filled of the Lord, moreover, we feel ourselves extraordinarily quickened and strengthened: we feel ourselves translated into such an opulent existence that all infirmity and deficiency vanishes before our eyes, every pain and affliction completely subsides in our blessed feeling of joy in him. What we thus feel, furthermore, we ought not look upon as something which vanishes without a trace once the time of festive joy is past. It remains and persists through each successive period of our life as the base note of every true joy in the Lord. Thereby even those particular moments in which we rejoice in the Lord out of some special occasion or circumstance can still raise our spirits for a long time, which would otherwise not be possible at all. In this way all Christian joy is cemented together in the one great joy which is directed to our Lord and Redeemer in his entirety.

2.3.7   Conclusion

Friedrich Schleiermacher's whole theological system or 'theological organism' – in its tripartite division of philosophical theology, historical theology and practical theology – "works to promote the church's health and to eliminate its diseases", argues Christine Helmer (2005:233). Stated somewhat differently, the task of theology as a whole is to 'improve the present condition of the church', with each of these theological 'subfields' (including dogmatic theology) playing a role in working towards this task (Helmer, 2005:233; cf.

Crouter, 2005:118). An account of salvation that can stand up to "the challenge to the credibility of theology while remaining appropriate to the Christian tradition" would, in the words of Walter Wyman (2005:129), be a part of Schleiermacher's "dual commitment to revision and fidelity to the Christian (specifically Protestant) tradition".[147] This includes methodological rigour in interpreting (the Christian notion of) salvation – whether apologetically, or didactically, or aesthetically, or by some different strategy altogether – because it would be important to Schleiermacher that Christian faith (as "certainty of the redeeming influence of Christ") and Christian doctrine (as the expression of Christian faith) (Gerrish, 1984:32) should be honestly accounted for (Gerrish, 1984:38).

This feeling of absolute dependence, which characterises 'true religion', "must be nurtured and cultivated *for full human flourishing*" (Begbie, 2007:147; my emphasis – NM). In *Christmas Eve* in particular, "[f]eeling, thinking, and doing are one interfused reality of human life and faith" (Tice, 1967:117). In the birth of the saviour, a new life or world or age for humankind has begun (Tice, 1967:122). Salvation, for Schleiermacher, has to do with piety and "[t]he beauty of piety" is joy (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:19). Human beings flourish when they, like the character Joseph in *Christmas Eve*, can 'love and laugh and enjoy it all', even amidst pain and suffering (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:74).[148] It is, for Joseph, 'the childish joy' of Christmas that makes this possible – that soothes "the long, deep, imperishable pain of life", that makes him feel at home in the world, and that enables him to give the world "one long loving kiss" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:74). Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that Schleiermacher's *Christmas Eve* ends with the invitation to "sing something pious and joyous" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:74) for "in this music all is resolved" (*Christmas Eve*, 1890:80).

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[147] Bernd Oberdorfer notes that exactly this is Schleiermacher's aim – namely, to develop a theological framework that can "avoid conflict between theology and the worldview of the natural sciences" (2002:167). Oberdorfer examines this relationship between theology and the natural sciences in a section entitled 'Schleiermacher and Science' (2005:172 – 175), wherein he points out that Schleiermacher maintains the theological character of faith propositions "in contrast to scientific theories" (2005:181).

[148] Perhaps this is nowhere more evident than in Friedrich Schleiermacher's funeral sermon (*Trauerrede*) for his son Nathanael, wherein he emphasises finding wisdom, peace and blessing – or flourishing – amidst experiences of death and suffering: "Gieb, daß auch diese schwere Stunde ein Segen werde für Alle, die hier zugegen sind. Laß uns Alle immer mehr zu der Weisheit reifen, die über das Nichtige hinweg sehend, in allem Irdischen und Vergänglichen nur das Ewige sieht und liebt, und in allen deinen Rathschlüssen auch deinen Frieden findet und das ewige Leben, zu dem wir durch den Glauben aus dem Tode hindurch gedrungen sind" (Höfner, 2009:482). Similarly the death of his father would 'strike him hard' ("Der Tod des Vaters traf ihn hart") (Jüngel, 2004:906).

2.4   Comfort? Salvation as gift of God
(Willie Jonker)

2.4.1   Introduction

Willem Daniël Jonker (1929 – 2006) was a (Dutch) Reformed minister and theologian "in the most turbulent years of South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy" (Naudé, 2014:1). After "he held a brief appointment as professor at [the] University of South Africa" and "a professorship in Practical Theology at Kampen University in The Netherlands"[149] (Naudé, 2014:1), Jonker accepted an appointment as Professor of Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology (which at the time functioned as a theological training institution for prospective ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church), where he taught for 23 years (1971 – 1994) (Naudé, 2014:1; Combrink, 2006:823; Botman, 2006c:822).

Jonker wrote extensively on Christology,[150] pneumatology[151] and ecclesiology[152], and played a vital role in the theological debates on apartheid, race relations and church unity within the

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[149] Willie Jonker also completed his doctoral studies in the Netherlands, at the Free University of Amsterdam under the supervision of Professor Gerrit Berkouwer, from 1952 – 1955 (Naudé, 2014:1). The title of his doctoral dissertation was *Mistieke liggaam en kerk in die nuwe Rooms Katolieke Teologie,* wherein he gave "an ecclesiological exposition and critical appraisal of the church as *corpus Christi mysticum,* developed after World War I by French Catholic theologians like Congar, Journet and De Lubac" (Naudé, 2014:1; footnote 1). Jonker was therefore "shaped by European theology and philosophy" (Naudé, 2014:6), and by Dutch (Reformed) theology (Berkouwer, Noordmans, Van Ruler) in particular. Piet Naudé challenges Willie Jonker on exactly this overwhelming (and almost exclusive) exposure to and focus on European theology in his lectures and publications, and points out that Jonker had contributed in a very limited way to *African* theological reflection (1991:117). Jonker agrees, at the time (1991a:120), with Naudé's critique that he had been shaped by European theologians (he adds Barth, Brunner, Weber, Vogel, Iwand, Kreck and Ridderbos, among others) and that he had, therefore, been shaped primarily by European theology. He admits that the realisation that European theology was itself contextual in nature had only shortly before dawned on him and other theologians of his generation, but mentions that he does not think that the theology that had shaped him was the climax or end of theological development (Jonker, 1991a:180). He would therefore prefer to leave the task of reflecting on the consequences of the contextual character of (European) theology in South Africa to a younger generation of theologians (Jonker, 1991a:120).

[150] Cf. *Die liefde van Christus dring ons* (Jonker, 1976a); *Christus die Middelaar* (Jonker, 1977); *Hoe kan ek seker wees?* (Jonker, 1988a), and *Ons Posisie in Christus en Ons Aardse Realiteite* (Jonker, 1997).

[151] Cf. *Ek glo in die Heilige Gees* (Jonker, Kotzé & Lombard, 1975); "Kritiese verwantskap?" (Jonker, 1982a); *Die Gees van Christus* (Jonker, 1983); "Die koningskap van Christus en die staat in 'n godsdienstig-pluralistiese land" (Jonker, 1984); "Die verhouding tussen Christelike geloof en mistiek" (Jonker, 1985);"Spiritualiteit en Godsverduistering" (Jonker, 1992); and "Sterk- en swakpunte van die gereformeerde spiritualiteit?" (Jonker, 1998b).

[152] Cf. *Die Sendingbepalinge van die Ned. Geref. Kerk van Transvaal* (Jonker, 1962); "Die Liberale Kerkreg en die Veelheid van Kerke" (Jonker, 1964); *Om die regering van Christus in Sy kerk* (Jonker, 1965); "Volkskerk of Belydende Gemeente?" (Jonker, 1967); *Die Woord as Opdrag* (Jonker, 1976b); *Vreemde Gemeenskap* (Jonker &

Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (cf. Naudé, 2014:1; De Gruchy, 2005:209 – 211). He has been variously described as a Scriptural theologian (Smit, 2013:265 – 271; Combrink, 2006:824), Reformed(-Catholic) theologian (Theron, 2010:179 – 183; Combrink, 2006:824), ethical theologian (Theron, 2010:181 – 182), church theologian (Smit, 2013:279 – 281; Botman, 2006c:821), church reformer (Van Wyk, 2006:8), "thoughtful theologian, drenched in the Reformed tradition" (Lombard, 2013:285), modern theologian (Naudé, 1991:117), public theologian (Naudé, 2014:2; Koopman, 2008:173 – 178), and theologian of freedom (Botman, 2006c:821 – 822; Van Wyk, 2006:7; Smit, 2013:279 – 281). In short, Willie Jonker has been described as one of the greatest theologians of the Dutch Reformed Church and of South Africa in the 20th century (Botman, 2006c:823).[153]

2.4.2   Theology as faith seeking understanding

All theology, argues Jonker (1970:162), is born of the need for the *fides quaerens intellectum,* or the will to understand what is believed. Theology, in this way, is therefore an act of reasonable reflection on the revelation of God (Jonker, 1970:162). In their book on theology, Johan Heyns (Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Pretoria at that time) and Willie Jonker (Professor of Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch University at that time) observe that theology is a deed or form of obedience (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:9). As such they opt (in a section written by Johan Heyns) for what is called 'evangelical confessional theology', which is described (1) as theology that is primarily based on and bound to Holy

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Theron, 1979); *Uit Vrye Guns Alleen* (Jonker, 1989b); *Bevrydende Waarheid* (Jonker, 1994); *Selfs die kerk kan verander* (Jonker, 1998a); and *Die Relevansie van die kerk* (Jonker, 2008).

[153] There are many descriptions of Willie Jonker as a person, in the context of both church and classroom, which range from his gentleness, sincerity and humility (Combrink, 2006:823; Smit, 2013:273; Van Wyk, 2006:8; Lombard, 2013:280, 282) to his brilliance and extraordinary career as an academic (Combrink, 2006:823; Lombard, 2013:280). Special mention is (often) made of his loyalty to and love for the Dutch Reformed Church of and for which he was a member, minister and theologian (Combrink, 2006:826 – 827; Van Wyk, 2006:8). After many years of struggle within the Dutch Reformed Church, wherein he had experienced criticism and resistance (*verkettering, verdagmaking en verguising*) for his stance against apartheid and racial injustice, the Cape Synod of the DRC unanimously accepted a motion wherein Jonker was honoured and thanked for the role that he had played as prophet and spiritual father for and within the Dutch Reformed Church (Jonker, 1998a:215 – 216). Amie van Wyk, a fellow theologian at the University of Potchefstroom at the time, would also emphasise that Jonker's theological contribution had been of immeasurable value in a dark period of South Africa's history (2006:8). In his words (2006:8): "Deur word en daad, optrede en teologie was hy 'n ligbaken in 'n dikwels donker tydperk in ons Suid-Afrikaanse kerk- en politieke geskiedenis." Jonker was, in short, a 'captivating theologian' (*boeiende teoloog*) for many, both in his person and in his theology (Van Wyk, 2006:7). For Willie Jonker's own account of his involvement with the Dutch Reformed Church over many years as member, minister and theologian, see his book with the meaningful title *Selfs die kerk kan verander* (even the church can change) (1998a). See also Jaap Durand's account of Willie Jonker's life and work within the Dutch Reformed Church (1989).

Scripture[154] and which wants to communicate the joyous news that God rules over all the earth and that God loves human beings (Jonker & Heyns, 1977:10), and (2) as theology that communicates the joyous news as it is understood and interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity (the Canons of Dordt, the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Cathechism)[155] (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:10). Theology, in short, is a *science* in that it is born of a need for theological *knowledge* (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:131), which aims to understand, explicate and proclaim the Word of God (Smit, 2013:268).

Yet such a theology is not only an intellectual endeavour, argues Johan Heyns, but is also a *calling* as 'concrete service to God' (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:130). Theology is thereby "a work of faith", argues Jonker (1977b:9) – and thereby constitutes 'a response in faith' to the address by God's Word, argues Heyns (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:130). Theology is embedded in faith, notes Johan Heyns, in that theology (1) emerges from living faith and (2) rests on living faith (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:130).[156] Stated somewhat differently, practicing theology is a spiritual matter (Smit, 2013:276). The personal life of faith of a theologian is therefore not only a 'formal power of inspiration', but also a force that guides and directs a particular theologian's whole theology, notes Heyns (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:130).[157] Theology and faith

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[154] Willie Jonker repeatedly refers to biblical texts as 'Holy Scripture' and as the 'Word of God', which is – for him – in line with confessional interpretations and understanding of the bible. Holy Scripture is, for Jonker, to be interpreted from within the church of Christ (1970:175) because it is, as Word of God, a book of the church. In his words (Jonker, 1970:175): "Die Heilige Skrif is die Woord van God, maar dit is juis daarom ook die boek van die kerk."

[155] In his book on confessions entitled *Bevrydende Waarheid* (liberating truth) (1994), Jonker argues that the character of Protestant confessions includes encompassing and theologically sound reflection as well as careful formulations (1994:11). Although some confessions of faith may be doxological in form (wherein the totality of Christian knowledge of salvation is expressed), he argues that Protestant confessions are not meant for the doxological celebration of salvation but rather as an account of the gospel (externally) and as rhetorical guidelines or rules for the preaching of the word, pastoral care and counselling, and the teaching of the youth (internally) (Jonker, 1994:11 – 12).

[156] Indeed, Johan Heyns would argue that faith is a crucial component of an 'evangelical confessional theology' – so much so that whosoever removes the aspect of faith and its function from theology is no longer dealing with either Christian or evangelical theology, he argues (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:130).

[157] Willie Jonker has very clear ideas about what the task(s) of a theologian entails (cf. 1977b:11). For him, "[t]he theologian is not a Christian philosopher whose task it is to draw up a comprehensive Christian outlook on life and reality or to devise a Christian theory of science demarcating the respective limits of the various special sciences", and "[n]or is the task of the theologian to draft a critique of our societal structures or to endeavour to supply all the answers for a Christian approach to the problems of our world" (1977b:11). Rather, he argues, "the theologian must relate his knowledge of the Word of God to the thought-patterns of his (sic) day" whereby "he (sic) should, as a modern man (sic), have sufficient knowledge of the general culture, problems and perils of his (sic) time to be able to interpret Scripture for this specific situation" (1977b:11). He pleads for "a dialogue between theology and the other sciences" so that (1) theology may be prevented from operating in a vacuum, and (2) the other sciences may be enriched by theological perspectives "which could be of value to them in their own research" (Jonker, 1977b:11).

are inseparable, for Willie Jonker (1977b:9 – 10), if theology is not to "lead to a merely intellectual and objectivistic knowledge, divorced from the existential saving relationship with God". Theology is "born of faith" and should lead to "a deepening of faith" (Jonker, 1977b:9).[158] Theology, in short, is simultaneously a *response* to God's address as well as a *calling* to formulate such a response in faith (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:130, 132).

Willie Jonker distinguishes between four models of theology, namely (1) theology as wisdom (evident in Augustine and the Eastern Orthodox tradition) (Jonker, 1977b:3 – 4; Naudé, 2014:2), (2) theology as rational knowledge of God (evident in Anselm, Aquinas and Roman Catholic scholasticism) (Jonker, 1977b:4 – 5; Naudé, 2014:2), (3) theology as revealed knowledge of God (evident in Luther, Calvin and the Protestant tradition) (Jonker, 1977b:5; Naudé, 2014:2), and (4) theology as religious experience (evident in Schleiermacher and neo-Protestant traditions) (Jonker, 1977b:5 – 6; Naudé, 2014:2). Jonker appeals to the 'Protestant model' (Naudé, 2014:2) or 'Reformational view' (Jonker, 1977b:7), the so-called third type of theology, where "the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures is taken as the proper object of theology" (Jonker, 1977b:7). Moreover, Jonker "positions himself in the specific Reformed tradition within broader Protestant theology" (Naudé, 2014:2). For him, this means that the one condition which makes this type of theology possible must be maintained, namely "adherence to the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures as Word of God" (Jonker, 1977b:7) – while at the same time avoiding the dangers of speculation, rationalism and subjectivism (Rietveld, 1977:16). For Willie Jonker, "[t]rue theology can only be biblical theology" (1977b:7). Theology is therefore an attempt to make sense of "the saving knowledge of God in Jesus Christ" (1977b:7) whom we come to know while practicing theology (Smit, 2013:269).

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[158] Yet theology, for Jonker, is also not merely a synonym for faith (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:128 – 131; Jonker, 1977b:8 – 10). Willie Jonker admits that "[t]he exact distinction between reflecting faith and theology is difficult to determine" since "[o]ur faith has been deeply influenced by theological thinking" – so much so that "[e]ven our confessional writings are largely the result of penetrating theological analysis" (1977b:10). It is worth quoting Jonker at length here, in order to illustrate both the overlap *and* distinctiveness of theology and faith respectively (Jonker, 1977b:10): "The distinction between theology and reflecting faith is not to be found in the contents dealt with, but in the method applied. Theology consciously employs methods, knowledge and concepts derived from the scientific world in a certain historical context. The theologian uses academic means in his (sic) study of Scripture which are not at the disposal of every believer… Theology may thus be seen as a form of intellectual service to the Word of God. It is the obedient, scientific study of Scripture with a view to a more thorough understanding of its message and the implications thereof for life in the church and the world." Theology is, in other words, deeply *hermeneutical* for Willie Jonker.

(Reformed) Theology is a hermeneutical, biblical, systematic, contextual, responsible, critical and dynamic reflection on and response to God's Word in our world, argues Johan Heyns (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:132 – 136; cf. Smit, 2013:268 – 271). For Willie Jonker, theology has to do with salvation (*heil*), as it is known in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore with the liberating truth of the gospel of God's grace (Jonker, 1994:1); with the soteriological core of the Reformation's *solae* (*sola Scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus, soli Deo gloria*), which are as emcompassing as God's grace (Theron, 2010:187; Theron, 2007:228); and with the confession that salvation flows from God's love and grace, not from the inborn temptation of self-salvation (Jonker, 1994:1). Indeed, soteriology is an important key to understanding Willie Jonker's theology, argues Erik Basson (2014; cf. also 2015). However, Jonker's understanding of salvation is arguably embedded in his interpretation of the formative, didactic, public and practical nature and function of Christian doctrine – which is, in turn, shaped by the methodological strategies that he employs to interpret Christian doctrine.

2.4.3   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

Christian doctrine, for Willie Jonker, is an expression of the revelation of God as it is reflected in church confessions (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:291). Stated somewhat differently, dogma or doctrine is the authoritative expression of the church's understanding of and reaction to God's revelation (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:291), and the hermeneutical formulations that came into being in the struggle for understanding Scripture over the ages (Naudé, 1991:114). Faith must be confessed, and the church is a confessional community (Jonker, 1994:3). Theology as a whole, for Jonker, is preoccupied with God's revelation, but Christian doctrine in particular expresses God's revelation in the confession(s) of the church (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:279).[159] As such, Christian doctrine is embedded in the theological terrain or landscape within which theological 'tasks' and 'methods' function (Heyns & Jonker,

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[159] Jonker emphasises that the context of a particular theologian's theology – namely, the historical situation of a theologian, cultural factors as well as philosophical frameworks – has a major influence on how various theological methods and structures are formulated (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:229). There is, for him, however a close connection between theology and confession, exactly because a theologian's theology always arises from a faith conviction which is shared by a church or faith community (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:230). In other words, theology is confessional ("[t]eologie het dus altyd, selfs teen wil en dank, 'n konfessionele kleur"). For this reason – namely, because of the different confessional backgrounds that theologies arise from – Jonker is able to distinguish between different theological types (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:230). Context also plays an important role for Jonker in the exegesis of biblical text. For him one of the fundamental rules of good exegesis is understanding a particular text or passage in context (Jonker, 1970:160).

1977:139). This terrain, with the theological borders that create the room or space needed for theology to function as a science (cf. Heyns & Jonker, 1977:140 – 149), is the landscape wherein or whereupon believers live, argues Johan Heyns (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:139). There appears to be at least four spaces which Christian doctrines occupy in this theological terrain within Jonker's work, namely (1) formative, (2) didactic, (3) public, and (4) practical spaces.

Christian doctrine, firstly, occupies a formative space for Willie Jonker. Christian doctrine is to preaching and teaching what grammar is to language, namely the unspoken rules to theological rhetoric without which theological communication becomes impossible (Theron, 2010:185). Christian doctrines employ faith grammar that is formative of faith practices like preaching and teaching (Theron, 2010:185; Jonker, 1977b:9). This 'faith grammar' therefore plays a *formative* role in that it shapes faith practices, but at the same time the faith grammar of Christian doctrine is itself formed or shaped by Scripture (Jonker,1977b:9). In turn, Scriptural exegesis should be formed by the faith community of which a theologian is part and by the church confessions[160] of that particularly faith community (Jonker, 1970:175). Indeed, for Jonker doctrine has no purpose in and of itself, but is a (hermeneutical) means to a theological end (Theron, 2010:185; Jonker, 1970:158).[161] The structure of 'biblical thought' would, for Jonker, be formative of 'dogmatic thought' (Naudé, 1991:111). This means that (1) Christian doctrine is *formative* insofar as the Word of God is its source and norm (Smit, 2013:266, 268), (2) Scriptural exegesis should be *formed* by a specific faith community with its accompanying church confessions, and therefore that (3) the very nature and function of Christian doctrine itself may be described as *formative*, with regards to the role it plays in shaping faith practices. Willie Jonker is in this sense a *scriptural theologian,* for whom the bible played an important role in *forming* Christian theology and doctrine.

Secondly, Christian doctrine occupies a didactic space for Willie Jonker. Dirkie Smit writes (2013:272) that the students of Willie Jonker would hear and learn about different viewpoints

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[160] Jonker argues that although neither churches nor their dogma are infallible, the church confessions provide the scope of Holy Scripture in such a way that Scripture may continue to play a corrective and critical role in shaping Christian doctrine, theology and the faith of believers (1970:176).

[161] In this regard Jonker often used the metaphor of a dish cloth or oven mitt (Christian dogma or doctrine) which is needed to move a hot pot of soup (the truth of God's revelation) from a stove to explain this point to his students (Smit, 2013:272; Theron, 2010:185). Dogma or doctrine fulfils the hermeneutical role of the cloth or mitt in working with God's self-revelation in Word and Spirit (Theron, 2010:185). In turn there may be many different theologies or theological perspectives or Christian doctrines that assist believers and theologians in dealing, however insufficiently, with the truth of God's revelation (Smit, 2013:272).

through exposure to a variety of theologians and philosophers in the dogmatics and apologetics classes that Jonker taught. The *informative* nature and function of Christian doctrine and dogma is perhaps most evident in Jonker's own approach to teaching. Instead of viewing dogmatics or Christian doctrines as a source of available and revealed truth claims that must be taught and learned, Jonker challenged his students to think for themselves, together with the church over the ages (Smit, 2013:272). Jonker's informative approach also provided the structure for his books on Christ (1977), the Spirit (1983), and the election of believers (1989b) respectively. In these books, intended as textbooks in Systematic Theology (Jonker, 1977:cover; Jonker, 1983:cover), there is a clear progression in argument which moves from an examination of some theological challenges and problems related to the topic of the book, to a dogmatic-historical overview (*dogmahistoriese oorsig*)[162] of some classic and contemporary theological responses to these challenges and problems, to an exploration of new perspectives (*nuwe weë*) on the particular topic, to providing some theological guidelines (*riglyne*) for further reflection (Smit, 2013:272; Lombard, 2013:288; Jonker, 1983:cover). Willie Jonker is in this sense a *systematic theologian*, for whom Christian theology and doctrine had an *informative* role to play in shaping students in theology and believers in Christian faith communities alike.

Thirdly, Christian doctrine occupies a public space for Willie Jonker. Piet Naudé, in an article on Willie Jonker's contribution to public theology,[163] points out that, for Jonker, "the church, understood as local congregation, denomination, and ecumenical church is the gateway to the other publics" (2014:3) which may well merit a description of Jonker's theology as 'public'.[164] Indeed, he describes Jonker's (public) theology as "a theology that seeks to

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[162] Robert Vosloo points to the importance of Willie Jonker's historical consciousness throughout his life and work, but also here - in his concern for providing a dogmatic-historical overview in these textbooks. See Vosloo's as yet unpublished lecture on Willie Jonker's historical consciousness, entitled "Op die breuklyn" (2015), presented as the tenth W. D. Jonker memorial lecture on 25 October 2015.

[163] Public theology is defined by Naudé as a theology which "attempts to address issues of public concern from a theological perspective and communicates this to appropriate publics in church in society" (2014:2). It is perhaps worth noting that while this is what public theology *is,* for Piet Naudé, public theology "*is not* about public relations on behalf of the church or seeking cheap public attention for a well-spoken theologian" (2014:7; my emphasis – NM).

[164] Piet Naudé points out (2014:7) that although Jonker himself never described his theology as 'public', Jonker's theology can be depicted as 'public theology' with regards to (1) his life-work that was "situated in the context of the church's struggle against apartheid" and (2) "[h]is choice to pursue the specific tradition of Reformed theology – drawing on John Calvin and Karl Barth – [which] already put him on the path to view all of reality under the rule of God." Moreover, Naudé points to "an explicit ecclesiological focus" in Jonker's (public) theology which, for him, meant that "the road to other publics in society leads via the public of the church" (2014:7). This is particularly evident in Willie Jonker's concern for the public place or relevance of the church

transform all of reality according to the will of God as revealed in Scripture" (2014:3). Christian doctrine that is shaped by such a public theology may therefore be *transformative* in nature and function – as it is encountered in preaching for instance,[165] which is "a public event with a transformative power both in and outside of the church" (Naudé, 2014:4). Indeed, a theology that is focused on the whole of life (Heyns & Jonker, 1977:131) in the sense that "there is no sphere of life which cannot profit from the services of a dynamic, biblical theology" (Jonker, 1977b:10) gives rise to Christian doctrine that "transforms the church and the world through Word and Spirit" (Naudé, 2014:4). Willie Jonker is in this sense a *public theologian,* for whom Christian theology and doctrine had a public role to fulfil.

Fourthly, Christian doctrine occupies a practical space for Willie Jonker. "There is a deep pastoral and practical intent in all of Jonker's theology," writes Naudé (2014:3) – indeed, for Jonker (1977b:9) theology is "a practical necessity" for the Christian church. Willie Jonker would apply his theology to a variety of practical issues, ranging from church unity[166] to the immorality act (Naudé, 1991:117). Indeed, the relationship between theory and practice is of vital importance to theology, argues Jonker (1977b:14), because "theology may never degenerate into a sterile intellectual game, unrelated to reality." Christian doctrine that is shaped by theology as *scientia eminens practica* (Jonker, 1977b:14) is therefore *performative* in nature and function. Theological knowledge entails, on the one hand, knowledge of life and self in relationship to God, and therefore Jonker regarded theological knowledge as a gift from God rather than a human achievement (Smit, 2013:277). Yet on the other hand Christian doctrine, as theology being practiced, is not an issue only of theory, but also of life praxis (*lewenspraksis*) for Jonker (Smit, 2013:279), and therefore Christian doctrine also has to be acted upon or performed. Willie Jonker is in this sense a *church theologian,* for whom the

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(1998a; 2008; cf. Smit, 2009a), but is also reflected in his work on social ethics (Jonker, 1973a; cf. Van Niekerk, 2011).

[165] Piet Naudé refers specifically to Jonker's work on preaching (cf. 1976a; 1976b) as a modus or expression of public theology, since "[p]reaching is public theology in action as the echoes of the gospel are heard in the church and its effects felt far beyond the church – because it is God's gospel" (Naudé, 2014:4). For Jonker, then, "the preacher should be both theologically and socially competent to ensure a proper communication of the gospel message in the realities of the world" (Naudé, 2014:3) even though this is not needed to make the gospel, the good news from God, relevant (Naudé, 2014:4).

[166] Church unity has been a primary concern for Willie Jonker throughout his life (cf. Jonker, 1998a) – indeed, Flip Theron points out that Willie Jonker longed for one church (2010:187; cf. also Smit, 2013). Jonker refers, in particular, to 'the socio-political situation in South Africa' that has led to a "the sinful division of the Church" (Jonker, 1991b:88). A united witness is necessary, also in South Africa, because it serves God. Yet the unity of churches had a role to play not only in honouring God but also in serving "the *well-being* of the country as a whole" (1991b:98; my emphasis – NM). Indeed, unity is important if we are "really to know and trust each other, sharing each other's burdens and happiness" (Jonker, 1991b:89).

nature, holiness, authority, task, mission, credibility, spiritual condition, and future of the church was of primary importance (Smit, 2013:279 – 280) – and in all of his writings on the church, argues Dirkie Smit, the *practical* nature of Christian life and theology (and doctrine, one could add) was underlined (2013:279).

Christian doctrine, in short, is portrayed as formative, didactic, public, and practical in Willie Jonker's thought and work. For Jonker – as scriptural theologian, systematic theologian, public theologian, church theologian – Christian doctrine or dogmatics arguably is formative, informative, transformative and performative in nature and function. Yet the *pinnacle* of the dogmatic task, for Willie Jonker, is articulating the free, universal invitation to God's grace (Naudé, 1991:115). Jonker arguably employs a collection of methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine which shapes his understanding and interpretation of salvation as God's gift.

2.4.4 Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

Theological methodology is a concern for Willie Jonker, since "[i]t is in theology's own interest to employ scientific utterances and to explain that it can be critically examined and verified within the framework of its own propositions – and this is in fact being done" (1977b:15). Theology must maintain its own (scientific) identity, argues Jonker (1977b:15), especially in the context of a university. He would be particularly interested in the methods that dogmatic theologians employ in their attempt to avoid unhealthy speculation about God (1970:163). Although Jonker himself did not work out an extensive theological methodology, he arguably employs a collection of methodological strategies in his interpretation of Christian doctrine as formative, didactic, public, and practical which may be described as (1) exegetical, (2) pedagogical, (3) polemical and (4) pastoral strategies.

A first methodological strategy that Willie Jonker employs, particularly evident in his commentary on the Letter to the Romans (*Die Brief aan die Romeine,* 1966), is an exegetical strategy. There is, for him (as with John Calvin, who played an important role in shaping Jonker's theology; cf. Smit, 2009a and Naudé, 2010) a dynamic hermeneutical relation

between doctrines and exegesis (Theron, 2010:185).[167] Willie Jonker understands exegesis as a listening to Scripture in all of its strangeness (Jonker, 1973b:90). His understanding of theology, and Christian doctrine in particular, places the revelation of God as attested to in Holy Scripture, the bible, the Word of God at the center of his exegetical endeavours (Smit, 2013:265). Christian doctrine is more than the history of dogma or the study of church confessions, argues Jonker (1970:158), in that it has to do with the truth of God's Word. Christian doctrine is a study of the revelation of God, as it is found in Holy Scripture, and in this regard dogmatics and exegesis have the same object of study (Jonker, 1970:159). However, whereas exegesis focuses its attention on exposition of the *text,* dogmatics focuses its attention on exposition of the *matter(s)* addressed in Holy Scripture (Jonker, 1970:159). In both cases exposition (which, for Jonker, is a synonym for exegesis) is the methodological strategy employed, albeit as two distinctive moments in the scientific study of the Word of God (Jonker, 1970:159, 161).[168] Exposition for dogmatic theology does not, however, entail

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[167] One of Willie Jonker's most important theological choices was his growing conviction that theology is hermeneutical in nature, argues Dirkie Smit (2013:268). Piet Naudé would mention two important characteristics of Jonker's hermeneutical approach, namely (1) his unwillingness to employ philosophical frameworks in his theological reflections, and (2) the 'naïve' approach to Scripture (1991:112 – 113). Yet, as Smit also notes (2013:269), there are also important limitations for Jonker to such an understanding of theology. On the one hand neither hermeneutics (Jonker, 1977b:9; cf. Jonker, 1970:170) nor ideology (Jonker, 1977b:15) should become what Jonker calls theological 'straightjackets': theology "which sets its own limitations on the Word of God" (1977b:9). On the other hand dogma or doctrine is not the final object or end of theological study (even if systematic theologians do study Christian doctrines in and of themselves as well) but the theological means to studying the Word of God as it is given in Holy Scripture (1970:158). Christian doctrine, then, is not merely a study of the content of church dogma, but rather a study of the revelation of God as it is attested to in Holy Scripture (1970:158 – 159). Smit points out (2013:269) that for Jonker the hermeneutical approach to theology would entail exegesis (*"saaklike, inhoudelike, teologiese uitleg"*) of Scripture in a way in which the case or content or message of the Scriptures is made clear. Jonker maintains that there is a message, or unity, or scope, or focus, or inner coherence to the Scriptures (Smit, 2013:269) – while at the same time warning against a reduction of the Scriptures to a single expression or theme or issue (Smit, 2013:269). Piet Naudé describes exactly this hermeneutical approach to Scripture as 'naïve' in a twofold sense, namely (1) that more recent directions and research in hermeneutics were not, at that time, sufficiently accounted for in Jonker's interpretation of Scripture, and (2) that Jonker's passion for preaching shaped not only his systematic analyses, but also his approach to rhetoric and communication (1991:113 – 114).

[168] In Jonker's words (1970:162): "Die dogmatikus is dus nie met iets anders besig as die eksegeet nie, maar hy (sic) is vanuit 'n ander perspektief met dieselfde Skrifwoord besig." In addition to the exegetical focus on Scripture, dogmatic theologians also work with the doctrines of the church (Jonker, 1970:162). Indeed, Christian doctrines are dependent upon exegesis of Holy Scripture (Jonker, 1970:167). Since Holy Scripture does not contain doctrines in and of itself, Christian doctrines must be 'developed' from Holy Scripture by church theologians, argues Jonker (1970:168). Perhaps it could be helpful to outline what an exegetical strategy would *not* entail, particularly with regard to the role of exegesis in 'developing' Christian doctrines. Firstly, exegesis should not be employed to provide scriptural evidence for doctrinal truths (as with scholasticism) (Jonker, 1970:164 – 165). Secondly, exegesis is not a rearrangement of scriptural utterances into a systematic whole which is then called 'doctrine' (Jonker, 1970:165 – 166). Thirdly, exegesis is not a 'sadistic' attempt to break down doctrinal truth, and should therefore not be placed in opposition to doctrine or dogma (Jonker, 1970:166 – 167; cf. 1970:173 – 174). Fourthly, exegesis is not a reappropriation of dogma or doctrine only to what is practical and functional within a given context (as with what Jonker calls 'proclamation theology') (1970:168 – 170). Fifthly, exegesis is not hermeneutics, which for Jonker points to a complete destruction of Scripture by way of historical criticism and a reduction of theology to hermeneutics (Jonker, 1970:170 – 171). In this regard

exegesis of *only* Holy Scripture, argues Jonker (1970:167), but includes an interpretation or exegesis of the thoughts of the church regarding Holy Scripture and church confessions. Christian doctrine therefore has an important pedagogical task which can be described as an *exegetical* strategy, which includes exposition of the bible, church confessions, and the context of believers (Jonker, 1970:162 – 163).

A second methodological strategy that Willie Jonker employs, particularly evident in his *Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek* (guidelines in dogmatics) textbook series,[169] is that of a pedagogical strategy. Willie Jonker produced this "very influential series of text books in systematic theology" between 1977 and 1989 with his colleague at the University of the Western Cape at the time, Jaap Durand. An important motivation for and concern behind this series of textbooks was the various courses that the both of them were teaching at the time (Smit, 2013:272). Jonker contributed three books to this series, namely *Christus die Middelaar* (Christ the mediator) (1977), *Die Gees van Christus* (the Spirit of Christ) (1983) and *Uit Vrye Guns Alleen* (by grace alone) (1989b) (Lombard, 2013:288). Christo Lombard argues that these textbooks had an immeasurable impact on those ministers who were the theological students of Willie Jonker and Jaap Durand, the 'mentors' of their generation (2013:288). Indeed, "[w]ho will fathom the influence which these original text books, shining like a lighthouse in a stormy night, in fact had on succeeding waves of theological students entering the ministry or academia in South Africa's darkest hours?" (2013:288) Instead of providing answers, Jonker endeavoured to guide students in asking critical questions about the

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Jonker is even critical of calling dogmatic theology 'systematic theology', since it may signal, he argues (Jonker, 1970:171), that dogmatics is only concerned with the phenomenon of the understanding of the biblical texts and with a systematic overview of the different interpretations of the bible. He points out that systematising the utterances of Holy Scripture is a lingering temptation for dogmatic theology (Jonker, 1970:172). Exegesis, in short, has to do with an exposition of the truth of God as it is revealed in the bible (Jonker, 1970:171) and with considering and appropriating the truth(s) of God's Word in the light of the questions of the day in an attempt to discern God's acts of salvation within the world and toward human beings (Jonker, 1970:172).

[169] The rationale for the Wegwysers in the Dogmatiek series is described as follows (Jonker, 1983:cover): "Wegwysers in die Dogmatiek is 'n reeks monografieë oor die vernaamste leerstukke in die dogmatiek. Die verskillende dele sluit by mekaar aan en gesamentlik dek dit die hele veld van die dogmatiek. Weens 'n gebrek aan 'n beknopte en bruikbare inleiding in die dogmatiek, wat reeds 'n geruime tyd in ons land ondervind word, het proff. J. J. F. Durand en W. D. Jonker by die aanbieding van die stof in die eerste instansie gedink aan die behoeftes van teologiese studente wat op 'n oorsigtelike en tog bondige wyse in die veld van die dogmatiese denke georiënteer moet word. Die opset van die behandeling van die stof is eenvoudig. Daar word telkens 'n oorsig gebied oor die standpunte en beslissings in verband met die verskillende leerstukke soos dit in die loop van die eeue na vore gekom het. Daarna word aandag geskenk aan huidige diskussies rondom die verskillende grondvrae in die dogmatiek, terwyl die bespreking elke keer afgesluit word met 'n aantal rigtingwysers vir die denke oor hierdie vrae in die lig van die Skrif."

various challenges and problems that faced the church and theology, in their day but also throughout the ages (Smit, 2013:272).[170]

A third methodological strategy that Willie Jonker employs, particularly evident in his well-known speech at the Rustenburg conference (which arguably is "[t]he most 'public' moment of Jonker's theological and church journey" (Naudé, 2014:4)), is a polemical strategy.[171] Christian doctrine, and particularly confessional writings, has an important critical task in protecting theological truth from heresy (Jonker, 1970:163) and fulfilling a polemical function by unmasking doctrinal error (Jonker, 1994:9). Indeed, Jonker's own critical theological arguments contributed to important public national debates in South Africa regarding the (theological) justification of the political structures and decisions of the Apartheid government.[172] This would culminate in his well-known confession of guilt at the National Conference of Church Leaders held in Rustenburg in November 1990 (Alberts & Chikane,

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[170] Jonker's pedagogical strategy arguably also becomes evident in his many articles and book reviews in the NGTT (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif) theological journal, wherein he exposed readers to theological books from outside of South Africa (Smit, 2013:272). These books include, among others, *Die Antwort des Glaubens* by Heinrich Ott (cf. Jonker, 1974), *Christelijk Geloof* by Hendrikus Berkhof (cf. Jonker, 1975), *Gereformeerden op zoek naar God* by Cornelis Graafland (cf. Jonker, 1992), and *Christian Theology* by Alister McGrath (cf. Jonker, 1996). Christo Lombard explains that "Jonker's influence and his referencing to new literature opened to many of us [students of Jonker] a whole new canon of Dutch and German ecumenical sources which some of us started reading in our own time" (2013:284; footnote 16).

[171] Dirkie Smit points out that although Willie Jonker had not necessarily meant for his theological endeavours to function polemically, these clearly *had* functioned polemically over the years, in his critique against many different issues – ranging from unnecessary intellectualism in theology to a division between theology and its church context to the unwillingness to submit to the work of the Word and the Spirit in church and society (2013:278). Both intellect and experience, both mind and heart, were important in expressing faith and practicing theology for Jonker. On the one hand, the impersonal intellectualism of scholasticism was problematic for Jonker because faith was a matter of the heart (Theron, 2010:183). On the other hand, an overemphasis on experience by way of sheer sentimentalism was also problematic for Jonker because this confused faith with personal experience (Theron, 2010:183 – 184).

[172] One of these debates arose due to suggested revisions to the South African constitution wherein provisions were to be made for some non-white population groups in South Africa to participate in the governing of the country by way of the Trimaceral Parliament (cf. Jonker, 1984). A group of 193 ordained ministers of the three white Afrikaans sister churches – the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (NGK), the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (NHK), and the Reformed Church of South Africa (GKA) – officially opposed this proposed revision on the grounds that "the granting of more political rights to the so-called Coloured and Asian population groups will jeopardize the Christian character of the South African state, as these groups include many adherents of non-Christian religions" (Jonker, 1984:1). This group of white, Afrikaner ministers claimed that the proposed revisions to the constitution contravenes the so-called Christian confession regarding the calling of the state to uphold the Christian religion, especially as it is confessed in article 36 of the Belgic Confession (Jonker, 1984:2). Willie Jonker examined this argument on theological, not political, grounds, and pleaded for democratic processes that would enable greater cooperation between Christians and non-Christians, particularly regarding state governance (Jonker, 1984:13 – 14). Another of these debates was an internal debate within the Dutch Reformed Church on race relations, which "in the end led to a new stance on race relations by the DRC in 1986, expressed in the document *Church and Society*, revised in 1990" (Naudé, 2014:1). Piet Naudé writes that "[t]his change of direction was the direct reason for a split in the DRC when the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, a whites-only church of roughly 40 000 members at the time, was formed" (2014:1).

118

1991:13). There, in a speech entitled "Understanding the Church Situation and Obstacles to Christian Witness in South Africa", Jonker apologised for apartheid not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Afrikaans people as a whole (1991b:92).[173] This confession of guilt, made before the end of Apartheid in 1994, was highly controversial and polemical at the time[174] and is regarded as "an important precursor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995 – 2002) which played a determinant role in the healing of South Africa's past" (Naudé, 2014:5), as well as an important impetus on the way toward "a new constitution, a new dispensation, and hopefully a new Dutch Reformed Church" (Lombard, 2013:282).

This strategy, however, cannot be divorced from Jonker's *pathos* for his students (Smit, 2013:273; Lombard, 2013:291), for the Dutch Reformed Church (Smit, 2013:274), for the unity of the church of Christ (Smit, 2013:273), and for the truth of the gospel (Smit, 2013:274 – 275). Yet perhaps it was exactly Jonker's *pathos* that enabled him to step into the polemical debates, particularly inside the Dutch Reformed Church, and participate in the robust debates

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[173] A longer version of the confession reads as follows (Jonker, 1991b:92; original emphasis): "I confess before you and before the Lord, not only my own sin and guilt, and my personal responsbility for the political, social, economical and structural wrongs that have been done to many of you, and the results of which you and our whole country are still suffering from, but *vicariously* I dare also to do that in the name of the DRC of which I am a member, and for the Afrikaans people as a whole." Piet Naudé explains (2014:5) that "Jonker had to confess publicly because of the special guilt of the DRC... concerning separate churches and its theological support for the policies of apartheid." Indeed, this public witness had a 'socio-psychological' and 'political' impact that "was to be channelled via the public of the church itself, in this case the public of the ecumenical church" (Naudé, 2014:5).

[174] There were mixed feelings about and receptions of Jonker's confession at the time – ranging from Archbishop Desmond Tutu's acceptance of this confession and embrace of Willie Jonker following his speech (De Gruchy, 2005:211; Botman, 2006c:822; cf. Tutu, 1991:99, 100 – 102) and an affirmation by the official Dutch Reformed Church delegation that Jonker "has in fact reiterated the decision made by our General Synod in Bloemfontein" shortly before (Potgieter, 1991:100), to "some who were not yet able or willing to forgive all" as well as "many members of the ruling National Party and the NGK [who] were furious with Jonker's act of 'betrayal'" (De Gruchy, 2005:211). John De Gruchy writes that "[t]his was particularly true of participants from the NGK mission churches who believed that the white NGK, as evident in the Vereeniging Consultation, was still dragging its feet in rejecting apartheid" (2005:211). The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (now the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa were critical of the *official status* of Jonker's confession (cf. the statement made by the moderatures of these two churches at Rustenburg – Alberts & Chikane, 1991:261). Russel Botman admits that he was one of those who objected to Jonker's 'earthshattering' confession of guilt at Rustenburg, but that this objection had been misplaced (Botman, 2006c:822). The DRC's denouncing of apartheid left many with doubt as to whether this sudden change of direction meant 'a change of heart', and therefore the DRC's confession of guilt was viewed with suspicion, as is evident in Bishop Cameron Mfecane's response to Willie Jonker's speech at Rustenburg (De Gruchy, 1991:27 – 28; cf. Mfecane, 1991:106). Yet it is clear that, as Christo Lombard points out, Willie Jonker "took everyone by surprise by the way in which he made this confession, namely in the middle of his academic contribution" (2013:281; footnote 5). For an interpretation of the Rustenburg in historical perspective, see De Gruchy (1991).

of his day.[175] Dirkie Smit describes Jonker's *pathos* for a biblical, hermeneutically responsible, Reformed, Christological theology as polemical in its resistance to what Jonker regarded as natural theology (2013:270),[176] and particularly on the issue of the reign of Christ (Smit, 2013:280; cf. also Jonker, 1962; and Jonker, 1965). Dirkie Smit explains that Willie Jonker valued theological discussion and critique, and would take great care in responding to the reactions to his work (2013:273),[177] but "always understood his role as primarily *theological* in the realm of the church" (Naudé, 2014:5). And yet the church itself also had a critical role to fulfil in society, for Jonker, if it is "to be inclusive in the sense that it knows no favouritism, but seeks the salvation and benefit of all" (Jonker, 1991b:96 – 97).

A fourth methodological strategy that Willie Jonker employs, evident in his sermons and weekly meditations in the weekly newspaper column *Geestelike Waardes* (spiritual values) from 1974 to 1992 (Smit, 2013:277; Lombard, 2013:281), is indeed then a pastoral strategy. This comes to expression already in the titles of the two collections in which some of these meditations were published, namely *Soms kom dit later* (at times it comes later) (Jonker, 1982b) and *Die Hand wat my Vashou* (the hand that holds me) (Jonker, 1987). Another

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[175] It is worth quoting Dirkie Smit (2013:274) at length here: "Self wou [Jonker], soos Calvyn, 'uitgeskop word, eerder as om ooit self die kerk te verlaat'. Alle gelowiges behoort daarom krities en lojaal te wees teenoor die spesifieke gestalte van die kerk van Christus waarin hulle hulself bevind. Meermale het hy hom byvoorbeeld óp die NG Kerk beroep téén die NG Kerk. Hy sou met trots verwys na sekere figure, tradisies en besluite in die NG Kerk se verlede en sê dat dit die 'eintlike NG Kerk' verteenwoordig. Terselftertyd is daar natuurlik nie nou reeds iets soos 'n suiwer of 'ware' kerk nie. Alle bestaansvorme van die kerk het behoefte aan selfkritiek, geestelike verdieping en vernuwing. En daarom het alle kerke behoefte aan mekaar: aan die gemeenskap, die kritiek en die vermaning, maar ook die troos en die aanmoediging van ander." It was, in other words, important to Jonker to participate in debates from *within* the Dutch Reformed Church, and to be critical of the DRC from *within* the DRC, and to call upon traditions of the DRC itself *against* the DRC, without leaving the DRC or critiquing the DRC from outside of the DRC (like Beyers Naudé or Nico Smith) (Van Wyk, 2006:8).

[176] Natural theology, writes Smit (2013:270), is theology that contemplates God from other sources than the revealed truth in Christ, the gospel, or Scripture. Jonker would, over many years, practice theology against different manifestations of natural theology, including *ervaringsteologie* (experiential theology) and *volksteologie* (people's theology) (Smit, 2013:270).

[177] This is particularly evident in the public theological debate with fellow South African theologian Johan Heyns (on self-love and self-preservation) in 1974. This followed after Willie Jonker published a series of contributions in *Die Kerkbode* (the official newspaper of the Dutch Reformed Church) on self-love and self-preservation. In these articles he argued against self-love and self-preservation, which was employed by apartheid theology as a justification for "the whole apartheid worldview and reality" (Smit, 2011:159), as biblical imperatives. He points out (by appealing to the bible and Calvin's exegesis of the love commandment) that self-love, interpreted as biblical command and elementary duty, could and had become an excuse for limiting the love of neighbour (Smit, 2011:160; Smit, 2013:281). "Christian love," he concludes (Smit, 2011:161), "is not self-preservation (*selfhandhawing*) and self-fulfilment (*selfverwerkliking*), but the unrestricted directedness towards (*ongereserveerde gerigtheid op*) the neighbour." Following this *Die Kerkbode* published a contribution by Johan Heyns, wherein Heyns defended and legitimated self-love by appealing to the various relationships in which human beings live, including with God, neighbour, creation and the self (but without any appeal to the bible in this regard) (Smit, 2013:281; Smit, 2011:162 – 164).

book's title, *Uit Vrye Guns Alleen* (by grace alone) (1989b), also expresses Jonker's pastoral motive, namely to comfort (Theron, 2010:184; Naudé, 1991:111). Dirkie Smit points out that this book is filled with the wonder, joy, gratitude, and praise for the joyous gospel (2006:2). Piet Naudé argues that "this book illustrates the nature of [Jonker's] dogmatics as a *pastoral* dogmatics in the tradition of Augustine and Noordmans" (1991:110; original emphasis). For Naudé, Jonker's pastoral approach or strategy is characterised by (1) a rootedness in Scripture and faith rationality, (2) hermeneutical approach, and (3) being framed by the practical-pastoral reality of the church (1991:110). He points out that Jonker's pastoral focus would play a crucial role in his doctrinal formulations (Naudé, 1991:116).

It therefore becomes clear that Christian doctrine is, for Willie Jonker, *church* doctrine – in that it cannot "stand quite aloof from the encounter of grace" by merely supplying "intellectual information" regarding grace, but must grapple "with the dynamic Word of the living God who encounters us in the Scriptures" (Jonker, 1977b:7 – 8). This 'Word', for Jonker (1977b:8), is "the power of God unto salvation" – a force of healing for all people, which involves both the heart *and* mind, both the *experience* of faith and *knowledge* of faith, of believers. If Christian confessions express the richness of salvation (Jonker, 1994:10), then Christian doctrine has a *rhetorical* purpose (cf. Smit, 2011:162) in playing formative, informative, transformative and performative roles in the expression of salvation. The exegetical, pedagogical, polemical and pastoral strategies therefore arguably shape Jonker's interpretation of salvation as a free, strange, and gracious gift from God.

2.4.5   Salvation as gift of God

Soteriology stands at the heart of Jonker's theology (Basson, 2014b) and what Jonker himself regards as the 'heart' or 'core' of the gospel (Smit, 2013:269). For Jonker, God's Word is a word of salvation (*heilswoord*). Salvation is *not,* for Jonker (and the Reformed theology that he wants to practice), salvation of the sinner from the (feeling of) guilt for sin (Smit, 2013:269). *Nor* is eternal salvation, for Jonker, to be confused with political salvation (Van Wyk, 2006:7).[178] Rather, it is *Christ* that forms the basis of Scripture, argues Smit (2013:270),

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[178] Amie van Wyk points out (2006:7) that the freedom of the gospel was very important to Jonker, and that this meant that he would fight against the mixing of the gospel and (political) ideology – whether in the earlier form of apartheid as a means of salvation or in the later form of (South African) liberation theology as a means of salvation. In short, for Jonker the gospel would testify to nothing less and nothing more than the free grace of God in Christ (Van Wyk, 2006:7).

in that it is *in Christ* that the good news of the gospel, the message that gives life, is heard (Smit, 2013:270).[179] The grace of God can therefore not be separated from the person and work of Jesus Christ (Jonker, 1968:136). The logic that governs Willie Jonker's argument regarding salvation involves not only a dynamic movement from sin to grace, or from justification to sanctification, but proceeds from sin to grace to justification to faith to sanctification to assurance of or confidence in salvation (*heilsekerheid*) (cf. Jonker, 1968).[180]

In this way the graciousness and giftlike character of salvation in Jonker's thought is not only communicated in the *content,* but also in the *structure* of Jonker's understanding of salvation. Salvation, for Jonker (1994:1), is a gift of God which flows forth from God's love and grace that it given in Jesus Christ (alone, he adds). The objectivity of God's grace, of salvation *extra nos,* was pivotal to Jonker's theology (Smit, 2013:279). Reformed theology, argues Jonker (1994:9), confesses that salvation is imparted to the church by way of the preaching of the Word and the administering of the sacraments as visible words through which God's promises of salvation are confirmed. For Reformed theology, salvation is not primarily the act of being liberated from death and finitude (as with the Orthodox tradition) (Jonker, 1994:20), or as an act of fulfilling human nature (as with the Roman Catholic tradition)[181] Jonker, 1983:58 – 59), but is the gracious attitude and act of God's boundless love toward the sinner (1983:59). The scheme within which grace comes to expression is no longer that of nature and grace, but of sin and grace (Jonker, 1983:59).

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[179] A longer quote from Smit's description of Jonker's argument regarding Christ as the key to understanding Scripture may be helpful in making this point clearer (2013:270; original emphasis): "In Christus word die Skrifte ontsluit, sien ons die hart van die Vader, herken ons die werkinge van die Gees, verneem ons Gods heilswil, roem ons die verkiesende genade, word ons betrek in die troue van die verbond. In Christus hoor ons die *evangelie* waarvan die Skrifte getuig. Daarom is alle prediking ook Christusprediking… En as dít die geval is, is dit duidelik dat dié goeie boodskap verkondig moet word. Die genade van God in Christus, waarvan die Skrifte getuig, dring tot getuienis en tot verkondiging, tot blydskap en roem, tot sekerheid en vertroue."

[180] Jonker, however, is critical regarding any logical, temporal application of the different aspects of the application of salvation (as with the *heilsorde* or *ordo salutis*) to reconciled human beings because it is exegetically questionable and theologically harmful (1983:204). Yet he would also maintain that (1) justification and sanctification are distinct and that (2) justification logically precedes sanctification, even if both are simultaneously imparted to the sinner, by the grace of God (Jonker, 1983:67).

[181] One of the ecumenical dialogues that would be very important to Willie Jonker, evident from the very beginning to the very end of his theological career, would be a dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. In his doctoral dissertation under Gerrit Berkouwer this would already be evident, where he dealt with contemporary catholic ecclesiology (cf. footnote 2). During the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965), he would write an article on recent theological shifts in Rome (cf. Jonker, 1963). Later he would present two lectures, one on justification (cf. Jonker, 1968) and one on Mariology (cf. Jonker, 1979), to an audience of (Protestant and) Roman Catholic ministers and theologians. Perhaps it is somewhat ironic, then, that his colleague and friend Flip Theron would describe him, in the year of celebrating 500 years since John Calvin's birth, as a (Reformed) Catholic theologian (2010).

Salvation, then, is understood as that which comes into being when human beings' sin is forgiven, the relationship with God is repaired and sinful human nature is purified (Jonker, 1983:59). The confession of the radical depravity of human beings correlates with the gospel's confession of God's radical grace whereby human beings are, without any reason for merit in themselves, saved (Jonker, 1994:33). For Jonker, who identifies with the Reformed tradition, the depth of human misery is therefore not human finitude or human createdness, but sinfulness before God (1983:59). Sinfulness, in turn, is arrogance, self-justification, and the refusal to rely solely on God's grace (1983:60), which Flip Theron describes as our estrangement – as sinners – from God, ourselves, and our entire reality (2007:226). The antithesis of salvation is, for Jonker, not human or finite nature, but sin (1989a:298). It is this focus on sin and guilt which plays an important role in emphasising the objective, Christological reality of salvation (Jonker, 1989a:293). Salvation is then understood as an objective gift of God in Christ, which comes from outside of ourselves and alone by God's grace (Jonker, 1989a:295). In other words, our salvation lies not in our own sinlessness or perfection, but is safely and securely grounded outside of ourselves in Christ (1989a:295). Such an exploration of a *formative* dimension of salvation comes to expression in the portrayal of salvation as freedom from sin and misery.[182]

Indeed, in *Christus die Middelaar* Jonker argues that the heart of the soteriological work of Christ is located in the reconciliation that takes place by way of the removal of the enmity between God and human beings (1977:194). It is to this end that Willie Jonker calls Christ the mediator, who acts as 'middle man' (*tussenpersoon*) between two parties in order for them to be reconciled (1977:194). Christ's work of reconciliation takes place within the context of the covenant of grace between God and human beings and is founded in God's eternal decision to elect the church in Jesus Christ and free human beings from sin (1977:194). Willie Jonker outlines what he calls 'three soteriological principles' that govern his discussion of salvation as reconciliation, namely that (1) God alone is able to save us (so that the saviour must be

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[182] Yet Jonker's notion of freedom may be understood in an even wider and more encompassing sense, as Dirkie Smit (2006:2 – 3) points out: "Vryheid was vir [Jonker] van sleutelbelang, die vryheid wat die evangelie bring. In sy proefpreek het hy al oor vryheid gepraat, soos sovele kere daarna – oor die waarheid van die evangelie wat ons vry maak, vry van sonde, vry van selfliefde, vry van gierigheid, vry van bande wat ons bind, vry van die vrees vir mense, vry van die suigkrag van die samelewing, vry van die vanselfsprekendhede van omgewing, kultuur, openbare mening, ideologieë, die volk, politieke strominge, vrý. Wie gedoop is, 'n nuwe identiteit ontvang het, 'n nuwe status, 'n nuwe posisie, 'n nuwe werklikheid, is vry om aan Christus te behoort met 'n nuwe gehoorsaamheid."

truly God), that (2) salvation must come to expression in human nature (so that the saviour must be truly human), and that (3) the whole of humankind ought to be understood as a unity, with a representative Head (so that the saviour can be seen as exactly this representative Head) (1977:42).

Yet these soteriological principles may be expressed in a variety of metaphors and theological interpretations. Willie Jonker outlines three interpretations of the soteriological work of reconciliation that Christ effects, namely (1) a juridical or objective interpretation (Anselm), (2) a moral or subjective interpretation (Abelard), and (3) a physical or classical interpretation (Athanasius) (cf. 1977:41 – 48). The juridical or objective interpretation portrays salvation as a satisfaction of God's judgment over sinful human beings, wherein Christ sacrifices His life on behalf of human beings in order to reconcile human beings to God (1977:46 – 47). The moral or subjective interpretation portrays salvation as the revelation of God's love in Christ, wherein Christ's example of love beckons human beings to love God and each another (1977:128 – 129). The physical or classical interpretation portrays salvation as victory over the forces of death and darkness (*deification hominis*), wherein the resurrection of Christ brings human beings into a(n eternal) life with God (1977:43 – 45). Willie Jonker, who follows Calvin in this regard (1977:47 – 48), situates his understanding of salvation within the objective or juridical interpretation of the reconciliation in Christ, which – for him – includes elements of both the moral or subjective interpretation and the physical or classical interpretation (1977:194 – 201). He emphasises that the death of Christ is a means to reconciliation (*soenmiddel*) not only between God and human beings, but also between Christ and God (1997:196 – 197).

Salvation is the work of the triune God (Jonker, 1983:16, 20; Jonker, 1989a:293), wherein God the Father, who grants salvation to sinners, engrafts human beings into Christ through the Spirit (Jonker, 1994:34). Salvation takes place within the triune God's covenant of salvation (*pactum salutis*) (Jonker, 1977:50).[183] Willie Jonker explains the *content* of this covenant as follows (1977:50): the Son had pledged his responsibility for the sin of human beings to the

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[183] 'Covenant' supposes or implies a mutual involvement in the relationship between God and human beings, argues Jonker (1989b:202). In this covenant relationship God includes the will, knowledge, and emotions of human beings in the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation (1989b:203). God's Spirit works within the life and being of the believer, and the believer surrenders himself or herself to God (1989b:203). Election plays an important role in such an understanding of the covenant relationship between God and human beings, for herein the responsibility and activity of human beings are upheld *together with* the affirmation that it is only God that is fully at work in human salvation (1989b:203).

Father; the Father had declared that the Son would be the Anointed, who would reconcile the elect with God; and the Holy Spirit would anoint and prepare the Son for this task, but also apply the work of reconciliation in the lives of the elect. In this way Christ, in his work of salvation (as reconciliation), fulfils His threefold office: as prophet, Christ reveals God in full; as priest, Christ reconciles sinful human beings through the sacrifice of his own life; as king, Christ is victorious over death, devil and sin, and reigns over the world and in His church (Jonker, 1977:53 – 54). In the threefold office of Christ, situated within the covenant of salvation, salvation and reconciliation become intertwined (Jonker, 1977:54).

Flip Theron points out that, for Jonker, salvation must be understood eschatologically (Theron, 2010). In the three collections of sermons that he compiled with his colleague Willie Jonker, each of the titles of these three books reflect this concern, Theron argues (2010:182): *Vreemde Gemeenskap* (strange community) (cf. Jonker & Theron, 1979), *Vreemde Geregtigheid* (strange justice)[184] (cf. Jonker & Theron, 1983), and *Vreemde Bevryding* (strange liberation) (cf. Jonker & Theron, 1989). The repetition of 'strange' in each of the titles is deliberate, he points out (Theron, 2010:182), and argues that a synonym for 'strange' could have been 'eschatological'.[185] This emphasis on the future was important to Willie Jonker (who follows Calvin in this regard), but does not imply a resignation to this life, here and now (Theron, 2010:182). Rather, the 'strangeness' of salvation lies therein that "[t]he grace of God is the *eschatological* deed of God whereby He once and for all gave His Son for the redemption of man (sic), so that a new situation was created in which it is possible for men (sic) to become children of God who live in the sunshine of His grace" (Jonker, 1968:136; my emphasis – NM). The eschatological dimension of salvation *informs* the

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[184] The title of this specific book calls to mind the Lutheran concept of 'alien righteousness' (*iustitia aliena*), which might – in this specific case – have been a more apt translation than 'strange justice', in reference to the title of this book. The Afrikaans word 'vreemd' can be translated as either 'strange' *or* 'alien', and is here a clear reference to the juridical emphasis on the Protestant doctrine of justification, which is an important element in Willie Jonker's work. I note this here, seeing as I also refer to the importance of 'strange righteousness' elsewhere in this section. However, I have decided to retain the use of 'strange' as a translation for 'vreemd' in this specific case, also to indicate the repetition of this concept in Willie Jonker's work and, indeed, the titles of the three books mentioned in sequence here. As a translation, the concept 'alien' works very well in this particular instance (in reference to 'righteousness') but less well with regard to the remaining two books which contain the word 'vreemd' in their titles (in reference to 'community' or 'liberation', respectively).

[185] 'Strange' appears to be an ambiguous term in Jonker's thought, however. In the abovementioned context the concept 'strange' has a positive connotation for Jonker, but elsewhere – such as in his description of historical critical methods of interpreting biblical texts – Jonker uses the concept 'strange' (*vreemd*) in a negative way, and particularly as a synonym for 'sadistic' (1970:173 – 174).

interpretation of salvation in a surprising or unexpected way, in that salvation's strangeness comes to the fore.

Such an understanding of salvation as reconciliation has a direct influence on human beings' *experience* of grace. The deepest secret regarding being a Christian, for Jonker, is becoming one with Jesus Christ, in whom our life is hidden (Smit, 2006:1). Salvation is from beginning to end God's work of grace, in which human beings can add nothing of their own accord (Jonker, 1983:58). Jonker describes the grace of God as God's unearned favour (*favor Dei*): "the kindly feeling or goodwill of God which flows forth from His eternal love and manifests itself as His unconditioned and undeserved kindness towards those that have in no way any claim to it" (1968:135). Indeed, "[t]he mere concept of grace is incompatible with any concept of merit" (1968:136). God's grace comes to expression and is revealed in the person and the work of Christ, who is both the *Gift* of grace as well as the *giver* of the gift of grace (1968:136). Christ reconciles sinful human beings to God through his death, whereby sinners are justified and received in faith (Jonker, 1994:32 – 33). For Jonker the objectivity of God's work of salvation cannot be compromised, in that salvation is understood not as some meritorious act or work of human beings but solely as a gift of God's unmerited, unearned, or undeserved grace (1983:62).

Yet exactly this trinitarian interpretation of salvation would include not only an objective, Christological understanding of salvation, but also a subjective, pneumatological understanding of salvation (Jonker, 1989a:293). A trinitarian view of salvation values the subjective experience of salvation and is an important element of the Reformed tradition's understanding of salvation (Jonker, 1989a:293). For this reason the necessity of a subjective appropriation of salvation, which is the work of the Spirit, had become such an important accent in Reformed spirituality (Jonker, 1989a:293).

Indeed, the role that the Holy Spirit plays in salvation had been underplayed for some time, while the focus had primarily been on salvation in Christ (Jonker, 1983:25). Willie Jonker argues that the work of the Holy Spirit is bound to the (soteriological) work of Christ, in that the Spirit is none other than the Spirit of Christ (Jonker, 1983:30).[186] In his book by exactly

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[186] Therefore the Spirit is never contemplated apart from the Word, exactly because the Spirit is understood as not just any spirit or spiritual reality, but as the Spirit of Christ (Jonker, 1994:43). The Spirit is the living God that speaks this Word of salvation to human beings personally and opens the hearts of human beings so that

this title, *Die Gees van Christus,* Jonker argues that the Holy Spirit is active (1) in the incarnation, anointment and and equipment of Christ for the work of salvation (Jonker, 1983:30), (2) in the work of salvation in Christ itself because salvation takes place through the Holy Spirit (Jonker, 1983:30), and in (3) binding the sinner to Christ, whereby the salvation in Christ is imparted to the sinner (1983:25). In short, one of the fundamental functions of the Holy Spirit entails giving sinners a stake in the salvation in Christ (1983:31). The work of the Spirit includes the sanctification of believers, which is not the basis of salvation but the way along which human beings live in and into the salvation that has been given by God's grace (1989a:295). This salvation, again, is fully given to us and secured for us in Christ as a gift (1989a:295), and cannot but touch our existence and call us to the highest activity of obedience and service to God (1989a:295). Willie Jonker calls such activity 'the fruits of salvation' (as opposed to 'the requirements for salvation') (1989a:295).

Salvation therefore entails a life of faith (or justification) (Jonker, 1989a:296) as well the participation in a life of holiness (or sanctification) (Jonker, 1989a:296). Salvation requires both a *passive* resting in God's grace and an *active* participation in the way of holiness (1989a:296). This understanding of salvation takes *faith* seriously, as a mysterious unification of both this passivity (of resting in God's grace) and activity (of faithfulness to God's call and commands) (1989a:296; 1983:62). Stated somewhat differently, faith is simultaneously the complete emptiness of human beings before God's grace (in a negative sense) as well as the human activity of embracing Christ and Christ's gracious deeds (in a positive sense) (1989a:296). Faith, in other words, is both a gift (*gawe*) and a summons (*opgawe*) (Jonker, 1989a:296). Flip Theron argues, in the first commemorative lecture held after Willie Jonker's death in 2006 (Theron, 2007:228 – 229), that Jonker understood faith as the faith *of* Christ (not the faith *in* Christ),[187] wherein the (only) justified is Christ, and the only true believer who is completely dependent upon God is Christ. Christ's faith points to the Trinitarian bond between Father, Son and Holy Spirit – a bond which even Christ's crucifixion and death could not break (Theron, 2007:228). In Willie Jonker's words (1968:141):

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salvation may be received in faith (Jonker, 1994:27). The Spirit, therefore, speaks and saves through the Word (Jonker, 1994:27).

[187] Flip Theron explains that this was the reason why Willie Jonker was so upset with the new Afrikaans Bible translation (1983), which translated justification by faith as God who justified us *because we believe.* Due to Jonker's objection to such a translation of justification this translation was changed in several places (Theron, 2007:229).

127

[f]aith is no achievement giving a man (sic) any ground for boasting. It is no good work accomplished by man (sic), with or without the assistance of grace. It is not the correct inner disposition of man (sic) after which he should strive, in order to be acceptable to God. It is exactly the opposite to all these possibilities… [F]aith is the only possible response of man (sic) to what God has given him (sic) out of free grace. It is acceptance of what God gives, it is assent to what God says, it is reliance on what God does… To be sure, faith in the promise of God is no human possibility. It is the result of the revelation of God coming to man (sic) and finding for itself an ear that will hear, an eye that will see, a heart that will trust… [Faith] is the empty hand stretched forward to accept what God gives.

Therefore, argues Jonker (1968:140), "faith does not bring about the justification of man (sic), but only accepts it." Justification by faith is "given in Christ" (Jonker, 1968:139) as "a forensic deed of God accomplished once and for all on the cross and in the resurrection of Christ" (Jonker, 1968:140). It is very important to Jonker to maintain the *forensic* (or *synthetical*) judgment that justification is "based on the redemptive work of Christ alone", instead of the *analytical* judgment that justification depends on the righteousness of human beings in and of themselves (1968:139). This *soteriological logic of faith* lies at the heart of Jonker's understanding of salvation (cf. Theron, 2007:229), and finds (pastoral) expression in the sacrament of baptism (Theron, 2007:231; cf. also Jonker's *'n Brief aan doopouers* (a letter to parents seeking baptism for their children), 1963a; as well as Jonker's discussion with Adrio König on baptism and covenant, 1990) and the doctrine of election (Jonker, 1994:35; cf. also Jonker, 1989; and Jonker, 1988b).

Justification, for Jonker (1968:141), makes 'a real difference' to human beings in that it brings "a new reality in[to] man's (sic) life" through Christ's death and resurrection, through which Christ paid 'the price for the *guilt* of sin' and through which Christ broke 'the *power* of sin'. Justification is, however, forensic in that it is understood as the *juridical* deed of God which imputes righteousness to human beings (Jonker, 1983:62). This righteousness is not the righteousness of human beings, but the strange righteousness (*iustitia aliena*) of Christ that is given or imputed to human beings (1983:62). However, when God declares the sinner righteous, then human beings are righteous not in and for ourselves, but in Christ. Yet it is impossible for human beings to remain where we are, in sin and misery, since Christ lives in the hearts of human beings through His Spirit (1983:64). Human beings grow in conformity to Christ (*comformitas cum Christo*) and therefore sanctification logically follows justification (1983:64 – 67).

Sanctification, for Jonker (1968:142), is "the fruits of the faith" and "the works of faith" which express human beings' love to God. Sanctification is not less important than justification, for "[o]ur works bear testimony to the reality of our justification through faith" (Jonker, 1968:142). This does not, however, mean that these good works of faith can at any point become 'meritorious' and thereby "the ground for our justification" (Jonker, 1968:142). Rather, sanctification is an invitation to those justified in faith by grace "to live worthy of the grace that has been given them" (Jonker, 1968:143). Sanctification, in short, has to do with living from *gratitude* toward God (for salvation) into *holiness* (within the new life that salvation has granted) (Jonker, 1994:40).

