

**Hope in suffering:
An African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
degree in the Faculty of Theology, Department of Dogmatology at the University of
the Free State

August 2010
Bloemfontein

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby handed in for the qualification Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work for a qualification at/in another University/faculty.

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DEDICATION

This doctoral research project is dedicated to my wife Catherine and our three children (Naphtali, Florence and Chimwemwe), my mother-in-law (Mrs. Florence Phiri) and mother (Mrs. Edina Banda), who despite experiencing suffering of some kind still lean on the Lord. May all these people find hope from God's victory in Jesus' resurrection even in their experiences of suffering!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For me to accomplish the research project, there were a lot of people involved who made this study a success. I might not be in a position to mention all of them by name. Let me open this page by saying thank you to those whose names might be missed, and please pardon me for this omission.

In the first place, I would like to praise the triune God for saving, calling and granting me the opportunity to study, and wisdom and energy which I desperately needed throughout the research project. To God alone be the "... power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!" (Rev. 5:12).

Secondly, my appreciations go to my sponsors, Rev. Christian Harrison and the entire First Presbyterian Church at Giddings in the United States of America for their generous financial support. Their continued support kept me going for I was able to pay for all the registration and tuition fees, transport to and from the University and other necessary logistical requirements. I really appreciate this support and may the triune God abundantly reward these brothers and sisters in the Lord. Furthermore, I particularly thank Prof. Andrew John Dearman for facilitating my scholarship with the First Presbyterian Church.

I also want to thank my church the Reformed Church in Zambia for their moral and spiritual support. The church has been so patient with me that even when they needed my services most they still allowed me to pursue the studies until completion. I sincerely thank the church and its leadership, and may the good Lord continue to guide his church. I particularly render my gratitude to Justo Mwale Theological University College for being everything to me. The College supported me as a student when I was pursuing the first degree at the same institution, they rendered financial and mutual support for the Masters studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in the USA, they organized my scholarship for doctoral studies at the University of the Free State in South Africa, and now I am serving the University College as a lecturer in Systematic Theology. I continued to develop the desire and interest to specialize in the field of dogmatics as a result of stimulation and inspiration from the faculty members and students who have been reliable companions on the theological journey. Indeed, I owe JMTUC a lot!

At this point, I would like to mention a few names which I cannot afford to forget. These persons have been of great importance in my theological development, especially in the field of Systematic Theology. The first person to mention is whom I call my mentor, guru, seer and study companion and leader: This is Prof. Rian Venter (and his wife) who has been a reliable Research Supervisor/Promoter throughout my theological education from the first degree to the Ph.D. Sir, I thank you very much for your wise and accurate guidance and for being available when I needed your help most. I also thank Dr. Gideon van der Watt, the Mission Secretary, for coming to my aid in instances where I was unable to travel to the university and pay fees. I thank him and the entire staff at the Mission Office in Bloemfontein. The other names to mention are Prof. Louis H. Zbinden and his wife Katherine. Mrs. Zbinden committed herself to thoroughly do language editing of the dissertation. Proff. Cynthia L. Rigby, David H. Jensen, William Greenway and other professors at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary who have particularly been inspiring and for their material support which assisted me in the completion of the research project. Mucous gracias amigos! Last but not least, I thank Senovia Welman, the information officer at the UFS Library, Rev. Deborah van den Bosch, the then Librarian, and Miss. Bathsheba Nyoka, the Library Assistant, at JTMC library for their assistance in getting access to the resources for my study. All these people mentioned above made the pursuit and completion of this study possible. To all of them I say Baie dankie, Mucous gracias, Zikomo kwambiri, Thank you very much.

It cannot go without rendering special thanks to my beautiful wife Catherine Shane-Banda and our three lovely children: Naphtali, Florence and Chimwemwe who have been very supportive in my studies. They were all so patient with me that they accorded me space and time to continue working on my dissertation. They also had to bear with me for being absent from them at many instances. I owe them much more than anything else. Mulungu azilemekezeka chifukwa cha mtima wanu woleza!

To this end I simply say, glory and honour be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
1. Research Focus	10
2. Research Problem Statement	10
3. Research Hypothesis	11
4. Research Delimitation	11
5. Research Methodology	12
6. Research Contribution	12
7. Research Chapters Overview	13
CHAPTER 1: STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP ON RESURRECTION FROM 20TH CENTURY TO PRESENT	16
1.1 THE RESURRECTION IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY	16
1.1.1 Bultmann: The Resurrection as a Symbol of Spiritual Experience	16
1.1.2 Barth: The Resurrection as an Act of God's Revelation	19
1.1.3 Pannenberg: The Resurrection as Historical and Apocalyptic	23
1.1.4 Moltmann: The Resurrection as an Event of Promise	25
1.1.5 Sobrino: The Resurrection as the Victims' Hope and Way of Living	30
1.1.6 Wright: The Resurrection as a Physical Reality	35
1.1.7 Crossan: The Resurrection as a Metaphorical Reality	37
1.2 ANALYSIS	42
CHAPTER 2: THE RESURRECTION IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY	45
2.1 AFRICAN THEOLOGY IN GENERAL	45
2.1.1 Defining African Theology	45
2.1.2 The Agenda of African Theology	48
2.1.3 Sources of African Theology	51
2.1.4 Evaluation	52
2.2 OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY	55
2.2.1 Forms of Contemporary African Christologies	55
2.2.2 The Quest for an Authentic African Christology	59
2.3 THE RESURRECTION IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY	60
2.3.1 The Centrality of the Resurrection in African Theology	60
2.3.2 African Conceptualization of the Resurrection	61
2.3.3 Resurrection in the Contemporary Africa	64
CHAPTER 3: HERMENEUTICAL APPROACHES TO THE RESURRECTION	67
3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE HERMENEUTICS OF RESURRECTION	68
3.1.1 Meaning: The Notion of Hermeneutics	68
3.1.2 Development of Hermeneutics in the 20 th Century	69
3.1.3 Hermeneutics of Resurrection: An Integration	72
3.2 WESTERN THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES	73
3.2.1 Berkhof: Trinitarian Approach	73
3.2.2 Kasper: Eschatological Approach	75
3.2.3 Conclusion	76
3.3 LATIN AMERICAN PRAXIAL APPROACHES	77
	6

3.3.1 Sobrino: Eschatological Approach	77
3.3.2 Boff: Human Utopia Approach	78
3.3.3 Conclusion	80
3.4 AFRICAN FEMINIST CRITICAL APPROACH	81
3.4.1 An Overview of Feminist Theology	82
3.4.2 Background of African Feminist Theology	83
3.4.3 African Women's Life-Experiences	84
3.4.4 Jesus' Resurrection in African Feminist Theology	86
3.4.5 Implications and Challenges	88
3.5 EVALUATION	89
CHAPTER 4: HUMAN SUFFERING AS HERMENEUTICAL HORIZON: GENERAL PERSPECTIVE	93
4.1 GENERAL SURVEY: PHENOMENOLOGY OF HUMAN SUFFERING	93
4.1.1 The Reality of Human Suffering: Various Views	93
4.1.2 Causes and Effects of Human Suffering	100
4.1.3 Human Reaction to Suffering	103
4.2 A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN SUFFERING	106
4.2.1 The Dialectic of God's "Hiddenness and Presence" in Human Suffering	106
4.2.2 The Uniqueness of Jesus' Suffering	108
4.3 AN ETHICAL CALLING IN HUMAN SUFFERING	112
CHAPTER 5: HUMAN SUFFERING AS HERMENEUTICAL HORIZON: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE	116
5.1 BROADER HORIZON: FRAME OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN AFRICA	117
5.1.1 Nature of Human Suffering in Africa	117
5.1.2 Causes of Suffering in Africa	120
5.1.3 Some Reactions to Suffering in Africa	126
5.2 SPECIFIC HORIZON: FACES OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN AFRICA	129
5.2.1 The 'Gloomy Face' of Poverty	130
5.2.2 The 'Aggressive Face' of Civil Wars and Refugees	134
5.2.3 The 'Devastating Face' of HIV/AIDS	137
5.3 THE DIVINE MANDATE IN AFRICA'S PLIGHT	141
CHAPTER 6: SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION IN THE BIBLE	146
6.1 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION	147
6.1.1 Suffering in the Old Testament	147
6.1.1.1 <i>Experiences of Suffering in the Old Testament</i>	147
6.1.1.2 <i>Causes and Purposes of Suffering in the Old Testament</i>	150
6.1.1.3 <i>Reactions to Suffering in the Old Testament</i>	153
6.1.2 Resurrection in the Old Testament	155
6.1.2.1 <i>Absence of Faith in the Resurrection</i>	156
6.1.2.2 <i>Development of Faith in the Resurrection</i>	157
6.1.2.3 <i>Meaning of Resurrection Faith in the Old Testament</i>	160
6.1.3 Old Testament Resurrection Hope in Suffering	162
6.2 NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION	163
6.2.1 Suffering in the New Testament	163

6.2.1.1 <i>Overview of Suffering in New Testament</i>	164
6.2.1.2 <i>Purpose for Suffering in the New Testament</i>	169
6.2.1.3 <i>Jesus' Perspective of Suffering</i>	171
6.2.1.4 <i>Key Motifs about Suffering in the New Testament</i>	175
6.2.2 Resurrection in the New Testament	177
6.2.2.1 <i>The Context of Resurrection in the New Testament</i>	177
6.2.2.2 <i>Survey of Resurrection in the New Testament</i>	181
6.2.2.3 <i>Jesus' Resurrection in Perspective</i>	185
6.2.2.4 <i>Theological Affirmations about the Resurrection</i>	188
6.2.3 New Testament Resurrection Hope in Suffering	190
6.3 A SYNTHESIS	191
CHAPTER 7: A PROPOSAL TOWARDS AN AFRICAN INTERPRETATION OF JESUS' RESURRECTION	194
7.1 SPIRITUALITY OF THE RESURRECTION FAITH	194
7.1.1 Faithful Present Existence	195
7.1.2 Hopeful Future Anticipation	199
7.1.3 Life in Freedom and Joy	200
7.2 ETHOS FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE	203
7.2.1 Love in Relationship	204
7.2.2 Solidarity with the Victims	207
7.2.3 Social and Political Involvement	211
7.3 TOWARDS HOPE IN SUFFERING	215
7.3.1 Trinitarian Basis of Hope in Suffering	216
7.3.2 Wholistic Approach for Hope in Suffering	218
CONCLUSION	224
BIBLIOGRAPHY	230
KEY TERMS	245
SUMMARY	246
OPSOMMING	248

INTRODUCTION

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most important events in Christian faith. It is so significant that without it the Christian faith would have been a meaningless and hopeless religion. The resurrection is not only the climax of Jesus' mission on earth; it is also the central basis of the Christian hope. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 beautifully argues for the importance of the Easter event:

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

What makes the resurrection so significant is that it is an event about God. The resurrection is about God's act of justice. By raising the innocently executed Jesus God demonstrates that he is the God of justice who vindicates the righteous and punishes the wicked. Furthermore, the resurrection is about God's victory: God triumphs over the power of death and all forces of evil. In other words, by raising Jesus God shows that he is the God of life and that life triumphs over death and any form of evil. The resurrection is also the basis for our faith and proclamation. We believe that Jesus was vindicated by the just God and therefore we proclaim God's victory and justice to the unjust world.

Therefore, Jesus' resurrection needs to be interpreted so that it can be understood in a specific context. Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the many contexts which require understanding the significance of the resurrection. This is so because the African context is faced with a lot of challenges of which some of them bring about experiences of pain and suffering. Since the resurrection is about hope in the God of victory and justice, it assures hope in that context of suffering. It is significant for the African context because an appropriate interpretation of the Easter event with due focus on God's triumph and victory leads to a realization of hope and the fullness of life. This research project primarily focuses on hope in the African context of suffering; and this hope comes about due to an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection.

1. Research Focus

The title of the research project is *Hope in suffering: An African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection*. Therefore, the research focus is to develop an appropriate hermeneutic for Jesus' resurrection from the African perspective in order to offer hope in the African context of suffering. Jesus' resurrection needs to be appropriately interpreted in Africa so that African experience of suffering is addressed. Every doctrine of the Christian faith needs to be relevant to a specific context. Africa is one of the continents which are experiencing various forms of suffering such as poverty, war and refugees, and HIV/AIDS pandemic. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus Christ has to be understood in an African context of suffering. For proper understanding of Jesus' resurrection, the research aims at developing an appropriate interpretation of the event which addresses the African experiences of suffering so that hope is realized. In order to accomplish this aim, and also to avoid losing track, the project seeks to fulfill the following objectives: (a) to do research and understand the significant and meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; (b) to investigate whether suffering is an appropriate hermeneutical framework for interpreting the resurrection of Jesus Christ; (c) to investigate and understand the African dynamic areas of suffering which have undermined hope among the Africans; (d) to explore and propose an appropriate hermeneutic for interpreting Jesus' resurrection to realize hope in the African context of suffering; (e) to situate the understanding in contemporary horizons of scholarly reflection on the resurrection and of doing theology in Africa; and (f) to make a contribution to the scholarly world and academic institutions, African context and the Christian community by developing African contextual theology as part of the global theological enterprise.

2. Research Problem Statement

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been rendered with different interpretations in the course of the history of Christian theology. For instance, feminist theology has understood the resurrection as the emancipation of women from patriarchal, oppressive and exclusive structures. For Latin American theology the resurrection, as Sobrino (2006:101) explains, is the "taking down of the crucified poor and oppressed community from the cross" of suffering at the hand of the elite and privileged in society. In the African context the perspective on the resurrection seems to be unclear. However, based on African Christological perspective in general, one would deduce that for the African the resurrection could be thought of as the feeling of being liberated from the power of the spiritual

forces of evil. Nevertheless, there is still no clear understanding of the resurrection from an African perspective. Many African theologians have extensively written on Christology in general. In their christological articulation they have made reference to Jesus' resurrection. However, the researcher is of the view that though the work of African theologians is commendable, it is quite insufficient in as far as the understanding of Jesus' resurrection in Africa is concerned. Therefore, the research seeks to address this problem of unclear and insufficient interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African perspective. The aim is to develop an appropriate hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection in Africa. In that sense, the crucial question of the research project is: *how should the resurrection of Jesus Christ be interpreted in an African context to address the particular reality and needs in Africa?*

3. Research Hypothesis

The research problem draws the researcher to make a claim that a developed hermeneutic of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the African context could be a tool for providing hope in a scenario of suffering. Therefore, it is assumed that suffering is an applicable framework for interpreting the resurrection of Jesus in the African context. In other words, an interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from an African context helps to revive hope in suffering. The meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ could be "translated" as hope in suffering in the African context.

4. Research Delimitation

The researcher's aim in this research enterprise is not to prove the facts about the historical reality of the resurrection, but to develop an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African perspective. The historicity is generally overwhelmingly accepted in orthodox Christianity. This research project will briefly argue that the Easter event is proven to have taken place at a specific time and space in history through the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus Christ to his disciples. The researcher assumes the objective of the reality of the resurrection in its eschatological nature. It points to God's act of justice both in the present and the eschatological future. However, this project focuses on an exploration of the *theological meaning* of the resurrection in the African context. Hence, the emphasis is on the quest for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African perspective. In short, the research does not focus on the historical question, but on theological and hermeneutical exploration.

5. Research Methodology

The research project is primarily based on *literature study*: i.e. it is concerned with the study of the available literature regarding the subject at hand. The following steps are therefore followed in this research methodology: (a) *reading* – an in-depth study and gathering of data from various authors of materials in books, articles, and from the internet; (b) *analysing* – a clear and critical evaluation of the studied and gathered texts on dynamic areas of suffering in Africa and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in order to understand from the scholarly world the theological, ethical and spiritual concepts involved; (c) *studying* – basically a general study of the various written discourses on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the experiences of suffering in Sub-Saharan Africa; and (d) *reporting and correcting* – making continuous consultations with my promoter for checks on progress, and making necessary changes and corrections in the process of writing and presenting chapters of the dissertation.

6. Research Contribution

The researcher is of the conviction that through the insights developed in this research project, a contribution will be made since the research offers a unique quest for an African hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection in the context of suffering, which in the end provides hope in that context. Hence, the purpose of the research is to make a contribution to the following three areas: (a) the scholarly world and theological academic institutions since the research is aimed at exploring and proposing a new hermeneutical approach of Christ's resurrection from an African context; (b) the sub-Sahara African community since the research will present a way of interpreting the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the African context, thereby assuring hope in their experience of pain and suffering; and (c) the Christian community of faith since the research addresses one of the key foundations of the Christian faith – the resurrection of Jesus Christ – thereby presenting theology of hope from the African perspective. The researcher hopes that through the research the three areas will look at the resurrection of Jesus Christ in a new and unique way to revive hope in a situation of suffering. In this sense, the researcher's aim is to make a contribution both to African contextual theology and global theological reflection.

7. Research Chapters Overview

To address the research problem, the researcher develops chapters with specific foci as a line of argument in the research. The first chapter surveys the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in contemporary theology from the twentieth century. Therefore, Bultmann, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino, Wright and Crossan have been selected as notable and prominent theologians who act as representatives of major theological interpretations of Jesus' resurrection in the period. Basically, this chapter gives an overview of different interpretations by these theologians in the contemporary scholarly world. Each of them interprets the resurrection of Jesus Christ from a specific and unique perspective. However, the overarching motif from these interpretations is that the Christian faith is anchored in the historical facticity (except Bultmann and Crossan), significance and uniqueness of the Easter event.

The focus of the second chapter is to develop an argument that the quest for an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection needs to thoroughly understand African theology in general. By African theology, the researcher refers to the theological enterprise and reflection that has been undertaken from an African perspective. The chapter briefly discusses dimensions in African theology in order to establish the basis on which African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is sought. It is clear that African theologians have understood the resurrection to mean the experience of freedom from life-threatening forces and powers. However, this freedom must be made to be a reality in the present situation of the African life-experiences. The researcher here focuses on the sub-Saharan Africa in discussing the life-experiences of suffering in Africa. The chapter also discusses the two foci of African theology and the newly developed perspectives in the contemporary African contextual theology: inculturation, liberation, emancipation of women and public theology. An African interpretation of the Easter event needs to pursue hope where the fullness of life is enhanced in this particular context.

Much attention in the third chapter will be to survey the Western theological, the Latin American praxic and the African Feminist critical approaches to Jesus' resurrection. The main reason for surveying these approaches is to understand the hermeneutical methods used to interpret the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having analyzed these hermeneutical approaches, the researcher discovers that most of these are actually articulated 'from above,' and thereby failing to be down-to-earth in as far as addressing the plight of the poor and the deprived in the African society. For that reason, the researcher is of the opinion that an African authentic and comprehensive hermeneutic of

Jesus' resurrection must, without neglecting the Christology 'from above,' embrace and present a Christology 'from below.' Since Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God which demands the radical reordering of life and systems in society, the resurrection in Africa must hermeneutically be approached from this premise of the radical transformation of life and society: it must encourage participation in the struggle for the transformation of social, cultural, political and economic structures which bring about suffering.

The fourth chapter deals with the general perspective of suffering as the hermeneutical horizon. The idea is to create a broad platform for understanding suffering in the African context so that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is appropriately interpreted with the intention of providing hope in a suffering situation. The chapter stresses the need to pay much attention to the suffering of victims. In this way, an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection provides a reasonable response to the situation of suffering in Africa and the global scenario.

In chapter five, the researcher explains specific portrayals of suffering in Africa and the divine mandate in the African suffering context. The rationale behind this explanation is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is all about hope in suffering. Since the *One* who suffered the terrors of Golgotha, is also the *One* who emerged victoriously from the Tomb, the suffering Africans from the terrors of poverty, refugees and wars, and HIV/AIDS are assured of the resurrected hope for better life of peace, equality, joy, harmony, love, dignity, humanness and interrelationship. Hence, the Christian mandate as commissioned by God is to make this hope a reality here on earth.

The research project also affirms that the biblical treatment of suffering and evil demonstrates a coherent pattern in at least one regard: the experiences of suffering and hope cannot be sealed off and divorced from each other. Suffering and hope are rather inevitably interdependent realities which ought to be integrated in the midst of life's various contingencies. To highlight the biblical voice about suffering and hope, the sixth chapter analyses the two concepts of hope and suffering as witnessed in the Bible. The chapter conclusively affirms that suffering is not an alien concept, but rather a constant motif throughout the biblical witness and appears in various forms. In whatever form suffering appears in the Bible, the reality is that God is ever present and powerful in the experience of suffering to encourage and empower the victim. Through Jesus' suffering and resurrection God brings hope, dignity and comfort to those who suffer. The Easter event as attested in scripture is therefore the source of hope in the situation of suffering.

The last chapter suggests a roadmap for the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection so that real hope in suffering can be realized. In this chapter the researcher proposes some principles and direction for hope as a pursuit of an appropriate African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the context of suffering. To interpret Jesus' resurrection in the premise of hope in suffering, African resurrection hermeneutics has to include the principles of spirituality and ethos, and then offer a way forward towards hope in suffering. In other words, the two principles are cardinal for an appropriate hermeneutic in the African context. By embracing these principles, an appropriate African hermeneutic offers hope in the context where many Africans are suffering due to poverty, wars and refugees and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Therefore, the way forward towards hope in suffering ultimately lies in God's ability to transform the world and establish his Kingdom, and requires human response to God's act through full participation in the renewal of the world. The chapter then concludes the research project by suggesting that the direction for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering is to engage in continued research on the subject by embracing specific guidelines to provide real hope in suffering.

CHAPTER 1: STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP ON RESURRECTION FROM 20TH CENTURY TO PRESENT

1.1 THE RESURRECTION IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been rendered with different interpretations in the contemporary theological history. Despite the differences in the way the resurrection is perceived, one unique fact, as Migliore (2004:370) testifies, is that the Easter event is significant for the Christian faith. The purpose of this section therefore, is not to engage in an endless controversy about the fact of the resurrection, although the historicity of Jesus' resurrection cannot completely be ruled out. The aim is rather to indicate how the resurrection has been interpreted in contemporary theology from the twentieth century. My assumption is that by now the resurrection is generally accepted by the majority of orthodox theologians to have taken place at a specific time of history. Moreover, the Christian faith is anchored on the historical facticity, significance and uniqueness of this event.

The chosen period for consideration is too wide and unattainable to deal with all the theological interpretations. Hence, the researcher selects notable and prominent theologians to act as representatives and to give a glimpse of major theological interpretations of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the period. The theologians who are considered are Bultmann, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino, Wright and Crossan.

1.1.1 Bultmann: The Resurrection as a Symbol of Spiritual Experience

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) was a German New Testament scholar who stressed the need for demythologization¹ of Biblical materials to make the *kerygma*² meaningful for the modern people (McKim 1996:35). By following the existential³ interpretation of the New Testament he made a sharp distinction between history and faith.

¹ According Kärkkäinen (2003:122), 'demythologization' does not mean "stripping away [a removal of myths] the mythical expression of the gospel" as it has been suggested by liberalism, but "is rather a matter of experiencing again the gospel and of re-expressing that encounter in the conceptuality of today." In short, for Bultmann it means the reinterpretation of myths existentially.

² *Kerygma* is a Greek term which in this sense simply means the proclamation of the Word.

³ 'Existential' (Lat. *existentialis*) is a philosophical term referring to that which is of ultimate importance to one's being or existence (McKim 1996:98). In the mind of Bultmann, existential interpretation is concerned with the meaning of the resurrection, and not with its historical facts.

Hunsinger (2004:163) explains that Bultmann interprets the resurrection primarily as a “*symbol of spiritual regeneration*.” Bultmann believes that the resurrection is neither a historical event which can be demonstrated by historical investigation as Pannenberg puts it, nor an act of God’s revelation as suggested by Barth (Moltmann 1990:232). The resurrection did not happen in space and time; neither did it happen to Jesus. It was not a bodily event in that Jesus was not corporeally raised from the dead. It is something that is a “subjective experience⁴ of the disciples and happens in us” (Migliore 2004:375). Therefore, for Bultmann the resurrection did not really occur at all. It is the rise of faith in the disciples and in us. He states, “For the resurrection, of course, simply cannot be a visible fact in the realm of human history” (Bultmann 1951:295). The idea of the historicity of the resurrection-event is an impossibility in Bultmann’s view.

The line of argument of Bultmann’s approach to the resurrection of Jesus Christ hinges on three-pair words (O’Collins 1987:47). These are: history and faith; science and myth; and *kerygma* and eschatology.

With regards to *history and faith*, he distinguishes between two German words: *Historie* and *Geschichte*. *Historie* refers to the events of the past as they are or simply facts of past history. For Bultmann, these facts of past history cannot and should not be the basis of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Geschichte* is the preferred term in the Bultmannian line of thought. It refers to the meaning and relevance of past events for our lives today. Therefore, according to Bultmann, the “resurrection of Jesus... was ‘historical’ in the sense of *Geschichte*...in the disciples’ minds and hearts, but it did not take place in real *Historie*” (Kärkkäinen 2003:120). Thus, the resurrection is not a historical or past event, but rather a reality that concerns our own existence here and now (O’Collins 1987:48). In fact, Bultmann regards the empty tomb as a legend and Jesus’ bodily appearances as mere “inventions by communities” (Sobrinho 2001:22). In summary, his emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not the facticity and historicity of the event, but its meaning and significance for faith (2001:23).

In discussing the pair of *science and myth*, Bultmann is influenced by Martin Heidegger’s way of thinking. According to O’Collins (1987:49), in Bultmann’s opinion to ascertain the resuscitation of corpses (i.e. the raising of Jesus from the dead), it is unscientific and utterly inconceivable,

⁴ The subjective experience is a happening that is out of reason, analogy, and change of mind: something that takes place in the mind, not really the actual physical or historical event.

impossible and incredible because corpses cannot come back to life or rise from the grave. As such, he opts for demythologization of such a myth. Christ can come alive for us as he came alive for the disciples if we share the disciples' understanding of existence and repeat their Easter faith.

On the last pair of *kerygma and eschatology*, he elaborates the concept of faith. Faith, in Bultmann's view, is "the gift of God and God's grace. Human beings can possess this faith only by listening to the New Testament *kerygma*" (Bultmann 1958:84). This means that since faith implies that Jesus is present or risen in the *kerygma*, one can acquire faith in the resurrection through the proclamation of the Word by the church as the bearer of the *kerygma* (Kasper 1976:132). Christ, through his resurrection, is encountered in the church's preaching of the Word. Hence, our faith emerges from the encounter.

The church's *kerygma* of the Easter faith is eschatological in that it opens the possibility of existence beyond the historical limits in the present. According to O'Collins (1987:51) "an eternal and decisive 'now' absorbs the past and the future." This eschatological understanding of the preaching of the church, in Bultmann's view, calls for a response of hopeful living. According to Bultmann, Park (1970-71:156) explains, Christian hope means "the Christian living hope-fully here and now, in spite of his [or her] having to die." It is being open and responsible for the future by making decisions and bearing responsibilities in the present. It is the experience of victory over death in the present by making right decisions now as a way of preparing for the future (1970-71:157). By this stress one notices that Bultmann seems to affirm a position that would be different from that of Pannenberg (historical facticity of the resurrection) and Moltmann (the resurrection as a promise of the eschatological happening) who came later after him.

We can sum up Bultmann's interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ by highlighting his four focal points as Hunsinger (2004:166-169) outlines them. Firstly, the significance of the resurrection to the disciples lies in the fact that it is the rise of faith in the disciples. The Easter faith was subjectively awakened in the disciples and inspired them to initiate the church's kerygmatic mission. Secondly, the resurrection was significant for Jesus because as the raised or exalted one to eternal life, Jesus is the Lord who is continuously present through the proclamation of the Word of God. Thirdly, the resurrection is an impossibility in as far as the 'historical' event is concerned. Bultmann categorically puts it that to consider the resurrection as a historical fact is utterly inconceivable because all thinking is shaped irrevocably by natural science. Finally, the resurrection is mediated to

the present by the proclamation of the Word. Jesus, the bearer of the Word, is risen in the *kerygma* for through the preaching of the Word faith is elicited to the church.

1.1.2 Barth: The Resurrection as an Act of God's Revelation

Karl Barth (1886-1968), a Swiss Reformed theologian made a significant contribution to the discussion on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, the resurrection is running as a core subject in his christocentric theology in almost all the volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*. Barth put much emphasis on God's Word in Jesus Christ, Scripture, and preaching. For Barth Jesus Christ is the revealed, written and proclaimed Word of God. Rejecting natural theology, Barth stresses the triumph of the grace of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ (McKim 1996:26).

Barth's main contribution to the resurrection faith stressed the divine plan which hinges on two major themes: *revelation* and *reconciliation* (O'Collins 1987:42). Therefore, this section is devoted to Barth's interpretation of the resurrection as the act of revelation which was meant for the reconciliation of humankind to God. The researcher is of the opinion that Barth develops the main thrust of Christ's resurrection – *God's act of revelation* – in a number of sub-themes: the centrality of the resurrection; the resurrection as a historical event; the relationship of the cross and the resurrection; relationship of resurrection and ascension; relationship of resurrection, Pentecost and *parousia*; and finally, his treatment of the tradition of the empty tomb.

For Hunsinger (2004:178), among the major interpretations of the resurrection – namely, history, transcendence, and uniqueness – Barth's interpretation of the event lies in the category of uniqueness interpretation which determines knowledge and significance of the resurrection. The resurrection is unique in the sense that it is “an act of God, an event of revelation” (Migliore 1991:373). In Barth's own words, “the happening of the third day which followed that of Golgotha is the act of God” (1956:300). Together with the ascension, it is “the definitive and comprehensive, the decisive and unequivocal event of revelation” (Barth 1958:140). By the act of appearing to the disciples after rising from the dead Jesus demonstrated God's divine gracious act of making himself known to the people. It is the concrete historical event of Jesus' self-manifestation after his death, the event “in which the hidden being and work of Jesus Christ [and of the triune God] are exposed and exhibited” (Barth 1958:146).

According to O'Collins (1987:46), the resurrection further reveals that Christ is the representative man "in his being-for-other-men." Barth (1961:283) states that Christ's true identity as very God and very man "emerged from concealment." His being as a representative person for humankind was laid bear in the act of rising from the dead. This is where the theme of reconciliation comes in, and is linked to the resurrection as the act of divine revelation. In the Easter event God revealed his divine intention and act of reconciling humankind to the divine self. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ "our reconciliation with God has taken place" (O'Collins 1987:42). One would ask, "How has this happened?" For Barth, the penal substitution is a mystery of God's revelation where "the eternal Word of God chose, sanctified and assumed human nature and existence into oneness with Himself, in order thus, as very God and very man, to become the Word of reconciliation spoken by God to man" (*Church Dogmatics* I.2: 122). The bridge from the past to the present has been provided in the Father's verdict of vindicating the crucified Jesus and thereby setting our justification in force through the resurrection. Barth (1957:758) states, "The resurrection alone is decisive for the truth that, as sinners before God, we are pronounced righteous." We attain our rightful position in relationship to God through the Easter event.

Barth expands the major interpretation of Christ's resurrection, the divine act of revelation for the reconciliation of human beings, by considering a number of motifs. To broaden Barth's view on the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, the researcher turns to these motifs, which may be termed as the "building blocks."

The first building block is the centrality of Jesus' resurrection in Barth's Christology. The Easter story is central in the sense that the resurrection of Jesus Christ "makes his passion manifest as the saving happening from God's side," and "the glory of the incarnate Word was seen by his followers" (Barth 1955:114). Klooster (1961-62:138) underlines this fact by stating that "the real centre and unity of Scripture is Jesus Christ, and the center of Jesus Christ is the resurrection." The resurrection then discloses the mystery of the gospel, the mystery of the divine revelation which is rooted in the incarnation and God's presence among the humankind in Jesus Christ.

The resurrection as a historical event is Barth's next building block. Barth does not deny the facticity of the resurrection; it is an event which took place in time and space (Hunsinger 2004:178). In fact, he states that "it is impossible to erase the bodily character of the resurrection of Jesus and his existence as the Resurrected" (Barth 1959:448). The question still is: What does he mean by this

affirmation? On one hand, he negates the resurrection as a historical event in the sense of being attainable by historical inquiry or investigation. He says, “We have no right to analyse or harmonise them [the Easter stories]. This is to do violence to the whole character of the event in question” (Barth 1959:452). Knowledge of the Easter event can only be reached through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, and not through historical inquiry. On the other hand, he differs from Bultmann who denied the historical fact of the resurrection. Barth believes the resurrection is a historical event which really happened in time and space (1959:445-446). Furthermore, for Barth the resurrection is a historical event not because it happened in the minds of the disciples, but it happened because it was revealed and it points to the eschatological future. Jesus Christ himself appeared to the disciples in space and time, and the disciples responded to this self-revelation through the appearance. This can only be comprehended by us through the intervention and testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit testifies to the resurrection as a historical event that has the promise for the future.

Barth’s treatment of the empty tomb is the next building block of his resurrection thought. Barth does not say much on this point because he shows little interest in the empty tomb narrative. In fact, he calls the finding of the empty tomb a ‘legend’ because for him this tradition “is not of itself and as such the attestation of Jesus Christ as he showed himself alive after his death” (Barth 1956:341). The empty tomb on its own is meaningless; it is neither the resurrection nor the appearance of the risen Christ. It is merely a presupposition of the resurrection; an indispensable sign of the Easter event. Barth clarifies further that “the function of the empty tomb ... is to show that the Jesus who died and was buried was delivered from death, and therefore from the grave, by the power of God” (Barth 1959:453).

Barth then moves on to discuss the relationship between the cross and the resurrection. According to Barth the resurrection (Easter) and the cross (Calvary) are inseparable aspects of one and the same historical event. The two are “acts of God” which are the two basic events of the one history of God with a sinful and corrupt world. The resurrection is meant to illuminate the crucifixion. The hidden work of Jesus Christ in the cross is “subsequently revealed and believed in his resurrection” (Barth 1955:122). Together the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alter humankind’s situation and destiny in that the right relationship with God is established by Calvary and human justification assured through the Easter event (Barth 1956:316).

Barth further discusses the relationship between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Barth emphatically affirms that though the resurrection and ascension might be seen as distinct, they are “inseparable moments of one and the same event” (1958:150). Barth understands this event as “the history of the forty days between His resurrection and ascension” (1959:441). There is no longer any paradox of God’s presence in Jesus Christ during this event of the forty days (1959:449). It is interesting to notice the way Barth plays with two phrases as he discusses the two events: *terminus a quo* (the resurrection as the beginning of the event) and *terminus ad quem* (the ascension as the end of the event). The resurrection is the beginning of the divine revelation or exaltation from the rising from the dead. The ascension is the consummation of the revelation to the absolute inaccessible place; the place of glory and fellowship with God.