Yet sanctification – and this approach to holiness in particular – cannot be limited to personal, individual human endeavours (Jonker, 1994:41). For Jonker, sanctification is necessarily also public and external (1989a:298), valid for the entire ecclesial, public, and political life of believers (1994:41). The whole of life, including politics, therefore becomes 'a holy matter' (1989a:298), and the hallowing of the whole of life lies within the scope of sanctification (Jonker, 1994:41, 46).[188] Sanctification has to do with the longing for the visible manifestation of the signs and coming of God's kingdom, and with the reign of Christ in the whole of life (1989a:299). Salvation, in other words, is not thought of as separate from the earth and life in the world, but as the healing and reparation of life into what God had intended life to be (Jonker 1994:44). The law of God, in particular, has meaning for the whole of life and for all terrains of life (1994:46).

There is, then, a *transformative* dimension to salvation which comes to expression in the notion of grace, for Willie Jonker. Indeed, justification and sanctification is, for Jonker (1994:40; 1983:67), the *duplex gratia* or double grace that God shares with believers in Christ. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated, but are held together in Jonker's thinking (1983:182 – 191). Yet there is also a distinctiveness to each that must be maintained, which Willie Jonker describes as the *indicative* of justification and *imperative* of

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[188] It is worth quoting Willie Jonker more extensively in this regard (1994:46): "Die gereformeerde verstaan van die heil is nie dat daar uit die goddelose wêreld maar net 'n aantal los indiwidue gered word nie. Die hele lewe binne sy geskape verbande moet verlos word. Uit die konsep van die verbond is daar geen enkele terrein van die lewe wat buite die seggenskap van God val nie, of dit nou die gesinslewe, die maatskaplike lewe, die ekonomie of die politiek is. Alle dinge in die lewe, tot en met die politiek, word vir die Gereformeerdes 'n heilige saak, omdat God se heerskappy oor die hele lewe gaan… Lewensheiliging beteken vir Gereformeerdes nie om uit die wêreld afgesonder te word nie, maar om in die hele wêreld en die hele lewe aan die wet van God gehoorsaam te wees en daarin as kinders van God se koninkryk te lewe."

sanctification (1983:191 – 197). Both the distinction between *and* the inseparability of justification and sanctification plays an important role in Willie Jonker's (1968:143) understanding of salvation as gift:

Justification is the deed of God whereby He declares a man (sic) righteous out of sheer grace, just because of the righteousness of Christ. Sanctification is the deed of God whereby He through His Holy Spirit renews man (sic) to the likeness of Christ. But although it is possible to distinguish between justification and sanctification, it is not possible to separate them from each other. Sanctification is included in justification. God does not justify a man (sic) without at the same time granting him (sic) the true righteousness of Christ that renews and changes his life. While it is clear from the Scriptures that sanctification can never be the ground for our justification, it is also clear that justification cannot be without sanctification, because both are included in the one work of Christ for our sake. That is why sanctification may be regarded as the proof of the authenticity of the justification. If there is no sign of good works or renewal in the life of those that claim to be saved by grace, it is obviously questionable whether they have been saved at all.

Willie Jonker insists that salvation is *a gift of God* "that is given to man (sic) from above, from outside of him (sic), and that there is absolutely nothing in man (sic) that can form the ground for this unexpected and undeserved gift" (1968:134). This grace is not only a gift of God, but a gift that God alone can give, and which therefore "forms the source and basis of all His gifts to man (sic)" (Jonker, 1968:136). Salvation, in other words, is not something to be searched for or to be worked for, but is the joyous gift of God's grace in which believers already share and from which believers already live (Jonker, 1994:29). Salvation as gift of God is embedded in God's grace which comes to us in the promises of God's Word (Jonker, 1994:31). The heart of the *sola gratia* lies in the elective love of God, as the depth dimension of salvation by grace (Jonker, 1994:38). This emphasis on the *performative* dimension of salvation (not as a performance by human beings, but as an initiative of God) portrays salvation as nothing less than *consolation* or *comfort*.

Human beings must receive God's grace in Christ, but this does not mean that we are to found or ground our assurance of salvation in our own experience or emotions (Jonker, 1983:60). The assurance of salvation, which is a source of *comfort* to human beings (cf. the Heidelberg Catechism's Question and Answer 1), is found in the work and act of the triune God as it is proclaimed to us in the gospel (Jonker, 1983:60). The assurance of salvation is a product of faith, but faith as it is understood in the light of grace and as it is given by the Holy Spirit (and not as self-determined attitude or self-deserving act) (1983:60). Faith, argues Jonker (1983:60

– 61), therefore exists in nothing but the reception of what God gives, the agreement with what God says, and the surrender to what God does. *A soteriological logic of faith* shapes Jonker's portrayal of salvation, as the free (formative), strange (informative), gracious (transformative), and comforting (performative) gift of God that enables human beings to flourish by the consolation or comfort of their assured salvation.

2.4.6   Comforted human beings?

Human beings live and flourish, in the fullness of their lives, from the salvation that is given in Christ (Jonker, 1989a:296). Moreover, faith forms "the point of contact where the justifying grace of God touches the sinner to let him (sic) share in *the full blessing of God's salvation*" (Jonker, 1968:141; my emphasis – NM). This is the joyous news of the gospel (Jonker, 1994:32), namely that salvation is a gift of God's abundant, free grace (Jonker, 1994:35). The comfort of human beings lies in the assurance of this salvation, which implies a resting in God's promises within the context of the covenant between God and humanity.

The comfort or consolation by which human beings flourish is the assurance of salvation (*heilsekerheid*). The basis of the assurance of salvation is, for Willie Jonker (1994:24), the conviction that salvation has been graciously given to human beings and by God's removal of the curse of sin (1994:24). The assurance of salvation is the exact opposite to what Jonker calls 'the urge toward self-salvation' (*selfverlossingsdrang*) – for whereas the assurance of salvation comforts human beings, the urge toward self-salvation unsettles human beings because we may never know whether we have done enough to be saved (Jonker, 1994:25). Only where salvation is understood as the sovereign and free gracious gift of God that is granted to the sinner without any merit or cause can salvation be understood as a source of comfort and consolation for human beings (Jonker, 1994:27). The Word character of salvation plays an important role in the assurance of salvation that comforts human beings, for (1) in the Word human beings encounter God's promise of salvation that is meant for each of us personally, whereby (2) human beings receive the grace of salvation by *believing* and *resting* in this promise (Jonker, 1994:27). The Word, and not the sacraments, forms the primary means by which salvation is communicated (Jonker, 1994:27).[189]

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[189] Although it should be mentioned that Willie Jonker also does accommodate the sacraments in his soteriology. For him (1994:29), the Word is the only means of salvation (*heilsmiddel*). However, the sacraments may – in a secondary way – be understood as additional means of salvation, but with the provision or requirement that such

The assurance of salvation, in other words, can only be grounded in the promises of God (Jonker, 1983:197). True assurance, and thereby the comfort that is born of this assurance, cannot be based on own religious experiences or subjective conditions (including happiness), but can only grow from faith in the self-revelation of God in Christ (Jonker, 1983:197). Human beings flourish because our comfort lies in our unity with Christ, by which the judgment regarding human beings' entire salvation – including both justification and sanctification – has already come to fruition in Christ (Jonker, 1983:209). It is therefore necessary, writes Willie Jonker (1983:210), to direct the doubting human being to Christ and not to own experiences or emotions. Each human being (ought to) know, through the Word of God, the fright of realising the extent of their being lost (*verlorenheid*) (1983:210). Experiences, also of the Word of God and of faith in God, may and do therefore play a role in the assurance of salvation, but for Jonker these experiences are multiple and secondary (1983:210). He argues that those who do not find the assurance that God's grace is also meant for them in God's promises will also not find this in such experiences (1983:210). Faith, he writes (1983:210), does not *rest* on experiences, but *creates* experiences. Yet faith alone can understand our experiences as experiences with God, and therefore the assurance of salvation (*heilsekerheid*) remains assurance of faith (*geloofsekerheid*) (1983:210).

The assurance of salvation is, however, also a source of *joy*. Willie Jonker would describe the Letter to the Romans as a reveling in the wonder of God's grace over us in Christ Jesus (1966:9). So too confessions are words of joy, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that express the consolation or comfort (*troos*) of the gospel of God's grace (Jonker, 1994:1). So too the gospel of God's grace cannot be separated from service to God, exactly because the gospel proclaims the God who gave Godself to us in Christ, through his elective love (Jonker, 1989a:294). This gracious initiative of God is the source of Christian joy, happiness and flourishing (Jonker, 1989a:294). Flip Theron describes this as 'the grace of the zero point' (1983). For Willie Jonker, both sanctification *and* justification is a grasping back to the 'zero point' (*nulpunt*) of the grace of God (1983:183).

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an understanding may only be legitimate to the extent that the sacraments are integrally connected to the Word (as 'visible words of salvation') (Jonker, 1994:29).

This zero point is the point we reach where we place our confidence outside of ourselves and in God's grace in Christ, explains Flip Theron (1983:19). This zero point therefore culminates, for Jonker, in the reality that we belong to Jesus (Smit, 2006:1). This assurance and this reality is a source of infinite comfort (*oneindige troos*) for believers (Smit, 2006:1). For Jonker, the joy and happiness of the gospel rests on the assurance and confidence with which we may trust God's promises (Smit, 2006:2). Flip Theron writes, in a sermon on comfort, that 'comfort' describes not only the entire content of the gospel (*'n troosryke evangelie*), but also the God rich in comfort (*die troosryke God*) (1983:16 – 17). This wondrous comfort (*wonderbare troos*) is safeguarded in the conviction that we are kept safe in the hands and life of the triune God (Smit, 2006:4).

Yet 'comfort' is synonymous with 'abundant' (Theron, 1983:17) and therefore the biblical promise of comfort ought not to be confused with the prosperity gospel's promise of comfort (Jonker, 1987:25 – 26). True comfort (*ware troos*) lies not in prosperity or earthly blessings, but in God's faithful care for us (Jonker, 1987:25; Smit, 2006:4). For this reason Jonker warns that our comfort lies not in the hope that God will deflect all evil and suffering from His children, but that He will be with us even in the midst of evil and suffering (Jonker, 1987:25 – 26). There are, in other words, not *many* comforts from which the best can be chosen (Theron, 1983:17 – 18). There is *only one* comfort (*enigste troos*) in life and in death (as it is 'sung in the song of comfort (*trooslied*)' of the Heidelberg Catechism), namely that we belong to our faithful saviour Jesus Christ (Theron, 1983:18). 'Trust' and 'comfort' are companions, argue Flip Theron (1983:20). Our comfort lies not in trusting ourselves or our religion or an experience of conversion or our guilt or our faith, but finding our security and safety outside of ourselves in our saviour, Jesus Christ (Theron, 1983:20). It is this only, deep, infinite, wondrous, true comfort by which and in which and through which human beings flourish.[190]

For Willie Jonker, the comfort of the gospel is grounded in our assurance of the salvation that the triune God grants human beings. This we encounter in the Word of God and in the sacraments – and in particular in the sacrament of baptism (Jonker, n.d.). The reconciliation

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[190] Flip Theron makes this point very elegantly in this sermon (1983:19): "Maar ís dit dan troos om nie aan myself te behoort nie? Of is dit die toppunt van troostelóósheid?... Nee, die troos van die evangelie is die enigste troos, dit is die ware troos, maar moet tog vir geen oomblik dink dit is 'n baie gewilde troos nie. Die troos van die evangelie is reeds dikwels binne en buite die kerk verkeerd verstaan. Die kommuniste spot met hierdie troos. Hulle dink dit is 'n troosprys wat ons vir onsself in ons verbeelding gefabriseer het om aan die troosteloosheid van ons bestaan te ontsnap. Maar ook binne die kerk is hierdie troos soms verminder tot 'n goedkoop troos waarvoor jy geen prys hoef te betaal nie."

that is wrought for human beings through the blood of Christ is the only secure ground on which our assurance of salvation, and therefore our comfort, rests (Jonker, 1988a:2). God grants human beings life through the life of His Son, who is the ground of our salvation (Jonker, 1988a:3). In Jonker's own words (1988a:4):

Ons kan alleen tot sekerheid kom, as ons rus in Gods beloftes dat oons slegs deur genade gered word en dat Hy reeds in Christus sy genade as 'n vrye gawe aan ons gegee het… Christus het in ons plek die straf en oordeel oor ons sonde gedra. God sien ons nie meer aan soos wat ons in onsself is nie, maar Hy sien ons aan deur Jesus. Hy reken ons die reinheid en die heiligheid van Jesus toe. Hy bedek ons met die bloed van Jesus, en neem ons in Jesus as sy kinders aan. Dit is die evangelie van genade. Jy kan alleen sekerheid hê, as jy op hierdie evangelie van genade vertrou.

Perhaps Willie Jonker's conviction that salvation is a source of assurance, consolation and comfort comes to expression nowhere better than in *Lied* 290, entitled *Dit is my troos dat ek gedoop is* (it is my comfort that I am baptised) (Jonker, 2001; hymn 290; cf. Smit, 2006:5). For Willie Jonker the knowledge that God knows those that belong to Him and that no one can pull them from His hand is a source of 'deep comfort' (*diepe troos*) (1991a:123). It is this confidence in salvation (*heilsekerheid*), in God's gift of grace, that comes to expression in the lyrics that Jonker wrote for this hymn in the Dutch Reformed Church's hymnal (Jonker, 2001; hymn 290). Indeed, in this hymn the comfort of the Trinity (Theron, 2007:227) is made clear not only in the content of the hymn, which follows below, but also in the *structure* or *procession* of the hymn's confession regarding the comfort of human beings. Here we encounter the comfort of baptism in the *name* of the triune God – Father, Son, Spirit – and in the *work* of the triune God – the covenant with the Father, the justification in the Son, and the sanctification by the Spirit.

Dit is my <u>troos</u> dat ek gedoop is	It is my <u>comfort</u> that I am baptised
dat ek gedoop is in U Naam	that I am baptised in Your Name
want deur die doop is ek verseker	for through baptism I am assured
dat U in guns U nooit nie skaam	that in Your grace You are unashamed
as Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees	as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
om ook mý God genoem te wees.	being called my God also.
Dit is my <u>troos</u> dat U as Vader	It is my <u>comfort</u> that You, Father,

Uself in trou aan my verbind	commit yourself to me in love
en dat U in U milde liefde	and that in this gracious love
my neem as erfgenaam en kind;	You take me as heir and child;
dat U die kwaad van my wil weer	that You want to protect me from evil
of anders tot my beswil keer.	or for my well-being deflect all evil.
Dit is my <u>troos</u> dat U, Heer Jesus	It is my <u>comfort</u> that You, Lord Jesus
as Seun my deur U bloed wil was;	want to wash me with Your blood;
dat U my inlyf in U sterwe	that You inaugurate me into your death
en vrymaak van die sondelas;	and free me from sin's burden;
dat U my met U óp laat staan	that You let me rise with You
en op 'n nuwe weg laat gaan.	and go on a new way.
Dit is my <u>troos</u> dat U vir ewig	It is my <u>comfort</u> that you always
o Heil'ge Gees, in my wil woon.	oh Holy Spirit, want to live in me.
U wil my heilig en steeds voller	You want to hallow me and evermore
die beeld van Christus laat vertoon.	let me display the image of Christ.
So maak U tot my eiendom	In this way you give me ownership of
als wat ek reeds besit in Hom.	everything that I already own in Him.

2.4.7   Conclusion

Willie Jonker once remarked that he felt at times that all of his theological engagement had come to nothing (Theron, 2010:189). Yet he is consistently described, by his students and colleagues, as "one of South Africa's most widely- and deeply-respected theologians" (Lombard, 2013:281). In a eulogy at Willie Jonker's funeral in 2006, his student and son-in-law Dirkie Smit would remind his family and friends, colleagues and students, that he had lived out of his baptism (*Willie Jonker het gelewe vanuit die doop*) (Smit, 2006). His baptism was, for him, the source of deep joy, happiness and comfort (Smit, 2006:1 – 2). This comfort is grounded, for Jonker, in the assurance of salvation – which we find not in our own subjective experiences or emotions, but in the objective truth of the gospel. The bible assures us of God's election of believers in Christ; that Christ had died for our sins; that Christ is risen and that we are saved and justified in the resurrection of Christ; and that our life is hidden

with Christ in God (Jonker, n. d.). In Jonker's life and thought salvation is portrayed as the free, strange, gracious, and comforting gift of God that enables human beings to flourish by the consolation or comfort of their assured salvation.

2.5   Conclusion

John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Willie Jonker provide classic Reformed portrayals of salvation as the remedy or reparation wrought by Christ. Salvation which is portrayed as union (with Christ), blessedness, and gift (of God) has a particular state of being in mind. Salvation thereby corrects or remedies or purifies that which sin has distorted or contaminated. This first contemporary discourse portrays salvation as *reconciliation,* wherein a number of underlying assumptions or presuppositions are evident.

Firstly, the "account of the human condition and human relations" (to one another and God) (Jantzen, 1998:161) which this discourse on salvation presupposes is that human existence is marked by alienation and estrangement from God. Stated somewhat differently, salvation is the response to the original sin or total depravity which permeates all human existence. Salvation is, in other words, portrayed *forensically,* as the actions and initiatives taken by God to remove – as if in a court of law – the estrangement, alienation, and guilt of sinful human beings.

This necessitates, secondly, a particular soteriological response, wherein specifically justification is called upon as a means of *correcting* this state of affairs. Justification precedes sanctification, moreover, lest an Arminian 'righteousness by works' pattern develop in response to human sinfulness. Sanctification therefore follows justification, and is a necessary companion to justification as a guarantor of the authenticity of the forensically imparted justification to the sinner. Herein justification becomes the inner basis of sanctification, and sanctification becomes an extension of justification. In other words, in the procession of justification to sanctification, the emphasis falls on justification.

Thirdly, the role or response of human beings to their reconciliation with God (and, derivatively, with fellow human beings) therefore entails nothing more than acceptance of the gracious gift of salvation given by God. Therefore human flourishing, in this first discourse,

entails little more than the grateful responses to the divine initiative. The rhetoric of human flourishing is, in other words, evident in the piety, joy and comfort or consolation that human beings experience following Christ's work of reconciliation in and for them. Piety, joy, and comfort may have broader societal implications, but salvation as reconciliation has – as its most imminent horizon of meaning – the reconciliation *with God* in view.

These underlying assumptions point to *a soteriological logic of faith* that plays itself out in the variety of ways in which human flourishing is imagined within this discourse. Such a logic is evident in a set of rhetorical patterns that emphasise acceptance, and employ reconciliation as a primary metaphor for salvation. In short, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Willie Jonker provide different ways of imagining human flourishing that is shaped by *a soteriological logic of faith*, and therein play important roles in shaping a first contemporary discourse on salvation – namely, salvation as reconciliation.

Chapter 3

Salvation as Liberation

3.1   Introduction

The rise of humanism and the transition to contemporary theology would reject God but would, however, retain "the moral obligation to love [the] neighbor" (Volf, 2011:59). Indeed, "[t]he central pillar of its vision of the good life [is] a universal beneficence transcending all boundaries of tribe or nationality and extending to all human beings" (2011:59). In other words, what Charles Taylor describes as 'exclusive humanism' would not exclude *other humans,* for "the flourishing of each [is] tied to the flourishing of all and the flourishing of all tied to the flourishing of each" (Volf, 2011:59). As Charles Taylor notes, "a powerful constitutive strand of modern Western spirituality is involved in an affirmation of life" (2011:174) in that "[t]he modern era's preoccupation... has been the betterment of the human condition" (Haybron, 2008:27). This is "evident in the contemporary concern to preserve life, to bring prosperity, and to reduce suffering worldwide" (Taylor, 2011:174). The concerns for justice and equality – the recognition that "rightly leading one's ordinary life [is] open to everyone" – accompanies this affirmation (Taylor, 2011:175). Exactly *this* affirmation – of ordinary life – would constitute "a major component of our modern ethical outlook", notes Taylor (2011:175), and would be "inspired by a mode of Christian piety" that would have important implications for the theological exploration of contemporary soteriology. This specific emphasis on ordinary life also comes to expression in a second contemporary discourse on salvation.

The recognition that human flourishing is "central to the Christian message" would be particularly evident in what Grace Jantzen describes as "the theologians of liberation, whether Latin-American, Black, or feminist" (1998:158). However, the specific emphasis on flourishing in communities that are characterised by justice, equality, and the human dignity of all is expressive of the abovementioned affirmation of ordinary life. Human flourishing is affirmed in reference to "universal solidarity" (Volf, 2011:59) with all human beings who experience political or economic oppression and injustice. The theologians of liberation, or Third World theologians, thereby portray human flourishing as "the fulfillment of the basic

138

needs of the people", including "a decent income through their own work, stable food supply, health care and education for their children, to name a few", argues Mechteld Jansen and Volker Küster (2009:160). Indeed, "[n]ot overflowing prosperity, but sustainable life in its fullness" is the true measure of human flourishing within such theologies (Jansen & Küster, 2009:160).

The story of the rise of humanism includes, in other words, not only a turn away from God but also a turn toward community and solidarity with fellow human beings. This entails taking history seriously, and the various oppressions that human beings may suffer in history. Gustavo Gutiérrez would become the classic example of a theologian of liberation who has concerned himself with history – and, more particularly, with the *underside* and the *underdogs* of history. As such, Gutiérrez writes with the poor of Latin America in mind, and calls for solidarity and equality in the context of poverty exactly because human flourishing is social and communal. Mercy Oduyoye takes up this call within a different albeit analogous context in West Africa, and similarly emphasises the fullness of life to which African women aspire. In yet another context, namely South Africa with its apartheid past, the Black and Reformed theologian Russel Botman maintains the dignity of all human beings – particularly those persons who were disregarded and discarded because of the colour of their skins. Together, these three theologians present a second contemporary discourse on salvation, wherein salvation is portrayed as liberation.

3.2   Fully alive? Salvation as communion (Gustavo Gutiérrez)

3.2.1   Introduction

Gustavo Gutiérrez (1928 –), John Cardinal O'Hara Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, is a Roman Catholic priest (of the Dominican order) and Peruvian[191] theologian

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[191] Curt Cadorette points out the significance of Gutiérrez's specifically *Peruvian* heritage in understanding the context of his theological endeavours (1989:50): "That Gutiérrez was born among the poor of Peru, that he knows their culture and language, that their hopes and aspirations are his heritage as well, are crucial factors in understanding him both as a human being and as a theologian. The intimate connection between his context and his theology, between the daily sights and sounds of Rimac and his written words, is of the utmost importance. Gustavo Gutiérrez is far more than a renowned theologian. He is also a Peruvian thinker, one of many persons who have grappled with the complex drama of a people and nation known as Peru." Indeed, it is exactly the

who is "often referred to as the 'father' of liberation theology" (Goizueta, 2004:288; Gutiérrez, 2009:317). He has written extensively on Latin American liberation theology[192] and spirituality[193], and in particular regarding the issues of the suffering,[194] faith[195] and life[196] of the poor in Latin America. Indeed, he is described by some as "one of the most original and articulate theologians of liberation" (Cadorette, 1989:50).

Yet liberation theology is not, argues Robert Brown (1980:13), the sole or individual creation of Gustavo Gutiérrez (although it must also be noted that "[t]wenty years ago the theology of liberation received its name in an article published by… Gustavo Gutiérrez" (Maduro, 1989:xv)).[197] Nor are (other) liberation theologians (like Leonardo Boff, José Míguez Bonino, and Jon Sobrino) the creators of liberation theology. Rather, for Gutiérrez, it is the poor masses that are the 'real' creators of liberation theology (Brown, 1980:13) in that theology is "grounded in the reality of poverty" (Lernoux, 1989:78).[198] Indeed, Robert Brown argues (1980:21) that Gutiérrez's theology was born not in "libraries or studies or seminar rooms" (even though he did study philosophy, psychology, and theology in France, Belgium, and Italy) but was shaped by "sharing in the struggle of oppressed peoples to achieve liberation" (1980:22). Gutiérrez's theology – particularly as it is worked out in *A Theology of*

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poverty in Peru that would provide "a catalyst for Gutiérrez's formulation of a new method for theology" (Kennedy, 2010:228).

[192] Cf. "Notes for a Theology of Liberation" (Gutiérrez 1970); and *A Theology of Liberation* (Gutiérrez, 1973).

[193] Cf. *We drink from our own wells* (Gutiérrez, 1984).

[194] Cf. "A Retreat from Commitment" (Gutiérrez, 1978); *Las Casas* (with the subtitle *In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ;* Gutiérrez, 1995); and *On Job* (with the subtitle *God-talk and the suffering of the innocent;* Gutiérrez, 2005a);

[195] Cf. "Faith as freedom" (Gutiérrez, 1975); "Faith and Politics" (Gutiérrez, 2005b); and "The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ" (Gutiérrez, 2009).

[196] Cf. *The Power of the Poor in History* (Gutiérrez, 1983); *The God of Life* (Gutiérrez, 1991); and "Memory and Prophecy" (Gutiérrez, 2003).

[197] See also the remark in a postscript (Gutiérrez, 1973:xi) that *A Theology of Liberation* is "based on a paper presented at the *Encuentro Nacional del Movimiento Sacerdotal ONIS,* July 1968, in Chimbote, Peru." Gutiérrez notes in this same postscript that "[t]he original lecture was updated for a presentation at the Consultation on Theology and Development… in Cartigny, Switzerland" in 1969 and published as "Notes on a Theology of Liberation" (cf. Gutiérrez, 1970).

[198] Herein the *economic* trajectories of history play a pivotal part in liberation theology. Experiences of the conditions of poverty, as 'inhuman misery' (Gutiérrez, 1999:20), guides theological interpretation of history (Kennedy, 2010:232 – 237; Gutiérrez, 1999:25 – 27). As such, Gutiérrez is concerned with such phenomena as "[t]he gap between the rich and poor nations" and "the virtual disappearance of sectors of the middle class" in Latin America (1999:23). It is this "reality of poverty, misery, and exploitation in the life of the vast majority of Latin Americans [that] doubtless constitutes the most radical challenge to the proclamantion of the gospel" (Gutiérrez, 1986:22), for in 'the reality of the poor' (1986:28 – 33) 'the Poor Christ' (1986:39 – 40) is found. See in particular Gustavo Gutiérrez's article on "Liberation and the Poor" in this regard (1986).

Liberation[199] – is therefore inextricably interwoven with the liberation struggles in Latin America.

Stated somewhat differently, two foundational convictions underlie Gutiérrez's liberation theology, namely: that (1) "God loves all persons equally and gratuitously"; and that (2) "God loves the poor preferentially" (Goizueta, 2007:288). Indeed, the *methodological key* to Gustavo Gutiérrez's liberation theology is 'the preferential option for the poor'[200] (Goizueta, 2007:296), which becomes what Robert Goizueta describes as "a privileged criterion" not only for orthopraxis, but also for orthodoxy (2007:296). Robert Goizueta (2007:288) points out that these convictions would be the product not only of Gutiérrez's "reflection upon the [S]criptures and Christian tradition", but also that of his "own lived experience". In short, liberation theology stems from (collective) reflection in which Gutiérrez has played an important shaping role. Gustavo Gutiérrez would describe theology as critical reflection on praxis, which in turn would shape a description of the nature and function of Christian doctrine – and in particular an understanding of salvation – in his work.

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[199] The version of *A Theology of Liberation* that will be made use of in this study, in following Stanley Hauerwas (1986:76; footnote 2), David Kamitsuka (1997:186; footnote 13), and Joyce Murray (1998:51; footnote 3), is the translation by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (both of whom also edited this version of Gutiérrez's *Teologiá de la liberación, Perspectivas*, originally published by CEP in Lima, 1971).

[200] Gustavo Gutiérrez "details [in his *Las Casas* (1993)] how the principle of the preferential option for the poor was advocated by Bartolomé de Las Casas, the 16th-century Sevillian Dominican theologian and missionary, who championed the religious and political rights of the Indians against oppressive colonial attitudes and practices" (Kamitsuka, 1998:188; footnote 43; cf. also Gutiérrez, 2009:2). Gutiérrez explains the genesis of this expression as follows (2003:1): "[It] was constructed, piece by piece, starting from the experience of many people who belong to many different Christian communities, as well as lay movements, in solidarity with the poor, around the years when the Episcopal conference at Medellín took place. The focus was later picked up by the Puebla Conference, giving the phrase the recognition we know now. Today it is present in many different areas of the Christian churches, and indeed, outside of them as well." Yet, adds Gutiérrez (2003:1), "[i]t is not merely about a phrase. It is a style of life that has inspired much commitment on three diverse but interrelated levels: the proclamation of the good news (in the pastoral and social spheres), perhaps the most visible; the theological (as a point of view for doing theology); and, as the basis of all this, the spiritual (that pertaining to the following of Jesus)." As such, the preferential option for the poor is "a theo-centric option" which is "centered on the gratuitousness of God's love" with "a prioritizing care for the insignificant and the oppressed" (2009:2). Indeed, "the ultimate basis of God's preference for the poor is to be found in God's own goodness and not in any analysis of society or in human compassion, however pertinent these reasons may be" (Gutiérrez, 2005a:xiii). The basis for God's special love for the poor is also not dependent or based upon the goodness of the poor in and of themselves (Gutiérrez, 1978:214). It is God's goodness, not the goodness of the poor, which justifies God's defense and protection of the poor – and yet "what makes them the preferred people of God" is that they are "those deprived of what is necessary to life as human beings" (1978:214).

3.2.2   Theology as critical reflection on praxis

Theology, for Gustavo Gutiérrez, involves reflection (or "the understanding of faith") as well as praxis (Gutiérrez, 1973:3). Theological reflection arises 'spontaneously' and 'inevitably', and is "intrinsic to a life of faith seeking to be authentic and complete" (1973:3). Theology, in other words, is embedded in faith – and yet it is not embedded in just any kind of faith, but in particular in "faith which is manifested in life, action, and concreted attitude" (1973:3). It is in such an 'active faith' or 'faith in praxis' that theological reflection is rooted (1973:3).

Theological reflection or study can, however, fulfill different functions. Gutiérrez distinguishes between three such 'classical' tasks or functions, namely (1) spiritual (or theology as wisdom),[201] (2) scientific (or theology as rational knowledge),[202] and (3) historical (or theology as critical reflection on praxis). Theology as critical reflection on praxis does not replace other functions of theology, namely wisdom and rational knowledge, but 'presupposes' and 'needs' these functions (1973:13). Without therefore discarding the spiritual and rational dimensions of theology, Gutiérrez nevertheless opts for a theology which consists of both the elements of historical praxis *and* critical reflection (1973:6). Such a theology, argues Gutiérrez (1973:6), "has its roots in the first centuries of the Church's life" and "is based on a true analysis of the signs of the times and the demands with which they challenge the Christian community."

The first element of a theology as critical reflection on praxis is indeed *historical praxis,* which Gutiérrez describes as 'the Christian's active presence in history' (1973:7). Such a praxis is grounded in love (or charity), as "the gift of one's self to the Other, and invariably to others" (1973:7). The life of the church plays an important role in historical praxis, in that "[t]he Word of God gathers and is incarnated in the community of faith, which gives itself to the service of all men (sic)" (1973:8). The church, the ecclesial community of faith, is thereby

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[201] A 'theology of wisdom' which arose in the early centuries is, argues Gutiérrez (1973:4), "above all monastic" and concerned with "spiritual life removed from worldly concerns". Gutiérrez is critical of a theology which only concerns itself with 'sanctity' and 'a life of spiritual perfection' while regarding 'the present life' as "essentially contingent", although he also maintains that "[t]he spiritual function of theology… constitutes… a permanent dimension of theology" (1973:4 – 5).

[202] A 'theology of rational knowledge', which arose from the twelfth century on, is "an intellectual discipline, born of the meeting of faith and reason" and concerned with 'rationality' and 'disinterestedness', argues Gutiérrez (1973:5). Gutiérrez is critical of a theology which is reduced to 'systematisation' and 'clear exposition', even though he also emphasises the need for theological rationality (particularly in Latin America) and maintains rational knowledge as another 'permanent' and 'indispensable' function of theology (1973:5 – 6).

called not only to an 'intellectual analysis' of their context, but also to 'pastoral activity', 'commitment', and 'service' (1973:8). Other important elements or dimensions of a commitment to historical praxis are described by Gutiérrez (1973:9 – 10) as philosophical (which considers "human action as the point of departure for all reflection"), apologetic (which is "a critical reflection on action" through which an attempt is made to understand "the internal logic of an action"), Marxist[203] (which is focused not only on praxis but on "the transformation of the world"), as well as eschatological (which regards "human history… [as] an opening to the future"). A concern for praxis comes to the fore in a consideration of all of these various dimensions, wherein a theology that is rooted in history may be developed.

A second element of a theology as critical reflection on praxis is *critical reflection,* which Gutiérrez describes as "a critical theory, worked out in the light of the Word and accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose" (1973:11). On the one hand this approach will shape theology into "a serious discourse, aware of itself, in full possession of its conceptual elements"; and on the other hand this approach entails "a clear and critical attitude regarding economic and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community" (1973:11). Theology, for Gutiérrez, *is* reflection or 'a critical attitude' – which means, for Gutiérrez, that "[t]heology *follows*; it is the second step" (1973:11; original italics). 'Pastoral activity' – "preaching the gospel message, by its sacraments, and by the charity of its members, the Church proclaims the gift of the Kingdom of God in the heart of human history" – precedes theological reflection (1973:11). Stated somewhat differently, "[t]heology does not produce pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it" (1973:11). Yet such theological reflection is not limited to the pastoral activity of ecclesial communities, but goes *beyond* "the visible boundaries of the Church" in its "opening to the totality of human history" (1973:12). For Gutiérrez, this 'indispensable critical task' "implies openness to the world, gathering questions it poses, being attentive to its historical transformations" (1973:12).[204] A concern

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[203] Gutiérrez's is not wholly uncritical of Marxism, and admits that contemporary theology finds itself in 'direct' confrontation with Marxism. Yet he also describes such a confrontation as 'fruitful', in that "it is to a large extent due to Marxism's influence that theological thought, searching for its own sources, has begun to reflect on the meaning of the transformation of this world and the action of man (sic) in history" (1973:9). Marxism makes it possible for him to understand society, says Gutiérrez in an interview with Dow Kirkpatrick (1976:459), and makes it possible for liberation theology to "[provide] an analysis of the surrounding reality for Christians and non-Christians alike in the struggle for freedom."

[204] Gustavo Gutiérrez emphasises that it is exactly such an open, critical reflection that safeguards theology from ideology (1973:12: "By keeping historical events in their proper perspective, theology helps safeguard society and the Church from regarding as permanent what is only temporary. Critical reflection thus always plays the inverse role of an ideology which rationalizes and justifies a given social and ecclesial order... [Indeed, a

for critical reflection is shaped by such an open attitude, for Gutiérrez, wherein a theology that is dynamic, not static; and vibrant, not sterile (1973:13).

A theology that consists of these two elements, namely (1) *critical reflection* on (2) *historical praxis*, "fulfills a prophetic function insofar as it interprets historical events with the intention of revealing and proclaiming their profound meaning", argues Gutiérrez (1973:13). How would a theologian, shaped by such a theology, look? Gustavo Gutiérrez describes such a theologian as "a new kind of 'organic intellectual'" who is engaged, 'personally' and 'vitally', in (1) historical realities ("with specific times and places") and (2) wherever there is a struggle for liberation from domination and oppression (1973:13). For Gutiérrez, this is also a question of hermeneutics, and therefore one could also ask: what kind of a hermeneutic does Gutiérrez employ in his understanding of theology?

A theology that is involved in historical praxes as well as critical reflection upon such praxes is, for Gutiérrez, governed by a particular type of hermeneutics – namely, "a political hermeneutics of the Gospel" (1973:13). The figure of Jesus Christ is the principal point of orientation within Gutiérrez's hermeneutic, or what he calls 'the principal hermeneutic of the faith' (1975:47). By asserting this he means that "the foundation of all theological discourse is Jesus Christ" who "loved the poor by preference" (1975:47). Herein Gutiérrez finds "the fundamental hermeneutical circle", namely from human beings to God and from God to human beings – more particularly, "from poor to God and from God to poor" (1975:47 – 48).[205] This applies to Gutiérrez's interpretation of biblical texts as well, in that it "starts and ends with Jesus Christ" (Siker, 1997:141), for in Jesus Christ "there could be no more explicit link between God and the poor" (Siker, 1997:141). Indeed, "[t]his link between God and the

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theology shaped by critical reflection] helps orient pastoral activity; it puts it in a wider context and so helps it to avoid activism and immediatism. Theology as critical reflection thus fulfills a liberating function for man (sic) and the Christian community, preserving them from fetishism and idolatry, as well as from a pernicious and belittling narcissism."

[205] It is worth quoting Gutiérrez own more extensive description of his 'hermeneutical circle' in this regard (1975:47 – 48): "from man (sic) to God and from God to man (sic); from history to faith and from faith to history; from the human word to the Word of the Lord and from the Word of the Lord to the human word; from fraternal love to the love of the Father and from the love of the Father to fraternal love; from human justice to the holiness of God and from the holiness of God to human justice; from poor to God and from God to poor." Olle Kristenson (2009:33) notes, interestingly, that Gutiérrez and most liberation theologians adopted the well-known 'hermeneutical circle' model (see-judge-act) from the Catholic Action movement in Europe. He explains it as follows (2009:33; original emphasis): "*To see* presupposes a willingness to apply a comprehensive socio-political analysis of the contemporary society based on a multidisciplinary use of social sciences, *to judge* presupposes the capacity to assess this analysis by a reading of the Bible and central church documents, and finally, *to act* presupposes a willingness to set up a pastoral plan of action that responds to this assessment."

poor in the person of Jesus is the interpretive key for all of Gutiérrez's biblical reflections and for his understanding of the 'hermeneutical circle'" (1997:142). Other elements or descriptions of Gutiérrez's hermeneutics include 'communitarian' (cf. Siker, 1997:143), 'militant' (cf. Siker, 1997:143 – 144), and 'historical' (cf. Siker, 1997:144) hermeneutics.

More recently Gustavo Gutiérrez has described his theological work in terms of 'a hermeneutics of hope', which has to do with "understanding… the reasons we have to hope" (2009:322). Theology situates itself in the context of giving an account of and motives for hoping (2003:14). Hope is "a gift from God" (2009:322; 2003:14) which, upon acceptance, "opens followers of Jesus to the future and to trust" (2009:322). However, this gift is *not* an easy hope"; *nor* is hoping synonymous with waiting (2009:322 – 323). A hermeneutics of hope, and the theological language that accompanies it, must be able to hold together both the realities of suffering *and* the right of every person to happiness (2009:322 – 323). This, for Gutiérrez, is 'hope against hope' (1975:60), namely fragile, creative, alive, and active hope (2009:322 – 323). Theological reflection must embrace this "gift of hope, vividly and creatively", for "a hermeneutic of hope has [an] important role to play" (Gutiérrez, 2003:15). Theology therefore takes place on 'a horizon of hope' (2009:323). *An eschatological logic of hope* arguably governs Gustavo Gutiérrez's liberation theology, for (1) "hope must be an inherent part of our present commitment in history", and (2) "the vital attitude of hope" interprets and explains history by "[penetrating] the present reality, the movement of history, that which is driving history toward the future." Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a reflection "in the light of the future which is believed in and hoped for… with a view to action which transforms the present" (1973:15). Such theology is hopeful theology, which, in turn, is not only a description of liberation theology but is also a *liberating* theology (1973:15; original emphasis):

[A] theology of the liberating transformation of the history of mankind (sic) and also therefore that part of mankind (sic) – gathered into *ecclesia* – which openly confesses Christ. This is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed. It is a theology which is open – in the protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of people, in liberating love, and in the building of a new, just, and fraternal (sic) society – to the gift of the Kingdom of God.

Johan Heyns already pointed out that such a theology is not dogmatic, but ethical; and because it is ethical it can also be described as critical, in that liberation theology (as a liberating theology) (critically) considers the economic-political and social-cultural nature of the communities in which human beings live (1975:8 – 9).[206] Gustavo Gutiérrez therefore does not provide an extensive or comprehensive account of his understanding of Christian *doctrine* as such, but in his systematic reflection on and study of faith particular aspects of the nature and function of Christian theology do emerge, which could be indicative of the possibility of thinking about the nature and function of Christian doctrine in Gutiérrez's work. In short, then, it is with the description of (liberation) theology as critical reflection on praxis in mind that the nature and function of Christian doctrine can be situated.

3.2.3   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

Any consideration of Gustavo Gutiérrez's understanding of Christian doctrine would have to account for the ecclesial context of his theological work, and the particular associations with and interpretations of 'doctrine' within (his view of) the Roman Catholic tradition (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:237). Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker refer to liberation theology's resistance to the design of a (Roman Catholic) 'scholastic theology', wherein an 'ahistorical system of divine truths' (or *scientia conclusionum*) is worked out and to which a status of infallibility is given (1988:237). Liberation theology is critical of such an 'exclusive bond between truth and orthodoxy' because it relegates any kind of activity or praxis to a 'secondary consequence or derivation of truth', instead of considering praxis as constitutive of truth in and of itself (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:237). Indeed, "[t]rue orthodoxy is an orthopraxis" for Gutiérrez (1975:46).

For Gutiérrez such an understanding of theology, namely as a scientific consideration of (infallible) doctrines (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:237) or a system of knowledge regarding God

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[206] Stanley Hauerwas agrees that liberation is "a theological concept in Christian ethics", and particularly – with Gutiérrez – that there is "a close relation between liberation as a theological concept and liberation as a social and political concept" (1986:75). Liberation (or 'a sense of liberation') is, for Hauerwas, "central to any account of the Christian life" – and yet liberation as an ethical concept must be tested against its ability to be and become not an end in itself, nor a means to dominate, but a means to serve one another (1986:75). In other words, for Hauerwas (1986:75 – 76) the most important contribution that Christians can make to liberation struggles is "to be a community of the liberated who can witness to paradigmatic forms of service…[as those who] pioneer ways of social relation that give concrete expression to liberty and equality." For him (1986:76), it is specifically the *church* who, "as a society of the liberated", must become "the necessary paradigm that can offer us imaginative possibilities of social relations otherwise not thought possible."

(Heyns, 1975:9) is problematic, in that it is too static and too abstract to account for a God who acts within history (Heyns, 1975:9). Indeed, "[a] theology which has as its points of reference only 'truths' which have been established once and for all – and not the Truth which is also the Way – can be only static and, in the long run, sterile" (Gutiérrez, 1973:13). Yet, arguably, a description of the nature and function of Christian doctrine would not have to entail a set of infallible truths about God, but could be in line with Gutiérrez's 'critical reflection on praxis'. Moreover, in such a description three aspects of the nature and function of Christian theology could emerge – namely pastoral, practical, political, and public dimensions, which, in turn, play formative, informative, transformative, and performative roles in the shaping of Christian doctrine and Christian believers.

Firstly, liberation theology is a pastoral theology, in that it is concerned with the suffering and pain of the poor in Latin America (cf. Kamitsuka, 1998:185).[207] The role of Gutiérrez's pastoral theology is to comfort, console, and encourage those traumatised by political violence and oppression (Kristenson, 2009:13, 34). For Gutiérrez, "all theology is ultimately pastoral theology as every problem it aims to respond to is a pastoral concern" (Kristenson, 2009:13); and indeed, Gutiérrez's 'theological insights' are described as "pastorally oriented" (Kamitsuka, 1997:173). Liberation theology is pastoral because it involves "identification with persons, with races, with the social classes which suffer misery and exploitation" (Gutiérrez, 1975:50). Pastoral theology expresses and embodies the joy of Easter (Kristenson, 2009:173), and orientates communities of faith amidst circumstances of suffering and oppression (2009:185). Christian doctrine that is the fruit of such a pastoral theology could therefore play a *formative* role in a double sense – namely, by being *formed* by a pastoral orientation and concerns; as well as being *formative* in its communication of "the free and unmerited love of God for every human being and especially for the poor and forgotten" (Gutiérrez, 2005a:xiii). Christian doctrine – which is *formative* because it comforts, consoles, and encourages – is, in short, pastoral.

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[207] Olle Kristenson (2009:9) describes Gutiérrez as a pastor, for whom "[h]is pastoral work precedes the theological reflection in his books and other writings." As a priest, Gutiérrez's role "was that of a pastoral theologian" and "his concern was a pastoral concern" (Kristenson, 2009:12). Indeed, "[i]n his parish in Lima Gutiérrez was confronted with examples of the consequences of poverty in his pastoral counselling, which affected him deeply. Seen together abuses of various kinds, divisions and family tensions, divorces, malnutrition, child mortality, crime and loss of cultural values form a pattern of a human suffering of enormous proportions" (Kristenson, 2009:213).

Secondly, liberation theology is a practical theology, in that it has to do with "the presence and activity of man (sic) in history" (1973:x). Human existence and history takes place within 'the salvific action of God' and 'the salvific horizon', and therefore Gutiérrez maintains that there can only be one history (1973:153).[208] This description is characterised by a move from "an abstract, essentialist approach" to an "existential, historical, and concrete view" (Gutiérrez, 1973:153). Christian doctrines are formulated and verified by way of praxis, or those acts that make a significant contribution to the liberation of the poor, because doctrinal truths are not disinterested (or objective) but interested (or subjective); not merely repeated but reformulated in the light of God's preferential option for the poor (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:238).[209] Christian doctrine is *informative* not because it communicates a set of eternal, ahistorical (Gutiérrez, 1975:28), immutable truth claims, but because it reflects on the life of faith in the light of history. The context for Christian doctrines is historical praxis, and therefore the nature and function of Christian doctrine may be described as experiential and contextual, dynamic and actual. Christian doctrine – which is *informed* by history and *informative* because it grapples with expressing the good news of the gospel in concrete, historical situations – is, in short, practical.[210]

Thirdly, liberation theology is a political theology, in that 'political directives' can be derived from liberation theology's concern for the poor and focus on historical praxis (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:243; footnote 10). Gustavo Gutiérrez points out that "[w]e often understand

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208 For Gutiérrez (1973:153), human history and salvation history are not separate entities – "one profane and one sacred" – but "one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ, the Lord of history." Gutiérrez emphasises the historical dimension of Christian theology because, for him, Christianity is rooted in the bible and the bible "thinks in terms of history" (as opposed to other religions, which "think in terms of cosmos and nature") (1973:174). Such a focus on history includes the future, for "[t]he full significance of God's action in history is understood only when it is put in its eschatological perspective" (1973:165), and therefore Gutiérrez maintains that all of history is oriented towards the future (1973:160).

209 This, argue Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker (1988:239), portrays theology not as *scientia fidei* but as *scientia caritatis*, wherein love-as-praxis becomes the primary correlating partner of theology. The problem with such a correlation between praxis and doctrine is that theological reflection is based on an 'unacceptable relationship between faith, salvation, and works' (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:239). For them, faith cannot be equated with works (even works of love) (1988:239), particularly from a Reformed perspective (1988:144), for in privileging praxis as a theological point of reference Gutiérrez sacrifices justification for sanctification. This particular 'dogmatic framework' – for orthopraxis is impossible without some kind of an orthodoxy (1988:240) – does not take the role of faith seriously enough, according to them (1988:239), and consequently trades the constitutive relationship between salvation and faith in for that of salvation and love. See also footnote 219.

210 Experience plays a particularly important role in Gutiérrez's theological reflections, and yet a *singular focus* on praxis may also be highly problematic. Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker emphasise that the criteria for scientific nature of theological reflection, and of Christian doctrine (or systematic theology) in particular, cannot rest solely on praxis and practical involvement (1988:240). Christian doctrine must, for them (1988:240), also be evaluated and shaped by other theoretical criteria, such as a critical ability and inner coherence, if is to avoid the danger of becoming no more than 'a one-sided operative contextuality'.

politics in a pejorative way" (namely, as "a dirty business") (2005b:175); and yet the central religious event within Christianity – namely, Jesus' crucifixion – is also a political event (2005b:176). Therefore "we cannot live a life in faith without historical, social and political consequences" (2005b:178). "Politics," for Gutiérrez (2005b:181), "is a form of action" and actions, specifically "acts of love towards the other", is an indispensable element within liberation theology. For him (2005b:183) political action is necessary "from the perspective of the most poor" because it has to do with "the power of service" to the poor. Christian doctrines that arise from liberation theology are shaped *by* and shaped *toward* political engagement (Gutiérrez, 2005b:185; 1975:51). Moreover, if Christian doctrine is to be more than mere "comfortable 'orthodoxies'" wherein Christians can "make themselves secure by not taking any stand on anything" (Gutiérrez, 1975:39), then Christian doctrine will be partial, committed to creating a 'just and fraternal society', and *transformative* (1975:44 – 45). The nature and function of Christian doctrine has a 'political dimension' (1975:54) in that it is shaped by "the political commitment to liberation in the perspective of the free gift of total liberation brought by Christ" (Gutiérrez, 1975:48, 52). Christian doctrine – which is *transformative* because it is concerned for and involved in resisting social and structural injustice – is, in short, political.

Fourthly, a liberation theology is a public theology, wherein "the truth of the gospel is acted and enacted" (Gutiérrez, 1975:46). Gutiérrez maintains that "[t]he Faith cannot be lived on a private or intimist level [for] the faith is the negation of any turning in upon oneself" (1975:53). Liberation theology is a public theology because it is embedded in communion and community, and therefore the gospel must be 'lived out' in a particular way (not as "an ideology justifying some determined social situation" but as "the Word of the Father who loves us in a free and gratuitous manner" (Gutiérrez, 1975:56)). Indeed, "a social appropriation of the gospel" shapes communities "which announce prophetically a creative and critical church entirely at the service of persons who fight to be persons" (Gutiérrez, 1975:59). This means cultivating an attitude of "being open to the world" and "listening to the questions asked in it" in order to perform Christian doctrines that are public without becoming activist (Gutiérrez, 1970:245; cf. also Goizueta, 2013:73). The nature and function of Christian doctrine is "the truth of the gospel [which] is acted and enacted" in public life (Gutiérrez, 1975:46), including 'entering unashamedly' into the political arena ("since that is where decisions are made that affect the dispossessed") and the economic arena ("where the

149

power in our society is increasingly located") (Brown, 1980:73). Christian doctrine – which is *performative* because it shapes ecclesial communities in definitive ways, with concrete concerns – is, in short, public.

Gustavo Gutiérrez's liberation theology is embedded not in a set of infallible truth claims, but in the comforting, consoling, encouraging, experiential, dynamic, contextual, actual, partial, communal, open and critical actions and activities of Christian believers and Christian communities. The nature and function of Christian doctrine that critically reflects on praxis can therefore be described as pastoral, practical, political and public. On the one hand, the pastoral, practical, political and public acts inform, transform and perform Christian theology and Christian doctrine. On the other hand, the pastoral, practical, political and public nature and function of Christian theology and Christian doctrine form, inform, transform and is performed by people of faith. Arguably then, the nature and function of Christian doctrine culminates in the formative, informative, transformative and performative roles that a liberation theology could play. The formative, informative, transformative and performative roles at play in engaging with Christian doctrine give expression to a very specific and major methodological shift, wherein a variety of minor methodological strategies – that may be employed in interpreting Christian doctrine – can be traced.

3.2.4   Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

A critical appropriation of theological method or methodology is pivotal to Gustavo Gutiérrez's argument that liberation theology affords theological reflection a different angle or view or perspective. Gutiérrez describes his purpose with working out a theology of liberation *not* as (1) elaborating "an ideology to justify postures already taken", (2) *nor* "to undertake a feverish search for security in the face of the radical challenges which confront the faith", *nor* (3) "to fashion a theology from which political action is 'deduced'" (1973:ix). Rather, liberation theology aims to "reconsider the great themes of the Christian life within this radically changed perspective and with regard to the new questions posed by this commitment" (1973:ix).[211]

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[211] The perspective that Gutiérrez has in mind is shaped by (1) the gospel and (2) "the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America" (1973:ix); and the commitment that Gutiérrez alludes to is a commitment to liberation from injustice and oppression and the building of a different – "freer and more human" – society (1973:ix).

Therefore the most important claim that Latin American liberation theology makes arguably has to do with theological methodology (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:236). This methodological claim is grounded in the reformulation of the theory-praxis relationship in theological reflection, wherein the choice is made for praxis (or lived experience, or transformational acts) as a point of departure for all theological reflection (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:236). Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker describe this inversion as the prioritising of orthopraxis above that of orthodoxy (1988:236). Gustavo Gutiérrez does not regard such prioritising as problematic, however, for in employing the term 'orthopraxis' (which is a reference to those acts that contribute to the liberation of the poor (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:238)) Gutiérrez does not mean to deny the meaning of 'orthodoxy' (which he understands as "a proclamation of and reflection on statements considered to be true") (1973:10). "Rather," writes Gutiérrez (1973:10),

the goal is to balance and even reject the primacy and almost exclusiveness which doctrine has enjoyed in Christian life and above all to modify the emphasis, often obsessive, upon the attainment of an orthodoxy which is often nothing more than fidelity to an obsolete tradition or a debatable interpretation. In a more positive vein, the intention is to recognize the work and importance of concrete behaviour, of deeds, of action, of praxis in the Christian life.

Yet such an assumed 'epistemological break' between Western, European theology (which follows the philosophical tradition of Immanuel Kant) and Latin American liberation theology (which follows the philosophical tradition of Karl Marx) represents not only two theologies – namely an abstract, unrealistic orthodoxy and a contextual, realistic orthopraxy, respectively – but, indeed, replaces a theology based on sound formulations with a theology based on correct actions (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:236). Gustavo Gutiérrez agrees that liberation theology "offers us not so much a new theme for reflection as a *new way* to do theology" (1973:15).

Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker would describe this ' new way' of doing theology by way of two methodological movements, namely (1) the formulation of theological 'truths' operationally and historically, and (2) the social verification of such truths (1988:237). Historical praxis (or transformational acts) express theological truth, which is then verified in the 'liberation effect' of such praxis (Naudé, & Jonker, 1988:237 – 238). Therefore it is not correct teaching or doctrine, but historical liberation that plays a definitive role in such a way

of doing theology (1988:238).[212] Arguably four methodological strategies may therefore be discerned within the broader methodological shift from orthodoxy to orthopraxy, in what could be called a contemplative strategy, an analytical strategy, an exegetical strategy, and a polemical strategy.

A contemplative strategy, firstly, is evident particularly in *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (Gutiérrez, 1984), with its focus on (liberation) spirituality.[213] For Gutiérrez, contemplation is a vital element of his liberation theology, for in contemplation "[t]he mystery of God comes to life" (2005a:xiii). In contemplative silence we encounter God; and in our speechless prayer "we simply place ourselves before the Lord" (2005a:xiii).[214] This "time of silence is the time of loving encounter with God and of prayer and commitment" (Gutiérrez, 2005a:xiv). Contemplation occupies an 'affective dimension' in Gutiérrez's work (as is particularly evident in his *On Job* (2005a)) (Goizueta, 2007:295), and comes to expression in worship, prayer, and action (Goizueta, 2007:294 – 295). It is "through the language of contemplation" that "we communicate the gratuitous nature of the love of God" (Lee & Gallegos, 1987:113). "[W]e are fully engaged in loving," remarks Gutiérrez (2005a:xiv), "when words… are

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[212] In other words, Gustavo Gutiérrez "proposed a theological method that did not start from theological dogmas in a deductive stance; instead he proposed that theology was indicative, a second step, a critical reflection on praxis in the light of the Bible" (Hennelly, 1995:26). Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker admit that liberation theology has, on this point, contributed valuable critique on traditional theology, and that a renewal in theological conceptualisations of truth is necessary and welcome (1988:238, 143). Yet they also maintain that such a shift from orthodoxy to orthopraxy may be problematic in a twofold way (1988:238): firstly, such a shift implies an acceptance of a Marxist epistemology; and secondly, such a shift leads to an absolutising of the effect of liberation as a final criterion for Christian doctrine, which may lead to a devaluation of other theoretical criteria for systematic theology.

[213] "At its core," writes Robert Goizueta (2007294), "Gutiérrez's theology is, in fact, a spirituality." Liberation spirituality is an encounter with Christ that is shaped by and "deeply rooted in the lived experience of God's presence in history", explains Henri Nouwen (1984:xiii). However, this encounter is "not primarily an individual undertaking" but rather a 'collective journey' or 'collective adventure' "of a people in search of God", which is "set into motion by a direct encounter with the Lord" (Murray, 1998:57). Such a liberation theology involves "a struggle against all the forces of death" as well as "a struggle for life in the fullest sense" (Nouwen, 1984:xvi). As such it is "grounded in "a preferential option for the poor" (Goizueta, 2007:284). This involves "an option for the lived faith of the poor" which is "an option for the spirituality of the poor", which means "to pray as the poor pray, and to pray to the God to whom the poor pray" (Goizueta, 2007:294). "Solidarity with the poor is the source of spirituality," writes Gutiérrez (2009:320), which involves 'a collective journey with God' and is practiced through "thanksgiving, prayer, and a commitment in history to solidarity" (2009:320). The 'deepest meaning' of such solidarity with or commitment to the poor is "to recognize in the face of the poor 'the suffering features of the face of Christ the Lord who questions and implores us'" (quoted from the Puebla document, in Gutiérrez, 2009:320).

[214] However, contemplation and practice work together, for Gutiérrez (2005a:xiii), in making up "a first act" which is "the stage of silence before God" and which precedes "a second act" of talking about God (or 'theologising'). For him, "[c]ontemplation and practice feed each other" (2005a:xiii). Yet in his later writings "Gutiérrez is reluctant to talk about a 'relationship' between contemplation and action as if these were two different realities" (Goizueta, 2007:294). Robert Goizueta points out that for Gutiérrez "contemplation is itself an intrinsic dimension of all truly Christian praxis" (2007:294).

incapable of communicating what is experienced at the affective level." Theology, for Gutiérrez, is speech enriched by silence, and silence fed by speech (Gutiérrez, 2005a:xiv). Contemplative language (which "often takes the form of lament") is part of the faith grammar of Gutiérrez's liberation theology (Kamitsuka, 1998:183). The contemplative strategy comes to expression in the spirituality of liberation, which "touches every dimension of life" and in which the 'healing' and 'reconciling' life forces of the God of life is encountered (Nouwen, 1984:xv).

An analytical strategy, secondly, is evident particularly in *A Theology of Liberation* (Gutiérrez, 1973). There Gutiérrez makes use of what he calls 'social analysis' (alternatively also 'systemic analysis' or 'class analysis') to interpret the social realities in Latin America (cf. also Goizueta, 2007:289). The concern of such a social analysis is for "Latin American reality" or the "social experience of Lain Americans"; and the role of social analysis is therefore the 'interpretation of such realities or experiences' (Gutiérrez, 1973:136). It is "only a class analysis," writes Gutiérrez (1973:87), "which will enable us to see what is really involved in the opposition between oppressed countries and dominant peoples." Social or class analysis enables a "new awareness of Latin American reality" wherein both 'economic factors' as well as 'political' factors' can be taken into consideration (Gutiérrez, 1973:87). Hence it is Marxist thought (or the acceptance of 'the Marxist epistemology' (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:238)) that 'inspires' Gutiérrez to analyse society (which is "one more step on the road of critical thinking" (1973:29 – 30)) and to work toward "profound transformation" (which would involve "a social revolution that will radically change the conditions [in Latin America" (Gutiérrez, 1970:250)).[215] 'Marxist' or 'social' analysis is therefore a 'social science tool' which Gutiérrez employs in order to "better describe the situation of the poor" (Siker, 1997:139).

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[215] Such a social analysis therefore involves, for Gutiérrez, "[t]he study of the dynamics" of Latin America within the fluctuating relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries, as well as the interaction between different social classes within Latin American societies (1973:85 – 87). Herein 'the social sciences' are of great importance for theological reflection in Latin America, argues Gutiérrez (1973:5; cf. also his chapter on 'Theology and the Social Sciences', 1990:53 – 84), in that it takes seriously "the interplay of interests and forces" and works toward "the historical conditions required for a historical transformation" (Gutiérrez, 1995:288). Indeed, the "[s]ocial sciences become for Gutiérrez a necessary tool" which makes it possible "to understand the social reality and therefore better sketch the challenges that the socio-political context present" (Kristenson, 2009:103). Theology, then, relies on 'corresponding disciplines' "[i]n order to make a theological reflection in a context of poverty and marginalisation", including "the analysis from a socio-political perspective" (Kristenson, 2009:103).

An exegetical strategy, thirdly, is evident particularly in Gutiérrez's engagement with church documents and in his commentary on the book of Job. Gutiérrez engages in exegetical work when he discusses the merits and problems in (Roman Catholic) documents such as *Gaudium et spes* (cf. 1973:33 – 34, 168 – 172, 33), the Schema of Zurich (cf. 1973:169), the Schema of Ariccia (cf. 1973:169 – 170), *Populorum progressio* (cf. 1973:33 – 34, 171 – 172), *Mater et Magistra* (cf. 1973:33), and *Pacem in terris* (cf. 1973:33) – among others, and including the preparatory documents for and proceedings of the respective Latin American conferences of Roman Catholic bishops in Medellín (in Colombia, 1968) and in Puebla (1979) (cf. Gutiérrez, 1978). In his *On Job*, the only biblical commentary that Gutiérrez would write, Gutiérrez considers the central question of "how we are to talk about God… from within a specific situation – namely, the suffering of the innocent" (2005b:xvii).[216] Gustavo Gutiérrez engages in exegetical dialogue with biblical texts not only in his *On Job* (2005b), but throughout his work – including in *A Theology of Liberation* (in a section entitled 'Biblical Meaning of Poverty'; 1973:291 – 299), *The Power of the Poor in History* (in a section entitled 'Biblical Overview of the Sources of Liberation Theology'; 1979:1 – 110), and *The God of Life* (in a section entitled 'Thinking the God of the Bible'; 1991:xiii – xv) (Sikes, 1997:127). Moreover, Gutiérrez includes a myriad of biblical references throughout his work, and – as Sikes notes (1997:127) – "the biblical texts often form a basis for discussion and reflection."[217]

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[216] Here Gutiérrez offers a "theological reflection on Job" from the context of Latin America, and specifically "the context of the suffering of the poor" which is "the vast majority of the population" (2005a:xvii; cf. also Siker, 1997:126 – 127). Indeed, "[m]uch of Gutiérrez's writing can be characterized as reflections on biblical texts and biblical themes," writes Jeffrey Siker (1997:127).

[217] Gustavo Gutiérrez describes his approach to using the bible – specifically as it pertains to his argument in *The Power of the Poor in History* – as (1) Christological (which, for him, is "the only way to grasp the profound unity of the Old and New Testaments"), (2) in faith (within a community of faith, not by 'trained specialists'), (3) historical (in that God reveals Godself in history), and (4) militant (by which he means reading the bible "from the perspective of the condemned human beings of this earth") (1983:4). Indeed, Jeffrey Siker points out (1997:128) that "Gutiérrez makes broad use of the biblical canon, ranging widely over both Old and New Testaments, as well as making very limited use of the Old Testament Apocrypha" – to the amount of 1687 biblical citations, according to Siker (1997:128). For Gutiérrez, the bible as 'Word of God' is central to his theological reflections. Siker (1997:126) describes Gutiérrez's approach to the Bible as a product or consequence of "the traditional understanding he initially received as a student, namely, pre-Vatican II progressive European Roman Catholocism." Jeffrey Siker highlights four aspects in Gutiérrez's use of the bible, namely (1) 'the experience and perspective of the poor' (1997:131 – 132); (2) creation, salvation, and eschatology as 'guiding themes' (1997:132 – 134); (3) reading the bible with a focus on poverty (1997:134 – 136); and (4) the ongoing dialogue between the bible and readers (1997:136 – 137). For a more comprehensive overview of Gustavo Gutiérrez's use(s) of the bible, see Jeffrey Siker's excellent chapter entitled 'Gustavo Gutiérrez: Liberating Scriptures of the Poor' (1997:126 – 148).

A polemical strategy , fourthly, is evident in the rhetoric that Gutiérrez employs throughout his work, and particularly in his account of the life and thought of the sixteenth century Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas (in *Las Casas,* 1995). There – with chapter titles like 'Dying before Their Time' (1995:21), 'Scourged Christs of the Indies' (1995:45), and 'Evangelization at Gunpoint' (1995:103) – Gutiérrez writes *polemically* about "Las Casas' prophetic criticism of Spanish violence against the indigenous peoples of America" (Goizueta, 2007:296) and Las Casas' witness which calls us into similar action and witness against oppression and injustice. For Gutiérrez, working toward the liberation of countries, social classes, and the poor involves confrontation and (different kinds of) violence "between groups with different interests and opinions" (1973:48). Such conflict would involve a polemical strategy, wherein nothing less than "a radical calling into question of the reigning social order" must be practiced (1975:33). Revolution, not reform, is required if poverty and injustice in Latin America is to be addressed (1975:33).[218] Those who Gustavo Gutiérrez describes as 'Latin American martyrs' (Brockman, 1983:932), such as Bartolomé de Las Casas and, more recently, Archbishop Oscar Romero – to whom Gutiérrez dedicates his *The God of Life* (1991) – are, for him, exemplary figures that embody the polemical nature of the gospel for the poor.[219] In this regard, even 'the armed struggle' (1970:250) may have a role to play in the transformation or social revolution in Latin America.

These strategies give, in their variety of different nuances, expression to the overarching methodological shift within Gutiérrez's liberation theology, wherein theology (or theory) is approached or worked out from within history and politics (or praxis) instead of a set of

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[218] This requires a 'revolutionary commitment' of Christian communities to justice and solidarity with the poor (1975:39). Such a commitment cannot take place in "calm waters" (1975:39), if it is to work towards 'eliminating human exploitation' (1975:42) and 'creating better conditions of life for everyone' (1975:42). Indeed, "what is perhaps most difficult for the Christian who openly and devotedly takes the side of the poor and exploited and commits himself (sic) to the struggle of the proletariat is the *conflictive* character which his (sic) social praxis acquires in that context" (1975:35; my emphasis – NM). Indeed, "[t]heological work consists," among other things, "of confronting challenges face-to-face, no matter how radical they may be" (2009:322).

[219] Gutiérrez also mentions other (contemporary) figures in this regard (1975:57): "The incarnation of the gospel in past and present Latin American history already reveals the limits and possibilities of the present proclamation of the gospel, and permits some foresight of the conflicts that the gospel will confront. Cases such as Henrique Pereira Neto, Nestor Paz, Hector Gallego, to mention only the more recently known names, are examples. Others, still alive, are tortured and maligned in the name of 'Christian Western civilization'. They and many more try to give testimony of their faith on unmarked roads, beyond the channels acceptable to the powerful of the continent." Elsewhere he writes that "[t]he blood of our brothers and sisters, who have died giving an account of their faith in God and having loved to the full those loved by God, is what gives the contemporary Latin American church its greatest richness" (1978:214). In an interview with James Brockman, Gutiérrez was asked about the assasination of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, wherein he remarked that "many Christians are giving their lives, witnessing unto death to the gospel, to the God of love and the God of the poor" and that Romero "was assasinated for preaching the gospel" (1983:931 – 932).

infallible truth claims (Naudé & Jonker, 1988:243). The contemplative, analytic, exegetical, and polemical strategies outlined *within* such a methodological shift together shape Gutiérrez's interpretation of salvation as communion with God and fellow human beings, and the liberation that such communion necessarily calls for within historical contexts of injustice and oppression.

3.2.5   Salvation as communion

Salvation is a central theme or concept of 'the Christian mystery', argues Gutiérrez (1973:149),[220] and therefore at the heart of his theological reflection. Moreover, a theology of liberation is, for Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973:45), intricately linked to the relationship between *liberation* and salvation, or the question "[W]hat relation is there between salvation and the historical process of the liberation of man (sic)?" Indeed, Gutiérrez himself "has noted clearly the soteriological nature of his theology" which "has shaped his theology from its very beginnings" (Murray, 1998:51). It would be of great importance to him to establish a 'saving dialogue' with the poor, particularly in Latin America, and therefore he would call "for renewed foundational investigation of the notion of salvation" (Murray, 1998:51). Indeed, "soteriology is central to Gutiérrez's entire theological project" (Murray, 1998:51).

Gustavo Gutiérrez distinguishes between two notions of salvation, namely quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative or extensive notion of salvation has to do with the evangelisation of non-Christians, and in particular with "the number of persons saved, the possibility of being saved, and the role which the Church plays in this process" (1973:150). This particular notion of salvation is characterised by two elements, namely (1) as "a cure for sin in this life", and (2) as being "attained beyond this life" (1973:150). In short, the quantitative notion of salvation interprets salvation as future life, as life beyond this life, in that "one's actions are judged and assessed in relation to the transcendent end" (1973:150). The consequences of such an interpretation includes, for Gutiérrez, moralism and a spiritual 'flight from this world' (1973:150) toward 'true life' (1973:152).

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[220] And yet, notes Gutiérrez (1973:149), contemporary theology has not – at least until the publication of his *A Theology of Liberation* in 1971 – provided "a profound and lucid reflection on the theme of salvation." He attributes this 'deficiency' to the difficulty of the matter at hand, and an assumption that salvation is understood (1973:149). He admits that there were, at the time, various books on salvation that had recently been published, but that these were "only a beginning" and that the time had arrived "for the notion of salvation" (1973:149).

The qualitative or intensive notion of salvation has to do with the fulfillment of human existence, and in particular with being open to God and others. For Gutiérrez (1973:151), this "widens the scope of the possibility of salvation" to all people – Christians and non-Christians alike – whether such grace is accepted or rejected, and even when a human being may not be clearly aware of the act of opening himself or herself to God and others. This notion of salvation has to do not with "something otherworldly" which regards "the present life… merely [as] a test", but is described as 'communion with God' (or 'union with God') (1973:151). In short, the qualitative notion of salvation sketches salvation as "the communion of men (sic) with God and the communion of men (sic) among themselves… which embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ" (1973:151). The consequences of such an interpretation include, for Gutiérrez, not a flight to an otherworldly life but rather "the transformation and fulfillment of the present life" (1973:152).[221]

Gustavo Gutiérrez is therefore highly critical of an 'optimistic vision' or understanding of salvation which may lead to escapism or the justification of injustice and oppression. He opts instead for a 'negative vision' which is realistic regarding unjust and dehumanising conditions in which human beings have to live, and which is willing and able to reject such situations. Only such a negative vision will allow "us to go to the root of the problems and… create without compromises a new social order, based on justice and brotherhood" (1973:174). Such a vision leads not to escapism but to 'a will to revolution' (1973:174), for it takes seriously the human responsibility for and behind unjust situations (1973:175). In other words, Gutiérrez is wary of being naïve regarding the role of sin in "the historical development of humanity" and is therefore also suspicious about any and all "those theologies enthusiastic about human progress" (1973:175).

"Sin," argues Gutiérrez (1973:176), "demands a radical liberation" (which, he notes, implies 'political liberation') and it is this gift of 'radical liberation'[222] that Christ offers human

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[221] Piet Naudé and Willie Jonker are critical of Gutiérrez's methodological move in replacing a quantitative interpretation of salvation with a qualitative interpretation of salvation, because such a move imbues human activity and action with what they call 'soteriological status' (*heilstatus*) – independent of faith (1988:239). See also footnote 207.

[222] Robert Brown notes that Gustavo Gutiérrez's recognition that poverty is a consequence of unjust and oppressive social structures, instead of "lack of initiative by the poor", leads Gutiérrez to speak of 'radical' changes and indeed 'radical' liberation' (1980:30). What Gutiérrez means by 'radical' is perhaps best explained by Brown's own exegesis of the word (1980:30): "The word 'radical' comes from *radix*, which means 'root;' to look at a problem 'radically' is to try and get to the 'root' of the problem. The root of the problem for Gustavo is that present social structures exploit the many poor for the sake of the few rich. The only effective way to deal

beings. Indeed, salvation is "totally and freely given by God" (Gutiérrez, 1973:159) and, as such, therefore marks "a transition from sin to grace, from death to life, from injustice to justice, from the subhuman to the human" (1973:176). The gift that is offered is the gift of God's Spirit which leads human beings into the gift of communion with God and other human beings (1973:176). Indeed, for Gutiérrez Christ is the liberator (1973:37) who

liberates man (sic) from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes man (sic) truly free, that is to say, he enables man (sic) to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human brotherhood (sic).

Sin, as an historical reality, herein becomes "not only an impediment to salvation in the afterlife" but "constitutes a break with God"; 'a breach of communion' with God and other human beings; a 'withdrawal from all others', through a 'turning in' of a human being upon itself (1973:152). Sin, for Gutiérrez (1973:172), therefore entails "the breach of friendship with God and others." Sin, as a breach of friendship (1973:35), is for Gutiérrez "the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which men (sic) live" and as "the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression" (1973:37). Sin is, in short, the root of all misery (1973:176). Such sin, which "originates in a socially and historically situated freedom" (1973:172), is therefore a personal, social, and historical reality which is part of 'everyday human life' and which constitutes not only a 'breach of communion' but also an 'obstacle to a full life' (1973:152; 172).[223]

Salvation, then, involves "redemption from misery", even if such misery "is only provisional" (1973:158). Christ's saving work enables human beings to live in freedom from sin and in communion with God and fellow human beings (1973:37). Stated somewhat differently, in Gutiérrez's Christological interpretation of salvation "the work of Christ is present

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with such structures is to 'uproot' them, so that other structures can replace them. Deep-rooted problems call for deep-rooted remedies… Uprooting means turning things upside down, so that the powerful are divested of power and poor and invested with power."

[223] Gustavo Gutiérrez does not, in other words, regard sin as "an individual, private or merely interior reality" but understands sin as "a social, historical fact, the absence of brotherhood (sic) and love in relationships among men (sic), the breach of friendship with God and other men (sic)" – which, therefore, also involves "an interior, personal fracture" (1973:175). It is important for a liberation theology to consider and respond to "the collective dimensions of sin" (1973:175). It is worth quoting Gutiérrez at length in this regard (1973:175): "[S]in does not appear as an afterthought, something which one has to mention so as not to stray from tradition or leave oneself open to attack. Nor is this a matter of escape into a fleshless spiritualism. Sin is evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of man by man (sic), in the domination and slavery of peoples, races, and social classes. Sin appears, therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation."

simultaneously as a liberation from sin and from all its consequences: despoliation, injustice, hatred" (1973:158). For Gutiérrez, salvation has to do with "the meaning of the saving action of the Lord in history" which is "centered upon Christ the Liberator" (1973:149).[224] He formulates the framework or approach regarding his interpretation of salvation as based on the bible and on history (1973:x):

The Bible presents liberation – salvation – in Christ as the total gift, which, by taking on the levels we indicate, gives the whole process of liberation its deepest meaning and its complete and unforeseeable fulfillment. Liberation can thus be approached as a single salvific process. This viewpoint, therefore, permits us to consider the unity, without confusion, of man's (sic) various dimensions, that is, his relationships with other men and with the Lord, which theology has been attempting to establish for some time.

Central to Gustavo Gutiérrez's soteriology is therefore "the theological meaning of liberation", which is not a mere doctrinal matter to Gutiérrez but involves "the very meaning of Christianity and… the mission of the Church" (1973:xi).[225] In order to provide a coherent and systematic account of liberation theology, Gutiérrez situates "the complexity of the process of liberation… in the salvific work of Christ" (1973:xi). It is in Christ that history is 'catapulted forward' toward full reconciliation and meaning and fulfillment (Gutiérrez, 1973:167). Christ is the "irruption into history of the God of gratuitous love" (Murray, 1998:56) who "smells of the stable" (Gutiérrez, 1991:85; quoted in Murray, 1998:56) and who embodies God's solidarity with and preferential option for the poor.[226]

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[224] And indeed, for Gutiérrez (1973:177) liberation reaches its fullest sense *in Christ*. Christ, who becomes fully human within human history, is 'the liberator' (1973:175), and therefore "the struggle for a just society is in its own right very much a part of salvation history" (1973:168).

[225] Herein "[t]he Exodus experience is paradigmatic" (1973:159) in that the liberation from Egypt (which Gutiérrez regards as "both a historical fact and at the same time a fertile Biblical theme") reveals God as the liberating God, who frees Israel from slavery (1973:155). Gutiérrez interprets the Exodus account primarily as a *political* action, wherein "the breaking away from a situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and fraternal society" takes place (1973:155). Moses fulfills the role of liberator, in this interpretation (1973:156), with the 'vocation' of struggling for the liberation of his people. God's political liberation of Israel inaugurates the history of Israel, argues Gutiérrez (1973:157), in that "[w]ith the Exodus a new age has struck for humanity" (1973:158).

[226] Gustavo Gutiérrez has been criticised widely for his commitment to this confession of who God is, and particularly for "not grounding the human imperative of liberating praxis in the divine indicative of God's saving righteousness" (Kamitsuka, 1997:177). This, however, is "not a tendency toward a liberation-salvation conflation" – argues David Kamitsuka (1997:177) – but "a statement about the church's responsibility to respond to the plight of the poor" (1997:177) as it is "grounded in God's prevenient and gratuitous love for the poor" (1997:178). This does not, however, mean that "[t]here is [anything] in the poor spiritually or morally which merits preferential favour by God" (1997:178). Rather, "God's special love for the poor" is because of the goodness of who God is, not because of the goodness of the poor (1997:178). Indeed, "God's goodness towards the poor is revealed in many ways but definitively in Christ who is 'God become poor'" (1998:178). Gutiérrez argues that authentic worship of *this* God, "who made himself a God of history in solidarity with the poor and

Gutiérrez's Christological emphasis is, however, not meant to devalue or discourage the participation of human beings in the work of God in history. Human beings take part in God's salvation when they "work, to transform this world" and by building 'the human community', argues Gutiérrez (1973:159). This involves a "struggle against misery and exploitation" as well as building a just society (1973:159). The struggle *against* an unjust and oppressive society is, for Gutiérrez, accompanied by the struggle *for* a just and open society "where people can live with dignity and be agents of their own destiny" (1973:x). For this reason Gutiérrez is critical of the term 'development' – for he believes that it "does not well express these profound aspirations" – and opts instead for the term 'liberation', which expresses these aspirations in a clearer way for him (1973:x).[227] In short, as a notion 'liberation' is "more exact and all-embracing; it emphasizes that man (sic) transforms himself (sic) by conquering his (sic) liberty throughout his (sic) existence and his (sic) history" (1973:x). Therefore Gutiérrez opts to describe salvation not by way of 'development', but in terms of 'liberation' – for (1973:168)

salvation embraces all men (sic) and the whole of man (sic); the liberating action of Christ – made man (sic) in this history and not in a history marginal to the real life of man (sic) – is at the heart of the historical current of humanity; the struggle for a just society is in its own right very much a part of salvation history.

Gustavo Gutiérrez outlines three approaches to the process of liberation (1973:36 – 37), namely (1) (*political*) liberation as an expression of the aspirations of oppressed people (as

the dispossessed and through them with all humans", requires the church and believers to be and act in solidarity with the poor as well (1975:38). Indeed, "[o]nly through genuine signs of love and solidarity will our encounter with the poor and the exploited be effective, and only through the poor and the exploited will we find Christ… [for t]he poor, the other, appears as a revealer of the totally Other" (Gutiérrez, 1975:39). This constitutes what Gustavo Gutiérrez describes as 'an authentic spiritual experience' (1975:40): "Christians committed to an historical praxis of liberation try to live there this deep communion: love of Christ in solidarity with the poor; faith in our condition as sons and daughters of the Father, in the task of forging a society of brothers and sisters; and, lastly, hope of Christ's salvation in our commitment to the liberation of the oppressed" (Gutiérrez, 1975:40).

[227] Development is regarded as 'superversive' in that "[i]t changes superficially from above, rather than radically from below" (Brown, 1980:32). Gutiérrez therefore opts for the concept 'liberation', which he describes as "a radical break from the status quo", involving "a profound transformation of the private property system, access to power of the exploited class, and a social revolution that would… allow for the change to a new society" (1973:26 – 27). Liberation, in other words, is not – like development – superversive (from above), but subversive (from below). By this Gutiérrez means that history is changed 'from below' (*sub-vertir*) in that "the poor take charge of their own lives" (Brown, 1980:31). 'Development', for Gutiérrez (1973:36), does not give a true picture of the tragic realities that the poor are faced with, whereas 'liberation' is dynamic (assuming that human beings are responsible for their own destinies), inclusive (in broadening "the horizons of the desired social changes"), and allows for a biblical approach that could "inspire the presence and action of man (sic) in history" (by portraying Christ as liberator, and Christ's liberation as freedom from sin) (1973:36 – 37).

opposed to development, which gives a false picture of the disparities between poor and rich); (2) (*historical*) liberation as the assumption that a person takes responsibility for their own destiny; and (3) (*redemptive*) liberation as salvation from sin, which is brought about by Christ the liberator. These three approaches outline "three levels of meaning of a single, complex process" which reaches its apex or full realisation in "the saving work of Christ" (1973:37). These approaches are distinct, yet interdependent; and "they are all part of a single, all-encompassing salvific process" (1973:176; cf. also Hauerwas, 1986:68).

Stanley Hauerwas (1986:68) suggests that, for Gutiérrez, (redemptive) liberation is the most fundamental expression of liberation "on which all other forms of liberation depend." And while it may be true that for Gutiérrez (1973:177) building a just society is liberating, and that liberating work is 'salvific work' (1973:72), it must also be said that liberation is no mere synonym for salvation, because liberation "is not all of salvation" (1973:177). Stanley Hauerwas (1986:72) points out that it is sometimes asserted "that liberation is equivalent to the notion of salvation." And, indeed, David Kamitsuka (1997:175 – 176) and Joyce Murray (1998:52) point out that Gutiérrez is often accused of this.[228]

Gustavo Gutiérrez, however, carefully formulates this relationship as 'liberation *and* salvation' (cf. this exact title in his *A Theology of Liberation;* 1973:149).[229] Joyce Murray argues that Gutiérrez "does not reduce salvation to historical liberation" but "interprets salvation ultimately as communion with God and one another in history and beyond it" (1998:52). David Kamitsuka agrees (1997:176) that (complete) communion with God and fellow human beings, and not liberation alone, is the ultimate goal of salvation. Indeed, for

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[228] The conflation of salvation and (socio-political) liberation is a concern that Hauerwas also mentions elsewhere (1977:233; footnote 1), and that is shared by a number of other theologians – including George Hunsinger (1983:258 – 258, 261), Roger Haight (1985:39), and Peter Wright Kendrick (1990:309) (cf. Kamitsuka, 1997:175 – 176; 187; footnotes 27 – 31; as well as Murray, 1998:52; specifically footnote 6). Joyce Murray attributes such confusion to a selective reading of Gutiérrez, since it is indeed true that Gutiérrez "sometimes speaks of salvation as liberation, at other times as life, and yet again as communion" (1998:53).

[229] Yet Hauerwas (1986:69 – 70) remains doubtful as to whether Gutiérrez's use of the metaphor of liberation is as unproblematic as it is portrayed in *A Theology of Liberation.* Hauerwas observes that "at times his account of liberation sounds far more like that of Kant and the Enlightenment than it does of the Kingdom established by Christ", and that an account of liberation which has such a 'ring of the Enlightenment' to it may be "at odds with the Gospel" (1986:69). Even if liberation is not freedom from 'self-incurred tutelage' (as with Kant) but liberation from (economic, political, social) injustice and oppression, Hauerwas still maintains that salvation – according to the Gospel – "is not a life free from suffering, free from servitude, but rather a life that freely suffers, that freely serves" because "[a]s Christians we do not seek to be free, but rather to be of use" (1986:69 – 70). David Kamitsuka points out (1997:173 – 174) that "[t]his criticism must be understood in light of a larger general argument Hauerwas has sustained over the years against what he judges to be a Kantianism" in which morality is universalised and secularised.

Gutiérrez (1973:177), liberation "is a precondition for the new society, but this is not all it is." Liberation, for him (1973:177), is directed towards communion,[230] and exactly within its focus on and drive toward 'total communion' it also denounces the limitations and ambiguities and shortfalls inherent in (liberating) historical events and praxes. Liberation, in other words, cannot fully express or explain salvation in Christ; nor can liberation (if it is to be dynamic and active within history) only work toward a greater fulfillment of human beings (Gutiérrez, 1973). For Gustavo Gutiérrez, salvation is too radical, too active, and too dynamic to be reduced to or limited by or exhausted by historical events. Instead, historical events are caught up in 'the salvific process' and find their meaning therein, for "nothing is outside of the pale of the action of Christ and the gift of the Spirit" (1973:177). In short, the (salvific) work of Christ transforms 'the social order' up to its very roots and basic structure (Gutiérrez, 1973:177).[231]

Gutiérrez's soteriological reflection takes place in "the midst of a people", and therefore "[c]ommunity… is the basis of Gutiérrez's soteriology" (Murray, 1998:52). Joyce Murray notes that the theological foundations of Gutiérrez's interpretation of salvation include (1) (historical and contextual) experiences of oppression, particularly in Latin America; (2) biblical accounts of liberation and Christ the Liberator; and (3) the praxes and life of church communities (1998:59). Indeed, Gutiérrez's soteriology is shaped by his work with Christian base communities (*communidades de base*)[232] in Latin America over many years (Lee &

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[230] Gutiérrez would, on the basis of this conviction, critique the Vatican II 'instruction' on liberation theology, *Libertatis conscientia,* for "its failure to fully develop the idea of communion as the ultimate purpose of liberation" (Murray, 1998:55).

[231] However, it would seem as if the relationship between salvation and liberation would remain a complex and controversial matter, as Gutiérrez himself also points out in a chapter on salvation and liberation (cf. 1973:149 – 187). For instance, Hauerwas agrees with Gutiérrez that there is "a close connection between salvation and social praxis" or "salvation and social justice" (1986:71), but is wary of privileging the metaphor of *liberation* in describing salvation because such rhetoric "does not sufficiently guard against such possible misunderstanding" (1986:70). He is doubtful as to whether "liberation is a sufficient image or metaphor to depict adequately the nature of that social salvation", even if liberation is indeed one of the images used in the New Testament to describe salvation (1986:71). Stated somewhat differently, Hauerwas raises the question of whether liberation "as a central organizing theological concept, [is] supple and inclusive enough to address adequately the range of ways in which the Christian tradition has wanted and would continue to speak of the evil that marks the human condition" (Kamitsuka, 1997:175). David Kamitsuka (1997:175) regards this as "an important theological concern" – for, as he points out (1997:175), "[h]istorically theologians have endeavoured to include a variety of metaphors for salvation – not always harmonizing them, but finding it theologically and pastorally valuable to retain a cluster of metaphors to describe what overcomes the ills of the human predicament."

[232] Gutiérrez explains that Christian base communities "are *not* an underground church" as was sometimes believed in Europe and North America (Lee & Pallagios, 1987:114; original emphasis). Moreover, these base communities are also *not* communities of "lay people, nuns, and priests who are against the church hierarchy" (Lee & Pallagios, 1987:114). Rather, "Christian base communities are part of a larger phenomenon" of "growing awareness of the root causes of poverty in Latin America", wherein "'[b]ase' refers to the last people in society,

Gallegos, 1987:114), which "honors their efforts as salvific" (Murray, 1998:53). Joyce Murray makes the point that it is this context of Gutiérrez's soteriology that has shaped his "understanding of salvation as communion with one another and with God" (1998:53). Such 'liberative communities', who work against structural injustice in solidarity with the poor, are therefore "places of transformative action where communion is experienced historically in anticipation of full communion in the eschaton" (1998:53). Such communities "affirm life in the midst of death" and thereby give expression to Gutiérrez's description of salvation as "God's gift of definitive life to God's children" (Murray, 1998:53 – 54).

Communion, for Gutiérrez, is both a gift ánd a task (Murray, 1998:55). God's (justifying) grace describes the giftlike character of communion, whereas God's (sanctifying) love describes the task-oriented focus of communion – and the connection between gift and task is of great importance to Gutiérrez, because it serves as "a basis for the justice that ensures communion" (Murray, 1998:56). Yet Gutiérrez has a *specific kind* of communion in mind, namely communion with the poor. This communion is established in Jesus Christ, 'God becomes poor', in that "God chooses solidarity with the poor as the necessary salvific praxis" (Murray, 1998:56; Kamitsuka, 1997:178). This means that the church, 'the sacrament of communion', is called to be 'a church of the poor' (Murray, 1998:58) in that it is "the visible sign of the presence of God within the liberation process" (1998:58). Salvation is embedded in community – and specifically, for Gutiérrez, in Latin American base communities – for "[t]he involvement of Christians in the world of the poor has soteriological significance in that it results in the creation of communities of solidarity which are bearers of God's salvation" (Murray, 1998:58).

Salvation is therefore not equated with liberation within Gutiérrez's soteriology, but expressed as "communion with God and one another in history and beyond it" (Murray, 1998:58). Liberation takes place *for* communion, and salvation is portrayed *as* communion. However, salvation is not only portrayed *as* communion, but also as the *restoration of* communion (1998:59). Gutiérrez's "soteriology of communion from the underside of history"

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the poor and those who are committed to them" (Lee & Pallagios, 1987:114). Indeed, the *communidades de base* is "the small grassroots communities… that have been multiplying all over Latin America" (Gutiérrez, 1978:215). These communities would shape Gustavo Gutiérrez's theological reflection in numerous ways – also in his *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (1984), which Joyce Murray describes as "Gutiérrez's most sustained soteriological reflection on the experience of base Christian communities engaged in liberation for communion" (1998:52; footnote 9).

thereby involves both "the personal dimension of salvation" *and* "concrete social and political implications" for historical communities (1998:58); both freedom "from oppressive situations" and freedom "for love and communion" (Murray, 1998:58).

Gustavo Gutiérrez's "soteriological vision of communion" rests on the distinction between 'freedom *from*' and 'freedom *for*' (1998:54).[233] Liberation, then, involves a twofold movement: (1) liberation *from* "oppressive structures which hinder man (sic) from living with dignity and assuming his (sic) own destiny" (1973:174);[234] and (2) liberation *for* "communion with God and one another in history and beyond" (Murray, 1998:51; cf. also Hauerwas, 1997:75). Indeed, the 'fullness of liberation' – which Gutiérrez continues to describe as "a free gift from Christ" – is embedded or expressed in "communion with God and with other men (sic) (1973:36). This involves an openness toward the other ("the going out of oneself"), both individually ("the breaking down of our selfishness") as well as structurally (the breaking down of "all of the structures that support our selfishness") (1973:36). Gustavo Gutiérrez therefore opts for an interpretation of salvation as 'fullness of life', in that such an understanding "gives [this world]… its authentic meaning and its own autonomy because salvation is already latently there" (1973:152).

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[233] "This classical distinction," notes Murray (1998:54), "is one of the basic elements in the traditional Christian view of salvation, a distinction commonly affirmed by Latin American liberation theologians." For Gutiérrez, this distinction is important because it articulates both the *indicative* of salvation (freedom from) as well as the *imperative* of salvation (freedom for). Although Gutiérrez does not explicitly describe the relationship between justification and sanctification in his soteriology, his concern for such a 'foundational distinction' already points toward at least an implied consideration of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Elsewhere he describes this distinction as "a *freedom from* all that impedes the person from being really free, and a *freedom to* love; that is the human fullness" (1975:26; original emphases).

[234] Stanley Hauerwas is particularly critical of this notion of liberation (which he calls the 'fatal abstractness' of Gutiérrez's use of the term 'liberation') in that it "is simply made to do more work than one term can bear as we are left unsure what kind of liberation is implied and/or if it is consistent with other values Gutiérrez desires" (1986:71). He finds missing in Gutiérrez's account of liberation particularly the notion of power (and the accompanying term or value 'equality'), because he regards power as "a crucial element of all significant social movements" (1986:72). Indeed, for him liberation "involves taking power from some and giving it to others", and therefore 'equality' and 'power' are "crucial categories" in working toward just societies (1986:72). The heart of Hauerwas' critique has, in short, to do with "the adequacy of liberation as a theme to guide Christian interpretation and strategy of the current social crisis" (1986:74). He suggests that, instead of merely opposing oppression and injustice in a generalised and abstract way, liberation theology may need more concepts and descriptions than liberation alone in order to "name the injustices we actually confront" in a specific and concrete way (1986:74). In other words, Hauerwas *agrees* with Gutiérrez's longing for a 'just and fraternal society', as well as with the assertion that Christians must work toward creating such a society, but calls for specific descriptions of injustice and specific strategies in order to address oppression (as opposed to the 'the fatally abstract ideals' that Gutiérrez outlines in his liberation theology) (1986:74). Hauerwas, then, charges Gutiérrez with not going far enough in working out the concrete consequences and practices of his (abstract) ideal of liberation from oppression and injustice.

For Gutiérrez, salvation embraces *all* human beings as well as *the whole* of a human being, and therefore he includes both creation[235] *and* eschatological fulfillment[236] in his soteriology. In particular, Gutierrez's theological reflection on salvation is permeated with an *eschatological perspective* (1973:160) or *eschatological logic,* wherein human history is understood as "an opening to the future" (1973:10). For him, this means that 'the future' becomes "a task, a political occupation, through which man (sic) orients and opens himself (sic) to the gift which gives history its transcendent meaning" – namely, "the full and definitive encounter with the Lord and other men (sic)" (1973:10). This full encounter takes place within the full communion with God and other human beings, so that liberation becomes directed toward salvation. Liberation, in short, is *for* communion (Murray, 1998:51), and it is in communion as a gift of Christ in which 'full freedom' resides (Murray, 1998:55).

Communion with God, for Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973:11), "inescapably means a Christian life centered around a concrete and creative commitment of service to others." Yet, because human beings can play a liberating role within history, Gutiérrez describes the role of human beings in God's work of salvation as being "coparticipant in his (sic) own salvation" (1973:173). Salvation, in short, is "the communion of men (sic) with God and the communion of men (sic) among themselves" that "orients, transforms, and guides history to its fulfillment" (Gutiérrez, 1973:152). Salvation as communion with God and fellow human

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[235] Creation and recreation forms part of 'the salvific process' (1973:154). He describes creation as "the first salvific act" in that "[t]he creation of the world initiates history" and that God "saves and acts in history" (1973:154). Gutiérrez would even go so far as to describe creation *as* salvation, insofar as "creation itself is a saving action" and "[c]reation is the work of the Redeemer" (1973:155). Moreover, for Gutiérrez human beings have a role to play in 'forging' or 're-creating' or 'self-creating' or 'self-generating' themselves in history "[b]y working, transforming the world, breaking out of servitude, building a just society" (1973:158 – 159). Salvation thereby becomes "the inner force and the fullness of this movement of man's (sic) self-generation that was initiated by the work of creation" (1973:159). Human beings fulfill themselves when they place themselves – by working for transformation and liberation and against oppression and exploitation – within God's 'all-embracing salvific process' (1973:159).

[236] Salvation has to do with eschatological promises, as it stands revealed by God in the bible ("the book of Promise" and "the book of hope") (Gutiérrez, 1973:160), in that eschatology is "the driving force of salvific history radically oriented toward the future" and – even more – "the very key to understanding the Christian faith" (1973:162). This involves both an 'orientation' (or 'posture') towards the future, as well as a 'concern for the present' (Gutiérrez, 1973:162 – 163), in that "it is the sense of a fullness which takes on and transforms historical reality" (1973:167). Indeed, for Gutiérrez the (singular) 'Promise' is 'the good news' that the bible proclaims, namely God's self-revelation and self-communication of love (1973:160). The (singular) Promise unfolds, by "becoming richer and more definite", in the (multiple) promises made by God in human history (1973:161), for "[t]he historical implementations of promises in the present are… as characteristic of eschatology as the opening to the future" (Gutiérrez, 1973:164; original emphasis). Historical, earthly, temporal events are the means through which human beings "can open up to the future of complete fulfillment", in that "eschatology is valid in the future as well as in the present" (1973:167). An attitude or disposition of 'active' and 'committed' hope marks such an openness to God and fellow human beings (1973:168).

beings finds expression in the affirmation that God is the God of life and that human beings may flourish in the fullness of life.

3.2.6   Fulfilled human beings?

Gustavo Gutiérrez's soteriology is ultimately concerned not with liberation, as if freedom is an end unto itself, but with life. Salvation involves "accepting the kingdom of life" (Gutiérrez, 1990:12; quoted in Murray, 1998:54), believing in "the God of life" (Gutiérrez, 1991:xi), and exercising the spiritual gift of love, which is "a source of dynamic activity and life" (Gutiérrez, 1984:63). Indeed, for Gutiérrez, it is a *particular vision* of life – namely, of "life in its fullness" – which shapes his soteriology definitively, in that "the ultimate purpose of this liberation and life is communion in love" (Murray, 1998:54). God is therefore the God of life (*El Dios de la Vida*) (1991) who gives life, for the poor of Latin America and within their experiences of death (1991:xv). It is this experience of death – hunger, oppression, injustice – which "leads to an affirmation of the God of life" (1991:xv; cf. also Brockman, 1983:934).[237]

The God who liberates, the God who saves, is the God who *is* life and who *gives* life. Indeed, "God liberates because God is the God of life" (Gutiérrez, 1991:3). "Life," argues Gustavo Gutiérrez (1991:3), "is God's will for all beings." The bible, in turn, is "the book of life, of all life" (1991:9). The bible reveals God as the 'living God' who is the 'friend of life' (1991:9); the Kingdom of God brings life (1991:14; cf. Lee & Gallegos, 1987:113); and "[t]he resurrection of Jesus is the Father's confirmation of the gift of life made in the Son" in that it signifies "the death of death" (1991:14). Belief in the resurrection, however, calls believers to defend "the life of the weakest members of society" (1991:14). The resurrection of Jesus Christ 'asserts life in the face of death' and proclaims that "life, not death, has the final word in history" (1991:15). In short, for Gutiérrez, God is "Lord and lover of the living" (1991:19). God is "a lover of life" and therefore believers in such a God are also called to be 'lovers of life' (1991:19).

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[237] The image of God as a God of life is, for Gutiérrez (1984:32), a source of encouragement and a focus amidst the complex context of the poor of Latin America: "The faith and hope in the God of life that provide a shelter in the situation of death and struggle for life in which the poor and oppressed of Latin America are now living – they are the well from which we must drink if we want to be faithful to Jesus. This is the water of which Archbishop Oscar Romero had drunk when he said he had been converted to Christ by his own people. Once this change had taken place, he could not but view his following of Jesus as closely bound up with the life (and death) of the Salvadoran people whose sufferings and hopes we all carry in our hearts."

This stands over and against oppression, for "[o]ppression in any of its forms means death" (1991:3). Therefore "the exploitation and despoilment of the poor… is a choice of death" (1991:16) in that oppression is death (1991:19). For Gutiérrez, 'death' becomes shorthand for the violence that is perpetrated against fellow human beings, by "crushing and grinding others", and in particular against the poor (1991:18). Moreover, it is "[t]he poverty that the poor suffer [which] means death" – and, in particular, "a premature and unjust death" (Gutiérrez, 1984:28).[238] The wicked become not the friends of life, but "the friends of [such] death" (1991:18). Sin, which is "the breaking of friendship with God and others" (1991:19), produces death, for sin not only alienates human beings from God and fellow human beings, but 'demands death' (1991:18). Yet "[l]ife and not death is what God desires for all, even evildoers, provided they abandon their evil ways" and practice justice (Gutiérrez, 1991:40. *Liberation,* not retaliation, is the appropriate way of resisting 'undue' and 'unjust' death. Liberation responds to death, because not only does "[l]iberation [embody] a will to life", but "[t]he *action* of liberation is [also] directed against oppression, servitude, and death" (1991:19; my emphasis – NM). "Liberation," in short (Gutiérrez, 1991:19),

expresses a will to life; consequently, by liberating us God is shown to be a liberating God, a living God, and the friend of life. To be a Christian is to be a friend of the author of life, Jesus the Christ.

Liberation, then, is the search for 'a utopia of life' which involves "building a world in which persons are more important than things and in which all can live with dignity" (Gutiérrez, 1984:27). Stated somewhat differently, liberation works toward "building… a distinct social order, more just and more human for all" (Gutiérrez, 1975:58). For Gutiérrez, the struggle for liberation consequently has to do with the assertion by the poor of "their [unquestionable] right to life" (1984:28, 30), since poverty contradicts "human flourishing on the earth" (Siker, 1997:135). The God of the poor is therefore not only the God of life, but also "a God who accompanies us in our everyday struggles" (*Dios Compañero*) (Goizueta, 2013:62). For Gustavo Gutiérrez, the affirmation of the right to life for all human beings – including the poor – points toward "the God of our hope", in whom the "dialectic of death followed by life" is revealed (1984:30). God wills "that every human being [has] life" (1984:30), whereby Gutiérrez means a *dignified, full, fulfilled, flourishing* life.

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[238] Gutiérrez distinguishes between two types of death, both of which is encountered in "[t]he poverty and insignificance in which many people live" (2003:11), namely: (1) 'physical death', which is "due to lack of the most basic necessities for life"; and (2) 'cultural death', which is "expressed in the oppression and discrimination against people for reasons of race, culture, or gender."

The yearning that Gutiérrez expresses by such affirmation of the life of all human beings is the yearning for "more human living conditions" (1970:245). This cannot be limited to a form of 'humanism' (including 'Christian humanism'; cf. Gutiérrez, 1975:28) or process of 'humanising', but involves a much broader scope – namely, "participating fully in the salvific process" (1970:256). Poverty negates life, because "its final outcome [is]… early and unjust death", and therefore poverty is, for Gutiérrez, both 'inhumane' *and* 'antievangelical' (2009:322). This "inhumane situation of exclusion" is and can only be addressed by the good news of the gospel, which is both 'liberating' *and* (indeed) 'humanising' (2009:323). For Gutiérrez, human beings can *be* well when they can *live* well.

Yet Gustavo Gutiérrez is admittedly critical of notions of 'well-being' or 'progress' because such concepts are embedded in development thinking, and in particular the understanding of development as economic growth (1973:24 – 25). 'Well-being' herein becomes synonymous with (increased) 'wealth'.[239] However, even where 'development' is interpreted not as economic growth but as 'a total social process' (which include not only economic well-being, but also social, political, and cultural well-being) (1973:26 – 27) it has been criticised for being nothing more than tokenism (which only effects superficial changes to deeply ingrained systemic injustices), exploitation (which involves paying low wages to a ready labour supply in third world countries), and paternalism (which has to do with the decisions regarding the 'good' of third world countries being decided by first world countries) (Brown, 1980:31 – 32; cf. also Gutiérrez, 1973:21 – 37).

Gustavo Gutiérrez therefore prefers to speak of 'happiness', which he understands as the product of a world and a society which is marked by "the defense of the rights of the poor, punishment of the oppressors, a life free from the fear of being enslaved by others, the liberation of the oppressed" (1973:167). Theological language must "loudly proclaim the right of each and every person to happiness" if it is to speak of 'the God of the beatitudes', argues

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[239] Gustavo Gutiérrez is highly suspicious of wealth, because he interprets attachment to money (and "the possibilities it creates of exploointing others", he adds) as idolatry (1991:60); and idolatry as death (1991:56). He notes that "[w]hen human beings place all their hopes on money, they leave no room for others" (1991:60). This is risky because it excludes the rich from the beatitudes, he argues (1991:60), "since their source of security and joy is money and not God." The idolatry of money is the opposite of worship of God, for Gutiérrez (1991:60). He relates this stance not only to a variety of biblical parables, but also to the testimony of Bartolomé de Las Casas regarding those who came to the American Indies in pursuit of gold, and who would not refrain from oppressing and dispossessing the indigenous peoples in the process (1991:61).

Gutiérrez (2009:322). But again, the happiness that Gutiérrez has in mind is not the happiness of being naïve or oblivious or uninterested in the plight of the poor (1978:218). Nor is the conviction that happiness is not to be found in 'this earthly life', but only in 'eternal life', a satisfying interpretation for Gutiérrez (2005b:175). God, who "calls us to life" and who "rejects any form of unjust death" (Gutiérrez, 2009:3), is portrayed as a God whose "will for life" is "a society of equals in which justice and rights are established" (2003:5). Happiness, for Gutiérrez, therefore has to do with both human dignity *and* human rights (2003:8).[240]

Theology is faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*), in that it is a reflection that "[accompanies] people in their suffering *and* joys" (2009:322; my emphasis – NM), also within the context and in response to 'the challenge of poverty' (2003:13).[241] It is therefore in the affirmation of the life of human beings (2003:13), in the 'desire for life' and 'pure friendship' with fellow human beings (and in particular with the poor) (2003:16), and in the relating to all human beings "as equal persons with dignity" who are "hoping to be accepted and understood" (2003:16), that the beauty of the communion with fellow human beings come to fruition. Living human beings share "in the life of the living God", and therefore human beings are called not into *superhuman* or *supernatural* life, but into becoming more (fully) human within "the grace of the communion with God" (Gutiérrez, 1973:172). *Fulfilled* human beings are human beings who flourish in communion with God and each other.

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[240] Life, which is "a gift from God", is "the first human right" (Gutiérrez, 2003:11) – and poverty, which "means death", "strikes against that right" (2003:11). Yet it is exactly in such circumstances that the gospel message of the "right to life" must be proclaimed (Kristenson, 2009:213). Affirming the human dignity of all persons, including the poor, includes the task of defending the human rights of all persons, including the poor (Gutiérrez, 1991:63). This may well mean "confronting powerful interests", and yet it remains the obligation of all Christians and of the whole church to protect specifically the poor and the oppressed – "the weakest members of society" – against violence (and in particular 'institutionalised violence') (1991:62 – 63). Gustavo Gutiérrez describes this as 'the promotion of justice', which he regards as "an essential part of proclaiming the gospel" (2009:324). The gospel, which is "the good news of Jesus", *demands* ánd *invites* us to (1) protest against poverty – "the negation of God's will-to-life" – and (2) be in solidarity with the poor (2003:12 – 13). And indeed, "solidarity with the poor… sets forth a fundamental demand: the recognition of the full human dignity of the poor" (Gutiérrez, 2009:324). The struggle for the right to life is embedded within the struggle for the liberation of the poor, because the struggle involves not only 'the protest against poverty' but also 'the affirmation of the life of the poor' (Kristenson, 2009:214 – 217).

[241] This should include the suffering and joy of the poor (2003:13), for whom "moments of authentic joy" and "laughter" are the moments "that sustain them as human beings" (2003:13). Gustavo Gutiérrez does not mention this "to soften the condition of the poor as victims, or to forget the systematic violation of their most fundamental human rights", but makes this point "in order that we do not forget their humanity and do not lose sight of the fact that they are not simply objects to pity or help, but rather, they are above all, persons destined to be the subjects of their own destiny and history" (2003:14).

3.2.7   Conclusion

Gustavo Gutiérrez is described as "the most prominent theologian of Latin America" (Brockman, 1983:931) and one of the "[f]ew contemporary theologians [who] have influenced the whole range of theological disciplines" (Goizueta, 2007:288). Gutiérrez, however, regards himself not as a theologian, but as a pastor – as is evident in interviews with him (cf. Brockman, 1983:933, 935; Lee & Gallegos, 1987:115) and observations by his friends and peers (cf. Brown, 1980:28; Nouwen, 1984:xvi – xxi) – perhaps in following his theological muse, Bartolomé de Las Casas (after whom Gutiérrez named a non-profit organisation in Lima, Peru, which ministers to the poor).

Yet perhaps it is in the life and song of the figure of Mary that Gustavo Gutiérrez's portrayal of living human beings is most clearly illustrated, not least because he is "especially interested in the paths taken by Mary's language – and silences – about God" (1991:165).[242] Indeed, Mary "holds a unique place in salvation history and in the proclamation of the kingdom of life", argues Gutiérrez, and is of great importance in "the faith of the Latin American people" (1991:164 – 165). It is therefore not altogether insignificant that the final chapter of his *The God of Life* (1991) is a treatise on Mary's portrayal of God (cf. 1991:164 – 186). For Mary – as 'woman' (1991:165 – 173), 'believer' (1991:173 – 179), and 'daughter of a people' (cf. 1991:179 – 186) – God as saviour is "the source of her happiness" (1991:180). Perhaps, then, Mary's life and song and language – which expresses the 'joy' and 'depth' and 'fullness' and 'happiness' and 'blessing' of God's salvation (cf. 1991:180) – exemplifies Gustavo Gutiérrez's portrayal of the communion with God and fellow human beings in which human beings live and flourish, for in her and by her we are led to understand (1991:185)

that [God's] free and unmerited love, which inspires our prayer and thanksgiving, requires of us a solidarity with those who live in circumstances contrary to the purpose of the God of Jesus Christ – namely, that all should have life.

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[242] More specifically, his interest lies in the possible guidelines that these paths may provide, "for the poor" but also "for all believers" (1991:165), because "Mary tells us about God" (1991:64). Mary, whom he describes as 'doubly oppressed and marginalised' (1991:165) – even in being 'blessed among women (1991:171) and the 'favoured one' (1991:173) – "tells us of God" exactly as a woman "marginalized and looked down upon by the dominant male sex" (1991:165). Her significance for the poor and for liberation theology is illustrated nowhere better than in her song of liberation (1991:179), in which she contemplates "God's liberating power" (1991:180). Mary's song, the Magnificat, insists that "all should have life" (1991:185) and "expresses well [the] spirituality of liberation centered upon God and the poor" (Gutiérrez, 1975:41).

3.3   Healing? Salvation as wholeness[243]
(Mercy Oduyoye

3.3.1   Introduction

Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye (1934 –), a Ghanaian Methodist[244] theologian, is regarded as one of the first African women theologians – and, indeed, "for a long time, the *only* African woman… to write and publish theological reflections of any significance" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:2; original emphasis). She is well-known for her work in the ecumenical world – including the All Africa Conference of Churches, the World Student Christian Federation (president), the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (president),[245] and the World Council of Churches (deputy general secretary) (Oduyoye, 1999:82; Grey, 2001:7; Kennedy, 2010:288; Pui-lan, 2004:19 – 20) – and widely praised for her founding role in establishing the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians[246] (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:2; Amoah, 2006:xvii; Bam, 2007:vi; Kennedy, 2010:288). She has written extensively on

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[243] A paper based on the material in this section was presented at the annual meeting of the Theological Society of South Africa that was held at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary in Pietermaritzburg, 17 – 19 June 2014, with the title: "Healed? A critical analysis of salvation in Mercy Oduyoye."

[244] Mercy Oduyoye was born into the (matrilineal) Akan in southern Ghana, and married into the (patrilineal) Yoruba in southern Nigeria (Oduyoye, 2002b:71, 76 (footnote 5); Pui-lan, 2004:19; Pemberton, 2000:90). She was raised in a Methodist community, and her father was a Methodist minister who eventually served as president of the Methodist Church in Ghana (Kennedy, 2010:286 – 287). She first practiced as a teacher – like her father – before studying theology at the University of Ghana and the University of Cambridge (Amoah, 2006:xvii – xx). Oduyoye later became the director of the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana, and taught at various institutions in the USA, including the Harvard Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary (Pui-lan, 2004:19, 21).

[245] Carrie Pemberton has pointed to "the productive matrix" that EATWOT has provided for "the development of Oduyoye's theology" as well as "the creation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians" (2000:96). It is here that theology would be explored through the lenses of liberation theology and first nation theology, and it is here that "a particular location" of 'alienation' – which is "made up by the specific perspective of poverty, colonial negation, dysfunctional resources of tradition and wealth" – and a commitment to 'societal well-being' would be worked out, according to Pemberton (2000:97). It is therefore not altogether insignificant that these very same themes and commitments are encountered in Mercy Oduyoye's theological work, and that her involvement in EATWOT may have shaped Oduyoye's theology in particular ways.

[246] The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians – or, in short, the Circle – "was inaugurated in 1989 to facilitate research, writing and publication by a pan-African multireligious and multiracial network of women with a concern of the impact of religion and culture on African women" (Oduyoye, 2001b:10; footnote 2). The Circle was launched "[w]ithin a year of the start of the Churches' Decade in Solidarity with Women in 1988", an initiative by the World Council of Churches that Oduyoye oversaw (Pemberton, 2000:95). The vision that "some formal organ was necessary to encourage the involvement of more women in the production of theology in Africa" was, however, a joint vision with Brigalia Bam (Bam, 2007:vi). Perhaps it is here – in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians – that African women's theology was birthed, for Mercy Oduyoye herself has called "the theology being done by the Circle 'African women's theologies'" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:3).

171

women,[247] religion,[248] and culture[249] (Amoah, 2006:xviii), as these pertain to Africa and African realities.[250] However, it is specifically the health and healing of African women that has been a focus for her (Kennedy, 2010:284).[251]

Mercy Oduyoye is variously described as "a feminist theologian" (Pui-lan, 2004:7), "a wise African woman theologian" (Amoah, 2006:xvii), a "great African storyteller" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:2), "a virtuoso at formulating unforgettably telling aphorisms, proverbs, sayings and quips" (Kennedy, 2010:284), a "leader in the ecumenical movement" (Pui-lan, 2004:7), "a pioneer of African women's theology" (Brand, 2002:160). She is regarded, in short, as "the mother of African women's theologies" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:10). Her work and thought is marked by various concerns pertaining to the flourishing of human beings, with a particular concern for the health and healing of African women (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:9), which comes to expression in what she describes as African women's theology.

3.3.2   African[252] women's theology

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[247] Cf. "Women and Ritual in Africa" (Oduyoye, 1992b); "Theological Education for Women in Africa: 1978 – 1996" (Oduyoye, 1997a); "The Search for a Two-Winged Theology" (Oduyoye, 2001a); *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Oduyoye, 2001b); and "Acting as Women" (Oduyoye, 2002a).

[248] Cf. "The Value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology" (Oduyoye, 1986b); *Leadership Development in the Methodist Church Nigeria, 1842 – 1962* (Oduyoye, 1992a); and "Culture and Religion as Factors in Promoting Justice for Women" (Oduyoye, 2007a).

[249] Cf. "Christian Feminism and African Culture" (Oduyoye, 1989); "African Culture and the Gospel" (Oduyoye, 2003); and "Culture and Religion as Factors in Promoting Justice for Women" (Oduyoye, 2007a).

[250] Cf. "Wholeness of Life in Africa" (Oduyoye, 1983); *Hearing and Knowing* (Oduyoye, 1986a); *Daughters of Anowa* (Oduyoye, 1995); *Beads and Strands* (Oduyoye, 2002b); "Jesus Christ" (Oduyoye, 2002c); and "A Letter to My Ancestors" (Oduyoye, 2005).

[251] See also her festschrift in this regard, edited by Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (2006), which pays attention to health and healing in all of its parts – including "African Women, the Bible, and Health" (part 2), "Women as Traditional Healers in Africa" (part 3), and "African Women's Experiences of Health and Healing, Endurance, and Peacemaking" (part 4).

[252] Mercy Oduyoye writes as an African – by which she means that she writes with the concerns of "black Africa, that is Africa south of the Sahara" (1986b:240) in mind – but cautions that although she is "a true African child, a daughter of Anowa", she "cannot pretend to write about all of Africa, West Africa, or even Ghana" (2002b:70; 2001b:9). Rather, she opts to do theology – as an African woman theologian – from her 'living centre', which is "the Akan of Ghana" (2002b:70). The mythical figure of Anowa is quite important in Mercy Oduyoye's self-understanding and self-positioning as an African woman theologian – in her words, Anowa "has never ceased to fascinate me" (2002b:73) – for in Anowa Oduyoye finds "Africa's ancestress" (2002b:70): "the mythical woman, prophet, and priest whose life of daring, suffering and determination is reflected in the continent of Africa" (2002b:70) who would, for her, be "the epitome of a woman participating fully in what is life-sustaining and life-protecting, someone worthy of being named an ancestress" (2002b:76; footnote 6). Moreover, the Akan (from which Oduyoye stems) is also known as "the children of Anowa" (2002b:72). For a more detailed explanation of the significance and story behind Anowa, see Oduyoye's chapter entitled "The Fire of the Smoke" (1995:1 – 16; republished in 2002b:67 – 77).

Theology, for Mercy Oduyoye, is "done wherever people reflect on their life situation in the context of the gospel" (1986a:2). The unavoidable and necessary contextual expression of theology led her to opt for 'Third World theology' (1986a:1 – 2), whereby she means "theology [done] from the context of injustice and unrighteousness" (1986a:2). It is with this concern that Oduyoye is interested in the exchange of ideas and sharing of strategies among Third World women theologians (Pui-lan, 2004:21). Oduyoye is critical of any "one uniform system of theology throughout the Christian community" and argues that theology should instead "[reflect] awareness of the horizon to which all believers move" (1986a:vii). For her, the heart of the Christian faith is this: "that our lives are hidden in God" (1986a:vii). Theology, in short, is 'for living' (Oduyoye, 1986a:vii).

Mercy Oduyoye practices theology within the ambit of liberation theology (1986a:3 – 6; 2001a:45); moreover, "[h]ers is a theology of liberation honed for the needs, depredations, sicknesses, and crises of Africa" (Kennedy, 2010:284). As such, African women's theology is ecologically sensitive as well as culture-sensitive (Oduyoye, 2001a:17). This calls for creating 'fresh language' in "telling and living the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1986a:4) and 'liberating' "African Christians from 'predigested' theologies so that they might become creative and relevant" (1986a:5). She does not attempt to summarise "what Africans are saying", but instead regards Africa – including her African experiences and background – as influencing both her method for doing theology as well as the content of her theological work (1986a:8). African women's theology is undergirded by a theology of liberation, argues Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (2006:3).

Such 'liberative work' is the responsibility not only of African women, but also of African men, argues Oduyoye – and as such it is the responsibility of "[a]ll of us, women and men… to observe, analyse, think and create liberative alternatives" (Oduyoye, 2001a:43). The plea for such 'joint responsibility' gives impetus to her argument for 'a two-winged theology', which would form and guide both the theological vision *and* the theological practices of African women theologians (2001a:43). She describes such an African theology as a 'two-winged theology' because, like a bird, it needs two wings (or both women *and* men) to fly (2001a:43; Pui-lan, 2004:20; Pemberton, 2000:107). For Oduyoye, 'two-winged theology' is "the paradigmatic heart of how African women theologians should engage in reflection and

action" in that it incorporates "men as colleagues in a common task to establish a humane Africa" (Pemberton, 2000:98). African women's theology should, moreover, contribute specifically to "the liberation project of African women as a whole" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:3).

African women theologians are, however, not to be grouped with feminist theologians, argues Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (2006:4; cf. Oduyoye, 2001a:15), because 'the feminist cause' is perceived by African women theologians to be "largely Western, white, and middle-class." Race and class, not only gender, are important *foci* of critique for African women theologians (as with their African-American counterparts) (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:4). Yet the description 'African women's theology' is deliberately distinguished from *both* feminist theology *and* (African-American) womanist theology (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:5):

[African women theologians] do not want to be called feminist, because of its seeming neglect of race and class; neither do we want to be called womanist because, as some have argued, the experiences of African-American women are different from those of African women.

African women therefore have particular theological language, methods and theories to contribute to working toward the full humanity of all human beings (Oduyoye, 2001a:45; Phiri & Nadar, 2006:4)), albeit in dialogue both with fellow liberation theologians (including men) (Oduyoye, 2001a:45) and fellow feminist and womanist theologians (as part of "the global sisterhood") (Oduyoye, 2001a:44). The trilogy of race, class, and gender therefore outline a first distinctive feature of African women's theology – namely, the struggle against the so-called 'triple-bind' of race, class, and gender within an African context (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:4). Two major influences in the development of African (women's) theology would therefore be (1) inculturation (which "entails proclaiming the gospel using the languages, worldviews, and thought patterns of African cultures") and (2) liberation (which "refers to Africans' urgent need to strive for economic and political freedom from neo-colonialism") (Pui-lan, 2004:9).[253]

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[253] Kwok Pui-lan (2004:10) points out that in and of itself, feminism is and must – for an African *women's* theology and for Mercy Oduyoye in particular – be "central to the discussion of both inculturation and liberation, not peripheral to it." The patriarchal elements in African culture must be accounted for when speaking about inculturation, and the abject poverty of women must be taken into consideration when speaking about liberation (Pui-lan, 2004:10). There are two important characteristics of this notion of feminism, argues Kwok Pui-lan: (1) Oduyoye's understanding of feminism "is not separatist, as she always tries to involve men as equal partners to build a just and peaceful African society in the midst of interethnic strife and abject poverty" (2004:10); (2) nor is Oduyoye's understanding of feminism limited to sexuality, as she understands feminism "to be more comprehensive and multifaceted, including socioeconomic, religious, and cultural aspects"

A second feature of African women's theology is its accountability to African women (Oduyoye, 2001a:44), insofar as it is a theology written *by* African women in order to articulate the concerns, struggles, and lived experiences *of* African women (Oduyoye, 2001a:47). As such, African women's theologies are defined by "their commitment to 'grassroots' women living in faith communities" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:6). African women theologians are therefore required to become 'bilingual': "speaking the language of the academy and that of their communities, not just linguistically, but culturally and socially" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:6). This involves moving between theory and activism (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:4, 6), without sacrificing "the theoretical upon the altar of activism" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:6).

A third feature of African women's theology is a 'distinct' and 'innovative' methodology, namely "the narrative method" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:7 – 8). "African women," writes Oduyoye (2001b:10), "accept story as a source of theology" (whether their own stories or that of other African women). 'Narrative theology' is found in both oral and written sources, and stories form a (traditional) source of such a theology (Oduyoye, 2001b:11; Grey, 2001:7). Narrative theology is perspectival and dialogical, rather than analytical or apologetic, and reintroduces 'the personal' into academic theology (Oduyoye, 2001b:11). 'Storytelling' is the method employed by narrative theology to "critique oppressive practices in African religio-culture" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:8).[254] Narrative theology, expressed in storytelling, is a culmination of the 'unique gifts' that African women bring to theology (Grey, 2001:7) in that it draws on "oral traditions, myth, folk tale… [and] the creativity of African women novelists" (Grey, 2001:8).[255]

(2004:11). While Kwok Pui-lan employs 'feminism' as a descriptor of Mercy Oduyoye's African women's theology, equating African women's theology with feminist theology is contested, as pointed out by Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (2006:4 – 5) above.

[254] However, Mercy Oduyoye is herself not altogether clear whether narrative theology includes, for her, a critical dimension. She herself regards 'appreciation', rather than 'critique' or 'refutation', to be characteristic of this approach (2001b:11); and yet she remarks that "skills for critical examination" is a core characteristic of African women's theology (2001b:11).

[255] "The stories we tell of our hurts and joys are sacred. Telling them makes us vulnerable, but without this sharing we cannot build community and solidarity. Our stories are precious paths on which we have walked with God, and struggled for a passage to our full humanity. They are events through which we have recieved the blessings of life from the hands of God. The stories we tell are sacred, for they are indications of how we struggled with God" (Oduyoye, 2001b:21).

In short, African women construct theology "at their own pace, from their own place… [in order to portray] their priorities and perspectives" (Oduyoye, 2001b:11). To this end, it has been pointed out African women theologians employ a 'double hermeneutic', namely 'biblical hermeneutics' in dialogue with 'cultural hermeneutics' (Grey, 2001:8; Oduyoye, 2001b:13). It is important to note that for African women's theology "the one is not possible without the other" (Grey, 2001:8); moreover, that it is in the space *between* biblical hermeneutics and cultural hermeneutics that "a very fertile area for imaginative theological reflection" may be found (Oduyoye, 2001b:13). This double focus on context and the bible, or cultural hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics, aids African women's theology in "[distinguishing] the good that is liberating" (Oduyoye, 2001b:11).

It would appear, however, as if 'biblical hermeneutics' is collapsed into 'cultural hermeneutics', for what exactly is meant by 'biblical hermeneutics' is not set out clearly in Mercy Oduyoye's work. *That* the bible is held in high regard by Oduyoye (perhaps as part of her Methodist heritage (Kennedy, 2010:288)), and *that* certain biblical stories and characters (cf. 2002a:185 – 186; 2008) play an important role in her working out of African women's theology, *is* made clear.[256] However, her approach to the bible and to her selected biblical stories and characters appear to be ably articulated by what is described as 'cultural hermeneutics' (Oduyoye, 2001b:11 – 13; Pui-lan, 2004:15 – 19). Not biblical hermeneutics by itself, therefore, but the bible interpreted or examined by way of cultural hermeneutics appears to be characteristic of Oduyoye's hermeneutical approach (cf. Pui-lan, 2004:18). Indeed, "there is an overlap of cultural and biblical hermeneutics as the bible is most frequently read from the standpoint of African culture" (Oduyoye, 2001b:19). Mercy Oduyoye explains that "[s]kills for the interpretation of the bible and culture from their own location have become a major challenge for women theologians especially as the bible has become part of the African context" (2001b:11). As she herself admits, African women theologians "come to the Bible with the same cautious approach we have to culture" (2001b:12) and use "culture as a tool with which to understand and interpret one's reality" as well as "the Bible" (2001b:12).

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[256] For instance, she argues that "[t]he Bible is the cornerstone of African theology" and, indeed, "of all theology", but that this does not mean that the bible is the *only* important source for theological reflection (Oduyoye, 1986a:60 – 61). In her words, "a cornerstone is not the whole edifice" (1986a:61). A second important source for theological reflection in Africa is history – and in particular (1) Christian history (which she understands as both dogmatic theology and pastoral theology) and (2) African history (which forms the context in which African theology is practiced) (1986a:51 – 52).

Cultural hermeneutics *is*, however, clearly worked out in Oduyoye's work, and forms "an important tool that African women theologians have developed to analyse their culture, religion, and the Christian heritage", writes Kwok Pui-lan (2004:15). This includes "[viewing] the Bible through African eyes [in order] to distinguish and extract from it what is liberating" (Oduyoye, 2001b:11). 'Culture'[257] is taken as a 'principle' or 'tool' for hermeneutics, wherein the understanding and interpretation of African realities and lived experience – which includes the Bible – enables African women theologians "to take one's experience seriously and to connect it with other realities" (Oduyoye, 2001b:12). African women's theology is multidimensional because "African women's cultural traditions are multilayered" (Pui-lan, 2004:15) and because there are 'multiple cultures' in Africa (Oduyoye, 2001b:12; Pui-lan, 2004:13).

However, some characteristics of the cultural hermeneutic of African women's theology may be identified. Firstly, cultural hermeneutics "seeks a critique from within, and not an imposition from without" (Oduyoye, 2001b:12 – 13). Cultural hermeneutics must therefore be specific and particular, because contexts are specific and experiences are particular (2001b:13). Secondly, such a cultural hermeneutic combines a hermeneutic of suspicion ("which entails challenging inhuman and domesticating customs and traditions while recovering their historical memory" (Pui-lan, 2004:15 – 16)) and a hermeneutic of commitment ("as African women must take up the responsibility to change and transform those oppressive customs in order to bring about a fullness of life" (Pui-lan, 2004:16)) (Oduyoye, 2001b:13). Cultural hermeneutics needs both a moment of critique as well as a moment of creativity if it is to work toward 'wholeness' and 'enhancement of life' (Oduyoye, 2001b:14). Thirdly, an important aspect of such a cultural hermeneutic is a hermeneutic of liberation (Oduyoye, 2001b:12; Phiri & Nadar, 2006:3), which is employed by African women in order "to identify and to promote life-affirming aspects in their culture" (Pui-lan, 2004:15). Together, these features – specificity and particularity, critique and commitment, and liberation – describe the cultural hermeneutics of African women's theology.

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[257] "Culture is a broad concept," writes Mercy Oduyoye (2001b:12), "which always needs fine tuning, but in the African women's language, the broad description used for it is 'What human beings have made from nature, and because of nature and community.' All that is not nature has been 'cultivated', worked upon, devised, dreamed up, and given shape and meaning by the human mind and hands." She employs the verbal form, 'culturing', to refer to "continuous activity of the human community" (Oduyoye, 2001b:12).

African women's theology, for Mercy Oduyoye, is and must be contextual or Third World theology, which is 'two-winged' in its involvement of both women *and* men, and which wants to resist all forms of oppression and promote that which "sustains and enhances life" (Oduyoye, 2001b:13). African women's theology is neither feminist theology nor womanist theology, but a theology of liberation by and for women in Africa (Kennedy, 2010:288 – 289). Moreover, cultural hermeneutics occupies a central position in Mercy Oduyoye's African women's theology (Pui-lan, 2004:7). In short, "African women's theology remains a story that is told, a song that is sung and a prayer that is uttered in response to experience and expectation" (2001b:22). It is within such an understanding of 'African women's theology' that the nature and function of Christian doctrine can be situated.

3.3.3   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

It should be noted from the outset that Oduyoye is, like the liberation movements and theologies that she describes, highly critical of what she regards as "traditional dogmatic and systematic theology" (1986a:2 – 3; 2002c:162). She associates "doctrinal positions and phrases" with "[u]nexamined religion", and in particular with "a selective and uncritical approach to Scripture" (2002b:53). Liberation theologians would not "[tell] people what questions to ask and then [furnish] them with the answers", as presumably dogmatic or systematic theology does, but would "listen to the questions people were asking and then seek the answers" (1986a:3). Therefore she also does not "set out to give an account of systematic theology in Africa" (1986a:vii) nor "to produce a systematic theology in the manner that is expected at Western universities" (Hennelly, 1995:181), but describes her work as 'unsystematic' in its attempt to account for the articulation of faith in the light of theological issues in Africa (1986a:vii). Her concern is for "making traditional Christian dogmas meaningful" so that 'the symbols of the faith' become more than 'mere talismans' and 'hollow incantations' (1986a:9). Hence she does not pay much attention to the nature and function of Christian *doctrine* as such.

However, Oduyoye still attempts to account for her insights into 'traditional doctrines' (including "creation, covenant, salvation, the Godhead, and doctrines related to Christian anthropology") throughout her work, even though she does so not by way of engaging

technical theological debates on these doctrines[258] but from her experience as an African woman theologian (1986a:11).[259] The identification of three 'spaces' (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:3) that Mercy Oduyoye's African women's theology occupies could therefore be indicative of Oduyoye's thinking on the nature and function of Christian doctrine. Mercy Oduyoye's African women's theology concerns the functional, liberative, and imaginative, which, in turn, play formative, transformative, and performative roles in the shaping of Christian doctrine and Christian believers.

Firstly, African women's theology is functional (Oduyoye, 2001a:40), in that it bridges "the gap between experience and formal dogmatic statements" by beginning "from the realities that people live" (2001a:44). A functional theology is a theology which is 'authentic' and 'relevant' by taking the particular context in which it is practiced seriously (Oduyoye, 1986a:52). Such a functional theology occupies a contextual space (Oduyoye, 2002c:151), and would therefore "produce symbols and language that are… inclusive of Africa's reality", which Oduyoye regards as being "different from traditional dogmatics and from the clusters of theological themes that are offered as well-reasoned systems of thought" (1986a:54 – 55). Her plea, also in a chapter entitled "Conventional Dogmatics on African soil" (1986a:56 – 66), is for a theology – and Christian doctrines – that speaks to African realities. Christian doctrines should express the Christian faith meaningfully *within* the lived experiences of African people (and women, in particular) (cf. Oduyoye, 1986a:138). Christian doctrine is *formed* by these experiences and realities, but may also play a *formative* role in translating doctrinal statements meaningfully within a given context.[260] Christian doctrine must therefore

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[258] She does, however, assure the reader that she is "aware of the critical nature of the battle for orthodoxy" from her reading of dogmatics, and that she wants to contribute in some way to "the struggle to shape orthodoxy, biblical and historical" because of the importance of 'theological symbols' in Africa (Oduyoye, 2002b:x).

[259] Indeed, her background is in 'dogmatic theology' ("which gave her the tools necessary to interpret the gospel within the African context in ways that meet the spiritual needs of the continent in the postcolonial era") (Amoah, 2006:xxii) and she also taught Christian doctrine, along with Church history, for a number of years as "the first woman lecturer in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Ibadan" (Pemberton, 2000:94).

[260] Stated somewhat differently, doctrines "must be studied, understood, and lived" by being "translated into human terms and applied to human relationships" (Oduyoye, 1986a:139), and yet "Christian doctrines have relevance not only on the horizontal plane" (meaning with regards to human relationships and community) but also in "our vertical relationship to [God] in the light of these doctrines" (Oduyoye, 1986a:143).

be contextual, authentic, and relevant, but must also be able to 'translate' or 'bridge' doctrines and lived experience.[261] Such Christian doctrines are, in short, functional.

Secondly, African women's theology is liberative (Oduyoye, 2001a:43; 2001b:20) and liberating (Oduyoye, 2001b:23) in a twofold sense. Firstly, such a theology is *African* theology in that it is concerned with liberation from the racism against and the economic exploitation of African people (Oduyoye, 2001a:50; Pemberton, 2000:90; Kennedy, 2010:284). Secondly, such a theology is *women's* theology in that it is concerned with the sexism against and the patriarchal exploitation of African women (Oduyoye, 2002b:69 – 73; Pemberton, 2000:90; Kennedy, 2010:284). African women's theology is therefore "African Christian Theology in the women-centered key" (Oduyoye, 2001b:10). Yet any theology which claims to be liberating for *Africa* "must first pass the test" of being liberating for *African women* (1989:441, 449). Christian theologies that claim to be liberative should therefore be liberating in this twofold sense. Such a liberative theology is 'praxis-oriented' in its (1) resistance to oppression and (2) solidarity with the oppressed (Pemberton, 2010:90). Christian doctrines that are shaped by such a liberative theology are *transformative,* in that it works for "the liberation from the evil that is oppressive and domesticating and which puts limitations where none is necessary" (Oduyoye, 2001b:20) and thereby "energise[s] and transform[s] horizons" (Pemberton, 2000:102). Such Christian doctrines cannot be inflexible (2002b:50), passive, fixed or set (which is "a style of being" that Oduyoye associates with "death-dealing patriarchy" (1995:16)) – but would be dynamic, open, and flexible (Oduyoye, 1995:16; Oduyoye, 2001b:22), as a "search for the truth about human life and how to live it" (Oduyoye, 1995:5).[262] Christian doctrines should, in short, be liberative.

Thirdly, African women's theology is imaginative (Oduyoye, 2001b:13), in that it contributes 'alternative visions' and 'narratives' and 'practices' to theological reflection in Africa and for Africa (Pemberton, 2000:91). This includes the 'gigantic' and 'exciting', but 'delicate' task of "evolving new language, positive myths, and dynamic icons" (Oduyoye, 2002a:183). As such,

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[261] In Mercy Oduyoye's words (2001b:18): "African women's theology does not end in documents, for the divorce of theology and ethics does not make for commitment and responsible living. This makes women seek a theology characterized by a struggle to make religion relevant to the challenges of contemporary Africa."

[262] It is worth quoting Oduyoye at length in this regard (1995:5): "Women want to join in the search for the truth about human life and how to live it; we want to decide for ourselves, for our day and situation, what constitutes a liberating and a liberative life." Elsewhere she writes (2001b:20) that embarking on a liberative theology involves "going at our own pace, setting our priorities and responding to our own contexts."

creative writings by African women (Oduyoye, 2001b:14) and imaginative presentations of African realities by African women (Oduyoye, 2002b:74) play a very important role in African women's theology. Mercy Oduyoye describes this as "the mythopoetic radix" of her work, whereby she means that African women's theology creates 'new myths' and 'new visions' of 'the new woman' in 'the new Africa' (2002b:74; 1995:11). As such, African women's theology is "coded" in 'myths' (cf. 1995:19 – 35), 'folktales' (cf. 1995:36 – 54), 'proverbs' (cf. 1995:55 – 76), 'maxims' (2001b:18) and 'dreams'[263] (1995:15; 2002b:105). Christian doctrines that are shaped by such an imaginative theology are *performative,* in that these come to expression in social relations (Oduyoye, 1995:19), individual self-perception (Oduyoye, 1995:20), and entire communities (Oduyoye, 1995:20). Christian doctrine is visionary, poetic, creative, and practical – or, in short, imaginative.

Mercy Oduyoye's African women's theology is embedded not in any one, esoteric, all-inclusive study which bears "no direct relationship to its geographical or human source" (Oduyoye, 1986a:1), but in relationships (as a "theology of relations"), interrelationships and mutuality (Oduyoye, 2001a:17). This emphasis on relationality, which Oduyoye finds lacking in "traditional Western theology", imbues "classical 'orthodox' systematic theology… [with] new colours and more subtle hues" (2001a:46). The nature and function of Christian doctrine that is embedded in contextual, authentic, relevant, dynamic, open, flexible, visionary, poetic, creative, and practical theology culminates in the formative, transformative, and performative roles that these doctrines play. The nature and function of Christian doctrine that is formed, transformed, and performed by African women's theology can therefore be described as functional, liberative, and imaginative. Such spaces as these, which reflect the concerns and priorities of African women's theology, not only derivatively describe the nature and function of Christian doctrine in Mercy Oduyoye theological thought, but also reflect the methodological strategies that she employs throughout her theological writings.

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[263] Mercy Oduyoye (1995:15) describes women's dreams as "our bringing into being new arrangements of reality." What is the content of such dreams, one may wonder? "We dream," she writes (1995:15 – 16), "of what we want to be and we identify who is going to create the environment in which we may be ourselves. We dream about the future relationships of men and women in Africa. We begin to design the future home of humanity and to weave new myths from our real lives. Homes become living structures, with movable walls, not places where we women are placed but a space in which to be human. Our dreams come into being in the Christian ambiance of life in Africa… Our dreams become a new cloth with an African pattern that fits into the global women's *asaasaa* [quilt-work or patchwork cloth]."

3.3.4   Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

Mercy Oduyoye has been praised for the methodologies that she has created and developed (Amoah, 2006:xxii) − work that has been continued by the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians, who have "often charted innovative methodologies that fall outside the ambit of traditional Western methodologies" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:7). In her own words, African women theologians "are open to share our experiences, to learn to deal with them, and to teach our strategies to other" (2002a:187). Moreover, Oduyoye (1986a:61) points to the importance of the 'hermeneutical circle' (see, judge, act) in her work. Indeed, her theology merges 'reflection' and 'life' (2001a:18): "it is to think about one's situation, analyse it and act to affirm or transform one's context." Arguably three methodological strategies may therefore be discerned in African women's theology, in what could be called an experiential strategy (see), an exegetical strategy (judge), and a pedagogical strategy (act).

An experiential strategy, firstly, is evident in her *Daughters of Anowa* (1995), wherein she "seek[s] to understand what 'the daughters of Anowa' [or African women] are experiencing today" (1995:9; 2002b:72). African women's experiences and contexts play an important role in orientating and shaping African women's theologies (2001b:9, 12; 2001a:47). Stories form a vital part of such theological reflection, for these recount exactly the experiences of African women (2001b:10). African women theologians prioritise "African women's own understanding" of theological matters and an own response to theological questions (2001b:15), seeing as "[t]heology is an expression of faith in response to experience" (2001b:22). As such, an experiential strategy "[studies] the socio-economic, political and religio-cultural realities of [African women's] context seeking specifically to understand the woman's experiences of God" (2001a:45). This includes studying the Bible "with our own life experiences as the starting point", for the Bible itself "gathers together theologies made up of experiences of individuals and whole communities over hundreds of years" (Oduyoye, 2002a:173). *Awareness of, or seeing,* the realities and contexts whereby African women do theology in the midst of their lived experiences is a key strand in Mercy Oduyoye's experiential strategy.

An exegetical strategy, secondly, is evident in her interpretation of culture and the bible, particularly in *Hearing and Knowing* (1986a) and *Beads and Strands* (2002b). Distinguishing

'the good' (namely, liberation from oppression) is one of the key principles of African women theologians' exegetical work (Oduyoye, 2001b:20). Developing own readings and interpretations of the bible is particularly important in such exegetical work (Oduyoye, 2001b:18). On the one hand, African women theologians have a responsibility to "read the Bible with ordinary readers" or "nonacademic women interpreters" (Pui-lan, 2004:19). On the other hand, African women theologians "must exercise caution when approaching the Bible, because not everything said in the Bible is good news for women" (Pui-lan, 2004:18). However, African women theologians interpret or read not only (biblical, written, literary) texts, but simultaneously engage in a "re-reading our world, the texts that history has set before and around us" (Oduyoye, 2001b:20 – 21). Culture, and in particular 'folk oral tradition', is therefore also attended to in Oduyoye's exegetical work, by way of her "detailed exegesis of the folktalk among the masses" (Pui-lan, 2004:16).[264] Culture, as expressed in folktalk, serves as "[a] mirror on life", "an authoritative source for decision-making", "a regulatory and preservatory function for what is dear to people", "a history of thought", and "a philosophy of life" (Oduyoye, 1995:20 – 21), and therefore cannot but be an exegetical focus for African women theologians. In her exegeses of both the bible and of culture, Oduyoye highlights the important role that language plays to shape social relations, communities, and worlds of meaning (1995:14; 2001a:49; cf. also Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 2001:17). She therefore urges that 'self-affirming language' be developed that may "nourish our humanity" (2002a:183). *Considering, discerning, or judging* 'the good' in the bible and in culture is a key strand in Mercy Oduyoye's exegetical strategy.

A pedagogical strategy, thirdly, is evident in her interpretation of doctrines and concern for theological education, particularly in *Introducing African Women's Theology* (2001b). African women theologians work toward creating "strategies for transforming attitudes, beliefs and practices" and "awareness of life experiences and their implications" (2001b:12). Mercy Oduyoye thereby not only points to the importance of communicating "African women's own understanding" (2001b:15), but also of 'discovering' and 'cultivating' "African women doing theology" (which has been a concern for Mercy Oduyoye in particular, and which would lead to the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians)

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[264] Kwok Pui-lan (1995:16 – 17) outlines three hermeneutical principles that shape Oduyoye's exegesis of folktalk (which includes'folktales' and 'myths' (Oduyoye, 1995:19)) and proverbs (which is interpreted in a separate category from 'folktalk' (Oduyoye, 1995:19). These principles may also be stated as three questions: (1) How do folktalk and proverbs shape women's lives? (2) For whose benefit is folktalk and proverbs used? (3) Has it become necessary to discard or recreate some of the folktalk and proverbs?