The final building block concerns the resurrection and its relation to the events of Pentecost and *parousia*. Barth considers the resurrection, the out-pouring of the Spirit and the second coming of Jesus Christ as stages in one and the same event. Like in the previous building block, Barth explains that even if the three stages are distinct they should be understood and seen “together as forms of one and the same event” (1957:294). The God who is revealed, believed and confessed in the Easter event is the same God who manifested himself through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and is the same God whom we await at *parousia* (1955:116). Therefore, Christian hope is grounded in the fullness of Jesus Christ, which in other terms may be called the fullness of God’s love and power which was active in Jesus Christ.

Having looked at the main thrust and how this thrust is built up through a number of motifs, the question we should ask ourselves is: In Barth’s view, how significant and relevant is his interpretation of the resurrection for us today? Barth answers the question by highlighting a number of aspects which are of great importance to consider. These aspects are revelation, reconciliation and redemption of humankind; and faith and hope as meaningful responses to God’s revelatory, reconciliatory and redemptive act of the resurrection event.

The very fact that the resurrection is the act of God’s revelation is in itself significant. It discloses the identity of God: God is revealed as sovereign and eternal and who could not be defeated by the power of death (Klooster 1961-62:159). At the same time, He is revealed as a God of grace and mercy. The resurrection declared the great divine verdict that humankind is redeemed from all

powers of evil and reunited with the Creator through Jesus' reconciliatory work (Barth 1949:121).⁵ Humankind is therefore expected to respond in faith and hope: faith as an encounter with the Living Christ who made and makes himself present through the power of the Holy Spirit (1959:487); and hope as a realization of the new life in Jesus Christ as "the conqueror [and bearer of victory]" (Barth 1949:122).

1.1.3 Pannenberg: The Resurrection as Historical and Apocalyptic

Pannenberg, born in 1928, is a German theologian who put much emphasis on eschatology with a "future" as the starting point for theological reflection (Mckim 1996:199). Pannenberg is one of the contemporary theologians who affirmed the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. He "saw Christ's resurrection as a bodily event in the external world" (Hunsinger 2004:169). The resurrection should not be seen as a supernatural and miraculous event, but as the paradigmatic and ordinary historical event which is dependent on historical investigation (Hunsinger 2004:171).

Pannenberg introduced a new phase in the theological interpretation of the Easter event. He not only restated the historicity of the event, but also situated the resurrection in the context of Jewish apocalyptic expectation – a unique approach in as far as the comparison with his contemporaries is concerned. His elaborative analysis of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is mostly articulated in the two books: *Jesus-God and Man* and *Systematic Theology* (Volume 2). For Pannenberg, Jesus' resurrection is the central event for both theology and Christology. The cross occupies little space in Pannenberg's christological line of thought, though the relationship between the resurrection and Jesus' life is upheld. Two important themes are clearly reflected in Pannenberg's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. He views the resurrection both as a *historical* and as an *apocalyptic* event. Therefore, what follows is the elaboration of the two motifs.

In the first place, *historicity* lies at the heart of Pannenberg's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. The German theologian asserts that the resurrection of Jesus is a bodily historical event which took place in the history of the world. In his *Jesus-God and Man* (1968:99) he firmly affirms:

If we would forgo the concept of a historical event here, then it is no longer possible at all to affirm that the resurrection of Jesus or that the appearances of the resurrected Jesus really happened at a definite time

⁵ The same motif is echoed and stressed in Barth's volume of the *Church Dogmatics* IV.1:309 of 1956.

in our world. There is no justification for affirming Jesus' resurrection as an event that really happened, if it is not being affirmed as a historical event as such.

The same emphasis is reiterated in the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*. He says that "if the event did not actually take place, of course, then all discussion of its meaning is a waste of time" (1994:346). According to Sobrino (2001:27), for Pannenberg the resurrection is historical in that: firstly, it has been expressed in the language of 'resurrection from the dead'; secondly, it is bound into the 'apocalyptic' tradition; and thirdly, it responds to the 'radical hope' found in human beings.

Pannenberg considers appearances and the discovery of the empty tomb traditions as the basis of the resurrection event's historicity. He concludes that "though the two traditions existed independently of each other, their mutual complementarity [allowed] the assertion of the reality of Jesus' resurrection as a very probable historical event which can be made certain by historical inquiry" (1968:104). In Pannenberg's view, the resurrection of Jesus Christ can only be understood through historical investigation. He (1968:99) explains, "Whether or not a particular event happened two thousand years ago is not made certain by faith but only by historical research, to the extent that certainty can be attained at all about questions of this kind." The resurrection is a historical event, a public fact, which can be proved by historical inquiry.

Secondly, Pannenberg moves to the motif of *apocalyptic expectation*. He situates the resurrection within the Jewish apocalyptic expectation of the end of the world. When the resurrection is viewed from the perspective of the Jewish apocalyptic expectation it aids in a clear comprehension of the Easter event (Pannenberg 1968:111). How does the Jewish apocalyptic expectation look like which in the end influenced Pannenberg in the theological thinking of the resurrection? O'Collins (1987:59) explains that according to Pannenberg the disciples understood and interpreted their visions through their prior apocalyptic view of history. They visualized that all things would be consummated in a general resurrection and judgment at the end of time. Therefore, seeing Jesus appearing to them as the resurrected Lord was actually a confirmation that the end of the world had begun. Hence, the resurrection of Jesus Christ proleptically anticipates the end of the universal history to be realized at *parousia*. In Migliore's (2004:377) words, "it signaled and anticipated the general resurrection and final judgment toward which the universal history moves." The resurrection is the prolepsis of the general eschatological resurrection, and it remains incomplete until the *eschaton* (Grenz 1990:142). Pannenberg (1968:75-76) explains that just like Jesus' resurrection, the resurrection from the dead is not resuscitation or revivification of corpses, but the transformation of

the perishable earthly body into a spiritual body and a transition into the consummation to be realized at the end of history, at Christ's second coming.

As a proleptic event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ further realized God's vindication of Jesus' claim to authority (Park 1970-71:160). It means directly that "God himself justified the condemned and executed Jesus, namely, by the Spirit, by whose power he was raised from the dead" (Pannenberg 1994:344). The resurrection of Jesus from the dead to a new life with God therefore determines the meaning of the pre-Easter history of Jesus and who he was in his relation to God. The ambiguity of Jesus' person and history is dispelled and removed (Pannenberg 1994:345). However, the ultimate divine confirmation of Jesus will take place in the future at his return where the full manifestation of God's revelation and glory will occur (Pannenberg 1968:108). Clearly, we see the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" in this line of thought. The resurrection is significant in that it assures Christ's presence in the sacraments and the hope for the glorious new life in the future resurrection existence (Pannenberg 1991:53). For Pannenberg (1969:72) this hope motivates and revives mission work in the world by the church.

1.1.4 Moltmann: The Resurrection as an Event of Promise

Moltmann, a retired German theologian and Professor of Systematic Theology and Social Ethics (Müller-Fahrenholz 2001:40), was born in 1926. According to Bauckham (1997:209), the initial source of Moltmann's theology was his experience as a prisoner of war from 1945 to 1948 and his sense of involvement, during and after the war. He understood the reality of God dialectically: God as the power of hope and one who is present in suffering. After the war, Moltmann studied at Göttingen where he "gained the eschatological perspective of the church's universal mission toward the coming kingdom of God" (Bauckham 1997:209). Having studied Dietrich Bonhoeffer's and Ernst Wolf's works, Moltmann developed a concern for social ethics and the church's involvement in secular society. His *Theology of Hope* (1964), as well as subsequent works, which he developed as a result of the influence of Ernst Bloch (Jewish Marxist philosopher) who wrote on the philosophy of hope, earned him a great reputation in the non-Western and Western worlds, in wider church circles and academic theology. Bauckham (1997:210) further testifies that though a Protestant theologian, Moltmann's work is recognized in other traditions and movements such as the Roman Catholic theology, Orthodox theology, and the liberation theologies of the Third World. The

key components of Moltmann's theological work are eschatology, theodicy, church, the doctrine of God, creation, political theology, Christology, and Pneumatology (Bauckham 1997:213).

Moltmann's Christology is mainly developed in *The Way of Jesus Christ* of 1990. In this volume, Jesus is metaphorically depicted as one "on his way to the messianic future" (Bauckham 1997:220). With this metaphor Moltmann retains the dialectic of the cross and resurrection. In his cross Jesus enters and suffers vicariously the end-time sufferings that threaten the whole creation. His resurrection is the eschatological springtime of all nature: the Easter event focuses not only on Jesus' past but also his future, which is the messianic future of the as yet still unredeemed world.

In the light of this, Moltmann views the resurrection of Jesus Christ as *an event of promise*. It is the daybreak of the new creation holding out the promise of renewal of all things as it is recorded in Revelation 21:5. As a happening of promise, the resurrection is "the promise of the kingdom of God in which all things attain to right, to life, to peace, to freedom, and to truth, is not exclusive but inclusive" (Moltmann 1967:224). It is future oriented, promissory in character and eschatologically verified. This event is all about the triune God's character – his identity: it shows God's ability to vindicate the oppressed and the proof that he fulfills his promises. In Moltmann's (1967:141) own words, "It was *Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of the promise, who raised Jesus from the dead." Therefore, the resurrection is not all about what transpires in the world and its history, but "a new possibility altogether for the world, for existence and for history" (Moltmann 1967:179). It contains the promise first for the crucified Jesus himself in that he stands vindicated by God, and then for the entire world which is yet to be fulfilled in the eschatological future, though this promise has already begun to be realized in the present. Migliore (2004:374) comments on Moltmann's thought by saying that the resurrection is "an event that makes history, that opens it up, that disturbs all our so-called established facts, and that makes us dissatisfied with the status quo of human alienation, suffering, and injustice".

Moltmann's central point, Christ's resurrection as a promise of the transformation of the world and its history, is developed in three approaches. According to O'Collins (1967:68), Moltmann uses three classical questions from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: "What can I know?" (historical approach); "What ought I to do?" (ethical or existential approach); and "What may I hope for?" (eschatological or theological approach). Although Moltmann distinguishes the three questions, he considers them as inseparable (Moltmann 1990:242). As expected from his

interpretation of Christ's resurrection, Moltmann absolutizes the third⁶ because it seeks to stress the divine promise of the Easter event – the opening up of a new future in hope for all people and all things. For Moltmann, what matters about the resurrection is not 'what I can know,' but 'what I may expect' and what, in the power of such expectation, 'I have to do' (Muller-Fahrenholz 2001:51). Now, it is important to highlight how Moltmann treats each of the three questions.

Moltmann handles the first question (historical approach – 'What can I know?') from the standpoint of the third question (eschatological approach). Here, he concurs with Pannenberg in that he also stresses the fact that the appearances of the risen Lord were the basis of affirming the historicity of the event. The Easter faith is silent regarding the exact occurrence in the period between Good Friday and Easter; there are no eye-witnesses to the actual event of Jesus' rising from the dead. However, Moltmann (1974:169) affirms that the appearances are enough ground to believe that the resurrection really took place. For Moltmann, the origin of the resurrection faith is the experience of the risen Christ in his appearances (christophanies)⁷ through the Holy Spirit (1990:218). As O'Collins (1987:69) explains, the disciples understood and interpreted the appearances of the risen Christ "through their hopes for a final future promised to the entire world."

To further elaborate the historicity of the resurrection, Moltmann gives three dimensions of the activity of the risen Jesus in his Easter appearances (Moltmann 1990:220): *Prospectively*, the disciples saw the crucified Christ as the living One in the splendor cast ahead by the coming glory of God. The risen Lord identified himself as one who is to come; his future promises 'the Kingdom in a new totality of being.' This meant their gospel had a promissory character – it was the anticipation in Word of Christ's parousia. *Retrospectively*, the disciples recognized the risen Christ from his marks of the nails and in the breaking of bread; the One who will come is the One crucified on Golgotha. This meant that their gospel made the crucified Christ present – it was 'the Word of the cross.' *Reflexively*, in this seeing the disciples perceived their own call to the apostolate. The apostolic mission to the world was set in force by the divine promise. This meant that their gospel was the present call into the liberty of faith. The three dimensions have implications for the Christian faith. Moltmann (1990:227) says, "Accordingly the Christian faith is a life lived out of

⁶ O'Collins (1987:69) clarifies that the reason why Moltmann absolutizes the third question is that the experience of the resurrection here and now is negative experience in that it is only experienced in faith, certainty, love and justification. But at the same time it is a goal for Christian hope.

⁷ 'Christophanies' here refers to the 'seeing of the risen Christ' by the disciples when he appeared to them. Moltmann (1990:220) explains that these christophanies "were not mysterious private revelations, but were understood by the people concerned as the first, preliminary radiance of the imminent dawn of God's new creation."

Christ [reflexive], a life lived with Christ [retrospective] and a life lived in expectation of Christ [prospective]. And in being these things it is also a life of new creation in the midst of the shadows of the transient [passing by] world.”

Concerning the facticity of the discovery of the empty tomb, Moltmann does not seem to show any interest in affirming it as the basis of the resurrection faith. This is because the idea of the empty tomb was astonishing and unexpected to occur at that time. Moltmann (2006:82) explains that the women who went to the tomb of Jesus were afraid and ran away, trembling with amazement because “birth and death are normal features of life on this earth, but Jesus’ resurrection shattered the regular order of things.” It overturned the normal expectation of the time in that God’s in-breaking new dawn surfaced from the divine horizon, and new life was assured.

Next, Moltmann handles Kant’s third question (the theological approach– ‘What may I hope for?’). According to Moltmann (1974:171), the end-time of the world and subsequently the beginning of the new creation has dawned. In this case, Moltmann treats the Christian hope from two viewpoints. On one hand, from the viewpoint of human history where Jesus’ resurrection seeks to stress that the general resurrection of the dead has begun in him and with him. This is so because Jesus is “the first-fruit of those who have departed this life and the first-born among the dead” (2006:82). The experience of hope in Jesus’ resurrection is a pre-reflection of what is anticipated to come in the future. Christian hope anticipates the promised justice, righteousness, life, humanization of humanity, socialization of humanity, peace for all creation and the fullness of God’s Kingdom (1967:329). On the other hand, from the viewpoint of nature where the resurrection of Jesus from the dead means cosmic renewal or universal new creation has begun in Jesus Christ. In Moltmann’s own words, “with the raising of Christ, the vulnerable and mortal human nature we experience here is raised and transformed into the eternally living, immortal human nature of the new creation; and with vulnerable human nature the non-human nature of the earth is transformed as well” (1990:258). This implies that the promised renewal, and hope thereof, is for both humanity and all the non-human creatures. Therefore, as Moltmann (2006:88) sounds a call, since human beings are hoping for the renewed life they need, they are “obliged to remain loyal to the earth, to care for it and to love it like themselves.” Mutual co-existence between humanity and nature is what Moltmann is calling for.

Finally, Moltmann's ethical question ('What ought I to do?') is about realizing the resurrection belief in the present scenario; "becoming alive in the spirit of the resurrection – the uniting of what has been separated" (1990:263). Regarding the triumph of the victims or oppressors in the renewed creation, Moltmann (1974:178) emphasizes that neither the victims nor the executioners shall triumph over the other. By dying for both the victims and the executioners Jesus Christ revealed a new righteousness which breaks through the vicious circles of hate and vengeance, and which from the lost victims and executioners creates a new humanity. Here, Moltmann is sensitive to the liberation nature and call of the Easter event.

In order to address the ethical nature of the resurrection, Moltmann (1999:87-89) gives three important dimensions for living in the power of the resurrection today. In the first place, *it is life against death*. For Moltmann, death encompasses the issues of oppression (e.g. rape cases, unemployment), exploitation (e.g. poor working conditions, the rich becoming richer at the expense of the poor), sickness (e.g. the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in the world especially in the Third World), and alienation (e.g. starving children of the Third World and the exposed street kids in the slums of the big cities). Life against these powers of death means two things: (a) loving, sharing life, establishing life and making life once again worth living; and (b) acquiring the consolation of the Spirit, which can establish and support us where our possibilities are at an end and we can do no more. Another dimension is *justice against violence*. This can as well be achieved in two ways. Firstly, the extension of justice by asserting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the international pacts for social, economic and cultural rights of 1966. Secondly, seeking consolation from God's justice which will triumph; the murderers will not finally triumph over their victims. The third dimension is *creation against annihilation*. This means furthering life by living together with other creatures, not exploiting and killing them.

The ethical perspective of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is also about enhancing the unity of the Spirit (1990:265-273). For Moltmann, this unity includes a number of elements: the unity of body and soul which are split into two by death; the unity of the person in time who is separated from life history by death; the unity between person and community detached from each other by death; the unity of the human race in the generation contact of which discontinuity takes root by death; and the unity between human civilization and nature in which human hostility over nature is perpetuated by the human anthropocentric perception of nature. Moltmann (1979:110) warns, "Today exploitation, oppression, alienation, the destruction of nature, and inner despair make up the vicious circle in

which we are killing ourselves and our world.” Disregard for a serious consideration of the ethos implied in the resurrection belief is in the end a self-destruction as is the case in the world today where global warming and climatic changes are causing adverse effects and thereby posing a great threat to human species.

To conclude Moltmann’s interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we need to point out the significance of this interpretation for the Christian faith and life. Reading along the line of Moltmann’s thought two aspects come out clearly: the *reality of new life* and a *call to mission*. As we have discovered, in Moltmann’s view, the resurrection is an event of promise where the renewal of all things have already begun. But then, what is the ultimate purpose of this renewal? Moltmann (1999:89) would answer that it is the indwelling of God’s glory, which transforms everything and brings the realization of new life to its fullness. This life is inclusive in nature and brings about peace, freedom, truth and righteousness as promised by God.

The promise of new life is also a call to mission in the world. Moltmann (1967:224) affirms that “the *pro-missio* of the Kingdom is the ground of the *missio* of the love in the world.” As Migliore (2004:378) puts it, the promise of new life is not only the basis of the Christian hope, but also of the Christian commission; it is the commission to show solidarity with the victims of world history in the hope of the renewal of all things as written in Revelation 21:1-5. He further adds, “The church that risks itself in the service of the crucified and risen Christ, attending to the pain and suffering of the world, will hear that word of promise” (2004:383). The promise of the resurrection as an event is the full attainment of life and an empowerment to do mission⁸ in the present world time and situation.

1.1.5 Sobrino: The Resurrection as the Victims’ Hope and Way of Living

Jon Sobrino is a Jesuit priest and professor of philosophy and theology at the Universidad Jose Simeon Carias of El Salvador. He was born (1938) in Barcelona, Spain, into a Basque family during the Spanish Civil War. Having lived in El Salvador for over forty years, he is fully familiar with the life experiences of the locals. That is why he theologizes from the perspective of the poor in Latin

⁸ Wholistic mission here is referred to that which encompasses all aspects that bring about new life in totality; be it political, social, economical, spiritual and ecological at all levels – personal, corporate and cosmic levels.

America. By surveying his books and articles one can conclude that Sobrino writes and does theology from the Latin American liberation movement's point of view.

Sobrino (2001:11) accepts the fact that the resurrection is an eschatological event of which the Ultimate has irrupted into world history. However, he believes that this eschatological reality of the resurrection cannot be accessible directly. It can only be fully comprehended from a particular viewpoint, namely, 'from the situation of the Third World.' In fact, his central affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is "that 'the risen one is the crucified one,' ... by appearing as risen displaying his wounds" (2006:101). Sobrino's viewpoint is a quest for the transformation of the world so that justice, peace and human solidarity can be realized.

Why does Sobrino reflect on the resurrection from the Third World viewpoint? It seems clear that Sobrino has two major reasons for his approach (Sobrino 2001:11). Firstly, Jesus' resurrection is inclusive in nature. This inclusivity is noticed in a number of aspects: Its *corporeality* – Jesus arose in the wholeness of his being (body and soul); its *sociability* – Jesus showed the way to the resurrection of all human beings by rising as the firstborn; its *cosmicity* – Jesus realized the coming of a new earth and a new heaven; and its *futurity* – Jesus revealed the future and hope. Secondly, he claims that there is now a sort of stagnation in theology of the resurrection due to, among many, two reasons: There is nothing important to say about the *present* for us now; and due to its emphasis on universal hope, there is no recognition of the *partiality* essential to it – Jesus' resurrection is hope, directly, for the victims. Therefore, in order for the resurrection to maintain its identity and relevance, Sobrino (2001:12) calls for the need of a new viewpoint – the situation of the Third World. This new viewpoint should include a reality that effectively affects history in its *present* situation and an understanding of the resurrection in its essential relationship to the victims (*partiality*) so that its unleashed hope is hope for the victims.

For the purpose of this research, therefore, this viewpoint brings us to the crucial question: How does Sobrino interpret the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the viewpoint of the situation of the Third World? For Sobrino the resurrection is the source of *hope for the victims and Christian way of living*. In other word, for Sobrino two twin themes are central to his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: *hope of the victims* and *Christian existence*. He treats the first theme as specific in this interpretation. The resurrection is specifically meant for the enhancing and grating of hope to the crucified victims of history. Just like the crucified Jesus was vindicated by being raised from the

dead, so do the victims find hope of being vindicated through the Easter event which, though anticipated in the future, should be made real in the present. Hope for the victims can generally be made real in the present through Christian existence. As Sobrino (2006:101) states, Christian existence is a way of living “here and now in history, in the light of the resurrection: a life in community with the crucified, in order to take them down from the cross, living already as risen, and walking – with humility in the face of the scandal of history – with the God of the poor and the victims.”⁹ It is life-in-solidarity with the victims of world history so that the victims not only feel welcomed and embraced by the non-victims, but also find hope of being emancipated from their plight of dehumanization.

What exactly do hope for the victims and Christian existence entail in accordance to Sobrino’s approach to the resurrection of our Saviour? Hope for the victims is mainly God’s anticipated triumph over any form of injustice inflicted upon the victims of world history. Who are the victims? According to Sobrino (2006:103), the victims include “both the great masses of the poor and oppressed who are put to death slowly and those who are assassinated for denouncing injustice and actively seeking justice.” They are all human beings who are threatened in their basic life and dignity through oppression and repression (2006:109). Though it is difficult from outside to search deeply into the specific hope of the victims in its fullness, Sobrino suggests that we can affirm the hope for the victims in Christ’s resurrection by preaching the resurrection as ‘good news’ and by showing love and credibility to the victims (2006:104). As mentioned above, for Sobrino hope for the victims is God’s anticipated triumph over injustice. This view of hope in the resurrection seems to focus so much on the future. However, Sobrino puts it in the present sense in that this hope must be realized in the here and now situation. Hope for the victims is neither about God’s omnipotence, nor about God’s power in universal form, but about the fact that the executioner will not triumph over the victims (1999:115). It is primarily about doing justice to the victims in the present scenario.

At the first glance of Sobrino’s view of Jesus’ resurrection, one would conclude that it does not seem to offer any hope to the non-victims. In actual sense, Sobrino clearly states that Jesus’ resurrection can indeed generate hope for them too on two conditions (2006:104-105). The first condition is the *actual reality* of the non-victims; the non-victims need to participate, even if only analogously, in the reality of the victims, so that their death is, in some way, like that of Jesus, on a cross. It is communion with the crucified – Jesus and the victims. The second condition is *subjectivity*; the non-

⁹ Sobrino had earlier made the same point by noting that Christian living is “being able to live as risen people – in the weakness of history – in following Jesus and to have the victims’ hope that God will triumph over injustice” (2001:15).

victims need to face up to the greater scandal of the injustice that already brings death to the victims and try to conquer it through our life-choices – what the non-victims themselves can do, like love and acceptance, to give the victims hope.

This then brings us to the other twin-theme of Sobrino's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus' resurrection also means the Christian existence, the living in accordance with Jesus' resurrection. Sobrino suggests two important aspects of this living in accordance with Jesus' resurrection. First, human beings no longer live as history's slaves but as history's *sovereigns* through Jesus' resurrection which indicates the present Christ's sovereignty (1996b:139). Second, Christian existence is sharing in Jesus' *fullness* and *triumph* or victory in love in the present though living in the wounds of history (2006:106). Victory in the resurrection is life against the enslavement of history, and the sharing in Jesus' fullness encompasses hope, freedom and joy. *Hope* here entails the justice and love needed to "take the crucified down from the cross" (2006:107). The victims live liberative hope generated by the resurrection of Jesus directly for the world's victims. It points to God's final triumph over the executioners (1988:130). *Freedom* entails life that overcomes self-centredness. It dedicates more to the liberation of others and practices the love that can become the greatest love. *Joy* in this case means overcoming sadness; thus, living for others and receiving from others, and celebrating life right now in mutual relationship with God and others. It is sharing in the community with the poor and victims (Jesus as the firstborn and the large family of the victims), and sharing in walking humbly with God (an expression of faith in reaching and journeying towards God) (2006:109). Sobrino alludes to the joyful existence in the following words (1996a:251), "To live with joy, to be glad to be alive, is to live with ultimate meaning – with ability to be grateful and to celebrate, the ability to be for others and be with others." Finally, Sobrino (1996b:140) claims that the resurrected Jesus is shown to be sovereign of history when we live the following of Jesus with hope, freedom and joy.

It is clear that Sobrino develops his thesis on the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection according to three main questions: the hermeneutical (how is it possible to comprehend the event and its meaning?), historical (what really happened?) and theological (what exactly is the significance of the resurrection?).

According to the *hermeneutical* question, Sobrino emphasizes that the meaning of the resurrection can be attained as the hope of the crucified; the victory of life over death (2001:36). The

hermeneutical principle of Jesus' resurrection is hope against the death of the victims or hope of the resurrection of the victims. This entails, as mentioned earlier, taking an active part in that hope, being capable of making their hope ours and being ready to work for it, even if this makes us victims. Sobrino calls this hermeneutical principle the 'praxis of raising the crucified' – taking the crucified people down from the cross (2001:45). He makes an appeal, "Since Jesus has been raised by God entails the hope that we can be *raised*, but it follows from what has been said that we also have to be, in some way, *raisers*" (2001:47). The praxis of raising the crucified is about both the theory and pragmatic of the truth of the good news.

The *historical* question concerns a number of aspects: the evidence of changes brought about in the disciples; what these changes mean; the need for us to have an (analogous) experience to that of the post-resurrection appearances; and the manner in which we have/do not have this experience. In Sobrino's point of view, the disciples' encounter with the risen Lord was an experience of grace in that "it was given to them to see Jesus" (2001:59). God initiated the change of perception in them. They also were made to understand the resurrection as pointing towards the future in its eschatological content. Sobrino believes that the resurrection is historical in that something happened to the disciples as affirmed by the New Testament; they encountered Jesus whom they called the risen Lord, and that a change was worked out in them (2001:64). The resurrection had an impact on their lives and their behaviour in the sense that there was a difference before and after Easter. Sobrino (1987:157) then links this thought to church's life in the present, "When the church is joined to the Crucified and to the crucified ... it knows how to speak of the Risen One. It knows how to stir up hope, and how to bring Christians to live as risen persons in history's here and now." We as the present Christians can have this experience of the risen Lord when we share hope of being raised with the victims of world history.

According to Sobrino (2001:16), what is involved in the *theological* question is mainly what Jesus' resurrection has to say about God, Jesus and human beings. The resurrection affirms the identity of God – the new name of God. It discloses the liberative power and love of God who is able to bring into being things that have not yet existed (1978:377). God demonstrates his power and love in that "God is the liberator of victims, in whom we can trust, but this liberator is still God, to whom we must surrender" (2001:95). The resurrection further says something about Jesus himself (1978:377-379). If God resurrected Jesus from the dead, then we can say that Jesus stands in a distinctive relationship to God. God confirmed Jesus' concrete life, preaching, deeds, and his death on the

cross. Finally, the resurrection says something about humanity and history (1978:377). Humanity has been offered new life which follows the footsteps of Jesus and is based on hope and love. “Jesus is already Lord, and believers are already the new men and women” (1987:154). Therefore, humanity can live as new, risen beings here and now in history by expressing the new life in hope, love, freedom and joy.

1.1.6 Wright: The Resurrection as a Physical Reality

Nicholas Thomas Wright is Bishop of Durham in the Church of England. He was consecrated bishop in 2003, the same year he authored his third volume: *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. He is a graduate of Oxford University, and previously taught at Cambridge, McGill, and Oxford Universities (Stewart 2006:xii). He also was formerly Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey and dean of Lichfield Cathedral. According to Evans (2006:55), Wright is believed to be the leading evangelical New Testament scholar. *The Resurrection of the Son of God* is his third volume in the series of books on Christian origins and the question of God. Wright’s approach to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is well articulated in this volume, more especially in the fifth part of the book: “Belief, Event and Meaning.”

Similar to Pannenberg’s understanding, Wright interprets the Easter event as a *physical reality*: Jesus’ resurrection is a real event which took place in history. Jesus was indeed bodily raised from the dead. He was raised corporeally (physically, with the whole body and soul). According to Wright (2003:685), the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was bodily raised from the dead is widely held, consistently shaped and highly influential. Welker (2007:462) testifies that Wright’s intention is to boldly affirm Jesus’ bodily resurrection. In fact, Wright (2003:398) states that a careful reading of the texts leads to the conclusion that Paul “had seen the risen Jesus in person, and that his understanding of who this Jesus was included the firm belief that he possessed a transformed but still physical body.” Jesus was bodily raised from the dead (Wright 2003:719), hence, his resurrection is a physical reality though with a transformed body. But then, Wright asks a question: What does this mean?

This brings us to the question about Wright’s basis of his interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection. Having articulated the centrality and essentiality of the early Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection, Wright (2003:685) asks, “What caused this belief in the resurrection of Jesus?” Stewart (2006:71)

explains that according to Wright what caused early Christian belief in the resurrection are the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of the resurrected Jesus to his followers. Wright (2005:675) notes that each of the four canonical Gospels ends with the stories about the discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances to his disciples. Therefore, using the tools of *necessity* and *sufficient* conditions,¹⁰ he concludes that the combination of the empty tomb and appearances of the living Jesus "forms a set of circumstances which is itself both necessary and sufficient for the rise of early Christian belief. Without these phenomena, we cannot explain why this belief came into existence, and too the shape it did. With them, we can explain it *exactly* and precisely" (2003:696). The discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus conjointly, together, not separately or individually, constitute a necessary and sufficient condition for the rise of the early Christian faith. Wright (2005:676) beautifully argues that, on one hand, if the tomb was found empty, but Jesus did not appear to his followers, it would have been assumed that someone had taken the body. On the other hand, if the reported appearances of Jesus took place, but his body still remained in the tomb, the disciples would have believed they had seen a ghost or a vision as it was a well known phenomenon in the world of the time. Wright also believes that the empty tomb and appearances traditions convey the message that God's new stage has been opened for God's purposes of which Jesus' disciples must carry forward. He says, "With Easter, God's new creation has begun; Jesus' followers are to be its agents, not merely its beneficiaries. The stories ... are told in such a way as to lay the foundation for the continuing witness and life of the church" (2005:676).

Summing up this sub-section on Wright's understanding of the resurrection, two important aspects which concern the nature of the resurrection are worth pointing out. Firstly, Wright observes that the resurrection was a politically revolutionary doctrine and that it remains so for the early Christians (2006:22). He explains that for Herod Antipas the tyrant, death was the last weapon he possessed, and if someone was raising the dead, then everything would turn upside down to him. Here now comes Jesus who is believed to have been raised from the dead and that he is the Messiah and Lord, the true King of the Jews and the true Lord of this world. This posed a great challenge and threat both to Herod and Caesar, the rulers and lords of the time. Furthermore, the bodily resurrection of Jesus was a decisive blow to all forms of evil and called the kingdoms of the earth to submit to the eternal and powerful Kingdom of God (2006:23). Easter also challenges the social and political pretensions (claims to possess skills) of modernism, both right wing and left wing. It is a challenge to the contemporary radical politics. Secondly, Wright (2005:678) observes that the central figure of

¹⁰ For Wright (2003:687), a *necessary* condition is something that has to be the case for the conclusion to follow, and a *sufficient* condition is something that will certainly and without fail bring about the conclusion.

the resurrection is God. It is about God the Creator who reclaims, judges and renews the created world. The resurrection points to the activity of God in reclaiming, judging and renewing the world by bringing that which was hopeless to the hopefulness, and the lifeless (dead) to the fullness of life. Therefore, any Christian person who believes in the resurrection, inclusive of an African Christian who is experiencing massive forms of suffering, is called to the confidence and hope that working for the Kingdom of God in the present is not an in vain undertaking.

1.1.7 Crossan: The Resurrection as a Metaphorical Reality

John Dominic Crossan is an Irish American and Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois (USA). Crossan has written a noticeable amount of scholarly volumes, which include *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991), *The Birth of Christianity* (1998), and *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* – coauthored with archeologist Jonathan Reed of Laverne University (2004). Stewart (2006:ix) tells us that Crossan's work has been translated into ten foreign languages, including Korean, Chinese, and Japanese, and that he has lectured to lay and scholarly audiences across the United States, in Ireland, England, Finland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In this analysis of Crossan's interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the researcher will focus on his scholarly thoughts in the two articles: *Bodily-resurrection faith* of 2006, and *The resurrection of Jesus in its Jewish context* of 2003. The former article articulates 'mode' and 'meaning' in bodily resurrection faith as key elements in his interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, while the latter situates the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ within the faith and theology of the Jewish context (Judaism).

According to Evans (2006:52), Crossan has made three significant contributions to the study of Jesus: his redaction-critical assessment of the Passion story; his openness to the extracanonical sources (the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Egerton Papyrus or Egerton Gospel, the Secret Gospel of Mark, and the *Gospel of Peter*) and his imaginative and creative exploration and application of Jesus' environment (social, cultural, political and economic background). Crossan's line of thought helps us to view the Passion story from a new perspective. The extracanonical sources might tell us more about Jesus and shed light on the nature of the tradition preserved in the canonical sources. His exploration and application of Jesus' environment may give us a new insight of Jesus' background.