(2001b:19). Although African women's theology is very young as *written* theology – beginning from the 1970s (2001b:22) – Oduyoye emphasises that "[w]omen have always been theologian (sic)" (2001a:47).[265] African women's theology is a *taught* theology, which does not mean that it is necessarily *formally* taught or taught by way of *written* work. This is also reflected in Oduyoye's interest in African women who study theology, both for ordination as ministers in a church *and* for making a career out of 'doing theology' (2001a:34). By way of a sample survey that she conducted, which is published in an article entitled "Theological Education for Women in Africa:1978 – 1996", Oduyoye comes to the conclusion that "women are making their mark in theological education" (1997:65). Just as the theological heritage of Mercy Oduyoye's ancestors[266] have formed and taught her to be "both authentically African and authentically Christian" (2005:xx), so too Oduyoye herself has been "a great teacher, having trained and mentored several scholars in and outside the African continent" (Amoah, 2006:xvii; cf. also Pemberton, 2000:94 – 95). *Communicating, teaching, or enacting* the theology worked out by African women is a key strand in Mercy Oduyoye's pedagogical strategy.

Mercy Oduyoye arguably employs the interrelated methodological strategies outlined as experiential (*seeing*), exegetical (*judging*), and pedagogical (*acting*) in interpreting Christian theology and Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine, which has to do with the functional, liberative, and imaginative aspects of Christian theology, forms, transforms and performs Oduyoye's understanding of salvation as wholeness.

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[265] "African Christian women have prayed and sung their theology from the days of my great grandmother", writes Oduyoye (2001a:47). "They have retold whole chapters of the Bible in African poetic forms to apply to specific situations and have brought up their children in the fear and love of God. They have inspired their sons and grandsons to become catachists and pastors. Their granddaughters and great-granddaughters are being ordained to the Eucharistic ministry, and they are writing theology inspired by the stories that grandma told, the songs she sang and the morning prayers Mama conducted, as by the incessant, counselling based on biblical events and quotations" (2001a:47).

[266] Mercy Oduyoye has a high regard for the role of ancestors in the life of Africans. She argues that they are important because they enable Africans "to remember their source and history" (1986b:242). Indeed, "[t]o deny history is to deny one's roots and source of self-identity. It is to deny also the fact that we embody in ourselves both the past and the future. Ancestral cults serve the purpose of keeping people from becoming rootless and purposeless, blown about by every fickle fashion and ideology. The ancestral cults have been the custodians of the African spirit, personality, and vivid sense of community" (1986b:242).

3.3.5 Salvation as wholeness

Soteriology plays a pivotal role in what Mercy Oduyoye describes as 'the African theological task' (1986b:245) because "the theme of salvation features… prominently in African religion" (1986b:245). She argues that "for theology to be relevant to African culture it has to speak of salvation" (1986b:246), and therefore soteriology plays a pivotal role in "the quest for a theology appropriate to the African context" (Brand, 2002:25, 28). Salvation does not only have to do with "the heart of *African* theology" (Brand, 2002:28; my emphasis – NM), but also best articulates the concerns of African *women's* theology because African women, unlike African men, are very much aware that their lives "are directed by living that others might more fully alive (sic)" (Oduyoye, 2001a:52) and that "their well-being as persons is treated as secondary, if it is considered at all" (Oduyoye, 1989:447).

Therefore Mercy Oduyoye employs the exodus event as a metaphor for African soteriology, because it is the story of African Christians (2002b:5) and because it also reflects her own specific experiences as an African woman (2002b:3). In other words, the exodus becomes paradigmatic for the experience of liberation *in* Africa, argues Oduyoye (2002b:4), and therefore she reinterprets (2002b:5 – 8) and decodes (2002b:8 – 10) the exodus story *for* Africa. The exodus "does not belong to only one nation or people called Israel", but has a broader significance (Oduyoye, 2002b:20). According to Oduyoye, the exodus event is "a gift to the oppressed" because it reassures and empowers oppressed peoples (2002b:10), and because it reveals God as the liberating God (2002b:3). In Oduyoye's employment of the exodus as soteriological paradigm, two important features emerge that describe her understanding of redemption or salvation.

A first important feature of Oduyoye's soteriology is her interpretation of that which human beings are redeemed *from.* She is critical of a spiritualised interpretation of the exodus events, wherein redemption is limited to "redemption from sin" and from "personal sinfulness" – at the expense of ignoring "the cry of the oppressed through the ages" (2002b:4). For her, liberation has to do with multiple struggles – spiritual and material (2002b:19), but also political struggles in Africa, against colonialism and oppressive systems (2002b:4 – 5). These various struggles "cannot be divorced" from one another (2002b:19). Indeed, "[t]he exodus is not so much personal as it is political" and therefore God's salvation is not only redemption

on a personal salvation, but a 'total salvation' (2002b:9, 22). Liberation herein becomes "a salvific act" (2002b:22). It is that which oppresses and alienates that "should make us seekers after salvation", argues Oduyoye (2002b:19), for salvation "touches human needs at all levels" – which includes the need felt by Africans for salvation (2002b:19). Salvation in Africa must, argues Oduyoye (1986a:10), account for African realities and challenges; and therefore (Oduyoye, 1986b:246) African women's

salvation theology has to feature the questions of racism and liberation from material need. It has to emphasize the need for communal decisions as against totalitarianism. Above all, salvation is to be seen as salvation from evil, both individual and structural.

Evil, or the power of evil, is taken very seriously by African theology, including African women's theology. Mercy Oduyoye notes that "Africa has a realistic attitude toward the power of evil", whereby she means the reality of 'collective evil' that takes shape in "racism and other kinds of exploitation" (1986b:244). More specifically, "[n]egation of community and attacks on life are seen as evil" (2001b:32). That which threatens human life and human survival is regarded as both evil (which is "to be abhorred and exorcised") *and* sinful ("because they undermine the worthiness of the Source Being, the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human being") (2001b:32). Such evil is manifested "in witchcraft, the aberrations of life and attacks on what makes for well-being" (2001b:32). Salvation therefore includes 'deliverance' from 'Satanic bondage' and 'demonic powers' (2002c:157 – 158).

However, Oduyoye does not only consider that which human beings are redeemed *from,* but also that which human beings are redeemed *for.* A second important feature of Oduyoye's soteriology is her concern for the well-being and human dignity of all people (which she describes as 'humanisation') (2002b:5). The liberating God is also the caring God (2002b:3, 14) who "restore[s] life where death threatens to take over" (2002b:46) and who "seek[s] the well-being of the other" (2002b:46). It is this caring God "whose womb becomes agitated at the sight of suffering and meanness" (2002b:55) and who, as "the source of all life" (2001b:33), cares for all of life. African women theologians, as "true life-givers" in their own way (2001b:37), have the "dignity of human beings" as well as "the sacredness of life" in view as an important horizon for their theology (and, arguably, also their soteriology) (Oduyoye, 2001b:29). For women theologians who participate through 'self-giving care' in the struggles of all who experience suffering and oppression, "hope is the main resource for a

186

woman's struggle" (2001b:37). Indeed, "[t]heology for African women… [is] a statement of faith enabling them to live their tomorrow today, as they await new life" (Oduyoye, 2001b:33). *An eschatological logic of hope* articulates, in other words, that which human beings are redeemed *for*. Eschatological hope is, in short, 'a midwife of new beginnings' (Moyo, 2006:250 – 253). This hope is a hope for 'new life', for 'transformation', and for 'a better world' (2001b:37), because "African women's theology is firmly lodged in the God of life, whose end is to defeat death and enthrone life forever" (2001b:50). This Mercy Oduyoye describes as being 'at home with the future' (2002a:186).[267]

Gerrit Brand notes that "salvation is conceived in *holistic* terms" by African theologians (2002:109; cf. Oduyoye, 2001b:25). 'Wholeness of life' means "that different areas of life, like the religious and the secular, or the spiritual and the material, can never be compartmentalised and understood in isolation from one another" (Brand, 2002:103). Salvation, in African theology, is "by its nature" understood as 'wholeness' (Brand, 2002:104). Evil, which is construed as the opposite of salvation, is "constituted by whatever detracts from such wholeness" (Brand, 2002:104). Brand points out that "[t]his holistic account of the human good is one of the most distinctive features of African soteriologies" (2002:104). This 'good', "toward which salvation aims", involves the state of 'human persons', 'human society', 'human culture', as well as 'the non-human world' (Brand, 2002:104). Moreover, Brand (2002:106) traces one important consequence of a holistic understanding of salvation, namely that "salvation acquires a 'gradualist' quality'" – for therein "[o]ne is not 'saved' or 'unsaved'", but "participates in salvation to a greater or lesser degree." It is only in the *eschaton* that 'wholeness of life' will be fully realised (Brand, 2002:106).

Wholeness is also a key soteriological theme in Mercy Oduyoye's work. As such, she points out the importance of 'wholeness of the person' (by which there is no "separation between the soul and the body in a person", and which is a core affirmation of "African medicine and psychiatry") as well as 'a wholesome life' (which does not only involve wholeness of a

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[267] African women "live as if all the good we hope for is in fact already in our hands, giving us the courage to be what we hope to be… This dramatization of Christian hope in a new myth enables us women of Africa to live our future today. Our future as women is in living our true humanity in a world that we have helped to shape, and in which even now we have begun to live and to enjoy, conscious of our situation and seeking conscientiously to change structures and attitudes. Even the prospect of being a part of this calls for celebrating" (Oduyoye, 2002a:186).

person, but also requires being "fully integrated into the community") (1986b:242 – 243). As Mercy Oduyoye points out (2002b:23), "God is concerned for the wholeness of our be-ing and for our relationship to God and to other human beings." Her theology "has the whole of life for a context" and is oriented towards 'living life as a whole' (2001b:23). God is "the Source of Life" (Oduyoye, 1986b:247) and the 'life-force' in us (Pemberton, 2000:94). As such, "the search after the life-force is itself a groping for a closer and more personal relationship with Being itself" (Oduyoye, 1986b:247).

It is through the 'pain of God', the vulnerability of God, and the suffering of God that "Being [is called] into being" (creation) and that God "pities the human condition and sends help" (redemption) (Oduyoye, 2002b:12 – 13). God's "redemptive powers flow out of this suffering love", which is embodied in Christ (Oduyoye, 2002b:13), and which is embodied in the self-sacrifice of African women (Oduyoye, 2001a:52). These 'redemptive efforts' by women (2002b:15) – wherein "[w]omen 'abandon' themselves to 'other-directed' services" in "promoting the well-being of all around them" (2001a:52) – reflect the caring and compassionate God who redeems (2002b:14 – 15). Mercy Oduyoye makes no attempt to systematically work out what justification and sanctification means within her soteriology, but in her interpretation of liberation arguably provides some guidelines as to how justification and sanctification could be understood within her work. Justification and sanctification arguably form two distinct but related soteriological loci in her work.

Firstly, God gives that which is good to human beings (2002b:15), and 'saves us from ourselves' – even if it means calling us back to God, searching for us, and suffering until the community is healed or becomes complete (2002b:16). It is "*Agyenkwa,* the one who rescues, who holds your life in safety" that takes us "out of a life-denying situation and places you in a life-affirming one" (2002b:18). Salvation therefore involves rescue (from dehumanising circumstances) as well as restoration (in that your life is given 'back to you' in "all its wholeness and fullness") (2002b:18). This salvation "is absolutely undeserved", writes Oduyoye (2002b:23): "God heard our cry, saw our discomfiture, saw us distraught under our oppressors, and liberated us." In short, God accomplishes "our salvation in Christ" (2002b:16). Justification therefore forms a first soteriological locus in Oduyoye's work, in that "salvation is seen as coming only from God" (2002b:25; footnote 2).

Stated somewhat differently, salvation includes the notions of a God that 'rescues', 'gives safety', and 'saves' (Oduyoye, 2002b:23). 'Redemption' is an apt collective description for these, adds Oduyoye (2002b:22), for this "is as much an African concept as it is a Jewish one."[268] However, Mercy Oduyoye also explains what salvation does *not* entail. Salvation is not exclusively or merely or only "giving satisfaction… to the injured honour of God" for such a view "leave[s] the sinner and the slave as spectators" to God's work of salvation (2002b:22). Nor is salvation to be equated with 'buying back', for such "marketplace terminology associated with redemption is not to be allowed to overshadow God's action of taking off our chains so that we may be free to be fully human" (2002b:22). Salvation or redemption involves 'being snatched away by God', being 'separated from oppressive environments, which involves the 'breaking off' (of "unjust relationships") and 'tearing down' (of "dehumanising structures") initiatives of God (2002b:22). Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God (which is "the central focus of traditional Western soteriology") is "but one aspect of salvation" in African theology (Brand, 2002:103).

Secondly, salvation or redemption also raises the question "What shall we do to be saved?" (Oduyoye, 2002b:16). Our salvation may be undeserved, but our liberation "is for a purpose" – namely, "to make us more human" (2002b:23). This memory – of being saved, redeemed, liberated – "ought to make us obey injunctions laid upon us" (2002b:23), for "[a] theology divorced from ethical demands would have little relevance in Africa" (2002b:16), and therefore she also takes seriously participatory relationships that "make for a healthy community" (2002b:15). Indeed, a redeemed life is 'life-in-community' (Oduyoye, 1986b:242) which, for her (2002b:45), is 'centred in God'. It would be important, in this regard, to keep in mind "Oduyoye's roots in the Methodist tradition with its connection with the Wesleyan holiness movement so influential in nineteenth century Ghana", for it is through "[t]his form of Methodism" that the "vision of community and individual wholeness through the salvific message of Christ" would be advocated (Pemberton, 2000:101). Hence sanctification forms a second soteriological locus in Oduyoye's theological work.

Soteriology has led Mercy Oduyoye to the development of a Christology (1986b:246), which occupies a central place in her theological thought. The link between soteriology and

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[268] She explains that 'redeeming' is also experienced by African Christians by way of "the custom of shaving off the hair of the widow and children at the death of husband and father" (2002b:21). This hair can be' bought back' for a sum of money, for those who wish to keep their hair and not have it shaven off (2002b:22).

Christology lies, for her (2002b:21), in Christ's role as "God's own 'chosen instrument for our salvation'." She notes that "[t]he Christ in the popular theology of Africa is above all the one who saves" – and yet it is not altogether clear what this means or implies (2002b:18). She herself interprets "[t]he salvation that Christ brought" as "[uniting] us all in himself" and to God (2002b:20). Reconciliation "to and in God", as a Christological interpretation of salvation, is theologically significant and important in and for African theology, notes Oduyoye (2002b:21). Christ "inaugurated the presence of the Kingdom of God" wherein all people are reconciled to God and to one another (2002b:24). The dictum 'Jesus saves' points, for her (2002b:25), to "the one through whom God demonstrated his sovereignty over all our experiences, including death." God does not save Jesus from (the experience of) *dying*, but from *death itself* – only "after he had been declared dead, finished, his efforts come to nothing" (2002b:25). Moreover, it is Jesus' *death* itself which "was transformed into a new quality of life" – namely, "a life lived perpetually in the presence of God" (2002b:25). This kind of life is theologically expressed, by Oduyoye (2001b:34), as 'fullness of life':

Wholeness is used here to mean all that makes for fullness of life, and makes people celebrate life. Well-being – *alafia* – for most of Africa implies the possession of the powers, graces or attributes that call for the celebration of life… Africans consider human beings as enjoying fullness of life when they have good health and the power to procreate… Fullness of life is defined as a state of prosperity, victory over evil and death-dealing forces. Rains and harvest, harmony with nature, all call for thanksgiving and celebration. When such a state prevails, life is whole and the whole creation enjoys *alafia*.

Mercy Oduyoye's interpretation of salvation does not, therefore, set up God's power over and against human flourishing. God's power, she writes (2002b:8 – 9) is "the power to save" and "create[s] space in which people could *grow*" (my emphasis – NM). It is exactly herein – namely, in "the God who delivers" – that "[t]he meaning of life and of the world, for the community as well as for the individual" (2002b:4) is to be found. Negatively stated, this means that "[a]ll limitations to the fullness of life… ought to be completely *uprooted*" (Oduyoye, 2002b:68 – 69; my emphasis – NM). Positively stated, God's salvation provides "an atmosphere within which the fullness of humanity can *flower*" (Oduyoye, 2002b:9; my emphasis – NM). With such an understanding of 'salvation as wholeness' it may be possible for 'Africa to heal itself' (Pemberton, 2000:102 – 103). Herein lies 'the good news to Africa', argues Oduyoye (2002b:25):

that people and communities have to be willing to die to all that dehumanises on both personal and corporate levels… [Indeed,] people who are saved by God have the Kingdom of God as their priority; this is the purpose for which Jesus lived and died. Liberated from the principalities and powers of this realm, we continue to work and live before God. That is salvation.

3.3.6   Healed human beings?

Mercy Oduyoye is deeply concerned for and committed to "the wholeness of life for all African women" (Amoah, 2006:xvii). Her theological vision for "a humane Africa" has led to her exploration of issues that pertain to "human well-being in Africa" (Pemberton, 2000:98). This 'call to life' ("out of the economic, military and civil dis-ease of Africa" and "from all that would deal death to Africa and her women") plays a pivotal role in Oduyoye's commitment to the health and healing of human beings (Pemberton, 2000:101). Indeed, for her, 'health' and 'healing' is inseparable from 'human well-being' (Oduyoye, 2002b:21) and 'wholeness' (Oduyoye, 2002c:162).

Moreover, African women theologians are concerned with the issues that African women struggle with daily ("such as HIV/Aids, poverty, and domestic violence") (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:6). These issues are related to health, and particularly the ways in which religion either enhances or denies health (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:9). 'Well-being constitutes health', in that "health involves completeness in all aspects of life" (Akoto, 2006:99). Health is therefore understood, within African women's theology, in a 'broad context' − namely as "encompassing the physical, emotional, psychological and social domains" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:9). Health is however, above all, 'relational', and therefore "[b]roken relations are never allowed to go unhealed" (Oduyoye, 1986b:244). For Mercy Oduyoye (1993:118)

[h]ealthy living includes not only the absence of disease but the presence of good relations with all as well as positive and abundant living that is seen in having visible well-being, symbolised by bodily strength, wealth and people; especially children and by being honoured by one's fellow citizens. This visible wellbeing (sic) is seen as evidence of being at peace with the spirit world, for that world too is an integral part of our reality.

Healing, then, "is to ensure that every member of our society is given the space to flourish" (Dube, 2015:11). Oppression is that which 'denies health', whereas religion is "replete with resources that [can] bring healing to women and the African community" (Phiri & Nadar,

2006:9). African women are thereby called upon to become 'health care providers' for themselves, their families, and their communities (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:9; cf. Akintunde, 2006) through "the instrument of care-giving" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:12; Akintunde, 2006:157). As such, Mercy Oduyoye grounds the concern for the health and healing of human beings (and African women in particular) in what she calls "a spirituality of care" (2002b:53). Such a spirituality involves "mutual caring and sharing and learning together" (2002b:53) which may be 'affirming' and 'nurturing' to those who need it most – such as the 'homeless', the 'landless', and the 'nameless' (2002b:54).

Mercy Oduyoye's vision of the care for human beings is perhaps best expressed in her theological exploration of 'mothering' and 'motherhood'.[269] For Oduyoye – who is herself childless (Njoroge, 2006; Oduyoye, 1999) – motherhood is a "societal blessing which women… bring to their societies" (Pemberton, 2000:99).[270] Mothering entails the enhancement of life (Pemberton, 2000:99) and the 'religious duty' that speaks to the actions required – 'nurture' and 'care' – for the full humanity of all (Oduyoye, 2002b:57). This does not only pertain to individual persons who happen to become mothers, but is the 'sacred duty' of "socio-political and economic system[s]" (2002b:57, 62). Mothering embodies, for Oduyoye (2002b:24), "a style of life that puts others first [and thereby] saves others." This also involves "refusing to stand by while others are being hurt, exploited, cheated, or left to die" (2002b:24). African women therefore "carry on a mothering agenda" and see themselves as "the custodians of life" (2001b:24). The womb, in particular, becomes the site of care in Mercy Oduyoye's metaphor of mothering (2002b:50), for it is this womb that "becomes agitated at the sight of suffering and injustice" (2002b:50). Such "[a]n agitated womb should

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[269] Mercy Oduyoye distinguishes between motherhood (which she regards as the biological act of procreating and raising children) and mothering (which she regards as the act of caring for human beings) (2002b:57 – 58). Motherhood is used so as to include the notion of mothering, but mothering does not necessarily presuppose motherhood (Oduyoye, 2002b:57 – 58). She admits herein that "[m]othering, rather than parenting, has been our norm", and that mothering has at times become either 'smothering' or "prevented men from seeing our real hurt" (2002b:107). Both of these "have completed the flight to patriarchy", and may therefore have had the exact opposite consequence to care (2002b:107).

[270] "I am Ghanaian and an Akan with both my parents and their parents on both sides belonging to mother-centred groups. My political and economic status in Akan structures depends on who my mother is. I am who I am because of who my mother is. I have no biological children but I am the first of my parents' nine children. Any Akan daughter will tell you what that means. I have not experienced motherhood but I know what mothering means. I have accompanied my mother through her motherhood. Motherhood has not made my mother poor. My mother is rich. She has a community of people whose joys and sorrows are hers. I am rich because I have this community and hold a special place in it. I am not a mother but I have children" (Oduyoye, 2002b:57).

give birth to new life", argues Oduyoye (2002b:55).[271] In this way mothering expresses concern for the flourishing of all human beings, and works toward their health and well-being (2002b:58). Mothering thereby becomes an expression of 'care' (2002b:59), which is the affirmation of "the humanity of all" (2002b:72). Therefore Oduyoye argues for "a mother's economy" wherein "abundant life and comfort for others precedes her own" (2002b:62). A global economy which exploits the poor – and African women in particular – is, for Oduyoye, the very opposite of mothering or care (2002b:62 – 63).

The metaphors of 'health' and 'healing' express Mercy Oduyoye's concern for the flourishing of human beings (and African women in particular) – and yet, 'wealth' and 'prosperity' are contentious issues in, if not altogether excluded from, her notion of what it means to flourish in Africa. She critiques what she calls "conspicuous consumption that ignores the needs of the poor" and that reflects the priorities of the middle-class in Africa (often within the church itself) (2002b:32). She argues that "[c]hurch architecture, vestments and interior decoration (including luxurious pipe organs do not provide an atmosphere that is welcoming to the majority of African Christians" for it promulgates "a style of life that alienates the majority of Africans who live under the burden of material poverty" (2002b:32). For this reason she is suspicious of the notion of 'beauty', because for her (2002b:32) "[b]eauty has become the equivalent of a vulgar display of wealth."

In this regard, Mercy Oduyoye is also particularly critical of any 'gospel of prosperity' that is preached "in the midst of massive poverty" (2005:xx). In a letter to her ancestors, she warns that this is 'deceptive' and 'dangerous', for the following reasons (2005:xx): (1) it entails little or no socio-cultural analysis of that which bars African communities from decent living standards; (2) it proclaims that religion can lead to welfare, but does not "empower the people to seek this welfare"; and (3) it promotes dualism – between religion and politics, and between body and soul – over and against a holistic understanding of life in Africa. Prosperity

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[271] This is what Oduyoye describes as *abadae,* or 'womb compassion', which is the source of being for her as an African woman (2002a:175). Elsewhere she describes 'creation' and 'the preservation of life' as "the core of women-being" (1989:446). She therefore argues that African women, as 'life carriers' ("according to Eve's name and Akan beliefs"), "cannot sit by and watch that life demeaned, oppressed, or marginalized, least of all her own life" (2002a:184). Moreover, "[w]omen derive power from caring and being caregivers, a role which puts them on the side of Christ" (2002c:165). African women theologians thereby "claim the soundly constructed so-called feminine traits they find in Jesus – his care and compassion for the weak and excluded" (2002c:165). In Christ "the fullness of all that we know of perfect womanhood is revealed," claims Oduyoye (2002c:166).

is problematic not only with regards to the exploitation of the poor in Africa but also concerning the (economic) exploitation of the earth and the earth's resources (2002b:52). After all, argues Mercy Oduyoye (2002b:46 – 47, 62 – 63), "our survival depends on its health and wholeness" (2002b:46).

Yet Mercy Oduyoye is also not necessarily opposed to 'wealth', as such. She is concerned about the stark divisions between the wealthy and the poor (2002b:51) (and especially where "Africa as a whole becomes the underclass of the world's poor" (2002b:52)), and critical toward those that lack the virtues of hospitality and neighbourliness with regards to poor persons (2002b:51). Her concern is with the patterns that she discerns in church, traditional African life, and the global economy that sacrifices women, children, and the poor "so that a privileged few can flourish" (Brand, 2002:161). She can, however, also be appreciative of prosperity (Oduyoye, 2002b:48) insofar as it is 'abundance that is shared' (2002b:51).

For Oduyoye, it is the "hidden persons among us" that must be included within the scope of 'qualitative living' – which involves "affirmation, survival and healing" (2002b:54 – 55; cf. 2001b:17). We are to move toward "being healing circles in a wounded world" (2002b:53). As such, African women, and African women's theology, have the potential of being "the mother of all life" and "the center of new life" (2002a:174). Healing and health therefore has to do with life, and mothering in particular with life-affirming stances (2001a:48): 'life-loving' (2002b:68); a 'liberating and liberative life' (2002b:70); 'life-giving' (2002b:72); 'life-affirming' (2002a:174); 'life-loving' (2002a:174); 'life-seeking' (2002a:176); and 'life-promoting' (2002a:182). The healing that comes through salvation, by the suffering love of Christ, "wipes off the dirt that hides the glory of our true humanity" and liberates human beings *from* "all evil and life-denying forces" *toward* fullness of life and human dignity (2002c:161). Without healing in Christ, there is no wholeness. In short, healed human beings flourish by the care of God, and it is this soteriological caring that enables them to live fully and wholly and abundantly and happily.

3.3.7   Conclusion

African women's theology is a theology concerned with the flourishing – healing and health – of human beings. Mercy Oduyoye in particular has made a "unique and important

194

contribution… to the development of African women's theology and to the liberation project of African women as a whole" (Phiri & Nadar, 2006:3). Moreover, Oduyoye herself argues that Christian theology has a role to play in contributing to 'Africa's well-being', if only it will learn to "respect and… tap Africa's 'hidden' resources" (1986a:11). Indeed, African women's theology, like all African theology, is theology which seeks to 'restructure African hope' for "the well-being of Africa, her women, children and men" (Pemberton, 2000:107 – 108). And yet in a letter to her ancestors, Oduyoye asks of her ancestors the following important question (2005:xvii): "Can we find a healthy and health-giving Christianity in Africa?"

Perhaps a response to this question can be found in Mercy Oduyoye's own theological reflections upon salvation, healing, and caring. She, like her ancestress Anowa, may not share in the experience of motherhood, but embodies the caring mothering required for the flourishing of all human beings. Mothering, which for Oduyoye (2002a:188; footnote 17) best expresses the caring and compassionate God, is concerned with the health and healing of human beings, communities, and the earth. African women's theology can and must and wants to be healing and healthy theology which promotes and affirms and gives and seeks and liberates and loves life – toward the caring for and flourishing of all of Africa's people, including the earth. This is the hearth of the matter, as Mercy Oduyoye (cf. 1989) would say!

3.4   Dignity? Salvation as reconciliation
   (Russel Botman)

3.4.1   Introduction

Hayman Russel Botman (1953 – 2014) was a South African Reformed minister and public theologian. He was ordained in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (in 1982) and played a key role in founding the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (in 1994).[272] He joined

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[272] Russel Botman explains the formation of URCSA as follows (2000a:204 – 205): "On 14 April 1994, a few days before the announcement of the first democratic government of South Africa, two black churches of the Dutch Reformed Church family, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa have united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. This post-apartheid uniting church has adopted the Confession of Belhar as one of its founding confessions." He points out that it is theologically significant that this church would opt to include 'uniting', instead of 'Dutch', in its name, for "post-apartheid 'uniting churches' have a major role to play in the building of a new community in South Africa" (2000a:205). Such 'uniting churches' have a responsibility to "empower its members so that they can play a pro-active role in

the Faculty of Religion and Theology at the University of the Western Cape (1994 – 2000), where he taught Practical Theology and later served as Dean of this faculty (1999 – 2000). In 2000 he was appointed Professor in Missiology, Ecumenism, and Public Theology at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology. Thereafter he became a Vice-Rector (2002 – 2007), in which position he was responsible for teaching and learning. He was inaugurated as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in 2007.[273]

Botman wrote extensively on theological anthropology,[274] ecclesiology,[275] and christology,[276] with a particular focus on apartheid,[277] the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,[278] and

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building a nation 'of which all humanity will be proud' (Nelson Mandela)" (2000a:205). Elsewhere he writes that URCSA decided to dispose of the word 'Dutch' in the church" in order to give "more prominence to the Reformed identity of the church" (2003a:377). Moreover, the choice for 'uniting' instead of 'Dutch' "paved the way for reconceiving the Reformed identity and integrity beyond eurocentrism and colonialism" (2003a:377). This choice furthermore reflects an invitation or "an open door to other Reformed churches in southern Africa, and specifically the white Dutch Reformed Church and the (Indian) Reformed Church in Africa" (2003a:378). The invitation that Botman had in mind here was the invitation to church (re)unification between the various member churches of the Dutch Reformed family of churches. This would, over many years, be a core concern for Botman, because it would reflect "a commitment to a visible public expression of the church in a divided society" (2003a:378).

[273] Not only would Russel Botman himself be the first black rector of this institution, but he would also play a fundamental role in placing the university within a trajectory of transformation in higher education in South Africa – through a number of (practical) institutional initiatives with Stellenbosch University (such as establishing the Centre for Transdisciplinarity, Sustainability, Assessment, Modelling, and Analysis (2011a:6), the Frederik van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development (2011a:6 – 7), and the Centre for Inclusivity), but especially in opting for a 'pedagogy of hope' in his inaugural address as Rector and Vice-Chancellor (Botman, 2007a). This would inform and come to describe his particular focus and legacy within Stellenbosch University, most notably through his positioning of the university in service of the South African and African public(s) – better known and understood by way of 'the Hope Project', a set of strategic *foci* based on the UN Millenium Development Goals (cf. Botman, 2011a; 2011b; 2012).

[274] Cf. "Dealing with Diversity" (Botman, 1995a); "Managing Endings and Transforming Continuities" (Botman, 1995b); "Die Bevryding van Kaïn?" (Botman, 1999a); "Covenantal Anthropology" (Botman, 2006b); "African Theology" (Botman, 2011a).

[275] Cf. "The Decisions of the DRC" (Botman, 1994); "'Dutch' and Reformed and 'Black' and Reformed in South Africa" (Botman, 1996a); "The New Quest for Ecclesial Forms" (Botman, 1996d); "Gereformeerdheid en die Belydenis van Belhar" (Botman, 1998); "The Church Partitioned or the Church Reconciled?" (Botman, 2000d); "Should the Reformed join in?" (Botman, 2002a); "Gospel and Culture" (Botman, 2003b); "Belhar and the White Dutch Reformed Church" (Botman, 2001a; Botman, 2004a).

[276] Cf. *Discipleship as Transformation* (Botman, 1993); "Is Bonhoeffer Still of Any Use in South Africa?" (Botman, 1997a); "Towards a World-Formative Christianity in South Africa" (Botman, 1997b); "Who is 'Jesus Christ as Community' for us Today?" (Botman, 1997c); "Discipleship and Practical Theology" (Botman, 2000a); "Ethics and Socio-Political Transformation" (Botman, 2000b).

[277] Cf. "Narrative Challenges in a Situation of Transition" (Botman, 1996b); "Is Blood Thicker Than Justice?" (Botman, 2000c); "Theology After Apartheid" (Botman, 2000e).

[278] Cf. "Pastoral Care and Counselling in Truth and Reconciliation" (Botman, 1996c); "The Offender and the Church" (Botman, 1999b); "Towards the embrace of political reconciliation" (Botman, 1999c).

(economic) globalisation.[279] A number of theologians – such as Abraham Kuyper, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (on whom Botman wrote his doctoral dissertation) – and specifically *South African* theologians – such as Beyers Naudé (after whom Botman named a centre within Stellenbosch University) and Dirkie Smit (who would be Botman's doctoral supervisor and mentor), as well as Jaap Durand, Desmond Tutu, David Bosch, and Allan Boesak – would play important roles throughout his life and in shaping his theological thought.

Moreover, Russel Botman was deeply involved in ecumenism, and served on a number of ecumenical bodies – such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Western Province Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), and the Southern Africa Alliance of Reformed Churches (1993:iv – v) – which, together with contemporary ecumenical declarations and confessions like the Kairos Document (1985), the Belhar Confession (1986), and the Accra Declaration (2004), played an important role in his theological development. Together, his experiences of the struggle against apartheid, the theologians who played a formative role in his life and work, and a variety of confessional and ecumenical concerns and documents shaped Russel Botman's theology into a theology of transformation – for as he himself notes (2000e:48), "[e]very question of identity… has deep theological meaning", and "[a] theology of transformation is the quest for identity."

3.4.2   A theology of transformation[280]

I want to see a biblically developed theology that inspires loyalty, brings vision for the future, serves the church, and mobilizes the priesthood of believers without sacrificing the prophetic task of theology… Such a theology should translate into a theology capable of a pluralistic public discourse with a distinct African voice and culture.

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[279] Cf. "Hope as The Coming Reign of God" (Botman, 2001b); "The end of hope or new horizon of hope?" (Botman, 2002b); "A Cry for Life in a Global Economic Era" (Botman, 2003a); "Human dignity and economic globalisation" (Botman, 2004b); "Turning the tide of the city" (Botman, 2004c); "Rejoice in Hope" (Botman, 2007b); "Revolution, education and religion" (Botman, 2011d); "Dread, Hope and the African Dream" (Botman, 2013).

[280] Indeed, a central part of Botman's work would revolve around transformation – as would much of "the studies of transformation of Reformed theology" in the 1980s (Botman, 2003a:376; footnote 3). Already in his doctoral dissertation, entitled *Discipleship as Transformation? Towards a Theology of Transformation* (1993), Botman would propose a theology of transformation as a response to the call – made by Beyers Naudé (Botman, 1993:iv, 1) – for "Christians to contribute towards the move for transformation by visionary thought, prophetic ministry and vocation." The vision for a particular 'future community' (1993:iv) in South Africa would be an important impetus throughout Botman's theological oeuvre, which would – in his very last theological lecture before his sudden death in 2014 – come to expression in what he describes as "the African dream" (2013:1).

It is with this set of criteria in mind that Russel Botman develops his 'theology of transformation' (2000e:46 – 47). Theology, argues Botman (1993:233 – 234), should play a central role in the transformation in society, particularly in South Africa.[281] As such, a theology of transformation is required to partner with "a broader community in the process of transformation" (Botman, 1993:234). Indeed, "[t]he transformational task of theology is defined within… the community of believers… and should be portrayed against its present contextual setting" (Botman, 2000e:49). The church is "[a] transforming community" for "transformation is God's work" (1995a:170). A theology of transformation "takes its point of departure in the belief that people can come to understanding the process of transformation" through 'learning' and 'conscientising' (1993:234). Yet such a theology "does not make an offer of cheap grace", but calls for 'costly discipleship' – or "the making of contemporary gospels at the cost of a gospel as we have seen in Jesus Christ" (1993:234). For Botman, it is exactly herein – namely discipleship – that faith exists (1993:233). Indeed, for him (1993:233), discipleship *is* transformation: "an enactment of transformation with vast social implications" (1993:233).

The transformation that Botman has in mind is 'social (or public) transformation', or "the reconstruction of a new society free from division and domination" (2000a:201). This is, for Botman (2000a:202), the exact opposite to the 'maintenance' of the status quo (whether in churches or in society), and not to be confused with 'change' (1996d:3). Rather, transformation is used by Botman "as a technical term… [that] represents the organic struggle with continuities and discontinuities prevalent in the new kairos in South Africa" (1996d:3).[282] Such a theology of transformation is therefore "a theology of liberation"

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[281] This would include both 'broad transformation' (which has to do with "the restoration of dignity especially of the poorest and most marginalised sectors of society") ánd 'deep transformation' (which has to do with "a deepening of equality so that the daughter of the farm worker would have the same opportunity to success as the son of the farmer") (2004b:320). Exactly this – namely, working "hard to assist the poor to gain access to… [Stellenbosch] University" in order that "the daughter of the farm worker has the same future opportunities as the son of the farmer" (2007a:5) – would be a characteristic focus within Russel Botman's term as Rector, in developing Stellenbosch University as "a multicultural university with a pedagogy of hope for Africa" (2007a:1). He would, in other words, work towards both broad transformation ánd deep transformation during his time as Rector of this university, and would therefore express the "wish to lead the University to increasingly becoming a multicultural home for all" in order that the university may strive to affirm "the human dignity for all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or diversity of learning needs" (2007a:5). Yet exactly this – namely, upholding the human dignity of all while also being successful within a global economic context that is *not* "conducive of the restoration of dignity" – is what Russel Botman describes as "the South African dilemma" (2004b:320).

[282] "A kairos," writes Botman (1996d), "is a moment of crisis and of opportunity" – but also a 'moment of fear' (2013:4). He speaks, in particular, of "the 'new quest' for becoming church in the *New* South Africa", which involves "the search for a new nation" and dealing with a "new dynamics for diversity and unity" (1996d:2;

(Botman, 1993:234) – or, as he describes it elsewhere, "a prophetic theology with a liberation emphasis located in the experiences of the poor black people" (Botman, 2000a:201). He describes this as 'South African black theology' (2000a:201).[283] Black theology is characterised by (1) "the poor as locus of theology", (2) 'commitment' to liberation of the (black) poor as "the first act in theology", and (3) the "struggle for the emergence of a people's church in South Africa" (Botman, 2000a:206). Anti-apartheid (public) theologies in South Africa were, in other words (Botman, 2000e:38), "developed in direct dialogue with liberation theology and presented themselves as emancipatory theologies." The most vital forms of these theologies would span both Reformed and ecumenical theologies (Botman, 2000e:37 – 38).

This focus on liberation, and the experiences particularly of black people in apartheid South Africa, would be appropriated in Reformed theology (2003a:376) by way of a "search for a liberative understanding of the reformed tradition" (Botman, 2000a:203). Such an understanding of the liberative potential of the Reformed tradition would, for example, give rise to the formation of the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA) in 1981 (Botman, 2003a:376). Being 'Reformed' would, for ABRECSA, be much more encompassing than "establishing a narrow confessionalism or traditionalism", in that it would come to describe "a particular confessing community in struggle" (2003a:376; 2000a:203). Indeed Reformed theology, for Russel Botman, has to do with "a cry for life", in that it is "[r]ooted in life and its struggles" (2003a:375). The vitality of Reformed theology

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original emphasis; cf. also 1995a). This "new Kairos for becoming church" is, for him (1996d:2), the search for and quest for social transformation in South Africa. This embodies what he describes as the move from "*kairoi* of dread to *kairoi* of dreams" (2013:15 – 17; original emphasis).

[283] Botman explains that South African black theology developed in two phases. The first phase would start in 1970 with the Black Theology Project (of the University Christian Movement), whereas the second phase would commence in 1981 with the Black Theological Caucuses (of the Institute for Contextual Theology, and which Botman himself attended) (2000a:202). In its first phase, black theology would focus on those deemed "ontologically black", as set out by the Black Consciousness Movement, and identify "[a]ll those people who were objectively black… [as] the focus of God's liberation" (2000a:202). In its second phase, black theology would redefined "blackness… as a more inclusive social construction rather than as an ontological manifestation" (2000a:202). Herein "a racial/class analysis" would be employed in formulating the locus and agenda of black theology (2000a:202). A good example of the latter is ABRECSA (the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa), for whom 'blackness' was not understood as ethnicity or pigmentation, but rather as "a socially constructed conditioning" (Botman, 2003a:376). Russel Botman regards the Lutheran theologian Manas Buthelezi as representative of the first phase of South African black theology, and the Reformed theologian Allan Boesak as representative of the second phase of South African black theology (2000a:202). As Botman points out (2000a:202), Buthelezi (at the Lutheran World Federation's meeting of 1977) and Boesak (at the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' meeting of 1982) would play "central roles in the process that led to the declaration of a *status confessionis*" with regards to the theological justification of Apartheid.

lies, for him, in transformation – or in the "revisioning, reforming, or liberating critical approach to itself in light of the Word and the context" (2003a:375) – of such a theology. Indeed, "the crux of South African liberative theology" is, for Russel Botman, the Reformed confession that the whole of life falls under the lordship of Christ (2003a:377).

However, as Russel Botman notes (2003a:376), "[s]peaking of being Reformed in South Africa is not unproblematic" for there is a "plurality in Reformed theology" in South Africa (Botman, 1996a:87). More specifically, in South Africa there has been "an oppressive as well as a liberative appropriation of Reformed theology" (2003a:376). Yet in both its oppressive ánd liberative manifestations, Reformed theologies in South Africa are public theologies – exactly because "they were so intimately related to apartheid, either in resisting or sanctioning it" (Botman, 2000e:36). For Botman, public theologies are those theologies that are "always sensitive to shifting political, cultural, and economic realities" (2000e:36) – and are therefore deeply contextual. As such, Reformed theology (2003a:375) therefore is

deeply personal (never merely private), existential (never disinterested), congregational (never dislocated), ecumenical (never parochial), and contextual (never ahistoric and abstract).

Moreover, Botman speaks of a situation of 'crisis' in South African contextual (or public) theologies (2000e:36), which is a consequence of "[t]he political changes in South Africa" (2000e:36) and the accompanying "struggle to converge intent with reality" – particularly in a secular society (2000a:206 – 207). A number of proposals have been offered following this transition from apartheid theology and anti-apartheid theology to post-apartheid theology, including a theology of reconstruction (Charles Villa-Vicencio),[284] a theology of reconciliation (Desmond Tutu), and a theology of transformation (Russel Botman) (2011a:6). Such theologies are 'African public theologies', argues Botman (2011:6), in that it is African

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[284] Although Botman is highly appreciative of Charles Villa-Vicencio's proposal of 'a theology of reconstruction' – he describes this as "the most comprehensive attempt at renewal theology in South Africa after 1990" (2000e:42) – he is critical of Villa-Vicencio's (1) 'praxeological' focus on nation-building (in that the choice for 'lawmaking' is a choice for the penultimate instead of the ultimate – namely, "obedience to God"), and (2) static, mechanical paradigm of 'reconstruction' (2000e:47). Russel Botman suggests correctives on both of these points. Firstly, he would see "participation in the formation of political policy", the struggle "for a bill of human rights", and the development of "a democratic constitution" not in and of themselves, but with an eye toward the (trans)formation of human beings (2000e:47). Secondly, he chooses to speak of transformation instead of reconstruction, because it suggests "growth and formation rather than engineering and mechanization" – exactly because "society is an organism that grows rather than a structure that can be dismantled and reassembled like a motorcar engine" (2000e:47). Russel Botman, in other words, follows the trajectory that Charles Villa-Vicencio has proposed – but opts for a theology of transformation as a corrective to a theology of reconstruction.

theology with "a contemporary thrust". If African theology is worked out "at the nexus of theological… and contextual… specifics" (2011:5 – 6), then African *public* theology is African theology which interacts with such social concerns as "public morality, local policy formation, Church-State relationships, and the developmental agenda" (2011:6).[285]

Yet Botman's appreciation of both Black theology *and* African theology raises the question as to the relationship between these two 'contextual theologies'. The so-called 'theological crisis' of post-apartheid theological reflection has, argues Russel Botman (2000a:207), resolved the tension between African theology and Black theology in the direction of complementarity, instead of competition or antagonism (2000a:207; cf. also 2003b).[286] This means that "[t]he nomenclature 'Black Theology' could recede... to embrace the name African theology where the former's critical class and race analyses will be accommodated" in order that "the strengths of both Black Theology and African theology will form a *new hermeneutic*" (Botman, 2000a:207; my emphasis – NM). Botman therefore regards Black theology as a form of contemporary African theology – or 'African theology's coming of age' (2000a:207; footnote 15) – with a specific history and a particular hermeneutic.

The hermeneutic that Russel Botman has in mind is a 'new hermeneutic' which involves "the critical reappraisal of the culture of African peoples and the social struggles (political and economical) of the continent" (2000a:207). It combines a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of reconstruction but is ultimately 'hermeneutically restless' (2011:7). By this he

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[285] See the complete inscription on 'African theology', written by Russel Botman, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (2011). Therein he explains that African public theology "remains rooted in the context of Africa", and that African theology's transformation to 'modern' African theology can be attributed to three historical stimuli: (1) gender, (2) ecumenism, and (3) methodology (2011:7). With regards to gender he refers to the important contribution of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, and Mercy Oduyoye and Denise Ackermann in particular (as "[t]he mothers of theology in Africa"), to "establishing the public theological discourse of 'modern' African theology" (2011:7). With regards to ecumenism he points to African theology's "persistent knack of exposing itself to ecumenical scrutiny and engagement", evident in such confessing documents as the Kairos Document and the Confession of Belhar (2011:7). With regards to methodology he traces the trajectory of African theology from the concern with liberation (1980s) to reconciliation (1990s), wherein the struggle against colonialism (1960s) and the struggle against apartheid (1980s) is incorporated into the working out of "an African public theology for the twenty-first century" (2011:8). Together, these three stimuli – gender, ecumenism, methodology – have contributed significantly to the formation of African theologies that are contemporary, contextual, public.

[286] Elsewhere (2000e:46; 2000c:360) he also speaks of "the long-standing academic impasse between liberation theologies and African theology", which further adds to this complexity. However, there he argues that "[t]he post-colonial and post-liberation needs of Africa should be brought to the ecumenical agenda. The need for Africanization should receive more attention without reducing the biblical place of the poor in theological construction." As with the relationship between African theology and Black theology, Russel Botman resolves this 'impasse' by arguing for complementarity instead of competition (2000e:46).

means that such a theology is every open to and ever grappling with "questions of identity, justice, race, class, power, forgiveness, confession, globalization, and gender" – while remaining committed to "the agency of the victim, the poor, and the marginalized" (2011:8). Russel Botman finds David Bosch's proposal for "a hermeneutic of transformation" particularly appealing, exactly because it manages to hold together "both continuity and change, [both] faithfulness to the past and engagement of the future" (2000e:40 – 41). It is therefore unsurprising that he opts for such a hermeneutic (2000e:48 – 49), and that

[a] theology of transformation argues for a hermeneutic of transformation instead of the current choice between a hermeneutic of suspicion (as in conflict thinking) over against a hermeneutic of trust (as in functional thinking).

Russel Botman's theology of transformation is a public, African, Black, Reformed theology. Such a theology of transformation is uniquely situated between history and future, and embraces – as an African public theology – "the resources of the black struggle in South Africa" *as well as* "a particular eschatological view of humanity and the form of the world" (2000a:207). Stated somewhat differently, a theology of transformation draws upon both memory *and* dream; both the 'dangerous memory' of the church's role in the struggle for liberation (2000a:205)[287] as well as "a new dream for Africa and for the rest of the world" wherein the earth and all human beings flourish (2013:23). As Botman notes (2000e:49), a theology of transformation has a "cosmic-eschatological orientation" – and is therefore permeated by *an eschatological logic of hope.* It is within such an understanding of 'a theology of transformation' that the nature and function of Christian doctrine can be situated.

3.4.3   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

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[287] Here Botman draws specifically on what he calls "the practical theological memory of a *status confessionis*" (2000a:201). He places such a high regard on memory that he claims that "[w]hosoever wants to understand the present dynamics of South African theologies must walk through the gates of *history*" (2000a:201; my emphasis – NM). The history or 'dangerous memory' of "the black church in South Africa" is a 'rich resource' for conceiving of "a missional-practical theological ecclesiology" which is "centered in the communicative practices of the poor" (Botman, 2000a:208). Memory becomes particularly important, he notes (1996a:98), in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearings – for the dynamic of remembering and forgetting, as well as 'long memory' and 'short memory', would play a crucial role there in "the restoration of people's humanity" (1996a:98).

It should be noted from the outset that Russel Botman is critical of mere affirmations of 'orthodoxy' (1996a:92), particularly in confessions.[288] In a reflection on the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (between the Lutheran World Federation and Roman Catholic Church), Botman – as part of the a group of Reformed representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches – would be critical of any doctrine (including the doctrine of justification) that would be portrayed as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* – or representative of "the basic truth" (2002a:14). Rather, he argues, doctrines are embedded in confession – and in particular in the confession that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' (2002a:14). For him, "confession is not about 'the right belief'" but about obedience, discipleship, and praxis (1996a:92). He does not, in other words, want to equate 'doctrines' with 'confession'; nor does he want to single out any doctrine as "'the truth' of Christianity" (2002a:14). Instead, he would – in following Karl Barth – "stand on the wholeness of doctrine" (2002a:14).

Yet Russel Botman also sees no "struggle between orthodoxy and orthopraxis", because "[t]he direct biblical relationship between faith and praxis subverts such juxtapositioning" (1996a:92). He does not, in other words, "share the idea of strict division of doctrinal questions from ethical issues" (2002a:12). Contextual theology, such as a theology of transformation (2000e:49), involves a 'theological wrestling' – particularly in and after "a traumatic time of transition" – wherein "the nature and task of theology" (and the church) is reconceived (Botman, 2000e:39). Such 'theological wrestling' involves a twofold quest, namely (1) "[t]he quest for a practical theology of social transformation" and (2) "the missiological quest for inculturation and indigenisation of African Christianity" (Botman, 2000a:207). In short, "[a] theology of transformation is the quest for identity as being and as practices" (Botman, 2000e:48). These quests take place within "the theological *landscape* in South Africa" (2000a:208). This particular landscape is to be 'reshaped' (2000a:208) into becoming "a blessing of salvation and liberation" (2000e:39). These particular quests, prompted and guided by Russel Botman's theology of transformation, concerns the practical, pastoral, and public, which in turn play formative, informative, and performative roles in the shaping of Christian doctrine and Christian believers.

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[288] He notes that "Reformed people are very careful in the use of the word 'confession'", and particular the equation of doctrines with confessions, for "[t]hey would prefer that a confession arise from their own hearts and within their own context" (2002a:13).

Firstly, a theology of transformation is practical, especially insofar as *discipleship* (or the "following of Jesus of Nazareth") [289] (2000a:210) plays an orientating role in such a theology – indeed, discipleship is "the organizing metaphor of a theology of transformation" (2000e:49). A theology of transformation plays a *formative* role in shaping churches and individual believers personally and communally, in "a struggle of the community with itself as well as its context" (Botman, 2000e:38).[290] This is what Russel Botman describes as 'theological formation' (2000e:38) or 'ethics' (2000b:101). Indeed, the praxis that Botman has in mind is "Christopraxis… expressed in ethical terms" (2000a:211). This is theologically significant, in that "the form of Jesus Christ" is "the foundation of a theology of transformation" (2000e:49).[291] Practices are, however, not lone endeavours, but call for "co-operative behaviour" within a community (2000a:211). Practices are, in other words, "always socially established", in that (1) it is "something done *with* one another" and (2) in congruence with 'its past' (2000a:211; original emphasis). Christian doctrines are and must therefore be *practical,* in that (1) doctrines are 'mediated' or 'communicated' by practices (Botman, 2000a:211 – 212) and (2) doctrines are historical and 'memorial' (which is not to be confused with "practices [that] are routinely and bluntly repeated throughout tradition")

[289] Discipleship is particularly important in Russel Botman's theology of transformation, for "[a] theology of transformation calls for the revisitation of discipleship and its practices as epistemological categories of theology" (2000e:49). Discipleship, "the organizing metaphor of a theology of transformation", is not merely the imitation *of* Christ (*imitatio Christi*) nor the conformity *to* Christ (*conformitas Christi*), but entails being transformed *by* Christ (*transformitas Christi*) (2000e:49). Here Botman has in mind the church, the "community of transformation", those *being transformed by* Christ (2000e:49). Indeed, "[t]he church this principle calls for is... a community being and practicing the vocation of a *transformitas Christi*" (2000e:49). Here, as in the rest of his theology of transformation, Botman is deeply influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (cf. for example Botman, 1993; 1996d; 2000a; and 2000e). However, not discipleship only but *discipleship and citizenship* would play an important role in Botman's thinking – for instance, in 1998 he would be a resident researcher at the Centre for Theological Inquiry at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he would focus on a project entitled "Global economy and citizenship in a democratic South Africa."

[290] Russel Botman is, however, particularly critical of attempts "to impact the society by declarations formed and published by synods and assemblies of the church" (2000a:205). The mobilisation of church members, and not statements (which 'immobilise people'), was and is important if believers were to play a role "in the building of a new community in South Africa" after apartheid (2000a:205). Indeed, he notes that "[c]ommunicative action rather than mere declaration will have to lead the way into a better and more faithful future" (1996a:205). In this way Botman would opt for an activistic and engaged theology, unfettered by the encumbersome processes of reaching a consensus in church assemblies or the disengaged and uncritical adherence to church declarations and statements.

[291] "Ethics," writes Russel Botman (2000b:101), "has to be understood as 'formation'... [and 'f]ormation' (Gestaltung) can only come from the form of Christ (Gestalt Christi). It is not achieved simply by efforts to become like Christ. It comes about only by being drawn into the form of Christ... Christ, not Christians transforms the world by shaping humanity in conformity with himself. It is the Gestalt Christi which takes form in humanity. This can only happen because of the Incarnation. Human beings become human because God took on human form in the Incarnation. The praxis-logic of transformation is christological and its christology is anthropological. The anthropology of humanity becomes (trans)formative by virtue of the fact that God took on our human form. The shaping of humanity in accordance with the realization of Christ is a single and indivisible social responsibility involving all the mandates in society."

(2000a:211). Practices have to do with *confession,* and thereby not only express, but also deepen and enrich, Christian doctrines.[292] Christian doctrines are formed into being communal, mediated, communicative, historical, and memorial – or, in short, practical.

Secondly, a theology of transformation is pastoral, especially insofar as *reconciliation* plays a pivotal role in such a theology. Russel Botman points out the questions that were raised regarding both the role of the church ánd the role of the theology that *informs* the church in debates about reconciliation in South Africa (2000e:39). A theology of transformation, which takes politics seriously, has a pastoral responsibility – particularly in assisting the church to fulfil its 'pastoral calling' to (1) "[make] memories redemptive",[293] (2) "[help] shape public opinion", and (3) "[help shape] the fabric of a nation" (2000e:39 – 40). Indeed, Botman argues that it is important to (re)consider the "types and forms of pastoral care in the life of a nation in search of its past in order to build its future" (1996c:154), exactly because reconciliation has to do with wholeness, healing and care (1996c:154, 157 – 158). Christian doctrines are and must therefore be *pastoral*, or concerned with "the restoration of the people's humanity" (1996c:156).[294] Churches are therefore not to withdraw from 'political matters', but to work in 'partnership' and 'solidarity' for "the human dignity of all" (Botman,

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[292] This was an important theological consideration in the proposal of a *status confessionis* in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, central to the establishment of a *status confessionis* in apartheid South Africa – by both the LWF and the WARC – was "the question of the relationship between confession and practice", writes Botman (2000a:203). This is particularly clear, according to Botman (1996a:91; 2000a:210), in the Belhar Confession, wherein "a direct connection between the reconciling, uniting and liberating acts of God and the praxis of the believers" is established. The Belhar Confession was "adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church as the result of the declaration of… [a] *status confessionis* with regard to the theological justification of apartheid by the Dutch Reformed Church" (Botman, 1996a:91). It was accepted as a fourth confession – together with the Canons of Dordt, the Heidelberg Cathechism, and the Belgic Confession – into the newly formed Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa. The significance of Belhar lies, writes Botman (1996a:91), in its "ethical commitment to justice central to faith, confession, and the unity of the church." URCSA (after 1994), or the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (before 1994), "understood its political and ecclesiastical task as a matter of faithfulness in following Jesus of Nazareth" (1996a:91). Indeed, "[t]he call to discipleship," writes Botman (2000a:210), "is praxeological in intent and content" – which Botman sees reflected also in the "[t]he ultimate language of Belhar" (2000a:210). In Belhar, "praxeology received confessional status within the church" (Botman, 2000a:210).

[293] Botman suggests that 'narrative' or 'storytelling' be employed in pastoral care and counselling. According to him (1996b:160 – 161; cf. also 1996a:94 – 95), "human beings cannot survive without narratives. In fact they survive through their memories wrapped up in stories. Their healing comes from narratives… To deal with our past pastorally we [therefore] need 'to make our memories redemptive'. Without memory we'll have no freedom. Without redeemed memories we'll have no future as a nation. Both our liberation and future require that we relinquish every natural-order or deterministic approach to memory to embrace a socio-theological constructionist approach in pastoral care."

[294] However, it is exactly for this reason that Botman insists upon "the empowerment of victims in pastoral work" in order that the victims become "the agents of the reconstruction of their memories" (1996c:162). Indeed, for him (1996:162) "[t]he wounded are the healers. This is the biblical nature of reconciliation. The wounded are not the object of healing, but the subject thereof. This is the way of Jesus Christ, the Truth and the Life."

2000b:101). Moreover, this theology of transformation – and the Christian doctrines that stem from it – should be "informed by a Christology that takes the [liberative] practices of Jesus seriously" (2000e:48). Christian doctrines are therefore informed by the concerns for restoration, healing, wholeness, care, liberation – and are, in short, pastoral.

Thirdly, a theology of transformation is public, especially insofar as *truth* and *justice*[295] form a central focus in such a theology. It is, in other words, 'a theology of shared-life' which enables "public discourse" (2000b:104) and calls for "[f]orming sustainable partnerships" in 'the public arena' (2000b:97). For this reason – namely, "because the Christian religion was used to sow conflict and thus contributed to the suffering, oppression, and exploitation of millions in South Africa" (Botman, 2000e:40) – a theology of transformation engages with various 'publics' and a variety of 'public concerns'. This means that not only the public of society, but also the public of the church in the world is taken seriously.[296] Indeed, "South African public theologies were always related to the identity of the church" and it is in this way that theology and church is held together in a transformative theology (Botman, 2000e:38). Faith *performs* particular functions – whether contestatory, conservatory, consecrating, or constructive – within church and society (2000e:38). Public theologies (1) *challenge* the church[297] ("to change its ways and become more relevant in a world of oppression, enmity, and poverty") (2000e:39), (2) *nurture* the church ("by stimulating its pastors and members with hopeful visions of public faithfulness") (2000e:39), and (3)

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[295] Russel Botman argues for a close connection between justification and justice in the light of "everything that Christianity has learned about justification after Auschwitz and apartheid" (2002a:15). The *doctrinal* connection between justice (*Recht*) and justification (*Rechtfertigung*) must be maintained, he argues (2002a:15), because it is a connection that is "rooted in our Reformed tradition" (including, he adds, in the thought of Karl Barth and John Calvin). He regards this of the utmost importance, and argues that "[t]o see a separation between justification and justice as a differentiation between doctrine and ethics... would amount to nothing less than a *doctrinal* betrayal of recent developments" (2002a:16; my emphasis – NM).

[296] Botman writes that "[t]he quest is for local faith communities to become public spaces where people who once were enemies could meet, a space for listening and for sharing stories" (1996a:97). This is a particularly daunting task which "the Dutch Reformers" and "the black Reformers" are faced with, namely "of talking to each other as perpetrators and victims of apartheid in the interest of truth and reconciliation" (1996a:97). Indeed, they occupy "a divided house" – the consequence of a "former nation-building project, which was also primarily engineered by Dutch Reformers" – and is tasked with the challenge, as "divided Reformed communities", to "play their rightful transformative role in the project of nation building" (1996a:88 – 89). It is significant, notes Botman (1996a:86), that newly elected President Nelson Mandela attended both the General Synod of the URCSA in April 1994 *and* the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in October 1994. Russel Botman describes this as a challenge to "the most divided religious community in South Africa both to overcome their historical differences and to participate in unison in the building of a new South African nation" (1996a:86). Indeed (1996a:86), "[b]y visiting these two synods he indicated that the country expects a significant contribution to nation building from all Reformed people in South Africa."

[297] A theology of transformation does not only challenge the church, but also society (2000e:50); not only society and church in general, but specifically "the social constructions of the society and of the church" (2000e:50).

establish a particular history (2000a:211). Christian doctrines that are performed in the various publics – particularly of church and society – are, themselves, public.

Whether in the practical, pastoral, or public nature and function of Christian doctrine, Russel Botman resists the division between the *articulation* of truth and the *application* of truth – or doctrine and ethics – because this does not maintain what he describes as "the theory-and-practice dialectic" of doctrines (2002a:15). It should therefore not be surprising that, for Botman (2000b:102 – 103), 'formation' is synonymous with 'transformation', and that although each of the spaces outlined above – practical, pastoral, and public – are described as distinct from one another, transformation encompasses all of "the 'visible activity' of socio-political and socio-economical magnitude" (2000b:103) whereby Christian doctrine may be formed, informed, and performed. In all of this it would appear as if the church – and particularly the ecumenical church in South Africa – is the primary focus for Botman's theological proposals. Indeed, "the church in its sociopolitical, socio-economic, and personal context" is "the locality of a theology of transformation" (2000e:49). Arguably, however, a portrayal of the nature and function of Christian doctrine in Russel Botman's theology of transformation does emerge – and clearly he himself is concerned with how doctrines function! (cf. 2002a:14) – which can be traced (derivatively) within his concerns for discipleship, reconciliation, and truth and justice respectively.

The nature and function of Christian doctrine that is embedded in communal, mediated, communicative, historical, memorial, restorative, caring, healing, and – above all – public theology culminates in the formative, informative, and performative roles that these doctrines play. The nature and function of Christian doctrine that is formed, informed, and performed by a theology of transformation can therefore be described as practical, pastoral, and public. Such spaces as these, which reflect the concerns and priorities of public, Black, African, Reformed theology, not only derivatively describes the nature and function of Christian doctrine in Russel Botman's theological thought, but also reflects the methodological strategies that he employs throughout his theological writings.

3.4.4   Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

Russel Botman makes a broad methodological shift in his theological thinking from "doctrinal agreement" to "ethics" (1996d:10); and even in his understanding of confessions (which "must become ethical") and the church (which is a community formed on ethics) Botman advocates for community or *ubuntufication*[298] (1996d:10 – 11). Exactly because faith (*credo*) has to do with praxis (1998:95), in that the integrity and authenticity of faith and confession is portrayed by life in community (1998:107), *(social) ethics* is a key strand throughout Russel Botman's theology of transformation. As such, an important consideration for Botman is epistemology. Thus he argues that "practices bear more than moral meaning" in that "they also bear epistemological weight" (2000e:50). By this he means that the "[e]ngagement in certain practices may give rise to new knowledge" (2000e:50) and discipleship, in particular, can be regarded as "such an epistemological category" (2000e:50). There is in other words no strict division between theory and praxis, between doctrine and ethics, or between faith and works in his theological thinking. This is reflected in the collection of methodological strategies that he employs – namely, a pedagogical strategy, an exegetical strategy, and a polemical strategy – wherein praxis features prominently throughout.

A pedagogical strategy, firstly, is evident in his establishment of and commitment to "a new pedagogical framework" within Stellenbosch University (2007), namely 'a pedagogy of hope'.[299] However, a pedagogical strategy is not only evident in Botman's commitment to

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[298] The metaphor of *Ubuntu,* "[t]he African metaphor that is currently taking greater prominence in the post-apartheid South Africa", plays a central role in Russel Botman's understanding of community. Indeed, "*Ubuntu* is an age-old African philosophy which is based on the notion of co-determination rather than self-determination" for, in this philosophy, "a person is a person through other people" (1996d:10; original emphasis). In short, "Ubuntufication is by far the challenge to form community not around doctrinal agreement, but based on ethics" (1996d:10).

[299] This, notes Botman (2012:214), "was inspired by, amongst others, the work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire" – and in particular his pedagogies of the oppressed and of hope. These 'critical pedagogies' develop "the idea that education should play a role in changing the world for the better" by stimulating (1) "critical thinking" and (2) "critical consciousness" (2012:214). He explains that he "felt that by infusing our work as a university with this kind of hope, we would be able to become not only 'significantly different' from our past, but also 'significantly better' for the future – in terms of our excellence and commitment to the people of our country and continent" (2012:214; cf. also his inaugural address, 2007a). Russel Botman's conviction that higher education in (South) Africa should contribute to development – (1) "human development" and (2) "socioeconomic development", in particular – implored him to work towards exactly this focus within his own institution, Stellenbosch University, in his capacity as Rector (2012:212 – 214). He argues that "[h]igher education produces graduates for the public good… [and should] prepare students to be agents for social good" (2012:213).

positioning Stellenbosch University to live up to its various responsibilities,[300] but also in his grappling with "*Christian* higher education" in South Africa and in Reformed churches specifically (1996a:89; my emphasis – NM), wherein the *formation* (or "education and spiritual guidance") of Christian believers is a core concern (Botman, 2000b:100). Herein *practices* play in important role, for certain "goods eternal to an activity are only really learned or formed when practiced" (Botman, 2000a:211). However, "[a] theology of transformation calls for a change in [both] the *forms* of acting and the *forms* of being" (Botman, 2000e:47; original emphasis). These – acting and being – are closely related in Botman's thought, for he argues that "[w]e are our practices, complex and socially extended" (2000a:212). It is this which leads to "the formation of a way of life" wherein "the following of Christ in concrete contexts of cultural and socio-economic dimensions" becomes important (2000a:212). Therefore "a society, a community, or an individual [is] to reach beyond itself for its new form" (2000e:47). *Critical thinking, critical consciousness, learning, and guidance* are key skills which are shaped – whether in a higher education context or in a church context – by Russel Botman's pedagogical strategy.

An exegetical strategy, secondly, is evident in his reading of biblical texts and church documents. Particular metaphors and exegeses of biblical texts played an important role in the theological justification of apartheid, as well as in the struggle against apartheid. Two metaphors in particular – namely Babel (cf. 1996a:89 – 90) and the Exodus (cf. 2000e:42 – 43)[301] – would play an important role in exegeses of apartheid and anti-apartheid theology

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[300] Russel Botman points out three responsibilities of Stellenbosch University: (1) *moral* responsibility ("[g]iven our history, we have a moral responsibility to the poor, to rural communities and to a diversity of individuals in our country"), (2) *historical* responsibility (facing up to "the lingering burdens of the 20th century... such as getting enough food to eat and clean water to drink , a roof over their heads, peace and security in their streets, a decent job with a fair salary, and quality education for their children"), and (3) *future* responsibility ("to embrace the challenges of the 21st century, the world of a new generation of young people, new ways of learning, new opportunities for research and the need for harnessing emerging technologies") (2011b:19). It is for this reason that Stellenbosch University would launch "The Hope Project" – namely, as "our way of living up to these responsibilities" (2011b:19). The university would identify "five themes to guide our core activities" – included in (the core activities of) (1) teaching and learning, (2) community interaction, and (3) research (2011b:21) – in order to position Stellenbosch University as "an effective role-player and participant in South Africa's strategic priorities" (2011b:21). The five themes would include the strategies priorities "to eradicate poverty; improve social services; build sustainable communities; improve the country's health profile, and grow an increasingly inclusive economy for the benefit of South Africa and Africa's citizens" (2011b:21). This would include "the promotion of human dignity", as one of these five themes (2011b:20).

[301] The difference between these two modes of doing theology during apartheid can also be described as two hermeneutical 'positions', namely (1) "a 'law and order' hermeneutic, whereby stability, security and peace of mind were the founding principles"; and (2) a liberating hermeneutic, wherein the bible "was regarded as a liberating story favouring the poor and the oppressed" (2007b:69 – 70). Stated somewhat differently, the

respectively. He notes from the outset that 'the problem of (moral) language' plays an important role, both in making sense of the past and in working toward the future. This is particularly evident in his analyses of "major theological documents of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s… as historical texts", wherein he traces "the occurrence of the theme of reconciliation" (2000d:106). Therefore not only rhetoric, but also 'hermeneutical dimensions', occupy important places within his exegetical strategy. For example, he remarks that "[t]he Bible is especially vigilant when vulnerable life is at stake" and "finds the hermeneutical key to reading the Bible in God's commitment to… vulnerable life" (2006b:84; 2013:14 – 15). This *informs* his portrayal of such doctrines as creation, redemption, and consummation (2006b:85), for such a reading – both of the Bible and of his context – alerts him to a particular, subjective, and partisan "focus on the status of vulnerable life" (both within "global economic realities" *and* in the Bible) (2006b:84). Ethical discernment and practice cannot be separated from "the reading of the Bible" (2007b:66) or even church documents and declarations, and therefore *rhetoric* and *hermeneutics* are core elements of Russel Botman's exegetical strategy.

A polemical strategy, thirdly, is evident in skilful inclusion of stories and narratives throughout his theological work. Russel Botman reads, as it were, 'the signs of the times' – also on "the front pages of the Argus, the Cape Times or Die Burger" (2004c:516) – and grapples throughout his work with questions such as (2004c:516): "How should we, how could we do social ethics in the current South African context?" He proposes (1996a:94 – 95) a (methodological) move from 'doing theology' to 'story telling'. This involves 'unlocking metaphorical locking devices' (1996b:38) which has to do with "open[ing] concrete issues to public discussion". Metaphorical locking devices – or pronouncing issues of justice 'sensitive and emotional', and thereby closing all debate on such issues – are "dangerous" for they "build new doors to private theologies that empower the individual and destroy community" (1996b:38). A polemical strategy is therefore focused on the *public effect* of language and stories*,* as important companions to "the public effect of the practices of church unity, reconciliation, social justice and a critical loyalty (sic) to the state" (Botman, 2000a:212). *Prophetic discernment and engagement* in public issues are important concerns within Russel Botman's polemical strategy.

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metaphor of 'the tower of Babel' "played a central role" in apartheid theology, whereas 'community' "is emerging as driving metaphor" in post-apartheid theology (1996d:2).

Christian believers are to develop an "ethical stance vis-à-vis the status quo [that] is based on the realization that there is nothing absolute or definitive about the status quo" (2013:20), whereby God's future – or Christian eschatology – should direct and determine "the lifestyle of Christians" that relativises 'the status quo' by "that which *can* be and that which *must* be and that which undoubtedly *shall* be" (2013:20; original emphasis). It is with this in mind that Russel Botman arguably employs the interrelated methodological strategies outlined as pedagogical, exegetical, and polemical in interpreting Christian theology and Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine, which has to do with the practical, pastoral, and public nature and function of Christian theology, forms, informs and performs Botman's understanding of salvation as reconciliation.

3.4.5   Salvation as reconciliation

Salvation is not developed as a theological locus in and of itself in Russel Botman's work. However, he is quite clear as how salvation ought *not* to be interpreted. Salvation is not to be confused with the 'indulgence' or 'luxury' of "otherworldly theologies" (Botman, 1996a:103). Indeed, "[w]e do not have a choice to go into the desert of withdrawal from the real issues of the social world" (1996a:103). Nor should salvation be understood within "a dualistic framework" which "separate[s] the physical from the spiritual" (2003a:383) and focuses only on "the soul of the individual" (2003a:383). For him, salvation cannot be "redemption from cares, distress, fears, sin and death… [that] has effect only after the grave… in another world (called heaven, in another time (called eternity) for one's soul" for such a (mythological) understanding of salvation is, in his words, "less than biblical" (2007b:72). How could salvation then be understood within Botman's theology of transformation?

For Russel Botman, *reconciliation* provides the key to his soteriology, which he describes as "the work of Christ the Redeemer" (2006b:82). For him, the very "essence of Christianity… [is] the reconciling suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (2006b:76). The church, in turn, "works with a community-based definition of reconciliation" (1995a:170) and "is constituted on a unique basis: reconciliation achieved by Jesus Christ, the church's only

foundation" (1995a:166).[302] However, this is also a complex notion in his work, for much of his written material on reconciliation pertains *not* to a theological contribution with regards to reconciliation between human beings (and between human beings and God), but to reconciliation between human beings in post-conflict situations.[303] Therefore a second key is needed in order to work out reconciliation soteriologically – namely, *covenant.*

Indeed, for Botman covenant is "a mode of God's activity that spans the economy of salvation from creation to redemption to consummation" (2006b:82). Moreover, it is in the 'idea of the covenant' that "[t]he urgency and immediacy of the relationship between God and humanity is… profoundly expressed" (2006b:85). The covenant is both an invitation to 'all beings' and 'all of creation' to participate in a relationship with God ánd a challenge directed at human beings to care for creation (and the economy) through "covenantal living" (2006b:85). This is theologically significant for Russel Botman (2006b:85), seeing as

[i]n the connection of covenant-redemption we learn that the destructive powers of cruelty and injustice can be overcome in ways that do not simply perpetuate the cycle of violence but create a foundation for a new and more hopeful common life.

Exactly this idea of covenant, with its accompanying invitation and challenge, would be taken up in the formulation of (the 2004) Accra Declaration of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (2006b:85). The 'hermeneutical key' that covenantal thinking employs is 'God's commitment to vulnerable life' (2006b:84). Botman ascribes this to the rootedness of "God's preferential option for the poor… in the conceptual and practical meaning of covenant"

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[302] Exactly this would be "the theological crux of the sin of apartheid", explains Botman (1996b:40), for "[a]partheid… departs from the irreconcilability of people" (1996b:40). This realisation would be formulated in a class discussion in 1978 at the University of the Western Cape, wherein the systematic theologian Jaap Durand would ask the class what the *theological* problem with apartheid was (1996b:40). The argument that apartheid is based on the assumption of irreconcilability of diverse people would consequently be adopted at the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1978, and eventually lead to the proclamation of a *status confessionis* in apartheid South Africa and the birth of the Belhar Confession (1996b:40 – 41). In short, based on this insight "South African churches and the ecumenical movement declared [a defense of the system of apartheid]… heresy and idolatry" (2006b:80).

[303] For example, he notes that "South African society has opted for the *idea* of reconciliation as a dignity enriched notion that could assist with the development of the poor and the marginalised" and that "the *act* of reconciliation is the most creative response of the South African society to the expressed need for the restoration of dignity after the situation of oppression and dehumanisation in the time of Apartheid" (2004b:324; my emphasis – NM). However, this particular view is embedded in what he describes as a 'human rights discourse' (2004b:324), with accompanying reflections on 'reparations' (2004b:38) and 'restorative justice' (2004b:324) – and is therefore not, in the first place, a particularly *theological* reflection on reconciliation. Elsewhere he notes a 'general consensus' that, while holding to the church's "separate calling to reconciliation", "the secular process of reconciliation would take symbolic preference" in the post-apartheid TRC hearings (2000e:39).

(2006b). This has important implications for how the flourishing of human beings with dignity is portrayed. Yet before this is explored, three sets of relationships in Russel Botman's soteriology merits consideration: (1) the relationship between salvation and liberation; (2) the relationship between soteriology and Christology; and (3) the relationship between justification and sanctification.

Firstly, salvation and liberation are accompanying themes throughout Botman's work. More specifically, the "theological struggle for liberation and the redemption of humanity" (2000a:212) is held together in much of his work. However, it is not always clear what the exact relationship between salvation and liberation is in Russel Botman's theological thought. He, perhaps unknowingly, describes this relationship at times as salvation *and* liberation (1996a:103; 2007b:72), and at other times as salvation *or* liberation (2000a:209). In other words, it is not altogether clear whether liberation is synonymous with salvation, and whether salvation and liberation are merely employed in close proximity. What *is* clear, however, is that Botman does not develop a soteriology that is far removed from Christology, but employs soteriology as a core element in his Christology – which arguably is the primary theological locus with which he works. Herein *history* plays a pivotal role.

Indeed, secondly, the focus on history accentuates the particular relationship between soteriology and Christology in Botman's work. Russel Botman argues that "the relationship between salvation/liberation and history… constitutes the pivotal problem where Christology seeks to be seriously incarnational and communicative… [and] interested in the quest for historical concretization" (2000a:209). This relationship – "between salvation/liberation and history" – forms the 'optic' for what Botman describes as "the Christological adventure" (2000a:209). The 'Christological adventure' that Botman appears to have in mind is "the relationship between Christ and the believers" in history – wherein "[h]istory… becomes the object and Christ and the believers are understood to be subjects of history" (2000a:209). He attributes this specific contribution to "liberation Christologies" which has "helped us to think about Jesus of Nazareth as the subject of history in such a way that the human subject is not thereby disempowered" (2000a:209). Such a position "deepens the Christological adventure" in that it "invariably leads to renewed thinking about the dominant themes in traditional theology" – including "the relationship between justification and sanctification" (2000a:209).

Thirdly, the relationship between justification and sanctification is indeed an important element within Botman's soteriology. Russel Botman's combined focus on ecclesiology and ethics – or discipleship, in following Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1993; 2000b:101 – 103) – culminates in a focus on sanctification throughout his work. This is further strengthened by what he calls a 'theological praxis-logic' (2000b:102), which explores the ethics of responsibility within the South African context. This is, however, vulnerable to what he calls the 'contamination of the salvation by works' (2000b:102). He follows Bonhoeffer's proposal to subordinate "actions of institutional discipleship" to "the actions of God", for "[t]hese actions are… only true when it is fully subordinate tot God's action" (2000b:102).

Herein three moves are made, which establishes the relationship between justification and sanctification accordingly. Firstly, sanctification is held as distinct from but related to justification, and is thereby not equated to or synonymous with justification (2000b:102). As such, "[i]nstitutional discipleship is never self-justification or self-glorification" but "the doing of God's will" (2000b:102).

Secondly, sanctification is portrayed as a distinctly particular set of actions, but "not a personal and separate initiative" that takes place independently of "the actions of God" (2000b:102). In other words, even if "actions of institutional discipleship cannot and should not be set side by side with the actions of God" (he adds "not even as a thank-offering or sacrifice!") there can be "no strict division possible between the works of God and the actions of institutional discipleship" (2000b:102).

Thirdly, sanctification follows justification; and even though justification (as 'ultimate life') is portrayed as the goal or aim of sanctification (as 'penultimate life'), in that penultimate or transformative living is "a 'preparing of the way' for the just future" (2000b:102 – 103), Botman maintains the order of "grace and obedience" (2002a:15). The "justification of the sinner by grace only" describes both the givenness of (costly) grace *and* the imperative of (liberating) grace. Stated somewhat differently, Botman gives priority to "God's initiative and gift, which can only be received in grace" (2006b:84) – only thereafter does he attend to the

214

'just future' toward which disciples are called to work (2002a:15 – 16). In short, justification and sanctification belong together within a theology a transformation.[304]

The resurrection is, moreover, "the ultimate transformation" in a theology of transformation, for it "injects an element of surprise and hope into human life" and "makes it clear that our lives belong to Christ" (2004c:512). 'Embracing the eschatological reality' is "essential for a theology of transformation", argues Botman (2004c:512). Salvation or redemption is, more specifically, accompanied by "the hope of redemption" (Botman, 2007b:72). Stated somewhat differently, hope is "an important category of redemption" (2002b:24). Such hope is "eschatological hope" (2007b:70), "hope against all hopelessness" (2007b:70), "biblical world-transforming hope" (2007b:73) – and "must be expressed as a category of grace" (2007b:70), for it is no less than a "redemptive category of grace" (2007:70). Indeed, such hope exists as "a gift of grace", reveals "a mystery of grace", and appears as "a manifestation of grace" (2007b:70). Moreover, "[t]his eschatological hope does not start with Jesus" but "is foundation to the whole revelation of the triune God" (2002b:26). Clearly, Russel Botman's soteriology is governed by *an eschatological logic of hope.*[305] Indeed, as he himself argues (2001b:73), "real hope that will save our world and its people will have to be rooted in eschatology and received as a gift of grace."

In short, the 'vitality' of Reformed theology lies in the affirmation that "our lives are lived by grace" (Botman, 2003a:383). Such grace – as it is manifested in reconciliation, truth, and justice – enables and encourages human flourishing. Post-apartheid theology 'on African soil' – such as a theology of transformation – employs "the theme of reconciliation as its blazing flag", which signals and guides contemporary African (public) theology (Botman, 2011a:8). Even more, reconciliation would become "the *pivotal* instrument for seeking restoration of human dignity after the apartheid wars and the anti-apartheid struggle"

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[304] For Botman, it is specifically the relationship between justification *and justice* that is in view here (2002a:15) He argues that "[i]t is a scandal to people who are dying daily of poverty, violence and oppression when we postpone discussion on the relationship between justification and justice, treating the latter as merely a matter of ethical application" (2002a:15). He therefore insists on "the *doctrinal* connection between justice and justification" and points out that "[it] would be a betrayal of everything that Christianity has learned about justification after Auschwitz and apartheid" if this connection should be broken or lost.

[305] Dirkie Smit also addresses the notion of the logic of Botman's thought, and specifically works out a 'theological logic' of Russel Botman's commitment to transformation – which comes to expression in his concern for (1) vocational spirituality, (2) responsible citizenship, (3) complex obedience, and (4) hopeful agency. See Smit's as yet unpublished lecture on Russel Botman's life and work, entitled "'Making History for the Coming Generation'" (2015), presented as the first Russel Botman memorial lecture on 19 October 2015.

(2006b:75; my emphasis – NM) in that human dignity corresponds with various dimensions of "the economy of salvation" (2006b:82). Russel Botman therefore opts for an interpretation of "[t]he restoration of human dignity [as] seen through the lens of reconciliation" (2006b:76) which portrays human beings as *dignified human beings.*

3.4.6   Dignified human beings?

Salvation as reconciliation has to do with human dignity (1999a:115). The dignity of human beings is grounded in the affirmation that "God created humankind in God's own image", argues Russel Botman (2006b:83). Indeed, this conception of human dignity – as embedded in the creation of humanking in "the image and likeness of God" – has "played a central role in Christian tradition" and also "proven influential in the formation of modern conceptions of human dignity" (2006b:83). Positively, this means that modern understandings of human dignity maintain the conviction that "human beings possess a dignity that must be respected by others, including the state" (2006b:83). Negatively, this means that "infringements on human rights amount to violation of image and therefore also of one's likeness to God" (2006b:83).[306]

Exactly this would happen in South Africa, "under the auspices of the apartheid regime", where the human dignity of many people would be threatened (2006b:72). Indeed, "[a]partheid was a crime against humanity" in that "[i]t was constructed to destroy the human identity of black people" (1996c:160).[307] This would emerge "from a complex of theological, political, and historical dimensions" (2006b:72). Reformed theology would not be exempt from this. As Russel Botman points out (in the words of the charter of ABRECSA), 'the total disregard for human dignity' is portrayed as a legacy of Reformed theology in South Africa –

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[306] This "focus on questions of human rights" would be the particular contribution of black theologians and liberation theologians, notes Botman (2011a:6), and would be accompanied by "more specific social and theological analyses of racism." This would, for example, culminate in "[t]he specifically theological condemnation of apartheid as a heresy" and "the production of several internationally prominent theological texts, including the Kairos Document and the Belhar Confession" (2011a:6).

[307] Elsewhere Botman writes that "apartheid has broken the dignity of *all* people, whether they were perpetrators or victims. It dehumanized black people through wide-ranging inequalities but it also distorted the human dignity of both black and white in the course of its history. South African black theologians, such as Simon Maimela, Desmond Tutu, and Allan Boesak, have argued since the 1970s that the liberation of black people would lead also to the restoration of the human dignity of whites. The freedom of blacks from suffering and oppression removes the need for the distortion of the human dignity of whites by the consequent erosion of white supremacy and white superiority. This is the full extent of the gift of reconciliation" (2006b:74; my emphasis – NM).

particularly as it was and is made manifest in political oppression (such as that which apartheid inflicted) and economic exploitation (such as that which first apartheid, and thereafter globalisation inflicted) (2000a:203). After apartheid – in the (1996) constitution of post-apartheid, democratic South Africa – human dignity would be identified as both "a core challenge" (2004b:317) *and* as "[t]he first and foremost value on which South Africa's democracy is found" (2004b:317).[308]

However, threats to human dignity did not disappear with the demise of the apartheid regime, but "are still prevalent… in the context of economic globalization" (2006b:72). Indeed, for Botman "[t]here is a continuum in the relationship between economic globalization, the hardening of poverty, ecological destruction, and growing social despair" (2003a:383). And yet globalisation, just like apartheid, is no accident. Botman traces (2003a:383) its 'genesis' to "an economic theory that has lost whatever moorings it once had in ethical and moral philosophy". The consequences of this is dire (2003a:383), for it has resulted in "the economic sacrifice of a whole continent". "The future of Reformed theology rests with its response to this global reality," writes Botman (2003a:383). Indeed, "the quest for such a response" must locate theology "at the margins where excluded people suffer and die" (2003a:383).

For Russel Botman, such a quest is "a quest for hope" (2002b:26). He writes of global despair and hopelessness which "started to foster when Nelson Mandela was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment" (2002b:24) and "[t]he unmaking of social hope [which] has continued ever since the 1960s to the very day in which we are now called to confess hope in Africa" (2002b:25). Yet Botman (2004c:514) regards hope as "a precondition for sustainable livelihoods, for fighting poverty, for seeking reconciliation and justice, for building stronger families, for standing firm against the scourge of AIDS and for pursuing peace in the city." This is what Botman describes as "a new religious horizon of hope [that] has arisen" in the

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[308] Russel Botman's interesting description of the role of the concept of human dignity with the South African constitution merits a longer explanation. In his words (2006b:73), "South Africa's democratic constitution marked the concept of human dignity as foundational and its restoration as the country's crucial public responsibility. As such, the constitution presents itself as a driving force for practices that can overcome past injustices that have threatened humanity and caused wide-ranging distortions of human dignity… [Moreover, t]he constitution flows out of the idea that the restoration of human dignity requires the government to accept responsibility for fulfilling and protecting the social rights of people, especially of the most vulnerable. The restoration of human dignity must be seen as more than a mere social goal. It ought to be regarded more specifically as an institutionalized practice within the public and private sector as well as in civil society."

wake of September 11, 2001 and the earlier transition into the new millennium, in 2000 (2002b:22). He would argue that, in light of the challenges posed by economic globalisation, the church must be a 'sphere of hope' (2004c:516) (which addresses global despair and particularly Afropessimism in an ecumenical way (2002b:22 – 26)) which 'confesses hope in action' (2002:27). This hope is much more than "anticipatory hope" (2002b:28), "secular hope" (2002b:26), "hope fullness" (2004c:516), "simple optimism" (2004c:516), "wishful thinking" (2004c:516), or "false hope" (2004c:516).[309] It is resurrection hope, "an act of hope that comes not from us", but which is "an act of God, coming from outside human beings" to "surprise hopeless people" (2002b:29).

Such hope has everything to do with human dignity, for it is "this-worldly hope for the twenty-first century" that hopes for "[t]he new acts that God is doing among us", namely "acts of liberation and humanization" (2002b:29). Christian hope – for Botman – is 'an act of God' which comes from outside "human beings, religious institutions, legal institutions, medical institutions or the governmental institutions" (2001:29). In short: "[h]ere, in a graceless, hopeless and brutal world the light of grace breaks the darkness of hopelessness" (2002b:29). The hope that Russel Botman has in mind is *transforming hope* (2007b:71), which is embedded in a "transformed imagination" and which leads to "the development of an imagination of hope" (2004c:516). Indeed, the hope that we need has to be born of our theological imagination, 'a dream of hope' so to speak, "that we need to confess and act upon" (2013:10). Yet it is a particular imagination that will help us understand the challenges of our time – globally, continentally, nationally – and not just any act of imagining and resultant hoping. We need prophetic, not popular, imagination, argues Botman (2002b:23) – for whereas 'popular imagination' is "itself imprisoned by despair", prophetic imagination points to a 'new horizon of hope' by telling stories – other stories, unpopular stories – of the future. The insistence on the future and on stories that shape identities is a particular hallmark

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[309] Indeed, for Botman, there are many things that hope is *not*. Hope is neither 'hope-fullness' nor 'simple optimism' (indeed, "optimism devoid of true hope is flawed" (Botman, 2013:18)) nor 'wishful thinking' nor 'false hope' (which would be a result of hope "that is driven primarily by economic growth and structure", according to Botman (2013:19; 2004c:516). Moreover, "the hope that Christians are called to confess in the twenty-first century differs radically from the hope manifested in the deterministic understandings of Marxism, modern Capitalism, and the Enlightenment" (2001:26) and so too Christian hope is not to be equated with 'the optimal political and relatively optimal economical, technological and high cultural moment in history' that Botman identifies with the transition into the new millennium (2004c:23). There are, in other words, finer nuances and distinctions between various forms of hope that Botman alerts his readers to – and yet the legacy of *Christian* notions of hope is itself not uncomplicated, in that it has often (as with the desctruction of the ecology and the AIDS epidemic) led to 'apathy', 'quietism', 'passivity' and 'paralysis'. Indeed, at times hope has become "a narcotic of the people" (2002b:27).

of religions and of religious people (2002b:23). Stories, as told through prophetic imagining, may indeed help us to regain hope in Africa (2002b:30). Indeed (2011d:605),

[t]he most crucial challenge for the future is to create a world that is better than the one we created in the twentieth century. The twenty-first century must see a better world; it must be a world of greater opportunities, a greener world, where wealth is shared, where we do not fight each other at every opportunity, and it must be a world where we learn to deal with conflicts and disputes in ways other than litigation and warfare. The difficulty is that we are still too close to the twentieth century and we are still very much the products of that century. A better, next generation will follow. However, the question remains whether we are able to begin to imagine what the world of the next generation could be like and what theological guidance they will have… If we want to make sense of this challenge that faces us, we have to look anew at the notion of hope, which – for me – brings us closest to the future generation. To work with the notion of hope is to pick up the telescope and focus it on a better future and imagine that it is here already and to work as though it is just around the corner. It is not yet here but once we have seen it, it becomes a generator of action.

This is the responsibility of African theologians, according to Russel Botman, and "South Africans, especially, should seize this moment to begin shaping an African Reformed theology" that is able to "recover and restore human dignity" (2006b:72). He outlines three post-apartheid discourses which have attempted to do exactly this, namely (1) the discourse of equality (which "restores dignity through the empowerment of dehumanized people" (2006b:74)), (2) the discourse of reconciliation (which "restores distorted human dignity on all fronts and offers the gift of unity and humane living" (2006b:74 – 75)), and (3) the discourse of *oikos* (which restores "the wholeness of creation and the wholeness of life as a gift of grace" (2006b)). Again, all three of these discourses are focused on the *restoration* of all of life, and in particular human life (2006b:74, 81).

Yet for Russel Botman, the individual dignity of each human being cannot be affirmed apart from the recognition that community plays a pivotal role in such affirmation. Human dignity is embedded in relationships and community, argues Botman (2003a:382), which is "God's remedy for social problems".[310] He consequently develops the notion of the household of

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[310] It is worth quoting Botman at length here (2003a:382): "The concrete person is a web of interactions, a network of operative relationships. A person is fashioned by religious, historical, cultural, genetic, biological, social, and economic infrastructure. Humanity is constituted covenantally. Such relationships are not mechanical; they allow for the individualization of the person without damaging the dignity of the human being. The dignity of human beings emanates from the network of relationships, from being in community. This is valid for redeemed community as well as created community. A human being created by God should not be reduced to the idea of a unique and free personal ego. As African Christians we cannot ignore the importance of the social and economic problems. God's remedy for social problems is community."

God, as the locality of such community (2006b:80 – 81).[311] Yet "the theological themes of the *oikos* and covenant of God" belong together in Botman's "own reflections on and rediscovery of the value of community" (2013:12; original emphasis). Indeed, not only *oikos* but also 'covenant' "[remain] an important theological category for re-imaging human dignity in our times" (2006b:85). Covenant is an expression of such relationality and community, for "[h]uman beings are capable of entering into covenant with each other because they are covenantal beings by nature" (2006b:85). Exactly because the dignity of human beings reside in God's covenant, both the "irrevocable gift" of community (justification) and the "vocation to life in community" (sanctification) (2006b:85) must be maintained. In short, "[c]ovenant is an anthropological reflection not only of what humans *do* but also of what humans *are*" (2006b:86; my emphasis – NM). Such human beings are dignified human beings, who live and flourish as covenant partners of God within the economy of salvation. Stated somewhat differently, human beings flourish where their dignity is restored, upheld, and cultivated.

3.4.7   Conclusion

"As an African" (2006b:82), Russel Botman was deeply committed to the challenges of despair, but also of the hopes and of the future, that Africans face.[312] Russel Botman's theology of transformation is therefore perhaps expressed best by "the first Reformed confession born on African soil to be received as having the same status as established confessions composed and adopted in Europe" (2011a:7) – namely, the Belhar Confession,

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[311] He employs the metaphor of *oikos* in this regard, which "focuses attention on the notion of the worldwide household of God" (2006b:80). This "household is a place of dialogue and its members are thus a community" (1995a:168). Moreover, "the *oikos* is a God-given place for living" that "enables relationship, evokes neighbourliness and living for the other rather than for mere greed and self-interest" (2006b:80). The household of God is the place of "shared and cooperative life" (2006b:81) wherein "dialogical communication", or "communication between people of different genders, ethnic origins, economic status, or religious orientation" is fostered (1995a:169). In short, "*oikos* reminds us that history is bound up with community, webs of relationships, belonging and life together. The *oikos* is a God-given space for living. It enables relationship, evokes neighbourliness and living for the other, rather than mere greed and self-interest" (2013:14; original emphasis).

[312] Throughout his work he calls for "justice, truth, and reconciliation for an abandoned continent called Africa" (2000c:361) – but even more, "[w]isdom will once again come down to the world from Africa" (2011d:606) in the form of "[a] proper African revolution" that works with "the idea of reconciliation in its connection to justice and unity" (2011d:605). Toward the end of his life, the idea of 'the African Dream' became an important part of Russel Botman's theological reflection (cf. 2013), not only in changing "international discourse… 'from Afro-pessimism to Afro-optimism'" (2013:18) but, more importantly, dreaming and hoping and acting on behalf of "the despondent youth" (2013:21). Hoping and dreaming "*for* young people" (2013:21; original emphasis) in dreaming "a new dream, a new African and Global Dream, wary of the trappings of the American Dream", would be characterise not only Botman's later theological thinking, but also his work and time as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University.

wherein "ethical commitment to justice [is] central to faith, confession, and the unity of the church" (1996a:91). However, Botman cautions that no prophetic theology (or prophetic theologians!) should be viewed on its own, as if it exists for itself, for to do this would be a 'mistake' (2007b:67).[313] Russel Botman is therefore not interested in 'the heroes' of transformation or 'the South African anti-apartheid prophets' – even in such illustrious figures as Martin Luther King Junior or Desmond Tutu or Nelson Mandela – but is focused on ("the theo-logic in the idea of") "following Christ" (2007b:66 – 67; 2000a:210; 2000e:49). Rather, such prophets and prophetic theologians "were never their own", for "[t]hey expressed Words that came from God's mouth" and pointed toward "the Fountain from which they drew the waters of life" (2007b:67). These 'prophets' and 'heroes' "spoke the words of a memory of hope encapsulated in the Bible" (2004b:71). A more apt description of Russel Botman as a 'kairos theologian' and a 'theologian of hope' would be hard to find.

As for Russel Botman's theology, it could be said that a theology of transformation cannot be content with final answers, responses, truths in which a simple choice between abolition or building, uprooting or planting, can be made (2000e:50) – for, as Botman points out (2000e:50), "[t]he quest for a theology of transformation is based on the acceptance of the fact that theology is always done on shifting ground." Therefore it cannot bút be 'hermeneutically restless', always open to the *kairoi* of dread and the *kairoi* of dreams (2013:15 – 17) – for "every now and again God gives us times in which a more complex calling beckons" (2000e:50). This 'theological quest' cannot but remember "the generation to whom the future belongs" (1996a:104), for a theology of transformation – which is embedded in an ethics of responsibility – must account for its responsibility towards the future. Herein "[t]heologians from the erstwhile apartheid divide" have a special responsibility "to give theological leadership in the time between the times" (Botman, 1996a:95 – 96). 'Dutch Reformers' and 'Black Reformers' in particular "will have to join society in a healing cycle of

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[313] It is worth quoting him more extensively here. He explains (2007b:66 – 67) that there is "a mistaken perception among us... that we actually thought that prophets saved our country from apartheid... This is deeply revealing of a mistaken mindset among us. We seem to forget that the words of the prophet (not the prophets themselves), that the message of prophetic theology (rather than prophetic theology), and that the language of the prophetic theologians (instead of their theology) carried South Africa through the nightmare of apartheid. Their words, message and language have a source that is infinitely more important than their theologies or they themselves might have been. We are often tempted to view the prophets alone, prophetic theology alone and prophetic theologians alone as the fundamental issues. And when they, and their theologies, exit the scene then progressive Christians feel alone, helpless and silenced. This perception is wrong. The words of the prophets, the message of prophetic theology and the language of prophetic theologians were never their own. They expressed Words that came from God's mouth. At a time such as this, the real question to ask should not concern the prophets, theologians and their traditions, but rather the Fountain from which they drew the waters of life."

transformation" (1996a:103). As Russel Botman concludes in his own doctoral dissertation (1993:vii): "[T]he task of transformation had only just begun. God Bless Africa!"

3.5   Conclusion

Gustavo Gutiérrez, Mercy Oduyoye, and Russel Botman provide classic Third World theological portrayals of salvation as abundant or full life, marked by whole and just relationships and communities, as an alternative to a world full of injustice, inequality, and violence. Salvation which is portrayed as communion (with God as well as others), wholeness, and reconciliation has a particular (future) world in mind. Salvation thereby provides an alternative vision to the various miseries that human beings are faced with in their daily lives. This second contemporary discourse portrays salvation as *liberation,* wherein a number of underlying assumptions or presuppositions are evident.

Firstly, the "account of the human condition and human relations" (to one another and God) (Jantzen, 1998:161) which this discourse on salvation presupposes is that human existence is marked by bondage and restraint – forced upon individual human beings and entire communities as a consequence of unjust political and economic structures. Stated somewhat differently, salvation is the response to the injustices wrought by human beings on fellow human beings, and which can be repaired by human beings alone. Salvation is, in other words, portrayed *ethically,* as the actions and initiatives taken by human beings to resist injustice and oppression in whichever form it may present itself, as that which distorts human dignity, human community, and relationships within community.

This necessitates, secondly, a particular soteriological response, wherein specifically sanctification is called upon as means of *resisting* this state of affairs. Justification precedes sanctification, but little to no attention is paid to the significance of justification in and of itself – rather, the emphasis is placed on sanctification. Justification remains the assumed precedent to sanctification, but it is the scope and depth of the implications of sanctification that is in view here. This does not exclude accepting the remedying grace of salvation in restoring relationships with God and others, but it is suspicious of any and all soteriologies that stop short of practical measures that give expression to such grace. In other words, in the procession of justification to sanctification, the emphasis falls on sanctification.

Thirdly, the role or response of human beings to their liberation from sin therefore entails nothing less than the call to resist injustices and inequalities in all their forms, and the striving toward a vision of a world marked by communion, wholeness, and reconciliation. Therefore human flourishing, in this second discourse, has to do with an inspiring and energising vision of such a future world made possible by God's liberation of human beings from (structural) sin and evil. The rhetoric of human flourishing is, in other words, evident in the fulfilled life, healing and dignity that human beings experience following Christ's work of liberation of and for them. Fulfilled life, healing, and dignity are granted by God, but it is the broader societal implications of this vision that salvation as liberation has in mind as its most imminent horizon of meaning.

These underlying assumptions point to *an eschatological logic of hope* that plays itself out in the variety of ways in which human flourishing is imagined within this discourse. Such a logic is evident in a set of rhetorical patterns that emphasise resistance, and employ liberation as a primary metaphor for salvation. In short, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Mercy Oduyoye, and Russel Botman provide different ways of imagining human flourishing that is shaped by *an eschatological logic of hope*, and therein play important roles in shaping a second contemporary discourse on salvation – namely, salvation as liberation.

223

Chapter 4

Salvation as Transformation

4.1   Introduction

Different forms of humanism have come to reach far more deeply into the landscape of salvation than theologians might want to admit, and this recognition highlights a third contemporary discourse on salvation. The transition to contemporary theology is inextricably bound to an 'anthropological turn' (or "anthropocentric shift", as Miroslav Volf would describe this (2011:59)) in the Christian faith. Herein, notes Charles Taylor (2011:186), "we are challenged to a difficult discernment, trying to see what in modern culture reflects its furthering of the Gospel, and what its refusal of the transcendent." As such, theologians are faced with "two untenable positions: either we pick certain fruits of modernity, like human rights, and take them on board but then condemn the whole movement of thought and practice that underlies them… or… we feel we have to go all the way with the boosters of modernity and become fellow travelers of exclusive humanism" (2011:186 – 187). The choice between *affirming* modernity and *condemning* modernity is, however, not the only options that avail themselves. Charles Taylor would see us following a third way, by "gradually find[ing] our voice from within the achievements of modernity… and from within these gains try to make clearer to ourselves and others the tremendous dangers that arise in them" (2011:187).

It is this way that neither uncritically embraces nor outright rejects the Christian faith as a resource to think about human flourishing, but realises that "[c]oncern with human flourishing is at the heart of the great faiths, including Christianity" (Volf, 2011:63). Herein lies both *conviction* and *challenge*; both the *belief* that "God is fundamental to human flourishing" and the *task* "to make plausible… the connection between God and human flourishing" (Volf, 2011:74). Indeed, making God the basis or foundation of human flourishing goes beyond both reconciliation and liberation, in that it calls for the very transformation of human beings themselves. If "God is the secret of our flourishing as persons, cultures, and interdependent inhabitants of a single globe" (Volf, 2011:74) – also in modernity, with its suspicion of transcendence and aims beyond ordinary life – then nothing less than the transformation of

human flourishing itself is called for. In other words, "God wills human flourishing" but this is not synonymous with "let human beings flourish", notes Charles Taylor (2011:173).

The task and challenge of holding both the affirmation of modernity *and* the affirmation of the transcendent together is particularly clear in the work of female – mostly feminist – theologians who garner their theological resources to respond to the oppression and suffering that human beings are faced with. The feminist theologian Serene Jones is, on the one hand, an apt example of a Reformed attempt to embed human flourishing in human beings' relationship with God. Ellen Charry represents, on the other hand, a retrieval of the classic trajectory in Western theology wherein both God and happiness is held together by way of an Aristotelian eudaimonism. These two theologians, who present two diverging examples of a theological affirmation of human flourishing, are accompanied by the South African feminist theologian Denise Ackermann, for whom abundant life is a blessing closely linked to 'the man on the borrowed donkey'. Together, these three theologians present a third contemporary discourse on salvation, wherein salvation is portrayed as transformation.

4.2   Grace? Salvation as God's gift of grace[314]
(Serene Jones)

4.2.1   Introduction

Serene Jones (1959 –), president of Union Theological Seminary in New York and former professor of theology (as well as former chair of Gender, Woman and Sexuality Studies) at the Yale Divinity School in New Haven, is a well-known Reformed, feminist theologian who has written extensively on systematic theology, particularly with regards to Calvin,[315] feminist theory[316] and trauma.[317]

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[314] A paper based on the material in this section was presented at the annual meeting of the Theological Society of South Africa that was held at the University of the Western Cape, 19 – 21 June 2013, with the title: "Flourishing? A critical analysis of salvation in Serene Jones." A paper based on the material in this section was published in the Journal for Theology in Southern Africa under the title "Graced? A Critical Analysis of Salvation in Serene Jones that Portrays Human Flourishing as Open to Relation, Beautiful, and Healed" (cf. Marais, 2015b).

[315] Cf. *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Jones, 1995); "Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law" (Jones, 2006); and "My Three Calvins" (Jones, 2009a).

[316] Cf. *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* (Jones, 2000); "Bounded Openness" (Jones, 2001a); and "Reading on the Bus" (Jones, 2004).

225

Theology is 'faith in search of understanding', and therefore the task of Christian theology must be taken up "by every new generation… with fresh vigor and creativity" (Lakeland & Jones, 2005:1). Five feminist convictions are central to Serene Jones as a theologian: (1) God wills the flourishing of women (as God wills the flourishing of all human beings); (2) a faith worthy of God's gifts of life, love and hope actively encourages this flourishing; (3) Reformed doctrines are to be critically engaged ("critiqued and treasured") with regards to the flourishing of women; (4) oppression and flourishing are to be understood together; and (5) both oppression and flourishing should be understood by way of who men and women are together (which would involve looking at more than gender, namely "also at the more intricate weave of dynamics, identities, and histories that makes all of us who we are") (Jones, 2006:22).

'Flourishing', then, is of central importance already in Jones' definition of feminism, and therefore a core task of feminist theology is creating "new structures for human flourishing" (Jones, 2006:31). Indeed, feminist theologians have a particular interest in the flourishing of human beings, argues Jones (2006:21):

Feminist theologians ask, in particular, How should we organize our social worlds so that women (and all people) are not oppressed but flourish? What economic, political, and social structures and laws need to be in place to ensure human and global well-being? What sort of rules might ensure fullness of life for all, including in that "all" the nonhuman world as well as the human?

In order to understand and analyse Serene Jones' interpretation of salvation, *both* the nature and function of Christian doctrine in Jones' thinking *and* the methodological strategies she makes use of in order to interpret doctrine must receive attention. For Jones, Christian doctrines are particular spaces in which the language or images of theology function in certain ways (2000:53). The doctrine of salvation is shaped in definite ways by Jones' feminist theological concerns, as outlined above, and is embedded within her understanding of Christian doctrine. Moreover, salvation or soteriology appears to be a constant concern or theme in her work, if in some books and articles less explicit than in others.

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[317] Cf. "Hope deferred" (Jones, 2001b); "Emmaus witnessing" (Jones, 2002b); and *Trauma and Grace* (Jones, 2009b).

4.2.2   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

Serene Jones' use of 'Christian doctrine' refers, in her own words, "to topics that regularly appear in the history of Christian theology and play a normative role in the shaping of Christian faith" (2000:16). Christian doctrines are "forms of lived, imaginative constructs" which "have the capacity to shape the identity and character of their adherents in positive as well as negative ways" and which involve "the language and images of theology" (2000:53). Christian doctrines, argues Jones (2000:54), are articulated from particular faith claims; claims that are "bold, normative, and powerful enough for persons to stake their lives on" (Jones, 2000:54). In other words, "doctrine provides the basic outline of the theological drama within which the Christian life unfolds", the "signposts (rules, orders, assumptions) that direct and structure Christian thought and action" (2000:16). In this sense, then, doctrine "refers to the collection of beliefs that shape how we view a particular topic in Christian theology" (2003:141).

In addition to such an understanding of doctrine, feminist theologians believe in "the constructive and emancipatory power of doctrine", writes Jones (2000:53). Particular views of doctrine are important to the task of feminist systematic theology, since "[d]octrines play an enormous role in mediating the gender relations that structure our lives and the multiple levels of oppression that restrict the flourishing of women" (2000:17). In Jones' own work, doctrines are sites or spaces of struggle for meaning, where reinterpretation and reconstruction stands at the heart of what Jones envisions theology today to be and to do. An important theological affirmation for Jones therefore is "the remaking potential of grace" (2000:53). Doctrine, she argues, has the power to facilitate this work (2000:53).

Serene Jones makes use of two images to describe the nature and function of Christian doctrine, namely the image of doctrine as lived imaginative landscape and the image of doctrine as drama (2002a:74).[318] However, she herself argues that Christian doctrine is more than the ideas that we espouse. Doctrines are spaces in which we live and make meaning of our world (2003:142). There appears to be at least four spaces which Christian doctrines

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[318] She has developed these images in a fuller way in an earlier work, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* (2000), and there she employs these very same images not only with regards to understanding Christian doctrine, but even more specifically to understanding the relationship between feminist theology and Christian doctrine.

occupy in her work, namely descriptive spaces, formative spaces, transformative (or reforming) spaces, and performative spaces.

Firstly, doctrines are descriptive spaces – or 'the space of the imaginary'[319] – for Jones. Doctrines describe Christian life, in that "[i]t is only through the complex interweaving of theology's many doctrines that we get a picture of full-formed Christian life" (2006:25). Doctrines "shape the way we view the world" (2006:26) and, in turn, how we view ourselves as those who embody particular faith identities. Jones makes special use of the image of 'lived imaginative landscapes' to describe the space "within which Christians stand to get their conceptual bearings in the world and the reality of God therein" (2002a:74). Doctrines are imaginative spaces that believers occupy or inhabit in order to "learn to negotiate the complexities of our living through them" (2002a:74). Doctrines describe the world in which we live through the belief systems that we espouse, the language that we use and the visions that we hold to. Doctrines also describe us, who and what we are as human beings (cf. Jones, 2003), and may therefore come too close for comfort to us.

Secondly, doctrines are formative spaces for Jones. Doctrines teach ("habits of thought and body"), shape ("not only what we rationally think about God but also what we desire and find beautiful with respect to the divine") and nurture the complex and thickly layered 'aesthetic texture' ("multiple desires, loves, dispositions, feelings, and affects") of faith (2006:24). Doctrines encourage certain 'forms of life' and shape "the kind of people we become… we are formed by their beauty" (2006:26). Doctrines push its descriptive function into formation, in that they provide the beginnings of a normative account on how we could (or should) be or live within this world and this life. Doctrines do not allow us to be mere spectators, but pull us into the complexities of faithful living.

Thirdly, doctrines are transformative and reforming spaces for Jones. Doctrines, such as the classical doctrines of sanctification and justification, explore the transformation of human beings by grace: "they describe how the sinner is forgiven by God and called to new life" (2000:50). Doctrines transform and reform believers into 'new modes of being', wherein the contours of the power of doctrines (such as the powers of sanctifying grace and justifying

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[319] Jones describes this, in the language of feminist theory, as "the world of the unconscious where all experience resides in unspoken fullness, where distinction exists but in constantly shifting form, and where identity remains as indeterminate as it is inexhaustible" (2006:28)

grace) are reshaped and reshaping the faith identities of believers (Jones, 2002a:73). Doctrines describe and form, but they may also take us to places where we would not go on our own. Doctrines fundamentally transform and reform how we view the world and ourselves and thereby how we live within this world and in relation to others.

Moreover, doctrines are, fourthly, performative spaces for Jones. Faith that is shaped by doctrines is more than rational, calculated, intellectualised knowledge of God. Faith is 'embodied' and 'affective', 'beautiful', born of 'wonder' and 'joyful awe', which moves human beings to think, to feel, to act, to live in particular ways (Jones, 2006:26). Doctrines ought to be enacted, and is therefore concerned with being particular (which Jones regards as the 'integrity' of moments, stories and lives (2009b:ix)) and practical (which Jones describes as 'enactment' or 'performance' in people's lives (2009b:x)). Jones relies on the tradition of J. L. Austin and the work of Judith Butler to explain that human beings learn (whether consciously or unconsciously) to perform (often unconscious) socially constructed scripts of what it means to be a person (2002a:60). She makes special use of the image of performance to explain what happens in the life of a believer when sanctified, because sanctification, like performance, has to do with excellence: "[w]hen one is sanctified, one performs and is performed by the script of divine love that comes to us in Jesus Christ, a script mediated to us ecclesially" (2002a:60). Jones describes doctrines as scripts or dramas, which Christian believers and communities alike 'perform' and 'enact'. This involves improvisation, because even though a script may have its own logic and flow, the enacting actors are tasked with improvising, embodying, playing the roles, as laid out for them by the particular script (Jones, 2000:20). Ultimately, however, "the power to perform [love] is a gift, not an inherent capacity" (2002a:61; cf. also 2000:66 – 67) even as "one is driven by the faith-filled desire to embrace with ever increasing conviction and skill 'the way of life abundant'" (2002a:62). Doctrines describe, form, transform and reform. However, doctrines are also 'at play' in our lives and in the world. Doctrines perform God's grace in our lives and world, and thereby perform us.

For Serene Jones, doctrine functions to describe, form, transform and reform, and perform particular faith identities in the lives of believers. This understanding of the fourfold function of doctrines is particularly evident in Jones' discussion of Calvin's interpretation of creation and law. For Calvin, she writes, creation is the theatre and dwelling place of our lives (Jones,

2006:26), while law is the portrait of a life and a way of life (Jones, 2006:33). Creation and law are 'aesthetic spaces' that sketch Christian faith and living as 'blessing', 'happiness' and 'joy' (Jones, 2006:34 – 35):

> Just as Calvin portrays the created order as witnessing to the aesthetic, powerful attraction of God, so too, the law witnesses to God's will for the world via its power to entice and excite. As with creation, it shines forth the wonder of God's beneficent goodwill towards us.

The nature and function of Christian doctrine arguably provides a helpful context as to how salvation functions in Jones' thinking and writing. A second important insight into Jones' understanding of salvation pertains to the methodological strategies she employs when interpreting doctrine.

4.2.3   Methodological strategies in interpreting doctrine

Jones employs a number of strategies, across various books and articles, to give form to her understanding of the nature and function of Christian doctrine, as outlined above. A particular strategy reveals, as it were, a particular understanding of salvation and embodies, in different ways, the four spaces in which Christian doctrine moves, as set out above. Moreover, through these strategies Jones responds to the questions of human flourishing, human and global well-being and fullness of life for all, as raised by her own understanding of the task of feminist theology. Another way in which Jones' methodological strategies could be understood is by way of the dialogue partners she engages with in each case: when she engages with (1) feminist theory, she does cartographical work; when she engages with (2) aesthetics, she does analytical work; when she engages with (3) trauma, she does reconstructive work.[320] In each instance, her choice of conversation partner shapes her methodology, and in each instance, her choice of methodology shapes the strategy which she uses to respond to the issue at hand.

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[320] In the foreword to Serene Jones' *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* (2000:vii), Kathryn Tanner argues for the importance of dialogue between Christian theology and other intellectual disciplines (Tanner herself engages with philosophy, which is also Jones' main conversation partner – through the work of prominent feminist theorists such as Judith Butler – in this particular book). Indeed, there is a clear trend or growth within the humanities (including literary studies) that engages with grief and trauma, argues Harold Bush (2010:202) – including books by Judith Herman (*Trauma and Recovery,* 1997), Cathy Caruth (as editor of *Trauma* (1995) and as author of *Unclaimed Experience* (2010)), Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil Smelser, Piotr Sztompka (as editors of *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004)), and Dominick LaCapra (*Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001)).

A first strategy that Jones employs, particularly evident in her book *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* (2000), is that of cartography, of mapping and remapping.[321] She uses two images to describe doctrines as shaped by the relationship between feminist theory and Christian theology: the image of theological dramas ("doctrines are the dramas in which we live our lives") and the image of landscape ("doctrines construct an imagistic and conceptual terrain within which people of faith locate and interpret their lives and the world around them") (2000:17; 2002a:74 – 75). Jones describes the task of mapping as follows (2000:19): "[t]aking up the role of cartographer, in the pages ahead I lay feminist theory over the terrain or landscape of Christian doctrine to see how the lines of theory might map the contours of theology." The aim of this, she points out, is not to reconstruct faith or the terrain of faith, but to provide travelling markers or signposts that could guide exploration through the same terrain of faith by way of new pathways (2000:19).[322] Doctrines provide 'distinctive theological landmarks' (or 'truth claims') within 'lived imaginative landscapes' (cf. the descriptive function of doctrines above) that orientates the believer and helps the believer to navigate the complexities of living (2002a:74). Doctrine is a landscape of faith, "the context within which [the believer's] living unfolds" (2002a:75).

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[321] She writes (2000:19): "I find the image of mapping to be a useful metaphor... Taking up the role of cartographer, in the pages ahead I lay feminist theory over the terrain or landscape of Christian doctrine to see how the lines of theory might map the contours of theology." Two critiques of Jones' methodology need to be noted in this regard. First, for Racher Muers (2002:140) "[t]he doctrines on which Jones focuses... all fall within the broad category of theological anthropology" with some brief considerations of the doctrine of God, christology and pneumatology (yet also in relation to theological anthropology). Christian doctrines, then, are in no way exhaustively discussed by Jones in this book. Her focus is specific, as Muers points out (2002:141) and therefore more work can and should be done in this regard. Second, for Ellen Armour (2003:212) this book mistakenly employs the notion of 'mapping' to describe its overall scope, for it "is more guidebook than map" – and she adds "as it must be". She therefore contests the metaphor of 'mapping' that Jones employs, and proposes instead that the metaphor of 'guiding' be used: "We use maps to get us where we have decided we want to go" (2003:212).

[322] Feminist theologians' engagement with classic Christian theology and doctrines in order to create new ways of understanding doctrine and theology, argues Joy Ann McDougall (2008:103), responds to an invitation extended by Rebecca Chopp (1997) to feminist theologians of her generation to engage classical Christian doctrines in their work. Other feminist theologians who "reconfigure the same cultural elements [of their own theological] hegemonic traditions for feminist ends" include, argues McDougall (2008:105), Elizabeth Johnson (with her book *Truly Our Sister*, 2004) and Wendy Farley (with her book *The Wounding and Healing of Desire*s, 2005). Elsewhere (2005:20) McDougall adds to this list Mary Grey (with her book *Sacred Longings*, 2004), Sarah Coakley (with her book *Powers and Submissions*, 2002), Stephanie Paulsell (with her book *Honoring the Body*, 2002)) and Deanna Thompson (with her book *Crossing the Divide*, 2004). Indeed, "all of these authors keep feminist faith with their traditions – not by blindly reiterating the past, but rather by joining in the classical work of theologians, re-envisioning Christian doctrines and symbols so as to address new cultural realities and intellectual challenges of the present time" (McDougall, 2008:122). Stated somewhat differently (2005:20): "By refracting their ecclesial traditions throught the prism of feminist theories as well as the fabric of women's lives, all of these theologians offer fresh interpretations of the Christian faith."

In *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology,* Jones is particularly interested in doctrines that relate to God's grace and the role they play in understanding our multiple identities (2000:19). Salvation is absolution and openness to relation (2000:68) – which articulates the vision of a God that wills wholeness and flourishing for all human beings (2000:75), particularly those that are broken, 'physically and in spirit' (2000:6). For Jones, the strategy of cartography has to do with a redescription of and reorientation within the landscape of faith, and therefore with formation (in particular a reformation of how Christian doctrines are interpreted when confronted with feminist theory), performance ('playing' the new, given faith identities we receive when our landscapes of faith have changed) and transformation.

A second strategy that Jones employs, most notably in her article "Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law (2006), is that of aesthetic analysis – which she describes as "to engage in an examination of a topic's quality as beautiful or as appealing and tasteful" (2006:22).[323] Within this strategy her aim is in line with her conviction that Reformed doctrines need to be both critiqued and treasured – indeed, she argues in the mentioned article that there are many ways to explore a doctrine. She herself chooses to explore the aesthetic character of the doctrines of creation and law by way of (1) a philosophical exploration of the concept 'beauty' and (2) a detailed exploration of the particular features of that which is regarded as 'beautiful' (2006:22 – 23). She finds this approach (which she terms "the approach of feminist theological aesthetics") useful because it links actions with desires with beauty: "what we do is profoundly affected by what we desire, and what we desire is deeply determined by our perceptions of what is beautiful" (2006:24). In another article, entitled "Graced Practices" (2002a), Jones argues for the image of 'adorned in freedom' to describe "the fundamental disposition we must take toward all we do" – which is a recognition of "the aesthetic quality of our enterprise" (2002a:70). She consequently describes the church (the community adorned in freedom), as "a community that embodies a very particular kind of beauty", "a community of the beautiful" (2002a:70).

Salvation, then, has to do with beauty – with the vision of a beautiful God that creates and shapes human beings, according to his image, to be and to become beautiful. For Jones, the

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[323] In her own words: "In my work as a theologian, I increasingly find aesthetic analysis a fruitful avenue of approach because it allows me to explore at a more complex level how Christian beliefs are formed" (2006:23). She already mentions this in an earlier article, "Hope Deferred" (2001b), where she already recognises the importance of developing a feminist theological aesthetic (2001b:228; 238).

strategy of aesthetic analysis does not only rely on a redescription of doctrines, but involves formation (such as the kindling of a fiery desire in us to make reality better), performance (such as revelling in our 'beautiful knowledge of God') and, ultimately, transformation (Jones, 2006:39).

A third strategy, as worked out in her book *Trauma and Grace* (2009b), is reconstructive imagining (2009b:xi). In *Trauma and Grace* (2009b), Jones attends to the relationship between violence and redemption (2009b:vii). In a word, this book deals with healing (2009b:1), with the question: "How do people, whose hearts and minds have been wounded by violence, come to feel and know the redeeming power of God's grace?" (2009b:viii). Jones uses 'trauma'[324] and 'violence' interchangeably in this book, and juxtaposes both to her understanding of 'grace' (2009b:ix).[325] A traumatic experience is an experience "in which a person or persons perceive themselves or another as threatened with annihilation, a force which they are helpless to resist and which overwhelms their capacity to cope", writes Jones (2002b:116). Grace speaks to the perceived threat and violence of traumatic experiences, in that it is "the incredible insistence on love amid fragmented, unravelled human lives" (2009b:xiii); a new story of self and the reimagining of a future (2009b:xiii – xiv). Trauma disorders the individual and collective imaginations of those involved in the traumatic event (2002b:119). In trauma, "images, a drama, a story, a vivid language" which draws together the experiences of disorientation and disillusionment with faith is therefore needed (2001b:228). Two interrelated faith claims shape this strategy, namely that (1) we are people who are broken by violence (and who live in a world broken by violence) whom (2) the healing power of God's grace and love enables to live in hope, love and grace. Imagination, argues Jones, is not fantasy (2003:142) or the construction of fantasy worlds (2009b:105), but all thought processes, conscious and unconscious, that helps each of us to make sense of our world (2003:142). Healing involves imagining a new story (2002b:128), and therefore believers are called upon to imagine "a world that embodies God's glory" (2009b:105)[326]; to

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[324] A traumatic event, argues Jones (2002b:117), is "an experience in which one perceives him- or herself or another to be threatened with annihilation". A traumatic event "provokes a feeling of utter helplessness on the part of the survivor" (2001b:117).

[325] Although "[h]er strategy of utilizing pastoral experience is a good one" (in that it helps to 'humanise' experiences of trauma), Harold Bush warns that Jones' repeated return to grace – or even the contrast between trauma and grace – may "strike readers as having a touch of glibness or the simplistic about it" (2010:203).

[326] In *Trauma and Grace*, Jones argues that attending to the complexities of trauma has to do with imagination: with reimagining a better future, with touching traumatised imaginations, with rediscovering old habits of imagination, with reinventing new habits of imagination (2009b:x). Ultimately, Jones regards the act of

become "storytellers, weavers, artists, poets, and visionaries… [who] help write the scripts of the Christian imagination… in a manner that seeks the flourishing of all people" (2002b:120). As such, Christian doctrine is "the theatre of imagination within which Christians stand as they interpret their world and give shape to their thoughts and actions" (2003:142). Moreover, "imagination is comprised as much of flesh and heart as it is of beliefs and well-formed ideas" (2009b:161). Imagination involves both vision *and* body, both mind *and* heart, both language *and* living.

This strategy portrays trauma as ruptured, disordered imagination (2009b:19) and salvation therefore as healed, (re)ordered imagination (2009b:38). Salvation or grace has to do with imagination – with the vision of a world which reflects God's glory and God's goodness, in which human beings find meaning and healing. The strategy of reconstructive imagining is a pastoral strategy which aims to address the violent and disruptive forces of trauma upon the thought worlds and thought stories ("that we live with and through which we interpret the world surrounding us") of believers (2009b:20). For Jones, the strategy of reconstructive imagining does not only rely on a (re)description and (re)ordering of the world in which we live, but also involves formation (such as an envisioning of a world filled with God's glory), performance (in which we embody, collectively, our visions of a good world and 'life abundant') and transformation.

Serene Jones deals with a wide array of topics, in which she focuses her scholarly and pastoral attention on 'grace', by which she aims to deal with the challenges that oppression (cf. Jones, 2000) and suffering (cf. Jones, 2009b) bring to Christian faith. The three methodological strategies outlined above portray salvation (in Jones' thinking and work) as having to do with openness to relation, beauty and healing. However, Jones centres or grounds these various nuances of her understanding of salvation in what she calls 'grace'.

4.2.4   Salvation as God's gift of grace

Salvation is repeatedly described by way of 'grace' or being "saved by grace" (Jones, 2002a:57). Salvation stands at the heart of Serene Jones' thinking and writing, across her

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envisioning or imagining as central to the task of Christian theology: "finding the language to speak grace in a form that allows it to come toward humanity in ways as gentle as they are profound and powerful" (2009b:x).

treatment of various topics and in her dialogue with various issues. She herself admits that she wants to do constructive theological work.[327] In such work, she argues (2001b:24), the perceived audience to whom doctrines speak is particularly important. Therefore grace has to do with "the soteriological significance of our practices" (2002a:53); with faith (2001a:57)[328], healing (2001b:240), and above all, love (2002b:124). Moreover, grace is an event ("the event of Jesus Christ coming to dwell in our midst") and a story ("the story of God with us") (2002a:56). It is the space or presence in which the lives of human beings unfold (2001b:228). Grace displays God's love for creation and for all human beings; indeed, divine love is crucial to understanding what Jones means by divine grace.

God relates to human beings in grace by justifying and sanctifying us (Jones, 2003:155). Salvation or grace can therefore be described by way of two 'themes' (of the Reformed tradition, she adds) or 'terms' or 'concepts', "which traditionally describe what grace accomplishes in the community of faith" and "define – at least at an ideal level – our most basic disposition toward all we do" (Jones, 2002a:54). The twofold character of living grace is justification and sanctification (2000:49; 2002a:57). These two doctrines are complements of each other, and therefore the dynamic interplay between these two doctrines must be maintained, argue Jones (2002a:55) – because they always function together, "as two dimensions of a singular grace" (2002a:58). Stated somewhat differently, grace saves us in two interrelated ways: by freeing us (justification) and by forming us (sanctification). Justification and sanctification together describe or 'image' (a unified) saving grace (Jones, 2002a:58).

Justification is 'the freedom of practices' or 'justifying grace': "it sets us free to practice freely and with joy" (2002a:55). The term 'justification' comes from the Latin *justum facere*, which means "to make just" or "to pronounce just" (2000:56). Justification, for Jones, has to do with freedom, with what we do not have to do as those who have received the gift of grace. In justification, sinful human beings are made righteous by God's own divine judgment, so that their lives are juridically remade (2000:57). The decision remains God's, emphasises Jones (by way of Calvin); the forgiveness and love that flows from that decision therefore

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[327] In her own words: "I believe that the deconstructive [apophatic] moment needs to be always accompanied by the constructive (cataphatic) moment of normative assertion" (2001a:56).

[328] Jones defines 'faith' as "a state of trust, a form of embodied knowledge in which one knows that one's life is held, fully and completely, in the reality of God's grace" (2001a:57).

emphasises that we are saved by grace alone (2002a:63 – 64).[329] Salvation rests in God's decision to choose us, to forgive us, to love us (2002a:64). Jones makes the point that justification chiefly has a describing function, in that the sheer givenness of grace – no more and no less – is emphasised. This may lead to practices of thanksgiving – with the desire to praise God, to please God, to delight in God – in which "one cannot help but seek to conform one's life to the will of the One who so loves" (2002a:66). Yet practices of thanksgiving, like practices of excellence, flow from this central affirmation, namely that one cannot and does not have to earn the love of God (2002a:66).

Sanctification is 'the excellence of practices': "empowered to perform, in disciplined beauty, the reality of grace in our midst" (2002a:55). The term 'sanctification' comes from the Latin *sanctificatio*, which means "to be made holy or saint-like" (2002a:59). Sanctification, for Jones, has to do with excellence, with what we can do as those who have received the gift of grace. Sanctification describes "the form of the holy life", "the concrete forming power of grace", and "certain patterns of living" (Jones, 2002a:59). In sanctification, the lives of human beings are transformed or materially remade (2000:57).[330] Jones makes use of the image of adornment to describe how grace functions in the life and becoming of the sanctified believer: "[w]hen one is sanctified, one is regenerated, formed anew – adorned by the grace of God's redeeming love" (2002:61). Jones make the important point that sanctification has a predominantly shaping or forming function, and therefore the formative, transformative and performative functions of Christian doctrine will be particularly useful in pointing out the "determinative work of grace in Christian lives" (2002a:61).

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[329] Noted Calvin scholars, such as John de Gruchy (1997) and Donald McKim (1997) have the highest regard and praise for Serene Jones' doctoral study and first book on Calvin's *Institutes*. For De Gruchy, her *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* "offers a fresh approach to our understanding of what Calvin was trying to do in the lectures which became his Institutes" (1997:271). For McKim, even though "[Jones] provides a non-traditional way of reading Calvin" (1997:167), "[t]raditional approaches to Calvin must now engage [*Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety*]" (1997:168). De Gruchy also mentions that "Jones' examination of Calvin's use of rhetoric in the Institutes… [are a] little repetitive at times", yet adds that "the discussion is always interesting and invariably illuminating" (1997:272). McKim is particularly interested in how Calvin saw himself as interpreter of Holy Scripture – which Jones does not address in this book – and wonders what this insight (which other Calvin scholars have highlighted as a basic perception) may have on Calvin is understood (and understood to function) rhetorically (1997:168). Clearly, the possibilities for rhetorical analyses of Calvin's work is as of yet far from exhausted, especially in conversation with more traditional approaches to and interpretations of Calvin.

[330] For Calvin, writes Jones, the process of transformation was twofold, entailing mortification (through which "believers come to see their sinfulness and turn away from it") and vivification (through which "believers are reborn and given new being in Christ") (2000:57).

Sanctification and justification are inseparable for Jones, in such an intense way that the one calls for the other. Grace cannot possibly be understood only by way of justification or only by way of sanctification, argues Jones. Therefore an understanding of the one immediately calls for the augmenting, complementing, fortifying presence of the other. The (sanctifying) forming power of grace is inadequately understood when it is understood in separation from the (justifying) freeing power of grace, and vice versa (Jones, 2002a:63). Sanctification can become "an overwhelming burden to people if they forget that God's love for them does not depend upon the excellence of their practices" (2002a:62) if unaccompanied with justification's complementing understanding of grace. So too justification needs sanctification's understanding of grace, if it is to be justification that bears fruit: "[w]hen one comes to know the freedom that grace affords, one cannot help but take up a posture of thanksgiving that allows the form that grace offers to take hold" (2002a:66).[331]

The point is made, then, that for Jones the doctrine of justification and the doctrine of sanctification (1) are deeply interrelated ("the two are part of an indissoluble whole… these two descriptions of grace should ideally be spoken simultaneously") and therefore (2) do not follow in any fixed, particular order ("neither should precede or follow the other in order of importance or stature, lest believers fail to grasp the twofold character of grace that holds them") (2002a:68).[332] Rather, the doctrines of justification and sanctification are folded deeply into each other's logic of grace (2002a:66).

What is the faith identity of the person who is described, formed, transformed and reformed, and performed by the doctrines of justification and sanctification? Jones argues that such a

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[331] Differently stated (Jones, 2002a:68): "When sanctification is given priority over justification, we lean toward Pelagian 'works righteousness'... when justification is given priority over sanctification, we lean toward antinomian carelessness. When both exist in simultaneous fullness, we lean in neither direction but stand upright, supported equally by both as the benefits of life abundant in Christ embrace us."

[332] Yet Jones herself allows for some maneouvering space in her argument here on the order of the relationship between justification and sanctification. In her remapping of the doctrines of justification and sanctification in *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* she argues that a more meaningful way in which to "narrate conversion in women's lives" 'should' (she thinks) entail telling the story of God's judgment and mercy in reverse – in her words, "starting with sanctification and its rhetoric of building up instead of with justification and its initial language of undoing" (2000:63). Arguably she refrains from advocating for a fixed order within the relationship here, where sanctification always precedes justification, but makes her case for "changing the order of the two doctrines" so that she may stay true to the feminist theological agenda of the book. She herself confirms this: "[t]his feminist theologian is thereby able to proclaim, from a Christian perspective, that... God desires to empower and liberate women rather than to break what little self-confidence they have" (2000:63). Yet for some, like Joy Ann McDougall, an inversion of the order of the two doctrines are clear: "Siding with John Calvin (and Karl Barth over Martin Luther), Jones inverts the order of sanctification and justification, giving women first a narrative of 'building up' rather than tearing down" (2003:294).

person, who "stand[s] in the conceptual space carved by these metaphors", is simultaneously a justified sinner and a sanctified believer (2000:58).[333] Justification and sanctification has to do with the descriptive, formative, transformative and performative nature and function of grace. Grace describes human beings as justified sinners and sanctified believers, as those who have received the gift of freedom and who are shaped by practices of excellence. Grace forms or shapes human beings (and their living patterns) into that which embodies God's will. Human beings are therefore formed and empowered by grace and by the gifts of the Spirit to flourish. Grace also has transformative power, by which Jones means that human beings "can be converted, changed, redeemed, reborn, remade" (2000:52). Finally, grace performs human beings as much as grace is performed by human beings: "when we perform and are performed by grace, our lives take on the form that we are" (2002a:60; 2002a:73).

Grace which describes, forms, transforms (and reforms), and performs the faith identity of believers also call for the practice of this very faith in a saving, loving God that believers claim. Jones has a particular concern for the relationship between doctrine and practices, since practices embody (and thereby portray, display or even betray!) the nature and function of Christian doctrine. For her, the knowledge of faith is "a deeply engaged, self-involving, and trusting form of knowledge" (2002a:56). Doctrine is inseparable from practice, because Jones focuses on more than "a set of abstract claims about theological hypotheticals" (2002a:74). Jones makes the methodological choice to reflect upon "a concrete set of substantive theological claims" which is by implication embedded and shaped by particular practices (2009b:x) – in other words, "doctrines 'practice' us" (2002a:75). For instance, she describes trauma or violence as "excruciatingly particular" and grace as "vibrantly particular" (2009b:ix). Moreover, the doctrines of sanctification and justification provide a 'distinctive orientation', 'a basic disposition' to practices that, in turn, describes, forms, transforms and performs practices that 'seek excellence' and 'celebrate freedom' (2002a:68 – 69). The practices of the church community embody "patterns of Christian living", which reveals her as a beautiful community, shaped by the freeing grace of justification and the forming grace of sanctification (2002a:70).

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[333] Jones associates justification predominantly with Martin Luther and santification predominantly with John Calvin. She goes so far as to describe the person graced as one who 'stands' as "Luther's justified sinner" and "Calvin's sanctified believer"! (2000:58)

A last word on Serene Jones' understanding and interpretation of salvation involves sin. For Jones, sin is grace denied (2000:94 – 125) which distorts our perceptions of ourselves and our world (2001a:58). 'Sin' has an important heuristic function in formulating 'grace': in the space of the doctrine of grace, writes Jones (2001a:58), "one cannot help but be both epistemologically sceptical… about one's ability to perceive reality without distortion and also ontologically certain… about the truth status of one's graced state before God."

Salvation is God's gift of grace,[334] whereby human beings are freed (justified) and formed (sanctified). The three methodological strategies, as outlined above, sketch this grace as openness to relation (as in the strategy of cartography), beauty (as in the strategy of aesthetic analysis) and healing (as in the strategy of reconstructive imagining). Human beings who are saved are graced; human beings who are graced are open to relationships with other (human and nonhuman) beings and God, are beautiful, and are healed. Salvation is expressed in freedom and excellence, and takes the concrete forms of openness to relation, beauty and healing. Moreover, salvation (like redemption[335]) is born of God's gracious, embracing love for all human beings and for the whole of creation (2001b:214). Human beings are loved (and thereby enabled to love), which is our salvation. In Serene Jones' thinking and writing, 'saved' means 'loved', in that salvation is transformative: saved, redeemed human beings are open, beautiful and healed. Salvation means transformation by God's love. Yet exactly this is the point of Jones' understanding of flourishing: that God wills human beings to be open, beautiful and healed. The event and story of salvation finds expression in the vision that God wills the flourishing of human beings.

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[334] Although grace is not a static given, in that "[w]hatever grace we see… will and should be a grace haunted by the ghost of the violence it addresses, a grace that continually vanishes and then returns" (Jones, 2002b:128).

[335] Jones understands redemption as "the reality that not even death on a cross can cause God to withdraw God's love from those whom God has elected"; as God's refusal to turn away from us; as God's choice to take death into Godself rather than abandon us to death and sin (2001b:241). Redemption means 'God-with-us', at any cost, for Jones. Some, like Stephen Webb (2001:509), argues that Jones' "whole line of analysis begged to be applied to the issue of abortion in direct and creative ways" (whereas the article itself focuses only on infertility, miscarriage and stillbirth – and very clearly not on abortion). For others, such as Margaret Kamitsuka (2011:103), Jones' theological reflections on women's reproductive issues (and for Kamitsuka, including abortion) "is the most profound theological statement about women's reproductive realities to appear since Ivone Gebara's "The Abortion Debate in Brazil" (1995).

4.2.5   Graced human beings?

The vision of the flourishing of all human beings describes and forms (but perhaps also transforms and performs?) Serene Jones' theology, and particularly her interpretation of salvation as grace. Indeed, the feminist theological conversation (cf. Brock et al, 1995) on happiness and well-being cannot be understood without understanding how feminist theologians use the term 'flourishing' within their work.[336] The five feminist convictions that shape Jones' theology (as outlined above) revolve around the notion of 'flourishing'. Yet, what does it mean to flourish? How does one flourish?

Serene Jones repeatedly uses the term 'flourishing' in relation to grace and salvation in her work, but does not provide a clear definition of the term in any of her books or articles.[337] There are, however, two moves that may guide an understanding of how she understands and uses 'flourishing' in her writing. The first move is related concepts that are used in close proximity to her references to 'flourishing', and the second (perhaps more helpful) move is understanding the opposite to 'flourishing' in Jones.

In a first move, Jones uses the concept 'flourishing' in close proximity to terms such as 'love', 'life abundant', 'healing', 'wholeness', 'glory', 'delight' and 'beauty'. Human beings flourish when they live abundant lives, by which Jones points to a way of life as revealed in Jesus Christ. Human beings are those loved unceasingly and graciously by God (2003:141). Jones writes that human beings "shall flourish if we can learn to love God, ourselves, and our neighbors and to care responsibly for the teeming world of which we are a part" (2003:146). God, out of love, desires what is good for us, and therefore God desires our health and our

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[336] Although not a feminist theologian by admission (in fact, she prefers not to be referred to as a feminist theologian at al), Ellen Charry's work may serve as an important indication and example here. Her book, *God and the Art of Happiness* (2010) (which follows on an earlier book, entitled *By the renewing of your minds* (1997)) deals with the growing conversation of happiness within theology (cf. footnote 1). For her, the Christian vision of human happiness is shaped by the conviction that God wills human beings to flourish. She echoes, in many ways, Serene Jones' understanding of how Christian doctrine functions, even though her work has an almost exclusive pastoral focus. This will be explored in greater detail in my PhD thesis, entitled "Imagining Human Flourishing? A critical analysis of contemporary soteriological discourses."

[337] And yet it remains crucially important to attempt to do so, as she herself argues: "As with any exercise in theory or theology, one's first task is to define the topic upon which one is reflecting" (2001b:229). Arguably, 'flourishing' or the vision of flourishing in Jones' work never forms the focus of her reflecting, but is treated by way of her reflections on other topics – be they reproductive loss, (infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth) as in "Hope Deferred" (Jones, 2001b); 9/11, as in "Emmaus witnessing" (Jones, 2002b); or the role of the church within a postmodern context, as in "Bounded openness" (Jones, 2001a).

flourishing (2003:146). The law acts as guide to our flourishing (2003:146). Inversely, God hates sin[338] because it threatens and destroys our flourishing, and thereby "opposes God's will for our flourishing" (2003:149). Sin manifests in oppression and suffering, which Jones regards as the exact opposite to flourishing.

In a second move, Jones contrasts the concept 'flourishing' with 'oppression'. Conversely, 'oppression' is the opposite to or lack of 'flourishing', which she defines as "dynamic forces, both personal and social, that diminish or deny the flourishing of women" (2000:71). Jones describes six features of oppression. Firstly she distinguishes between material and cultural oppression, which (she argues) ought to be analysed differently but understood together (2000:72). Secondly she writes about the power relations and dynamics that shape social worlds, and which constitute our lives. Power may enhance or diminish the control a person experiences (and has), and is therefore not neutral or objective (2000:72). Thirdly, the collective or institutional and the individual or personal "character of oppression" ought to be distinguished but also held together (2000:73). The personal as well as the collective or institutional is political (2000:73). Fourthly, oppression is engaged and engaging; feminist discussion of oppression is done 'from the inside' (2000:74). Fifthly, feminist visions of 'women's wholeness' and 'flourishing' form a 'regulative ideal', "allowing one to assess the present standards of justice, wholeness, and… 'flourishing'" (2000:75). Lastly, feminist theories of oppression are concerned with practice, in that they should "work for the good of women's lives" and "empower action for change" (2000:76).

If the inverse of Jones' understanding of oppression is applied in order to give an outline of what she understands as flourishing, the following could probably be said about what a vision of flourishing human beings may look like. Firstly, Jones' vision of flourishing human beings is both material *and* cultural, concerned with the whole of human life. Secondly, a vision of flourishing human beings has the power to shape social worlds and form our living. Thirdly, a vision of flourishing human beings is not only personal or individual, but also collective; not only collective or institutional, but also personal. Fourthly, a vision of flourishing human beings is engaged and engaging, involved and involving, both subjective and objective. Fifthly, a vision of flourishing human beings bears the responsibility of acting (or of being

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[338] She defines 'sin' accordingly: "Sin is something we do, both collectively and individually, in conscious and unconscious ways, when we live against God. Sin is also something that happens to us, what we suffer when other people and institutions harm us" (Jones, 2003:154).

expected to be performed) normatively, as a measurement of how well human beings are. Lastly, a vision of flourishing human beings is practical and concerned with practice.