Having given a brief background to Crossan's life and work, this sub-section then moves to Crossan's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. In the first place, it is worth noting that Crossan denies Jesus' crucifixion, death or burial (Stewart 2006:73-74). In short, he denies the historicity of Jesus' Passion story. For Crossan, it is typical that "victims of crucifixion were either left on the cross to be eaten by animals or buried in shallow graves (and thus almost certainly also eaten [devoured] by wild animals)" (2006:74). Similar incidences might also have really happened to Jesus' body when he was crucified. This view is not in line with the Christian belief about Jesus' Passion story as attested in the canonical narratives. Obviously, his analysis of the extracanonical sources could have been Crossan's supplier of such pieces of information.

When it comes to the resurrection, one would expect that since the biblical version of the Passion story is denied the same would be the case to the Easter event. To our shock, Crossan highly upholds the event of Jesus' resurrection. He believes that the resurrection is real, even if only visionary (Evans 2006:50). However, Crossan redefines the resurrection of Jesus Christ (2006:186). He understands the resurrection as *metaphorical*: first, it is meant to provide hope; second, it points to Jesus' continued presence in the church; third, it means that God has reversed Rome's verdict on Jesus; fourth and most importantly, the Easter happening seeks to stress God's expected transformation of the cosmos, the vindication of his people in the general resurrection and the demonstration of justice in the judgment of the wicked.

Where does Crossan base his line of thought in his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? At this point Crossan moves on to talk about the origin and claim of bodily resurrection faith. The origin and claim of bodily resurrection faith are well articulated by answering two fundamental questions: "What, be it in belief or disbelief, did a first-century Jew mean by the term 'bodily resurrection'?" and "What, against that background, did a first-century Christian Jew mean by claiming that God had raised Jesus from the dead?"

In answering the first question Crossan situates the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ within the faith and theology of the Jewish context or the context of Judaism. "The bodily resurrection can only be understood correctly within the faith and theology about resurrection present in certain circles of his contemporary Judaism," Crossan (2003:29) explains. He says that Jesus lived and died as a Jew. Therefore, for one to comprehend the resurrection, his Jewishness should be taken into consideration. According to Crossan (2003:34-35), the first-century Jewish initial position on the

meaning of bodily resurrection was disbelief in an afterlife. The first-century Jews believed that after death individuals, good or bad alike, go down to *Sheol*. It was an act of faith for the Jews *not* to believe in the life after death, and for them, life before death was enough and adequate.

Later Jewish resurgence of belief in life after death was due to symbolic hopes or hyperbolic prayers in first and second parts of Daniel, and in 2 and 4 Maccabees that pointed to the resurrection and even to bodily resurrection (Crossan 2003:37). These texts talk about the events of martyrdom, bodily resurrection and an after-life as an apocalyptic vision of vindication by justice. Therefore, Crossan affirms that for first-century Jews bodily resurrection is about the vindication of God's justice (2003:43). It is the final eschatological event – the grand finale of God's public vindication of murdered martyrs and all persecuted innocents. It is also about the establishment of a perfect world where the divine transformation of the earth, the definite and forever establishment of justice and righteousness, and destruction of evil and violence, injustice and unrighteousness are awaited and expected.

Crossan (2006:24-25, 174-180) gives two important aspects in this understanding of bodily resurrection faith in the Jewish tradition: cosmic transformation and bodily resurrection itself. The cosmic transformation is God's Great Divine Clean-Up of the world from a world of evil, injustice, impurity, and violence into a world of justice, peace, purity and holiness (2006:24, 174-175). Bodily resurrection is understood in two ways: first, what he considers to be the general reason – transformation of nature at three levels of physical world, animal world and social world; and second, the specific reason – vindication of martyrdom where God's justice is specifically faced with the battered, tortured, and executed bodies of martyrs (2006:175).

For the understanding of bodily resurrection in the first-century Christian Jewish tradition, Crossan (2003: 46-51) looks at what it does not mean and what it does mean. The resurrection is not bodily resuscitation – the coming back from a coma, apparent death or unconsciousness; it is not post-mortem apparition – a supernatural appearance, ghost, or a sudden unusual sight; nor is it heavenly exaltation – being taken up to heaven by God to escape death, decay, and Sheol (2003:46-48). The resurrection in the first-century Christian Jewish tradition is general resurrection (2003:48-51). Jesus' resurrection meant the beginning of general resurrection as talked about by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. It is the grand finale, the final act of the apocalyptic drama of final justification and ultimate divinization of this earth.

Three aspects are cardinal to the understanding of the first-century Christian Jewish view of the resurrection. First, while Wright talks about the six Christian mutations within Jewish resurrection belief, Crossan (2006:176) considers the bodily resurrection in the Christian tradition as the third great mutation. This is the Christian mutation which proclaimed that the general bodily resurrection was not just imminent but had already begun with Jesus' resurrection. For Crossan the first great mutation is one which took place within Jewish covenantal faith and was concerned with faith in imminent eschatology, and the second great mutation was within the first and concerned the bodily resurrection. Second, he talks about the twofold causality: the appearance of Jesus after his death and the discovery of the empty tomb are historically factual in their entirety; and the historical communal experience of Jesus' individual life and already present Kingdom of God, even if not fully consummated (2006:177). The third aspect is the collaborative eschaton. By this, Crossan (2006:27, 178-180) explains that eschatological transformation, general resurrection, and cosmic judgment call for the doing of God's will on earth; participation in, collaboration and cooperation with the already and present God's Great Cosmic Clean-Up between the time of Jesus' resurrection and the general resurrection.

How, then, does Crossan treat the question of mode and meaning of bodily resurrection faith? Apart from his knowledge of the first-century Jewish tradition and the first-century Christian Jewish tradition, what is Crossan's personal understanding of bodily resurrection faith? He starts by explaining the meaning of the key terms, 'mode' and 'meaning.' (2006:24, 171-173). Mode, according to Crossan, is the difference between the literal, factual, actual, or historical language and the metaphorical, fictional, symbolic, or parabolic language. In this case, therefore, Crossan (2006:27, 181-182) takes the mode of the resurrection in relation to what he calls 'the harrowing [robbing] of hell.' The harrowing of hell is the proclamation of liberation to the righteous dead in that Christ-led but communal resurrection in the corporate first-fruit of God's Great Cosmic Clean-Up. The harrowing of hell due to the Christ-led communal resurrection is what makes Crossan prefer the metaphorical to the literal (Wright's approach) understanding of the resurrection.

According to Crossan, meaning is what it means to you, implication, intension, purpose, effect, teaching, and that which enhances our participation in the new creation. He states that whether one considers the literal mode or metaphorical mode, when it comes to the meaning of the resurrection, each of the modes claimed that God's Great Cosmic Clean-Up had begun by Jesus' resurrection and that put Rome on a collision course with God (2006:184). To expand this point, Crossan compares

the sequence and program of Caesar and Christ. While Caesar incarnates the Roman sequence of *first victory then peace* or *peace through victory* in this world by violence, Christ incarnates the Jewish sequence of *first justice then peace* or *peace through justice* in this world through nonviolence (2006:28, 184). While the program of Rome is *piety, war, victory, and peace*, the program of Christ (and of Paul) is the sequence of *covenant, nonviolence, justice and peace* as we read in John 18:36, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Galatians 6:15. Hence, Crossan conclusively states that whether taken literally or metaphorically, the early Christian resurrection faith “proclaims that God’s transformation of this world here below has already started” (2006:184). This is a religio-political vision and/or program that is nonviolent but also revolutionary.

To conclude Crossan’s interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection, it is worthwhile pointing out two options for the way forward as suggested by Crossan (2006:28-28, 185-186). He proposes that if one is to discuss the Christian resurrection faith further, s/he would follow one of the two routes; either continuity of the argumentation on the mode or to accept the reality of Jesus’ resurrection. On continuing to debate on mode, the pressing issue is whether it was/is to be taken literary or metaphorically. Crossan (2003:52) observes that if the resurrection is taken literally, the concluding assumption would be that Jesus arose from the grave alone (personally or individually) (2003:52). The communal or structural resurrection (general resurrection) will occur soon in the future where all Christians, living or dead, will join Jesus in resurrection (1 Thess. 4:14-17). If taken metaphorically (something beyond itself), one would come up with no less than one meaning (2006:29, 186). The obvious meanings would in the end include the reality of hope, Jesus’ continued presence with believers, and God’s reversal of Rome’s verdict on Jesus. However, Crossan considers the resurrection, as a *metaphorical reality, to be God’s Great Clean-Up* of the world which has already begun and we are called to participate in it.

Crossan suggests ending the debate of mode historically, theologically, and especially pastorally. According to Craig (2006:139), Crossan declines to engage Wright’s argument on the historical level, preferring to dialogue about the theology of the resurrection. He quickly concludes by ascertaining that Christian belief in the resurrection is either literally or metaphorically, but in either case, the meaning is constrained by the original intention of those who first proclaimed the Easter event. In other words, he says the meaning of the resurrection lies in the mind of the first-century Jewish Christians. Therefore, ending the debate would be one of the preferred routes to take.

1.2 ANALYSIS

This chapter has given an overview of different interpretations by various theologians in the contemporary scholarly world. Each of the theologians considered interprets the resurrection of Jesus Christ from a specific and unique perspective. To conclude the chapter therefore, an analysis of the contemporary interpretations of Jesus' resurrection is provided. There are so many ways through which we can engage the analysis of the contemporary interpretations of Jesus Christ's resurrection. However, the researcher considers the African framework of suffering as crucial for understanding the resurrection of Jesus in the African context. Suffering in this research is the "window" through which the doctrine of resurrection *must* be viewed if it is to, indeed, transform both us as individuals and the world. Without this window, suffering is perpetuated, the victims are further marginalized, and hope is withheld. This approach is also chosen as a preliminary evaluation from an African perspective.

First of all, it is helpful to outline the major themes reflected from the interpretations. The first theme is the *reality of the resurrection event* which has clearly been highlighted by Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino and Wright. Second, there is the emphasis on the *generation of the Easter faith* by Bultmann and Barth. Third, Barth and Pannenberg allude to the fact that the resurrection is about the *revelation of God*. Fourth, Barth makes a connection between the resurrection and redemption in that the resurrection is an *act of God's self-disclosure* of which its purpose is the reconciliation of humanity to the divine community. Fifth, Moltmann and Sobrino bring out the truth that the resurrection is about the *promise and hope for the renewal* of all things in history. Finally, Bultmann, Barth and Sobrino sound the call to participate in realizing the resurrection belief by communicating it through *proclamation* as one of the core tasks of the church. Moltmann, Sobrino and Crossan have also ably elaborated the themes of *justice and politics*.

The *reality of the resurrection event* and the *faith it generates* in the Christian life are applicable to the African sense of hope in suffering. Africans believe in the reality of the resurrection and that despite the suffering they are experiencing, God will surely renew all things and bring about new life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the source of hope in the situation of suffering. We also need to acknowledge that the resurrection as a *redemptive event* makes sense in the African context of suffering. The Easter event reveals the identity of God as one who is concerned with and enters in a living relationship with all humanity. Therefore, this God is concerned with the plight of the suffering Africans. God also desires to redeem the suffering African masses from all forms of

suffering. Viewing the resurrection from a theocentric point of view in the African framework of suffering enhances a strong foundation for the Christian faith and hope because God is the ultimate source of hope in all situations of suffering.

Furthermore, as seen in Sobrino's call, Jesus' resurrection event has to do with *praxis*: giving hope to the victims of oppression – in the African sense, giving hope to the suffering Africans – and a way of living as Christians. Hope for the suffering Africans here includes participating in world transformation through acts that will enhance peace, justice and human solidarity, and preaching the truth that justice has been done to the victims of suffering through God's triumph over evil and death in the resurrection. The church in Africa is challenged to not only preach about God's justice and care for the suffering Africans, but also to engage in acts that are aimed at upholding and reflecting God's justice and care. The church itself must be seen to care for those suffering and also advocate for the evenly sharing of resources. African Governments should be called to formulate social and economic policies that are meant to address the plight of the suffering masses in Africa. There is need to participate in the transformation of Africa by advocating for justice at all levels, be it personal, ecclesial, social or political. This in itself is a step towards the emancipation of the suffering victims in the present Africa.

It is also worth emphasizing the *Christian existence* in the situation of suffering. This is crucial for it challenges the suffering Africans not to be complacent with their plight and continue enduring. They are called upon to do something: they need to live as sovereigns in the present and express the fullness of triumphant life through love, hope, freedom and joy. The fact that God has triumphed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, should give them courage and hope to rise to the occasion and make a difference in fighting for justice, peace and wellbeing of all humanity. They should realize that as God's image they have the right to live a descent life in the world. This descent living is realized when the Africans themselves embrace the reality of their worthiness before God and before all other human beings.

In closing the chapter, the researcher states that the contemporary interpretations discussed in this chapter act both as the bases and counterparts in an effort to develop an African interpretation of Jesus Christ's resurrection. The fact that the chapter has stressed that Jesus' resurrection reflects God's *identity* and his *triumph* over evil and death, all forms of social and political powers in Africa are challenged. The resurrection is about *new life* and *responsibility*: new life in the sense of

mutuality, love, freedom, justice and joy; and responsibility towards the self, other human creatures and all the non-human creatures. The central figure of the whole of the resurrection talk is the *triune God*. Therefore, if we are to develop an interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African context of suffering, the basis, focus and purpose of the same God must be taken into consideration. It is God who brings about new life and who accomplishes responsibility in us for the ultimate purpose of granting hope to the hopeless.

CHAPTER 2: THE RESURRECTION IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY

2.1 AFRICAN THEOLOGY IN GENERAL

The quest for an African interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ requires a thorough understanding of African Christian theology. Therefore, following in this section is a brief discussion of the tenets and trends contained in African theology. The sole purpose of this discussion is to establish the basis on which an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is sought.

2.1.1 Defining African Theology

As Mugambi (1989:9) has pointed out, the term 'African theology' does not find a consensus of meaning or a precise definition among the African theologians. It has been rendered with several meanings depending on the angle from which one perceives it. Few examples of the meaning of the term can be cited. According to Daneel (1989:77), African theology is "an umbrella term for all forms of Christian theologizing by missionaries in Africa and more particularly by Black Africans, thus including South African Black theology." It can also mean a religio-cultural theology which, in contrast to Black theology, is aimed largely at the indigenisation of Christianity in Africa. For Mugambi (1989:9) 'African theology' may mean two things: first, the discourse which Africans conducted among themselves before their contact with and influence by Christians and Muslims; and second, the discourse which is being conducted by Africans, in order to relate their own cultural and religious heritage to Christianity. Nthamburi (1991:3) shares a similar meaning with that of Mugambi. He understands the term to mean either the theology of African traditional religion or the theology that comes from the traditional reflection on the existence of African peoples and their beliefs. For Maluleke (2005:487), the term is "used as an encompassing notion within which the various emphases and types of African theologies, including black theology, are located." A further and seemingly comprehensive meaning is offered by Magesa. Having made a survey in the churches in Kenya, he concludes that "most officials in all the churches defined African theology as one that aims at contextualizing Christian scripture into the African's way of life, concentrating on the language, culture, traditions and customs of the locality" (Magesa 2004:47).

The diversity in meaning of the term ‘African theology’ is, among many factors, a result of the diversity and complexity of the African continent. However, whichever definition one comes up with, the bottom line is the contextualization¹¹ of the Christian theology to the mindset and experience of the contemporary African people. Schreier (1986:1) explains that while the basic purpose of theological enterprise is the reflection of Christians on the gospel in the light of their own circumstances, “much more attention is now being paid to how those circumstances shape the response to the gospel. This focus is being expressed with terms like ‘localization,’ ‘contextualization,’ ‘indigenization,’ and ‘inculturation’ of theology.” Though there are slight different nuances in meaning, all of these terms point to the need for and responsibility of Christians to make their response to the gospel as concrete and lively as possible. African Christian theology, and indeed the interpretation of Christology in general and Jesus’ resurrection in particular, aim at concretely and lively responding to the gospel from within the African circumstances. Therefore, the quest for the contextualization of the Christian faith in the African culture and experience, in the end provides a basis for the interpretation of Christology, and specifically the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

African theology has developed, and will continue to develop, through a number of stages. Mugambi (2004:152-156) takes a thorough stock of the discourses on the development of African theology. The researcher values with great respect Mugambi’s stock-taking of the development of African theology. In Mugambi’s opinion, the missionary agenda is the first discourse of African theology in the twentieth century (2004:152). Missionaries defined theological reflection in Africa by rationalizing and justifying colonial rule and imperial subjugation of the African nations. There was no clear distinction between the missionary theological reflection and imperialism in Africa. The second trend was the rise of African Independent Church movement (2004:153). Having read the Bible for themselves, the founders and leaders of these churches challenged the authority of the missionaries to determine what suited the Africans. They formed their own churches, and their theology emphasized the free agency of the Holy Spirit in contrast to the restrictive and oppressive missionary theology.

Mugambi further points out that the third discourse is the rise of global missions in the West due to the recognition of the fact that mission is an integral part of the church’s existence. The desire for an

¹¹ Cole (1998:12) defines contextualization as “a theological formulation from exegesis of biblical texts within a socio-cultural context, and a living out of that theology within the given cultural context, utilizing the Bible as the only authority while recognizing the progress of biblical revelation.” This is coupled by the recognition that “the message of the Bible is a constant; our particular situations are variables” (:13).

extension of mission to the continent of Africa was catalyzed by the dissolution of the International Missionary Council in 1961 whose functions were incorporated into the World Council of Churches as the Division of World Mission and Evangelism. The end result of this development was the establishment of departments, divisions or programmes for missions by WCC member churches in Europe and North America to provide financial and moral support. However, ten years later there developed another discourse, seemingly a counter reaction to the global mission discourse. The moratorium debate was initiated by the Kenyan, John Gabu, who proposed a voluntary suspension of missionary funds and personnel to Africa for five years. This move would challenge the African churches to administratively and financially rely on themselves, and in the end develop administrative models consistent with their cultures and affordable within their means. This proposal was obviously received with mixed views (2004:154). On one hand, the third Assembly of the All African Conference of Churches at Lusaka in May 1974 endorsed the proposal. On the other hand, however, the proposal was condemned by the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization held in the same year.

Later, there appeared another discourse on the African scene: the liberation-inculturation discourse (2004:154). The Catholic missionaries preferred inculturation to liberation as an alternative agenda for the African theological reflection because they wished to dissociate African Catholic theological discourse from the liberation-oriented discourse of Latin American theology. In the researcher's view, this is why inculturational theology seems to put more emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ than on His redemptive work, and hence, remains deficient in addressing the African experience of suffering. The trend that later emerged, and is evidently making headway in Africa today, is the conversion-salvation discourse (2004:155). Being of central concern in the Evangelical and Pentecostal circles, this discourse's preoccupation was based on the view that the primary business of cross-cultural mission should be 'conversion' and 'salvation.' The judgmental approach is one of the problematic areas of this discourse.

Having taken stock of the development of African theology, Mugambi (2004:155-156) concludes that all the discourses outlined above were 'reactive' and antagonistic in nature. He therefore proposes a reconstructive discourse for theological reflection in Africa. He says this motif was open for discussion in 1990 and was endorsed as the theme for the All African Conference of Churches Eighth Assembly at Yaoundé, Cameroon in 2003.

What contributed to the development of African theology in the twentieth century? Parratt (1987:2) outlines four factors which led to the development of African theology. These included the movements towards independence in many colonial territories during the 1950s and 1960s; the rediscovery of the value of traditional African culture; the appearance of an increasing number of new African-controlled churches – African Independent Churches; and the role of a number of Europeans in the movement towards development of African theology through publications and encouragement to African theologians by editing collected essays and conference papers. Despite these factors, African theology still remains with the challenge on sound and ideal theological reflection for the African context. The challenge includes the specific interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the framework of suffering for the realization of hope among the suffering Africans. This challenge then leads to discussion on the agenda of African Christian theology.

2.1.2 The Agenda of African Theology

An initial glance at African Christian theology compels one to hypothetically conclude that this theology pursues the dual-agenda: contextualization of the Christian message (inculturation) and liberation of the African peoples from the unpleasant experiences of suffering. On contextualization, Maluleke (2005:487) points out that the main agenda of African theology is to enable and inspire the church to develop its own theologies so that it may cease depending on “prefabricated theology, liturgies and traditions,” and become “not an exotic but a plant... indigenous to the soil.” By so doing, the church will be able to address the political, cultural, economic, sexual, ecclesial and global challenges. African inculturational theology (sometimes simply referred to as African theology), according to Daneel (1989:78), “refers to the dialogue between European Christian thought and African religious thought, aimed at integrating Christianity completely with African life and culture.” In short, it aims at theological incarnation of the gospel message in the African cultures (Nyamiti 1991:3). Daneel (1989:29) adds by stating that “an implicit, focal goal is that African theology should be freed from the directive pressure, norms and aims of Western theology.” This goal will enable African theology to convey the Christian message in a way that liberates Africans from religious and cultural domination. According to Sawyerr (1987:13), the demand pressed upon the church is to interpret the Christian faith so that it can bring “home to the Africans the truth of the Christian gospel in an idiom related to the African situation.” Cole (1998:19-21) suggests that in the process of interpreting the Christian gospel a number of factors need to be taken

into consideration: (a) the *philosophical factor* – understanding the thought forms, world and life views of both the Bible and the contemporary African culture; (b) the *cultural factor* – the total way of life of the African people which embraces the thought patterns, and world and life views; (c) the *linguistic factor* – the vehicle that conveys the concepts and thought forms of the African culture; and (d) the *hermeneutical factor* – the quest for the contextual meaning of the message in the African situation.

The other aspect of the agenda in the process of African Christian theological reflection is liberation of the African community from oppressive experiences. African theologies of liberation, as Nyamiti (1991:12-13) puts it, are in two categories: the South African Black theology and African liberation theology. Following American Black theology and chiefly centered on the racial or colour factor characteristic in the ideology of apartheid, South African Black theology spread the good news as a message of liberation in a situation of oppression and segregation. African liberation theology is found especially in independent sub-Saharan Africa. Molded on indigenous socioeconomic structures and more affiliated to the Latin American liberation theology, this theology is broader in theological approach than South African Black theology for it wishes to integrate the liberation theme into the rest of the African cultural background. Its main concern is to preach the gospel as a message of liberation in the African context of poverty, hunger and political powerlessness. Mugambi (1989:12) recognizes that the objective task of the African Christian theology is liberation. He stresses that liberation “is not just one of the issues, but rather, all issues aimed at liberating the African from all forces that hinder him/her from living fully as a human being.” Therefore, to construct such an African Christian theology certain key concepts are fundamental. Among such concepts are righteousness because Africans are seeking justice due to the experienced exploitation and their culture has been submerged and distorted; wo/man because wo/man is a total whole being which involves the spiritual, economic, political and cultural aspects; and eschatology because future liberation is understood in terms of the temporal (this world, not the sacred world), rather than spatial.

With this understanding, as already note, one would be compelled to quickly conclude that African Christian theology has had the dual agenda of contextualization and liberation. However, though the two concepts have been prominent on the scene of African Christian theology, they are not the only schools of African Christian theological reflection. African culture is multi-divergent in nature.

Due to this pluralistic characteristic of African way of life, one also observes a manifold of schools in African theology.

As Maluleke (2005:492-496) outlines, among the many schools of African Christian theology, these include theologies of the African Independent Churches, African charismatic or evangelical theology, translation theologies, African feminist or womanist theologies, theologies of reconstruction and post-colonial theologies. Theologies of the African Independent Churches concern the 'enacted,' 'oral,' or 'narrative' African theological enterprise. Maluleke (2005:492) upholds the fact that African Independent Churches' theologies are the best illustration of African Christianity. African Charismatic theology portrays the reality that African Christianity is generally evangelical-pentecostalist in orientation and "contains a sizeable body of literature and events which could be said to be representative of a theological strand of African theology" (2005:493). Translation theologies are concerned with the translatability of the Christian message or gospel into African vernacular languages (2005:494). African Feminist theologies are reflected in the activities of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians (CIRCLE). The CIRCLE is critical of both African culture and African Christianity in ways that previous African theologians have not been able to do. It is meant for charting a new way of doing theology (2005:495). Theologies of Reconstruction, mostly pursued by Jesse Mugambi of Kenya and Charles Villa-Vicencio of South Africa, seek to propose that "instead of inculturation or liberation we should aim for an innovative transcendence of both – the reconstruction theology seeks to engage in serious dialogue with democracy, human rights, lawmaking, nation-building, and economics in order to improve the quality of human life" (2005:496).

Post-colonial African theologies are faced with manifold and new challenges in a fast-changing world: issues to do with democratization of Africa, poverty, globalization, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, civil wars, religious pluralism, and many other social and economic challenges. The agenda for African Christian theology as expressed in different schools of African theological undertaking should in the end help us to pursue a comprehensive interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To achieve this goal, therefore, the resurrection must be understood with the African context in mind to truly provide hope for the wellbeing of the suffering Africans.

2.1.3 Sources of African Theology

Any theological construction does not originate from nowhere or nothing. There are sources which feed such a theological undertaking in any continent and context. African theologians develop African theology by deriving their insights from a number of sources.

Nearly all theologians in Africa are of the consensus that the primary source for developing African theology is the Bible. Dickson (1984:15) calls the Bible a primary formative factor for constructing African theology. Pobe (1987:31) says it is the foundation document of the church where African theology has to be rooted. In Daneel's view the Bible is the "criterion" for doing theology in Africa (1989:47). For Magesa (2004:46) the Bible is generally accepted as the basic principle of all Christian teaching. African theology cannot do without the Bible. Although Maluleke (2005:490) rightly charges that a vigorous debate on biblical hermeneutics similar to that on culture, identity and African religion both by African and non-African theologians is lacking, he affirms that the Bible "has enjoyed a respected status and place in African theology." Like in any other theological adventure, the God who is discussed in African theology is attested by and revealed through scripture. Hence, it is ideal that the Bible is taken as a priority source in African theological pursuit. That is why the researcher develops the reflection on hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection in chapter six with due consideration of the biblical witness.

The tradition of the church is another source for African theology. By tradition we do not refer to the African traditional religion as some quarters may think. In this sense, the term 'tradition' is used to mean established traditions of the church – the church's teachings and confessions (Dickson 1984:24). Pobe refers tradition of the church to "the stream of apostolic life and witness stretching from the apostles to all generations and areas, though not immediately identifiable with them" (1987:31). Although African theology has a task to interpret and contextualize the inherited Western Christian tradition, this tradition is also a crucial source for doing proper theology in the African context. The researcher is reflecting on the resurrection from the reformed perspective in the African context.

African theology should also take African culture very seriously in its process of construction. Here, as Dickson (1984:28) explains, culture denotes the values and norms in the African context. It also refers to African traditional religion and culture which, according to Nthamburi (1991:26), includes the beliefs, practices and the way of life of the African peoples. Maluleke (2005:489) make an

elaborate call for a serious consideration of the African religion and culture in African theological enterprise:

It seems to me that until African theology takes African religion and culture seriously, the discussion will continue to be artificial and patronizing. The increasingly pluralistic context in Africa demands that we 'listen' to other religions more carefully and more respectfully, without ceasing to be committed Christians ourselves and yet without a hidden evangelistic motive.

The researcher would agree with Maluleke by adding that unless African theology takes African religion and culture very seriously, it will continue to be a foreign entity to the African context and irrelevant in addressing the plight of the African peoples. This is simply because for any theology to be liberative in nature it must be seen to assume the way of life of the people for and with whom it is operating.

The other sources of African theology include the African living experience – dimensions of one's faith (Dickson 1984:22), the African modern history and its development, and the environment and problems of Africa – and the contribution of the African Independent Churches; their theology, though, is mostly unwritten and may seem "unorthodox." African living experiences include oppression, exploitation, people (especially children) dying of hunger, civil wars, poverty, poor or lack of social services such as medical care and basic education, corruption, diseases, and now the HIV/AIDS pandemic. African theological reflection must have a close eye to these African life-experiences for they are viable sources for comprehensive theologizing in Africa. Further, openness to the voices of the African Independent Churches is as well crucial for constructing an authentic and relevant African theology for the African masses. The researcher's personal position is that although all the sources are not consistently used in this research project, they must be taken into consideration for constructing a meaningful and comprehensive African theology.

2.1.4 Evaluation

The researcher is of the opinion that South African Black theology has lost value because it was limited to the quest for the liberation of segregated black South Africans from the perpetrators of apartheid. Its relevance was felt at that time, but now that apartheid is almost no longer an issue, it would seem naïve to still cling to the norms and thought patterns of this theological reflection.

Theologies of inculturation, too, are deficient as far as the researcher understands. In the first place, inculturation theology stresses so much on the ontological question and not on the functional question. When it comes to Christology, for instance, the person of Jesus Christ is so much emphasized that his work receives little attention, thereby making it irrelevant in addressing the plight of the African people. Secondly, there is always a danger to fall into the trap of syncretistic theology where culture receives more applause than the gospel. This is not to insinuate that culture is less significant in African theological reflection. Culture is an essential entity in the process of doing theology in African and any other context. Tanner (1997:62) points out the necessity of culture in doing theology:

Culture in contemporary theology also becomes a way of talking about the historical particularity of Christianity itself, an issue of prime importance in theological discussion at least since the nineteenth century. Cultural diversity as a human universal – the fact that one is always speaking from somewhere, from a position of cultural specificity in action, thought, and feeling – suggests to theologians the propriety of their speaking from where they are, out of the particularities of Christian communal practice.

Therefore, culture must seriously be taken on board if one is to do meaningful theology in any context. However, culture must also be allowed to be challenged and directed by the gospel because the gospel is the norm for any theological enterprise in any cultural context. Therefore, culture should not be emphasized to such to an extent that it pushes the gospel to the peripheral.

One would be compelled to prefer the African liberation theology, since it seems not only to be broader and promising a future, but also addressing the social and political vices that inflict suffering among the poor communities. However, African liberation theology too is not sufficient in the quest for the African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. The African continent is not only multi-divergent, but also dynamic and complex. New challenges have surfaced, and so African liberation theology seems to be exclusive and not really addressing these challenges. In short, the researcher argues that one cannot just single out a specific approach in the quest for an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. There is need for new and inclusive thinking in this quest.

Koopman's suggestion of a '*Public Theology*' seems to be a new and inclusive approach for doing theology in the contemporary Africa. Generally, Koopman (2003:3) describes a number of aspects of public theology from the South African perspective: the concept of public theology; various spheres of the public; the mode and style of public theology; and the task of public theology, which

works as his suggestion for the agenda of public theology in South Africa. Though Koopman takes Public theology as an approach for the South African context, the concepts highlighted seem to be applicable to the rest of the contemporary African continent, and would assist a great deal in addressing the subject at hand: African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection as a source of hope in the context of suffering in Africa.

Koopman suggests that public theology can be understood as the church's engagement in confessional, polemical, apologetic, ecumenical and critical correlation with various institutions of the public (2003:8). The church engages itself in these discussions with the public because it is by its nature a public institution. Using Dirkie Smit's discourses in public life, Koopman (2003:9-10) explains that public theology addresses four major spheres. The first is the *political sphere* which includes themes relating to the relationship between theology and the state, government, political power and the control and regulating of public life. The *economic sphere* is second and focuses on themes relating to the relationship between theology and the so-called autonomous market-economy, globalization, ecology, science and technology. Thirdly, Koopman proposes *civil society*. This sphere deals with themes relating to the relationship between theology and the institutions, organizations, associations and movements of civil society. These institutions strive to enhance the quality of life, satisfy the needs and foster the interests of the people, change the nature of society and build the common good that is a life quality for all. Examples of such institutions could be schools, legal bodies, cultural and sports clubs, the neighbourhood, and the churches. Lastly, *public opinion* encompasses themes relating to the relationship between theology and the pluralistic public discourse on the nature of society, common foundational values for society, common challenges and common priorities for society. For Koopman, public opinion paves the way for jointly striving towards the common good.

Koopman (2003:16) explains that in the sphere of politics, public theology should engage in the process of lawmaking, law evaluation and law implementation through cooperation between the church and government at all levels. However, Koopman warns that in the process of fulfilling this task, public theology needs to guard against two extremes: on one hand, *sociological sectarianism* (i.e. a withdrawal from social responsibilities due to theological and pragmatic reasons) and on the other hand, *constantinianism* (i.e. co-option by the agenda of the state). In the economic sphere, Koopman suggests that cooperation should be sought with the state and economic role players on local and global levels to address poverty and to enhance economic justice. In this quest, social

services and developmental projects should aim at addressing poverty in society. Koopman (2003:17) explains that the civil society sphere should aim at fulfilling public theology's responsibility to create, in cooperation with the state, a society where people enjoy quality of life. Lastly, to influence public opinion on what constitutes a good society, public theology has to face and deal with challenges such as: association with oppressive institutions like colonialism and apartheid; entering the intellectually sophisticated technical public discourse; getting consensus within church and religious circles on public issues; and acknowledging and engaging with the powerful role of the media.

Koopman's approach, and indeed the consideration of the democratization of Africa, would be a preferred road to embark on. As mentioned earlier, this would assist in developing an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection as a source of hope in the context of suffering in Africa. The public theological approach is not only new and inclusive, but also seems to be wholistic in nature for it seeks to address almost all aspects of society and thereby attending to the plight of suffering in Africa. Therefore, it is reasonable that the quest for an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from the framework of suffering covers the elements of public theological discourse.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY

The analysis of African Christian theology stands as a sure foundation for understanding African Christological reflection. This is so because, as Nyamiti (1991:3) argues, a variety of African Christologies "corresponds to the schools of contemporary African theology, namely those of inculturation and liberation theology." Furthermore, the analysis of public theology surveys the critical aspects in the African context which African Christological reflection must take on board. Therefore, what follows in this section is a presentation of an overview of Christology as articulated and understood in Africa.

2.2.1 Forms of Contemporary African Christologies

As pointed out above, contemporary African Christologies are in correspondence with contemporary African Christian theology. Therefore, a careful analysis of these African Christologies reveals that Christological reflection in Africa appears in two major forms. There are those Christologies which

are more concerned with the concept of inculturation and others focus much on liberation. Hence, in this sub-section the researcher discusses the two forms of the contemporary African Christologies.

African Christologies of Inculturation are mostly developed theological schools and the majority of the current Christologies in Africa belong to this school of thought. There are two categories of contemporary African Christologies of inculturation. One category moves from the Bible to African reality (Nyamiti 1991:3). This approach attempts to construct an African Christology by starting from the biblical teaching about Christ and strives afterwards to find from the African cultural situation the relevant Christological themes. Nyamiti cites two key examples of this approach: that of John S. Mbiti and of Kofi Appiah-Kubi. Mbiti's aim is to find out the Christological subjects which have particular interest for the African. In the end he highlights two themes: *Christus Victor* – Christ is the conqueror of evil powers (spirits, magic, disease and death) feared by the Africans and is also the guarantor of immortality; and *Christ's birth, baptism, death and resurrection* – these correspond to the life crises ritually stressed by the African. Appiah-Kubi employs a similar method as Mbiti and stresses that Jesus is a Mediator or Intermediary; Saviour, Redeemer, and Power; Liberator; and Healer. Mugambi (2003:136) follows the same approach. He explores the various paradigms evident in the New Testament and their possibilities in the development of an African Christology. By exploring a holistic and relevant approach to the African Christological reflection, Mugambi comes up with twenty-seven christological paradigms. However, it is not the interest of this research work to mention all the twenty-seven paradigms.

The other approach of African Christologies of Inculturation moves from African reality to Christology. This approach takes the African cultural background as the point of departure for christological elaboration. It examines the mystery of Christ from either the perspective of the African worldview or from the angle of some particular themes taken from the African worldview or culture (Nyamiti 1991:4). Examples of African theologians who examine Christ from the African worldview perspective include: E. J. Penoukou – Christ-event is a passage, a way of accomplishment of a project of being (Christ is the Mediator, the Jete-Ancestor¹²) between God the Father and the whole creation; and Charles Nyamiti – Christ's personality (or incarnation) implies his initiation into the community of God, other spirits and fellow human beings (1991:6). For Nyamiti in this approach, Christ is the best model for the African or any other adolescent at that age.

¹² The Jete-Ancestor is one who is the source of life and the fulfillment of the cosmotheandric relationship in the world (Nyamiti 1991:5).

Examples of proponents who examine Christ from the angle of some particular theme in the African worldview are many. Included in the list are H. Sawyerr – Christ is the Elder Brother in whom there is no distinction of race, sex, colour, or social condition; J. S. Pobee – Christ is the great or superior ancestor (*Nana* in Akan tribe) who has power and authority to judge, reward, and punish; Kwesi A. Dickson – the cross is the basis of Christian hope for it demonstrates both human degradation and triumph and sharing of life; A. T. Sanon – Jesus is the Head and Master of initiation; Alyward Shorter – healing is a central feature of the life and ministry of Christ, and all healing is directed towards eternal life and wholeness; Benezet Bujo – Christ is the proto-ancestor (the unique ancestor who is the source of life and highest model of ancestorship); and Charles Nyamiti – Christ’s ancestorship as our Brother-ancestor is rooted in the Trinity (the inner life of God). Other examples are those articulated by J. Mutiso-Mbinda – Christ, being our ancestor *par excellence*, becomes our mediator who continues to intercede for us, and Ambrose Moyo – Jesus is a supreme intermediary spirit between God and people (Nthamburi 2003:56). Akrong’s *Jesus as ancestor* in cosmological and soteriological African assumptions (2006:35-36) falls in this category.

Kärkkäinen (2003:251-254) gives an elaboration of the African Inculturational Christologies and concludes that African Christology stresses the fact that Christ is the powerful healer and head of the family (chief or leader). Stinton is unique in the way she treats the Inculturational form of contemporary African Christologies, which should comprehensively conclude this form of African Christologies. She (2004:36) explains:

To the question, ‘Who is Jesus Christ for Africans?’, a cluster of Christological images is brought forth: (1) *Jesus as life-giver*, with special reference to the images of healer and traditional healer; (2) *Jesus as mediator*, developing the image of Jesus as ancestor; (3) *Jesus as loved one*, concentrating on images of family and friendship; and (4) *Jesus as leader*, focusing on the images of king/chief and liberator.

As stated earlier, the pendulum in the contemporary African Christologies of Inculturation seems to swing so much to the side of Jesus’ identity. There is little movement on the redemptive function of Jesus Christ. The researcher then discusses the second form of contemporary African Christologies.

Contemporary African Christologies of liberation correspond to two trends in African liberation theology: South African Black theology and African liberation theology (Nyamiti 1991:12). The key perspective in the two theologies of liberation is that Christology is done ‘from below’ where the man Jesus of Nazareth is the starting point. The theological rationale behind this conceptualization is

that Jesus lived in a society which was oppressed and exploited by the Roman imperialists. Therefore, his primary mission was to fight against poverty, oppression, and lack of freedom. In the course of his fight he was executed by his opponents. But by raising him from the dead, God the Father has shown that he was for him and with him in his struggle against oppression. Hence, all the Christians who fight against their oppression participate in Jesus' fight; they carry on his work of liberation and thus identify themselves with the "black Messiah" and with God's will (1991:13). Motifs which are developed from this perspective are such as *soteriology* (the mission of Jesus), *protology* (creation) and *socio-spiritual order* (Magesa 1991:161-162). Others are Jesus as *Prophet* (one who was sent from God), *Priest* (suffering servant, sacrificial victim and priest on the altar), and *Potentate* (Sovereign Ruler and reigning Lord with authority) (Waruta 2003:50-52). Martey (2006:94) adds *Son of God* (an existential reality with strong soteriological motif).

This rationale then is applied to the African context. For Magesa (1991:157), African Christologies of liberation "can be comprehensible and credible among the African rural masses, and urban poor and idealistic youth." Jesus assures such groups of his solidarity with them in the struggle to diminish poverty or any form of suffering, such as untimely deaths of millions of children due to malnutrition, poor hygiene, and lack of medical care (1991:158). Jesus is equally the liberator of the rich, the proud, the intellectually conceited, and the like, because he challenges their consciences to conversion, attention and dependence on him (1991:157). Jesus is the foundation, the inspiration, the basic reason, and the guarantor of the ultimate success of the struggle for the liberation of the human person, for development and healing. Jesus as liberator is the Master who brings about a new beginning by "building bridges of friendship and justice among people, which is precisely what is meant by God's rule and order" (1991:159). The Church is ideally the agent and articulator of Christ's liberation in the world, and particularly in Africa.

African Christological reflection from the liberation perspective can at least bring a sense of hope to many Africans who are experiencing adverse poverty and suffering. Additionally, African Christological reflection from a liberation perspective should as well consider the multifaceted context of Africa to wholistically deal with the problem of suffering among many Africans.

2.2.2 The Quest for an Authentic African Christology

Jesus is the role model for African existence. As Waruta (2003:52) has rightly pointed out, Jesus is the ‘man for others’ who gave his life for others; the most wretched people of the earth, and therefore he means life and never death. The quest for an authentic African Christology should also reflect this unique characteristic of Jesus Christ. In fact, as Nthamburi (2003:55) explains, in African Christology, “what is important is not the person of Christ as such but His role in the salvation of the world.” Although an authentic African Christology has to articulate both ontology and function of Jesus Christ, it has to attend to Jesus’ role in the world in order to address the plight of Africans for the realization of authentic hope in the context of suffering.

In this discussion on the quest for an authentic African Christology, the researcher is indebted to Nthamburi’s analysis in the article entitled *Christ as seen by an African: A Christological quest* of 2003. Having given a number of African Christological images articulated by African theologians, Nthamburi poses by asking a very significant question: What should be the starting point of our Christology? (2003:57). Like Sobrino, Nthamburi feels that the point of departure for the quest of an authentic African Christology should be that of the “praxis of Jesus of Nazareth which includes His person, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension.” The incarnation was the culmination of God’s own self-disclosure. This God’s revelation was meant for the liberation of the miserable humanity of the world. Therefore, African Christology becomes meaningful or authentic when it is translated to the African contextual situation of daily existence. In other words, authentic African Christology is that which makes Christ identifiable with African suffering, weakness, pain, hunger, oppression, loss of human dignity and death. A relevant Christology for Africa is one which is concerned about the Africans’ social, political, economic and spiritual realism of existence: It is Christology as ‘it should be’ in that it presents a “Christ who in His humanity suffers with us, is deprived with us, fights with us and identifies wholly with our situation” (2003:58).

In summary, Nthamburi poses a very challenging question: How has our understanding of Christ transformed people in our midst, particularly those who have suffered injustice, poverty and deprivation, physically as well as spiritually? To the researcher, an authentic African Christology continues to search for an authentic African answer in the African context with commitment and faithfulness. Therefore, the quest for an interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection in the African framework of suffering moves in the same direction of authentic African Christology.

2.3 THE RESURRECTION IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

The perspective on the resurrection in the African Christian theology seems not clearly articulated. Nonetheless, an analysis of the African Christology in its general sense would help to conclude that the resurrection in the African context could be thought of as the feeling of being liberated from the power of the spiritual forces of evil. To highlight further this assumption, the final section of this chapter is devoted to discuss the resurrection in the African Christian theology by looking at the centrality of the resurrection in African theology, African concepts of the resurrection, and how the resurrection should be understood in contemporary Africa.

2.3.1 The Centrality of the Resurrection in African Theology

Christian faith situates the resurrection of Jesus Christ at the central position of theological reflection. As the cornerstone of the Christian faith it “sets Christianity apart from every other religion in the world” (O’Donovan 1992:106). The whole gospel truth is anchored on the Easter event. Ela (1988:109) testifies that Jesus’ resurrection is the summit of God’s own self-disclosure. In other words, we would say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the climax of the Christ-event.

What is the message of the resurrection which makes it occupy a central place in the African theology? According to De Gruchy (1994:64), the resurrection story seeks to raise a point that “through the power exhibited in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God reverses the judgment upon him, vindicates his life and message, and proclaims a victory over the forces of human sin and evil which consign him to the grave.” For this reason we have hope of life both for the present and the future. The author adds by stating that contemporary Christology must therefore provide hope to the people who are in the situation of despair, anxiety and uncertainty. Though there is no clear extensive articulation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in African theology, as far as the researcher can know, when we consider this central message of the resurrection we discover that the African context is addressed as well. In fact, theologians who have tried to pursue the subject of Jesus’ resurrection from the African perspective have admitted that the Easter event is a key to the understanding of the essence of the Christian faith. It is therefore meaningful to begin with the discussion of the conceptualization of the resurrection in the African context.

2.3.2 African Conceptualization of the Resurrection

The way the resurrection has been conceptualized in the African context seems to be so fragmented that it becomes difficult to state clearly the central position of African interpretation of the event. To pause a bit, the researcher admits that it has not been easy to find resources for this section; what has been discovered has been out of sheer hard work and inquisition. It is only hoped that what is presented here will not only make sense but also be of great help in understanding how the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been interpreted in African theology. Coming back to the subject of fragmentation in the conceptualization of the resurrection, a number of theologians have different points of emphasis depending on the life situation of their time. At this point it is vital to cite a few as examples.

Writing with the intention to present the resurrection as a political vision, Anonby (1999:335) gives the background of Ngugi's articulation in the two novels: *A Grain of Wheat* of 1967 and *Matigari*¹³ of 1989. In the first novel, Ngugi encapsulates the essence of 1 Corinthians 15 on the resurrection and the paradox of life springing out of death as stated in John 12:24. He transforms these highly echoed passages into his political vision for a new and free nation rising out of the ashes of colonialism of old Kenya. For Ngugi, the resurrection as mentioned in the two passages, meant liberation from the colonial masters. To his disappointment, his vision seems not to be realized yet due to massive corruption and exploitation in the new Kenya. Hence, in *Matigari* Ngugi shifts his focus to a post-colonial Kenya that has failed to achieve the liberty and justice he had hoped for; for him exploitative capitalism continues to suppress the working masses of the nation. Despite the shift, the essence of the resurrection has not been lost. It is about the liberation of the suffering masses due to corruption and exploitation by the powerful elite in the Kenyan society.

The second example of African understanding of the resurrection to cite is that which is provided by a Zimbabwean, Isabel Mukonyora, in her article entitled *The Dramatisation of life and death by Johane Masowe*¹⁴ of 2000. According to Mukonyora (2000:429), Johane's notion of death among the Shona extends from falling asleep, becoming unconscious, dreaming about death, suffering from

¹³ According to Anonby's explanation, Matigari in the novel is a 'seeker of the truth and justice' (p.67) who symbolizes the spirit of freedom that can never be eradicated or obliterated; while individual freedom fighters may perish, their vision will not die, for the spirit of freedom is eternal. Jesus was crucified as a victim, but his resurrection had to revive the spirit of freedom for all humankind.

¹⁴ Johane Masowe, like Simon Kimbangu in Zaire, Alice Lenshina Mulenga in Zambia, Mai Chaza in Zimbabwe and prophet Isaiah Shembe in South Africa, was a founder figure and a self-proclaimed 'Prophet' of a so-called African Independent Church (Masowe church) in Zimbabwe.

headaches, being bewitched and so on. To rise in this particular context, simply means to become awakened and to be restored to good health. Dying and rising is understood in situations of suffering from illnesses, persecution and experiences of healing through the power of the Holy Spirit and/or God. These are metaphorical ways of expressing the two conditions of dying and rising as absolute dependence on the supernatural power and the victorious conquest of the forces that lead to death. The dramatisation of life and death by Masowe in using the metaphors of dying and rising explains very well the concept of death and resurrection. In this case, the resurrection is understood to mean a victorious defeat of any force that may tend to lead to the condition of death. Again, we see the concept of liberation being resounded though from the supernatural perspective. There is the yearning to be freed from the forces that threaten life – the essence of human existence.

The third example to take note of is that from Fr. Ferdinand Nwaigho, a lecturer at The Catholic Institute of West Africa in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. In the article of 2001, *Understanding Inculturation in the Light of the Resurrection*, the Catholic priest makes a remarkable elaboration of an African understanding of the resurrection. He states that “since God’s love of justice is shown in the resurrection, faith in the resurrection should be expressed through a personal commitment to create a system of social justice which promotes positive human relationships” (2001:45). This resurrection faith touches and transforms African cultures in such a way that people are led to freedom and hope that will enable them to proclaim justice, peace and compassion by way of life. Life and faith in the victory of God’s justice are the crux of the matter of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is therefore realized in the African culture through the proclamation of the Word of God and celebration of the sacraments. The end result of this realization of the resurrection is the recognizing of African identity “which had been wounded, disfigured and trampled upon in the belief that pagan (non-Western) cultures are basically idolatrous” (2001:44). The resurrection in this context implies the victory of God’s justice where faith leads to hope for life in its fullness. As Kärkkäinen (2003:248) affirms, life in the African context is seen beyond death, and death in actual sense is a passage to life. Therefore, Christ’s resurrection is a sign of hope for it signifies the defeat of the power of death and evil.

Still another example for understanding of Jesus’ resurrection in the African theological reflection is the concept of Christ as the Proto-Ancestor articulated by Bujo and Mununguri. For Bujo (1992:91) the understanding is that of identification with the Proto-Ancestor both in the event of the cross and the resurrection. It is about accompanying Jesus in the experience of suffering in the cross and the

life-giving Spirit in the event of the resurrection. The resurrection becomes liberating and challenging in the remembering and retelling of the event. In Mununguri's view, the resurrected Proto-Ancestor is concerned with the salvation of an African from fears, anguishes and all kinds of powers which oppress him/her and enclose him/her in darkness (1998:82). As the resurrected Proto-Ancestor, Christ has brought about liberation through the victorious triumph over all the powers (suffering, jealousy, hate, sorcery, invocation of the dead, bad luck, death and Satan) which enslaved the Africans, and the life of these Africans has reached its fullness. The resurrection is therefore the realization and experience of life through the victory of Jesus as the Proto-Ancestor.

The final example worth citing is one by a prominent and prolific African theologian of the century. John S. Mbiti (1972:52), in the article *Some African concepts of Christology*, raises two main problems: Christological points of special interest among African Christians and the portrait of Jesus in the African conceptualization of the world. It is important to point out that in the second problem Mbiti just highlights both the less relevant titles to the traditional African concept as including those of Messiah, Christ, Son of David and Son of Man, and the relevant titles in African traditional background as including those of Son of God, Lord, Servant of God and Saviour or Redeemer (1979:58). The researcher is more interested in the first problem for it clearly addresses the conceptualization of the resurrection in the African context. Firstly, Mbiti affirms that the birth, baptism and death of Jesus "attract the special attention of African Christians because they portray Jesus as a perfect man, the one who has gone through the necessary *rites de passage*¹⁵" (1972:56). Still, this is not the area of concern in the discussion of Mbiti's understanding of the resurrection.

Mbiti emphasizes Jesus' birth, triumphal entry, death and resurrection as major components of the life of Jesus. However, the resurrection of Jesus and that of those incorporated into him play a dominant role. Mbiti understands the resurrection in the framework of the *Christus Victor* title. Jesus is the *Christus Victor* because he liberates Africans from many forces and powers (spiritual powers, spirits, witchcraft, sorcery, fear, anxiety, sickness, diseases, the powers of evil and the greatest of all being death). This worldview of the work of Christ is in line with the chief myth which tells us "how men [and women] lost God's original gift of immortality, resurrection, and rejuvenation" (1972:54). Jesus as *Christus Victor* restores the lost immortality, brings about in his own life and promise that those in him will be resurrected, and Jesus' rejuvenation begins to take place leading towards the

¹⁵ According to Mbiti, there are four (or three) *rites de passage* (rites of passage), birth, initiation (at adolescence, generally), marriage, and finally death. These are the stages through which a person wins full recognition as a complete and entire member of the African society. Jesus attained the recognition as a perfect man by going through these stages, with the exception of the marriage stage.

eschatological climax when God will renew all things in the world (1972:55). Jesus is the victorious conqueror of the devil who manifests his power through demon possession, sickness, madness, discord, fights, murders and other vices which seem to threaten life for an African.

It has been noticed through the analysis of African conceptualization of Jesus' resurrection that liberation in one form or another is the running thread. The resurrection of Jesus Christ means freedom from the life-threatening forces and powers in the African context. However, the African continent is a diverse and dynamic context. Things keep on changing and new challenges have come on the scene. Issues ranging from corruption, urbanization, democratization coupled with capitalism, HIV and AIDS pandemic and the like have occupied a central position on the African scene. Africa is moving from the naturalistic/supernatural and confined society worldview to the materialistic and globalized perception of life. Therefore, there is need to have a clear contemporary African interpretation of the resurrection which makes sense to the contemporary African. The next subsection ventures to address this very need.

2.3.3 Resurrection in the Contemporary Africa

It is a fact that by virtue of resurrecting from the dead, Jesus demonstrated and proclaimed victory over all forces and powers of death. But then, as Ela (1988:110) challenges, the question still lingers in the mind of a contemporary African: How can we celebrate (the victory of) the resurrection where millions of men and women live in suffering and oppression? It seems many Africans are still experiencing 'the passion of Jesus Christ' rather than the joy emanating from the Easter event. That is the reason why Henze (2008:8) calls upon the Christian community not only to view the resurrection faith as an event which took place about two thousand years ago, but also to consider it as an event which demonstrates the reality of Christ's presence among us today. Christ meets us, and should continue to do so, through and in the present day life-experiences.

The life-experiences in the present African context are multifaceted. Africa today experiences the 'passion of Christ' in the form of hunger, poverty, poor health services, low standards of education levels and corruption. Sharp increases of food, fuel and transport prices have become the order of the day. Chapter five of the research project gives an in-depth discussion of specific experiences of suffering in Africa. The purpose of pointing out these experiences here is just to establish the fact that the contemporary African context requires a rethinking of the event of Jesus' resurrection. The

re-developed approach of the resurrection must be in such a way that the cries of the African people are seriously taken into consideration. The call for a contemporary contextual reflection on the resurrection is echoed by Goergen's African prayer on the Christ-event indicated in his article of 2001 (*quoted in part*):

Crucified Christ, our elder brother, our friend,
Friend of all who suffer, who suffers with us, and in us, and through us,
Raise us up with yourself, O eternal Son of God,
Give us hope, bless us with new life,
Bring us true justice, bring us true peace,
Restore to us our rightful dignity as your daughters and sons,
Children of Africa, children of God.

You, O risen Christ, are the energy of a new Africa,
Africa's conscience, catalyst of our reconstruction,
the hope for a world, a continent, renewed.
Give us again, O Giver of the Spirit, the Gift of your Holy Spirit,
to guide us, to encourage us,
to give us courage, to give us wisdom.

The prayer expresses the need to rethink the resurrection for the liberation of the suffering African populace. As Miha (2008:3), a Catholic priest from Zambia, has pointed out, the resurrection is about getting out from slavery into the Promised Land where the quality of life is shared and experienced by all regardless of the status in society. It is about a real Passover from slavery towards a new start with the concern for the poor, justice, love and peace (Thaden 2008:6). The resurrected Christ should be the 'rising sun' (Banda 2008:17) for the contemporary African people where they see the new dawn being made real in their life situation of suffering and 'death.' African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the contemporary African context should seek to pursue such an understanding. The research work is therefore fully devoted to pursuing the African understanding of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the context of suffering.

The main aim of the first two chapters has been to survey the state of scholarship on Jesus Christ's resurrection from the twentieth century to the present. The purpose of the survey has been to lay the foundation for the chapters to follow. What has clearly come out in these chapters is that Jesus' resurrection is generally accepted to have occurred in history. The crucial question however is how various theologians in different contexts have rendered varying interpretations of the event. It is also

clear that African theologians have understood the resurrection to mean the experience of freedom from life-threatening forces and powers. However, this freedom must be made to be a reality in the present situation of the African life-experiences. Chapter three then will concentrate on various hermeneutical approaches to the Easter event.

CHAPTER 3: HERMENEUTICAL APPROACHES TO THE RESURRECTION

Contemporary Christology has had two main streams of approach as identified by Pannenberg (1968:33) commonly known as Christology “from above” and Christology “from below.” The first approach begins from the divinity of Jesus, and the reality of incarnation as the structure of Christology stands at the centre (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:5ff). God the Son became human by descending from the world above. Notable examples of Christology “from above” include: Karl Barth’s humiliation of the Son of God and exaltation of the Son of Man; Emil Brunner’s pre-existence of Christ; and Heinrich Vogel’s Christology and dogmatics. As it will be displayed in this chapter, one would note that most of the Western theological approaches to the resurrection are developed along the line of Christology “from above.”

Christology “from below” starts by upholding the historical man, Jesus of Nazareth, and then recognizes his divinity (Pannenberg 1968:35). This approach is primarily concerned with Jesus’ earthly activity (works, message and fate), and arrives only at the end with the affirmation of the incarnation. Pannenberg (1969:36) recognizes Christology “from above,” but states that the historical reality of Jesus must be the basis and central to Christological reflection today. Hence, he takes the route of Christology “from below” – the divinity of the historical man Jesus of Nazareth. Most of the contemporary liberation Christologies, feminist Christologies and African Christologies follow this route. The researcher’s approach in the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection is Christology “from below”: from the life-experiences of Africans for hope in suffering.

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of hermeneutical approaches to the resurrection. An understanding of the “hermeneutics of resurrection” has been provided for to clarify what we mean by the term, its historical developments and how it can be integrated in the subject at hand. Then the chapter generally surveys Western theological approaches, Latin American praxial approaches and African Feminist critical approach. The main reason for surveying these approaches is to understand the hermeneutical methods used to interpret the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thereafter, these methods are analyzed to find out if they are appropriate for interpreting the Easter event in the African context of suffering.

3.1 UNDERSTANDING THE HERMENEUTICS OF RESURRECTION

3.1.1 Meaning: The Notion of Hermeneutics

It is appropriate to define the term “hermeneutics” before one undertakes the discussion on the hermeneutics of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To begin with, according to Mudge (1983:250), the term “hermeneutics” originates from the Greek word *hermeneuein* which in English is translated as “to interpret,” and “interpretation” is a translation of the Greek word *hermeneia*. Therefore, although “hermeneutics” may have various usages, it generally means the theory of interpretation of texts, particularly the biblical texts. Mudge further elaborates that hermeneutics is thus the science of the interpretative process which begins with the determination of the original meaning of a text, what is commonly referred to as *exegesis*, and leads to elucidation (clarification or explanation) of its sense for modern readers (exposition, paraphrase or sermon)¹⁶. Hermeneutics involves disciplines such as lexical (vocabulary), linguistic, literary and philosophical inquiry.

Harvey (1992:117) provides a similar meaning of the term by stating that “hermeneutics is the inquiry concerned with the presuppositions and rules of the interpretation of some form of human expression, usually a written text, although it could also be an artistic expression of some kind.” From the above definition of hermeneutics we can describe the term as one that simply involves the process of interpretation. The whole aim of interpretation is to discover the meaning of a certain human expression for the benefit of a specific context. Jensen (2007:2) understands hermeneutics to mean “the reflection on the problem of understanding:” It is a reflection on how one understands a particular text, speech or an intended action in order to avoid misunderstanding. In other words, this is the art of understanding which involves proclaiming, translating, explaining and interpreting. Hermeneutics can further be referred to as the identification, analysis and removal of obstacles to understanding such as unawareness to classical biblical languages, medieval philosophy and biographies of biblical authors (Jensen 2007:3).

Therefore, “hermeneutics” is concerned with “a conscious way of approaching the interpretation of texts according to certain procedures” (McKim 1996:127). These procedures have to do with vocabulary, literary, linguistic, philosophical, theological and contextual inquiry of a particular human expression for the purpose of discovering the meaning of that expression. The researcher

¹⁶ Ibid, p.250

understands the notion of hermeneutics, in relation to the subject at hand, to mean a continuous inquiry into the Easter event by using specific principles of spirituality and ethos with the intention to understand what Jesus' resurrection would mean in the African context of suffering. The idea is to develop a hermeneutical approach which would be appropriate for understanding the Easter event so that hope in suffering can be realized. But then, the notion of hermeneutics has developed over the history of the church, particularly in the twentieth century. It is for this reason that the researcher finds it ideal to give an overview of how the concept of hermeneutics has developed in the century.

3.1.2 Development of Hermeneutics in the 20th Century

To discuss the development of the notion of hermeneutics developed in the 20th century, the article by Dirkie J Smit, *Biblical Hermeneutics: the 20th Century*, and Jensen's *Theological Hermeneutics* seem to be reliable sources. Therefore, the researcher makes a summary of these works and highlights some implications for the hermeneutics of resurrection in an African context of suffering. A number of scholars were involved in this development, but here only six key scholars are mentioned: Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas and Ricoeur.

Schleiermacher emphasizes the importance of *understanding the intention of the text's author* in hermeneutics. According to Schleiermacher, although language which the speakers/authors and listeners/readers share makes understanding possible, true understanding is attained when the intention of the author of a text is taken into consideration (Smit 1998:300). The interpreter must strive to reconstruct or reproduce the intention or meaning of the author (speaker, writer or sender) in his or her own consciousness. In this sense, hermeneutics should involve grammatical interpretation, technical or psychological interpretation and interpretation of "feeling" or divination so that it becomes possible to experience what the speaker or writer wants to communicate (his/her intention). In this process of pursuing the intention of the author, "ethics of interpretation" is adhered to in that it renders the ancient text as authoritative by removing obstacles to understanding of the text thereby avoiding allegorical interpretation (Jensen 2007:2). The whole aim is to discover the truth for faith and morality (2007:43). In the case of Jesus' resurrection, hermeneutics should be aimed at understanding the divine intention for raising Jesus from the dead: thus, the liberation of humankind from all forms of suffering so that humanity can trust and serve God their liberator.

For Dilthey, hermeneutics needs to take into consideration *history, tradition, and culture* of the text. He is more interested in the question of interpreting, reconstruction and understanding of history because historical consciousness not only provides a link with the past, but also causes an experience of alienation from history – an experience of distance (Smit 1998:300). Therefore, in interpretation and understanding there should be a conscious effort to overcome this experience of historical distance by moving into the past, re-constructing and re-experiencing the original experience. Only through this can understanding of the text be reached and experienced fully by the reader or interpreter. Hermeneutics of resurrection, therefore, entails embracing the historicity of the Easter event; thus, accepting the discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances to his disciples as historical evidences of the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

Heidegger goes further by affirming the aspect of *personal existence that comes into being by the act of interpretation*. In Heidegger's own words, "In order for us to discern this [understanding of being], *time* needs to be explicated primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of *Dasein*, which understands Being" (Heidegger 1962:39). With this emphasis, Heidegger develops what is known as the "hermeneutical circle." He explains that first of all, the reader/interpreter comes to the text not with a clean slate; s/he brings "pre-understandings" (questions, pre-knowledge and concerns) to the process of interpretation (Smit 1998:301). Jensen (2007:119) testifies that for Heidegger, "we do not achieve understanding as a result of interpretation, but we already understand even before we interpret. The task of interpretation is to bring to light the interpreter's previous understanding." Therefore, when pre-understanding is brought to the process of interpretation it is changed, challenged, modified, affirmed and revised by new possibilities of existence. When this happens, then the affected, changed, transformed and modified understanding becomes the new horizon, the new pre-understanding in the next phase of the process (Smit 1998:301). In this process language as "the house of being" plays a significant role: Through language we encounter and interpret reality itself – the reality of being human (of existence) is revealed. In the process of interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering, therefore, there is need to understand and consider Africans' pre-understandings and personal existence (identity). These pre-understandings and life-experiences shape the way Africans would understand Jesus' resurrection in that situation of suffering.

Gadamer develops the ideas from his predecessors by drawing very important implications. His emphasis is *truth, which can only be found in the process of conversation or dialogue* (Smit 1998:301). For Gadamer, interpretation “is a dialogue between the text and the reader, in which the reader approaches the text with a set of questions [pre-understanding], which the text may or may not answer” (Jensen 2007:142), depending on how appropriately the questions are formulated by the reader. In this sense, Gadamer argues that both the text and reader brings to the dialogue one’s own horizon. Therefore, true understanding can be reached or takes place when the two horizons meet, or fuse. In fact, for Gadamer the goal of interpretation is the fusion of the two horizons, and the medium through which this fusion takes place is language. In the hermeneutics of Jesus’ resurrection in the context of suffering, there must be the fusion of the original understanding of the Easter as witnessed by Jesus’ disciples and an African experience of resurrection amidst experiences of suffering. Only then can true understanding of Jesus’ resurrection be appropriately reached and realized for hope in suffering.

Habermas developed his critical hermeneutical theory in a debate with Hans-Georg Gadamer from 1967 to 1971 (Jensen 2007:194-196). He attacked Gadamer by pointing out that hermeneutics is not an end in itself, but *a means towards the overarching enterprise of the emancipation of the individual*. For Habermas, hermeneutics is a critical means of emancipation which involves three principles: scientific or empirical-analytic frame of reference, historical-hermeneutical frame of reference and sciences of social action such as economy, sociology and political science (Jensen 2007:194). Truth can be reached, in this sense, by embracing a consensus of all the three principles for the transformation of society, an ideal forum for communication. The quest for hermeneutics of resurrection in the context of suffering needs to aim at attaining an ideal forum for communication where emancipation from the experiences of suffering by Africans is truly realized. This should be so because resurrection is about experiencing emancipation from the terrors and systems that escalate suffering.

The argument by Ricoeur is that, one can claim to have properly understood a biblical text only *when such an understanding leads to action*, because the real power of a biblical text lies in its transformative power to a new way of living and being. This is the power to suggest, to propose, to open up, to make possible, to produce “a world in front the text” and invite the readers or hearers to adopt or inhabit this world (Smit 1998:301). It is an appeal to readers to be transformed, to be changed and to act in a new way for a new way of looking at life, of thinking, of being and of acting.

Ricoeur acknowledges that each biblical text has a “surplus of meanings” (the intended meaning plus the unintended meanings). Therefore, to discover these meanings, especially the true meaning (understanding), one has to be engaged in explanation – moving from the “world in front of the text” to the “world behind the text” by using all the scientific and critical tools such as historical-critical methods, structural analysis and psychoanalytical interpretation at his or her disposal (Jensen 2007:145). In this way, new possibilities of one’s existence, language, worldview, and new awareness about God are attained and inspire action. The hermeneutics of the Easter event need to lead to a liberating action for the poor: an understanding of Jesus’ resurrection can only make sense if it leads to action for the right cause of the victims of suffering in Africa. As Smit (1998:302) argues, explanation alone in hermeneutics is not enough; to understand the biblical text is to be transformed by that text (in our case, the Easter event), to be called to action (an action of liberation for the sufferers).

3.1.3 Hermeneutics of Resurrection: An Integration

Hermeneutics of resurrection encompasses all the six aspects discussed above: understanding God’s intention in Jesus’ resurrection, historicity of the Easter event, Africans’ pre-understanding and personal existence that comes into being by the act of interpretation, the truth about the resurrection which can only be found in the process of dialogue between the event itself and the African community, a means towards the emancipation of the individual and an understanding of the resurrection which must lead to action of liberation. Understanding of a text is related to an interpretation of a doctrine like Jesus’ resurrection in that, as Jensen (2007:2) argues, “Understanding texts, one’s self, God and the world are at the heart of the theological enterprise.” In other words, Jensen (2007:3) affirms that hermeneutics forms an essential part of any theological undertaking because of two fundamental reasons: First, theology is about the interpretation of the Christian texts, biblical and other (including that which is about Easter), and the proclamation of the Christian faith on the basis of the understanding gained from these texts – all issues involved in textual interpretation are of utmost importance for theology. Hermeneutics of resurrection is therefore about interpreting Jesus’ resurrection from the African premise of suffering for the proclamation of hope to the suffering Africans. Second, theology attempts to express the Christian experience of God in intellectually accountable language – all theology must first and foremost be hermeneutical theology. The aim of the hermeneutics of resurrection must be to interpret the Easter

event in such a way that God is experienced as a God of justice who grants and assures hope amidst suffering.

Therefore, the hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection in Africa is about the interpretative process that seeks to understand the meaning of this Easter event in the African context of suffering. What follows in the next section is a survey of specific interpretative approaches to the resurrection event of Jesus Christ from different perspectives. This survey of the three methods - Western, Latin American and Feminist - does not assume that the three are the only ways of interpreting the Easter event. These have been given as representatives of the vast categories of interpretative approaches available. Furthermore, these approaches are then linked to the quest for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from the perspective of suffering in Africa.

3.2 WESTERN THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES

As pointed out, most of the western approaches to the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection follow the Christology "from above." The resurrection in the western approaches is mostly interpreted from the divinity point of view. This section therefore seeks to briefly highlight two examples of the hermeneutical approaches to the resurrection from the Western theological scholarly world point of view. By "western theological approaches" in this case we refer to the approaches developed mostly by western male theologians (European and American theologians), rather than Latino, feminist or African theologians. Approaches developed by Berkhof (Louis) and Kasper are the two examples discussed in this section.