Salvation in Serene Jones is a major shaping power in defining and determining her interpretation of 'flourishing'. These two moves, in which the proximity of terms related to 'flourishing' and understanding 'oppression' as opposite to 'flourishing', guide an understanding of how Jones means to articulate and use the term 'flourishing'. An important characteristic of Jones' use of 'flourishing' is the proximity of *a creative logic of love*. Flourishing is revealed in redemption, in "the reality of God's redemptive love for creation" (2001b:241) – moreover, with God's love for all persons and the whole of creation (2001b:241). God remains committed in God's love and redemption of human beings (2003:157), in that "God meets our sin with grace" (2003:155). Grace is 'unmerited love', which "emphasizes the fact that God seeks to redeem us not out of any externally imposed necessity but solely because God decides to do so" (Jones, 2003:155). Flourishing, for Jones, is enfolded in *a creative logic of love*.[339] However, God not only wills the flourishing of all people, but the flourishing of all of creation, writes Jones (2002b:124). Flourishing expresses an embracing hospitality of love – God's will is that all created beings, all human beings, all women and men and animals and plants and elements, flourish. Ultimately, however, flourishing is ultimately an act of envisioning and imagination.[340]

The event and story of salvation as grace finds expression in the vision that God wills the flourishing of human beings. Saved human beings (who are freed and formed by grace) flourish in that they are open to relation, beautiful and healed. This particular expression contributes to the broader and growing theological conversation on human happiness or well-being. Happiness, within this view, is experiencing the love of God, others and self. In other words, in Serene Jones' work salvation can also be defined as 'being loved by God' (Jones,

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[339] Joy Ann McDougall argues, however, for exactly the opposite to such an analysis or focus – namely, that the flourishing of all persons is, in Jones' work, constructed from a "future-oriented framework" or "eschatological perspective" wherein all persons, women included, "know themselves to be justified and sanctified in faith" (2005:22). In other words, it is not in creation that Jones, for McDougall, situates the notion of 'flourishing', but in eschatology. Indeed, for McDougall Serene Jones "departs from most feminist theologies that locate claims to women's full flourishing in the doctrine of creation" by situating "women's subjectivity within the eschatologically oriented doctrines of justification and sanctification (2003).

[340] Serene Jones' fondness for stories and poetry illustrates this well. There is scarce an academic article or book that she has written that is not in some way connected to a story or a situation that she was faced with. Not only does her incorporation of the mode of storytelling into her work illustrate the importance of imagination, but it also displays her concern for addressing the real life, everyday, practical challenges and oppression that she sees playing a role in the lives of human beings.

2002b:124). Being saved means being loved, and being loved means being saved. Happiness, then, is well-being sustained by love, or enjoying the pleasure of flourishing within the containment of divine life (Jones, 2000:65). Within this view, human beings who are 'saved' (or 'graced' or 'loved') are transformed into happy human beings that are open to relation, beautiful and healed.

But happiness does not just 'happen'. Theology, faith communities, believers are "to stake claims, to make normative judgments, to build structures – both conceptual and material – that enable human beings to flourish and live as God intended" (Jones, 2001a:51). Indeed, two fundamental conditions of enabling or empowering human beings to flourish are self-determination and freedom (2000:138). Yet the partnering work that may (and has to) be done to enable human beings to flourish does not negate the sheer givenness of God's gracious gift of life abundant. The final word on happiness and flourishing in the thinking and work of Serene Jones therefore belongs to the story of God's love for human beings (2000:155; cf. also 2001a:57):

[I]t is the story of a gracious God who out of love calls the world into being and seeks covenantal relation with it. It is the story of a God who seeks this relation for the good of these creatures, that they might flourish, loving God and one another and living together in relations of justice, peace and beauty.

4.2.6   Conclusion

Serene Jones' work on salvation must be understood from the (feminist theological) conviction that God wills the flourishing of all people (particularly women) and that Christians "are called to follow God's will and seek out conditions for that flourishing" (2000:52). The vision of the flourishing of human beings is an 'alternative story' and 'another economy of existence'[341] (Jones, 2001a:54) in which human beings are envisioned as 'loved

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[341] Arguably, it is here, with Jones' use of the concept 'economy', that the starkest contrast between her understanding of soteriology and her understanding of eschatology can be sketched. Soteriology envisions an alternative economy of existence (2001a:54) wherein human beings flourish, whereas eschatology explores human flourishing within the economy of ultimate redemption (2001b:240). Eschatology, for Jones, has to do with "the Christian vision of the world-as-it-should-be and the resilient texture of hope born of faith" (2002b:125). For Jones, then, it would appear as if eschatology is collapsed into the broader narrative of redemption. Eschatology is a form, the ultimate form, of redemption, and can therefore scarcely be understood separately from redemption. Redemption provides the broader context or meaning-making narrative for understanding eschatology. Yet it is exactly here where Joy Ann McDougall criticises Jones for abstracting ecclesiology and uncritically in following Luther (with his notion of the church as a community of saints) and Calvin (with his metaphor of the church as mother). More specifically, she "misses from Jones a sharper feminist

by God' and therefore enabled to be 'happy': open to relation, beautiful and healed. Theology (and womanist theology in particular), argues Jones, is and should therefore be transformative[342] and visionary[343] (2004:188 – 190). For Serene Jones, salvation – and finally the whole of theology – has to do with imagination, with visions of flourishing, happy human beings (2004:193) that are open to relation, beautiful and healed:

And what is theology, if not finally the poetry of wild fantasy, colored horses, and the touch of a lover's skin… and the realities such visions make possible.

4.3 Happiness? Salvation as living and being well[344] (Ellen Charry)

4.3.1 Introduction

Ellen Charry (1947 –), Margaret W. Harmon Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, has written extensively on Christian doctrine[345], issues regarding moral formation,[346] and the intersections between theology and psychology.[347] Recently her research has increasingly focused on the latter, to the extent that she is in the process of

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critique of the dangerous economy of gender complementarity" inherent in the reception of Luther's and Calvin's descriptions of the church (2003:294)

[342] By which Jones means "[R]eadable, beautiful, interesting theology that people both inside the academy and outside can and will read, theology that allows its reader, by virtue of its compelling vision, to think beyond the given, to crack open their present with hints of a future possibility" (Jones, 2004:188).

[343] For Jones, these visions have to do with "full, happy lives", "the good life", "a life well-lived" – in short, with human flourishing (2004:189 – 190). Visions of human flourishing occupy imaginative space, and therefore she views "the battleground of the imagination" as one of the most important battlegrounds in the struggle against oppression in years to come" (2004:190). Moreover, "churches, as distinctive, strong Christian voices, must be heard clearly in this struggle for imaginative space" (2002b:120).

[344] A paper based on the material in this section was presented as part of a theological training course (or "VBO-kursus") on virtues and happiness organised by Communitas (Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University), with the topic "Geluk: deugde-in-praktyk om te floreer" (Happiness:virtues-in-practice to flourish, 29 – 31 July 2014). A paper based on the material in this section was published in *Verbum et Ecclesia* under the title "Happy? A critical analysis of salvation in Ellen Charry that portrays human flourishing as healing, beauty and pleasure" (cf. Marais, 2015b).

[345] Cf. "The moral function of doctrine" (Charry, 1992), "Academic theology in pastoral perspective" (Charry, 1993), *By the renewing of your minds* (Charry, 1997), and "To know, love, and enjoy God" (Charry, 2002).

[346] Cf. "How should we live?" (Charry, 2003a), "On Happiness" (Charry, 2004b), "Christian witness to contemporary culture regarding sex" (2004a), and "The crisis of modernity and the Christian self" (Charry, 1998).

[347] Cf. "Positive theology" (Charry, 2011) and "The Necessity of Divine Happiness" (Charry, 2012).

writing a book on 'positive theology' and has been invited to present lectures at the Centre for Positive Psychology of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.[348]

Ellen Charry is best known for her work on classical theology and a theological engagement with the topic of happiness. "Theology," writes Ellen Charry (2004b:19), "is concerned with human happiness." For her, "to discount the importance of human flourishing is to misunderstand theology and its purpose", since theology is (1) about life in this world and (2) about the enjoyment of this life in this world (Charry, 2004b:19). Happiness may have to be redefined theologically, but it ought not be abandoned because it has come to be associated with hedonism or emotional euphoria, argues Charry (2007:31). Indeed, "it is far more rewarding to think of happiness in theological terms than in emotional terms" (Charry, 2004b:20).

She argues that the task of theology is "to help us know, love and enjoy God better" (Charry, 2004b:19). Dwelling in God implies both enjoyment and glorification, whereby individuals are blessed and the well-being of society is enhanced (Charry, 2004b:19). Theology is

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[348] This follows from her remarks in an interview that I had with her on Wednesday 3 April 2013 in Princeton, New Jersey. Professor Charry mentioned in this interview that she is the first theologian to be invited to lecture and present her research at this renowned Centre, where the so-called 'father' of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, resides and works. In the mentioned forthcoming book, wherein she wants to engage more fully with positive psychology than she had in previous publications, the interdisciplinary implications of her theological research in the matter of human flourishing and happiness will hopefully become even clearer. Yet Eric Johnson describes Charry's book on *God and the art of happiness* (2010) as already "an example of a Christian positive psychology" (2011:256). Charry's approach, he adds, is unusual and "radically different" from contemporary (positive psychology) research on happiness in that it is not based on naturalism and that it does not equate positive feelings with pleasure, but "offers a decidedly *theistic* understanding of happiness and human flourishing" that parts ways with the known and accepted empirical approach that positive psychologist have been employing for the last two decades (Johnson, 2011:256; original emphasis). Charry's approach, argues Johnson (2011:256), is helpful in that it extends the "far too basic, inchoate, and individualistic" understanding of happiness as "pleasure" or "fulfillment" to "one's relationship with God". If this is taken to be a first interdisciplinary implication of Charry's theological work on happiness and human flourishing, then a second interdisciplinary implication could surely be described as her "skillful weaving of self-love into a theocentric account of human wellbeing" (Johnson, 2011:256). In other words, Charry contributes (argues Eric Johnson) to positive psychological accounts of happiness and human flourishing by (1) providing a decidedly theistic (not empirical) account of happiness, and (2) including the notion of self-love in such a theocentric account. Yet this also comes at a price, one could point out, for in cutting 'her own paleoorthodox path' Charry does not cite many theological contemporaries (Johnson, 2011:256) but instead relies on her own biblical interpretations and references to some classic theologians. Paul Wadell points out that among these (including Boethius, Aquinas and Butler) "the pivotal theologian for Charry is Augustine" (2012:362). There may be many more intra- and interdisciplinary implications and restrictions to Charry's 'own paleoorthodox path' which cannot and will not be traced and explored in this study, but the point still stands: Charry's (recent) past and (forthcoming) future research on happiness and human flourishing is charting a theological way into a research focus long dominated by positive psychologists (cf. Johnson, 2011:256).

concerned with human happiness because God is concerned with the happiness of human beings.[349] Indeed (Charry, 2002:176),

God, not the church or modern scholarship, is the center of happiness. The means to happiness is the truth of God that is to goodness, beauty and wisdom. This is to say that God is the psychological and moral foundation, not only of personal fulfillment, but also of just societies.

Yet theology has often misunderstood and misconstructed its own purpose and task, argues Charry. She writes (1997:17 – 18) that she is persuaded "that over the course of centuries of action and reaction to the ups and downs of theological practice, theology has lost its ability to address questions of happiness and perhaps even goodness."[350] It is for this reason that she turns to the classic theologians – "who based their understanding of human excellence on knowing and loving God, the imitation of or assimilation to whom brings proper human dignity and flourishing" and who "held that knowing and loving God is the mechanism of choice for forming excellent character and promoting genuine happiness" (1997:18) – to (re)formulate the nature and function of Christian doctrine. Happiness has a 'soteriological calling', writes Charry (2010:xii), and therefore any understanding of happiness from her work will need to account for her understanding of salvation. Charry's understanding of salvation is embedded in her interpretation of the formative nature and function of Christian doctrine – which is, in turn, shaped by the methological strategies that she employs to interpret Christian doctrine.

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[349] As to the reasoning behind Ellen Charry's argument for the 'retrieval' of a Christian doctrine of happiness now, she writes (2010:xii): "With affection for pieties and theologies espousing self-denial, the redemptiveness of suffering and a towering fear of hell are out of favor; Christianity is in an upbeat mood, and Christians reassure one another that God loves and encourages them in their struggles. While this book is written to address older weaknesses in Christian theology, it addresses them in order to reclaim Christianity's offering of happiness from secular captivity." Charry's therefore addresses two challenges with this particular book, namely (1) an overemphasis on sin and hell in (Protestant) theology; and (2) secular definitions of happiness (2010:xii). Arguably, however, "[r]elatively little attention is... paid to the hindrances of sin on happiness" or "the role of Christ's death (and atonement) and resurrection in Christian happiness" (Johnson, 2011:257). Some account of the functioning of sin within a doctrine of happiness and an account of salvation that takes sin seriously is perhaps not adequately accounted for within Charry's theological portrayal of happiness and human flourishing, as some (like Eric Johnson, quoted above) would suggest.

[350] She refers to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre (who "has pointed this out for moral philosophy") and Charles Taylor (who "has chronicled the career of this loss since the Enlightenment") in this regard, and argues that these "narratives can be paralleled within theology" (1997:17).

246

4.3.2   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

For Ellen Charry, Christian doctrine means 'teaching and instruction' (*doctrina* in Latin and *dogma* in Greek (Charry, 2006b:152)). In her own work, however, Charry distinguishes between doctrine and dogmatics. "Doctrine," writes Charry (2006b:152), "came to denote a belief, theoretical opinion, dogma, tenet, or system of tenets in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries."[351] Dogmatics, she would argue (2005b:203), is "the elaboration of Christian doctrine as set forth in the three articles of the Nicene Creed, each article of which identifies one of the three ways in which God is known."

Yet it is with the nature and function of Christian doctrine, more than dogmatics or systematic theology, that Charry would be concerned. In her book *By the renewing of your minds* (1997), Charry argues that "classical doctrinal theology is pastorally motivated and that its end is human flourishing" (2010:ix). In this book, and in its sequel entitled *God and the art of happiness* (2010), three convictions shape her arguments regarding the nature and function of Christian doctrine, namely (1) that "[d]octrine is pastoral", (2) that "theology and spirituality belong together", and (3) that "the purpose of what seems to be practically irrelevant formulas such as God is One and Three is to promote love of God and nourish a godly life" (1997:xiii).

These convictions culminate, writes George Lindbeck (in Charry, 1997:xiii), in the argument that doctrines have 'love-promoting' and 'life-nurturing' force. In Ellen Charry's thinking, Christian doctrine has an overwhelmingly formative task (1997:18). Christian doctrine guides and shapes believers into those who know, love and enjoy God. This twofold function of doctrine, of guiding and shaping the lifes and identities of believers in particular ways, culminates in what Ellen Charry describes as 'the pastoral function of Christian doctrine', as the subtitle of one of her books attest to (cf. 1997).

Firstly, Christian doctrine guides or directs the life of the believer; alternatively stated, Christian doctrine has to do with knowledge. The foundation of knowledge and direction, more specifically, is "knowing and loving God" in that "life's goal is conformation to God" (Charry, 1997:4). Yet "development of character will not happen without knowledge" (1997:19). Indeed (1997:3),

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[351] She adds that "'dogmatic' is a seventeenth century Protestant term" (2006b:152).

247

[u]nless we center in God, Christians claim, we are lost. We do not really know who we are, from whence our life takes its orientation, or where we ought to direct our energies. Without God we are liable to float aimlessly at the mercy of volatile emotions and hormones or be seduced by less worthy companions than the maker of heaven and earth. Or we may turn to ourselves in a misguided search for fame, wealth or power.

Ellen Charry argues that "one of the tasks of primary religious doctrines is to guide believers" (1997:17). Yet Christian doctrine has to do with teaching and learning, and ultimately with knowledge and the conditions for knowing, and therefore Charry takes issue with what she regards as the predominant view of knowledge today. Purely objective, rational knowledge not only entails an outdated and overly idealistic epistemology (cf. Charry, 1993:102; footnote 16), but is also undesirable within theology. Virtue is an important aspect of what she calls 'good knowledge' (Charry, 2006b:157), for it expresses the need for God's grace in forming and transforming human beings. Knowledge is formative, in that there is an intimacy between the knower and that which is known (Charry, 2006b:166). Indeed, "the participation of knower and known in each other is the blessing of being known, knowing, and learning" (2006b:166).[352] Knowledge is, furthermore, a source of blessing because "[i]t requires being with, staying with, examining, and attending to something so that it yields to us as much of itself as possible" (2006b:166). This also pertains to the relationship between God and human beings. Charry writes that "God is blessed by our knowing him; we are blessed by knowing him" (2006b:166). Contemplation is an active, engaged, practical knowledge that values wisdom and goodness; Charry likens the contemplation of divine things to "absorbing the aroma of God" (2006b:166). Wisdom, moreover, is a particular form of knowledge (2006b:167):

[I]t is what remains in the soul after observation is complete. It is what stays with us after the impression that the encounter with the text or the lesson leaves behind – sometimes consciously and sometimes not. These insights nourish and expand us for good or ill... [G]ood knowing is to be taught by what one seeks to know. This is a moral and communal art that requires well-developed instincts and tendencies. When done well, it shapes the soul for a wise, good, and productive life. Good knowing is sapiential; it is only possible by divine grace.

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[352] Here Charry calls upon post-critical philosophy (and figures such as Michael Polanyi, Gabriel Marcel, Hans Georg Gadamer, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor) to support her point that "the knower shapes the known" and that "the known also shapes the knower" (Charry, 2004c:32).

Knowledge of Christian doctrine does not, therefore, only guide or direct the life of the believer, but also shapes and reshapes, forms and reforms both the knower and the known.

Christian doctrine, secondly, forms or shapes the life of the believer; alternatively stated, Christian doctrine has to do with wisdom.[353] Good knowledge is a form of contemplation that is directed towards wisdom. For Charry, the act of knowing is a skill or craft or art "by means of which the soul grows by God's grace" (Charry, 2006b:167). Good knowing is sapiential knowing, argues Charry (2006b:167): on the one hand it is "a moral and communal art that requires well-developed instincts and tendencies"; on the other hand "it is only possible by divine grace." Knowledge can enhance or damage one's own soul or the souls of others; however, sapiental knowing "shapes the soul for a wise, good, and productive life" (Charry, 2006b:167). Therefore the wisdom of God, or sapience, is the foundation of a life of dignity, a life lived well, a good life, a happy life. For her, there is an integral link between the knower and the known, in that the knower is emotionally connected to what is known, and that which is known is shaped by the knower. This she names 'wisdom' or 'sapience'. In both the Western *and* Eastern theological traditions, argues Charry (1997:4), God is regarded as "the origin and destiny of human happiness."

Although Ellen Charry does not and would not describe herself as a feminist theologian,[354] here she is, as she herself admits (1997:18), indebted to two feminist insights: namely, that (1) "some theological traditions have at times been so driven by cognitive concerns as to deny the role of affect and experience in religious knowledge", and that (2) suffering is redemptive in its own right ought to be resisted (because this is a view which "is not supported by the biblical materials or the tradition's strongest theologians").[355] These insights form an 'important impetus' in her work (1997:18). In her article "Welcoming Medieval Christian women theologians" (2003b) Charry makes the case for two additional insights (which she garners not, in this case, from feminist theologians, but from medieval women theologians):

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[353] Ellen Charry defines *sapientia* (Latin for 'wisdom') as "the response of loving God" and "the capacity to share in God" (1993:94).

[354] This follows from her remarks in an interview that I had with her on Wednesday 3 April 2013 in Princeton, New Jersey.

[355] Although not herself a feminist theologian, Charry's insights and work on human flourishing is appreciated by feminist theologians such as Leanne Van Dyk, who describes Charry's book (1997) as "deeply learned", "well written", "carefully researched" – in short, as "a prophetic call to professional teachers of theology to renew the tradition of teaching doctrine for the formation of virtue and for the knowledge of God" (Van Dyk, 1999:104).

(3) that imagination is one of the greatest contributors to Christian theology (2003b:2); and (4) that the exegesis of doctrine is not separate from the spiritual life, but that it serves to bring people into 'the divine presence' (2003b:3). These insights accentuate Ellen Charry's argument that "the doctrinal tradition is not an end in itself, but a means to help us grow, love and enjoy God better" (2003b:4). For Charry, as for the medieval women theologians whom she has studied, theology "is a path toward a truly satisfying life" (2003b:4).

Christian doctrine is formative, in that it guides or directs (through knowledge) and shapes or forms (through wisdom) the lives of believers. Such a description of Christian doctrine arguably provides a helpful context as to how salvation functions in Charry's thinking and writing. A second important insight into Charry's understanding of salvation pertains to the methodological strategies she employs when interpreting doctrine.

4.3.3   Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

Ellen Charry employs a collection of methodological strategies in her interpretation of Christian doctrine as formative (guiding and shaping), namely (1) pastoral, (2) apologetic, and (3) aretegenic strategies.

Formation, firstly, entails a pastoral perspective or interpretation of faith and the life of believers. It is particularly in her two books, *By the renewing of your minds* (1997) and *God and the art of happiness* (2010), that Charry works out her main argument regarding Christian doctrine, namely that "classical doctrinal theology is pastorally motivated and that its end is human flourishing" (2010:ix). Here she argues that Christian theology and Christian doctrine in particular have always, throughout the ages, been deeply pastoral and concerned with the healing of human beings. Pastoral interpretation is therefore a first methodological strategy that Charry employs in her work, which takes her first point regarding Christian doctrine – that 'knowing God' facilitates healing – seriously.

Wise, virtuous knowing entails both the need for the gift of God's grace *and* the honing or development of certain skills. If "knowing God is an art of the especially blessed soul" (Charry, 2006b:169), then the skill of knowing God becomes a central part to the identity of believers (Charry, 2006b:169). In *By the renewing of your minds* (1997) Charry makes use of

the striking analogy of medicine to express how she means to interpret Christian doctrine, even as she points out that this analogy is not 'paramount' to her arguments in this book. Indeed, writes Charry (1997:11), "the theme of Christianity as therapy runs throughout Christian theology" and "theology as spiritual medicine can be traced back to Plato." The therapeutic model for knowledge of God would be maintained in the patristic age (Augustine) up to the Reformation (Calvin), argues Charry (1997:11).

Christian doctrine's analogy to medicine expresses this first methodological strategy. Charry charts five ways in which theology is analogous to medicine. Firstly, medicine and theology both require information, in the specific knowledge of physical (medicine) and psychological (theology) processes within human beings that need to be understood in order to effect physical (medicine) and spiritual (theology) healing (Charry, 1997:12). Secondly, medicine and theology both demand 'highly skilled judgment' (or "the ability to interpret clinical data based on the knowledge at hand" (Charry, 1997:12)). Theology, like medicine, "relies on careful assessment of available knowledge" that includes theological practice as well as theoretical constructs or theological language (Charry, 1997:12 – 13). Thirdly, medicine and theology both imply "the need for trust and obedience" if these are to be 'successfully practiced' (Charry, 1997:14). Fourthly, medicine and theology both contain elements of risk and uncertainty, in that healing cannot be guaranteed (Charry, 1997:14). Fifthly, in both medicine and theology there may be malpractice, and therefore "[k]nowledge in theology and medicine is revisable within limits set by their respective traditions" (Charry, 1997:14). In short, if "Christianity is medicine for the soul" (Charry, 1997:11), then theology – and salvation – has to do with healing: specific knowledge, sound judgment, adherence, risk and learning. Indeed, "[s]alvation is the healing of love that one may rest in God" (2010:xi).

In Charry's first methodological strategy, namely a pastoral interpretation of Christian doctrine, salvation as healing deals with knowing God. In her arguments regarding theological training (Charry, 2002) and the ordination of homosexual persons (Charry, 2004c) it becomes particularly clear that, for her, theology is inherently and unmistakably pastoral in its concern for the flourishing of human beings. Here too salvation is portrayed as healing and (spiritual, psychological) health. Within her treatment of happiness in *God and the art of happiness* (2010), she writes that this book is an offering that carries "a special burden for those traumatized by life's adversities – that they may be comforted and encouraged" (2010:xii).

251

This first methodological strategy is formative in that it shapes and guides Christian believers toward knowing God as a way towards healing.

Formation, secondly, deals apologetically with core affirmations of the Christian faith. There is a collection of widespread, interesting passages in Ellen Charry's writing, where she deals with a range of apologetic concerns, including proof for the existence of God (cf. 2006b:168 – 169), the importance of the turn from the modern self to the Christian self (cf. 1998) and the centrality of happiness in the Christian tradition (cf. 2007). However, it is with regards to what Ellen Charry calls 'primary theology' or 'primary Christian doctrines and teachings' (1997:5) that the full scope of Charry's apologetic concerns are revealed. Ellen Charry's second methodological strategy in interpreting Christian doctrine is closely linked to her views on what she regards as the two branches of theology. She distinguishes between two kinds of theology, namely primary (or sapiental) theology and secondary (or scholastic) theology.[356]

Primary theology has to do with asking questions as to who we should become and how we should live (Charry, 2006b:144), in that it "seeks the knowledge of God so that we come to dwell in the truth; for the truth will make us happy and good, and in that way, free" (Charry, 2006b:145). It is clear, from the outset, that she favours this understanding of theology, and she calls on all her considerable (classic) resources – most notably Augustine and Thomas Aquinas – to support her in her argument for a return to 'normal', 'sapiental', 'primary' theology (cf. 2006b; 1997). the primary goal of theology, she would argue (2006b:152), is "to incite persons to good and happy lives." Primary theology is 'normal theology', or theology that is "directed toward wisdom and goodness" (Charry, 2006b:152) and which seeks to shape human beings for life with and in the triune God (2006b:161).

Secondary theology is 'professional academic theology', which finds its intellectual home at universities and which is tasked with gathering, coordinating and organising "the wealth of scriptural, theological, and philosophical material" available to theological reflection (2006b:155). This 'branch' or 'way of doing' theology has been shaped by what Charry describes as three epistemological crises: (1) the pressure on theology to become an academic

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[356] Ellen Charry describes the epoch of primary theology from the late second century to the seventeenth century, and the age of secondary theology from the twelfth century and throughout the seventeenth century ("with a hiatus during the early years of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century", she adds (2006b:149)).

discipline (which Charry describes as scholasticism, or "the West's recovery of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (2006b:145)); (2) the pressure to maintain intellectual credibility (whereby Charry points to modernism and the 'experimental science' and 'empiricism' of the seventeenth century (2006b:146)); and (3) the pressure to remain intellectually coherent and meaningful (which Charry sees as a response to postmodernism and the rejection of truth, knowledge and goodness today (2006b:146)). The combined pressure of scholasticism, modernism and postmodernism has increasingly shaped theological reflection into an academic discipline (with its respective 'fragmented subdisciplines') (2006b:150); which aims to be intellectually credible, coherent and meaningful.[357]

The distinguishing question for her in this regard, then: "Is theology a technique for promoting orthodoxy against challenge, or is the formation of the soul [intended] for the enjoyment of God?" (2006b:156)

Primary theology or primary doctrines are 'first-order assertions' which describe "the practically oriented content of the faith", whereas secondary theology or secondary doctrines are 'second-order thought' which deals with theological method (1997:5). Throughout her work, but particularly in her book *By the renewing of your minds* (1997), Charry argues convincingly for a (re)turn to primary theology or primary doctrines. Her concern that a central task of theology should be "to assist people to come to God" (1997:5) makes the apologetic slant of her understanding of primary theology or doctrines clear. She adds that such a description of theology's task is not unproblematic, in that it is "a contested idea for modern theology, which has moved away from primary Christian beliefs and focused on theological method instead" (1997:5).

Moreover, secondary theology or doctrines are important, in that these maintain the identity and coherence of Christian faith communities. Yet, as she points out, "issues of method do not

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[357] Another way in which Ellen Charry describes what she calls 'the loss of theological realism' is by way of three pivotal moments: (1) John Locke's rationalism, (2) David Hume's empiricism and (3) Immanuel Kant's critique of the classical proofs for God's existence, and hence, faith (1997:6 – 11). She suggests that modern understandings of truth and knowledge developed by way of these three stages: "Locke separated faith from knowledge, denying the importance of trust as an element in truth. Hume insisted on the repeatability of events as a sign of their truth and disallowed inferential reasoning, tentativeness, and discerning judgment. Kant pointed out that the conditions for knowing lie within the mind itself and that human knowing cannot transcend the limits of time and space within which the mind operates" (Charry, 1997:10). For her own, more extensive argument regarding the various stages or moments which have led to what she calls 'the loss of theological realism', see Charry (1997).

exhaust the theological task" (1997:5). Secondary theology and primary theology entail different theological tasks; yet Charry argues that secondary theology "should support the primary doctrines of a community" (1997:6). She calls upon classical theology – Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in particular – to argue for the importance of 'sapiental theology', a mode of primary theology that is concerned with "helping people flourish through knowing and loving God" (1997:6).

Primary doctrines are therefore concerned with both knowledge *and* practice. Ellen Charry regards the choice between insight-oriented and practice-oriented theological reflection as a false dichotomy. Instead, she argues for the complexity of human beings in which both knowing *and* doing feature equally (1997:4). Exactly herein lies the beauty of the vision of happy human beings. Salvation is the beauty of 'loving God' and 'being loved by God' that guides, shapes and transforms human beings. She reminds the reader that "[t]he Christian tradition says that God is able to teach us to love by loving us quite beautifully unto salvation" (2007:32). Moreover, there is beauty in the holiness that comes from obeying God (Charry, 2010:268). Indeed, as Charry writes (1998:105): "Turning to God... emancipates us from our unloveliness." The interchange between knowledge and practices enables human beings to flourish by God's grace and love. This second methodological strategy is formative in that it shapes and guides Christian believers toward loving God as a skill in which God's beauty and our beauty stand revealed.

Formation, thirdly, has an aretegenic focus. Throughout her books and the many articles that she has written on various topics, Charry makes the point that Christian faith plays, and has always played, a guiding and shaping role in the lives and identities of believers. Moreover, the aim or focus of Christian doctrine is the good formation of character (or what Charry calls 'salutarity'): "[t]hey seek to form excellent persons with God as the model" (Charry, 1997:vii). This third methodological strategy, wherein the pleasure of 'enjoying God' guides and shapes believers into happy people, expresses yet another understanding of salvation – namely, salvation as enjoyment or pleasure. Aretegenic analysis is not only concerned with moral formation, but with the joy, enjoyment and pleasure that the transformation of human beings evokes.[358]

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[358] Ellen Charry makes the point explicitly in an article wherein the relationship between sacraments and doctrines are attended to. What we know, argues Charry, is shaped by "sensuous as well as cognitive experience" (2005b:209). The pleasure of a happiness that is grounded in Christian doctrine involves the

Charry uses the adjective 'aretegenic' (from a combination of the Greek words *arete*[359] and *gennao*, which together mean 'to beget virtue') to indicate and describe "the virtue-shaping function of the divine pedagogy of theological treatises" (1997:19). By using the term 'aretegenic' Charry attempts to "represent the moral and psychological dignity and honor which Christianity encourages" (1993:101; footnote 15). Moreover, for her the term refers to "the nobility of human life" (1993:101).

The moral shaping function of Christian doctrine is understood by way of the 'salutarity principle', which Charry describes as the theological unearthing of the divine pedagogy "in order to engage the reader or listener in considering that life with the triune God facilitates dignity and excellence" (1997:18 – 19). Ellen Charry's third methodological strategy therefore considers virtue ethics by way of what she calls the 'salutarity principle'. Yet Charry is not satisfied with a virtue ethics approach alone, and makes a point of taking character formation seriously (1997:19):

What constitutes excellence from a Christian point of view, however, is harder to pin down. At times Christian excellence has centered on a specific virtue, like love, humility, self-denial, or self-sacrifice. At other times clusters of virtues, such as the three theological virtues – faith, hope and love – have been highlighted... This work does not identity a specific Christian norm of human excellence against which subsequent construals of goodness are judged. It focuses not on character traits but on various mechanisms of character formation.

In order to do this, Charry makes a methodological choice for what she calls 'a turn to the (theological) tradition for guidance' (1997:17). Charry employs classic theological treatises, and in particular those of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, to argue for "the reclamation of the pastoral function of doctrine" (1997:17). She accounts for this approach as follows. Firstly, Christian theology stands within a "historically recognizable tradition" which requires continuous reinterpretation (1997:17). A turn to the tradition is therefore required, if Christian doctrine is to be faithful to its nature and function. Secondly, secular culture can be of only 'diminished assistance' to theology, in that it "seems to have spent its moral and intellectual capital" (1997:17). Even though theology may still learn a great deal from 'secular

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attraction to and attractiveness of God – in her words (2005b:209), "[w]e can only take refuge in that which looks and tastes good. God must seduce us."

[359] Here she also refers to Aristotle, for whom *arete* would denote 'moral excellence' (Charry, 1997:19).

philosophies and ideologies', it may well be that theology also has important contributions to make. Thirdly, a historical consciousness is important not only because it reminds us how limited our 'own historical vantage point' is, but also because "we moderns need the older author's understandings of human psychology, of how knowing and loving God functions in people's lives" (1997:17). Morever, "[w]e also need their views on pastoral responsibility, as well as their insights into God's strategies for human flourishing" (1997:17). It is a turn to tradition that may enable modern theologians and theologies to check "the prejudices and limitations of our own time and place" (1997:17). Ellen Charry constructs a pastoral Christian theology by (re)turning to the theological tradition (and in particular to what she calls 'classical theology') and by (re)considering and (re)learning from our theological forebears (1997:17).

Such a turn to the tradition implies more than simply (re)reading and (re)interpreting classical authors such as Augustine and Athanasius. For Ellen Charry, the turn to tradition also implies a particular hermeneutical strategy, which she calls 'aretegenic reading'. Aretegenic reading or analysis attends to the moral shaping force or potential – 'the psychological dynamics' and 'rhetorical art' – of a text (1997:20). Aretegenic reading as hermeneutical strategy could accomplish two tasks. Firstly, texts that are read aretegenically "arouse awareness of a lack" and "create desire", in that reading becomes "reading for pleasure" (Charry, 1997:22). Secondly, stories shape "an ability for self-transcendence" and "the possibility for change" (Charry, 1997:22). Not only is aretegenic reading concerned with the moral formation through processes of discernment, but aretegenic reading also generates pleasure in and for the reader (1997:22). A pivotal part of this methodological strategy is therefore the generation of desire and pleasure for the Christian believer. The pleasure that a Christian believer finds here is the pleasure of stories, and in particular "the stories of God enfolded in the doctrines" which guide and shape patterns of pleasure (Charry, 1997:22).[360]

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[360] Ellen Charry's understanding of 'stories' is not synonymous with 'fiction', however. 'Stories' are a fundamental part of Christian faith, where fiction has stood in for religion in many ways (1997:24): "[F]iction can claim to bind the reader together with others; but although the reader may be lifted momentarily into the company of great and exemplary characters, unless the reader makes a serious commitment to them or lives in a community that reinforces the values and behaviours they lift up, the new friends vanish the moment the book is closed. The social context provided by reading, designed to lift the reader out of isolation, is of limited scope. The company we keep must carry over into life. Unless we induce our real-life friends to read this novel, or see this film, and then discuss it with them, or become college teachers so that we can talk about our favourite books with our students, we are still on our own in interpreting and making the final judgment on whether the world offered by the author merits our redesigning ourselves."

Yet pleasure is both a given *and* a practice. Salvation, upon this view, has to do with enjoyment and delight – with enabling believers, through Christian doctrine, "to desire and delight in God so that their dignity, relationships to persons and things, and visions of human excellence and a just social order stem from that delight" (1993:102). Indeed, "virtue," writes Charry (2007:31), "gives genuine pleasure." This third methodological strategy is formative in that it shapes and guides Christian believers toward enjoying God as a source of pleasure and joy (cf. Charry, 2007:32).

Ellen Charry's pastoral, apologetic and aretegenic strategies are eloquently expressed in her constructive proposal for what she calls 'asherism', which works out "the healing process in a life of reverent obedience to divine commands that shape character and bring moral-psychological flourishing and enhance societal well-being" (2010:xi). 'Asherism' is derived from the Hebrew word *asher,* which means 'blessed' or 'happy' (2010:xi). Charry defines 'asherism' as the "enjoyment of life through dynamic obedience to edifying divine commands that enable us to flourish that God may enjoy us and we enjoy God" (2010:ix). In asherism, the close relationship between happiness and salvation stands revealed. 'Asherist soteriology', writes Charry (2010:xii), is to be understood christologically, in that "happiness is being healed by Jesus with and for the wisdom of love." Asherism is a form of practicing the happy life, in two directions: (1) by being healed by Christ and thereby being enabled to heal others; and (2) by being therapeutic when being part of the healing process of others. In short, "[b]eing healed enables healing, and healing heals" (Charry, 2010:268).

In her pastoral interpretation of Christian doctrine, knowing God facilitates the healing work of salvation. In her apologetic understanding of Christian doctrine, loving God is a source of beauty and beautification. And in her aretegenic view of Christian doctrine, enjoying God is a skill of good and happy people. These three methodological strategies shape her understanding of salvation as living and being well, where healing, beauty, and pleasure are guiding and shaping forces in the lives of human beings.

4.3.4   Salvation as living and being well

The Christian story's aim is the salvation of humankind (Charry, 1993:103). Indeed (Charry, 2004c:291),

[n]o one doubts that Christianty offers salvation. The longing to be well/whole/ elected/repaired/liberated/transformed/released/redeemed/shriven/forgiven/restored/justified/sanctified/glorified/ blessed is based on the observation that all is not well – with us, that is. We want it to be, but cannot make it so, perhaps cannot even imagine what being "well" would look like.

For Ellen Charry, salvation has to do with imagining the psychological and moral wholeness and well-being of individuals and communities (1993:103). She works with two expressions of the vision of salvation, namely of *living* and *being* well.

Firstly, salvation is described as healing, which she calls "a psychological vision of salvation" (2004c:292). Here salvation is God's mercy in the face of our sinfulness, which soothes, comforts, calms, relieves the psychological anxieties and hurt surrounding failure and the fear of divine punishment. Another version of this vision of salvation is hope in the (bodily) resurrection, which becomes the antidote to the fear of death (2004c:293). This is another version of Charry's psychological vision of salvation, in that it alleviates the pain of fearful unrest with hope. Within the psychological vision of salvation, salvation is God's mercy and the bodily resurrection, in response to the fear of divine wrath and the fear of death.

Secondly, salvation is described as transformation, as the restoration of personal integrity and strength (2004c:293). In this view, salvation is not the opposite of fear or anxiety, but of illness and disorientation. This disorientation, writes Charry (2004c:293), is the lack of skills and resources "needed for our transformation, and the clarity of mind even to discern what ought to be done." This second vision makes use of an 'illness-to-health model of salvation' in which God makes a 'therapeutic alliance' with human beings in order for human beings to "get better [and] genuinely stronger by having the power of God working in us and for us" (2004c:294). Upon this understanding, the dynamic of salvation is transformation by, through and into love: "[w]e become what we love" (2004c:294). Within the transformational vision of salvation, salvation is healing 'ensouled bodies', the strengthening or growth into the

beauty and wisdom of God, and the pleasure or joy of being transformed through, by and into love.

Yet (Charry, 2004c:294),

[a]s with all articulations of Christian tradition, particular visions of salvation wax, wane, and are transformed as new circumstances call forth different perspectives, giving rise to new insights about how Christian hope may best be conveyed to one another in a particular time and place. How theology articulates salvation today will depend in part upon how one reads the culture and what restatements of the vision actually succeed in giving hope. For the vision of salvation offered must strike home. It must give us what we need. It must cure our souls.

For Charry's interpretation of salvation, healing and hope is intimately connected. Moreover, she suggests that visions of salvation be judged by their ability to 'bring hope'[361] and 'cure souls' (2004c:294). This twofold criterion for visions of salvation – bringing hope and curing souls – plays a particularly important role in the development of soteriology in Charry's later work, such as her *God and the art of happiness* (2010).

Moreover, Christian soteriology needs to take embodied human existence seriously, argues Charry, because (1) human beings are not only their bodies, or their minds, or their spirits, but whole persons (2004c:295); and because (2) "God cares about us in our full integrity: heart, soul, mind, and strength" (2004c:296). This seems to imply, for her, that salvation engages the full range of human senses in experiencing God. In salvation, human beings 'taste God' and receive a 'foretaste of heaven' (Charry, 2004c:296), and God's power and love is visible, tangible, edible, audible and fragrant (Charry, 2005b:208). Again, hope and healing are inseparably linked in such a vision of salvation.

Christian faith does not merely celebrate human life, argues Charry (1993:101), but "seeks to transform human persons through the grace of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit." Salvation as transformation – expressed in healing, beauty, and pleasure – means "maturing" or "growing into the wisdom of divine love and enjoying oneself in the process" (2010:x). For

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[361] This is a particularly interesting point, since it moves between eschatology and soteriology, and may potentially even collapse one doctrine into the other. Yet the instilment of hope appears to be a distinguishing element for Charry in the analyses of different visions of salvation. She writes (2004c:296) that "[a]ll seek to offer hope, whether phrased as the vision of God, blessedness, eternal life, the greatest good, perfect happiness, or holiness."

Charry, salvation is centered in sanctification (2010:x), though not as a 'private possession' or as a 'personal prize'. Salvation, for Charry, is "a way of life in community" (2005b:212) in that believers are engrafted into "the drama of salvation" (2005b:215). Indeed, Christianity is more than either a set of beliefs *or* a set of practices, in that Christianity is embedded in community, in a shared way of life (2003a:264).[362]

4.3.5   Happy human beings?

In her book *God and the art of happiness* (2010) Ellen Charry reviews the historical trajectory of the theological conversation about happiness and offers a proposal as to reopening the theological conversation (2010:ix). She seeks to address the gap between eschatological happiness and temporal happiness in particular. The question for her, then, is whether there are sufficient theological resources available to think and talk about happiness within this life. Her practical concern for people who experience suffering and grief and her observation that "Western Christian theology is skittish about temporal happiness" (2010:ix) shapes her study on the nature and art of happiness. Two episodes frame her narrative of happiness: (1) happiness has primarily been understood in terms of (future) eschatology, in that happiness has been limited to the life hereafter;[363] and (2) Protestant theology's focus on the intellectual coherence of its doctrines (instead of the formative power or pastoral function thereof) has problematised the very possibility of a theological conversation on happiness (2010:x).

Yet Charry argues that the time has come for the theological conversation on happiness to be reopened, "for the sake of God's great Yes" (2010:x). In this regard she takes her cue from Karl Barth (2010:x; 1997:28 – 29) and in particular from what she regards as Barth's correction on John Calvin. She writes (1997:29) that "Calvin's lugubriousness... supports a

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[362] Therefore the need for 'spiritual friends', those present and those who have gone before, who accompany us in the lives we live (2003a:264). For Charry, these spiritual companions seem to include the classic theologians (particularly Augustine) whom she consistently refers to in formulating and shaping a Christian doctrine of happiness.

[363] She relates this to theologians' embarrassment at Friedrich Nietzsche's criticism of the Christian faith's pessimistic view of the human condition. She writes that theologians consequently relocated "value and goodness away from earthly and human things" and taught the despisal of human pleasures, such as marriage and politics (1993:100). Nietzsche argued that "the Christian judgment is psychologically destructive for everyone, for it undercuts the drive for power, self-preservation, and control over one's life while it exalts suffering, helplessness, and even promotes poor hygiene!" (Charry, 1993:100) However, Charry admits that "Christianity has not always been conducive to the psychological well-being of all persons" and that the challenge to Christian faith lies in how it promotes human dignity and uphold human personhood (1993:100).

punitive and guilt-ridden identity that Barth considers incompatible with God's grace",[364] and that even though Barth "is not motivated by the modern psychological insight that a guilt-ridden personality is unhealthy", Barth understood the pastoral power of doctrines (such as the doctrine of sin) (1997:29). For her, Karl Barth is one example of a recent theologian who is concerned with the salutarity in Christian theology and of Christian doctrine in particular (1997:28).

Ellen Charry argues for a salutary understanding of happiness, whereby she seeks to reconnect goodness to happiness. She observes that the Christian witness to happiness within scripture and tradition may find appropriate conversation partners in modern psychology and philosophy with regards to understanding excellence and flourishing, but that both Christian and non-Christian notions of happiness and flourishing need to be judged by the 'salutarity principle' (1997:30). For her, "[l]iving well is key to a happy life" (2004b:20) in that being virtuous and being happy are inseparable (Charry 2006b:163). She observes that this has not always been the case within theology, in that "Christian doctrine has not adequately linked piety to pleasure" – which has lead to the creation of a 'theological gap' between happiness and goodness. The unlinking of goodness to happiness has lead to the linking of excitement to happiness instead. Christian doctrine has ceded the term 'happiness' to the marketplace, and so it has again become the task of theology to (re)define and (re)intrepret happiness theologically (Charry, 2010:xii).

She traces three errors made by modernity and one error made by Christian theology in thinking about happiness. The first error is thinking that happiness is just about ourselves, about the individual's private, personal life and preferences. Indeed, "modernity lost appreciation for the sociality of happiness" (Charry, 2004b:23). The second error is to confuse "a constant state of euphoria" with happiness. Charry would rather assert happiness as "a power of the soul" (2004b:23). The third error is to assume that "we know what will make us happy and that we are able to get it" (2004b:23). These three errors constitute what Charry describes as 'the quest for self-gratification' which has, in modern times, come to substitute

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[364] For Eric Johnson, this evaluation of Calvin's theological stance on happiness strikes a 'discordant note', in that Charry's portrayal of Calvin (and Luther, he adds) appears to be 'hasty' and 'unsympathetic' – that is, "in contrast to the more detailed and favourable discussions of other Christians, even Boethius" (2011:257). As such, Johnson reads Charry as depicting Calvin as "an enemy of Christian happiness" and as "guilt- and anxiety-ridden promoters of self-deprecation" (2011:257). Johnson argues that this would "surprise those who have actually found some divine happiness reading Luther and Calvin and [who have applied] their gospel remedies to their own guilt" (2011:257).

salvation (2004b:23). Modern philosophy may have trivialised happiness by converting it into a private feeling, but the Christian faith has contributed a fourth error by being completely absent in the discussion on happiness. A suspicion of pleasure and the enjoyment of life has contributed to the abovementioned trivialisation of happiness (Charry, 2004b:23 – 24). Ellen Charry warns of a notion of happiness that is devoid either of goodness (so that happiness becomes 'mere fun') or material satisfaction (so that happiness becomes disconnected from life in this world) (Charry, 2004b:25).

In her critique of 'the modern self', Charry writes that "[t]he secular self is grounded in itself" (1998:95) and so is based on the assumption that "the self [contains] within itself all that it [needs] to provide its own happiness" (1998:98). It is preoccupied with itself: with 'self-sufficiency' (1998:96), 'self-mastery' (1998:97), 'self-trust' (1998:99), 'self-direction' (1998:100), 'self-construction' (1998:100), 'self-creation' (1998:100), 'self-respect' (1998:100), 'self-formation' (1998:100), 'self-expression' (1998:100), 'self-esteem' (1998:101), 'self-restraint' (1998:104), 'self-sacrifice' (1998:104), 'self-fulfillment' (1998:104), 'self-gratification' (1998:105), 'self-image' (1998:102), 'self-actualization' (1998:102), 'self-realization' (1998:102), 'self-control (1998:102), and 'self-construction' (1998:107). The underlying assumption here is that the 'romantic-expressive modern self' (1998:104) "must be unconstrained in order to flourish" (1998:102 – 103). Flourishing and happiness is confined to the self, and without the broader context for happiness and flourishing that God provides the modern self is rendered 'anomic', 'amoral', 'asocial' and 'alone' (1998:103 – 104).[365]

Yet this is not the story that Ellen Charry imagines for theology's engagement with happiness. "Happiness," writes Charry (2010:x), "is a realizing eschatology with salvation centered in sanctification." The source and meaning of happiness lies not in human beings themselves, but in God. For her, intimacy with God or "dwelling in the being of God" (1998:104) grounds the Christian self.[366] At this point Christian psychology[367] becomes of great importance to

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[365] Yet in a later article (Charry, 2011:291) she would argue that there is and ought to be a theological engagement and affirmation of "genuine self-confidence, self-love, and self-appreciation amidst the struggle of the divided self."

[366] Here Ellen Charry (1998:106) calls upon the Christian tradition to support her point: "The teaching of intimacy as the way to a proper self, found in Paul and Augustine and elaborated in the Orthodox tradition, through its doctrine of *theosis,* is not permission to withdraw from the world. The modern self, as we have seen, depends – or at least claims to depend – on itself alone. That is the source of its fragility and instability. It is chaned to what it can know and do on its own."

Charry's argument. She argues that it provides us with "a theological context for the formation of the self" in that "[o]ur identity is not self-constructed but given by God and rooted in the being of God" (1998:107). The goal of Christian (moral) psychology is the correction of doctrinal formulations that are abusive and oppressive and the affirmation of the goodness of bodily, natural, material living (1998:111). Stated somewhat differently, Christian psychology as Charry interprets it argues for a balance between a 'defect-based psychology' (2011:285) or 'pathology-driven narrative' (2011:284) and a 'strength-based psychology' (2011:285).[368] Classic Western Christian Psychology (CWCP) focuses on the ontological realities of creation and fallenness of human nature (2011:286) and the psychological concern of balancing divine wrath with divine compassion (2011:288).

A major point of overlap between Christian theology and positive psychology lies in the use of the term 'flourishing'.[369] Ellen Charry uses the term 'flourishing' in relation to salvation and happiness in her work, but does not provide a clear definition of the term in any of her books or articles.[370] Yet she traces some of the implications of what she means by 'flourishing' in her argument that theology is concerned with human happiness: that psychological and moral flourishing are related to goodness, beauty, and wisdom (2002:175); that flourishing is deeply embedded in communitarian and social responsibilities

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[367] Ellen Charry defines Christian psychology and articulates the role of theology within Christian psychology as follows (2011:284): "Christian Psychology embraces those disciplines that speak of the soul… from within Christianity, encouraging a transdisciplinary dialogue. Theology is central to that discussion because it sets the terms for thinking about nature in broad sweep… [t]hat is, Christianity carries a set of psychological commitments that ground all attempts to think about the soul, or the self as moderns have translated *psyche*."

[368] Here Charry engages with Martin Seligman and other positive psychologists who hope to supplement the focus on defects and illness in psychology with strengths and abilities (2011:285). Positive psychology is primarily interested in 'health', 'resilience', 'hardiness' and 'strength' (cf. Charry, 2011:288), a focus which Charry appears to echo in her explorations of 'positive theology' (2011:288 – 292). She illustrates how this can be done in her article "Positive Theology" (2011), wherein she explores the role that the sacraments and pneumatology can play in formulating a theological discouse of encouragement (2011:290 – 291).

[369] 'Flourishing' is a popular term within positive psychology, so much so that Martin Seligman's latest book is entitled *Flourish* (2011). Indeed, '[h]appiness and human flourishing have both been explored by positive psychologists over the past 15 years' (Johnson, 2011:256).

[370] Yet, as Dustin Resch also remarks, "[t]he reader of Charry's book is left, not with a concise description of happiness as a philosophical and theological formula, but with strands of biblical and theological tradition that evoke further rumination on the nature and possibility of happiness, and especially one's own hope for happiness" (2013:485). The point of this study is also not to provide the reader of Charry with either an exact definition of 'flourishing' or 'happiness', *or* with a complete set of exhaustive definitions of all terms relating to her use of 'flourishing' or 'happiness'. Rather, the aim here is to portray her argument, made over many years in various kinds of publications, regarding the doctrine of salvation and how human happiness is to be understood from her broader understanding of how Christian doctrines are to function. Moreover, the semantic field within which her use of 'flourishing' and 'happiness' is embedded – by use of such terms as 'healing', 'beauty' and 'pleasure' – is sketched, without necessarily providing precise definitions of each of these terms or an exact delimitation of this semantic field, seeing as this is not to be found in her own written work.

(2002:176);[371] that human beings flourish when they know, love and enjoy God (2002:176); that we flourish "only when transformed by being taken up into the divine life" (1998:98). At points it may seem as if she uses the terms 'flourishing' and 'happiness' interchangeably (cf. 2004b:26). However, what is clear is that, for Ellen Charry, God wills the flourishing, 'the abundant life', of human beings (1998:111).

An important characteristic of Charry's use of 'happiness' is *a creative logic of love*. At the heart of Charry's theological work on happiness is "the ability to love well" (2007:33). A healthy personality that is formed by the love of God is an agile self, a "functionally loving character" (2007:33). She writes that "[h]appiness comes as we find ourselves and those around us flourishing because we have enhanced their well-being" and that "[t]his is a proper form of Christian love" (2007:32). In her article "Academic theology in pastoral perspective" (1993), the task of wisdom is 'happiness' and the method or means to this is 'love (1993:93). Love is fundamental to Charry's understanding of happiness (1993:94). "Love", writes Charry (2006b:166),

is not simply an emotion but is the presence of the beloved in the lover. Love leaves the fragrance of itself in the soul, just as sitting beside a glowing fire leaves its aroma on one's clothes, or embracing someone wearing perfume leaves a trace on one's body.

This *creative logic of love* permeates Charry's understanding of happiness, and guides and shapes how salvation is expressed in her work and thinking. In healing, beauty and pleasure God's creative love for all humankind is expressed. This is what Charry means when she writes that "God is key to happiness in this life" (2004b:20), in that the depth and scope of a theological conversation on happiness is lost when God's will for the flourishing of human beings is not affirmed. Happiness has to do with the love of God as expressed in the salvation of human beings, and is therefore grace, a gift freely given. However, being or becoming happy is also a skill, a spiritual art learned through the guiding and shaping forces (or moral formation) of Christian doctrine (cf. Charry, 2004b:28). Therefore it needs to be added that knowing, loving, enjoying God is the means to happiness. Human beings "flourish by

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[371] The vision of flourishing stands in service of God and neighbour, argues Charry (2002:176), and is therefore in the interests of the common good, in that it forms "the foundation of a healthy and prosperous social fabric for civilization" (2002:176). Yet some, like Paul Wadell and Colin Gunton, would ask whether there is enough of 'an ecclesiological dimension' (Gunton, 1998:456) or an adequate account 'of the kind of community 'asherism' calls the church to be' (Wadell, 2012:363) in Charry's working from theology of happiness or doctrine of salvation.

knowing and loving God" (1997:3). Yet, argues Charry (1997:3), "God is not only good to us but good for us", and therefore flourishing that finds its origin in the enjoyment of God has consequences and implications for our relationships with one another (1997:3).

Knowing, loving and enjoying God are skills that are developed and honed over time – in short, the art of happiness (cf. Charry, 2010). 'The maturing self'[372] is skillfully, artfully guided and shaped by God (2006b:169), through love:

As it happens with human lovers, it happens between God and us. By staying together over a long period, attending to their lover's manners, needs, and gifts, and being vulnerable to the other's very presence, human lovers become one flesh.

4.3.6   Conclusion

Theology, for Ellen Charry, has a distinctive calling "to incite persons to a good and happy life by knowing, loving and enjoying God" (2006b:150). Indeed, happiness is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, argues Charry (2007:31).[373] It follows that the theological task, for Charry, entails deriving "knowledge of God that makes for a good and happy life for others" (2006b:163). Christian doctrine, wherein knowledge of God comes to expression in the church, guides and shapes human beings into people who live their lives excellently (2010:x), with dignity, nobility of purpose and happiness (1997:3; 2004b:28). Therein lies a theologically sound foundation for happiness as "a life nourished by love and goodness of God that contributes to the flourishing of creation" (2007:33). Perhaps, then, it could after all be argued that Charry's 'retrieval of and reinvestment in the resources of the Christian tradition' may contribute toward 'developing a richer psychology for the Christian community of the 21st century' (Johnson, 2011:257).[374]

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[372] Emotional and intellectual security, argues Charry (2006b:162 – 163), requires "a reflective bent of mind, emotional depth, and a philosophical or theological orientation to ground and guide one's judgments."

[373] "*Happy* is the very first word of the Psalter. Matthew uses the word *happy* to describe those who take on the yoke of Jesus. Augustine uses the word *happiness* to describe the goal of life" (Charry, 2007:31). Yet Charry has been criticised by different theologians and in different publications, regarding her use of the bible. Colin Gunton, for instance, points to the absence of 'Old Testament themes' in her first book (Gunton, 1998:456 – 457; cf. Charry, 1997) – whereas for others, like Dustin Resch, emphasises the 'strained nature of her attempt to fit all biblical commands into a pedagogical mode' (particularly with regards to her exegesis of the Pentateuch) in her second book (Resch, 2013:485; cf. Charry, 2010).

[374] Indeed, Eric Johnson would go even further and describe Ellen Charry as "the theologian [who] has performed an invaluable service to Christians in psychology and counseling by retrieving for us a robustly Christian articulation of happiness" (2011:257). Charry's thinking therefore not only has important

265

4.4   Blessing? Salvation as freedom and grace[375]
(Denise Ackermann

4.4.1   Introduction

Denise Ackermann (1935 –), Extraordinary Professor at Stellenbosch University,[376] describes herself as 'a feminist theologian of praxis' (Ackermann, 2014:14). She has written extensively on feminist (liberation) theology[377], spirituality[378] and the South African context,[379] ranging from concerns with Apartheid[380] and church ministry[381] to reproductive rights[382] and HIV/Aids.[383] Her latest (and last) book reflects on these and other issues from the perspective of 'ordinary blessings' (cf. Ackermann, 2014).[384]

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*inter*disciplinary implications, one could argue from Johnson's assessment of Charry's particular portrayal of salvation, but also important *intra*disciplinary implications – in that (1) it "has many personality, psychopathology, and psychotherapy implications", and (2) "it offers a markedly different account of human nature than one finds in the pages of modern psychology" which "have not been much explored by Christians in the field" (2011:256).

[375] A paper based on the material in this section was presented at the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians' conference (of the SU and UWC Circle chapters) at Stellenbosch University (8 May 2014), with the theme "Gender and Human Flourishing". This paper was published in the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* under the title "Blessed? A critical analysis of salvation in Denise Ackermann that portrays human flourishing as liberation, grace and the goodness of life" (cf. Marais, 2014).

[376] Denise Ackermann is also affiliated with the University of the Western Cape, where she was Professor of Practical Theology until her retirement in 2000 (Pillay, Nadar & Le Bruyns, 2009:6). In addition to this, she founded the Cape Town Chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (cf. Pillay, Nadar & Le Bruyns, 2009:6).

[377] Cf. "Feminist Liberation Theology" (Ackermann, 1988); "Defining our humanity" (Ackermann, 1992); and "Engaging Freedom" (Ackermann, 1996a).

[378] Cf. "An Unfinished Quilt" (Ackermann, 1989); "A 'spirituality of risk' for Christian witness in South Africa" (Ackermann, 1994); and "Christian attitudes laid bare by two beatitudes" (Ackermann, 2008).

[379] This threefold structure is also reflected in a festschrift that was recently dedicated to her, in which context (part 1), spirituality (part 2) and theology (part 3) partially structured the various dedications to her life and work (Cf. Pillay, Nadar & Le Bruyns, 2009).

[380] Cf. "On Hearing and Lamenting" (Ackermann, 1996b); "'A voice was heard in Ramah'" (Ackermann, 1998a); "Becoming fully human" (Ackermann, 1998b); and "Claiming our footprints" (Ackermann, 2000b).

[381] Cf. "Liberation and Practical Theology" (Ackermann, 1985) and "Differing Theories, Same Old Praxis" (Ackermann & Armour, 1989);

[382] "Reproductive rights and the politics of transition in South Africa" (Ackermann, 1995).

[383] Cf. *Tamar's Cry* (Ackermann, 2001) and "From Mere Existence to Tenacious Endurance" (Ackermann, 2006).

[384] For this book, entitled *Surprised by the Man on the Borrowed Donkey* (2014), Ackermann won the 2015 Andrew Murry-Desmond Tutu prize for theological literature.

Theology is "concerned with human suffering and emancipation", writes Ackermann (1996a:33), and should therefore promote the full humanity of all who suffer and who are oppressed, including women (1988:17; 1996a:33). Feminist theologies are, in short, 'for life' (Ackermann, 1997).[385] A 'feminist theology of praxis', moreover, is "critical, committed, constructive, collaborative and accountable reflection on the theories and praxis of struggle and hope for the mending of creation based on the stories and experiences of women/marginalized and oppressed people" (Ackermann, 1996a:34). Therefore there are important connections and tensions between theology and context (Ackermann, 1996a:35). For her, "[t]he need to continue wrestling with the economic, social, political and spiritual implications of an analysis concerned with the mending of creation remains central to the theological agenda", which, she argues, should include the incorporation of the legacies of Apartheid in theological reflections (1996a:36).

Feminist theology (with its concern for resisting sexism and working toward the equality of all women), liberation theology (with its concern for socio-economic-political justice and the struggle against societal exploitation of all forms (Ackermann, 1985:36)) and practical theology (with its concern for "[t]he emancipatory nature of communicative actions" (1996a:35)) are central tenets of Ackermann's theological agenda. There are particularly important links between feminist theology and practical theology ("in the sharing of certain methods and certain aims"), with liberation a key concept common to both feminist theology *and* practical theology (1985:38). Indeed, "[f]eminist liberation theology is in essence practical theology, that is it is committed to action and reflection in a reciprocal relationship" (Ackermann, 1985:24).

Ackermann prefers to speak of a feminist theology of praxis rather than a feminist practical theology[386] because the former avoids the trap, she argues, of "reproducing traditional frameworks which essentially ask the same old questions" by merely recreating current male-

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[385] Cf. the doctoral dissertation by Ronell Bezuidenhout on the re-imagination of life in Denise Ackermann's work (2007).

[386] Although others describe her as a practical theologian (cf. De Gruchy, 2007:33 – 34) and even Ackermann herself at times describe herself as a 'feminist practical theologian' (cf. Ackermann, 1994:124).

dominated models of practical theology (1996a:37 – 38).[387] In other words, a feminist theology of praxis creates its own models and methods (Ackermann, 1996a:38).

A feminist theology of praxis is concerned with salvation, in which justice – as 'right relation' – is taken seriously (Ackermann, 1992:15; Ackermann & Armour, 1989:52). A feminist theology of praxis is concerned with redemptive acts of love and liberation, which allow all human beings and the entire creation to flourish. A feminist liberation theology is key to understanding flourishing and salvation within Ackermann's thought, because her theological convictions underpin the variety of ways in which she views the formative, transformative and performative roles that Christian doctrine may play.

4.4.2   Feminist liberation theology

A feminist theology of praxis "seeks a political understanding of truth and theory and recognizes that the task of describing the relationship between God and humanity is intrinsically an historical and practical act", writes Ackermann (1996a:42). This is so because feminist theology is, according to Ackermann (1985:33), rooted in two needs: (1) "the need for woman to reflect on human relationships and in particular on woman's relationship to God"; and (2) "the need to make theology, words of faith and church structures less one-sidedly male and more person-orientated" (1985:33). In short, feminist theology is born when a critical and systematic reflection on sexist oppression takes place 'in the light of faith' (1985:33).

Feminist theology, argues Ackermann (1985:30; 1988:16 – 17), looks to liberation as 'a key concept' because "[f]eminist theology arises from the historical reality of sexism in human society" (1985:33). Indeed, feminist theologies are, for Ackermann (1997:63), "critical theologies of liberation." Liberation, coupled with "a new vision for all of humanity"

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[387] In 1997, Denise Ackermann would describe feminist theologies' standing in relation to academic theology in South Africa as 'both, and neither' (1997:66). Primarily, she would argue that feminist theologies – including her feminist theology of praxis – inhabit the spaces "on the periphery of theological discourses" (1997:67). This would entail both advantages *and* disadvantages (cf. 1997:67). In addressing issues such as "the endemic nature of sexual violence against women and children" or "the widespread degradation of our environment" (which are two pressing issues for her), theologies from the margins are driven by "a profound longing for human wholeness" and "a better world" (1997:67). This would involve finding new images to describe Christian doctrines, such as theological anthropology (1988:19), because feminist theology of praxis is shaped by the interests of justice, liberation and well-being (Ackermann, 1996a:38) or a "just, healing and liberating praxis" (1996a:47).

(Ackermann, 1988:17), has oriented theology toward praxis, and therefore the concern for liberation from (multi-dimensional) oppression (1988:17) shapes a feminist theology of praxis. However, not oppression but "the acceptance of the equal human worth of all in a just society" is feminist liberation theology's point of departure, argues Ackermann (1988:17). Feminist liberation theology "remains first and foremost a critical theology of liberation" (1988:17) which is particularly concerned with "the historical reality of sexism in human society" (1988:15).[388]

Yet, as Ackermann admits, "[t]here is… no one feminist theology" (1988:15; 24) and even feminist theology itself "is not… without its own tensions" (1985:34). She herself distinguishes, for instance, between revolutionary and reformist feminist theologies (1988:16), or exclusive and inclusive models of feminist theology (1988:16 – 17). The exclusive model of feminist theology "sees sexism as the key to all social oppression" while the inclusive model of feminist theology "views sexism together with racism, classism, etc. as *one* of the structures of oppression" (Ackermann, 1985:33; original italics; Ackermann, 1988:15). Particular points of tension between feminist theologians concern (1) experience (Ackermann, 1985:34 – 35), (2) the relevance of history and tradition (Ackermann, 1985:35), and (3) their visions for the future (Ackermann, 1985:35 – 36). Yet, even if it may not be possible to resolve all the tensions within feminist theology, a diversity of perspectives is regarded as a strength of feminist perspectives, in that they may be "mutually challenging and creative" (1985:36).

Denise Ackermann also explores the similarities and differences between feminist theology and liberation theology. An important similarity between feminist theology and liberation theology is that "theology is done by those who *themselves* belong to 'the exploited classes' and not on their behalf" (1985:37). An important difference between feminist theology and liberation theology is that "[t]he context of feminist theology is more universal than the class struggle of liberation theology… [because] feminist theologians look at *all* structures, symbols and words which are discriminatory and oppressive" (1985:37).

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[388] "I call myself a feminist theologian of praxis. I came to feminist theology through liberation theology. My early work was that of a feminist liberation theologian, because I was (and still am!) convinced that all theological theory is inextricably bound to Christian praxis. Feminist theological reflection meant exploring the legacy of patriarchal traditions and biased interpretations of scripture, and then trying to dismantle discriminating practices in the church. Its goal was to construct inclusive, affirming theories and practices for women – and for that matter for all who experience marginalisation and oppression" (Ackermann, 2009:270).

In her description of the concerns of feminist theologies, Ackermann (1997:66) argues that feminist theologies are concerned with (1) "unmasking sexist practices in the church and in theology" and (2) exploring "hope, love and faith in the search for liberation and well-being." Yet feminist theology is also "undergirded by a holistic approach and the rejection of dualisms" (1994:127; footnote 3). Denise Ackermann employs images like mapping, remapping and exercises in theological cartography (1996a:34; 43) to describe the tasks of a feminist theology of praxis. On her map of a feminist theology of praxis there are six clues or markers of importance: (1) critique and commitment; (2) constructive engagement and collaboration; (3) accountability; (4) struggle and hope; (5) the mending of creation; and (6) stories and experiences (1996a:43 – 48). She admits that even her attempt at drawing a theological map or 'landscape of faith' may be incomplete or faulty, and that new maps may be needed. Indeed, "[t]heologians continue to be cartographers of changing contexts" (1996a:49) and therefore "the need for revised maps for changing times will compel one to return to the drawing board again and again" (1996a:49).

In short, Ackermann opts for 'the liberation perspective' which "manifests concern for the liberation of all people to become full participants in human society" because that she regards as "the most helpful perspective feminist theology can draw on" (1985:36). Therefore she would go so far as to argue that feminist theologies "have their genesis in liberation theologies, which in turn are part of the larger unfinished dimensions of theology" (1997:63). With such an understanding of 'feminist liberation theology' in mind, the nature and function of Christian doctrine can be situated.

4.4.3   Nature and function of Christian doctrine

For Denise Ackermann, Christian theology is "the systematic reflection on and study of faith" (1985:30) – even more specifically, the task of theology is a systematic reconstruction of our religious symbols (1988:19). In her work she does not pay much attention to the nature and function of Christian *doctrine* as such, but in her systematic reflection on and study of faith three aspects of the nature and function of Christian theology emerge, which could arguably

be indicative of Ackermann's thinking on the nature and function of Christian doctrine.[389] Denise Ackermann's 'feminist theology of praxis' concerns the communicative, critical and experiential dimensions, which, in turn, play formative, transformative and performative roles in the shaping of Christian doctrine and Christian believers.

Firstly, a feminist theology of praxis is a practical theology, by which Ackermann (1996a:35) means that it is "a theological operational communicative science in which reflection on the theory/praxis dialectic is central".[390] This means that theology links knowledge with action and passion – and particularly involves the concern with suffering and oppression (Ackermann, 1996a:33). Practical theology, writes Ackermann, "is the theological theory of Christian communicative actions" (1985:30) or "an operational science [which] contains both theory and praxis" (1985:31). The communicative plays a formative and performative role in shaping Christian doctrine and Christian believers. Indeed, Ackermann argues that theology "which is done in the service of believing, has a communicative dimension" (1985:30) and therefore opts for a theological point of departure in which "Christian communicative actions of faith" (1985:30) or "the communicative dimensions of Christian actions" (1985:40) are investigated. Theology, in this sense, is therefore not only formed but also 'performed': practiced, acted out, done in a variety of ways.

Secondly, a feminist theology of praxis involves reflection and critical engagement (Ackermann, 1985:30). Since practical theology has to do with "the complexity of the

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[389] Ackermann's writing on feminist anthropology supports this argument: "The task of feminist liberation theology is to engage in a systematic reconstruction of our religious symbols which, in reflecting the relationship between humanity and God, are founded on a sexist bias. Such an exercise would require, among others, that we look at our God-language, Christology, redemption, our views on anthropology and on church and ministry" (1988:19). Moreover, she argues that a practical theology (such as her feminist theology of praxis) is necessarily inductive, which means that it "examines statements, symbols and acts that communicate Christian faith" leading to the formation of theological theories and the empirical verification or falsification of these theories (Ackermann, 1985:32) (which "does not necessarily or wholly exclude deductive methods" (Ackermann, 1985:37)). This does not mean that Ackermann has an interest in searching for an overarching system of thought – she prefers looking to "new ways of action which can bring about change" – but action and reflection belong together in her feminist theology of praxis (1985:37). Indeed, "[o]ur concern is with liberating praxis not with abstract universals" (1985:24). Moreover, the way in which a feminist theology of praxis should reflect on issues should be 'systematic' and 'documented', even if the verification of reflection is found in 'liberating praxis' (Ackermann, 1985:37). It is however clear not only that Ackermann values systematic reflection and reconstruction within a feminist theology of praxis, but also that this would involve Christian doctrine. Her discussion of a feminist theological anthropology is a clear example of this (cf. Ackermann, 1988:19 – 24).

[390] Interestingly, Ackermann (1985:30) notes that there are not one but two areas of debate in practical theology, namely (1) "the place of theology in practical theology" and (2) "the theory-praxis problem". She deals shortly with the former and extensively with the latter, and therefore this study will follow her in its focus on her description of 'the theory-praxis problem'.