3.2.1 Berkhof: Trinitarian Approach

Louis Berkhof begins by stating that the resurrection is not resuscitation. He says, "The resurrection of Christ did not consist in the mere fact that He came to life again, and that body and soul were reunited" (Berkhof 1996:346). Berkhof's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is that the event is the work of the triune God: Christ arose through his own power; he arose through the power of God the Father; and he arose through the operative power of the Holy Spirit (Berkhof 1996:347). The event of resurrection sends the message that the divine breaks into the course of history; thus, in the resurrection the incognito of Jesus is removed and God reveals Himself as the triune God. There is always a tendency to neglect the fact that all three persons of the Godhead were actively involved in

the event of the resurrection. This misconception implies the three persons will not be involved at the general resurrection. The resurrection is the work of the triune God who is present in mutual love and life-in-relationship with humanity and the entire creation.

According to Berkhof (1996:349), understanding the resurrection as the work of the triune God leads to a number of implications in as far as the resurrection is concerned. In the first place, the resurrection implies that Jesus was not a mere human being, but a teacher sent from God, and that He was the very Son of God as we read in Romans 1:4. Jesus was actually coming from the very community life of the triune God, rather than an isolated stranger without any form of origin. Therefore, Christian hope in the context of suffering is based on the Easter event, and this event is about the triumph of the triune God. Through the resurrection the triune God affirms that life-in-relationship triumphs over all the shadows of suffering and death. Secondly, the resurrection implies the supreme attestation of the fact of immortality. If Jesus could not completely decay in the grave and came out with total life, this is proof enough that the life of the triune God is immortal. For people who are experiencing suffering, the resurrection is a hopeful event because it is a creative work of the triune God to bring life to its fullness. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ the triune God assures the fullness of life where suffering is replaced with an experience of joy and peace. The resurrection further implies the basis of redemption and the foundation of the church. It is the triune God who saves people from any hostile force and establishes the community of believers where he shares life-in-relationship. Therefore, through the resurrection the triune God promises to end suffering and establish a harmonious community. Fourthly, the resurrection implies the Father's seal on the completed work of Christ, the public declaration of the acceptance of this work by the Father. Since the triune God was actively involve in the event of the resurrection, the completed work of Christ was actually the completed work of the triune God. The resurrection is therefore a declarative event that God's work to deal with all pain and suffering is an already completed work. Finally, the resurrection implies Christ's glorification to a new life as the risen and exalted Head of the Church and universal Lord. Jesus was glorified to the mutual and relational life in the eschatological community of the triune God. Therefore, Christian hope in suffering focuses on the realization of mutual and relational life in the present and the eschatological future. The promise of hope in the context of suffering is for a specific destiny: a destiny where life is shared in the relational community of the triune God. Hence, the triune God is the basis of hope in suffering.

3.2.2 Kasper: Eschatological Approach

Kasper (1976:130) states that since the resurrection transcends what is historically verifiable, there is need for hermeneutics (exegetical problem) and historical criticism (historical problem). His theological basis is that the first resurrection witnesses rely only on the appearances of the Risen Lord which focus on the eschatological event (1976:136-143). Therefore, for Kasper an eschatological approach is appropriate for interpreting the resurrection. Kasper considers eschatological approach for understanding Jesus' resurrection on a number of grounds. Firstly, God identifies Godself with, glorifies the crucified and awakened One as solidarity with, and vindication of suffering and unfairly executed Jesus. This is actually God's demonstration of justice over the innocent victim of suffering and death. Secondly, the resurrection is about an eschatological revelation of God: it reveals God's identity and work for his creation. It reveals that the loving and just God maintains his identity by vindicating the victim of suffering and death now and in the eschatological future. Thirdly, the resurrection is about an expression of faith in the encountered Risen Lord and the witness in the Risen Christ through the Holy Spirit. Kasper's eschatological approach is appropriate for interpreting Jesus' resurrection because it highlights key issues which address hope in the situation of suffering: solidarity with and justice for the victims of suffering; God's identity and work of justice as the sole basis of hope in suffering; and faith in and witness to the Easter event as appropriate responses in the situation of suffering.

Having established that the eschatological approach is appropriate to interpret the resurrection, Kasper (1976:144-154) then gives three meanings of the resurrection. Firstly, Jesus' resurrection is an *eschatological act of divine power* (1976:144-145). It is God's decisive eschatological act and self-revelation where his power embraces new life through which God's love and faithfulness triumphs over suffering and death. It is also the revelation and realization of God's Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus Christ. Therefore, faith in Christ's resurrection is based on the foundation of God's ability to deal with suffering and establish God's Kingdom in the present and the eschatological future. Secondly, Jesus' resurrection is eschatological because it is *exaltation* (1976:146-154). This implies that the God who vindicated Jesus by honouring him as ruler in the present and future, demonstrates His presence in the experience of pain and suffering. Thirdly, Jesus' resurrection is eschatological in the sense that it is a *redemptive* event (1976:154-159). This implies that through the Easter event God establishes the victims of suffering in a position of divine authority and power. The loving and faithful God grants hope and freedom in the new life with Christ. The gathering of the covenantal community for the Word and sacraments and confession of

their faith is actually a forecast of the anticipated eschatological event where God will establish peace, freedom and true and mutual interrelationship.

3.2.3 Conclusion

The Western theological approaches discussed in this section are appropriate for the African context of suffering in that they seek to interpret Jesus' resurrection as the new beginning of human existence. The researcher affirms both Berkhof's trinitarian and Kasper's eschatological approaches because an appropriate approach to Jesus' resurrection is based on the triune God who acts for the justice of all people. The new dawn is about new life where human suffering is seriously dealt with. But then, this new dawn is started by the triune. God establishes new beginning with new life where justice for all humanity prevails.

This eschatological perspective of hope for new beginning can be illustrated by a song composed by various musicians few months before Zambia's fortieth anniversary in 2004. "The New Dawn" was composed in dedication to Zambia's attaining forty years of independence in 1964. The message conveyed in the song is eschatological in content. The beginning of the new dawn with new life for Zambia has begun. This new dawn has approached with the promise of good things to come which is believed would promote the quality of life for all Zambians, although this still remains a challenge to be a reality. In short, the new dawn in Zambia has already come as a present fact, but at the same time it is yet to be made real in the future. The resurrection event witnesses to the act of the triune God who declares justice for victims of suffering and establishes new life for all now and in the eschatological future. As Morris (1988:153) has observed, the resurrection is not only a past reality, but also a present and future reality in that believers are united with Christ and now experience a foretaste of the already inaugurated new age to come. The researcher seeks to take on board the two approaches in quest for an interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the African situation of suffering. The emphasis in this quest would be the basis of hope in suffering: the triune God who triumphs over suffering and demonstrates justice through the Easter event. This hope is realized in the present and anticipated in the eschatological future.

3.3 LATIN AMERICAN PRAXIAL APPROACHES

The Latin American approaches to Jesus' resurrection are "from below." The concept of praxis is the point of emphasis in this perspective. Lois (1993:173) provides a comprehensive definition on the Latin American praxial approach:

The praxis dimension is a historic-praxic Christological hermeneutics, a hermeneutics operatively connected with history and its liberative transformation, a hermeneutics that will permit the discovery of the salvific meaningfulness of Christ through its capacity to arouse liberation praxis in believers.

The praxial approaches seek to stress the inexorable need to place the victims at the heart of any Christian interpretation of Jesus' resurrection (Queiruga, Susin & Sobrino 2006:10). Ultimately, the intension of the praxial approaches is not only to provide hope to men and women but also to bring liberation to these people who are facing affliction at the hand of human injustice or simply as a result of natural circumstances. Therefore, they make a call for a committed solidarity with the victims from the side of oppressors or any other non-victim personalities. Furthermore, the praxis dimension includes the ecological and cosmic concern in its reflection because nature, too, suffers at the hand of the human species.

This section is concerned with the way Latin America approaches its interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As it will be demonstrated, the focus is hope for the victims who are experiencing suffering mainly due to the oppression of the elite. It seeks to address the question of appropriate approach one would pursue to interpret the resurrection in such a context. To discuss the Latin American praxial approaches, Sobrino and Boff have been selected to act as representatives of this theological reflection. With the two examples the researcher applies the Latin American approaches to the African context for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in Africa.

3.3.1 Sobrino: Eschatological Approach

Generally, Sobrino (1996c:164) suggests that Christian theology in Latin America "ought to continue to be a theology of liberation." This should be so because the ever denser element of reality continues to be oppression that generates *victims*. Therefore, doing theology from amidst the victims

enhances hope amongst the victims. It is with this general principle in mind that Sobrino's hermeneutical approach of Jesus' resurrection is eschatological. In this sense, eschatology is not necessarily a future entity, but a present reality. Hence, Sobrino's (1978:236) underlying question is: What is the meaning which the resurrection might have in the present here and now? In simple terms, Sobrino (1978:240) presents his hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection that takes in all aspects of reality by asking three basic questions¹⁷: *What may I hope for? What can I know? What should I do?*

Tackling the first question, "*What may I hope for?*" Sobrino (1978:243-245) makes two affirmations: the horizon of hope in the New Testament and the consequence of this horizon of hope. In the New Testament hope is the apocalyptic expectation where "the end of history would soon appear, re-creating all of reality" (Sobrino 1978:243). This is the horizon for understanding the resurrection insofar as it expresses hope in the situation of suffering. The consequence of this horizon of hope in suffering is that the resurrection needs to be understood from the perspective of striving for justice in an unredeemed world. Justice for all, especially the victims of suffering, is considered in the quest for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in Africa. Regarding the second question, "*What can I know?*" Sobrino (1978:246-253) reflects on a hermeneutics for grasping the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection. Sobrino affirms that the resurrection is historical in the sense of being a definitive promise of God that opens up an eschatological future. It is God's promise about a future where suffering is removed and new life of God's justice is established. The third question, "*What should I do?;*" emphasizes the resurrection as eschatological from the praxis point of view. Sobrino (1978:253-256) considers praxis as a hermeneutic principle which understands the resurrection as a political event. The political hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection takes into account the theology of the cross which aims at transforming life through acceptance of suffering. By so doing, we practice true discipleship and real solidarity with the victims of suffering.

3.3.2 Boff: Human Utopia Approach

Boff (1987:121-123) hermeneutically approaches the Easter event with the realization of human utopia in mind. He starts by affirming the reality of the Easter event as radical transformation and

¹⁷ Sobrino here is extracting and rearranging Immanuel Kant's famous three questions: *What can know? What must I do? What may I hope?*

transfiguration of the earthly life of Jesus. Boff further points out that the resurrection is a reality because God did not allow the grass to grow on Jesus' sepulcher. Therefore, the "resurrection is the realization of his announcement of total liberation, especially from the reign of death, [from pain, hatred, and sin]. The resurrection signifies a concretization of the Kingdom of God in the life of Jesus" (Boff 1987:122). In this case, life and meaninglessness of death have their meaning assured in the resurrection of Jesus. Boff (1987:125-129) also ascribes to the appearances and the empty tomb traditions as the decisive facts in accounting for the reality of the resurrection. In fact, he considers the empty tomb account as an invitation to faith and the appearances tradition as the origin of faith in the resurrection. For Boff (1987:129-134) the resurrection was significant to the disciples for it brought about a complete reversal in their lives: they acquired a new horizon and new eyes, to the extent that they could read the human reality of past, present and future in a completely new way.

In discussing the core of his approach in interpreting the resurrection, Boff (1987:134) observes that the human person is essentially a being on the road to itself – continuous utopias. "People seek to realize themselves on all levels: in body, soul, and spirit; in biological, spiritual, and cultural life," he explains. Unfortunately, this desire is continuously obstructed by frustration, suffering, the absence of love, and the lack of unity with self and others. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection seeks to be the utopia realized within the world, because resurrection signifies an eschatologization of human reality, an introduction of human person into the Kingdom of God, a total realization of the capacities God placed within human existence (Boff 1987:135). In simple terms, the resurrection is the full and true attainment of human utopia. The result of this is that all the alienating elements (death, pain, hatred, and sin) that injured life have been annihilated.

Now, what does the realization of utopia through Jesus' resurrection mean for Christians? Boff (1987:135) provides a fascinating answer. He says, for the Christians, "as of the moment of the resurrection there is no more *utopia* (in Greek: that which does not exist anywhere) but only *topia* (that which exists somewhere). Human hope was realized in Jesus resurrected and is already being realized in each person." Therefore, to the question, "What is to become of humankind?" Christians joyfully answer in faith: the resurrection, as a total transfiguration of the human reality, both corporal and spiritual. God has already transformed the corporal-spiritual personalities into the image of the resurrected Jesus (Boff 1987:135-136). The total human being has been transfigured into the life of God: true human utopia has been realized through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Boff's interpretation of the resurrection could be applicable to Africa's situation of suffering. It would mean that through Jesus' resurrection human beings find true existence with God. If that is the case, true existence in the present life can only be realized in God who showed his ability to end suffering by raising Jesus from the dead. By virtue of Jesus' resurrection all experiences of suffering and pain are transformed into true realization of hope and fullness of life. God transforms suffering into the fullness of life: life which is shattered by pain and suffering is brought into existence. The researcher finds this understanding of the Easter event as valuable for the quest of an appropriate interpretation of the event in African for real hope in suffering. The only problem with this hermeneutical approach is the concept of utopia. It could be misinterpreted and thereby hope in Jesus' resurrection would be understood as mere dream of something that is nonexistent. Hence, the whole essence of hope in the situation of suffering in Africa becomes meaningless. Nonetheless, Boff understands hope in the present life as that which is realized in God who made the resurrection of Jesus Christ possible. Therefore, utopia needs to be understood from the right perspective: thus, the perspective of God's transformation of suffering into the fullness of life through Jesus' resurrection.

3.3.3 Conclusion

The Latin American approach, as it is clearly reflected in the two approaches, emphasizes praxis. This is the combination of both the theoretical articulation and practical application of faith in Jesus' resurrection. The praxial thrust is crucial to interpreting the resurrection in a context where human life is abused as a result of oppression and exploitation by either a powerful individual or community, or by the effects from natural circumstances. Therefore, the Latin American praxial approaches find room in the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering. There is a genuine call to put into practice the act of faith in the resurrection by a corresponding act of justice, service, solidarity and love (Casaldaliga 2006:123). The poor need to be assisted to realize of their dream of utopia in the present (Libanio 1993:716, 726). According to Susin (2006:125), the resurrection is the heart of life and faith. He states that "the resurrection of the dead and, absolutely, the resurrection of Jesus, the crucified one who was raised – resurrection as *horizon* and as *event* – is the heart of human life and of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:13-14, 19)." In Susin's mind, resurrection does not primarily have to do with establishing a firm basis for composing a doctrine or a religion. It has to do first and foremost with human life: life lived in joy and suffering,

shared in compassion and in nonconformity. Therefore, for the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in Africa to be relevant, such a hermeneutical enterprise must practically address the plight of the suffering Africans: it must continuously try to aspire to bring hope to these suffering people in the African society by enhancing the norms of love, peace and justice.

3.4 AFRICAN FEMINIST CRITICAL APPROACH

It is believed in Christian circles that Jesus Christ, the man from Nazareth, is true God and true human. Jesus was born, lived, died and resurrected from the dead. This Jesus is alive, yesterday, today and forever. However, the Jesus who arose from the dead seems to be hidden to feminist theologians. The reality that Jesus is alive seems to be a nightmare to women due to the life-experiences which they pass through. It is claimed that these life-experiences are driven by patriarchal dominating and oppressive structures. As Bahemuka (2003:14) suggests, for women to emerge from this hidden reality Africans, both women and men, "have to make an act of faith." In this act of faith there is need to develop a critical mind that will radically challenge the *status quo*.

African feminist theologians have taken a course of action where they devote themselves to interpret the resurrection of Jesus Christ amidst the vices of sexism, racism and classism. This section presents African women's hermeneutical premise as an African Feminist Critical approach. This is so because feminist theologians in Africa, like in other contexts, seek to challenge the existing male and white female approaches of the understanding of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. In this section, therefore, the researcher gives a general overview of feminist theology, the background of African feminist theological reflection and the life-experiences of women in Africa which has fueled the undertaking of theological reflection by these women in Africa. With these three background dimensions of feminist theology in mind, especially by African women, the hermeneutical approach of Jesus' resurrection is articulated. Then, some implications and challenges in interpreting Jesus' resurrection from an African feminist perspective are drawn out as a way of concluding the section.

The reason for giving such a long introduction in this section, which was not done in the previous sections of the chapter, is to emphasize the focus of this research work. The focus is the giving of hope to African context of suffering. Women are mostly vulnerable to this suffering and a neglected category in theological discourse. With this feminist perspective the researcher seeks to indicate that

a feminist approach to the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is equally appropriate in an African situation of suffering, though it is usually left on the periphery.

3.4.1 An Overview of Feminist Theology

Generally, the idea of feminism in theology originates from a conviction that a theology of relationships might contribute to bring us closer to human life as God desired it from the very beginning of creation. It is with this general perception that one can understand the phenomenon of feminist theology. Therefore, as Ackermann (1994:197) argues, feminist theology is one of the vehicles through which women express a critique of existing theology and religious practices. In this way, feminist theology contributes creatively towards the unfinished dimension of theology. Feminist theological reflection is born from the communities of women who are seeking wholeness. This is a pursuit to the commitment of being accountable to the particular community of women.

In Ackermann's view, feminist theology is a process, and this process begins with a critique of existing interpretations (Ackermann 1994:198). It then goes through a time of struggle and risk as memories, traditions and source-book dialogue with the present context. Lastly, the process of feminist theology moves on to the creative doing of theology which promotes and affirms women's humanity and is consonant with the values of the reign of God, such as justice, love, freedom, equality, wholeness and peace.

Feminist theological reflection is not an aimless pursuit by hopeless women. It aims at the liberation or emancipation of all humankind, women and men inclusive, and the transformation of the existing religious, social, cultural and political structures. This means the rejection of male hierarchies and dominance. It also entails promoting the contribution by women and men to the "naming and shaping their realities in such a way that all people's humanity is affirmed in just, loving, liberating and healing praxis" (Ackermann 1994:199). Feminist imagery of a woman as the originator of evil, the agent of death and the cause of the withdrawal of primordial bliss are not only challenged, they are also condemned and rejected for they pose a threat to the emergence of the articulate female partners (Manus 2003:176). In short, we would say that feminist theology critiques all manifestations of male dominance in past and current theologies. It makes a contribution by reforming and reconstructing our faith concepts, symbols, images and praxis from a feminist

perspective. As Ackermann (1994:205) rightly informs us, the goal of a feminist theological agenda is to address those areas in which women seek healing and wholeness

3.4.2 Background of African Feminist Theology

Women in Africa have opted to pursue a different route from those of the women of other contexts, such as Europe, North America, Latin America and Asia. Their pursuit of feminist theology is unique in that it is devoted to address the issues that affect them in their specific African context. The formation of the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* was born as a result of this commitment. Ackermann (1994:200) explains that the formation of the CIRCLE, as it is commonly abbreviated, has resulted in an increase in publications: the works of Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro are among the many that one could consider when doing feminist theology in Africa. What is the background of the African feminist theology?

Hinga (1996:26-31) gives a considerable articulation of the background of African feminist theology. She explains that the *Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians* is a forum which was initiated by approximately seventy African women who met in Ghana in 1989. The aim of formulating this forum was that through it they could research, analyze and reflect upon their experiences in their tremendous variety of contexts in which they live. “The inclusion of the term African ... was their attempt to name the cultural [the cultural context distinct from other cultural contexts, particularly the Western cultural context] and social-historical [colonialism] locations” (Hinga 1996:27). This means African women struggle not only with the issues to do with culture in their localities, but they also struggle against imperialism. Imperialism here refers to the critique of Western women in so far as they may presume to speak on behalf of the African women. African women seek to emphasize that the right to speak for themselves is a necessary condition for their emancipation and must be respected by all people regardless of who they are.

What then are the specific issues that are of concern for African women as feminist theologians? Hinga (1996:29-31) alludes to a number of issues which are important to point out. Firstly, as noted above, primarily African feminists are concerned with the issue of the desire to break out of their enforced silence: this is claiming their right to speak for themselves. In this regard, they reject the evils of colonialism, racism and sexism. Secondly, they seek to embark on a sustained, systematic research and publication initiative, focusing on the critical analysis of the impact of culture and

religion in their lives, through a *dialogical approach*. The third objective of the African feminist theologians is to deal with the historical reality of cultural imperialism implicit in the imposition of the Western way of life in Africa, particularly the imposition of the Western religion on the African communities. Fourthly, their critical hermeneutics of religion and culture also involves Christian women in an analysis of the decisively ambiguous impact of Christianity in their lives. In this way, they challenge the practice of injustices in church and society as a sinful betrayal of the vision of Jesus who laid a foundation for a human society characterized by equality, freedom and justice. Lastly, they seek to embark on a critical reading and re-evaluating of the role of the Bible as a source for any Christian theology.

In summary, we would say the primary concern of the African feminist theology is a two-pronged protest: it is directed at both African religion and culture, and Christianity. The concern here is to voice their protest against sexism and its roots in religion and culture. What has been the drive of this concern which prompted African women to embark on the route of theology they have taken? What follows explains the life-experiences which women in Africa have gone through.

3.4.3 African Women's Life-Experiences

Nasimiyu-Wasike (1991:71) argues that there are different ways in which women experience life in Africa. On a national level, they experience life in terms of cultural, physical, political, environmental, and economic spheres which vary between and within nations in Africa. At a personal level, lifestyles vary according to poor or rich, single or married, with no children or with ten children, with husband present or absent, participating in domestic or commercial career, traditional or modern, rural or urban, at peace or at war, of social chaos or order, with a family system that is patriarchal or matriarchal, with opportunities for education and self-direction or not. However, as Kärkkäinen (2003:198) simplifies, even though women's life-experiences vary from culture to culture and context to context, there are some uniting features. Three features which seem to be the most important in terms of implications for Christology, and indeed the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection can be highlighted.

The first is that women from different situations in Africa have experienced their embodiment as something negative in many Christian traditions. Women in these traditions have been left on the periphery in terms of inclusion, expression and actions. This has happened due to a dualistic

worldview of the Western theology that place soul over body and male over female. As Stinton (2004:56-57) remarks, Jesus' revolutionary approach to women has been concealed by Christian tradition, and a male-centred Christology. Other reasons for *disembodiment* according to Stinton are sexist cultural orientations (e.g. the appeal to blood taboos from African traditional religion in protest against women's ordination to the priesthood) and the contemporary socio-political context.

Secondly, women from different contexts in Africa have experienced *oppression* due to varied patterns of domination and submission. The New Testament concept of Christ's headship over his body, the Church, reflected in the headship of the husband over his wife, has often legitimized the subordination and oppression of women. Nasimiyu-Wasike (1991:71) elaborates the intensity of the oppression and hardships of African women. She explains that African women in communion with their sisters in third-world countries are struggling for the bare necessities. They face severe hardships: working hard by carrying heavy burdens such as firewood; fetching water from faraway rivers and wells; planting, weeding, and harvesting crops; caring for children; grinding corn and preparing food; and tend to work for long hours, especially in rural sectors. Besides fulfilling the duties expected of them as women, they also do eight hours of work in their professional fields like nursing and teaching. Culturally, women in Africa undergo unbearable hardships. They are customarily looked upon solely as child-bearers and servers, and often cruelly oppressed when they have failed in childbearing or when their child dies. As if that is not enough, despite their nurturing, maintaining, and serving life for the survival of the human communities, women are always marginalized and given an inferior status.

The sad part of this scenario is that in their oppression, African women have learnt to *tolerate*: they fatalistically accept the given conditions. This is why Ayanga (2003:92) has noted two fundamental ways through which women have contributed to their social condition. Women have contributed to their lowly status (and oppression) through general acceptance of their prescribed social role and position. Through the centuries, they have come to accept, and to believe, that they have no say even in those matters which intimately concern them. The other way through which women have contributed to their plight is their despising of each other. For instance, they would rather vote for a good-for-nothing man than their own fellow woman who might be more honest and more interested in their problems. As a result of this men capitalize on their timidity and fear of success to oppress and marginalize them. In as much as men are called upon to consider emancipating women, the women themselves should wake up from their slumber and develop self-esteem. The good news is

that women in Africa have started rising on their own feet to greater heights and face the challenges that come their way.

Lastly, despite these negative experiences, *interrelatedness* has been part of the experience of women in Africa. Women have traditionally found identity in relation to others as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, not as single male individual representing all humanity as it was in the past. In this interrelatedness, women share their life-experiences and how they would continue to nurture humanness amongst themselves and other members of society.

3.4.4 Jesus' Resurrection in African Feminist Theology

Having given an overview and background of African feminist theology, and life-experiences of the African women, one would ask: How does all this information relate to the subject at hand? How does it help in understanding the hermeneutics of the African feminist critical approach? It is vital at this stage to quickly point out that for one to understand the hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection from an Africa feminist theology perspective, there is need to link it to the broader perspective of feminist theology. The reason is simple: the African feminist critical approach is born from such a broader perspective. Therefore, this sub-section highlights how African feminist theologians interpret the resurrection with their critical approach.

The African feminist interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is not clearly spelt out and articulated. One would discern how African feminists understand the resurrection from their broader view of Christology. To begin with, Nasimiyu-Wasike (1991:72) argues that an African woman believes that there is an indissoluble union between the supernatural and her everyday life, and she seeks to harmonize these elements in her life. Therefore, for an African woman, Jesus is the person who enables her to combine her authentic inner experience of the divine with her effort to harmonize her life with the divine. She believes that her life is lived in union with God: her theology is not one which is written and articulated but one which is lived and practiced in everyday activities and experiences. Jesus does not cease to be the source of empowerment and inspiration for the African woman in the present situation. An African woman is enabled by Jesus to pass from unauthentic to authentic human existence so that she discovers her true identity of being made in the image and likeness of God (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1991:77).

African women in the end are empowered to voice the significance of Jesus to them in their experiences of cultural stigmas against singleness or childlessness, political, economic, legal and other social spheres. In this struggle for justice, one of the African feminists' central motifs is "the deep sense of Jesus' solidarity with women in their suffering. Inherent in that solidarity is a profound intimacy with Jesus that many African women express" (Stinton 2004:277). Thus, Jesus becomes the model for all humanity, female and male. The profound intimacy between African women and Jesus is reflected in the way these women name Jesus. Okure (2001:243) explains that African feminists discover in Jesus a friend, lover, liberator, husband of widows, life-giver, mother and ground of the new humanity. The designation of Jesus as mother stems from the cultural view of a woman as the embodiment of life, the one who gives birth to life.

Now, with this understanding of the intimate relationship with Jesus, African feminist theologians interpret the resurrection. The resurrection to African women implies *victory*: through the resurrection, Jesus became the liberator, companion, friend and teacher in their experiences. Amoah (1988:43) adds a voice by stressing, "The Christ whom African women worship, honour, and depend on is the victorious Christ, knowing that evil is a reality. Death and life-denying forces are the experiences of women, and so Christ, who countered these forces and who gave back her child to the widow of Nain, is the African woman's Christ." For African women Jesus Christ is the victorious conqueror of all evil spiritual forces in a number of areas. First, he is the nurturer of life, and a totality of the African women's being. Second, he is the liberator of the sufferers, the restorer of all those who are broken, the giver of hope and the courage to be. Third, despite the threatening hardships encountered in women's daily lives, he is the one who calls all people forth to mutually participate in the creation of a better world for all. Jesus' resurrection, therefore, represents the survival of human communities through African woman's birthing, nurturing and maintenance of life. This life is further enhanced through a woman's loving relations and motivation.

A further understanding of the African Feminist theology's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is presented by the *eschatological* model of Christ (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1991:77). In this model, we see Christ as being sent by God to an alienated world where the presence of God takes the shape of the Crucified One. On one hand, in his suffering Christ took on the conditions of the African woman and conditions of the whole community of humankind. On the other hand, in his resurrection the African woman is called to participate in the restoration of harmony, equality, and inclusiveness in all human relationships in the family, and church. Christ meets African women in their own cultural,

physical, environmental, political, and economic variations. This fact is made real in the event of the resurrection where all humankind finds its true meaning for existence. It entails holistic *shalom*: liberation, social and political wholeness, harmony, peace, blessing of all life, justice and righteousness.

3.4.5 Implications and Challenges

To wrap up this section, the researcher briefly highlights some among the many implications and challenges of the African feminist theological undertaking. These implications and challenges are thereafter linked to the subject of hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection in the African feminist view through a concluding statement.

According to Ayanga (2003:95-97), African feminist theology's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection has some implications for the present African community. In the first place, the emancipation (liberation) of women in Africa calls for total *overhauling of the social system* as we know it today. The social system requires a careful examination and thorough repair. Secondly, African feminist theology calls for a questioning of the *theological assumptions* on which women's oppression is based to end the suffering on the part of women. Thirdly, African feminist theology is a call for a *keen awareness* by the women themselves. This awareness should include their social and economic status and the fact that this can be changed. Fourthly, understanding the resurrection from an African feminist perspective implies that women should find their own *new identity* which would help them work towards re-ordering their life accordingly. Fifthly, African feminist theology seeks to point out the fact that there is need to *realize that a woman is a total human being*: thus, a woman has a right to exist as herself and not necessarily as the extension of someone else – either as the daughter, wife or mother. In fact, as Kinoti (2003:73) states, Christ has brought down the blockades of colour, class, status, ethnicity, sex and education, and merged pulpit and pew. Sixthly, the reflection on Jesus' resurrection from an African feminist point of view emphasizes the fact that women should be *able to accept, be thankful and be proud* of being women: they should not be ashamed of the specific roles which they have to perform. By roles here we refer those roles that make the women different from men. Lastly, African feminist theology's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection implies that *women can meaningfully contribute towards changing their social situation* through the avenues of formal and informal education and the church as a community of faith.

Hinga (1996:32-33) lists four enduring challenges of African feminist theology, to which the researcher adds one more. The first challenge is that African women need to commit themselves to create a theology (in this case, we are referring to Christology and resurrection) that is not just *about* women but is also *of* women. Their theology must emerge from the real life-experiences of the grassroots of the women's communities. Secondly, African women are challenged that their emerging theology must consider the insights and experiences of non-Christian women, not just those from Christian community: in their dialogical approach they must embrace the norms of inclusiveness and all-embracing. African feminist theology must also address the equally urgent issues of survival that African women are facing: issues to do with women's political empowerment and economic justice. African feminist theology should as well not neglect the global community: the enduring commitment is a challenge to bring practical gifts and contributions to the process of healing and reconstruction, not only of their battered continent but also of a battered world. To all these challenges the researcher would include that African feminist theology should endeavour to develop a comprehensive and authentic Christology, and indeed the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, for African women which would comprehensively address their plight. What is available is just a fragmentation and small pieces discussed in passing in the concept of Christology.

An authentic hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection in the African context must be inclusive of the African feminist critical approach if it is to truly enhance hope among the suffering Africans. Suffering in Africa adversely affects all people, men, women and children. Therefore, a hermeneutical approach which is aimed at understanding the resurrection, as well as at addressing the plight of many Africans, must embrace all the concerns of these categories of people. Failure to do so, such an approach might produce an understanding of the resurrection which is irrelevant to the Africans.

3.5 EVALUATION

The last section functions mainly as conclusion of the chapter. This section is therefore merely aimed at bringing out the main aspects of the approaches in each of the sections. Then a personal opinion on each of the main aspects is provided in line with the hermeneutical approach towards the understanding of Jesus' resurrection in an African context of suffering.

To sum it all, the researcher states a general remark with regards to the hermeneutics of the resurrection in Africa. Having analyzed the Western theological approaches, it has been discovered that most of these hermeneutical approaches are actually articulated 'from above.' For this reason, they seem not to be down-to-earth in as far as addressing the plight of the poor and the deprived in society. In other words, one would provide a critique that they are "too theological" and "too theoretical." The praxis of the resurrection remains void, thereby neglecting the issues that affect the suffering communities. However, the admirable stress of the hermeneutics from this perspective is that they are theocentric, trinitarian and eschatological in nature. This thrust lays the basis for an authentic and comprehensive interpretive premise of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in Africa. The interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in Africa must base its hermeneutical principles on the nature of the triune God. The resurrection is about God's revealing his being and dealing with his creation in the person of Jesus Christ. As Villa-Vicencio (1994:194) rightly affirms, in Christ God identifies with suffering humanity by entering into pain and death on the cross; and in Christ God inaugurates hope for the liberated humanity by assuring a promise through the Easter event. Therefore, an African authentic and comprehensive hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection may consider Western theological approaches as the basis for theological reflection on the Easter event.

The researcher is of the opinion that African hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection should focus on Christology 'from below.' With this approach, Jesus is viewed from within the socio-political context of first-century Palestine as the one who identified himself with the poor and marginalized members of society (Villa-Vicencio 1994:192). Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God which demands the radical reordering of life and society. The resurrection, therefore, must hermeneutically be approached from this premise of the radical transformation of life and society. This is what we see in the Latin American praxial and African feminist critical approaches. They both have refused to accept the status quo, and opted for the transformation so as to provide and enhance hope in society.

Latin American praxial approaches view the resurrection of Jesus Christ "from below." They seek to describe the resurrection in terms of liberation of the poor. This liberation is about freedom from all forms of domination and oppression. As has been noticed in both examples of the approaches in Latin America, the pursuit is that of the creation of a new humanity and a new kind of society. In this new humanity, liberation from sin, which is at the root of all oppression, injustice and domination, is realized. Villa-Vicencio (1994:191) makes it clear by stating that the eschatological

promise of God's reign, which will remove sin and all its consequences, is aimed at establishing a new creation of justice, righteousness and peace. To relate this approach to the African context, the researcher would say that the issues addressed by the Latin American praxial hermeneutical approaches may not be the same as those experienced by the African community. This in the end may seem to be irrelevant to the African context. Furthermore, this approach is so much anthropocentric that it may undermine the centrality of the triune God as the main subject of the resurrection event. However, despite the negatives, the praxial approach shows a great concern for the plight of the suffering victims. For this reason, as stated above, the praxial thrust is crucial to interpreting the resurrection in a context where human life is threatened by acts of oppression and exploitation, and effects from natural circumstances. In this case, the researcher emphasizes that the Latin American praxial approaches should find room in the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African context of suffering.

African feminist critical hermeneutics reflects on the approach "from below" as well. The concern is for the suffering of African women at the hand of hierarchical and submissive cultural and religious structures. The idea is to call for an emancipation of women so that there is mutual interrelatedness among all the human beings as intended by God. Although African feminist's hermeneutics of the resurrection seems to be fragmented and anthropocentric, the life-experiences of women are addressed. This move in itself is a step in the right direction towards providing hope in the situation of suffering. Therefore, as stated before, an authentic hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering must be inclusive of the African feminist critical approach so that it truly enhances hope for the suffering women as well.