271

Christian communicative praxis" or "the communicative dimensions of faith" (1985:32), practical theology also implies systemic analysis (1996a:37). A feminist theology of praxis should reflect critically on the communicative praxis particularly of oppressed groups (such as women), argues Ackermann (1996a:38). Critical theological theories aim to articulate and account for conditions of oppression and suffering (1996a:41). Yet critical reflection is also experimental, argues Ackermann (1985:37), in that it constantly raises "questions and tentative observations about a changing world" instead of providing final answers and conclusions.

For Ackermann, the critical task of a feminist theology of praxis has both an ethical dimension ("concerned with justice and equity within political, social, economic and religious structures and relationships") and a strategic dimension ("expressed in liberating praxis") (1996a:41). These dimensions are inseparable in her thinking, as she explains in reference to her involvement in the South African anti-Apartheid activist group the Black Sash (1996a:42; cf. Klein, 2004:43 – 46; cf. Ackermann, 1995:124; footnote 29) and the African theological society, the Circle for Concerned African Women Theologians (1996a:42; cf. Klein, 2004:50). In short, "[a] feminist perspective assumes a critical stance" toward patterns of (especially sexist) oppression in human society (1985:33) and therefore plays both a performative and a transformative role in shaping Christian doctrine and Christian believers. Theological reflection on and from Christian doctrine that engages in the task of critical engagement transforms but also performs the ethical and strategic dimensions of a Christian communicative praxis. A feminist theology of praxis is 'critical and committed' (Ackermann, 1996a:43) in its "desire to engage with the multifaceted demands of emancipation and healing".

Thirdly, a feminist theology of praxis is experiential theology, orientated "towards particular issues which are rooted in experience" (Ackermann, 1996a:37). The experience of oppressed people (including women) is a central category within a feminist theology of praxis (1996a:48) – indeed, it begins "with systemic analyses that take the experiences of women and marginalized people into account" (1997:65). A feminist theology of praxis that roots itself in the contextual experiences of women is "compelled to grapple theologically with the effects that war, displacement, poverty, sexual violence, and the degradation of the environment have on the lives of women, children, and the poor" (1997:65). This, for

Ackermann (1985:35), is women's contribution to "the unfinished dimension" and "open-ended journey" of theology – namely, experience. Experience plays both a formative *and* a transformative role in shaping Christian believers and Christian doctrine.

There are two divergent models of experiences that shape feminist theology, argues Ackermann (1985:34), namely (1) a *feminist* or liberation experience for women and (2) *traditional* experience for women. Ackermann hereby opposes experiences of freedom from sexist, male-centred cultures with experiences of rediscovering and revaluing that which sexist, male-centred cultures have rejected or denigrated (such as 'relational emotions') (1985:34). Yet the focus on experiences, as valid and important as it may be, also have dangers and limitations because "[o]ur personal experience is of necessity shaped by the reigning ideology of the society we live in" (1985:34).

Moreover, experiences are diverse, contradictory and contextual (1996a:48) and therefore "not viewed as the sole arbiter of knowledge" (1996a:48). Rather, "the diversity of women's experiences" has led to the formation of new and interesting theological perspectives. The point that the emphasis on the experiences of oppressed people wants to make is not that these experiences are monolithic or simple, but rather that "contextual issues are… profoundly theological" (1997:65) and therefore that experiences should play an important role in forming and transforming theological reflection. Indeed, a major strength of feminist theologies is its groundedness "in the concrete and material experiences of women and marginalized people", which enables feminist theologies to "move to theology and then back to praxis in the passionate longing for a better world" (Ackermann, 1997:67).

Denise Ackermann's feminist theology of praxis is rooted in the communicative, critical and experiential. On the one hand, the communicative, critical and experiential forms and transforms Christian theology and Christian doctrine. On the other hand the communicative, critical and experiential nature and function of Christian theology and Christian doctrine forms and transforms people of faith. Yet Christian doctrine is also 'performed' in the many ways in which theology is practiced. Arguably then, the nature and function of Christian doctrine therefore culminates in the formative (communicative and experiential), transformative (experiential and critical) and performative (communicative and critical) roles that a feminist theology of praxis could play. The formative, transformative and performative

roles at play in engaging with Christian doctrine give expression to a variety of methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine.

4.4.4 Methodological strategies in interpreting Christian doctrine

A feminist theology of praxis engages Christian doctrine, argues Denise Ackermann (1997:65), primarily with regard to hermeneutics. She is of the opinion (1997:65) that "[t]he continuous questioning of Christian doctrines, the search for inclusive theological anthropologies, new understandings of the Trinity and Christology, have been a breath of fresh air in the hallowed halls of systematic theology." Ackermann moves from a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' (cf. Ackermann & Armour, 1989:53; cf. Ackermann, 1992:17), to a "reading 'for life' hermeneutic"[391] within a feminist theology of praxis, which has both its "moments of suspicion" *and* "moments of creative reconstruction" when reading the bible (1997:66).

It is with this 'for life' hermeneutic in mind that the collection of interrelated methodological strategies that Ackermann employs in interpreting Christian doctrine is examined. These can be loosely grouped into the categories of (1) theoria, (2) praxis and (3) poesis.[392]

Christian theology, firstly, has to do with the methodological strategy of theory – with "observing, interpreting and evaluating critically" (1996a:41). Theory, like praxis, is an indispensable aspect of a practical theology (Ackermann, 1985:31). Denise Ackermann derives theological theory from "faith in the person of Jesus Christ and his tradition-history applied to the concrete contemporary situation of the church" (1985:31). As such, theories are directive, yet provisional (1985:31).

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[391] She has also, elsewhere (1998a:80), called this a 'hermeneutic of healing', by which she means that "all theological theories and all theological praxis must be measured by their ability to contribute to the healing of my country" (1998a:80).

[392] She outlines these "basic ways of knowing, living, doing and being in the world" (according to classical philosophy) in her argument for the close relationship between praxis and theoria in Christian (feminist) theology (1996a:41). In her description she includes a fourth mode, namely techné (which "referred to acts of application and doing") (1996a:41), which this study does not regard as a methodological strategy in her work. The reason is twofold: (1) not only does she herself choose not to employ this strategy, but more importantly (2) she repeatedly argues for the deeply interrelated and mutually shaping force of theory and praxis (cf. Ackermann (1996a:41), where she argues for "praxis as theory" and "theory as praxis"), so that a mere application of theory – as in her description of techné – would be untrue to her theological methodology. Her protest against reason becoming technique instead of praxis is that theory thereby becomes divested of its substantive content, "including notions of justice, freedom, and human happiness" (Hewitt, 1995:9 in Ackermann, 1996a:41).

Christian theology, secondly, has to do with the methodological strategy of praxis – with "the intentional *practical engagement* whereby people sought to do something for the common good" (1996a:41). She adds that praxis "has become the technical term for the action/reflection mode of learning and teaching" (1996a:41). Praxis, like theory, is an indispensable aspect of practical theology (Ackermann, 1985:31). Denise Ackermann describes praxis as "action concurrent with reflection or analysis, which should in turn lead to new questions, actions or reflections" (1985:31). Yet praxis is not synonymous with practice in Ackermann's thinking. Christian practices are both theological and normative, but for Ackermann the word praxis means something more – namely, "a practice that has been informed by theory, that has been reflected on" (Klein, 2004:45). Praxis, in short, is "faith in action" (Ackermann, 1985:32).

Much of Denise Ackermann's work is devoted to keeping theory and praxis together (cf. 1996a:41 – 43). Herein lays a key methodological insight into Ackermann's work – namely, that "[t]here is neither pure theory nor pure praxis… [t]hey are neither totally separate nor totally identified" (1985:31).[393] She argues (Klein, 2004:51) that

[t]o stay in the realm of theory makes it much easier to avoid the reality of praxis. I cannot separate theory from praxis. For me, what I believe and what I do about what I believe, are inseparable. In my theology, what I believe and what I theorise about has to find feet in praxis… Christ's ministry was no just sermons and teachings; it was a praxis of healing, a praxis of caring, a praxis of being with those who were marginalised, and ultimately a praxis of dying, because that was what was demanded of him. It was an iconoclastic praxis.

The relationship between theory and praxis that Ackermann envisions is 'a state of bipolar tension' (1985:31) in that "praxis can… dictate theological reflection" (1985:32) and that theorising is also a practical activity (1996a:41). It is a tension between 'what we believe' and 'what we do about what we believe' (Klein, 2004:45). Stated somewhat differently, it could be said that "[r]eflection on praxis shapes our theories that, in turn, translate into renewed praxis for healing" (1997:65) for "[o]ur theories have to stand the test of practice" (Klein, 2004:52).

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[393] Theory-praxis is an indispensable aspect of a practical theology, in Ackermann's work (1985:31) – yet Ackermann herself argues for three further aspects of a practical theological methodology, namely a future orientated, inductive and interdisciplinary approach (1985:31 – 32).

Christian theology, thirdly, has to do with poesis – with "the creative imagination or the evoking of images which could be discovered aesthetically" (1996a:41). Indeed, as Ackermann herself argues (1996a:43), the required critical edge to the demands of emancipation and healing must be augmented by the allowance "for creativity, flexibility and attentiveness". Poesis, like theoria, is intricately linked to praxis (Ackermann, 1996a:42), in that imagination and the ability to envisage a better world form part of the work of healing and reconstruction in our society (Ackermann, 1996a:44).

In Ackermann's work, there are two modes of doing theology which exemplify this. The first theological mode in which she moves is that of telling stories in a variety of ways. "Our stories constitute our identity" in that we all have a 'narrative identity' (Ackermann, 1998b:24), and therefore "[t]elling stories breaks the silence which blankets the lives of women and other marginalized and oppressed people and is thus intrinsic to the healing of our diverse communities" (Ackermann, 1996a:48). The theological mode of telling stories is vital to liberation and transformation, argues Ackermann (1996a:48), because "they contain some of the very stuff that nurtures relationships and opens up possibilities for healing."[394] Stories (1) claim identity, (2) names evil and (3) makes sense of seemingly nonsensical experiences (Ackermann, 2001:18 – 19). It is of particular importance to Ackermann that the life stories of those who have been oppressed are heard and reflected upon, because these stories hold the potential for transformation of both the oppressed *and* their oppressors (1996a:48).[395] Indeed,

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[394] "We hear and speak different stories," which, upon hearing the stories of the other, "changes my story forever… Telling our stories, hearing the stories of others, allows our stories to intersect. Sometimes they conflict, accuse and even diverge greatly; sometimes they attract, connect and confirm. As our stories touch one another, they change, and we too are changed" (Ackermann, 1998b:24). This is risky for those telling their stories, because it means acknowledging that "our views are only partial and that… our own identities are complex" (Ackermann, 1994:125).

[395] Elizabeth Tapia (2004:324) thinks that "[t]he themes and issues embedded in her stories are relevant today", but Christina Landman (2000:235 – 236) is highly critical of theological storytelling as practiced by Ackermann and other Circle theologians. Firstly, argues Landman (2000:235), a book like *Claiming our Footprints* (Ackermann et al, 2000) contains a variety of women's stories, but upon closer reflection these are the stories of women who are "mainly white and Christian, some of whom do not hold South African citizenship" and who do not, therefore, "represent South African women in general". Not only are stories like these therefore a misrepresentation of the realities of South African women, but they "[cause] pain to South African women rendered voiceless by other women" (2000:235). Secondly, for Landman (2000:235), this particular book "does not contribute to feminist theologies' body of knowledge, either locally or internationally", and thereby "raises the question of why the book was published." She regards this book as "light reading" and is of the opinion that "one finds more interesting stories better written in popular lifestyle magazines" (2000:236). Thirdly, Landman (2000:235 – 236) remains unconvinced that the private stories told by the contributors to this book is anything more than "the private stories of privileged women who are unable to integrate their stories into the bigger story of women in South Africa today" – in short, "the private remains private" and the stories therefore lack a broader public significance or performance. Stories that do not contribute to an analysis of society or that do not make substantial recommendations for the healing of those marginalised by society are too limited for where South

"[i]t is only when hearing and telling stories begins as a process of openness, vulnerability and mutual engagement that alienations of class, race and gender can be challenged" (1996a:48).

Yet hearing and telling stories are not enough, argues Ackermann (1996a:48). There is a challenge that stories pose to their hearers that must be accepted – namely, "the challenge to act as agents for the mending of creation" (1996a:48). Stories accentuate the capacity for and necessity of political and personal transformation (1996a:48).

The second theological mode which exemplifies poesis in Ackermann's work is telling stories by way of theological letter writing. She explains how she came to "write letters to people who matter to me, about the themes that have been at the core of my search for healing and freedom" (2003:xii) in a book with the subtitle *Letters from a Landscape of Faith* (2003). For her, writing letters was "a vehicle to keep me from academic excesses", from the theological jargon of academic theology (2003:xii). This she would describe as a venture in doing theology 'simple and straightforward' (2003:xii; cf. Smit, 2009d). However, for her there would be an even more significant reason for this way of doing theology – namely, that she believes that the method chosen for communicating points to the kind of theology that she wants to practice (2003:xv). The art of letter writing follows a certain theological method, which "draws from experience that is submitted to critical scrutiny and tested within the social and political milieu in which it is shaped" (2003:xv). This entails narratives, or the telling of (personal) stories (2003:xvi; cf. Loades, 2004:349). The art of theological letter writing is, moreover, autobiographical: "[G]iven the method I have just described, these letters have drawn me into writing about myself" (2003:xvi). This means that the personal and the public become interwoven,[396] for together they tell the stories of a person's life

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African feminist theological discourses should have been by the time that this book was written (Landman, 2000:236). Yet stories may yet have a role to play in South Africa – as Landman (2000:236) admits, such stories are "a source of women's experience and an important beginning to the retrieval of women's voices in South Africa."

[396] John de Gruchy (2007:33 – 35), Selina Palm (2012:367 – 368), Flora Keshgegian (2004:87) and Ann Loades suggest that Ackermann's theology can be described as 'public theology' – by which De Gruchy (2007:35) means that Ackermann functions "on the boundaries between the academy, the church, and secular/political society"; and Palm (2012:368) means "Ackermann's distinctly uncompromising passion for the tough questions of life"; and Keshgegian (2004:87) and Loades (2004:349) means that it becomes clear in Ackermann's writing that faith cannot merely be a private matter. Spirituality is an important aspect of such an understanding of Ackermann's practical, public theology. Indeed, for De Gruchy it is Ackermann's spirituality that "shapes her public theology most profoundly" (2007:35).

(2003:xvi). John de Gruchy would call the art of writing letters to family and friends a 'genre' in doing theology (De Gruchy, 2009b:175). He writes that the advantages to doing theology in this way includes not overwhelming readers with footnotes, in that – in letters – "you have to say what you mean up front" (De Gruchy, 2009b:175). "You must speak from your own experience and perspective" and yet, "[a]t the same time… explore issues in some depth if it is to be theological at all" (De Gruchy, 2009b:175).[397]

Denise Ackermann arguably employs the interrelated methodological strategies of theoria, praxis and poesis in her 'for life' hermeneutic in interpreting Christian theology and Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine, which has to do with the communicative, critical, and experiential aspects of Christian theology, forms, transforms and performs Ackermann's understanding of salvation as freedom and grace.

4.4.5   Salvation as freedom and grace

Denise Ackermann is highly critical of "a personal and otherworldly salvation" because it may exclude "meaningful change and the risk of transformation" (Ackermann & Armour, 1989:55). Rather, salvation has to do with both freedom and grace, because "a feminist liberatory approach seeks that which is freeing and whole-making for both women and men" (1992:14).

Salvation is performed in freedom, which transforms – or frees – human beings and human society. "[L]iberation," writes Denise Ackermann (1985:36), "is a core concept at the very heart of the Christian gospel… the gospel offers liberation from sin and guilt – a vision of what it means to be a liberated sinner." Salvation in Ackermann's work has a clear concern with liberation and freedom. However, salvation concerns more than just the freedom from sin and guilt. The liberating power of the Christian faith also has to do with the socio-cultural

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[397] Flora Keshgegian (2004:87) remarks that "[t]he epistolary form is a bold move for a theological text" in the sense that although "more and more theologians and scholars have been writing memoirs, few have ventured into inscribing their thoughts in the form of letters." Elizabeth Tapia (2004:324) appreciates Ackermann's many references and notes within her letters, but mentions two challenges to her 'extended letters': (1) "she does not deal much with critical analysis of power and dominance"; and (2) her letters lack more references to "works of black African theologians" which "would have added the richness". Yet for Keshgegian (2004:88) Ackermann's theological work has been critical – "not only of the racial politics of whites and Afrikaners, but also of the gender bias and patriarchal oppressiveness of much Christian theology." She (2004:87 is of the opinion that Ackermann makes good use of the theological genre of letter writing by writing "in an engaging and accessible style, ably weaving theory with reflection, autobiographical detail with historical and political analysis."

and political, with the abolishment of injustice and the building of a new society (1985:36) –
in short, with transformation.[398] Salvation is performed in 'doing theology', such as working
against slavery and racial oppression.

Salvation, for Ackermann, also has to do with transformation, which she describes as "a
passion for change" (1996a:45). Transformation has to do with both hope *and* struggle, with
both eschatology *and* history (1996a:46). However, salvation in Ackermann's thinking mainly
has to do with freedom, and therefore with vulnerability (1996a:45): "Any person who invests
her or himself in the freedom of the other as an end in itself, embraces vulnerability, a
beautiful yet painful concept and one which causes many feminists and oppressed people to
recoil." It is in vulnerability that both hope *and* struggle can be embraced; or, stated somewhat
differently, "there is no change without vulnerability and risk" (1996a:45).

As important as human beings are to Ackermann, transformation also involves the ecology, in
what she calls 'the mending of creation'[399] (1996a:45). The mending of creation involves
transformation by love, in which good relations among human and non-human beings are
fostered, and which "speaks of justice, love, freedom, equality and the flourishing of
righteousness" (1996a:47). Mostly, though, "the mending of creation rests on transforming
our relationships with ourselves, with one another, with God and with our environment
through actions for justice and freedom" (1996a:47). Salvation then, firstly, has to do with
performing and transforming freedom.

However, salvation in Ackermann's thought also – secondly – has to do with (both ordinary
and extraordinary) grace (2014:36): 'ordinary', because grace is often found "in the order of
things", as "a commonplace reality, flooding the world, there for all, from the beginning of

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[398] This is exemplified in, for instance, Ackermann's advocacy for a 'transformative' understanding of
theological anthropology; a model which is "directed at the attainment of full personhood for both men and
women, whilst realising the simultaneous need for societal change" (1988:22 – 23).

[399] Ackermann argues specifically for the use of 'mending' instead of 'healing' (although there are instances
where healing and 'a healed world' are a part of her vocabulary to describe salvation as transformation), because
she regards 'mending' as "a more encompassing and less psychologically oriented term" (1996a:33; footnote 6).
She understands 'mending' not as patching or fixing, but as "making whole again" (1996a:33; footnote 6).
'Healing' and 'wholeness' are important companions in her work (cf. 1994:125 – 126), in that both "[t]he work
for healing and the search for wholeness begins with the search of justice" (1994:126). This is risky, because
there are no guarantees of 'being healed' or of 'achieving the goal of wholeness'. Therefore the task of "seeking
healing and wholeness in our society requires a communal vision based on a profound desire for justice and a
commitment to stand in the truth" (1994:126).

time" (2014:36 – 37); and 'extraordinary', because grace "cannot be earned", "is unmerited and utterly abundant" and "permeates the world" (2014:37). Salvation is a story of (unending) grace (2014:36), of "[o]ur story with God" (2014:36), with being made "from and for God" and one another (2014:37). Grace is both a gift and a revelation of who we are (2014:38). God's grace "is unfathomable and unmerited" (2014:39), "is for all creation" (2014:40), "pursues us" (2014:40), "is free, extravagant and transforming" (2014:41), and "enables us to respond to God in Christ" (2014:41). Grace has to do with being in relationship with God – a relationship of 'healing love' – wherein human beings are imbued with "the sense of being held and cared for" (2014:41). In Ackermann's thought, grace is practical, in that it 'performs' salvation: "Grace sanctions the forgiveness of sins, restores relationship, and enables love and hope" (2014:41). Grace is performed in its sheer givenness to us by God, but God also transforms human beings and the entire creation. Yet grace, like freedom, has to do with the inner logic of God's love, in that "grace declares God's love – and God can be no other than loving" (2014:44). Grace, for Ackermann (2014:37), has to do with blessing, because blessing means acknowledging "the working of God's grace in our lives." Salvation then, secondly, has to do with performing and transforming grace.

Salvation is God's purpose for humankind, argues Ackermann (2009:171); and salvation – as freedom and grace – is deeply concerned with "the blessing of being in sustained and loving relationship with the Ground of all Being" and "a world in which God will be at home in us" (2009:173). Freedom and grace are therefore also plays a formative role in shaping the identities of believers and faith communities. Salvation, as the formation, transformation and performance of freedom and grace, is a redemptive and loving blessing. For if God is a God "who pours out Godself to us" because "[t]otal self-giving is the very nature of our God" (2009:166), then salvation points to the blessings of being loved and being made to love. The intricate connections between salvation, love and blessing in Denise Ackermann's thought and work comes to expression in her understanding of the flourishing of human beings and the whole of creation.

4.4.6   Blessed human beings?

Forming, transforming, and performing freedom and grace culminate in the vision of the flourishing of all human beings and the entire creation. Denise Ackermann repeatedly employs the term 'flourishing' in relation to well-being and salvation in her work, but does not provide a clear definition of the term in any of her books or articles. Ackermann does, however, employ 'flourishing' in close proximity to such terms as 'wholeness', 'healing', 'well-being', 'blessing', 'fulfilment', 'liberation', 'justice' and 'love'.[400] Flourishing is also clearly opposite to 'subordination', 'discrimination' and 'oppression' (Ackermann, 1992:18) – indeed, "[t]o liberate people to live a life of dignity that affirms their worth is very difficult in situations of oppression, discrimination and poverty" (Klein, 2004:41). She has a particular concern for the well-being of all, which "can be discerned through feminist analysis" and which "is grounded in our relationship with God, with one another and with creation" (1996a:45).

In Ackermann's thought, the relational aspect of flourishing is of great importance. "[R]elationship," writes Ackermann (1998b:17), "is central to our being and to our well-being." It is, however, difficult to define. What it is not, argues Ackermann (1998b:17 – 18), is alienating, apathetic, isolating, separating or oppressive. Rather, right, loving and just relationships are mutual – "concerned with the feelings, needs and interests of each other (sic)" – and reciprocal – "created out of mutual interdependence" (1998b:18). "My humanity is found, shaped and nurtured in and through the humanity of others," argues Ackermann (1998b:18), and therefore "there is no growth, happiness or fulfilment for me apart from other human beings." For her, humanity is precious (Ackermann, 1989:75). Moreover, since God's (covenant) relationship with us is characterised as being loving and just – involving 'unconditional love', 'ongoing presence', 'justice', 'peace' and 'wholeness' – we too are called to practice loving and just relationships (Ackermann, 1998b:21).

For Ackermann, relationship and the practices are inseparable, in that "[f]aithful Christian practice can only be ethical, effective and relevant if it takes seriously the challenge of relationship in difference and otherness" (1998b:22). Relationship is not "an abstract

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[400] Ackermann does not, however, have much affinity for 'happiness' in her work – for instance, in one of the few instances where she references happiness directly she does so only within the context of an argument on progress which is measured in expanding capital growth (cf. 1997:64).

theological truth" but is practiced "with our entire being – our bodies, our emotions and our minds – in what we see, hear, say and do" (1998b:23). In short, being fully human means living in relationship (Ackermann, 1998b:20) because it means acknowledging that "I am not complete unto myself" (1998b:23), that "there is *no full humanity without the other*" (Ackermann, 1998b:25; original italics). Full humanity, or 'authentic existence', "is living as a fully human part of a whole in mutual relationship, participating not possessing, needing one another, knowing that we belong to one another" (Ackermann, 1998b:22). This means grappling with "the challenges, implications, and surprises of seeking to be in relationship with each other in all our difference and otherness, in the fullness of our humanity" (1998b:27).

Relationality is the expression of love for self and neighbour in that "[a]ctive loving of self and neighbour" is "the praxis of right relationship" (1992:20). There is an intricate bond between relationality and love within Ackermann's work, which is embedded in a feminist theological anthropology that values a praxis based on love and justice (1992:20 – 21). Relationality, however, is the opposite of 'alienation' (1992:21), 'spiritual deprivation' (1992:21), 'apathy' (1992:21), 'sexism' (1992:21), 'racism' (1992:22), and 'classism' (1992:22), 'ageism' (1992:22). Relationality is both a need and a priority (1992:22), which links us to our 'created nature' (1992:22) and "finds its source in our understanding of the God as *God in relation*" (1992:22; original italics). The key for understanding this God-in-relation is Jesus, 'the man on the borrowed donkey', who is the model and the guide into a transformative anthropology (1992:23). Relationality is the basis for a transformative anthropology, in which the full humanity of all (including women) are affirmed (1992:23). Finally, the vision of the flourishing of all human beings is undergirded by such a transformative anthropology, which is "concerned with our relationships with ourselves, with one another, with God and with our environment" (1992:23).

Denise Ackermann's notions of blessing and flourishing are also particularly closely connected.[401] For her, 'abundant life' points to "a new intensity of living", of being "fully alive" (2014:27). 'Abundant life' is all that is "fulsome, affirming, redolent with promise" and

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[401] She writes about the complexities surrounding her choice of 'blessing' as follows (2014:26): "Being 'blessed' has an overtly pious ring. As I wrote the blessings that follow in this book, I struggled to find similar words that sounded less 'religious', words like 'happy', 'privileged', 'favoured', and so on. But in the end I decided that 'blessing' actually says it all even if it needs 'decoding'".

is encapsulated in three words: compassion, love and hope (2014:28). 'Blessing', then, articulates what she understands as being 'fully alive' (2014:27) – in her words, "[e]xploring blessing is in essence finding out what it means to be a fully free human being" (2014:26). She explains her understanding of what 'blessing' is (and is not) as follows (2014:26 – 27):

Feeling blessed is not an uninterrupted good feeling. It is not financial security, nor physical well-being. It is not lasting pleasure, nor happiness, nor an unendingly cheerful mood. Being blessed is not some abstract faith concept of spiritual well-being. Being blessed does not mean that life becomes an easy ride. A sense of blessedness is challenged by the exigencies of life… [Moreover, b]eing blessed is not an abstract theological concept. It is a practice, a way of living, not an esoteric truth. There is nothing majestic or mysterious about being 'blessed'. It is about living in a way that makes the promise of abundant life possible, even in daunting circumstances. Being blessed is expressed practically in prosaic matters such as affirming another with a loving word, feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger and caring for those in need."

Yet Ackermann's understanding of blessing is inseparable from what she describes as her 'longing for the man on the borrowed donkey'[402] (2014:26). Theology has to do with 'living fully', which entails the acceptance of the ambiguity of life and living (Ackermann, 2000b:172). Yet it is the spirituality born in the alchemy of risk, struggle and hope that would sustain us through life, "in good and bad times" (2000b:171). Spirituality – that which touches upon "the deepest parts of our being where our feelings, thoughts, beliefs and praxis reach out in faith for the wholeness imaged in us by God in Jesus Christ" and which "enables us to truly love God, ourselves and one another" (1994:125) – expresses this longing in her work. Spirituality "is a journey of self-discovery and God-discovery – of knowing yourself and knowing God" (2009:276) which has, at its core, to do with how Ackermann understands blessing. For her, blessing means (1) holding onto Jesus' promise of abundant life and (2) hearing and obeying Jesus' commands (2014:26 – 27). She clearly makes the point that blessing, for her, is no mere superficial or fleeting thought or emotion, but a deeply existential

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[402] Ackermann's reference to Jesus of Nazareth as 'the man on the borrowed donkey' is pivotal to her feminist theology of praxis (and her relationship with Jesus, she would add) (2014:23). She writes that "[i]t is an expression that has a touch of the comical, and that is laced with paradox and incongruity when it is used for the central figure of my faith" (2014:23). Perhaps even more telling is her explanation of how she came to this particular phrase (2014:23): "I remember that morning all too vividly. Sitting at the very end of the nave near the high altar of Canterbury Cathedral, I watched the bishops of the Anglican Communion enter and take their seats under the soaring, ribbed Gothic ceiling of that historic building. Clothed in robes of brocade, silk and even gold lame, embroidered with indigenous themes, mitres on heads, among them a handful of women, they entered the cathedral with measured tread. I found myself straining forward as the doors closed slowly behind the Archbishop of Canterbury. What was I hoping to see? Then I realised and was surprised by the image that popped into my head. I was looking for 'the man on the borrowed donkey'! Where, amidst all this pomp, was Jesus whom I had come to know and love and who had changed my life?"

and spiritual struggle. In the struggle to live with love and the courage to hope, we learn about blessing (2014:27) – moreover, it is Jesus that gives and is able to give 'abundant life',[403] by offering human beings the triad of compassion, love and hope (2014:28).

Compassion, the first element within Ackermann's triad of abundant life, is a 'gut reaction', which entails "to suffer with someone" or "to enter into a person's situation and become involved in that person's suffering" (2014:28). Compassion is more than theory – 'thinking' or 'saying' – argues Ackermann (2014:28): "[c]ompassion is practical", and therefore moves us to 'alleviate suffering', 'oppose injustice', and to be concerned for "the dignity and worth of all people without exception." Compassion has to do with a practical expression of love (2014:28 – 29).

Love, the second element within Ackermann's triad of abundant life, is inseparable from compassion (2014:29). Yet love does not come from human beings in themselves, who love because God first loved them. For Ackermann (2014:29), "[t]he foundation of love is God's love freely given" which "awakens our ability to love in return." Love means to be 'affirmed', 'desired' and 'accepted'. Love is more than affections or intimacy or the erotic – "[l]ove (like hope) is a practice or a way of life, often fraught with difficulties, sacrifice, frustrations" (2014:29). Love is both an obligation (of "living as a moral person") and a gift from God, for Ackermann (2014:30): it is "for the flourishing of creation."[404] Ackermann consequently argues that love ought to be understood in relational terms (2014:30):

Love is about how I relate to God, others, myself and to the world in which I live. Love is to risk trust and commitment. Love means creating space for another in which she can flourish, while at the same time she does this for me. This is love that is mutual – my desire for the well-being of the other is related to his desire for my well-being. Her fulfilment is my fulfilment.

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[403] Even more – for feminist theologies, Jesus is the model of 'full humanity' (1992:17), which "includes women, men, and children, infected and affected" and "[strives] to uphold the integrity of life, value the dignity of the (sic) human beings including those who are on the margins or who are excluded" (Björk, 2006:317).

[404] Although, interestingly, Ackermann also includes the notion of 'self-love' when she writes on love in other contexts. She argues, in an article on the beatitudes (2009:165), that "we must love ourselves as we are... to love ourselves is to rest in God in whom alone is our hope." In an earlier article, on a feminist theological anthropology, she writes that relationality involves "the affirmation of self which enables us to love our neighbour as ourself" (1992:22). The acceptance of God's love comes to expression in self-love" (1992:22).

In short, "[t]o love is to be in relationship" (Ackermann, 1998b:20). Not only are human beings made to love and to be loved, however, but "[l]ove is our only salvation" (Ackermann, 2014:31). Love saves human beings from meaninglessness and "gives meaning to God's entire creation (Ackermann, 2014:31). Love gives content to Ackermann's understanding of salvation, but also calls upon human beings to hope.

Hope, the third element within Ackermann's triad of abundant life, means "never to surrender our power to imagine a better world, that present unjust arrangements are provisional and precarious and do not require acceptance" (2014:32).[405] It does not mean "hoping for the end times when all will be made new" or "a false sense of fulfilment that believes that all is well" (2014:32). For Ackermann, hope "is not optimism" (2014:33), "is not vested in some future victory" (2014:34), "is to be lived" (2014:34), "is risky" (2014:34), "recognises the tragic in our history" (2014:35), "is learning to wait" (2014:35), and "is nurtured by prayer and community" (2014:36). Hope is 'a passion for the possible' because "God is the ground of our hope" (2014:36).

Compassion, love and hope – the triad which describes the abundant life that Jesus gives to human beings – stand at the heart of Ackermann's understanding of 'blessing'. It is therefore understandable that Ackermann would be highly critical of the belief that "the more helpless we are the stronger and greater that makes God" because this thinking causes us to "rob ourselves of our own capabilities and responsibilities" in waiting for God to act (1988:27). Feminist theology challenges such an understanding of God and human beings. The vision of the flourishing of human beings has to do with love – more specifically, with flourishing in vulnerability and powerlessness (1988:27). Liberation and flourishing are closely linked in Ackermann's understanding of salvation, in that "the gospel of love, justice and peace means to become involved in liberating praxis" (1988:27). This involves the elimination of discrimination of any kind, in order to afford dignity and justice to all created beings (1988:28). In short, God's love for each and every human being challenges us to exercise a 'world-transforming praxis', which works for justice and human dignity for all (1988:27).

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[405] "To hope is to refuse to accept despair or defeat. It is our response to the dilemma of being both oppressors and oppressed. Hope is resistance. It actively avoids the void of hopelessness by wrestling with all that seeks to deprive us of hope and disempower us. It risks daily engagement in liberating praxis. It risks ambiguity, uncertainty and darkness" (Ackermann, 1994:126).

For Ackermann, this is precisely what the beatitudes of Matthew 5:1 – 11 and Luke 6:20 – 26 embody. Her interest in the beatitudes stems from a concern for the ethical values within South African society (2009:158). She is particularly concerned with "the rampant materialism and acquisitiveness" and the "[u]nbridled violent criminality" that permeates South African society (2009:158 – 159).[406] Not only are the beatitudes 'precise' and 'comprehensive', but they "contain a complete précis of Jesus' teaching" (2014:42) and "set out ethical norms, standards, and injunctions by which Christians are called to live" (2009:157). Here too Ackermann is concerned with "the practical application of what we believe to be right in our daily acts, in our relationships, and in our worship" – in short, with our 'ethical praxis' (2009:159). Indeed, the beatitudes "have stood as a moral beacon for all times" in that they are "the embodiment of Christ's teachings" (2014:42). She believes that the beatitudes "are intended to guide us on how to live freely and fully" (2014:43). Therefore she attempts "to describe different experiences of blessing" in her own set of 'ordinary blessings', in a book entitled *Surprised by the man on the borrowed donkey* (2014).

Flourishing, then, is 'abundant life': living 'fully' and 'freely', in relationship with God and others, with compassion, love and hope. Salvation, as freedom and grace, forms, transforms and performs the blessing of living fully and freely in human beings and human society. Indeed, "that which affirms the full humanity of all as created in the image of God" is considered 'redemptive', by Ackermann & Armour (1989:54). Denise Ackermann's understanding of the flourishing of human beings and creation wants to balance "the concerns of liberation theologies for a healed world" (1997:64) with the advancement of the common good (1996a:45). Her vision of the flourishing of (1) women and marginalised people and (2) the environment are expressions of her "passionate longing for a better world" (1997:67), which is a core affirmation of *a creative logic of love* in her work. Ultimately, her vision for the flourishing of human beings and the entire creation has to do with the vision of 'abundant life' and the powers of compassion, love and hope. Flourishing, however, also involves praxis: the practices of imagining a better world, storytelling and practical-ethical living – in short, with freedom and grace. To flourish is to be blessed and to be a blessing unto (human or nonhuman) others.

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[406] Elsewhere she emphasises violence in the South African society of 1994: "In South Africa at present, every aspect of our lives is lived out within the context of violence… Violence in South Africa is endemic and normal" (Ackermann, 1994:123 – 124).

4.4.7   Conclusion

For Denise Ackermann, "feminist theology is a work of love" which entails "living towards freedom and refusing to settle for anything less (2009:272). Apart from being a feminist theologian of praxis (by her own admission) Ackermann also describes herself as 'a ragbag theologian' (wherein the ragbag is used as a metaphor for how she does theology) (cf. Pillay, Nadar & Le Bruyns, 2009). Calling herself a 'ragbag theologian' has been her way of "describing a love affair with theology" (Ackermann, 2009:272) – even more, the "never-ending, totally absorbing love affair" (Ackermann, 2009:281). Denise Ackermann ends her theological work – this 'love affair' – with a telling reflection on blessing. She argues that theology has to do with blessing because it has to do with the transformative power of salvation. Living fully and freely means embracing the vision of 'abundant life', which is the blessing of loving and being loved. Blessing is more than being fortunate or happy, however (Ackermann, 2014:43), for it

includes a sense of being privileged with divine favour, of being holy, hallowed. It means experiencing gratitude at receiving unmerited grace. It is about a sense of well-being because the goodness of life is affirmed and upheld against the odds. It asserts certainty at God's presence, mercy and care. God wants to bless us. All that is required from us is to do our best to love God and one another. Then we will be blessed for God's love can do no other.

4.5   Conclusion

Serene Jones, Ellen Charry, and Denise Ackermann provide classic feminist portrayals of salvation as the loving and healing initiative taken by Christ in response to human brokenness. Even Ellen Charry, being the exception to the nomer 'feminist', portrays salvation as the love, healing, and enjoyment of God – and thereby contributes significantly to this particular discourse. Salvation which is portrayed as grace, wellness (both in living and in being), and freedom have (the enjoyment of) the beauty or the art of living in mind. Salvation herein entails embracing well-being and the experience of being loved by God. Salvation thereby makes it possible for human beings to live and be well. This third contemporary discourse portrays salvation as *transformation,* wherein a number of underlying assumptions or presuppositions are evident.

Firstly, the "account of the human condition and human relations" (to one another and God) (Jantzen, 1998:161) which this discourse on salvation presupposes is that human existence is marked by suffering and brokenness, which includes oppression (and particularly the oppression of women). Stated somewhat differently, salvation is the restoration of broken relationships, including the relationship to the self. Salvation is, in other words, portrayed *aesthetically* (which includes ethical implications)*,* as that which enables the healing of broken relationships and suffering human beings, wherein human beings may find enjoyment and beauty.

This necessitates, secondly, a particular soteriological response, wherein specifically sanctification is called upon as a means of *encouraging* or *fortifying* human beings in their suffering and brokenness. Sanctification precedes justification, as the deliberate move away from emphasising the sinfulness and depravity of human beings, in order to contribute to the restoration (not further denigration) of human relationships to God and fellow human beings. Moreover, not only is the classic order of justification and sanctification reversed, but little to no attention is paid to justification itself – perhaps because of the suspicion that a destructive or oppressive notion of sin (that is insensitive to experiences of violence and violation) is required in order to make sense of justification. Even if justification features at all, here sanctification precedes justification and is accompanied by elaborate exploration of the implications of sanctification, so that the emphasis falls ultimately on sanctification.

Thirdly, the role or response of human beings to their transformation in God therefore entails the appreciation and embrace of the love of God amidst a broken world and broken relationships. Therefore human flourishing, in this third discourse, entails the recognition of the beauty of restored relationships with God, others, and creation. The rhetoric of human flourishing is, in other words, evident in the grace, happiness, and blessing that human beings experience following Christ's work of healing and restoration. Grace, happiness, and blessing may have an infinite number of possible ethical implications for communities and relationships, but salvation as transformation has – as its most imminent horizon of meaning – the transformation of the self-in-relationship in view.

These underlying assumptions point to *a creative logic of love* that plays itself out in the variety of ways in which human flourishing is imagined within this discourse. Such a logic is

evident in a set of rhetorical patterns that emphasise appreciation, and employ transformation as a primary metaphor for salvation. In short, Serene Jones, Ellen Charry, and Denise Ackermann provide different ways of imagining human flourishing that is shaped by *a creative logic of love*, and therein play important roles in shaping a third contemporary discourse on salvation – namely, salvation as transformation.

Chapter 5

Imagining Human Flourishing

5.1   Introduction

At last we have come full circle, from *exploring* human flourishing to *imagining* human flourishing. Tracing the rhetoric of human flourishing throughout the work of contemporary theologians is an ongoing adventure which, for this study, was limited to an inquiry into the landscape of soteriology, but which could also have taken other forms and explored other theological landscapes. What *is* clear, however, is that both exploration and imagination is important in "fresh attempts to think through and interpret contemporary experience and knowledge theologically" (Kaufman, 1995:73). The exploration of contemporary understandings of salvation is therefore inseparable from the quest for language to express what it means for human beings to flourish.

Yet, as Gordon Kaufman reminds us (1995:70), "[t]heology is not a speculative game in which each theologian strives for a more interesting or exotic construct than his or her predecessor" but "is the attempt, through hard thinking and imaginative construction, to present the Real with which humans have to do."[407] What the variety of theologians in the variety of discourses in view here *do* contribute are various interpretations of salvation, namely as reconciliation, liberation, and transformation. These contemporary discourses contribute, in turn, a rich variety of typologies and language about human flourishing – piety, joy, comfort, a fullfilled life, healing, dignity, grace, happiness, blessing – which represent a collection of attempts to interpret the rhetoric of human flourishing soteriologically. Herein I have made use of more recent as well as "older theological vocabulary"[408] in order to "make

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[407] Günter Thomas makes a distinction between texts and the world of lived realities; between what Gordon Kaufman describes as 'imaginative construction' and 'the Real' (1995:70); between 'map' and 'territory' (2014:1). He writes that "[a]ccording to this metaphor of map and territory, both are standing in an utterly non-arbitrary relationship. Maps claim to 'map the territory', to image it, in an adequate, even measurable way." Indeed, "a map never mirrors completely the territory – and, there might be many adequate maps, depending on their practical use" (Thomas, 2014:1). Moreover, "[a]ny map is inescapably an abstraction and a selection. But [the significance of a map lies] neither on the territory, nor on the map – it is the practical use and expectation of the user" that "limits and binds the obvious 'arbitrariness' in the construction of maps" (Thomas, 2014:1).

[408] On the one hand, Gordon Kaufman argues *against* a mere repetition of "the same old theological vocabulary, ever louder and more emphatically" which "was worked out for, and thus was relevant to, the experience in the world had by earlier generations; but [which] no longer fits well with ours" (1995:73). On the other hand, he

theologically intelligible our experience, as actually grasped and interpreted by us in the language of modern psychology... art and ordinary life" (Kaufman, 1995:73).

However, the recognition that soteriology plays a dominant role, if not *the* pivotal role, in theological reflection has led feminist theologians such as Grace Jantzen and Janet Trisk to critique what they view as an 'over-emphasis' on salvation (Jantzen, 1996:59 – 60; Trisk, 2008:200). This focus on salvation would become even more pronounced from the Reformation onwards, notes Trisk (2008:200), resulting in the reliance upon saviour figures. This is highly problematic, particularly for liberation theologians and feminist theologians, in that such relationships – marked as they are by unequal power relations – form "the basis for such structures as patriarchy, racism and colonialism" (Trisk, 2008:200). A focus on salvation as the foundation of human flourishing, in short, has also been problematic in and of itself.[409] *How* soteriologies *perform* the theological language game(s) which shape the rhetoric of human flourishing is therefore a central concern in attempts to imagine human flourishing.

5.2   A theological language game?

The various contemporary discourses on salvation outlined in this study are indicative of a theological landscape that is dynamic, restless, fluctuating, and constantly changing. Theological landscapes are expressive of "the interpretive schemes" that religion provides, in that they shape and organise 'all of life' – "including both behaviour and beliefs" – in relation to a particular framework, argues George Lindbeck (1984:33; cf. also Smit, 2009b). Indeed, this framework can be described as a *linguistic* framework "that shapes the entirety of life and thought" (1984:33). As such (1984:33),

[i]t comprises a vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully deployed... [A]s a language (or 'language game,' to use Wittgenstein's phrase) is correlated with a form of life... so it is also in the case of a religious tradition. Its

argues *for* making use of what he calls "older theological vocabulary" as "a major resource" for formulating new vocabulary that makes it possible "to think through and interpret contemporary experience and knowledge theologically" (1995:73).

[409] Yet Grace Jantzen would go even farther by claiming that the *reverse* is true – namely, not that salvation is the foundation of flourishing but that "[f]lourishing is the unacknowledged foundation of salvation in the western theological text" (Jantzen, 1998:157). This, notes Janet Trisk notes (2008:199), is particularly evident in liberation theologies ("and exponents of the social gospel"), where the metaphor of flourishing comes into its own. However, it should also be noted that others – such as David Ford – equate salvation with the "flourishing of life" (notes Paul Fiddes, 2007:177; cf. Ford, 1999:4 – 10).

doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops.

An exploration of the landscape of soteriology therefore takes the shape of an *inquiry,* which is neither comprehensive nor final. Such a hermeneutical inquiry is, however, both *formative* and *transformative*, notes Anthony Thiselton (2007:xvii). Yet it is also *performative*, in that it has to do with 'the general language game of religious discourse', or the significance of theological language within "modern secularity" (Kelsey, 1975:5). Within this "larger unit of language-and-life-activity" rhetoric is imbued with meaning (Thiselton, 2007:59). Moreover, this involves imagination – for "[t]o imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (Thiselton, 2007:59 quoting Wittgenstein, 1967:section 23). Indeed, "all theological positions are rooted fundamentally in imaginative construction" (Kaufman, 1995:46 – 47).[410]

The 'theological language game' which governs the rhetoric of human flourishing therefore has as much to do with theological content as with theological methodology, or with "a significant use of language and not just an idling of our language motors" (Kelsey, 1975:6), if it is to be both prior to *and* part of systematic theology (1975:6). Meaning, understanding, and interpretation necessarily takes place within a particular "language game, form of life, or extralinguistic situational context, [Ludwig] Wittgenstein suggests" – outside of which questions about the meaning of a particular subject only leads to confusion (Thiselton, 2007:58). Language games, writes Anthony Thiselton, takes place within a world of meaning "consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" (Thiselton, 2007:58 quoting Wittgenstein, 1967; sections 47 & 7). This is no different for secondary, systematic (unsystematic) theology, which has to do with the "exploration of the utility and significance of various theological concepts and images" (Kaufman, 1995:47). The horizon of meaning includes, for systematic theology, Christian doctrine.[411]

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[410] Paul Fiddes (2009:14) describes the way in which hermeneutics and imagination are related as follows: "In reading we can sense the stretching of mind and feeling, the tautness and even the stress which comes from holding together the movement from mystery to the mind which a concept represents, and the movement towards mystery which is characteristic of the imagination." Indeed, "the work of the imagination elaborates the Christian story to make it relevant for the contemporary world in which it is told and in which it shapes the Christian way of life" (Fiddes, 2009:21).

[411] John Webster argues that the use of the terms 'Christian doctrine', 'dogmatics', and 'systematic theology' are largely interchangeable and "often arbitrary" (2009:1). He himself distinguishes between these as follows (2009:1): "Of the three, 'Christian doctrine' is the most general and descriptive, indicating that the field of inquiry is Christian teaching, but making no prescriptions about what might count as normative Christian teaching or about the form which an account of it might take. 'Dogmatics' is often, though not exclusively, used to denote the rather more determinate study and exposition of dogma, that is, of authorized church teaching; it is

Moreover, Christian doctrine entails *hermeneutics* in that "doctrine raises issues of 'understanding'" (Thiselton, 2007:61). Indeed, "[a]ll contemporary systematic theology can be understood as fundamentally hermeneutical" (Tracy, 1981:104) in that systematic theologians seek "to retrieve, interpret, translate, mediate the resources – the questions and answers, form and content, the subject matter – of the classic events of understanding of those fundamental religious questions embedded in the classic events, images, persons, rituals, texts and symbols of a tradition" (Tracy, 1984:104).[412] And the extent to which systematic theologians perform this hermeneutical task well "contributes to the common good, to the realm of authentic publicness", argues David Tracy (1984:131).[413]

Yet doctrine and theology are also not necessarily synonymous. George Lindbeck explains (1984:76) that whereas "there can be great variety in the theological explanation, communication, and defense of the faith within a framework of communal doctrinal agreement" a consensus on doctrine does not exclude the possibility of disagreement on the *interpretation* of doctrine. This is made even more difficult by what he calls 'contemporary antidoctrinalism', or the apathy or even resistance to "the very notion of communal norms"

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somewhat less current in contemporary theology, especially in English. 'Systematic theology', on the other hand, is broader in compass than dogmatics, if the latter is taken to be concerned with teaching which has acquired ecclesial definition and approval, since systematic theology occupies itself more generally with Christian claims about reality. Further, as the adjective suggests, 'systematic' theology is especially interested in the scope, unity, and coherence of Christian teaching." As such, "[s]ystematic theology aims at a comprehensive, well-proportioned, an unified conceptual representation of Christian teaching. In conceptualizing Christian doctrine in its full scope, systematic theology treats a relatively stable range of topics" (Webster, 2007:12).

[412] "[T]his," notes David Tracy (1984:405), "involves the risk of a personal interpretation, not the false security of mere repetition... Systematic theologians cannot simply repeat; they must critically interpret the tradition mediating the event. Theologians cannot collapse into, they must critically interpret the situation in the light of the event." However, this can also be described as "gathering the fragments", which is an "expression from David Tracy's recent work" (Smit, 2009c:81; footnote 112). Dirkie Smit describes this as follows (2009c:81; footnote 112): "The issue itself – finding some way of living with radical plurality – occupied the central place in his thought through all his work. It is the search behind the blessed rage for order within diversity; it is the power of the analogical imagination to recognise similarity-amidst-difference and therefore to make meaningful conversation possible between different traditions; it is the religious hope that empowers people caught in the pluralities and ambiguities of method, history and language; it is the dialogue, albeit sometimes one of silence, with the other. In some of his latest essays, he reflected on the notion of 'fragments' and preferred the expression 'gathering' or 'assembling' of the fragments for this task."

[413] Indeed, "[o]nly with such careful attention to the complexity of the theological vocabulary does it become possible to do responsible theological work, whether that be the sketching out of a picture of the world and life as a whole in the form of a systematic theology, or the attention to particular doctrines, concepts or problems; whether it be conceived as explication of the experience or dogmas of the church or bible, or as phenomenological description and interpretation of religious or general experience" (Kaufman, 1995:20).

(1984:77).[414] He locates the significance and importance of doctrines in their reflection of "the grammar of the religion" (1984:81), which has direct bearing on the significance of doctrines, in that "doctrines [now] acquire their force from their relation to the grammar of a religion" (1984:81).[415]

In short, George Lindbeck proposes an understanding of doctrine that resembles "grammatical rules rather than propositions or expressive symbols" (1984:84). Herein, too, it becomes clear than an exploration of doctrinal *loci* − such as soteriology − takes the form of a theological language game which is governed by a distinct 'grammar' or 'logic'.[416] Two aspects of the 'theological language game', in which the rhetoric of human flourishing engages, merit further discussion − namely the role that doctrinal *loci* play as well as the various theological logics which shape and guide the respective contemporary soteriological discourses outlined here.

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[414] In George Lindbeck's words (1984:77), "[t]he very words 'doctrine' and 'dogma' have the smell of the ghetto about them, and to take them seriously is, it seems, to cut oneself off from the larger world." It is with this critique in mind that he develops an argument that explores "new and better ways of understanding their nature and function" (1984:7). Rinse Reeling Brouwer agrees that everything that smells of a system has acquired a bad name ("[a]lles echter wat naar systeem riekt, en zeker alles wat dan ook nog leerstellingen in systematische samenhang wil presenteren, heeft in onse tijd een slechte naam") (2009:9). It is for this reason that he asks, in the last chapter of his *Grondvormen van Theologische Systematiek,* whether dogmatic work still matters, and whether such work can still be done (in a section entitled "Kan het nog wel: dogmatiek bedrijven") (2009:357 − 359).

[415] This does not mean, notes George Lindbeck (1984:81 − 82), that doctrines do not err, for "doctrine is an inevitably imperfect and often misleading guide to the fundamental interconnections within a religion. In part this is because every formulated rule has more exceptions than the grammarians and theologians are aware of... Yet, despite these inadequacies, the guidance offered by the grammer or the doctrine of the textbooks may be indispensable, especially to those who are learning a language, to those who have not mastered it well, or to those who, for whatever reason, are in danger of corrupting it into meaninglessness."

[416] Dirkie Smit reminds the reader, however, that it ought not be forgotten that such descriptions are metaphorical (2009b:390 − 396). He describes theologians as 'grammarians', those interested in the inner workings of the language, the vocabulary, the syntax, the power of the language (2009b:393). Yet a language is not learnt from grammarians, he notes (2009b:394), but from family and friends and colleagues − which, in the case of faith, is the faith community (2009b:394), and even more specifically the liturgy (2009b:394 − 395). In short, grammar has to do with rhetoric, and rhetoric is traditionally described as having three components: ethos, logos, and pathos (200b:397). See also his article on rhetoric, entitled "Rhetoric and ethic?" (2009c). Paul Fiddes similarly describes theologians as "[e]xpert speakers of the language" as those that are "skilled in the grammar that is generated entirely within the Christian tradition" (2009:8). For him (2009:8), "these rules of speech create their own world of meaning."

5.3   On doctrinal *loci* and theological logics

5.3.1   Soteriology and doctrinal *loci*

The notion of *locus* (or *topos*) "stems from Aristotle's theory of argumentation and the rhetorical tradition", argues the Finnish Lutheran theologian Risto Saarinen (2012:9), which makes it particularly suitable in a consideration of just that – namely, the *rhetoric* of human flourishing (cf. also Compier, 1999). David Kelsey explains (2009:28) that

particular theological topics (such as the nature of God, creation, the person and identity of Jesus Christ, the meaning of Jesus' life and death, sin, grace, the church, etc.) [have conventionally been called] *loci* or 'places' about which a variety of theological proposals can and have been made and around which theological disagreements cluster.

A "rough logical hierarchy" is, however, discernible "among Christian theological *loci*", notes Kelsey (2009:28). Salvation, he notes, has always occupied a central position within doctrinal *loci,* in that it is "logically more basic than many other beliefs" (Kelsey, 2009:29). Indeed, salvation stands at the heart of Christian theology as 'the paradigmatic meaning'[417] of the Christian religion, notes David Tracy (1981:450). As a classic Christian doctrine, soteriology therefore occupies a major *locus* – or place – in the Christian faith (Kelsey, 2009:29). However, as David Ford argues (1999:1), salvation within Christian doctrine is also a pervasive topic (1999:1), in that

[s]alvation is not really one doctrine at all in most works of Christian theology... [but]... is distributed through treatments of God, creation, human being, sin, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, atonement, justification,

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[417] See also Giorgio Agamben's classic work on paradigms in this regard, wherein he deals with the question: what is a paradigm? (2009:9 – 40). He argues that paradigms are aimed at making a series of phenomena intelligible by providing the frameworks of interpretation necessary to do such hermeneutical work (2009:37). As such, the hermeneutical task requires as paradigmatic thought or interpretation (2009:33). However, paradigms do not precede the phenomena they interpret, but exist 'alongside' such phenomena: "Im Paradigma ist die Intelligibilität nich vor den Phänomenen da, vielmehr befindet sie sich sozusagen »bei«, oder »neben« (pará) den Phänomenen" (2009:33). Nor do paradigms find their meaning in presupposed principles, whether in the past or the present, but rather in the 'exemplary constellation' ("beispielhafter Konstellation") of particular parts or elements (2009:33). The function of paradigms, he argues (2009:11), is to provide a 'historical problem context' wherein different historical figures – philosophers, in his case; theologians, in my case – may be situated in order to enable interpretation of these figures as they are read or understood together ("in meiner Analyse aber als Paradigmen behandelt werden und dort die Function haben, einen historischen Problemkontext zu konstituieren und in seiner Gesamtheit verstehbar zu machen") (2009:11).

sanctification, vocation, church, ethics and politics, worship, sacraments, spirituality, ministry and eschatology: in fact, through all topics.

This does not mean that such doctrinal *loci* necessarily indicate a fixed position, seeing as doctrines may move into a variety of spaces for a variety of reasons. Indeed, doctrines are both flexible ánd stable, argues Risto Saarinen (2012:8), and therefore provide interpretation of such doctrines with a "rich variety of dialogical possibilities". The embeddedness of soteriology in (outer) proximate *loci*, and the consistence of soteriology in two closely related (inner) *loci*, makes for the continuous positioning and repositioning, or mapping and remapping, of the rhetoric of human flourishing within the dynamic landscape of soteriology. In its doctrinal web of relations, which is marked by both outer *loci* and inner *loci,* the *locus* of soteriology must be continuously positioned and repositioned, mapped and remapped, for the process of interpreting "topical subjects" or *loci* remains ever "open-ended and incomplete" (Saarinen, 2012:12). Two sets of 'relations among beliefs' (Kelsey, 2009:28) – namely an outer dynamic and an inner dynamic – are evident within an exploration of the landscape of soteriology.

Firstly, soteriology is a doctrinal *locus* among many doctrinal *loci*, and as such is embedded in a number of proximate doctrinal *loci* with which it is inextricably linked. In the various theologians and theological discourses that have been the focus of this study's inquiry *Christology* has been the constant companion of both the detailed and broader inquiries into soteriology, throughout the three discourses on salvation. It was seldom possible to find soteriological arguments that were not intwined with the person of Jesus Christ, and often impossible to extricate coherent soteriological accounts without any reference to the particular theologian's Christology. Christology, in other words, play a particularly important role in orientating and reorientating soteriology within the interplay between various doctrinal *loci.*

Other *loci* would also be important doctrinal companions to soteriology in this study. These include theological anthropology, trinity, creation, ecclesiology, hamartiology, and eschatology. Together, these doctrines form spaces wherein the rhetoric of human flourishing emerge – not *only* in overlap with Christology, but also in relation to all of the major doctrines mentioned above. The place, the *locus,* that soteriology occupies is however a shifting space which cannot be fixed into position because of the *external* dynamic created in proximity to doctrinal *loci* such as Christology and theological anthropology. As such, soteriology cannot

be found in a single, fixed place or position, but is positioned and repositioned within a web of relations to other doctrinal *loci.* Soteriology, in short, is a *locus* among *loci.*

Secondly, soteriology also consists of a number of doctrinal *loci*, and in particular the doctrines of justification[418] and sanctification. These doctrinal *loci* also exert influences that make it impossible for soteriology, across a variety of theologies, to become fixed into position.[419] The *internal* dynamic which is created by doctrinal *loci* such as justification and sanctification within soteriology, and in the overlap and negotiation of space between justification and sanctification, play a role in shaping soteriology. Neither justification nor sanctification express soteriology exhaustively, but form part of a web of relations in which soteriology is continually positioned and repositioned, mapped and remapped.

This does, however, raise the question as to the relationship between justification and sanctification.[420] I have argued in previous chapters that the relationship between these two doctrinal *loci* or beliefs shape the rhetoric of human flourishing in distinctive ways. More specifically, I have pointed out that where justification preceded sanctification – salvation was portrayed forensically, as reconcilitation (chapter 2); that where the order was maintained but

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[418] At least, it should be added, for Western traditions, and in particular for Protestantism. Valerie Karras argues, for instance, that justification is a preoccupation of Western churches, and that the "Orthodox in general have never quite understood what all the fuss was about to begin with" (2003:99). She notes that Orthodox conceptions of salvation is much more concerned with an "experiential and synergistic approach", wherein "there isn't much talk about justification" (2003:99). Indeed, "Eastern Christianity from its origins shows a singular lack of interest in discussing its soteriology in terms of justification" (Karras, 2003:99). There have been attempts – such as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's study on salvation, entitled *One with God* (2004) – to "move toward an ecumenically fruitful convergence regarding the doctrines of salvation of the Eastern and Western wings of the church" (Kärkkäinen, 2004:ix). Yet "Reformation theology has had a hard time in trying to reconcile the idea of *theosis* with the doctrine of justification", notes Kärkkäinen (2004:5). He too observes (2004:6) that "whereas for Lutherans the doctrine of justification is the doctrine upon which Christianity either stands or falls, in the history of Orthodox theology there is almost a total absence of any mention of the idea of justification by faith." It should be noted here that I have, from the very beginning of this study, considered but decided against the inclusion of a discourse on *salvation as deification* – partly because the study was simply becoming too large already, but also because the lack of a doctrine of justification in such a discourse may have come very close to the third discourse that I did include, namely salvation as transformation, wherein a doctrine of justification is largely underemphasised and mostly absent.

[419] Yet others, such as Paul Fiddes, are critical of Christian doctrines such as soteriology because he thinks that "doctrine will always seek to reduce to concepts the images and stories upon which it draws" (2009:8). He argues that "doctrine uses metaphor in an attempt to *fix* meaning, to define and limit a spectrum of possible interpretations" (Fiddes, 2009:9). As such, doctrine tends to closure and "will thus always need to be broken open for new exploration" (2009:9).

[420] Dawn DeVries raises this exact same question in her chapter on justification in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (2007:205). She points out that "[o]ne general problem with the idea of sanctification is that, with a few exceptions among Wesleyans and evangelicals, it seems that there are almost no theologians who choose to talk about this doctrine any more" (2007:205).

a greater emphasis on sanctification was evident – salvation was portrayed ethically, as liberation (chapter 3); and that where sanctification preceded justification with little attention paid to justification – salvation was portrayed aesthetically, as transformation (chapter 4). The respective juridical, ethical, and aesthetical rhetorics of each of the three soteriological discourses make it evident that the relationship between doctrinal *loci* – and justification and sanctification in particular – is not altogether arbitrary or unimportant.

In short, in the various theologians and theological discourses that have been the focus of this study's inquiry it has become clear that the *relationship* between justification and sanctification has played a role – not in establishing an *ordo salutis,*[421] but in shaping the rhetoric of human flourishing in definitive and important ways. Yet, even in cases where either of these two *loci* were less pronounced or seemingly absent, both exerted an influence on the space that the particular soteriology occupies. Indeed, it is only together – albeit in a variety of relationships – that these doctrinal *loci* express the inner dynamics of the various contemporary soteriologies of this study. Justification and sanctification, in short, are *loci* within a *locus.*

Any venture into soteriology is an exploration of the good news of the gospel. In its concern for place or space, such an exploration is a venture into soteriology as a particular theological *locus.* This *locus* – position, point, or place – is, however, not a fixed *location*, but a shifting, ever-changing landscape wherein theologians have attempted to find their footing, as it were, and proclaim the good news of the gospel in the midst of the miseries that human beings are confronted with. Faced with experiences of *dislocation* or 'human withering'*,* as I will explain below*,* theologians would venture anew into the landscape of salvation and discover therein grammar or logics that may orientate or *relocate* believers within their lives and experiences.

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[421] Closer scrutiny of the relationship between justification and sanctification may raise the question as to whether such an inquiry necessarily translates into a proposal for an order of salvation. Perhaps the necessesity for the development of such proposals may arise at some point, even if this was not developed in this particular study. However, proposing or establishing a formal *ordo salutis* in any of the contemporary soteriologies explored herein, wherein justification and sanctification would be interpreted as 'steps' or 'elements' in a process that moves gradually toward salvation, is not in view here because I was not interested in exploring "the logic of coming to belief or of coming to faith in God" (Kelsey, 2009:27). Instead, as explained above, the horizon of exploration for this study is "the logic of beliefs" (2009:27) or "the formal logical relations" of Christian beliefs or doctrinal *loci* (Kelsey, 2009:28).

5.3.2 The logics of faith, hope, and love

A variety of theological proposals may accompany doctrinal *loci,* notes David Kelsey (2009:28).[422] However, this study is not primarily focused on encompassing *all* doctrinal *loci* in a comprehensive whole, such as theological positions are wont to do; nor to explore the endless possibilities of theological proposals regarding the *locus* of salvation. Instead, I have limited myself to the exploration of *one* theological *locus* and traced throughout this study how the 'imaginative force' or 'grammar' or 'logic' (cf. Kelsey, 1975; 1999; 2009) of contemporary soteriological discourses perform within the theological language game that is played out within the landscape of salvation. Yet *why* this focus on various theological logics of the contemporary soteriological discourses outlined in previous chapters, one might ask?

Explorations of what David Kelsey calls "the logic of Christian beliefs" have to do with how a collection of doctrinal *loci* are "formally related to one another" (Kelsey, 2009:28). These formal relations, or grammars, or logics,[423] mark distinct pathways and routes of exploration within the landscape of soteriology. The nine contemporary soteriologies explored in this study are grouped into three discourses – namely, (1) salvation as reconciliation, (2) salvation as liberation, and (3) salvation as transformation – that display distinct rhetorical patterns or grammars of faith. As such, various 'grammars' or 'logics' – that govern these shifting patterns – are traced throughout the three soteriological discourses. Herein the relationship between the internal *loci* – namely justification and sanctification – of soteriology plays an important role in shaping the theological patterns or grammar of the respective soteriological discourses.

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[422] Moreover, clusters of theological *proposals* together form theological *positions*. Indeed, David Kelsey explains that "any elaborate complex of theological proposals concerning the major traditional topics or *loci* in Christian theology" may be deemed a 'theological position' (1975:4 – 5). In other words, a 'system of theological proposals' together render a 'theological position', which in turn develops proposals about theological *loci* "with an eye to their logical inter-connections" (1975:129 – 130). Such theological positions may encompass "a set of several different families of arguments" although "it is not itself taken as a whole ordered as an argument" (1975:137). Theological positions are "fascinating works of the imagination", notes David Kelsey (1975:9), for "[l]ike literary works of the imagination, they solicit sensitive and probing analysis." Herein he outlines two ways to analyse a theological position, namely (1) asking "what *roles* are played in the structure of the whole position by its discussion of each of several theological *loci*", and (2) asking "what *roles* are played in the arguments found in each of those discussions by various kinds of intellectual inquiry" – or asking "what they are *used* for within the 'system' as a whole" (1975137 – 138; original emphasis).

[423] David Kelsey notes that the metaphor of 'grammar' may be interchangeably used with the metaphor of 'logic' (Kelsey, 2009:28). For him, both the grammar and the logic of Christian doctrines refer to "the formal patterns of the relations among... beliefs" (Kelsey, 2009:28). The beliefs he has in mind are 'articulated beliefs' and, as such, require interpretation and exploration (Kelsey, 2009:28).

A soteriological logic of faith is evident in a set of patterns which is primarily interested in *correction.* Salvation is portrayed as union (with Christ), blessedness, and givenness – each of which has a particular state of being in mind. Salvation thereby corrects or remedies or purifies that which sin has destorted or contaminated. Herein the focus is on reconciliation, or a reconciled relationship with God, which also has implications for the relationships with others. In other words, justification becomes the inner basis of sanctification, and sanctification becomes an extension of justification. The point here is that such a rhetoric of salvation is meant to *console* and *affirm*, and thereby move the reader into *accepting* or *receiving* the remedy and purification that salvation effects. This does not exclude taking action in restoring relationships with others, but precedes such initiatives and is suspicious of soteriologies that conflate justification and sanctification for fear of a 'righteousness by works' soteriology. In other words, a soteriological logic of faith emphasises appreciation before resistance or embrace, and therein moves readers into receiving salvation that is forensically imparted to undeserving human beings.

An eschatological logic of hope is evident in a set of patterns which are primarily interested in *resistance.* Salvation is portrayed as communion (with God as well as others), wholeness, and reconciliation – each of which has just action in mind. Salvation thereby calls for the resistance of injustice and oppression, which distorts community and relationships within community. Herein the focus is on liberation, or a liberated relationship with God which, more importantly, has implications for the relationships with others. In other words, little to no attention is paid to the significance of justification, and the emphasis is clearly on sanctification. Justification is the assumed precedent to sanctification, but it is the scope and depth of the implications of santification that is in view here. The point here is that such a rhetoric of salvation is meant to *call to action* and *incite to activism*, and thereby *enable* the reader to respond to the claim that salvation lays on their lives – namely, in *resisting* and *challenging* unjust and sinful structures. This does not exclude accepting the remedying grace of salvation in restoring relationships with God and others, but it is suspicious of any and all soteriologies that stop short of practical measures that give expression to such grace. In other words, an eschatological logic of hope emphasises resistance amidst appreciation and embrace, and therein encourages readers to initiate and participate in just action or activism against injustice, which is ethically required of liberated human beings.

A creative logic of love is evident in a set of patterns which are primarily interested in *enjoyment.* Salvation is portrayed as grace, wellness (both in living and in being), and freedom – each of which have the beauty[424] or art of living in mind. Salvation thereby entails embracing well-being and the experiences of being loved by God. Herein the focus is on transformation, or being transformed in relationship with God and others. In other words, here there is also little to no attention paid to justification, yet coupled with eloborate exploration of the implications of sanctification. Even if justification features at all, here the classic order between of justification and sanctification is inverted. Sanctification precedes justification, but the nature of the implications of sanctification differs from the previous logic in that it includes but moves beyond only ethical implications. The point here is that such a rhetoric of salvation is meant to *encourage* and *fortify,* and thereby move the reader into *appreciating* the abundance and unfathomability of salvation. This emphasises the recognition that the beauty of restored relationships permeate all relationships, including with God, others, and creation. Such a rhetoric is, however, suspicious of soteriologies that require a destructive or oppressive notion of sin – particularly because it is sensitive to experiences of violence and violation that such notions may incite. In other words, a creative logic of love emphasises appreciation amidst acceptance and resistance, and therein moves readers into recognising the beauty of salvation and the cultivation of the aesthetic senses alongside ethical imperatives to bring about such transformation.

These three logics – a soteriological logic of faith, an eschatological logic of hope, and a creative logic of love – perform in different ways, wherein they give distinct expression to a variety of rhetorical patterns. However, these logics share a set of mutual characteristics. Firstly, these logics *exist concurrently* within the landscape of soteriology, so that a historical development from the first to the last is not in view here. Indeed, as I have indicated in

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[424] *Beauty* is "the glory of God, and the supreme form of that beauty in the world is Jesus Christ and his cross, in all its apparent ugliness", notes Paul Fiddes (2009:5). For Karl Barth, argues Fiddes (2009:5), beauty "is the persuasive and convincing form of the glory of God, understood as the overflowing of God's joy in its superabundance." This does not mean that "the glory of God is... simply the same as the splendour in beautiful things", but rather that the glory of God "is the creative source of worldly radiance" (Fiddes, 2009:9). As such, *aesthetics* "is seeing the 'form' of the glory of God, and this glory is the love that abides eternally in the Trinity" (Fiddes, 2009:5). As such, *aesthetic theology* "depends upon the aesthetic realm for its language, content, method and theory" (Fiddes, 2009:5). In short, aesthetic theology "will take the aesthetic forms of narrative and image as its form of discourse (language); it will draw on the arts, in both their religious and secular expressions, as a source for theology (content); and it will apply hermeneutical theory taken from the the (sic) arts to sources of theology, especially Scripture, and even to the very structure of theology itself (method)" (Fiddes, 2009:5).

chapter 1, a historical overview is beyond the scope of this study. Secondly, *no clear division* between these logics is in view here, for it may very well be that these various logics overlap to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the particular soteriologies in view. Thirdly, these logics are not static but – insofar as they give expression to the rhetorical and formal patterns that emerge in mapping and remapping the landscape of soteriology – *dynamic and open*. What is presented here can therefore be no more than a snapshot, a temporary freeze frame, a moment in an endless succession of moments that precede and follow this portrayal.