In conclusion, the researcher affirms that theologically, although not methodologically, all three approaches could be applicable for the formulation of hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection in an African situation of suffering. In this way, such hermeneutics is theologically based in that the triune God retains the centrality in the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus as God the Son himself arose from the dead, and the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead empowered the Son to rise from the dead. In this sense the resurrection must be interpreted as the work of the triune God. Furthermore, the hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection is praxial in that it becomes meaningful to the African context when the resurrection is translated into an African contextual situation of daily life. In other words, as Nthamburi (2003:57) argues, Christ should be seen to identify with humanity's suffering, weakness and pain in Africa. Lastly, the

hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection in the African context must be critical of the status quo. In this critical approach the intention must be the participation in the struggle for transformation of political and economic structures which bring about suffering. Therefore, in the next chapter the hermeneutical horizon of suffering is discussed to understand the dynamics of suffering in Africa.

CHAPTER 4: HUMAN SUFFERING AS HERMENEUTICAL HORIZON: GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

The chosen research framework for interpreting the Easter event is the experience of suffering. The assumption behind this framework is that an appropriate hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection will address the plight of suffering by many people in the world, especially Africans, and thereby provide hope in such a situation. Edwards (1988:649) provides a clear explanation of the term "suffering." Suffering is described in three distinguishable meanings in the English version: (a) "let," "allow"; (b) "experience," "endure"; and (3) "feel pain or anguish." According to Edwards, the concept of suffering in the New Testament may be rendered by numerous terms, e.g. "chastisement" or "discipline" (*paideia* in Greek), "distress" (Greek: *stenochoria*), "endurance" (Greek: *hypomone*), "grief" (Greek: *lype*), "persecution" (Greek: *diogmos*), "plague" (Greek: *Plege*), "tribulation" (Greek: *thlipsis*), and other related verbs (1988:650). In simple terms, to suffer is to endure pain, misery or difficulty; to undergo a painful experience; and to become worse or lessen in quality. Therefore, suffering is simply an experience of pain, misery or difficulty. Many communities, particularly in the African context, have undergone experiences of suffering in terms of pain, misery or difficulty as a result of either human hostile activities or natural calamities in the course of world history. Having discussed the hermeneutical approaches to Jesus' resurrection in chapter 3, chapter 4 then deals with the general perspective of suffering as a hermeneutical horizon. The idea is to create a broad platform for understanding suffering in the African context so that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is appropriately interpreted with the intention of providing hope in a suffering situation.

4.1 GENERAL SURVEY: PHENOMENOLOGY OF HUMAN SUFFERING

4.1.1 The Reality of Human Suffering: Various Views

As noted above, suffering is simply an experience of pain. Pain is usually defined as "every sorrow the human spirit can experience consciously or unconsciously, whether understood or uncomprehended; it is the sum total of all the devastation wrought by evil from the beginning of time to the present" (Clarkson 1983:9). This pain has a grip on human suffering and results in a cry for an answer and release from such an affliction. Such a cry manifests itself in questions such as: "Why is such suffering in our world?" "Why is evil so strong?" "If God is all-powerful, why does

wrong seem so often to triumph?” “If God is not only powerful but good, why does He allow pain to afflict His good creation?” The crucial among the many questions is that which concerns theodicy: “the philosophical and religious enterprise of reconciling the perfect goodness of God with the presence of evil in the world” (Towner 1986:335). These are crucial questions which humanity has struggled with in the course of history. Despite these, and a lot more, questions, suffering remains a real factor on the global scene.

Suffering is prominent and ambiguous in the world: it is both real and a paradox. It exists under the contradictory signs of modern comfort and successes in our planet. This is where the ambiguity lies. There is an experience of affliction in aspects such as loneliness, broken relationships, medical illness, life disappointments and slow relinquishing of life with age. In scripture suffering is described by a range of biblical themes such as social evils, poverty, war, natural disasters, the suffering people of God due to discipline, opposition and persecution and bad leaders of God’s people, illness, death and bereavement (Carson 2006:37-173). Ultimately, the suffering of God is revealed in the event of the cross where the cross is the triumph of justice and love. Therefore, as Emerson (1986:22) rightly states, suffering must be acknowledged as a reality of evil in the world. This acknowledgement will raise a necessity in us to decide what to do with evil that causes suffering. What follows is a general survey of the nature of human suffering from various perspectives. In other words, the researcher is now going to explore various views on the nature of suffering.

An *evolutionary* worldview offers a contrasting perspective on the reality of suffering in the world as compared to the biblical understanding. In Macquarrie’s (1986:337) thought, the term “evolution” literally means “unfolding”; this is understood as a continuous unfolding in a certain direction. Evolution proceeds at several levels: *biological theory* (scientific theory which is based on empirical evidence), *cosmological theory* (the unfolding in the whole universe to include planetary systems, stars, galaxies, and chemical substances), and *metaphysical theory* (the analysis of the necessary and universal causes and structures of being). Therefore, with this understanding of evolution, suffering is perceived to be part of the unfolding process in biological, cosmic and metaphysical spheres. This evolutionary process is one characterized by “death and struggle, cruelty, brutality, and ruthlessness. It is a ghastly fight for survival, elimination of the weak and deformed” (Ham 1987:89). In Ham’s point of view, what underlie the evolutionary worldview are death, bloodshed, and struggle which lead to bringing humanity into existence: an onward and continuous progression. Suffering and

death lead to humanity's existence. In short, the line of evolutionary worldview is death, bloodshed, suffering and disease which lead to millions of years, and eventually to humanity's existence. The Christian worldview perceives the line of existence as creation-corruption-catastrophe-confusion-Christ-Cross-Consummation. According to the evolutionary perspective, suffering is accepted as a positive phenomenon which leads to human existence. This in the end, due to the embrace of the idea of human evolution, has encouraged many people in the world to accept evil ideologies, such as Nazism (Hitler), racism or white supremacy (whites over the blacks and other races), and Marxism (Karl Marx) (Maatman 1970:163), which have eventually caused massive suffering in the world.

Calvin (Inst. II.1.4-11) cites *original sin* as the result of human predicament. Due to the fall of Adam and Eve, the whole human race was delivered to the curse and its consequences. As a result of the fall, humanity is totally depraved and forfeited the enjoyment as originally endowed by God. In Calvin's own words, "Therefore, after the heavenly image was obliterated in him [Adam and his guilt], he was not the only one to suffer this punishment – that, in place of wisdom, virtue, holiness, truth, and justice, with which adornments he had been clad, there came forth the most filthy plagues, blindness, impotence, impurity, vanity, and injustice – but he also entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries" (Inst. II. 1.5). The human plight then has affected the rest of the creation; hence, the escalating suffering in the world. The good news of hope is that humanity's image is restored through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ who assumed the position of mediator between God and humanity (Inst. II. 6.1-4; 12.1-3; 15.1-6).

Barth (1960:349-352) distinguishes between suffering as a result of sin or evil from a *shadow-side of creation*. For Barth, evil is nothingness which means privation, the attempt to defraud God of His honour and right to be gracious and at the same time to rob the creature of its salvation and right. Gollwitzer (1994:139) explains Barth's thought that "Nothingness is that from which God separates Himself and in face of which He asserts Himself and exerts His positive will." The shadow-side of creation constitutes the creaturely nature (night, sorrow, finitude or creatureliness and need) which distinguishes the creation from God. Night, sorrow, finitude and need are meaningful and belong to the good creation of God. This shadow-side is contiguous to nothingness. Barth says this negative side, the "not" of creation, is in fact an expression and frontier of the positive will, election and activity of God. In other words, it is this finitude that makes creation to totally depend on God's expression of grace and love to contend the effects of nothingness, such as suffering and pain. The good news is that nothingness, though real, has no power of its own for it has "already" been

overpowered by God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and “will be” completely consummated at the return of Christ in glory (Gollwitzer 1994:146).

Tillich (1957:71) considers human suffering both as an expression of *finitude* and as a result of *estrangement*. According to Tillich, the fall brought about estrangement (self-loss and loneliness), finitude (limitedness and createdness) and eventually human guiltiness. For this reason, as Tillich argues, "suffering, like death, is an element of finitude. It is not removed but is transformed into blessedness in the state of dreaming innocence. Under the conditions of existence, [wo]man is cut off from this blessedness, and suffering lays hold of him[her] in a destructive way. Suffering becomes a structure of destruction – an evil" (Tillich 1957:70). Tillich also states that since human beings are estranged from the ultimate power of being, they are lonely, guilty, and prone to the natural fate of death. They are, in other words, determined by their finitude (1957:66). In a nutshell, humans find themselves in the predicament of suffering because of finitude and estrangement. Tillich (1957:71) notes that this suffering is both meaningful and meaningless. On one hand, it is said to be meaningful in that it calls for protection and healing in human beings who are attacked by the pain of suffering. On the other hand, it is meaningless because of the fact of “aloneness” of the individual human being, one’s desire to overcome it by union with other creatures, and the hostility which results from the rejection of this desire.

Guthrie (1994:168-169) acknowledges the reality of suffering in the fact of *human finitude* and the *presence of evil* in the world. Guthrie explains that some hard and painful experiences we go through are simply due to our finitude. Creaturely existence is about decay and growth, adulthood and adolescent, loss and gain, pain and pleasure, sickness and health, death and birth. Finitude entails that “creaturely life at best is fragile, vulnerable, and temporary – Ps. 103:15; Is. 40:6-7” (Guthrie 1994:169). Guthrie makes us understand that though sometimes suffering and death could be as a result of our own or others’ sinfulness, suffering and death are not as such and in themselves evil. They actually denote that we are not God, but mere creatures who are fragile and vulnerable. A fascinating point which Guthrie highlights is that real evil enters the world scenario when humanity refuse to accept the finitude of human life or try to play God with our or others’ lives (Guthrie 1994:169). Neglecting the reality of our finitude, as it has happened in the evolutionary worldview, is a catalyst for inflicting pain and suffering on our own lives and of others. In order to avoid suffering, there is need to acknowledge that a dark side to God’s good creation (thus, finitude – the vulnerability and mortality of human life) is a reality.

For liberation theologians, suffering is viewed from *socio-cultural and economical-political perspectives*. For instance, Gutierrez (1990:7) describes the situation of suffering from the point of view of the poor (the “nonpersons”). He states:

In Latin America the challenge does not come first and foremost from nonbelievers but from nonpersons – that is, those whom the prevailing social order does not acknowledge as persons: the poor, the exploited, those systematically and lawfully stripped of their human status, those who hardly know what a human being is. Nonpersons represent a challenge, not primarily to our religious world but to our economic, social, political, and cultural world; their existence is a call to a revolutionary transformation of the very foundations of our dehumanizing society.

In short, suffering for liberation theologians, like Gutierrez, is as a result of political, social, cultural and economic injustices as perpetuated by the world of the elite. The poor, oppressed and exploited end up being victims of the effects of structural sin and evil: hunger, dehumanization, insufficient health care, lack of decent housing, poor and low education levels, low wages, unemployment, struggle for human rights, oppression and exploitation (Gutierrez 1990:10). According to liberation theology, the remedy to this problem does not necessarily lie in the intellectualization of the whole scenario, but in the promotion of what Gutierrez calls *liberation praxis*. Liberation praxis entails accepting and living – in solidarity, in faith, in hope, and charity – the meaning that the Word of the Lord and our encounter with that Word give to the historical becoming of humankind on the way toward total communion (Gutierrez 1988:32). This implies being committed to the world of the poor: consciously entering and living into their world. As Gutierrez (1990:10) puts it, regarding it no longer as a place of work but as a place of residence, and emerging from it to proclaim the good news to every human being.

Feminist theology’s view point on suffering is equally unique. Its uniqueness lies in its use of *women’s experience* (Ruether 1983:13). As a result of this focus on women’s experience, the underlying critical principle of feminist theology, therefore, “is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive” (Ruether 1983:18). The question one would raise is: What then characterizes women’s experience which not only causes, but also is/are a manifestation of suffering? In Clifford’s opinion, the main issues of women’s experience include subordination and subjugation of women (2001:16). Women experience the dishonour of their full equality and human

dignity due to sexually based discrimination, oppression¹⁸, violence directed to women (in form of assault by domestic partners, rape, murder, infanticide, cruel neglect, and the international trafficking in women and girls), economic and social injustice, cultural mistreatment of women (e.g. the calling HIV/AIDS pandemic as a “the women’s disease”), and women’s own low self-esteem. In general terms, as Clifford (2001:13) argues, we would hypothetically say that according to the feminist theologians “in every part of the globe women are still discriminated against because of their sex. Many women continue to be relegated to a secondary status and even actively oppressed by men.” This practice in the end brings about massive suffering amongst the women folk.

African feminist theologians add a voice on suffering of women due to the *experience of subordination and subjugation*. According to Oduyoye (1990:34) women are oppressed both in church and society. Therefore, there is need to demand for “justice, peace and equality for women suffering because of discrimination on the basis of caste and race.” Sexism and other social operations along the gender divide do a lot of harm to the humanity of women, tear up community and distort hospitality in Africa (Oduyoye 2004:54). African women experience suffering due to economical, political and military changes and arrangements on the African continent. Oduyoye (2004:59) explains the whole scenario that “in Africa, the instabilities of war and the disruption of natural disasters, economic and political mismanagement, often result in the disruption of whole communities and inexorably propel women into the situation of having to parent their children single-handedly. Stateless and homeless, they struggle to care for the people who have survived with them.” Even if the whole family (men, women and children) suffers the effects of these vices, traditionally women are expected to be more caring and more compassionate, which puts an additional burden on women. Economically, African women do not fall into the category of the under-employed, but they are over-employed and under-paid (Oduyoye 2004:60). In short, for Oduyoye (2004:61) women in Africa suffer at the hand of what she calls material and economic poverty. In the mind of Chirongoma (2006:183), material and economic poverty manifests itself in inequalities, inaccessibility of health care, deprivation, violence, sickness and ill-health, malnutrition, hunger and dying. Furthermore, women in Africa have become bread winners due to loss of employment by their spouses as a result of devastating policies of the African governments. In other words, mothers in Africa have become what Williams (2001:34) calls “market women,”

¹⁸ In quoting Iris Marion Young’s work, *Justice and the politics of difference* of 1990 and published by Princeton University Press in Princeton, Jones describes oppression as containing five faces in contemporary North American culture: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. All these faces are capable enough to cause extensive suffering among women.

earning their own living and simultaneously nurturing their children. African women on the continent experience the nightmare of these vices which actually dehumanize their existence.

Human suffering cannot just be described in a single sentence because it is manifold. It embraces every area of evil and appears in various forms. Clarkson (1983:8-9) identifies at least seven categories of suffering. First, suffering can be *psychological* (e.g. due to pressure, circumstances, life-situations, secret sorrows, unrelieved and unbearable tension, and permanent physical disability). Second, suffering may be *social* (e.g. due to disappointing relationships, family breakdown, alienation, being unappreciated or misunderstood, humiliation, injustice, and selfishness). Third, there is *personal* suffering (e.g. due to unmet goals, unrealized potential or creativity, unrecognized worth, unrewarded services, living with unending frustration, anxiety, haunting fear, remorse, deep mental depression, emotional instability or breakdown, troubled unconscious, and the scepter of suicide). Fourth, there is *matrimonial* suffering (e.g. climaxes as a result of unfulfilling or unhappy marriage, sexual deprivation, abuse, or perversion, undesired singleness, widowhood, divorce, childlessness, homosexual orientation in some cultures, and children's misbehaviour). Next, there is the category of *emotional and physical* suffering (e.g. due to having a physically handicapped child, being physically handicapped, watching innocent children suffer or die, childhood trauma, broken homes, losing a beloved parent or marriage partner, pathetic and loveless old age, and senility). Six, suffering includes *economic* pain (e.g. due to the experience of poverty, hunger, loss of livelihood, inability to work or to secure employment, sudden calamity, economic collapse, or some form of natural disaster, and the unspeakable horror of war). Finally, suffering manifests as *spiritual* (e.g. as a result of sin, physical death, and spiritual death – eternal separation from God).

We need to understand that despite the fact that suffering is unpleasant to the human mind, it is however part of being human. Humanness entails suffering. "Suffering is part of the human predicament since the fall... Following the fall, to be human is to suffer" (VandenBerg 2007:404). This affirmation, however, does not assume perpetuation of suffering, as it is the case in the evolutionary thought, but rather to acknowledge that as a result of the fall human suffering has become an inevitable reality in the world. In fact, as Hall (1986:46-71) argues, to wish the world were immune from *every* form of struggle and *every* form of suffering would be to wish not to have been created at all. This is because the humankind that sinned, which has brought massive suffering on the planet earth, is the same humankind who was created good and in the *imago Dei*. Suffering

also shows the reality of our “creatureliness” – human finitude. In all the perspectives of suffering surveyed in this section, we see that suffering is a global reality which portrays an ambiguous picture. The ambiguity is portrayed in both human freedom and finitude, and also the escalating evil in the world. Therefore, this phenomenon cannot, and should not, be ignored as something that does not exist in the world. Suffering exists at personal, communal, national, continental and global levels. The next sub-section briefly looks at the causes and effects of human suffering at whatever level of its manifestation.

4.1.2 Causes and Effects of Human Suffering

Human suffering is real and ambiguous as already noted. But then, what causes this suffering and how does it affect the human species in the world? Generally, some have affirmed that suffering is not part of God’s good creation. Suffering, as Stott (1986:313) argues, is actually “an alien intrusion into God’s good world, and will have no part in his new universe. It is a satanic and destructive onslaught against the Creator.” In this sense, suffering is often seen as a result of sin (of others), our human sensitivity to pain, and the kind of environment in which God has placed us. Others see suffering as caused by natural eventualities, other people (whether deliberately or not), and sometimes by ourselves. Basically, from the Christian point of view, there are two main causes of human suffering: suffering as a result of nature and as a result of human activity. Migliore (1991:101) calls these two basic causes of suffering *natural evil* and *moral evil*.

What then is natural evil or suffering? According to Migliore, natural evil is the suffering and evil that human beings experience at the hand of nature. It is the injury and suffering caused by diseases, earthquakes, droughts, fires, volcano eruptions, and floods. He beautifully points out that “being a finite creature includes the possibility of pain, illness, grief, failure, incapacity, and the certainty of aging and eventual death” (Migliore 1991:101). In most cases, whenever there is a natural calamity it leaves behind massive suffering upon the multitudes of people. It is difficult on the human part to fight and end such a suffering with human efforts. Only God in his divine power has the ability to address natural suffering. Moral evil is the suffering and evil that sinful human beings inflict on each other and on the world they inhabit. This kind of suffering is caused by either sinful human beings on others and the world, or an individual person on oneself. The researcher wishes to give more details to the two aspects of moral evil.

In many cases, people suffer today as a result of human affliction on others and the non-human creatures. For instance, as Gerstenberger (1980:130) argues, the contemporary economic and societal structures have established conditions under which people suffer today. Technical civilization has left millions of the people in the developing countries reduced to intensifying poverty. Fifty to ninety percent of the populace in the third world is living below the standard that we would regard as compatible with human dignity. The population in these contexts is on the increase causing many people to be undernourished, unemployed, and illiterate, and affected by all kinds of diseases due to poor health services (Gerstenberger (1980:131)). Suffering is also caused by unequal distribution of goods. The industrial society is predominantly composed of prosperous Asians. This heavy industrialization consequently results in the squandering of raw materials from the poor third world. The poor contexts are left with depleted natural resources, and benefit less or not at all from the industrial developments. Other consequences of the industrial boom are the disruption of the environment, misuse of drugs and medicines, and the polarization of interest and power groups, armament races among the nations, bad investments and socio-political causes.

Moral evil can also be caused at an individual human level. In his exploration Peters (1994:10-17) discusses seven forms of sin that lead to radical evil/suffering at this mundane level. The first is *anxiety* – the fear of loss, and especially the fear of losing ourselves, ultimately in death, can cause suffering to the affected individual. Next is *unfaith* – failure to trust God (refusing to live in his care and assume we must care for ourselves) and our neighbours can lead to a regrettable isolation and in the end cause massive suffering. *Pride* is the third step. This is where our tendencies toward the divine come to the surface and the capacity to ignore the suffering and needs of others. The desire to possess, which Peters terms as *concupiscence*, is the fourth step and includes desire, lust, envy, greed and coveting, self-promotion, self-provision, self-determination and self-perpetuation. Fifth, Peters identifies *self-justification*: an attempt to make ourselves righteous by identifying with what is good, even if it takes a lie or a scapegoat to do so. Sixth, there is *cruelty*: actually inflicting pain (physical, social, emotional or spiritual) on other humans or other creatures. Finally, *blasphemy* is the climax of radical evil where God and the things of God are used in self-justification. At this stage, there is the misuse of divine symbols so as to prevent the communication of God's grace. The practice is that of enhancing our own position of power and the conscious use of divine symbols in the worship of radical evil. This in the end leads to suffering to the individual and many people in society.

There are also different opinions on the causes of suffering in various schools of thought. Among the many are those that are offered by the era of evolution and science, Existential Philosophy and Post-Colonial thinking. In the evolution school of thought, suffering is a result of the *unfolding process* in biological, cosmic and metaphysical spheres which are characterized by death and struggle, cruelty, brutality, and ruthlessness. This whole evolutionary process leads to human existence. As for Existential Philosophy, human suffering is due to the *absurdity* of the human life: finitude (limited by the factual conditions of existence) and freedom which is limited by finitude. For Existential Philosophy, “human existence is free, but freedom is always limited by the factual conditions of existence. Thus, there is a tragic element in existence” (Macquarrie 1986:341). In other words, human existence is characterized by a fundamental absurdity in that the free human being is also finite.

When it comes to the Post-Colonial thinking, the *sociopolitical* causes take the scene. Suffering is a result of the sociopolitical structures. Masolo (1994:221) elaborates the structuralist philosophy with the mindset that “the world as ‘world’ exists only with reference to the knowing mind, and the mental activity of the subject, itself depending on sociocultural and historical factors, determines the form in which the world appears.” This mindset has been the running thread in the world’s sociopolitical and economic structural systems. These systems have in a way perpetuated what Gordon (1997:242) called “the classic, paradoxical conflicts of just injustice and unjust justice.” In this sense, therefore, Post-Colonial African Philosophy faces the challenge of formulating a just justice (in the midst of the unjust justice of hegemonic capitalism) in a system that offers no recourse but a just injustice.

Suffering, in whatever form it appears, has adverse effects on many people in the world. To begin with, suffering brings about and increases *massive poverty* in many societies of our globe. Sobrino (1999:111) rightly acknowledges, “There is a gigantic scandal: two-thirds of the human race live in poverty and 1,300,000,000 have to live on less than a dollar a day.” Many communities in the world, especially in the Third World, are struggling for quality livelihood. In some quarters just to find basic essentials for survival is a nightmare. Secondly, the new international order characterized by the free-market economy works to the advantage of the elite rich individuals and nations, and the poor continue to wallow in abject poverty. The gulf separating the rich and the poor continues to become greater year by year. The world of the oppressed continues to be poor in power, money,

technology and arms, though rich in humanity and spirituality (Richard 1992:27). This is what the world of the rich and oppressors need to realize and appreciate from the poor.

The effects of suffering are also noticed in forms of *undernourishment, unemployment, illiteracy and illnesses*. Beker (1994:17) is right when he argues that this scenario creates a tension between suffering and hope in Christian life. This tension is so basic that for so many Christians the tension itself has become a contradiction in that it suffocates hope and compels resignation and despair. Suffering hits so many people of the earth from every direction and from every corner of the earth. The recent pronouncements and effects of the global economic melt-down have contributed to the eclipse of hope. Unfortunately, some evil people have taken advantage of the situation to amass wealth at the expense of the suffering poor people. For instance, at the time the researcher was writing this section of the chapter, it was announced in the Zambian popular media (Muvi TV, ZNBC, Times of Zambia and The Post) that the Zambian Anti-Corruption Commission had unearthed a scandal where a Ministry of Health official corruptly stole about ten billion kwacha (which after investigations came to twenty-seven billion kwacha, and later increased to sixty-seven billion kwacha) from government coffers. With these huge amounts, this official was able to build big mansions and purchase expensive vehicles like BMW, Hammer, Mercedes Benz, Chevrolet and a Mitsubishi truck. The ACC had also confiscated these items. One would wonder how such resources could be misappropriated when many hospitals and clinics in Zambia lack proper medical services, care and facilities. Such is the pattern in many nations of the world. A lot of people are suffering and dying without proper social services and medical care. The next question, then, is: How have human beings reacted to the massive suffering in the world? The sub-section which follows addresses this crucial question.

4.1.3 Human Reaction to Suffering

The question of suffering has been part of human struggle since the fall. When it comes to the disciples of Jesus Christ, the same question perplexed their minds. They struggled with the nature of the life and message Jesus lived before them and which culminated in his death (Green 2001:100). The expected Messiah who would deliver Israel from the Roman colonizers ended up being executed. Why should a Messiah, the powerful King of the Jews, suffer such a shameful and disgraceful way to Golgotha and an eventual death? This is a scandal of particularity! Jesus further told his disciples that they, too, would go through suffering and persecution. The obvious reaction is

resentment and resignation. This is naturally a human reaction because as fallible human beings we dislike to be associated with and experience suffering of any form. We are unable to bear the effects of suffering. The frame of this research, however, is to call for an appropriate reaction: a search for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the experience of suffering, and an effort to change the whole situation of suffering in light of hope as realized in the Easter event.

One of the outstanding reactions to human suffering is *to question God's justice and love* in such a situation of severe suffering. How can the love and justice of God be justified in the face of evil? It seems in this reaction there is an assumption that God's love and justice either appear in a cosmetic way or does not exist at all. To such a reaction Billman (2005: 27) responds that "I need a life of prayer that reminds me I am not, finally, the one who justifies God's ways. Rather, I am a creature who is justified by God's grace and charged with not missing the pleasure that comes from trying to make a more just world." Billman may be right that a human being is justified by God's grace and charged with a responsibility to make a just world. However, the reality of the effects of suffering still haunts human beings in the world. Moreover, it becomes a big challenge, and possibly an unattainable fact, to make a just world for the people who are actually immersed in suffering. Still, humanity questions the love and justice of God in the face of suffering.

Another human reaction to the reality of suffering in the world is the *dwindling in hope*. The Bible makes a promise of hope for the future. In the eschatological future God promises a "new heaven" and a "new earth." In short, God promises a transformed universe where peace, justice, righteousness, love and wholeness will be the order of the day. But then, with the present escalating experiences of suffering in the world hope in such a promise is undermined. What is the relationship of the promised hope to the reality and experience of suffering in the world? Unlike Billman, Beker (1994:18-22) faces the reality by affirming that:

Both the *quantity* and *quality* of suffering in our world threaten to overwhelm us in such a measure that it seems to evaporate any reasonable basis for hope, or at least any reasonable connection between the cycles of individual failure and success, between suffering and hope. The scope of suffering in our world defines not only our recent past and our present experience but also extends to the impending future. And the global range of suffering in our world makes its impact on us all the more intense.

To stress the scope and intensity of suffering in the world, Beker further states that our exposure to suffering, unparalleled in scope and intensity, is a daily and global reality. For Beker, the scope and

intensity of suffering is so immense and real that it creates false hopes and blind suffering: where confidence breaks down not only in human goodness but also in divine trustworthiness, we face the eclipse of hope and the triumph of irrational suffering. Indeed, when blind fate rules, hope has no ground and suffering no purpose. And this carries with it at least two consequences: (1) when hope has no real ground, false hopes will blind us; (2) when suffering has no purpose, blind suffering triumphs.

Still, another reaction to human suffering is the displaying of *indignation* (an expression of anger due to the harm caused by intense suffering). With this reaction, it is assumed that human beings *ought* to be immune from such evil and suffering (Carson 2006:25-27). Such a reaction of indignation comes due to a number of reasons. Sometimes we falsify the balance between the promise of hope for the future and the reality of suffering as scripture testifies. At times we may succumb to the crush of the urgent – we think that if God is going to relieve our sufferings, he ought to do so immediately. Some people thoroughly misunderstand a number of important texts like Romans 8:28, and absorb a form of theology which seems to provide all answers to the problem of suffering. Furthermore, others have not adequately reflected on the cross – the meaning of taking up our cross and die daily, or to fill up the sufferings of Christ.

For some, especially in Africa, the response to suffering is more *political oriented*: a desire to change the social and political structures which are a source of suffering. The idea here is to call for activism, not passivism, to fight for human quality of life. For instance, Gahmya (1991:66-67) suggests three basic ways through which the African society calls for social and political reform. The first is *lobbying*: trying to persuade one or more legislators (members of law-making bodies) to vote for or against a certain measure. In the case of the church leaders, they can approach Christians holding higher positions in the civil service and/or legislation, pray with them, counsel them and let them know the issues that are of great public concern. The second is forming of or supporting and joining the existing *pressure groups*. The aim here is to be in solidarity with those endeavouring to build a truly humane community: an effort to take up the cause of the poor and oppressed in the African communities. Thirdly, there is a yearning to embark on *letter-writing*: This is where Africans voice their objections or approval of certain issues by publishing articles in both national and private newspapers, Christian magazines and any other papers which enjoy wide circulation like the *Post* newspaper in Zambia. These are some of the ways through which Africans react to suffering. In fact, recently there has been a wide call for Christians to take up key positions (a call

for active/partisan politics) in the governance affairs of their nations. The idea behind this call is that Christians by nature of their calling are honest people, and hence they will execute their duties in the God-fearing manner and be concerned with the suffering people in their societies. Unfortunately, the result has been disappointing in most cases.

To sum it all, as McManus (1999:476-477) clearly states, human suffering greatly shakes our belief in the goodness of creation and the possibility of salvation. It challenges and confronts the victims of suffering with essential questions of life's meaning and purpose, and dialectically provides the means of imaging the horizon of our hope. As noted before, this research is a call for an appropriate reaction: a search for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the experience of suffering, and an effort to change the entire situation of suffering in the light of hope as realized in the Easter event. Therefore, however real and intense suffering may appear, there is need to have a good theological view of suffering. Suffering needs to be perceived from the perspective of divine hiddenness and presence. In this way we are assured of a clear picture of suffering in any context and at whatever level. It also helps us to respond appropriately to such a situation of suffering. The experience of suffering portrays a God who is hidden and unconcerned with the plight of the suffering communities. In the next section, the researcher argues that this seemingly hidden God is also present in the situation of suffering.

4.2 A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN SUFFERING

4.2.1 The Dialectic of God's "Hiddenness and Presence" in Human Suffering

There are some life-threatening situations which make God appear to be hidden. The experiences of emotional and/or physical pain and suffering result in a perception of God as uninvolved, disinterested and absent or apathetic (Louw 2008:94). The meaning and message of God in such experiences seem not to make any sense to the human mind. Life-threatening moments are those moments when a dark cloud has overshadowed human life, and undermined human hope for better life. Examples of these moments are such as when we fall critically ill, when we lose a beloved one like one's spouse, when we suffer an affliction of some kind, and many more hard to cope with situations. In such situations of suffering the love and grace of God for us seems to be a nightmare. An experience of suffering portrays a God who is apparently hidden, though he is the source of life and human hope. The crisis of meaning and faith enters when the praxis of justice is thwarted by the

presence of evil. When evil is more evident and potent in the world than the presence of God or his goodness and justice, God appears to be hidden and all hope for a better life is lost.

The situations of suffering sometimes make humans to speculate about the nature of God. This in itself is a barrier to God and makes Him hidden. Some of the speculative statements are such as: human suffering is the will of the loving God; God does not will evil directly, but permits it to happen; and no event takes place without the permission of the omnipotent God. However, as Baum (1992:24) questions, are such answers still acceptable when one is in pain? Did God really give permission for Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Rwandan genocides? A further challenging question could be: Does God give permission for cancer, HIV/AIDS and other diseases? If he does, then in an African worldview such a God could be considered as a witch, who inflicts pain and suffering upon the people. Billman (2005:25) makes an elaborate argument about such speculations and says that it has serious consequences for prayer. He further explains that suffering in some situations does not warrant any explanation because it is incomprehensible to the limited and fallible human mind.

For example, the Book of Job leaves us with a central question of “how we are to talk about God from within a specific situation of the suffering of the innocent” (Gutierrez 1989: xviii). According to Gutierrez, the innocence that Job vigorously claims for himself helps us to understand the innocence of an oppressed and believing people amid the situation of suffering and death that has been forced upon it. The Book of Job forms a complex whole and addresses major motifs such as the transcendence of God, the problem of evil, human suffering, retribution and friendship. In a nutshell, this book portrays a God who appears to be hidden in the situation of human suffering. In chapter six the researcher discusses the biblical perspective on suffering in a more elaborate manner.

The seemingly hidden God in suffering is also a present God in such a situation. “The incarnate God is present, and can be experienced, in the humanity of every [wo]man, and in full human corporeality” (Moltmann 1974:276). In his providence God does not leave his creation unattended to. If we are to answer the question of God’s goodness and justice in the prevalence of evil and suffering in the world, we need to situate suffering in the context of God’s providence. Babinsky (2005:4-5) affirms that “the suffering we undergo must be contemplated only in the context of the providence of God, not apart from God, and that the evil we encounter must be contemplated only in the context of the sovereign goodness of God.” God’s providence here is demonstrated by God’s sovereign love for all people and every creature. God as the source of life is the origin of all things

and is the sovereign dispenser of all things at an appropriate event in history. In other words, we would say that God is sovereign in love, goodness and justice over all things, inclusive of evil. Therefore, since God is present and in charge, there is need to trust his providential care even in the experience of suffering.

Trust in God's providential care is in a sense an appropriate response to suffering. When we trust that God is present in our plight, it evokes a prayerful spirit in us. Baum (1992:26) calls this kind of prayer a 'prayer of surrender.' Since all hope is lost, we have no choice but to surrender in prayer to God. We surrender ourselves to God in prayer because God is the principle of life and the source of the spiritual and physical energies that enable us to transcend our wounded condition and live richly and deeply. Trust in the God who is present in suffering does not just evoke a prayerful spirit in us, but it also energizes us to help others realize the need to see God's presence for themselves in the midst of their suffering. God needs to be shown to them that he is truly present in whatever form of suffering. This in the end enhances hope to the suffering community. Furthermore, as Wengert (2002:205) affirms, we do not bless or worship suffering but proclaim the God who declares the nothingness of suffering and death to be life and grace. God's deepest desire is the happiness of human beings, for he is committed to the human cause. Ultimately, as McManus (1999:491) concludes, we are all dependent upon God in silence or in speech, in waiting or in activity, whose initiative finds fulfillment beyond the limits of our time or judgment, and whose intentions for our unity, wholeness and flourishing will not be thwarted.

4.2.2 The Uniqueness of Jesus' Suffering

Having stated that God is present in human suffering, though seemingly hidden, it is appropriate to affirm how his presence has been manifested. For us Christians, we affirm that "Christ himself is the great revelation of how God responds to evil: out of an intoxicating and apparently relentless love for humanity, God dwells with us in all of our suffering and stupid cruelty, bringing the incalculable sweetness of divine love to us as intimately as possible" (Farley 2005:16). God ultimately revealed his loving presence in the person and suffering of Jesus Christ. Yacob (2005:10) clearly affirms that "the One who came yesterday is also present today in the fragility of human destiny, and will always be within the weakest, poorest, and smallest of God's people." God demonstrated his presence in the predicaments of humanity through the suffering of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' suffering, God identifies Godself with human suffering. Brinkman (2009:220) supports this point by arguing that suffering is

not linked to the substitutionary assumption of the guilty of others. It is rather “an identification that derives hope from a ‘passage’ similar to that of Jesus’ passage through his suffering to his resurrection. Jesus is thus the representative of millions of sufferers who, full of hope, can identify with him.” Therefore, the divine identification with humanity entails in Jesus’ suffering God’s presence amidst the calamities that bring about suffering.

The question which we can pose here is the nature of Jesus’ suffering. There is always a temptation to think that Jesus suffered only at one stage (during the Passion Week) of his life. The fact is that Jesus suffered throughout his lifetime, though his suffering is magnified during the Passion Week. Berkhof (1996:336-338) gives a comprehensive argument of the nature of Jesus’ suffering. He clearly states that Jesus suffered during his entire life from the assaults, rejection, hatred and unbelief of his enemies and close friends. Jesus also suffered emotionally in body and soul due to the magnitude of human sin and the punishment he would bear. Berkhof further argues that Jesus’ sufferings were as a result of a number of causes ranging from Jesus’ own assumption of a position of a servant, living in a sinful and polluted atmosphere, Jesus’ perfect anticipation of extreme sufferings he would soon experience, and the loneliness, temptations, hatred, rejection, maltreatment and persecutions which he underwent in the end.

Moltmann (1974:126-153) describes the suffering of Jesus Christ as “*Jesus’ Way to the Cross*.” This way to the cross is characterized by three aspects. The first is *Jesus’ relationship to the law* (the *Torah*). He was considered to be a blasphemer for according to the law, his claims about the Kingdom and his relationship with the Father were not compatible with his humanity as perceived by his contemporaries. Moltmann (1974:130) notes that “the conflict was provoked not by his incomprehensible claim to authority as such, but by the discrepancy between a claim which arrogated to itself the righteousness of God and his unprotected and therefore vulnerable humanity.” For this reason he was exposed to the suffering on the way to the cross. Secondly, *Jesus’ relationship with the authority*: he was likened to the revolutionary sect known as the Zealots and therefore condemned as a rebel. Jesus’ punishment on the cross was not necessarily as a result of blasphemy, “which in Israel at his time, as can be seen from the death of Stephen, was always that of stoning. Jesus was crucified by Roman occupying power” (Moltmann 1974:136), for as Stott (1986:24) testifies, the Romans “reserved crucifixion for criminals convicted of murder, rebellion, or armed robbery, provided that they were also slaves, foreigners or other non-persons.” Roman citizens were exempted from crucifixion, except in extreme cases of treason. Jesus was surrendered

by the Jewish authority to the Roman power to suffer such a shameful humiliation to liberate criminals, murderers, armed robbers, slaves, foreigners and those considered non-human. The last aspect of *Jesus' Way to the Cross* is his *relationship with the Father*. Moltmann (1974:145) acknowledges that though the theological conflict of Jesus with the understanding of the law on the part of the Pharisees, and his theological and political conflict with the Zealots and the Romans provide an explanation of his condemnation as a “blasphemer” and his crucifixion as a “rebel,” they do not explain the true inner pain of his suffering and death. His suffering and death were unique for he was the godforsaken (Mark 15:34; cf. Psalm 22:2). In a nutshell, Jesus suffered the torment in his torments and died ultimately because of the abandonment by his God and Father (Moltmann 1974:149). Jesus' suffering and death are in this case unique because they are redemptive or liberative in nature. Moltmann views the cross as primarily God's own suffering and an intratrinitarian event.

These sufferings were not purely natural, but also the result of a positive loving act of God for humanity's redemption. VandenBerg (2007:394) argues that, based on the biblical text, at least one instance of suffering, the suffering of Christ, is redemptive. Therefore, redemptive suffering is unique to Christ. He suffered and died for a mission to redeem human persons from the powers of sin, to offer forgiveness and usher in a new age which will be culminated at his second coming. However, Jesus' redemptive work does not end in suffering and ultimate death on the cross. It continues in the life and work of the church. In the words of Boersma (2004:234), “The work of atonement has its climatic and decisive moment in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He continues his work in the redemptive mission of the church for the world.” Jesus suffered to redeem the church so that through the redemptive work of the church he can redeem the world. Through the missional work of the church, God in Christ who suffered opens the gates of the Kingdom for a suffering world.

The above description of the nature of God presents a “dialectic” of the Godself: God is one who is not only identified with suffering (vulnerability, weakness or *pathos*), but also in the resurrection God is active in overcoming suffering. On one hand, God is portrayed as the compassionate and suffering God. The cross is the true portrayal of the God who identifies himself with human suffering. Therefore, Louw (2008:95) testifies that “the suffering and death of Christ was a mediatory event, which displayed the reality of a suffering and dying Son of God.” This is what makes Christ's suffering unique as compared to human suffering. On the other hand, we should

understand that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ God transforms, empowers and transfigures. This is the basis of the Christian hope because “the strength/force of God is displayed in the overwhelming power of the resurrection, which empowers people to live with dignity and purposefulness despite the reality of suffering, pain, illness, disability, impairment and death” (Louw 2008:95). In the victory of the resurrection over the powers of suffering and death, we see that God is defined finally as the living God. Through the resurrection, God grants us power for reconciliation, forgiveness, victory, and meaningful embodiment and healing. This is the good news that manifests into a life of joy, gratitude and hope.

Moltmann (1974:329-335) draws us to the realization of a wholistic hermeneutic which he calls *political hermeneutics*. Political hermeneutics is “a hermeneutics of life in the situation of the passion of God, and therefore includes both practice and the alteration of practice” (Moltmann 1974:329). Therefore, liberation within political hermeneutics addresses a series of realms and dimensions called “*vicious circles of death*.” The first of these vicious circles is in the realm of economy; thus *poverty*. Poverty in this sense encompasses hunger, illness and early mortality, and is provoked by exploitation and class domination. To address this vicious circle, Moltmann suggests *socialism* as a remedy and symbol for the liberation. Liberation from poverty entails the satisfaction of the material needs of people for health, nourishment, clothing, shelter and advocacy for social justice. In the political realm, the vicious circle is *force* where domination of dictatorships, upper classes or those with privileges, and dominant relationship of powerful over weaker nations are apparent. In this dimension, Moltmann proposes *democracy* as the symbol for the liberation of people from the vicious circle of force. Liberation here means human dignity in the acceptance of political responsibility: participation in and control of the exercise of economic and political power. The third vicious circle is racial and cultural *alienation*: being robbed of your identity and characteristics and being degraded to the point of becoming manipulable factors in the system. This can be addressed by *emancipation* as the symbol for liberation of people. In this sense, people are able to regain self-respect and self-confidence in the recognition of others and fellowship with them. Fourthly, the vicious circles of poverty, force and alienation are bound up in a greater circle of *industrial pollution of nature*. This is irreparable destruction of the balance of nature by industrialization. The remedy to this vicious circle of nature is *peace with nature* as the symbol of liberation of humankind: freeing nature from inhuman exploitation and satisfying nature. The last vicious circle which Moltmann cites is *senselessness and godforsakenness*: the perplexity, disheartenment and loss of all sense of purpose by many people in our society. To this vicious circle,

Moltmann suggests *meaning of life* as the alternative for liberation: a significant life filled with the sense of the whole. Meaning of life is realized when all dimensions of human endeavour (economic, political, cultural and industrial circles) are adequately addressed.

We can conclude this sub-section by stressing that while our suffering may work to sanctify us or draw us into closer fellowship with God, it has no salvific effect. Only Christ's suffering was redemptive, and therefore unique in its nature. Nevertheless, the sufferings of Christ are related to ours and speak to us in our pain in a number of ways. Stott (1986:314-337) suggests that Christ's suffering is a stimulus to patient endurance, the path to mature holiness, the symbol of suffering service, the hope of final glory, the ground of reasonable faith, and the proof of God's love – the personal, loving solidarity with us in our pain.

Political theology as reflected in political hermeneutics is required to bring hope to the suffering people in the world. Therefore, political theology portrays the solidarity of God who is concerned with the welfare and well-being of the suffering humanity. The solidarity of God then calls for reciprocation by ethically showing the same solidarity to those experiencing suffering in the world. The subsequent section calls for ethical living in solidarity with the people experiencing suffering.

4.3 AN ETHICAL CALLING IN HUMAN SUFFERING

Human suffering in the world is a reality and its effects are overwhelming and devastating. Furthermore, we also realize that God is ever-present in the very experience of suffering, though at times we feel as if God's presence is a hidden reality. God's presence is ultimately manifested in the suffering of Jesus Christ whose mission is for the redemption of humankind. The questions which remain to be answered are: What is the call of God upon us in a suffering situation? How should we respond to this call? The researcher is of the view that there is an ethical calling in the experience of suffering. Hence, the section gives different opinions from various scholars on how we should respond to suffering in the world today. These opinions are considered as examples of alternative responses to suffering.

Babinsky (2005:4-9) is of the view that the best response to suffering is not to ask questions like "Why did this happen?" or "Why did God permit this?" because the answers are hard to find. But to ask the more helpful question: "How shall I live?" Through this question we are challenged in the

way we make decisions, in our easy comforts with our privileged lives.¹⁹ For this reason, Babinsky proposes at least four ethical ways through which we can respond to suffering. Firstly, the expression of *faith* to the ever-loving God despite the circumstances in which we find ourselves. “Faith²⁰... strengthens in me a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence in *all* things so that when a time of adversity comes, I say that I am given an opportunity to grow through the pain and affliction into praise” (Babinsky 2005:7). Secondly, faith overflows into *doxology* where we express joy and thanksgiving to God. Thirdly, we can respond to suffering by offering *prayer* within the community of faith together where we pray that God’s sovereign love might be made known to those who suffer under whatever calamity has befallen them. Fourthly, we respond by getting to *work*. Babinsky (2005:8) says, “God challenges me to look beyond myself to all those who are living under God’s sovereign love and goodness. Given calamities and tragedies, afflictions and adversity, there is much work to do.” It is not just about proclaiming, but an action of the sovereign love of God in Christ for all people to whom we are called. In summary, Babinsky is advocating for an inclusive and comprehensive response to suffering. She sees suffering as an ample opportunity for individual Christians and everyone to express meaningful faith, to praise and to be praised by God’s sovereign love, to pray, and get to work.

Another opinion is expressed by Farley (2005:17-18). Like Babinsky, he proposes that we should try to avoid exhausting ourselves looking for reasons for suffering, but instead we should engage a practice of theodicy. This practice of theodicy does not seek an explanation for the suffering experience, but rather a response to suffering. The appropriate response which the practice of theodicy seeks is the natural expression of *compassion* for suffering. Farley (2005:18) argues, “The abyss between this fantasy of power and our experience of underserved and afflictive suffering tears us apart and erodes the certainty of our faith.” But “when we practice compassion for one another we bear witness to the deepest dimension of our faith: God dwells among us. We fantasize about a saviour who could remove the conditions of suffering or inflict suffering exactly as it is ‘deserved’.” Farley further conclusively elaborates, “Therefore in our own suffering and in our awareness of the suffering of the world we should not attribute either indifference or retribution to God. But in the daily practices of compassion that open our heart in ever-expanding awareness to the depth and varieties of suffering, we rest in intimacy with Christ. This intimacy and this compassion are not solutions to the logical problem of theodicy, but they are the nearness of God to the world which is a

¹⁹ Here, Babinsky refers to her American elite context.

²⁰Babinsky is using Calvin’s definition on faith: “Faith is a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence towards 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 III.2.7).

light in the darkness, which the darkness did not and cannot overcome” (Farley 2005:18). It is the Christian mandate that we emulate Jesus by extending compassion to all people, especially to those that are experiencing various forms of suffering. Through the suffering of Christ God identified himself with the vulnerable people in the world. Hence, solidarity with vulnerable people is one way of showing and practicing compassion towards the victims of suffering.

Yacob and McManus echo the same kind of response. They both advocate for what one would call the *praxis of solidarity*. For McManus (1999:490-491), the praxis of solidarity manifests itself in transformative action and in resistance and protest to suffering. It appears as faithful waiting in situations of extreme suffering: attentive love in a *now* that belies the promise that sustains us. It is a contemplative, relational praxis, demanding the hard work of reconciliation together with the paradoxical knowing that reconciliation is a gift of God. The praxis of solidarity is rooted in Jesus’ intimacy with God the Father that sustained the cross and issued in his resurrection. It is also manifested in hopeless situations by the courageous, ministering human presence that alone witnesses to God’s final word over suffering, sin, and death. This praxis of solidarity entails a discipleship of presence (extending a sorrowful embrace). “Where suffering is in vain, its victims depend upon those still free to act in hope or wait in the fruitful silence of reverent solidarity” (McManus 1999:491). As for Yacob (2005:10-17), the praxis of solidarity means making the love of God a reality to the poor and suffering people of Iraq. It is living with the poorest of the poor and helping them to realize that God’s forgiveness gives real hope to the hopeless.²¹ Jacob (2005:17) concludes with a fascinating affirmation, “In the suffering of the Iraq people, I have seen the face of God.”

Other different additional opinions are coming from theologians like Parker, Jensen, Boersma, Still and Palmer. Parker (2007:17-20) advocates a sense of ecumenism by stating that becoming more connected across cultural and geographical lines in the global community “can be empowering, liberating, and enlightening. The ecumenical movement itself is a fruit of a certain kind of globalization.” Jensen (2007:5-10) emphasizes the need for an intercultural relationship and fellowship in the global community where the hybrid nature of all human identity is recognized. Where all cultural human identities are welcome at the Table of Fellowship the impoverishment of suffering is minimized. For Boersma (2004:234), the appropriate response to suffering is an

²¹ The illustrations accompanying Yacob’s article include both images of Iraq’s geography (the land) and an image, in the shape of Iraq, formed out of the faces of many different ordinary Iraq people, from all different religious and geographical areas of the country. In the centre of this image is the face of Jesus on the cross.

expression of joy in sharing Christ's hardships and being united to Christ. More than anything else, Christians "rejoice in the opportunity to share in the hospitality of the Kingdom that opens up through the suffering of Christ, continued also in their lives." Still (2002:191) presents a similar response by stressing that Jesus' scars give a picture of the mission on which Jesus sends them (the disciples): the mission to suffer in their proclamation of him to the world, just as their crucified Lord had been sent. Here, there is need to realize that suffering is not an end in itself, but also a going through the way Jesus has gone. In the words of Palmer (2005:136), "Luther's theology of the cross is in the same line as the biblical principle of servant leadership (Mark 10:43-45)." Our response to suffering, therefore, is to exercise joy and servant leadership for the sake of the victims.

Another, and most precise and appropriate ethical response is to engage in a *political theological enterprise*. Here the stress is on the implications of the Christian faith; in the case of this research, it seeks to emphasize the ethical implications of Jesus' resurrection in the situation of suffering. Hence, as alluded to earlier, it calls for an enterprise of political hermeneutics. Moltmann is informative on this subject. Political hermeneutics is about reflecting the new situation of God in the inhuman situations of people for the sole purpose of breaking down the hierarchical relationships which deprive them of self-determination, and of developing their humanity. In other words, "political hermeneutics sets out to recognize the social and economic influences on theological institutions and languages, in order to bring their liberating content into the political dimension and to make them relevant towards really freeing men from their misery in certain vicious circles" (Moltmann 1974:318). Hence, political hermeneutics addresses the vicious circles of poverty, force, alienation, industrial pollution of nature and godforsakenness by advocating a comprehensive political theology. This theology calls for socialism, democracy, emancipation, peace with nature and meaning of life as symbols for the liberation of humankind from the vicious circles. This truly is praxis of solidarity and relevant to the African scenario of suffering. Furthermore, political theology makes faith in the Easter event a reality in that the suffering people are resurrected from their plight to a meaningful and fullness of life.

The researcher's opinion is that all the above surveyed responses are appropriate in the situation of suffering. Their appropriation and application depend on the nature of suffering. Therefore, there is need to pay attention to the suffering which the victims are going through if we are to render an appropriate ethical approach to deal with the suffering. In the context of the subject at hand, an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection provides a reasonable ethical (and any other)

response to the situation of suffering in the world in general and Africa in specific. The issues raised in this ethical response are related to what has been discussed in chapter three. The essence of this link is to stress that the quest for an appropriate and adequate hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering needs to encompass ethical issues. These issues are considered in the last chapter of the research project. The chapter that follows discusses suffering as a hermeneutical horizon specifically from the sub-Saharan African perspective.

CHAPTER 5: HUMAN SUFFERING AS HERMENEUTICAL HORIZON: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Theology makes more sense and can be considered to be relevant when it is done in the cultures, times, circumstances, and concrete situations of a particular people of such a context. It is for this reason that the researcher has consistently insisted that Jesus' resurrection can only be appropriately interpreted within the framework of suffering in the African context. Suffering is an ambiguous and ubiquitous reality and is not a respecter of age, condition, place, time or any manifestation of a human being. Although its causes, intensity, extent, duration, and attitude may differ from context to context, we need to confess that suffering in Africa is real. Perhaps the question we ought to ask ourselves is: How would one generally describe suffering in Africa? In this chapter, the researcher explains the broader framework of suffering on the African continent, specific portrayals, which the researcher calls "faces" of suffering in Africa, and the divine mandate in the African suffering context.

5.1 BROADER HORIZON: FRAME OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN AFRICA

5.1.1 Nature of Human Suffering in Africa

The African continent appears with two contrasting faces: a brighter and more promising face on one hand, and a gloomier and more hopeless face on the other. Describing this scenario from the African Christianity's perspective Mwaura (2000:97) testifies, "On the one hand, [Africa] depicts a picture of faith, hope and dignity in the crucified Christ; on the other, one of despair, suffering, hopelessness and death. African Christians as cross bearers live in their faith, believing that Christ is reflected in them in every aspect of their being, and as they face their daily struggles in an oppressive environment which they sometimes do not comprehend." It is because of this dual-faceted appearance in their existence that Africans define their situation as that of suffering. In fact, the ambiguity itself may as well intensify the suffering.

When we analyze Africa's context of suffering, we would easily be compelled to agree with Gutierrez's definition of suffering. The Peruvian theologian describes the suffering of the poor in terms of hunger and exploitation; insufficient health care; lack of proper and descent housing; lack of proper formal education; unemployment and minimum wages systems. According to Gutierrez

(1990:10), the poor are the “abused human beings whose rights of association and expression are often censured in the interest of a few aristocrats.” Suffering in this case is experienced by the poor who are vulnerable due to lack of basic essentials for human survival. In other terms, suffering is as a result of a multidimensional poverty: historical, socio-economic, dialectical, theological, and political realities (Sobrino 1988:159-160). Suffering in Africa cannot easily be described in a single sentence because it is multifaceted. As cited in the previous chapter, Moltmann (1974:329-333) refers to the multifaceted nature of suffering as the *vicious circles of death*, which may be applicable to the African context. This research, therefore, seeks to give a snapshot of the general picture of suffering on the continent.

At this stage it is vital to listen to a number of African voices. In his introductory remarks to the article entitled ‘*The disfigured body of Christ and African ecclesiology*,’ Kanyandago, one of the prominent African theologians, names the general suffering in Africa as “the disfigured Body of Christ.” Although Kanyandago refers with “the disfigured Body of Christ” to the church, the realities and concepts which he discusses as issues related to the African church can also be likened to those which are obtained on the continent as whole. To begin with, he offers a commentary to the text on Jeremiah 31:15 where Rachel refuses to be comforted in the weeping for her lost children. Kanyandago (1998:179) explains:

On the African continent, suffering is such a common phenomenon that there is a danger of accepting it as natural or God-ordered. The continent can be considered a place where mothers (parents), such as Rachel, are wailing and weeping for the loss of their loved ones. There are those who die before they are born or who die prematurely. Millions die of hunger, famine, malnutrition, dehydration and diseases or in civil wars. Those who manage to become adults become non-persons in exiles, refugee camps, prisons...

Africa as a continent is disfigured in the sense that the life of individuals or groups is in a way affected negatively in all dimensions of human existence: healthwise, political, social, and economical, and all other aspects that support human survival. Cases of human suffering (disfigurement) on the African continent are innumerable and some are particularly grave (Kanyandago 1998:180-183). In the first place, there is generalized economic backwardness and poverty. Ironically, Kanyandago notes, on a continent endowed with many human and material resources, one still finds a general economic crisis which negatively affects other spheres of life. Civil wars and refugees are the order of the day on the African continent. Millions of people and properties are lost in Africa almost every year in protracted civil wars often perpetrated through the

collusion of local leaders and outside powers. These civil wars give rise to the problem of refugees and displaced people whose psychological and social relationships are shattered; leaving them marked all their lives. Famine and hunger are other forms of disfigurement in Africa. Many Africans stay many days without sufficient good food and drink. Besides millions of children who die every year as a result of malnutrition, thousands of others die from hunger or are exposed to it. The general picture of suffering in Africa is that which is accelerated by poverty, famine, diseases, exploitation, civil wars, racial discrimination, and the increased number of Africans who find themselves in refugee camps due to these civil unrests. The scenario of suffering in Africa, therefore, can be summarized by the devastating effects of political and socio-economical arrangements which do not seem to favour the wider masses on the continent.

Kunhiyop (2001:8) adds by arguing that the index of poverty is, “as the rest of the world is progressing, getting richer, and having better living standards, Africa is rapidly deteriorating, getting more children and of course getting poorer, hungrier, sicker, less clothed, and less sheltered. As the countries are consumed in war, men are killed and widows and orphans are created daily.” Poverty intensifies suffering in Africa to the extent that the poor Africans are devastated and de-humanized. In fact, suffering on the continent encompasses the spiritual, socio-economic, political and ecological aspects of human life.

Waliggo (1991:169-170), a Ugandan Catholic priest, describes suffering in Africa in a number of aspects. Firstly, he says suffering is seen in the lack of basic necessities of life that causes death to millions of Africans annually. This scenario is noticed in vices such as hunger, famine, and malnutrition; insufficient and/or unclean water; lack of medicine and health care units; unsatisfactory living conditions; the large population of homeless people – the refugees, displaced peoples, or orphans and widows. Suffering also manifests itself in the economical aspect. In this aspect poverty is the noticeable element. Poverty in Africa is primarily caused by unbalanced economic policies which favour the already rich and powerful nations of the world. This situation was established from the time of the African slave trade, through colonialism to the present-day neo-colonialism. Thirdly, high levels of illiteracy and ignorance of the scientific and technological advancements in the world lead to an inferiority complex, and feelings of helplessness.

Suffering in Africa can also be said to be cultural. What Waliggo means here is that suffering manifests in cultural oppression, racism, tribalism, and a feeling of being rejected. In other words,

suffering may be taken as part of a specific cultural system. African dictatorial leadership approaches have also caused massive suffering to the African people. Since the time of Africa's independence, Africans have greatly suffered under the yoke of their own political leaders: military coups, conflicts and selfish African leaders. Lastly, Waliggo points out that the feeling and prediction that so far there is no remedy to Africa's suffering seems to add more pain and suffering to Africans. Suffering in all its aspects seems to keep on multiplying as years go on, causing greater despair and anxiety.

Another African theologian, Niwagila (1997:178), further testifies to this pathetic situation of suffering from the ecological perspective. For Niwagila, African countries are facing ecological crisis. There is water pollution through the dumping in it residues from factories. The thick forests of equatorial Africa are being exhausted, and much of them are killed by chemicals and plastic materials. Africa is no longer a sanctuary of natural resources, but a den of robbers. Africa is now exporting life and importing death: the cities are full of used cars, forbidden chemicals such as DDT, expired food commodities and drugs used in the rural areas which threaten the lives of the inhabitants.

In short, having looked at various descriptions of suffering by African theologians, we would affirm that suffering in Africa manifests itself in socio-economic, political, and ecological deplorable conditions. Examples of such conditions are poverty, hunger, famine, diseases with poor health care, lower education standards, civil wars, influx of refugees and ecological crisis. The situation still worsens despite the fact that Africa is endowed with rich and abundant natural resources such as water in the rivers, dams and lakes, natural vegetation, fertile soil, favourable climatic conditions, good landscapes, and available mineral wealth. The researcher discusses the specific aspects of African reality of suffering in the next section of the chapter. As for now, the question is: What, then, are the causes of this situation of suffering in the African continent?

5.1.2 Causes of Suffering in Africa

There are so many causes of suffering in Africa. Basically, one would describe suffering in Africa as a result of factors such as political, economical and ecological. Down the line of historical unfolding events, we discover that suffering in Africa is mainly connected to slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, dictatorial forms of leadership, harsh economic policies like the Structural Adjustment

Program, civil wars, depletion of the natural resources and ecological destruction. It seems there are so many factors that have escalated Africa's plight. What really is the root cause of Africa's experience of suffering?

Waliggo (1991:165-169) helps us to understand suffering in Africa by highlighting the major categories of suffering, and these can be grouped into two. The first category includes those forms of suffering which should be constantly fought against in our lives and society. Suffering can be self-inflicted through sin, misbehaviour, ignorance, lack of self-control, laziness, narrow-mindedness, and malice. That is why the Bible calls us to repentance and conversion as an expression of God's kindness and compassion. On the other hand, under this category, suffering can be caused by selfish individuals or groups or societies of people. In this sense, therefore, God calls for liberation of the victims. This liberation is meant for the enhancement of God's Kingdom which is characterized by justice and righteousness, peace and unity, and human dignity and universal brotherhood.

The second category has to do with the forms of suffering which should be "positively and dynamically accepted and utilized as means to our growth to Christian maturity and to authentic and total human liberation" (Waliggo 1991:165). First of all in this category, there is suffering on behalf of those you love, and to share with those who have nothing. This kind of suffering demands a sacrifice, but brings joy to both the victims and the one who sacrifices his/her life. Jesus of Nazareth experienced this form of suffering in his preaching and in action by freely accepting suffering and an eventual death on the cross (John 15:13). To clarify further this theodicy, Waliggo (1991:168) comments, "Whereas, therefore, the cross is a sign of rejection, failure, and humiliation on one hand, it is a sign of extreme love, commitment, and liberation on the other." The suffering of Jesus Christ was an extension of God's extreme love for the liberation of the suffering humanity. It was meant for the other, not the self. Suffering can also be as a result of a natural cause. This is the mysterious suffering of the innocent which can make the victims easily lose the Christian faith and faith in God (Psalms 73:13; John 9:2-3). Sometimes this kind of suffering comes our way, though painful and too hard to bear, with the purpose of manifesting or revealing God's works and will.

Again, the most challenging question which we need to answer is: What then are the root causes of Africa's sufferings? Different opinions have been offered both by outsiders and Africans themselves. Waliggo (1991:170) explains that according to many outsiders, some of the root causes

of Africa's sufferings are African tribalism, innate laziness, lack of investment/inventiveness or creativity, and corruption of the African leaders.

When it comes to Africans, there is a divergence of opinions. Some say the root cause is the exploitation of Africa by outsiders which enforces ignorance and poverty on the continent. As stated in chapter four, *Post-Colonial African Philosophy* notes that decolonization and formal nationalist spirit in Africa do not mean the end of imperialism. Imperialism has actually been incarnated in economic colonization as a major aspect of capitalism. Due to the ever-growing desire to make profits, rival groupings have developed power struggles. In the end, these power struggles have brought about massive suffering, especially on the African continent. Gahamya (1991:61-63) cites a number of causes of the scourge of suffering in Africa. According to him suffering is as a result of the colonial legacy where Africa was looked upon by colonial powers as a source of raw materials. He further explains that as a result of this perception, most of the African countries were single commodity economies with large plantations started by settlers producing a single crop for export. Suffering was further escalated by destructive economic policies put in place by many of the African leaders who took over from the colonial masters after independence. The next catalyst of suffering in Africa has been skilled manpower crisis: the colonial powers on the whole never trained local manpower to replace them once independence had been achieved. This deficiency in skilled manpower resulted in, among other things, the mismanagement of the economy, continued reliance upon expatriates, a delay in training and employment of Africans in managerial and other skilled positions. The other aspect which has contributed to Africa's suffering is military expenditure: due to civil wars large part of the budget is allocated on defence, thereby depriving other vital projects of the needed funds. This in the end hinders development, and consequently causes poverty (one of the "faces" of suffering in Africa) on a larger scale.

Others are of the view that suffering in Africa is a result of ignorance of science and technology which prevents Africa from competing with developed countries. The absence of total liberation of Africa and the Africans is thought to be the root cause of suffering in Africa by some Africans. Still, others suggest that the root cause of this pain and suffering on the African continent is the presence of sin and lack of total conversion to Christ. All these opinions, from both outsiders and the local Africans, could have contributed to the suffering of Africa in one way or the other. But then, it is important to know where all these causes come from.

The researcher finds the opinion offered by Waliggo to be appropriate in as far as the root causes of suffering in Africa is concerned. According to Waliggo (1991:171-173), apart from the natural causes, there is only one root cause of suffering on the continent: that is *rejection*, both by powerful outsiders and powerful insiders. All attitudes which continue to oppress Africa and intensify suffering originate from rejection. From rejection there comes failure to seriously think of a lasting solution to the unnecessary suffering on the continent. Waliggo further claims that outsiders have constantly demonstrated rejection to Africa in a number of ways. In the past, especially in the colonial and missionary era some outsiders rejected Africans by virtue of their black colour which they perceived as a sign of dirt, sin, evil, sickness, malice, and aversion. Others offered a distorted interpretation which in their mind represents the Africans as the condemned children of Ham, who were to be slaves forever to the descendants of Shem. Rejection was also perpetuated due to many myths which were told and written about the Africans and their land, e.g. the perception that Africa is a dark and hostile continent. Rejection was also due to the misconception that the Euro-American world is the centre of the universe – the model of what is good and the centre of God’s love and presence. Pondi (1997:43) calls this kind of thinking as “the process of *de-Africanisation* of Africa” where the mindset is characterized by the concept that African development is dependent upon whatever the northern countries of the world decided, whether politically or economically.

It is also true that Africans have often been rejected by their own powerful political, economical, religious and social rulers in various ways. Rejection has been noticed where bad governments in Africa have caused many deaths, forced many people into refugee life, and created suffering for many people. Sometimes due to fear, self-interest, self-preservation, and in some cases ignorance, many of Africa’s social, intellectual, and religious leaders have often overlooked the sufferings of their own people, allied with the rejectors, and supported the *status quo* in situations of suffering. African theologians, too, appear to many ordinary African Christians as among the “rejectors” for not doing theology from, for and with the local African people. Kudoyi suggests that a *system*, mainly the institutions of government, is the cause of poverty in Africa, hence the rejection of the poor people. This in the end causes massive suffering upon the African communities. Kudoyi (1997:9) ably narrates this scenario:

African leaders had suggested one-party systems, arguing that one-party systems would develop their countries very fast, promote prosperity, peace, justice and unity. Instead, the one-party system had retarded progress and caused corruption, tribalism, oppression, exploitation, injustice and extreme poverty among millions and millions of Africans, while making a few Africans millionaires.

In fact, rejection is also being noticed in the multi-party and capitalistic system. That is why for Post-Colonial African thinking rejection is perceived from a political point of view. Post-Colonial African Philosophy cites socialism and colonialism as the two major world sociopolitical systems that have had a dominating impact on the African continent. In actual sense, as Wondji (1993:826) explains, Africa's decolonization in the 1960s was an opportunity for African countries to revive diplomatic relations with the socialist world. African leaders resorted to the socialist alternative because it put humanity at the centre: no person uses his wealth to exploit others and all people are required to work to earn their living (Nyerere 1998:80). Furthermore, "socialism recognizes dialectic, the possibility of creation from forces which are opposed to one another; it recognizes the creativity of struggle, and, indeed, the necessity of the operation of forces to change. It also embraces materialism and translates this into social terms of equality" (Nkrumah 1998:93). The capitalist mindset presents a different picture, where the interest is in earning huge profits and enhancing free market economy. According to Chinweizu (1993:769), slave trade, imperialism and racism are the three evils that have coloured Africa's relationship with the capitalist world.

In Fanon's thought, rejection was due to a number of factors. The first is *colonization* of Africa where "the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown" (Fanon 1998:228). In colonization, the colonizer rejects the native by exercising oppression in the form of domination, exploitation and pillage (plunder). Therefore, the call in this colonial period was for Africans to fight against oppression. The other factor of rejection in African is the process of decolonization, which was characterized by acts of violence. Fanon (1998:142) defines decolonization as "the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies." The encounter and existence (e.g. the exploitation of the native by the settler) of the two forces was marked by violence. This violence escalated throughout the whole process of decolonization, which to a great extent resulted to suffering. The expectation by an ordinary African was that decolonization of Africa would end vices such as poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment. Unfortunately, the outcome in most African countries did not meet the expectation because the vices which continue to bring suffering are still a strain on African people. This in itself is rejection of the suffering people of Africa.

The other factor of rejection is *racism*. Racism, as defined by Van der Berghe (1967:11), is “any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between human groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinctions between groups socially defined as races.” The core issue in racism is the mindset of cultural hierarchy; this has negative impact on economy due to enslavement of an “inferior” culture by a “superior” one. According to Fanon (1998:306-308) racism is an element of systematized oppression of a particular grouping. Racism is oppressive in that it destroys the other culture’s cultural values or ways of life in terms of language, dress and techniques. In Fanon’s words, “The social constellation, the cultural whole, are deeply modified by the existence of racism” (Fanon 1998:307). It also leads to the acts of domination, exploitation and dehumanization of one cultural grouping by another which massively affirms its superiority. In short, racism bloats and disfigures the face of the culture that practices it. It enslaves, exploits and weakens a social group through alienation, assimilation and imposition of foreign culture on the so-called “inferior” cultural group.