These remarks do not, however, yet clarify the relationship between these various logics. On the one hand, these various logics are not merely different perspectives on or different versions of the selfsame pattern discernible in all contemporary soteriologies, but exist in *distinct patterns* that are concretely particular. This also does not mean that these patterns are unique, and therefore consisting in unrepeatable elements. On the other hand, these distinct logics do not stand alone, each in their respective claims, but stand in a triadic relationship to one another. More specifically, these three logics are inseparably intertwined and therein collectively embedded within a triadic structure of faith, hope, and love.[425]

5.4   Human flourishing and theological triads

Faith tells us only that God is. Love tells us that God is good. But hope tells us that God will work God's will. And hope has two lovely daughters: anger and courage. Anger so that what cannot be, may not be. And courage, so that what must be, will be.

(St. Augustine; quoted in Kelsey, 2009:501).

The theological triad of faith, hope, and love has stimulated the imaginations of theologians throughout the ages – from Paul to Augustine, and beyond[426] – to present a framework or

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[425] Elizabeth Hall, Richard Langer, and Jason McMartin point out, interestingly, that "the character strengths most central to the flourishing life have an astonishing similarity to the virtues elevated above others by Paul... [in] 1 Corinthians 13:13... and proposed by the eudaimonistic theologian Thomas Aquinas... as the three 'supernatural' virtues: faith, hope, and love" (2010:116). This, however, is not the reason for the choice of these three notions. David Kelsey's theological framework (in *Eccentric Existence*) works in a much more robust way with the notions of faith, hope, and love – which he employs as the respective appropriate responses to God's relating in creation, consummation, and redemption. However, what should be evident is not only the choice for these three notions in describing the various logics in the three soteriological discourses outlined in previous chapters, but the *pairing* of these notions that differ from Kelsey's framework. The relationship between eschatology and hope is maintained, but in the case of creation and salvation Kelsey's order is not followed. Instead, creation is paired with love and salvation is paired with faith.

[426] Two recent publications also illustrate this well enough. A first example is that of Catholic theologian Thomas Rausch's analysis of the significance of the theological virtues for Pope Benedict XVI, in a book

302

model wherein theological arguments can be situated. Two contemporary theologians have done exactly this in recent years, namely in developing triadic metaphors that can host their respective theological arguments. David Kelsey has developed the notion of the 'triple helix' in order to present his proposal for rethinking theological anthropology within a broader, theocentric framework, whereas Russel Botman has developed the notion of a 'rotating triangle' in order to present his proposal for rethinking public theology and the necessary theological virtues or values that may respond to the spirit of the times. Both of these triadic metaphors are concerned for the *order* in which faith, hope, and love is presented, and therein for the formal relations between the various 'logics' which determine this order.

5.4.1   A triple helix (David Kelsey)

David Kelsey has developed a theological framework for interpreting or understanding living beings – more specifically, human beings – theologically within God's relating to all that is not God. The central claim of Kelsey in his book, *Eccentric Existence* (2009), is that all that is not God is to be understood ex-centrically, outside of itself, within God's ways of relating to all that is not God. He distinguishes three formal ways in which God relates to all that is not God – namely, (1) God relating to create, (2) God relating to consummate, and (3) God relating to reconcile – and is careful to maintain the relationships of these three ways of relating to one another throughout his project. Indeed, the three parts of Kelsey's project are "theologically necessary, logically different from each other, irreducible to one another, and yet inseparable from each other" (2009:893).

However, he notes that this "only gets us part way toward imagining how the[se] three parts... work together" in rendering his picture of 'human eccentric existence', and that it requires "a formal way to imagine their overall structure as a whole-in-complexity" (2009:900). This leads to his proposal of the metaphor of the 'triple helix', wherein three 'basic plots' or 'types of stories' structure the narrative of God relating to all that is not God (cf. Marais, 2011:55). I have described the triadic structure of Kelsey's triple helix elsewhere (Marais, 2011:55) as follows:

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entitled *Faith, Hope, and Charity* (2015). A second example is that of Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright's argument that the theological virtues may pave a path to greater unity within the ecumenical church, in a book entitled *Faith, Hope, and Love* (2014). Both of these titles, interestingly, retain the classic Pauline order of faith, then hope, and then love.

Stories of God relating eschatologically and God relating to reconcile are distinct and yet wound around and bound to one another in their being stories that have Jesus of Nazareth as their central figure and Jesus' life and death as their central plot. In addition, the pair of these stories are wound around and bound to the story of God relating creatively, "from which they are inseparable because they necessarily presuppose it, but into which they cannot be absorbed" (2009:476). The logics of these distinct narratives are bound to one another in the model of a triple helix, but do not follow in a linear or chronological pattern on one another, and cannot be absorbed into one another's plots or narrative logics. Additionally, the triplex structure attempts to stay true to the inherent standard of secondary theology's aim to attend and protect the complex and different theological *loci* from conflation into one, basic theological *locus.*

Thus Kelsey's project organises its proposals "around the poles of three, not two, logically more basic theological claims about God: God relating to create, God relating to consummate eschatologically, and God relating to reconcile" (2009:477).[427] Herein he opts for the description 'triple helix', whereby he means to point to "two or more helices… (spiraling) around one another" (2009:898). In particular, he sees two narrative logics (which cannot be collapsed into one another) wound around each other (expressed in three stories of God's relating), being "inseparable" and "in a fixed order" (2009:898). According to Kelsey's logic, the first helix involves a single narrative logic (God relating to create), whereas the second helix is a combination of two narrative logics wound together (God relating to consummate eschatologically and God relating to reconcile) into a double helix. The latter helix is ordered around the narrative logic of "the same concrete historical subject" (2009:898), namely Jesus of Nazareth. Finally, helix (God relating to create) and double helix (God relating to consummate and God relating to reconcile) are wound together to form a triple helix.

These three 'logics' are read together with the theological triad of the Christian life as the articulation of what the appropriate responses or attitudes "to one of the three ways God relates – namely, in faith, in hope, and in love" (2009:836). As such, he portrays flourishing (human) life as "eccentrically shaped by faith, hope and love" (2009:856). Herein Kelsey, interestingly, structures his entire project to adhere to the logic of this theological triad – in the order of

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[427] Kelsey is careful to maintain, however, that these two proposals "each have their own distinctive internal logic" even if "[a]t the same time, they cannot be separated from each other" (2009:899). Their communal christological centre binds them together in a way that they spiral around each other, which signify a logical relation and fixed internal structure. These two proposals are, in other words, themselves complexly interrelated in Kelsey's project – "while distinguishable, they are inseparable" (Kelsey, 2009:122) – in that they are both concretely enacted within the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Kelsey sees God relating to create as "ontologically prior to and logically independent of God's drawing creatures to eschatological consummation and God's reconciling them" (2009:121), and therefore God's relating to creation stands alone, the basic assumption of *both* God relating to consummate and God relating to reconcile.

creation, eschatological consummation, and reconciliation – which is unusual and remarkably deliberate, in that eschatology is traditionally discussed last and even often defined as 'the doctrine of the last things'. Faith, hope and love – which, if it were to be presented by way of the pattern creation-reconciliation-consummation would have read faith, love and hope – is triadically structured in accordance with the three narrative logics of David Kelsey's theological anthropology.

5.4.2   A rotating triangle (Russel Botman)

Russel Botman works out an 'ecumenical collage' of the interplay between dread and hope, with a specific concern for locating Africa and hope for Africa's youth within such a collage (2013). Herein he too employs what he calls "the triad of Christian life", namely faith, hope and love. This triad, Botman argues (2013:9), "represents a triangle with equal corners that energizes Christianity" in a communal way, in that it "represents a collective, public understanding of Christianity and not a personal, individualistic one" (2013:9). "Paul," writes Botman (2013:9), "is writing not about one's personal love, individual faith or private hopes" but "speaking of collectively and publicly demonstrated faith, hope and love" (2013:9). Christians, then, are "people of the triad". Moreover, the triad is a core concern for public theology, in that "the triad is the international mark of Christianity" (2013:9).

In an equally unusual and remarkably deliberate way as that of the structural choice that David Kelsey makes regarding the pattern or order of this theological triad, Russel Botman opts for the centrality of hope, not only as "the middle element of Christian life" that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13, but as that which is of the greatest importance for our time, given our context and 'own social conditions' (2013:10). He points out that Paul "moves away from the structure of equality in the triad" by highlighting love as the most important of these three virtues. However, this must be understood in the light of the serious communal concerns that Paul was faced with within the Corinthian church context, argues Botman (2013:10). The choice for the theological virtue of love is therefore not a choice made only once, by Paul, and thereafter and forevermore valid and relevant for every context and community. Botman argues for the exact opposite – namely, that this critical choice between faith, hope, and love must be made again and again in ministry and public life, at different times and in different places (2013:10). He points out (2013:10) that

305

[a]t certain times the world needs a Martin Luther or John Calvin who proclaims the greatness of *faith* in the triad… At other times we need the prophetic voice of Martin Luther King Jnr calling us to *love* above all other things when he speaks of people living in love in the country of the brave – here he sounds very much like Paul. It shows how we have to make a critical contextual decision about the primacy in the triad of Christian public life.

Therefore a reshuffling or a rotation of the triad is again needed, argues Botman, in that "we now need hope" (2013:10). More particularly, the hope that we need has to be born of our theological imagination, 'a dream of hope' so to speak, "that we need to confess and act upon" (2013:10). Faith, hope and love – which, if it were to be presented by way of the contextual challenges that we are faced with in the 21st century would have read faith, love and hope – provides the context for Botman's ecumenical collage of a public theology that can contribute to the development of "the African Dream" (2013:17 – 19) and "the Global Dream" (2013:19 – 21).

5.4.3   Flourishing in faith, hope, and love

Together, these two proposals – namely, David Kelsey's triple helix and Russel Botman's rotating triangle – present a robust possibility of navigating the landscape of soteriology and the world of meaning of human flourishing within this landscape. The strength of the metaphor of the triple helix lies in its stability and coherence, in that it traces the formal patterns of the various logics in Kelsey's theological anthropology. However, this proposal works with a static and fixed description of the relationship between the logics of creation, consummation, and reconciliation – which is exactly what Russel Botman's rotating triangle wants to avoid. Botman makes the observation that the theological triad of faith, hope, and love must remain open to the possibilities of reshuffling the order of its various logics if it is to be responsive to the human miseries of its context. However, this is not a metaphor without challenges, and particularly the stability and coherence of the rotating triangle may be at stake if a set of criteria for its reshuffling does not accompany suggestions for rotation.

Together, these two proposals mutually enhance and strengthen one another, and make it possible to maintain both the necessary flexibility *and* the necessary stability in making sense of the relations between the various logics outlined above. Instead of proposing a new

metaphor that combines insights from (and attempts to avoid the respective weaknesses) of David Kelsey's triple helix and Russel Botman's rotating triangle, which is neither necessary nor called for in this study, it would make sense to simply present how a soteriological logic of faith, an eschatological logic of hope, and a creative logic of love may function together within a combination of elements from these two metaphors.

The rhetoric of human flourishing is shaped by different soteriological discourses; these, in turn, are patterned in definitive and distinct ways, which can also be described as their 'grammar' or 'logic'. These logics were traced throughout the description of the soteriologies of nine contemporary theologians, and – more specifically – found to shape and guide each of the three contributions per discourse. In this study, the order of these logics are indeed presented as faith, hope, and love – or the discourses of salvation as reconciliation, salvation as liberation, and salvation as transformation – in an attempt to show, in this last chapter, how particularly the relationship between the doctrinal *loci* of justification and sanctification has evolved throughout these discourses. In the first discourse I have identified a soteriological logic of faith, and argued that justification forms the main focus herein, both in content and order of presentation. In the second discourse I have identified an eschatological logic of hope, and argued that sanctification forms the main focus herein, in content but not in order of presentation. In the third discourse I have identified a creative logic of love, and argued that sanctification forms the main focus herein, both in content and in order of presentation. The respective logics thus portray the relationships between the 'inner' doctrinal *loci* of soteriology respectively as justification-sanctification (with the emphasis on the former), justification-sanctification (with the emphasis on the latter), and sanctification-justification (with the emphasis on the former). The point here is that there are important formal relationships between doctrinal *loci* that shape the various logics in definitive ways.

However, this does not mean that these logics could not and should not also be responsive and open to the contextual challenges or questions that may disorientate or disrupt their order, whatever the specific order may be at a given time. Rather, the order of these logics is required to respond to the miseries – that which flourishing is not – of human beings if the rhetoric of human flourishing is not to fall prey to becoming stale and static. Rotation or reshuffling or reorientation is therefore necessary within the framework of the theological triad, particularly as it tries to articulate human flourishing in changing circumstances and

contexts. The criteria for initiating such movement may differ; however, insofar as such reshuffling or rotation involve attempts to imagine and reimagine human flourishing in the midst of experiences of human misery and human withering – the 'lived experiences' and questions of human existence – the explorative dimension of systematic unsystematic theology is maintained. In other words, the reshuffling and rotating of the logics of faith, hope, and love ought to stimulate further 'imaginings' of what it means to flourish.

5.5   Human flourishing contested?

The complex situatedness of soteriology as a doctrinal *locus* is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in tension with specific doctrines. The choice for a rhetoric – or even a theology (cf. Jantzen, 1996) – of human flourishing is not altogether unproblematic, and some theologians would go so far as to describe the very notion of human flourishing *contested* (cf. Jansen & Küster, 2009). These contestations often take the form of three objections, namely that (1) human flourishing is a form of *anthropocentrism*, that (2) human flourishing ostensibly entertains *consumerism*, and that (3) human flourishing is embedded in *secularism.*

In this part of the exploration of soteriology each of these objections are portrayed as arising from a tension within the relationship between the doctrine of salvation and the doctrines of creation, human beings, and God respectively. These contestations or objections illustrate in more concrete terms the variety of doctrinal *loci* that border on and, in some cases, infringe upon the soteriology as a *locus* in and of itself. The result of such distorted relations between (outer) proximate *loci* is anthropocentrism (a focus on human beings above all else), consumerism (a focus on health and wealth above all else), and secularism (a denial of transcendence above all else). Together, these objections to the rhetoric of human flourishing are nonetheless important regions to be mapped and remapped within the landscape of soteriology, albeit as possible danger zones to well-meaning interpreters. Stated somewhat differently, this set of objections contribute valuable contours to cartographical work, for in them a variety of borders or fringes or edges or boundaries of the rhetoric of human flourishing lie exposed.[428]

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[428] Paul Fiddes notes (2009:16; original emphasis) that "there are good reasons for establishing frontiers and drawing limits... [for t]he boundary marks out an area, sets up a space, in which exploration is *required*." Limits or borders or fringes or frontiers therefore play an important role in exploratory work.

5.5.1   Soteriology and anthropocentrism

A first objection that is leveled against the rhetoric of human flourishing is that such language is anthropocentric, and thereby focused on the salvation of human beings above all else. The South African ecotheologian Ernst Conradie argues (2013:4) that "[t]here has been a long-standing tendency, especially in Protestant theology, to portray the Christian message of salvation as being narrowly focused on the redemption of human beings." This prompts a question regarding "the very nature of salvation in terms of the nourishing and flourishing of the earth" (Conradie, 2013:4 – 5).[429] The issue at stake here is that of the ecological crisis and Christian thought patterns and grammar that have contributed to anthropocentrism.[430]

This objection can also be described as arising from the tension between the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of salvation (Conradie, 2013:5).[431] This includes a myriad of questions regarding the relationship between creation and salvation, among which (1) "what exactly *it* is that has to be saved" and (2) "what creation is to be saved *from*" (2013:18 – 19; my emphasis – NM). More specifically, how the relationship between creation and soteriology ought to be understood is in view here. However, Conradie also warns (2013:29) that the very emphasis on the relatedness between creation and salvation "may well push one in the direction of a fusion of creation and salvation."[432] The opposite danger to fusion is, he points out (2013:30), "one of compartmentalising the themes of creation and salvation" which "may lead to various forms of dualism." Neither fusion nor compartmentalisation are

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[429] Some documents, such as the World Council of Churches' *Together towards Life* document (2013), take this point of critique very seriously and therefore make it clear that "the gospel is the good news for every part of our life and society" in that "God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation" (2013:5).

[430] See, for instance, the influential essay by Lynn White in this regard, entitled "The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis" (1967; cf. also Marais, 2011:1; footnote 1), wherein he accuses Christianity of bearing 'a huge burden of guilt' for cultivating the rhetoric of domination over the earth and anthropocentrism. As Ernst Conradie points out (2013:16), "[t]he environmental crisis indicates that the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ may well be relevant for a planet in distress."

[431] Ernst Conradie observes (2013:9; original emphasis) "that there is a widespread inability in classic and recent Christian theologies to do justice to both the theme of creation *and* the theme of salvation, to the Christian faith in God as Creator *and* as Saviour, to the first *and* the second articles of the Christian creed."

[432] He goes on to argue that such a fusion "does not offer a way forward" for even though "[s]alvation may be a form of creativity… creation has to be other than salvation" (2013:30). Indeed, the doctrines of "creation and salvation [require] a certain relatedness between, but not the union of, these two acts of God" (2013:30).

therefore adequate in resolving the tension between the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of salvation (2013:30).[433]

However, as Ernst Conradie rightly points out in his research project on creation and salvation, there may very well be a variety of ways in which to approach and portray the relationship between these two doctrinal *loci*. This is also evident in this study's focus on nine theologians, from whom different views and positions on the relationship between creation and salvation could be deduced. Yet it is neither fair nor convincing to deduce from the various descriptions, analyses, and comparisons of the respective theologians presented in this study to try and sketch a picture of the relationship between creation and salvation after the research focus on human flourishing has been retained throughout. A deeper and more troubling critique should therefore rather be the very delineation of this study, with its focus on specifically *human* flourishing. More particularly, the choice for the pairing of 'human' and 'flourishing' (instead of 'ecological' and 'flourishing', or opting for only 'flourishing') may trigger this point of critique from a superficial reading of the research focus.

I have written about the relationship between ecological theology and theological anthropology elsewhere (cf. Marais, 2011). Therein I have argued that theology is deeply anthropological, but that this need not summarily exclude a concern and responsibility for the earth and her ecology. Anthropological is not synonymous with anthropocentric.[434] Human flourishing need not, in other words, be set up over and *against* ecological flourishing. Instead, the very rhetoric of "flourishing calls for a careful fostering of connectedness and

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[433] Ernst Conradie himself would point out (2013:31) that the relationship between the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of creation is complex, in that "[t]ypically the one is subsumed under the other or under a third category." Indeed, "[w]e are typically either pulled in the direction of emphasising salvation more than creation… or to emphasise creation more than salvation" (Conradie, 2013:31). His own proposal with regards to this dilemma is trinitarian theology, or placing the earth in the triune God's economy of salvation (2013:31, 39; cf. also 2008 and 2015).

[434] However, it ought to be noted that some theologians make no such differentiation. Rebecca Todd Peters, for instance, notes (in her book *In Search of the Good Life* (2004)) that asking what the good life of the flourishing of human beings mean, is a question that "necessarily makes certain assumptions that are anthropocentric" (2004:22). Yet this does not mean, she argues, that the concern for human flourishing excludes the concern for "caring for the planet" (2004:26) – not if "our moral universe includes all living creatures and the earth as well as humanity" (2004:27). Ellen Charry goes even farther by linking human stewardship to human and divine happiness. For her (2010:275), a theological vision of human flourishing does not only involve the happiness of human beings, but also the well-being of creation and the happiness of God. She argues (2010:275) that "delighting in felicitous experiences and advancing creation's well-being is multidimensional... Such moments are pleasurable in themselves and joyful in the longer term both because they both enhance God's happiness in creation's flourishing under human stewardship and because they enhance our happiness at being agents of that flourishing."

care that every species blossom" (Trisk, 2012:262). Moreover, the rhetoric of flourishing takes bodiliness seriously, argues Janet Trisk (2012:262 – 263), and calls for "an appreciation of beauty, both natural and artistic." A focus on *human* flourishing cannot and ought not, by any stretch of the imagination, be interpreted as anthropocentric based only on the fact that 'human' is included in the title of such a study. The very metaphor of flourishing is borrowed from the natural world; moreover, theologians such as Grace Jantzen have specifically employed a 'theology of flourishing' over and against a 'theology of salvation' because the rhetoric of flourishing is seen as a non-anthropocentric and non-patriarchal alternative to soteriology (cf. Jantzen, 1996; Trisk, 2008). It would therefore be a strange conclusion to arrive at that the rhetoric of (human) flourishing need necessarily be anthropocentric, for human flourishing is inseparable from the flourishing of the earth and all living beings.

5.5.2   Soteriology and consumerism

A second objection that is leveled against the rhetoric of human flourishing is that such language is consumerist, and thereby focused on wealth and health above all else. The question raised by Volker Küster (2009:148) is of pivotal importance in this objection, namely: "Are we seduced by the globalized neo-liberal consumer capitalism or the gospel of wealth and health?" Indeed, "[a]s theologians we may question the concept [of human flourishing]… when it tends to underline the individual's search for success and prosperity" (Jansen & Küster, 2009:149). For this reason theologians are sensitive as to whether "we [are] seduced by the globalized neo-liberal consumer capitalism or the gospel of wealth and health" (Küster, 2009:148). In short, the issue at stake here is that of the various gospels of prosperity and Christian thought patterns and grammar that have contributed to prosperity theology. Indeed (Jansen & Küster, 2009:149)

[h]uman flourishing seeks to promote health, wealth, happiness, hope, agency and wholeness. As theologians we may question the concept, however, when it tends to underline the individual's search for success and prosperity… [which are] abounding in globalizing Pentecostal/charismatic movements.

When human flourishing becomes equated with *wealth* – or 'individual success' and 'prosperity' (particularly as it is encountered "in globalizing Pentecostal/charismatic

movements")[435] – the capacity for including suffering is sacrificed, whereby the rhetoric of human flourishing becomes theologically inadequate or even obsolete (Jansen & Küster, 2009:149). This is the risk of partaking in the rhetoric of human flourishing, notes Mechteld Jansen and Volker Küster (2009:157) – namely, that human flourishing may become equated with prosperity: "[h]uman flourishing comes with success and success is measured by financial prosperity."[436]

When human flourishing becomes equated with *health* – or 'well-being', as in the World Health Organisation's definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" – it becomes highly suspect because it proclaims a utopia, or "a life without suffering, happiness without pain, and a community without conflicts", which simply does not exist (Moltmann, 1993:272). In a reflection on human embodiment, Jürgen Moltmann notes that not all "ideas of 'health' are necessarily healthy in themselves" (1993:271), and therefore that health cannot be measured "merely against the system of values of the particular society in question" (1993:271). This is what Moltmann describes as 'the (anxious) cult of health' (1993:274 – 275), wherein human flourishing comes with health and health is measured by the absence of illness.

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[435] Yet the Pentecostal theologian Henry Lederle laments the fact that "[t]he general public holds a widespread prejudice against the so-called Prosperity Gospel" (2010:224). In his *Theology with Spirit* (2010), Lederle defends the prosperity gospel (in a section entitled "Prosperity" (2010:218 – 224)) and argues that although this has been a major point of critique against Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, "it is also a teaching that has a very strong biblical base" (2010:218). For him, prosperity has to do with salvation, which "includes spiritual, material, and physical dimensions" (2010:218). He therefore critiques Protestantism for not regarding 'human well-being' as "an aspect of salvation itself" and for spiritualising salvation by focusing on the "[restoration of] the relationship between God and human beings" (2010:218 – 219). Yet he also proposes an alternative to the prosperity gospel, namely "God's comprehensive blessing", wherein he has "God's meeting the need of fallen human beings" in view (2010:222). This includes "rebirth and new life in Christ, forgiveness of sin, sanctification, physical healing, emotional well being, deliverance from the demonic, as well as God's favor in material blessings" (2010:222). In other words, Henry Lederle agrees that salvation includes health and wealth as part of the many blessings that God bestows on human beings.

[436] More particularly (Jansen & Volker, 2009:157 – 158), this "emerge[s] through the emphasis on the motivation of believers to live a life of abundance. God desires to bless those who take up their business plans and start their enterprises. It may emerge in the message that Christians can and should share in Christ's victory over sin, sickness and poverty. In many cases this message is followed by or lined with the idea of seeding and reaping. When you seed faith, meaning that you give tithes, you will reap blessings, meaning that you will succeed materially." In the prosperity gospel two developments intersect, namely (1) "Western concepts of the individual pursuit of happiness" (which spread from North to South), and (2) "communal aspects of human flourishing" (which spread from South to North) (Jansen & Volker, 2009:158). They ascribe this to the legacy of the prosperity gospel which, they note (2009:157), "blends Pentecostal revivalism with elements of positive thinking." This is particularly evident in African Pentecostal churches, they argue (2009:157); but they also make the point that the prosperity gospel originated in the United States and 'migrated' from there to Asia, Africa, and Latin America (2009:158).

This objection to consumerist interpretations of salvation as wealth and health can also be described as pertaining to the relationship between the doctrine of human beings and the doctrine of salvation. Prosperity gospels that measure salvation in terms of well-being, or health and wealth, equate 'being human' with 'being healthy and wealthy' (cf. Moltmann, 1993:273).[437] Salvation is thereby conflated with theological anthropology, and flourishing measured by way of the *absence* of illness and suffering (cf. Moltmann, 1993:273). Thus illness (as the absence of health) and poverty (as the absence of wealth) are thereby excluded from the rhetoric of human flourishing, which in turn makes any such rendition of flourishing incompatible with (any kind of) suffering. It is for this reason that Jürgen Moltmann opts for a description of 'health' as "the strength to be human", for herein a human being may find meaning in both health *and* sickness, both wealth *and* poverty, and – ultimately – in living *and* in dying (1993:273).

In short, the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of human beings ought not be conflated or held completely apart, for in this relationship a central concern for "human life [that] can develop in every direction in all its fullness" comes to the fore (Moltmann, 1993:275). As such, soteriology is concerned with life and flourishing – but not for life or flourishing over and against death or sickness. The human life that Jürgen Moltmann has in mind here is a life that is "accepted, affirmed and loved" not *in spite of*, but *because of* its frailty and mortality (1993:275). Equating human flourishing with either wealth or health – or any combination thereof – is the result of a distortion in the relationship between the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of human beings. The rhetoric of human flourishing need therefore not be understood as symptomatic of consumerism, or an obsession with wealth and health, for human flourishing has to do with the affirmation of life.

5.5.3 Soteriology and secularism

Yet such an affirmation of life has its own set of complexities and problems. A third objection that is leveled against the rhetoric of human flourishing is namely that such language is humanistic at the expense of transcendence, and thereby focused exclusively on human

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[437] This has a number of dire consequences, argues Moltmann (1993:273): "This leads to the suppression of illness in the individual life, and means that the sick are pushed out of the life of society and kept out of the public eye. To turn the idea of health into an idol in this way is to rob the human being of the true strength of his (sic) humanity. Every serious illness which he (sic) has to suffer plunges him (sic) into a catastrophe, robs him (sic) of his (sic) confidence in life, and destroys his (sic) sense of his (sic) own value."

flourishing above all else. Charles Taylor points out that such a singular loyalty to human flourishing has meant an acceptance "of no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing" (2007:18). He sees a close allegiance between the rhetoric of flourishing and modern secularism (2007:18) that "closes the transcendent window, as though there were nothing beyond" (2007:638). In short, the issue at stake here is that of transcendence and Christian thought patterns and grammar that uncritically reproduces an exclusive humanism that is deeply secular.

This objection can also be described as arising from the tension between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of salvation. Indeed, the role of God – perhaps even the necessity of God – in salvation is thereby in view, particularly after "the massive subjective turn of modern culture" with its "new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths" (Taylor, 1991:26). Whereas *before* this turn God "was considered essential to full being", *after* this turn "salvation comes from recovering our authentic moral contact with ourselves" (1991:27). Indeed, the "relative weakening of Christianity" (and "of any other strong, transcendental outlook") is accompanied by "the view that human life is better off without transcendental vision altogether" (Taylor, 2011:172). This would lead to "the rise of an exclusive humanism" that is "based exclusively on a notion of human flourishing, which recognizes no valid aim beyond this", writes Taylor (2011:172).

There are, however, "great dangers" to such an 'exclusive' and 'self-sufficing' humanism, writes Taylor (2011:172). One such a danger is "an immanent negation of life" (2011:172) which exhausts "the fullness of life, even the goodness of life" (2011:173). Exactly this, namely, the preoccupation with self, is one of the most devastating consequences of 'a secular age' – namely, an age "in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable" (Taylor, 2007:19 – 20). Marcel Sarot agrees that "in contemporary Western society most people are no longer much interested in questions of meaning, but merely try to live a life that is as pleasant as possible (1996:21).[438] In short, the issue at stake here is that of humanism devoid of transcendence, and Christian thought patterns and grammar that have contributed to the development of such an 'exclusive humanism'.

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[438] James Smith questions the assumption, however, that secularism can be so easily mapped (2014:2) and presents a counter proposal to Charles Taylor's 'reading of the times' – namely, as to how *not* to be secular (which is also the title of Smith's book) (2014).

Yet there is also "a powerful constitutive strand modern Western spirituality [that] is involved in an affirmation of life" (Taylor, 2011:174). This, writes Charles Taylor (2011:174), "is perhaps evident in the contemporary concern to preserve life, to bring prosperity, and to reduce suffering". He adds that these admirable pursuits are "without precedent in history" (2011:174). Ernst Conradie also notes that "[t]he modern liberal tendency [is] to equate salvation with the flourishing of inherent potential, with education and development, if not progress, with the dynamics of building a better society, with moral upliftment through moral education" (2013:23). One of the greatest dangers of affirming human flourishing has therefore also produced the concern for humanitarian efforts.

In short, exclusive humanism has contributed, in the wake of the rise of modern secularity, notions of human flourishing that has proclaimed "the primacy of life" at the expense of "aiming beyond life" (Taylor, 2011:176). This is perhaps the most devastating critique of the rhetoric of human flourishing, and perhaps the greatest reason why the significance of soteriology for the rhetoric of human flourishing needs to be mapped and remapped. The consequences of failing to do so may emerge in the inability to deal with theodicy, which Charles Taylor describes as "the widespread inability to give any human meaning to suffering and death, other than as dangers and enemies to be avoided or combated" (2011:176). This specific problematic within the relationship between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of salvation – namely, a consideration of the significance of human *misery* or human *withering* for human *flourishing* – therefore deserves more attention.

5.6   Human withering and human flourishing

A study on the rhetoric of human flourishing would not be complete without some consideration of what human flourishing is *not,* as that which the rhetoric of human flourishing has in view to oppose or correct or reposition. Theo Boer employs the metaphor of 'withering' as a counterpart to 'flourishing', particularly where human beings experience suffering – as is the case with "patients with a euthanasia request" (2009b:203). In remaining consistent with the metaphorical choice for flourishing, the notion of withering is therefore a sensible description of a variety of human miseries, including vulnerability, illness, suffering, oppression, sin, and evil.

There is a dynamic relationship 'between flourishing and withering', notes Boer (2009b:197) on the one hand, so that a simple understanding of withering as the absence of flourishing is not possible. Marcel Sarot agrees (1996:11; footnote 32) that "there may be disputes about borderline cases" of human flourishing, but argues – on the other hand – that "no one would call a withering plant flourishing." Indeed, he points out that there are often 'objective standards' employed in evaluating a human life, which makes it possible to distinguish between 'withering' and 'flourishing' (Sarot, 1996:11 – 13). It is therefore important and worthwhile to consider a variety of different categories of what such 'human withering' may entail, without necessarily excluding these categories from being part of human flourishing.

5.6.1 Vulnerability and illness[439]

A first category of human withering has to do with vulnerability and illness. More specifically, theologians such as Grace Jantzen prefer to make use of "the language of illness" (as an alternative to the language of sin) to describe "the human condition" (Trisk, 2012:261). Illness is particularly incompatible with what Jürgen Moltmann describes as "[t]he modern cult of health" with its "fear of illness" (1993:274).[440] Human flourishing is compromised when health is set up over and against illness (1993:274), and portrayed as excluding "the sick, the handicapped, and the old who are close to death" (1993:274). This amounts to 'social death' (1993:274). Illness may therefore range from "a malfunctioning of the organs of the body" to "a shaking of personal confidence" to "loss of social contacts" to "a crisis of life itself", including "loss of significance" (Moltmann, 1993:275). As such, illness is a consequence of frailty and vulnerability, and thereby a natural part of human life and human

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[439] See also the interdisciplinary study on illness, edited by the German theologians Günter Thomas and Isolde Karle (2009). Therein they note that the phenomenon or experience of illness is an important horizon to be explored by theologians, particularly in the context of post-secularity and post-modernity (2009:9). They ask a series of important questions in this regard: "Zweifellos ist Krankheit für die Religion auch ein Problem der Ethik und moralischer Kommunikation. Wie werden Kranke wahrgenommen und behandelt? Wie werden die Qualität und the Zugänglichkeit medizinischer und pflegerischer Leistungen erhalten und ausgebaut? Wie können Menschen vor Ausschlussmechanismen geschützt werden und wie werden Gesundheitsleistungen gerech verteilt?" (2009:9) In a section on illness in systematic theological perspective (2009:309 – 542) various theologians – including the South African theologians Dirkie Smit, Nico Koopman, and Robert Vosloo – respond to these and other important questions.

[440] Grace Jantzen, on the other hand, accuses the modern world not of a preoccupation with health, but a preoccupation with death (Trisk, 2012:261). More specifically, she sees in Western Christianity a "fascination with and dread of death – necrophilia and necrophobia" (Trisk, 2008:197). For this reason she makes use of the language of 'shrivelling' rather than 'withering' (cf. Trisk, 2008:197) to describe the absence of flourishing.

flourishing. Vulnerability and illness can therefore not consistently be held as oppositional to human flourishing.

Mechteld Jansen and Volker Küster point out that health and healing may be an important category of human flourishing, although by healing they emphasis not necessarily cure, but care and shalom (2009:156 – 157).[441] This they call 'holistic healing', which "encompasses health, security and salvation" (2009:157). Yet such an understanding of human flourishing does not, they argue, exclude suffering and illness. This enables them to include frailty in their conception of human flourishing, as in the case of old age, for instance: "[b]ecoming old does not diminish the flourishing of a person" (2009:157). Alternatively they speak of 'vulnerability', which is the finitude and pains that human beings suffer – including "cold, heat, hunger, thirst, tiredness, loneliness" (Jansen & Küster, 2009:153). In other words, the quest for human flourishing becomes a questionable endeavor if it cannot include both illness *and* vulnerability in its scope (cf. Jansen & Küster, 2009:149). Indeed, the rhetoric of human flourishing needs to take vulnerability seriously, argues Mechteld Jansen and Volker Küster (2009:153), if it is serious about a concern for the present, material world (Trisk, 2012:262).

Vulnerability and illness point to a particular understanding of human misery that is concerned with the *natural* frailty and limitations of human existence. In this first category of human withering, the natural and mortal limitations of being human are taken seriously. Interpretations of health and salvation that do not comply with the acceptance of the natural, mortal lives of human beings – with its accompanying struggles and suffering – are therefore incompatible with human flourishing. Human withering thereby becomes a natural part of human flourishing, in that both withering *and* flourishing fall within the ambit of being human – which includes illness, vulnerability, frailty, pain, and ultimately death.

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[441] David Ford points out that "'[h]ealth is the root sense of the word 'salvation', and this has an immense range of meaning" (1999:1), which has to do with the "physical, social, political, economic, environmental, mental, spiritual, moral" dimensions (1999:1). Salvation "is as broad as creation itself", argues Ford (1999:3), and therefore the transformation of the self (which is the focus of his work on soteriology) has to do with, among other things, "ordinary life in enjoyment" (1999:3). The second part of his book, entitled 'Flourishings', provides a series of images by which to illustrate the flourishing of human beings, and the aim of this part of his book is "to explore human flourishing in some of its richest forms, and to do so in a way which invites intelligent and wholehearted appreciation and even participation" (Ford, 1999:107). Salvation, for Ford, is linked with substitution (which entails "responsibility, love and sacrifice") and abundance (which has to do with "flourishing, joy, blessing, thanks, overflow, love, infinity, singing, polyphony and feasting") (1999:4). See also the collection of essays on *Health and Human Flourishing,* edited by Carol Taylor and Roberto Dell'Oro (2007).

5.6.2   Suffering and oppression

A second category of human withering has to do with suffering and oppression. As pointed out above, the rhetoric of human flourishing cannot undergird "the widespread belief that there is an inherent right for every human being to be free from illness, pain and disability" (Jansen & Küster, 2009:153). In other words, "suffering is connected with the flourishing life" (Hall et al, 2010:117) – yet *how* this connection between suffering and flourishing is theologically interpreted is contested. For instance, Jennifer Hall, Richard Langer, and Jason McMartin argue that suffering may be redemptive or useful in that it could contribute "in becoming increasingly conformed for the image of God" (2010:120). Herein, suffering may play a role in bringing about "virtuous character formation" (2010:117) which "can lead to the development of [theological and psychological] virtues" (2010:118).

Others, such as Ellen Charry, argue that the rhetoric of human flourishing addresses the suffering of people who "experience hardship and grief that sets them off balance" (Charry, 2010:ix) – as "those traumatized by life's adversities" (2010:xii) – *not* because suffering is redemptive (2010:xii, 1997:18), but because "classical doctrinal theology is pastorally motivated" (2010:ix). Indeed, the "end [of such theology] is human flourishing" (2010:ix). Circumstances that cause suffering, "such as in war, random violence, and the deprivation of normal agency", will interrupt the ability of human beings to flourish, argues Charry (2010:275). Therefore experiences of suffering cannot merely be glossed over or explained away by claiming that suffering "can lead us… in becoming increasingly conformed to the image of God" (Hall et al, 2010:120) or that suffering can "be understood as accomplishing God's purposes" (Hall et al, 2010:120). In short, the 'litmus test' for the rhetoric of human flourishing is "[t]he theology of the cross", notes Mechteld Jansen and Volker Küster (2009:159). Any notion of human flourishing which "does not take seriously into consideration the experience of poverty and oppression to which large parts of the world population are still exposed… commits heresy", they argue (2009:159).

Suffering is, however, not necessarily synonymous with oppression. Serene Jones (2000:72 – 76) outlines various forms of oppression, among which material, cultural, collective, institutional, and political oppression may play a distinctive role. She notes in particular the role that power relations and power dynamics play (2000:72), especially when oppression is

engaged 'from the inside' (2000:74). Specifically, oppression causes suffering but may be more deliberate than some forms of suffering. As such, feminist theories of oppression are concerned with practice, in that they should "work for the good of women's lives" and "empower action for change" (2000:76). Herein the rhetoric of human flourishing plays a very important role, argues Jones (2000:75), in that it may make possible the assessment of present conditions by way of the 'regulative ideal' of flourishing.

Suffering and oppression point to a particular understanding of human misery that is concerned with the *communal* dimensions of human existence. In this second category of human withering, the shared experiences of suffering and oppression are taken seriously. Interpretations that do make no conceptual room for the inclusion of suffering in flourishing run the risk of positioning theodicy over and against human flourishing. However, the same cannot be said for oppression. Whereas the possibilities for flourishing amidst oppression cannot necessarily be denied, it can be said that oppressive and violating relationships and circumstances make for human withering rather than human flourishing. In other words, both oppression and suffering may create the conditions for human withering, but only oppression is ultimately incompatible with human flourishing.

5.6.3   Sin and evil

A third category of human withering has to do with the belief "that something is wrong with human life – and indeed the whole world – in its present condition" (Gunton, 2002:59), or sin and evil. These notions are often used interchangeably, which raises the question as to the distinctiveness of, and relationship between sin and evil. Ted Peters notes that although "the words sin and evil mean nearly the same thing", he describes sin as 'the cause' and evil as 'the effect' (1994:8).[442] The South African theologian Ernst Conradie similarly describes sin

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[442] His book entitled *Sin* (1994) is a classic in this regard, and merits a longer quotation in this regard: "I tend to use evil to refer to the effects of sin such as loss, pain, suffering, and destruction... Sin is the cause, evil the effect. Yet, the idea of evil covers somewhat more than just sin or the effects of sin" (1994:8). Here he thinks of what he calls 'natural evil', which broadens the description of evil. In other words, "evil can refer both to sin's effects and to the suffering caused by the accidental course of nature, including disease, drought, earthquakes, tornadoes, and floods" (1994:9). Another classic study on evil is that of American moral philosopher Susan Neiman, who provides an alternative history of philosophy as a history of evil (2002). Her book does not, she notes (2002:8), offer "a definition of evil or criteria for distinguishing evil actions from those that are simply very bad" – instead, here her goal was "to use different responses to the problem of evil as a means of understanding who we have become in the three centuries that separate us from the early Enlightenment" (2002:10). These two books, by Ted Peters and Susan Neiman, are two examples of authoritative studies on sin and evil, but many more may be cited here. A book that shares common themes with Peters' *Sin* is, for example,

as "the origin of evil" and evil as "the consequences of sin" (2013:8, 21). David Kelsey argues that it is important, for theological reasons, to distinguish clearly between the concepts 'sin' and 'evil'.[443]

The distinction between sin and evil lies, argues David Kelsey, within its grounding: whereas sin is defined theocentrically (as distortion of appropriate responses to God), evil is defined creature-centrically (as violation of creatures' integrities) (cf. Marais, 2011:62). If "[e]vil is violation of what and who creatures are and how they are to be", then "[s]in, by contrast, is defined by direct reference to God… it is always 'against God'" (2009:409). However, it could be said that there is some overlap between the concepts of sin and evil, as much as it could be said that there are definite distinctions. The consequences of sin and evil are said to be the same in that they both violate creatures. Indeed, "insofar as sin is a violation of the identities of living human personal bodies in a living death, it is also an evil" (2009:847). Furthermore, sin and evil are understood by Kelsey to be negative mysteries, since, for instance, there seems to be no account of how evil came to be. These are mysteries "in the sense of something undeniably real and a-rational, without cause or reason" (2009:411).

Sin ought not be confused with vulnerability and suffering, however (Jansen & Küster, 2009:153), even if there are important interconnections between sin, vulnerability, and suffering. Vulnerability may as yet become the environment that makes sin possible, by way

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The Return of Splendor in the World by Christof Gestrich (1997; cf. in particular 1997:xx, where Gestrich himself points out these similarities). Both Christof Gestrich's book and the doctoral dissertation by Rachel Baard – entitled *Sexism and Sin-Talk* (n. d.) – are concerned with the *rhetoric* of sin and evil. In Baard's dissertation, for example, chapters are dedicated to such topics as "Deconstructing the Rhetoric of Gynocide" (chapter 2) and "The Ethos, Pathos, and Logos of Feminist Sin-Talk" (chapter 5) (Smit, 2009d:167; footnote 6). In Christof Gestrich's book sections are dedicated to similar topics, such as "The Language of the Doctrine of Sin" (1997:10 – 13) and "The Church's Language Problems with Evil" (1997:153 – 159). See also Don Compier's chapter on "Rhetorical Hermeneutics and the Christian Doctrine of Sin Today" (1999:49 – 70).

[443] Apart from his distinctions between sin and evil, Kelsey furthermore distinguishes in every part of his book between sins in the plural and sin in the singular, which he regards as a reworking of a traditional distinction between 'actual' and 'original' sin. He mentions that "[t]raditionally, theological accounts of sin have distinguished between sin (in the singular) as a state or condition of fallen human creatures (i.e. original sin) and sins (in the plural) as a variety of intentional acts (i.e. actual sin)" (2009:419). Indeed (Westminster John Knox Press Radio interview with David Kelsey, 2009) "where 'actual sin' were individual pieces of behaviour that were sinful, and, what I'm calling sin the singular, that will be sin in the plural. So, sin in the singular is a lot closer to what has been called 'original sin'. It's simply the name for a way a whole human being as a whole human being is distorted and in bondage to that distortion." See also David Kelsey's insightful article entitled "Whatever happened to the doctrine of sin?" (1993). Herein he argues that the doctrine of sin "is vigorously alive but has migrated" from its traditional home – namely, the doctrine of creation (1993:169 – 172) – by way of three trajectories: (1) from creation to theological anthropology (1993:172 – 175); (2) from creation to redemption (1993:175 – 176); and (3) from creation to christology (1993:176 – 78). Don Compier, however, 1999:92; footnote 2) regards this argument by David Kelsey as merely restating the problem.

of human beings' resistance to "forms of vulnerability, in a defensive as well as offensive attitude" (Jansen & Küster, 2009:153), but is not in and of itself synonymous with sin. Suffering, similarly, may make for the conditions that could contribute to committing sin, but cannot – in and of itself – be either synonymous with sin, or be regarded as punitive measure for sin. Of course this does not exclude the possibilities that sin may precede suffering, nor that sin may be a consequence of experiences of suffering.

More important, however, is the relationship between sin and oppression. Any application of sin that stops short of applying sin to "the context of poverty and oppression" is lacking, argues Mechteld Jansen and Volker Küster (2009:153). It is necessary not only to take the sin of individuals seriously, as sin that is perpetrated, but also the effect of sin on others, as sin that is structural (Jansen & Küster, 2009:153 – 154). Structural sin – or "[t]he socio-political and economic structures that are sinful" – does harm collectively, whereas individual sin do harm individually (Jansen & Küster, 2009:154). Exactly because "[h]uman flourishing cannot be but communal flourishing", human withering also affects community (2009:155).

Sin and evil point to a particular understanding of human misery that is concerned with the *moral* implications of human withering. In this second category of human withering, the origins and consequences of the negative mysteries of sin and evil are taken seriously. Interpretations that do not adequately account for the distinctiveness of sin and evil respectively, as well as how they are related, may continue to give impetus to a counter reaction of unqualified affirmations of human flourishing. In other words, sin and evil may provide the moral categories for describing human withering, but may also create the conditions for human withering – including oppression, suffering, vulnerability, and illness.

5.7   Human dignity and human flourishing

The glory of God is a human being fully alive, and the life of humanity is the vision of God.

(St. Irenaeus; quoted in Kendall & Soulen, 2006:3)

This catchphrase is often quoted in reference to both human dignity (cf. for example Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:8) *and* human flourishing (cf. for example Hall et al, 2010:115) alike.[444] The

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[444] See also Christof Gestrich's *The Return of Splendor in the World* (1997) in this regard, wherein he notes "[w]ith great apprehension... the decline of splendor in our world today" (1997:1). A crucial question for him is

glory of God is "the reflection of the light of God shining in the faces of those who turn their gaze toward him", argue Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead (2006:24), and is therefore "not a natural human endowment" (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:24). Rather, 'divine dignity' is the foundation of 'human dignity', and 'human dignity' is the revelation of 'divine dignity' (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:8). This connection between God's glory and human beings is more than just a *formal* connection, however, in that it also comprises an *aesthetic* connection, argues Paul Fiddes (2009:5). Indeed, "*[b]eauty* is to be understood as the glory of God" and "*aesthetics* is seeing the 'form' of the glory of God" (2009:5; my emphasis – NM). The rhetoric of human flourishing, likewise, reflects both a formal element *and* an aesthetic element.

Human flourishing, I have noted in chapter 1, comprises blossoming and thriving. Human flourishing expresses God's glory and manifests the beauty of God relation not in its functionality or self-referentiality, but in its contextuality and concreteness, gracious givenness, relationality and responsiveness, and eccentricity. This is the ground of the intrinsic dignity and value of human beings (Kelsey, 2009:570). However, this – as well as the communal reference to the glory of God – raises the question as to the relationship between human dignity and human flourishing. What is the difference, if any, between these two concepts – or are and should they be used synonymously or interchangeably?

5.7.1   Human dignity or human flourishing?

Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead note (2006:1) that the rhetoric of human dignity has become increasingly important within public discourse after the end of World War II, and that it is referred to in important founding documents (such as that of the United Nations) and constitutions the world over (2006:1 – 2). For instance, human dignity is included as a core value of democracy in the South African Constitution (Marais, 2013a:239). Moreover, the rhetoric of human dignity is prevalent in contemporary ethical debates on issues ranging from

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therefore whether "the inner vitality of things, relationships, plants, animals, and human beings [can] once again [return] to the very place where they have already begun to recede." The splendor of human beings "[disappear] in the wake of sin and separation from God", argues Gestrich (1997:13), which means that "[e]verything becomes worthless, mean, and base" (1997:13). Paradoxically, it is in the question regarding where *good,* not evil, comes from – and from where human beings are created – that theology and philosophy are interested, observes Christof Gestrich (1997:25). He points out that "[t]he return of splendor [or glory] is possible" and that "[t]he return of splendor in the midst of a reality demolished by sin is called *grace* by the Bible" (Gestrich, 1997:26; original emphasis).

"war and poverty to abortion, human cloning, and euthanasia" (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:2), and deeply embedded in the Christian and classical humanist tradition (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:3; Marais, 2013a:239 – 240). The doctrine of the *imago Dei* has long functioned as the scope within which theological interpretations of human dignity are explored (Marais, 2013a; 2013b), and has shaped theological anthropology in distinctive ways. For instance, Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead outline three noteworthy themes to Christian conceptions of human dignity, namely (1) that "human dignity is conferred by God" (2006:6), (2) that the measure and norm of human dignity is discovered in the pattern of God's relating to human beings (2006:6 – 7), and (3) that the context for human dignity is the church, in that "human dignity has an ecclesial rather than an individual horizon" (2006:7 – 8). In short, "[h]uman dignity is achieved in relation, not in isolation" (2006:8).

Yet not all contemporary theologians ground their arguments on human dignity in the doctrine of the *imago dei.* David Kelsey is one of the notable exceptions to this trajectory, in that he (as he himself admits) develops a relational interpretation of human beings and human dignity "without reference to the classical theological anthropological trope, 'Human beings bear the imago Dei'" (Kelsey, 2009:1008; cf. Marais, 2013b:5 – 6). I have argued elsewhere (Marais, 2013b:11 – 12) that David Kelsey's theological anthropology moves away from a closed, fixed, static system of describing human beings, and toward a 'systematic unsystematic whole' wherein there is greater openness to new insights on what it means to be human[445]. And indeed, other contemporary theologians have also moved toward stressing "the multidimensionality of human dignity" (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:23 – 24) wherein "human dignity in theological context is not a static possession but an eschatological provocation and goal" (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:24).

Outlining the differences between the concept of human dignity and the concept of human flourishing may therefore be more complex than merely describing the former as fixed and the latter as dynamic. The modern use of human dignity as "the inner basis or foundation of [human] rights that flow naturally and inevitably from it" differs greatly from the Christian affirmation, and particularly *early* Christian thought, that human dignity is "derivative of the

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[445] David Kelsey explains (2009:897) that "[t]he major reason that the traditional way of systematizing theological anthropology around the theme of the *imago Dei* will not do is a formal reason. The problem lies in the conventional procedure's assumption that anthropological claims made in Christian practices of secondary theology are warranted by a single canonical narrative that has a single plot or narrative logic."

more primitive and central notion of humans being created in the image and likeness of God" (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:12). There are, in other words, a multiplicity of usages of human dignity, ranging from foundational usages (such as in human rights discourses) to derivative usages (such as in biblical exegeses of the *imago Dei* texts), which would make an oversimplified conceptual comparison between human dignity and human flourishing quite impossible.

However, there may still be important reasons to not simply *equate* human dignity with human flourishing. Indeed, "flourishing is a positive concept which suggests verdant life" (2012:262), whereas dignity – whether as a 'derivative concept' reliant on the confession that human beings are created in the image of God (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:12; cf. Marais, 2013b), or as a 'foundational concept' "from which flow [human] rights" (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:12)[446] – is a 'negative concept' which suggests experiences of injustice (De Lange, 2010:3; cf. Marais, 2013a:236 – 237). A notable difference between the notions of human dignity and human flourishing therefore lies in their respective metaphorical frames of reference. Whereas human dignity has come to be embedded in a *judicial* or *political* rhetoric (cf. Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:1 – 2; De Lange, 2010:3 – 5), human flourishing is rooted in a *biological* or *agricultural* rhetoric (cf. Sarot, 1996:10 – 11).

Moreover, whereas human dignity language upholds and protects the *minimum* requirements of being humane, human flourishing language strives and pushes towards the supposedly *infinite* possibilities of being human. As such, the concept of human dignity may very well be less pliable than the concept of human flourishing – just as the concept of human flourishing may be less focused than the concept of human dignity. This does not mean that the rhetoric of human flourishing should not *include* the affirmation of human dignity; nor that the rhetoric of human flourishing should *replace* the rhetoric of human dignity.[447] Instead,

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[446] Charles Taylor notes (1991:46) that "the modern notion of dignity" is "now used in a universalist and egalitarian sense", and that "the underlying premiss here is that everyone shares in this." Indeed, he argues (1991:46) that "[t]his concept of dignity is the only one compatible with a democratic society".

[447] Frits de Lange, for instance, outlines two discourses within human dignity – namely a discourse of justice (which focuses on a shared humanity) and a discourse of flourishing (which focuses on individuality) (2010:3 – 5; cf. Marais, 2013a:236 – 237) – whereby he inverts this relationship in order that human dignity may include human flourishing. For him, neither of these two discourses overwhelms the other, in that they are embedded in different social contexts (2010:5). He argues (2010:5) that the discourse of justice rules over the political, public realm, whereas the discourse of flourishing rules over the private realm of charity and care.

acknowledging the distinct frames of reference and conceptual loadedness of each of these rhetorics may inhibit a simple conflation of flourishing with dignity.

5.7.2   The aesthetic appeal of human flourishing

This consideration – namely, how the rhetoric of human flourishing differs from the rhetoric of human dignity – does call for a closer scrutiny of the concept of human flourishing. In chapter 1 I have followed David Kelsey's outline of human flourishing because few, if any, have worked out what human flourishing means as systematically as he has. However, David Kelsey's exegesis of human flourishing – and his notion of blossoming in particular – need also be critiqued. Although his account is coherent and systematic in its concern for avoiding the concept 'well-being' and thereby the trappings of health and wealth, he works with primarily a functional interpretation of flourishing, which may be lacking in *aesthetic* depth. This is perhaps best illustrated in a comparison to Grace Jantzen's definition of flourishing, which holds to the etymological connection with flowers (1996:61). She writes that the word 'flourish' "is related to the Middle English *florir* and the Latin *florêre,* which means 'to flower'" (1996:61). In its noun form, 'flourish' refers to "the mass of flowers on a fruit tree, or the bloom of luxuriant, verdant growth" (1996:61); while in its verb form, 'to flourish' means "to blossom, to thrive, to throw out leaves and shoots, growing vigorously and luxuriantly" (1996:61). Using 'flourish' with reference to human beings, whether in its noun form or verb form, "denotes abundance, overflowing with vigour and energy and productiveness, prosperity, success and good health", writes Jantzen (1996:61).

It ought to be noted, however, that David Kelsey does consider some of these notions, and even describes 'to blossom' as the manifestation of "the type of beauty of which a given life is capable by virtue of God's relating to it" (2008:2; 2009:315). He also makes a deliberate choice *against* the metaphoric extension of 'luxuriant growth', because "it unqualifiedly reintroduces health as a metaphor" (2008:3; 2009:315). Yet he makes the choice *for* a metaphoric extension of 'blossoming' that includes providing 'fruit' (that may nurture and support the flourishing of others) and 'seed' (that may determine the flourishing of subsequent generations) (2008:2; 2009:315). Possibly this could also include an affirmation that flourishing does not only *provide* for external sources that make for the flourishing of others

(such as fruit and seed),[448] but also the recognition that flourishing *draws* on external sources, "as a plant draws water and nutrients from the soil" (Trisk, 2008:199). This does not mean that the rhetoric of flourishing ought to "lead one to emphasize only the public and the political at the expense of the private and inner life" (Jantzen, 1996:74), for

[a] plant which flourishes does so from its own inner life, 'rooted and grounded' in its source. If that inner life is gone, the plant withers and dries up, no matter how good its external sources.

What this may mean is that not only the survival of the plant is in view here, but something more; not only the fact *that* the plant lives, but the appreciation of *how* the plant lives. In other words, flourishing entails the recognition that the plant exhibits and contributes an aesthetic component by its very living. Without life the plant cannot flourish; and its survival is surely the minimum condition for its flourishing. Yet *when* it flourishes, the plant does something more than merely survive. Extending the metaphor of flourishing only in a functional way, such as including 'fruit' and 'seed' as descriptions of flourishing *for* others, may be too limited if it does not also include some reflection on "the beauty of which a given life is capable" (Kelsey, 2008:2; 2009315). Such beauty may be 'fragile beauty', but it has the potential to "release the springs of creativity by which newness can enter the world" (Trisk, 2012:263 quoting Jantzen, 2004:111).

The aesthetic appeal of flourishing talk is even more starkly evident in a conceptual comparison with the notion of dignity. Human dignity is rhetorically static and fixed, and for good reason: in circumstances where the human dignity and basic human rights of human beings are violated, the concept of human dignity stands firm as a beacon or a minimum indication of what *may not* be perpetrated against human beings. Human flourishing, however, is dynamic and open, in that it fluctuates, changes, and resists being fixed to a single ideal or set of ideals of what human beings *can* experience and accomplish. The quality of the performance of each of these rhetorics is therefore determined by their metaphorical frames of reference; and just as it would compromise the performance of the rhetoric of human dignity if the concept of human dignity would become fluctuating and open in circumstances of violence and violation, so too the performance of the rhetoric of human flourishing would be

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[448] Indeed (Trisk, 2008:200), "[t]he metaphor of flourishing… suggests a mutual commitment and responsibility to one another's flourishing. We depend on others just as much as they depend on us. There is no room here for rescuers and dependents."

hampered if the concept of human flourishing were to be fixed and closed to any new insights or possibilities of being human.

In other words, there is not only life and energy in flourishing, but also *beauty* and *pleasure* and *delight.* The rhetoric of flourishing does not only perform in a functional way, but *appeals* to the reader and *lures* the reader into an imagined world of meaning. The rhetoric of flourishing, in other words, is meant to *entice* and *beguile* its audience into a particular imagined world or landscape. It *pulls* or *draws* its audience in by artfully sketching a picture of alternative possibilities of life and living. As such, it cannot be defined in any final way, and resists any attempt to fix its meaning and assign it a range of synynoms – or, for that matter, antonyms. Perhaps it is exactly herein that the appeal of the rhetoric of human flourishing lies – namely, that it can potentially mean many things, and that an imaginative appraisal or approach thereby comes closest to understanding how this rhetoric performs.

5.8   Conclusion

In this systematic theological exploration of the landscape of salvation three contemporary soteriological discourses have been traced, namely (1) salvation as reconciliation, (2) salvation as liberation, and (3) salvation as transformation.[449] A last matter that remains to be addressed here, at the end of this exploration, is the lingering concern with Charles Taylor's accusation that the rhetoric of human flourishing signals a turn to an exclusive humanism which would be indicting not only of theological engagements with human flourishing, but also of contemporary soteriologies that may be regarded as making *too* much of human beings.

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[449] These discourses are also evident in a variety of recent publications. For instance, the British theologian Colin Gunton describes salvation as "reconciliation with God" in his *The Christian Faith* (2002:72); the South African theologian Ronald Nicolson prefers to speak of salvation as liberation, in a chapter dedicated to this in his *A Black Future?* (1990); and American theologian Dawn DeVries points out that the interpretation of salvation as transformation plays an important role in Catholic theology (2007:206). Indeed, Ronald Nicolson notes that "there are many different ways in which salvation can be perceived" and classified (1990:105). He himself, as one example, makes use of four theories or categories or types in his description of salvation (1990:105 – 106) – namely the ideas of (1) substitutionary atonement (1990:106 – 114), (2) victory (1990:115 – 122), (3) example or moral influence (1990:135 – 150), and (4) sacrifice (1990:151 – 155). Geoffrey Wainwright, as another example, outlines "two approaches to the saving work of Christ" (1997:ix), namely (1) the Word made flesh (1997:3 – 98) and (2) the threefold office of Christ (1997:99 – 186). Many other examples can be cited here, but Ronald Nicolson and Geoffrey Wainwright are taken to be illustrative of the many different ways in which salvation can and has been portrayed by contemporary theologians.

No easy response to Taylor's objection can be given. A careful consideration of the contemporary soteriological discourses outlined in this particular study may very well include both agreement *and* disagreement with his objection. But a response such as this is best given with a question in mind, which might be formulated as follows: do contemporary soteriologies succumb to the pressures of modernity's exclusive humanism, one might ask?

Yes, one might have to answer, in that there appears to be moments wherein contemporary notions of salvation make less of transcendence – or 'that which aims beyond life' – and more of well-being here and now. This is particularly the case in ethical and aesthetical portrayals of salvation, wherein the doctrine of justification recedes into the background while emphasis is placed on the resistance of injustice and the appreciation of beauty –

And *no*, one might also have to answer, in that it is in the very affirmation of life that that which aims beyond life becomes important – even if transcendence therein becomes equated with the full life beyond ordinary or everyday life. In other words, new forms of transcendental outlook are at play in contemporary notions of salvation, wherein a variety of (re)imaginings of salvation include the concerns for health, human dignity, and happiness.

Contemporary soteriologies do not set up the vision of abundant life over and against ordinary life, which may be problematic in some ways and liberating in other ways. In short, then, the anthropological turn that Charles Taylor describes is not a *simple* turn, devoid of complexities and ambiguities that play into the diversity of ways in which human flourishing may be imagined. Rather, theologians' concern for the flourishing of human beings is entangled in questions of meaning, of that which aims beyond life, of transcendence. The rhetoric of human flourishing has to do with what we live for, what we hope for, and what we can imagine our lives and the world to become – in that it is embedded in the landscape of salvation.

Yet one may also ask how contemporary theologians imagine human flourishing?

"They shall flourish as a garden," writes Grace Jantzen (1998:156 – 170), and "blossom as the vine" (1998:157). Such images "express the soteriological reality" (Van der Watt, 2005:520); and "[d]ifferent soteriologies… give varying accounts of what people are saved from, what

they are saved for, and the means or mediators of salvation" (Sherry, 2003:19). Piety, joy, comfort, fullfilled life, healing, dignity, grace, happiness, blessing – a collection of soteriological images[450] contributed by contemporary theologians to the imagining of human flourishing. The exploration of the landscape of salvation has taken us through a trajectory of Reformed theology, liberal theology, liberation theology, African women's theology, black theology, feminist theology, positive theology, and perhaps much more; all important routes and inroads that contemporary theologians make into the interpretation of what it means for human beings to flourish. And here, at the end of this exploration, it has become clear that the rhetoric of human flourishing is no less than a 'spring of beauty' from which creative and imaginative theology may flow forth (cf. Trisk, 2008:202) – for indeed, "[g]ood theology is a work of beauty" (Trisk, 2008:202).

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[450] Jan van der Watt (2005:521) describes the functioning of such images as follows: "Images are not comprehensive, but have a limited scope of expression and should not be over-interpreted. No single image can cover the soteriological event in its entirety... [Therefore] images should not be read as independent mutually exclusive and conflicting expressions that should be interrelated. Each one contributes in its own way to the full soteriological landscape. It also seems that different authors describe the same landscape by using different imageries. This should be seen as enrichment of soteriological expression." See also Patrich Sherry's book on the *Images of Redemption* in this regard (2003).

An afterword on theological cultivars

I sometimes go horseriding in the vineyards of Stellenbosch, which made me think of the significance of cultivars in this part of South Africa. The Stellenbosch region is perhaps best known for its landscapes of vineyards and thriving wine industry. Unsurprisingly, this area of South Africa is referred to as the 'winelands' for its concentration of wine farms. However, not only one type of wine is made here, but a great many varieties abound – including such wines as Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Shiraz, and Chenin Blanc. Stellenbosch is, moreover, widely regarded as the birthplace of the Pinotage cultivar.

Cultivars are varieties of grape cultivated in order to produce specific wines with particular characteristics in terms of taste, smell, and look. Indeed, the very word itself – 'cultivar' – is a conglomeration of the terms 'variety' and 'cultivate', or short for 'cultivated varieties'. As such, cultivars are diversely (albeit selectively) bred plant varieties with distinct characteristics. Cultivars share genetic patterns, but also have own sets of genetic codes that provide the patterns or logics according to which they develop into distinct types of grapes – and, ultimately, wines. Indeed, the requirements for being classified as a cultivar include selection for specific characteristics as well as stability and uniformity in these selected characteristics across plants of the same cultivar. Only then is it possible to propagate or breed or grow or proliferate more plants of such a strain or cultivar.

As a metaphor, the notion of 'cultivar' is therefore not only particularly rich in meaning but also connected in a distinct way with Stellenbosch, the context in which this study is rooted. Cultivars bear both fruit and seed, and is rhetorically at home within the biological, agricultural setting of flourishing talk. Cultivars are distinct and diverse – much as the various discourses on salvation that are portrayed in this study – yet embedded in a broader family of relations and world of meaning. Cultivars are, in their plant form, not static but dynamic, in that they survive and die, flourish and wither, in their bearing fruit and producing seed that can be a blessing to all living beings – not only human beings – in providing food and drink. There are, in other words, clear analogies between grape cultivars and human flourishing which may make the employment of 'cultivar' as a metaphor both interesting and stimulating.

However, metaphors are of course not limitless or boundless in their significance, and – apart from pressing a metaphor to say or be more than it *can* – it may even become dangerous when metaphors are pressed to signify more than it *should*. In the case of the notion of cultivar, it is glaringly evident that the fruit and seed of grape cultivars are not *only* a blessing, but would also become a curse in certain circumstances. Grapes – in their wine form – have been instrumental to the abuse of human beings in South Africa, particularly by way of the *dopstelsel* during Apartheid (wherein farm workers would be paid in large quantities of low quality wine). This has left a long legacy of paternalistic relationships between farm owners and farm workers, alcohol abuse, and fetal alcohol syndrome. Indeed, exactly this legacy is what Russel Botman, the late Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, had in mind when he proposed a way forward for the University that would enable the daughter of the farm worker to have the same future opportunities as the son of the farmer. And so this too is part of the legacy that flourishing cultivars have contributed.

A last word on the world of meaning regarding cultivars concerns landscapes. Cultivars are directly impacted by the landscapes in which they are cultivated, in that their environment – including soil quality, water, weather, wind – contribute significantly to the quality of wine that is ultimately produced. Moreover, the landscape itself, embedded as it is in a particular environment, shapes the very choice of cultivars cultivated in that particular space or place. Some cultivars are better suited to drier climates, for instance, whereas other cultivars can only come into their own closer to the ocean. This is particularly evident in the fruit that these cultivars ultimately bear, in the form of wine – and even more specifically evident in tasting the wine. Enjoying the produce of cultivars involves not only the fruit of the grapes, however, but also the seed which would ensure the continuation of particular cultivars and enable future vineyards to flourish and produce their own fruit.

The various conceptions of human flourishing that are outlined in this study – namely piety, joy, comfort, fullfilled life, healing, dignity, grace, happiness, and blessing – represent a collection of attempts to imagine human flourishing. However, these nine conceptions of human flourishing are not the cultivars that I have in mind. Instead, the various logics that emerge when these conceptions are read together within their soteriological discourses – namely, a soteriological logic of faith, an eschatological logic of hope, and a creative logic of love – take the metaphorical form of *theological cultivars* that shape interpretation of human

flourishing. As such, these theological cultivars ought not to be conflated with either fruit or seed, for even though cultivars are directly responsible for *producing* fruit (grapes, wine) and seed (plants, vineyards), in and of themselves cultivars perform a different role altogether – namely, in providing the genetic pattern or code necessary for classification and reproduction. The various theological cultivars explored in this study perform in a similar way, namely not as final products of interpretation (fruit) nor as that which precedes or precipitates interpration (seed), but as distinct genetic patterns or interpretive logics that may yet blossom and flower into fruit and seed.

The metaphor of cultivation is by no means new. Martha Nussbaum entitles her book on higher education *Cultivating Humanity* (1997), which she bases on the philosopher Seneca's exhortation: "while we live, while we are among human beings, let us cultivate our humanity" (1997:xiii). Here she argues for the cultivation of such capacities as 'emphatic interpretation' (1997:63) and 'sympathetic imagination' (1997:85). Theologians also employ the metaphor of cultivation in their rhetoric on human flourishing. Consider John Calvin's well-known saying *ubi cognoscitur Deus, etiam colitur humanitas*; where God is known, that which is human flourishes or is cultivated, cherished, promoted (*Menswaardigheidsvoorlegging,* 2008:2). Here Dirkie Smit refers to the slightly different translations by Karl Barth and Eberhard Busch of the verb *colitur*, which he translates as "comes into glory, is cultivated, is nurtured, is nourished, flourishes, is cared for" (Smit, 2007:2; footnote 9). Clearly, then, the metaphor of cultivation contains within itself possibilities for imagining more sides to the rhetoric of human flourishing, including the potential to develop or expand the metaphor of human flourishing in ways that may be expressive of its *rhetorical performativity*.

The idea of theological cultivars is an alternative to patterns or grammar or even logic, but expresses nothing new, contributes nothing out of the ordinary to the rhetoric of human flourishing that such other metaphors cannot also contribute – except for this: the notion of cultivars imply the rhetoric of human flourishing, of the cultivation of that which is human, and fits more easily within an organic world of meaning. In other words, as an alternative, the notion of cultivars is *rhetorically elegant* in its communication of implicit and explicit associations with human flourishing, or the transfer of meaning. But of course each interpretation has its own limitations, and the associations that such an image of rhetorical patterns holds may have different associations for others.

Perhaps the greatest strength of such an image – namely, that of the theological cultivars that bring to expression different soteriological notions of human flourishing – lies exactly herein: in the concrete particularity of the image. There is, in such a metaphor, greater coherence in content and method, and a metaphorical cohesiveness that may function well within the rhetoric of human flourishing. The cultivars of faith, hope, and love may therein bear distinct fruit and seed, and yet maintain a certain amount of shared characteristics that makes it possible to hold the cultivars together within a rotating theological triad.

However, the suggestion to make use of the image of theological cultivars is an experimental one – and yet, although it is a peripheral concern to the overall argument of my study, it is nonetheless an attempt to expand or broaden the horizons of meaning to include more images into the world of meaning of human flourishing. Again, a rhetoric that performs well is one that does not only concern itself with the *content* of its images and metaphors, but also with the *methodological* ways in which these are employed. Metaphors that are resilient enough to hold within itself both content and method, both rhetoric and logic, are attractive exactly because of an assumed coherence in its aesthetic explorations.

There may of course be many other – even better – metaphors and images to explore in this regard: not only as ways of imagining human flourishing, but also as ways of imagining how the rhetoric of human flourishing functions and performs. A particularly satisfying metaphor is one which does not operate only in the former or only in the latter sphere, but manages to speak to each of these distinct concerns in a coherent and stimulating manner.

Perhaps this is exactly how human flourishing is and must continually be imagined – namely, from the lived world of everyday experience. The experiences that enable me to flourish – such as when I am on horseback, to continue the image I employed above, not only when things are easy and fun, but also when the going is difficult and I am thrown from the horse – are associations and images that may enrich my rhetoric of human flourishing. And so it will be for each person, within the variety of different lived worlds and own experiences of human flourishing and human withering. Entangled as they are, human withering and human flourishing together make for the cultivation of human beings – by way of the theological cultivars of faith, hope, and love. At least, that is one way in which I imagine it!

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357

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