It is important to note that racism has not been completely eliminated on the African scene. Even if the most part of racism which was practiced during the colonial era came to an end with the emergence of the colonies into independent states, racism still persists in some of the independent African states. Eze (1984:105) testifies, “The formal prohibition of racial discrimination has not often eliminated racial conflicts and in some countries, such as the Sudan and Chad, violent conflicts have ensued that almost led to the dismemberment of the political entity.” Rwandan genocide is a typical consequence of racism which led to the massacre of many people in 1994. Therefore, the whole scenario of racism in Africa is that of cultural rejection of one race by the other. Racism, too, brings suffering on the so-called inferior cultural grouping.

The belief in *superstition* and practice of *witchcraft* in Africa has been a source of rejection and suffering. According to Bosch (1987:41) in traditional African society evil and suffering are generally authored by a witch. However, witches are not the only source and agents of evil and suffering. These also come from a category of malevolent ancestral spirits, people who died in wickedness and with a curse, and now they take that evil to those that are living. To remove the bad omen (and suffering) which is believed to have come from ancestral spirits, a religious ritual is performed where a sacrifice is offered in order to let the spirit rest in peace (what is known as “*kugoneka mzimu*” in my language – Chewa). If evil is a result of witchcraft, an exercise of witch-

hunting is undertaken. This exercise is performed by the witch-finder/hunter or *kamcape*.²² Stewart and Strathern (2004:61) narrate that when the witch-finder comes to the village, he has all the men and women line up before the headman, as for an inspection. All the people are told to pass by the witch-finder, who catches their image (“spirit”) in a small mirror and is said to be able to tell at once whether they are guilty of witchcraft. Those selected are told to yield up their “horns and medicine,” and these are then collected at a cross-road outside the village for everyone to inspect. Each person is told to drink the *mucape* liquid (cleansing medicine), and they are then declared free from witchcraft. Anyone who drinks the medicine but afterwards returns to the ways of witchcraft dies a grisly death and so self-destruction. The witch-finders also sell minor protective charms and medicine sewn in small cloth bags. The whole idea of these practices is to get rid of the suffering and pain which is brought about by witchcraft practices.

Suffering in Africa appears in many forms and explanations for its cause are varied. In whatever form it appears, suffering is being intensified due to the fact that in some quarters it is accepted as a norm of life. As a result, adverse effects on the African communities arouse various reactions from the people. The sub-section that follows focuses on various reactions to the situation of suffering in Africa.

5.1.3 Some Reactions to Suffering in Africa

As noted earlier, there is dialectic picture of the experience of life in the African context. Africa shows some light of hope on one hand, and a dark cloud of hopelessness on the other. Maluleke (2000:93) calls this scenario the dialectic of identification and non-identification. He explains that African community, particularly the grass-root African Christianity, “harbors a dialectic of identification and non-identification with the suffering and experiences of Christ.” This means that some Africans identify themselves with the sufferings (of Christ) while others do not, especially those who live an easy life of excess. For this reason, there are various reactions to the situation of suffering in Africa. Naturally, one expects inadequate or inappropriate as well as adequate or appropriate reactions. It is the intention of this sub-section, therefore, to briefly point out some of these reactions to suffering in the African context.

²² *Kamcape* simply means the performer of cleansing of the practice; in this case, witchcraft.

According to Kunhiyop (2001:14-20) there are a couple of notable inadequate approaches or reactions to the plight of suffering, especially the vice of poverty, which must be considered as unacceptable. In the first instance, there is the idea that *God “sides” with the poor and “opposes” the rich*. In fact, almost all literature on the proper Christian approach to poverty demonstrates a consensus that God has a concern for the poor (e.g. Proverbs 14:31; 19:17). It is true that God is concerned with the plight of the poor, but is not indiscriminately identified with the poor. He does not take sides because this God is a just and compassionate God. Therefore, the perception that God sides with the poor and opposes the rich is inadequate and unacceptable. Secondly, there is the call for *equal distribution of wealth* because justice demands the equal distribution of wealth. This call is catalyzed by the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor is seen as sinful and therefore must be eliminated. Yes, God demands a life of justice and equality among his creatures. Nevertheless, to attain this reality by any attempt to deal with poverty must deal not only with the external causes (e.g. bad economy, famine, and deaths), but also with the internal moral issues. Moral and spiritual solutions are not only basic but also pertinent in any attempt to deal with the problem of poverty, and indeed of suffering.

Others are advocating for the *overthrowing of corrupt structures*. This idea emphasizes that there must be a violent revolution to overthrow the rich in structures of power in order to achieve the objective of justice for all. However, experience has shown that once a class has attained power, it also becomes a rich class and the poor continue to suffer. There is no guarantee of better and quality life even after an evolutionary action. There is also what Kunhiyop calls “*guilt manipulation*.” This is where you assign guilt to the wealthy that are perceived to accumulate wealth through exploitation of people. The truth is that from a biblical and Christian point of view, manipulation of guilt is never given as an appropriate motivation for helping the poor. Some people are rich not necessarily out of exploitation or any other unacceptable means, but they were just blessed by God through hard work in life. In fact, some of these rich people are very good at helping out the needy.

Another unacceptable perception of suffering is where you consider it as *normal for women to experience some kind of suffering*. Mwaura (2000:98) testifies that “the model of Christ as the long-suffering, sacrificing servant has been imposed on women. They are many times called upon by pastors to accept their deprivation, suffering and abuse as Christ did, and focus their minds on the reward that will result from their endurance. The cross therefore ... is not free of abuse.” The result of this perception is that women become victims of culture which dictates their position and roles in

society as well as access to resources. Therefore, women are marginalized economically, socially and politically and bear the greatest blunt of poverty. They also experience the greatest impact of failing economics and bad governance, gender violence, property grabbing, degrading widowhood rituals, wars, ethnic violence and the HIV/AIDS scourge which in some countries in Africa is considered as “a woman’s disease.” Women are more vulnerable to the disease and are disadvantaged due to their lack of access to education, health care, property and knowledge of their legal rights. Women are also psychologically suffering. For instance, by virtue of being women and the issuing of blood during the menstruation cycle women are demeaned and made to be of low self-esteem.²³ This whole perception and scenario of women perpetuates suffering and is not only unacceptable, but also inhuman which needs to be dealt with in order to enhance justice for all people.

Despite the gravity and ambiguity of suffering in Africa, there are some people who approach suffering with a positive and hopeful mind. God’s demonstration of the sacrificial love is what motivates such individuals and communities to react to suffering in such a positive manner. Sivalon (2002:375), a Tanzanian expatriate, gives a theological reflection by the Maryknoll Society in Africa on their ministries. Responding to the major social issues of poverty, AIDS and refugees, the theme of suffering of the innocent has emerged as key for understanding the *Paschal Mystery* and its centrality in the salvific will of our trinitarian God. Through the innocent victim, God’s self-sacrificing love is revealed. That love stands in strong protest against social sin and its negative impact on human life. It also manifests God’s loving presence to those who suffer persecution, oppression, and discrimination. The loving God is the Emmanuel, the God with the suffering people of Africa. For this reason, one approaches suffering with hope for the better.

The love of God is not the only driving force for hopeful live in suffering. By nature, Africans are religious people who identify themselves with a supreme being. Even before the missionaries brought the Christian faith to the African communities, they already had some forms of worship of a certain supernatural being that was not only transcendent, but also concerned about their welfare. As Sivalon (2002:376) acknowledges, the African deep religiosity is a source of hope and joy in the face of massive suffering by the innocent Africans. Further, Sivalon (2002:382) explains that another side of African life that is so striking to the foreigner is the joy and celebration which are so

²³ The researcher remembers one instance where he was administering Holy Communion at a certain congregation in Reformed Church in Zambia. Some men refused to be served with bread and wine by female elders simply because they were considered as “dirty” due to their monthly blood discharge. According to these men the elements of the sacrament were already “defiled” by the women’s “dirtiness” immediately the women touched the serving plates and cups.

much a part of the lives of the people of Africa. Even in the midst of drought and famine, traditional ceremonies go on, and all ceremonies are celebrations. This genuine joy comes from the very depths of the religiosity of the people, and their insight that God is always with them. God is never questioned or blamed. God's goodness and presence is never doubted. God is the *God with them*.

This calls to view and approach suffering in Africa from the perspective of God's love. The understanding that God never ceases to love despite the intensity of suffering enhances a right reciprocity within us. We react to suffering with worship, love, hope and joy. Furthermore, such an understanding of God calls for a pragmatic response. The practical response would be thought to be threefold: cultural, psychological and political. The cultural sphere seeks to address the question of culture in its relation to the gospel. The whole essence is that the oppressive elements in our culture need to be transformed in order to release people like women from their bondage. On the psychological sphere, there is need to provide a therapy that would address emotional effects of suffering among the African communities. The political sphere should be concerned with the issues to do with solidarity with the sufferers and changing and challenging the structures that perpetuate suffering. This threefold practical response to suffering truly makes God's love a reality among the suffering Africans.

The researcher seeks to elaborate more on our role in dealing with suffering in Africa with an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. But before such a discussion, it is practically appropriate to discuss the specific aspects of suffering on the African continent. This is so because suffering in Africa manifests itself and progresses in a number of areas. The researcher has opted to call these areas the "faces of suffering" in Africa and their selection is meant to demonstrate how suffering in Africa is affecting people's hope. There are so many aspects which portray suffering in Africa, but the researcher is of the view that the chosen aspects are the most common ones which would help to understand the reality of the African suffering scenario. The section that follows is dedicated to this line of thought.

5.2 SPECIFIC HORIZON: FACES OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN AFRICA

Suffering in Africa manifests in several aspects which if we are to attempt to discuss, this doctoral research could not contain. Therefore, due to limited space the researcher seeks to highlight only

three major “faces of suffering” in Africa. The three issues arise in terms of their negative impact and cause a lot of suffering to human life in the African communities.

5.2.1 The ‘Gloomy Face’ of Poverty

Like general suffering, poverty is a vice which emerges as a result of both natural and man-made hazards. All these vices, whether natural or human calamities, can and have caused abject poverty to the African. What then is poverty, and how has it affected the African continent? Poverty can be described in so many ways, but in this research project the researcher adopts the definition as proposed by Theuri. According to Theuri (2003:233) poverty is “the absence of the material goods and amenities needed to sustain one’s life at a level and in manner that promotes the dignity of the human person; it degrades everything that is human.” This description of poverty is appropriate in that it explains the real situation of suffering in Africa. Many people in Africa have been deprived of things essential for their survival. Their lives have been degraded to such an extent that injustice has been perpetuated economically, socially and politically. The socio-economical and political situations and structures have denied the poor in Africa their means of survival. Oduyoye (2006:26) observes, “First and foremost the inability to feed, house, and clothe oneself from one’s resources is the stark face of poverty. Individuals, organizations, and governments that cannot meet these basic needs independently of donations, grants, and loans are poor.” Poverty promotes a dependency syndrome either at an individual, community or national level. Because one cannot meet the basic needs by oneself, s/he is left with no choice but to beg for assistance, which in most cases – especially at national level – has conditions attached.

Poverty in Africa manifests itself in many ways such as prostitution, exposure to risks, corruption, robbery, street life in form of street kids and street vendors, increased unemployment, living in squalor, shanties, shackles, high infant mortality, acute malnutrition, short life expectancy – which in sub-Saharan Africa is mostly below fifty, human degradation, and living in overcrowded and often poorly ventilated homes (Kunhiyop 2001:4). People who fail to make ends meet resort to addictive practices, including sex, alcohol, drugs, and eventually run mad (Kanyandago 1999:8). Poverty pervasively dominates the African continent where pictures of weak, hungry and emaciated human beings all over the continent are displayed on televisions. When one moves along the streets of the African cities one is confronted by the gloomy picture of poverty in the form of beggars roaming and begging money or food for themselves and their families. One wonders if there is any

hope for the poor in Africa. The poor struggle for survival each day that passes. As Sivalon (2002:377) puts it, everyday people wake up to the reality of being underpaid, or unpaid; they struggle to survive, and continue to hope for better for their children.

The alarming situation is that most of the Africans are not just poor, but they are destitute – with hardly any means for adequate livelihood. Yet the rich on the other hand are not merely rich, but they are affluent in that they have more than they could ever need for comfortable living. This scenario would compel one to conclude that poverty is not as a way of accident; it is in most cases established and sustained, whether consciously or unconsciously, by people “who happen to be in charge of the continent’s resources and government, inflicting great violence to the majority of people in the continent” (Theuri 2003:255). In an article on globalization for the journal of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary called the *Insight*, the researcher made a claim that globalization is ambiguous which poses a great challenge to African contextual theologies. There is a disparity in the manifestation of globalization on the African continent: on one hand, there is a promise or revival of hope; and on the other, there is gloominess of hope. To describe the gloomy picture, the researcher claims, “Africa has been considered a dark continent for a long time. With the surfacing of the gloomy face of globalization, a large population of Africans has undergone unfavourable conditions such as poverty, poor health care, unemployment, economic neo-colonialism, and many more” (Banda 2007:27). It is this gloominess, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, that has caused abject poverty and eventually massive suffering in Africa.

To illustrate Africa’s scenario of poverty, Muchena (2009:32) helps with global statistical information. According to this information, 100 million more people were driven into poverty in the year 2008 and 44 million people were suffering from malnutrition. In the same year, one billion people were reported to live on less than a US \$ 1 per day. It is also recorded that since 1990 the number of poor people (most of them are in Africa) has increased by an average of ten million per year; and the number of Africa’s poor people has grown, and Africa’s share of the world’s absolute poor increased from 25 percent to 30 percent in the 1990s. It is also estimated that 1.2 billion people lack access to clean water, and hundreds of millions breathe unhealthy air; and nearly 25 million people in a year die due to lack of clean water and adequate sanitation. Africa also accounts for only 2 percent of the global trade. In fact, of the 41 Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) identified by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2000, 37 countries were in sub-Saharan Africa. The

statistics also indicate that according to the SADC Millennium Summit on Poverty in 2008, over 40 percent of the SADC citizens live below the poverty datum line.

Another piece of statistical information is displayed by Moyo (2009:69). The information gives a clear picture of food poverty and malnutrition in various countries in Southern Africa. This information ranges in the years from 1990 to 2005. The table²⁴ below is meant to function as a sample which shows the levels of food poverty and malnutrition in the stated countries:

Country	Prevalence of child malnutrition, under weight (% of children under age 5)		Population below minimum dietary energy consumption			
	Surveys 1990-1999		Surveys 2000-2005		Share (%)	Millions
	Year	Percent	Year	Percent	2004	2004
Angola	1996	40.6	2001	30.5	35	4.8
Botswana	1996	17.2	2000	12.5	32	0.6
DRC	1995	34.4	2001	31.0	74	39.0
Lesotho	1996	16.0	2000	18.0	13	0.2
Madagascar	1997	40.0	2004	41.9	38	6.6.
Malawi	1995	29.9	2002	21.9	35	4.2
Mali	1996	26.9	2001	33.2	29	3.8
Mauritius	1995	14.9	n/a	n/a	5	0.1
Mozambique	1997	26.1	2003	23.7	44	8.3
Namibia	1992	26.2	2000	24.0	24	0.5
Seychelles	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	0.0
South Africa	1999	11.5	n/a	n/a	3	0.0
Swaziland	n/a	n/a	2000	10.3	22	0.2
Tanzania	1999	29.4	2005	21.8	44	16.4
Zambia	1999	25.0	2003	23.0	46	5.0
Zimbabwe	1999	13.0	n/a	n/a	47	6.0

From the information given above, one can tell that most of the countries in Southern Africa were experiencing abject food poverty and malnutrition in the period the surveys were carried out. Take, for instance, Zambia (the researcher's country of residence), by 1999 the country's prevalence of child malnutrition was at 25%, and the population below minimum dietary energy consumption was at 46% in 2004 representing 5 million people. Now, Zambia's population stood at slightly over 11 million according to the 2000 census. This means, then, that nearly half of the country's population

²⁴ Moyo extracts the statistical information from the World Bank Development Indicators of 2007.

was below minimum dietary energy consumption, and a considerable number of children were malnourished.

The reality of poverty in Zambia can further be illustrated by the survey carried out on 28th February, 2009 by the Jesuits Centre for Theological Research (Kryticous 2009:60). For example, according to this report the total cost of basic food items for a family of six in the city of Lusaka (Zambia's capital) is about K 2,199,880 (which is roughly about US \$ 439.98) per month. This excludes other additional costs like school fees and medical charges. In any case, the estimated figure would make a family of six survive in Lusaka as at February, 2009. The gloomy face appears when it comes to an average wage earned per month by a worker in Lusaka. The lowest paid worker earned about K 300,000 (US \$ 60) to K 750,000 (US \$ 150), and the highest paid worker earned K 1,121,000 (US \$ 224.20) to K 2,624,000 (US \$ 524.80). Much of the work force in Lusaka is comprised of casual workers on a small farm, guards with security firms, secretaries in civil service, teachers and nurses. According to the survey, only a few nurses are paid a salary which can meet the total cost of the basic food items in Lusaka. The rest of the workers' salaries are below what they need to survive. This shows how poor people are in Zambia as reflected by the Lusaka statistics. Surely, how can a family of six survive on US \$ 60 per month when in actual sense they need about US \$ 439.98 for their living? No wonder many families engage themselves in illicit activities like robbery, prostitution, street vending and corruption for extra income. This only shows that the effects of poverty in developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa, are not only real, but also are so much devastating.

Let us take the Zimbabwean situation as another example. The country is endowed with natural richness in form of minerals, water from rivers and lakes, fertile soils for agriculture and green natural vegetation. But due to poor management, political conflicts, international economic sanctions and cultural and social violence, Zimbabwe is left depleted economically where food and other essentials of life are hard to find. As if that is not enough, cholera hits many already poor and devastated communities. In short, poverty in Zimbabwe manifests its gloominess in forms of political, social, economical and health crises. These have adverse psychological, social and spiritual effects on the ordinary Zimbabwean.

The Zambian and Zimbabwean pictures of the poverty situation is exactly what one would find in most of the African countries, especially where there are political and economic upheavals. As noted

earlier, there are so many factors that contributed to the problem of poverty in Africa. Some of the effects of poverty on the continent, as Theuri (2003:236-237) explains, are such as the undermining and eroding of African tradition of family solidarity and generosity by materialism and individualism. The means of production are controlled by the rich and the most influential minority in most African countries, to the exclusion of the poor majority. This in the end creates tension between the affluent and powerful and the poor and oppressed. The poor are denied access to qualitative life in that they are subjected to the sub-human living conditions.

The question still remains: How can an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection address the situation of suffering through poverty in Africa? This is a challenging question which will be addressed in this research project. However, at the end of this chapter, the researcher will suggest a God-given mandate entrusted to humanity. For now the researcher discusses another "face of suffering" in Africa.

5.2.2 The 'Aggressive Face' of Civil Wars and Refugees

When we listen to the world news, we discover that the problem of refugees in Africa continues to dominate at the world scene. In most cases the problem of refugees is a result of ethnic conflicts, violence, civil wars, religious militarism, terrorist activities, and social unrest in a number of African countries. These civil unrests continue to produce thousands of refugees who are huddled in camps and are experiencing extreme suffering in these camps. In the words of Obeng (1999:121), "Throughout 1991 and 1992, Africa was confronted with a problem of mass movement of people of unprecedented magnitude and complexity. Thousands in Africa were forced to flee their countries everyday, particularly in Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan ... The people involved in such movements fall into a category recognized as refugees." Sub-Saharan Africa has in most recent history been marked by a number of continued civil wars. These wars are so fierce that they portray an "aggressive face of suffering" on the part of the victims. The concern of this sub-section is to discuss the suffering of refugees in Africa who find themselves in refugee camps in foreign countries due to civil wars in their countries of origin.

To start with, it is important to understand who a refugee is. Obeng (1999:122) explains that the United Nations, in its 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol agreed to define a refugee as follows²⁵:

Every person who, owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

African states have recognized that “well founded fear of persecution” was not sufficiently a wide criterion to cover all the refugee situations in Africa. Therefore, the then Organization of African Unity (O.A.U), now called the African Union (A.U), extended the definition of refugee at its Convention of 1969 to state the sufficiency of the definition, and it read as follows²⁶:

A person who has been compelled to leave his own country owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

Both of the definitions simply allude to the fact that refugees are people who have been forced to leave their home countries to seek refuge outside, because their lives were threatened by acts of violence (Obeng 1999:123). Refugees may be described in various categories. They could be people who are not victims of persecution but leave their homeland as a result of a threat posed by environmental change – drought, famine, environmental disaster and socioeconomic decline. They could also be internally displaced people – those who are unable to cross borders and reach a territory in which they could receive the protection and assistance which they desperately need. Refugees could be people who commit criminal offenses in their countries and escape justice to seek refuge outside. Some ex-presidents and government officials may be given asylum by sympathetic countries and usually live luxurious lives there. However, the researcher agrees with Obeng (1999:123) that the term “refugee” in this case strictly refers to people who because of violence of some kind, find themselves seeking refuge in camps outside their own countries.

²⁵ Obeng quotes the *Collection of International Instruments Concerning Refugees* published by the Office of the UNHCR, Geneva 1990:11 & 40.

²⁶ Again, Obeng quotes from the *Collection of International Instruments Concerning Refugee*, p. 194.

To understand the “aggressive face” of civil wars and refugees, it is of utmost importance to provide some statistical information. By 1995, in Africa south of the Sahara, there were 5,456,438 refugees. Generally, as Kanyandago (1999:7) states, of the estimated 17,000,000 refugees in the world, about 6,000,000 resided on the African continent. In percentage terms, the Human Rights Correspondence School reflects that Asia hosts 48.3 percent of all refugees, followed by Africa (27.5 percent), Europe (18.3 percent) and North America (5 percent). According to Blume (2000:166), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees’ official statistics shows that by the year 2000 there were 22,257,340 people under the care of the UNHCR. Of these, 11,675,380 are refugees in the sense of Geneva Convention [of 1951], 3,968,700 are certain categories of internally displaced people, 2,509,830 are recently returned refugees, and 2,921,830 are other persons of concern. In short, there were about 6,250,540 refugees in Africa and 7,308,860 in Asia. There were high concentrations of refugees throughout Central Africa originating from Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, the two Congos and Angola. Compared to the size of the national population, among the main refugee hosting countries during 2001 (Armenia, with 70 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants; Congo, with 40 per 1,000 inhabitants; Yugoslavia, with 38 per 1,000 inhabitants; and Djibouti, with 37 per 1,000 inhabitants) Zambia hosted 27 per 1,000 inhabitants.

These statistics show that most of the refugees reside in the developing countries: countries with the least developed infrastructures and some of the lowest per capita income in the world. Most of these people in the refugee status are not soldiers. They are ordinary people who woke up one day and found that they no longer could safely carry on with their lives as usual. They left everything behind (fields, families, stores, church and property) and scrambled for their lives. They sought refuge in foreign lands, and in refugee camps where they experience great suffering. Obeng (1999:124) describes the suffering of the refugees as people who do not willingly abandon their families, homes and property to live destitute lives in refugee camps. They are forced to do so because of situations of extreme insecurity within their national boundaries. Men, women and children flee their homes to preserve their lives. Thus, these refugees carry the emotional burden of traumatic situations they experienced in their countries during their flight to freedom. These situations include death of family members, separation from relatives, loss of homes and livelihood, experiences of torture, physical and sexual abuse. Above all they find themselves cut off from the cultural traditions from which they drew emotional support and meaning to life. These refugees have stories of terror and despair to tell.

Reading about the plight of the refugees, one is made to comprehend the fact that refugee life is so aggressive in that it is characterized by immense suffering. Refugees are dehumanized, uprooted people from their cultural milieu, left in constant insecurity, and are led to intractable social and security problems. Therefore, refugees need emotional support and consolation; they require new security and firmer identities within the uncertainties and impossibilities of their conditions; they need to find meaning in their situation; they want assurances that they are sane in the midst of the madness around them; and they need to understand themselves and come up with a new self-definition (Obeng 1999:124). The church is in a better position to provide these emotional needs to the refugees. In this case, an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection should be able to provide hope in hopeless situations of emotional calamities as experienced by refugees. The next "face of suffering" in Africa is what the researcher has called the "devastating face" of HIV/AIDS.

5.2.3 The 'Devastating Face' of HIV/AIDS

The biggest challenge in Africa, as from 20th to the present century, has been the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This epidemic is so devastating that it surpasses vices like poverty, civil war and refugees, famine and economic crisis in effect. Sub-Saharan Africa is more heavily affected by HIV/AIDS than any other region of the world. It is estimated that at the end of 2007 22 million people were living with HIV and approximately 1.9 million additional people were infected with HIV during the same year. In 2008, the AIDS epidemic in Africa has already claimed the lives of an estimated 1.5 million people in this region, and more than 11 million children have been orphaned by AIDS (Pembrey 2009:1). The pandemic has really caused a lot of suffering in the African communities.

It is important to understand what this epidemic is all about from the onset. HIV stands for *Human Immunodeficiency Virus*. It is a small virus that causes AIDS. It is too small to be seen with an ordinary microscope, and there could be 230,000 at the point of a pen or on a full stop at the end of a sentence (Garland and Blyth 2005:21). It is called "Human" because the virus is only found in humans, and not in animals or insects; "Immunodeficiency" because the virus reduces the defense power of the immune system in the body of the victim; and "Virus" because it is a micro-organism which is too small to see with a regular light microscope – hundreds of times smaller than a bacterium or malaria parasite.

AIDS is the acronym for *Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome*. “Acquired” because it is a condition that people get or catch, not one they are born with it. The virus that causes AIDS is passed from person to person, including often from mother to baby. An infected person gets or acquires the virus from someone else who already has the virus. The condition is called “Immune” because the HIV attacks the immune system; “Deficiency” because there is a deficient, inadequate, or “less-than-needed” response to all diseases by the immune system; and “Syndrome” because there are numerous signs and symptoms. When a person has AIDS, there is a group of signs and symptoms from which he frequently gets sick: yeast infections – white, milky coating inside the person’s mouth, throat, or both; persistent cough – in most cases, tuberculosis; mild body weakness – gross loss of weight; continuing fevers and night sweats; little desire to eat; persistent skin rashes; herpes infection; shingles; swollen lymph – glands; persistent diarrhea; pneumonia. According to Gitome (2003:191), AIDS is a severe life-endangering epidemic caused by HIV which spreads through infected semen, vaginal secretion and blood transfusion. HIV, which was first described in 1983 in Paris, is primarily sexually transmitted. The virus can also be transmitted through sharing hypodermic needles and by using infected cutting equipment. The medical personnel can also get AIDS through unprotected handling of patients and instruments. One thing that is well-known by almost everyone is that there is neither a vaccine against nor a cure for AIDS.

The brief history of the emergence of the pandemic is that the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed in 1981 in the United States of America, 1983 in Uganda and 1984 in Kenya. Since then there has been a rapid spread of the disease in the world. Most countries now have people with AIDS, or infected with the virus. The number of the victims continues to go up. For example, van Houten (2006:6) informs us that in 1991, the global number of victims hit 10,000,000, in 1995, 20,000,000, in 1999, 30,000,000, and now (2006) it is approaching 40,000,000. Zaccagnini (2009:1) indicates that Zambia’s first reported AIDS diagnosis in 1984 was followed by a rapid rise in the proportion of people living with HIV (prevalence). Concerning the people who die of AIDS, Gitome (2003:193) testifies, “In 1996 alone, one million people died of AIDS. The adult death rose in 1997 to 2.3 million ...” These figures have continued to rise, causing devastating suffering among the African masses. In fact, as Breetvelt (2006:16) observes, in Africa HIV prevalence is as high as 20-25% of the adult population.

The devastation of the “face” of HIV/AIDS in Africa can be detected by analyzing the statistics both on global and continental levels. According to the 2006 statistics, the global total was estimated to be 39.5 million which is an increase by 2.6 million since 2004. The large majority of these victims live in sub-Saharan Africa, 24.7 million adults and children. Of these 2.8 million were infected and 2.1 million people died of the disease in 2005 (van Houten 2006:10-11). Gitome (2003:193) says, “According to the joint United Nations AIDS/World Health Organization (UNAIDS/WHO) Report of June 1998, the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to progress rapidly. Every day, over 8,500 people are newly infected with HIV. UNAIDS estimated that 30.6 million adults and children are living with HIV/AIDS, and 90% of these people live in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Table below illustrates how the pandemic has been escalating as from 1998 to 2008.”²⁷

Region	1998	2008			
	Grand Total	Adults & child. living with HIV/AIDS	Adults & children newly infected	Adult prevalence	Deaths of adults & children
Sub-Saharan Africa	21,000,000	22.0 million	1.9 million	5.0%	1.5 million
North Africa & Middle East	210,000	380,000	40,000	0.3%	27,000
South-South East Asia	5,800,000	5 million	380,000	0.3%	380,000
Oceania	n/a	74,000	13,000	0.4%	1,000
Latin America	1,300,000	1.7 million	140,000	0.5%	63,000
Caribbean	310,000	230,000	20,000	1.1%	14,000
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	190,000	1.5 million	110,000	0.8%	58,000
North America, Western & Central Europe	1,340,000	2.0 million	81,000	0.4%	31,000
Australia & New Zealand	12,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
East Asia & Pacific	420,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Global Total	30.5 million	33.0 million	2.7 million	0.8%	2.0 million

²⁷ Note that the latest statistics on the world epidemic of HIV/AIDS were published by UNAIDS/WHO in July 2008, and refer to the end of 2007. This information was updated on 6th July, 2009.

The statistics above clearly show that sub-Saharan Africa is the most hit by the pandemic. The number of people living with HIV in Africa has risen in ten years from 21 million to 22 million, and it is still growing. About 67% of the people living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa. More people are being infected by the virus and more people die of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa than any other region. The prevalence rate is higher than that of any other region.

Louw (2008:417-419) cites, among the many, nine reasons for this high prevalence in Africa. The first is *polygamy*: quite a number of African males are either polygamous or have several sexual partners. The second is the *movements*: migratory labour and continuous moving between the rural areas and cities increases the risk of AIDS spreading. *Women's vulnerability* is the third reason: Women's lack of status gives them very little bargaining power in sexual relationships and very little chance of insisting that their husbands use condoms. Fourth, *women's low or lack of economic power* contributes to increased prostitution. Fifth, *fertility rates* in some African groups means there is continuous procreation by HIV-infected parents. Sixth, *the high incidences of sexual diseases* enhance the spread of HIV. Seventh, HIV is *rapidly increasing among children* in South Africa and Africa as a whole. *HIV programmes deviation* is the eighth reason: HIV programmes, including those providing information on prevention, often do not reach groups with the highest risk factors. Lastly, *structural and systematic factors* such as poverty and inappropriate economic policies and medical care facilities are contributing to the pandemic.

Therefore, in Africa it would not be wrong to link the pandemic to vices such as poor health care, famine and poverty. Many poor people are most vulnerable to both the acquiring and the effects of the disease. The statistics above also reflect the suffering of the people in sub-Saharan Africa, because, as it is commonly said, if you are not infected you are affected. This brings us to the reflection on the impact of the pandemic in Africa.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the African continent is so great that it causes a lot of suffering among many people. The effects are so devastating that many families find it hard to cope with the situation. Africa has lost young and able-bodied work-force. People have lost their own children, nephews and nieces, spouses and peers, neighbours and colleagues, and continually live in uncertainties and underlying fear of what would befall them. The number of orphans has increased tremendously. According to the UNAIDS Report, about 1.6 million children were orphaned by HIV/AIDS in 1997 alone. Of those orphans, 90% live in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the people

who die of AIDS leave behind orphans, grieving and struggling without parent's care. Among the orphans there is a psychological trauma of seeing their parents' illness all the time and the life-long suffering after the death of their parents. A number of these orphans find themselves in streets where some of them indulge in all sorts of crime. They also end up being physically and sexually abused.

HIV/AIDS in Africa has affected all sectors of life. In the health and education sectors, Africa has lost much needed personnel for skilled labour. It has also affected households in terms of income, production and other necessities for the families' survival. As a result of many deaths experienced in Africa, the cost of living has gone up due to the healthcare expenses incurred on the patient, and consequently funeral costs when the patient dies. Many families are losing their income earners. HIV/AIDS has also contributed to the decrease of Africa's life expectancy which in most countries does not go beyond 47 years (Pembrey 2009:7). Millions of adults are dying from AIDS in early middle age. In short, HIV/AIDS has impacted the social, religious, familial, political and economic development and the whole well being of the African people.

Now most of the African countries have made antiretroviral drugs available for patients. This is a sign of hope in that there is a prospect for a longer and healthier life for people living with HIV/AIDS. This also, to a great extent, helps to diminish the stigma, discrimination and silence about HIV/AIDS (Breetvelt 2006:45). The core concern of an appropriate interpretation of Jesus Christ, therefore, should be the encompassing of a multidimensional approach which in the end would bring hope to the suffering population in Africa from this scourge. In the end, this calls for an understanding of our God-given mandate in the context of Africa's suffering.

5.3 THE DIVINE MANDATE IN AFRICA'S PLIGHT

Having discussed suffering from a general global perspective, an African broader perspective and from specific aspects, we are now left with the question: How does this tie with the subject at hand? The whole essence of this survey has been to give a clear and broader picture of the African context of suffering. This context desperately requires an offer of hope from an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. Although this will be the main concern in the seventh chapter, it is proper to close chapter five with some hints on what God has entrusted to us as our responsibility in the plight of Africa.

In order to address the problem of suffering in Africa, there is need to understand the mission of God which he has mandated us to fulfill. The trinitarian life is the perfect example of a dynamic relationship. Because God in his being is to live for the wellbeing of the other and is the source of all reality, he seeks to establish a relationship in which harmony, peace and equality are the prevailing norms. Therefore, God's mission is one of fostering relationships within reality, permeating reality with the self-communication of selfless love. It is about the God "Being With," the God as Trinity, in creation, moving creation to be in relationship to itself and with God as the basis of its reality. God's mission is also about the Supreme "Being With" fostering, nourishing, and nurturing relationship through the self-communication of relationship. In this case, as Sivalon (2002:381) puts it, "the centrality of the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus to salvation history flows out of the very nature of the Trinity as relationship." Jesus Christ suffered, died and resurrected for the sole purpose of establishing, nourishing and nurturing a harmonious communal relationship. For this reason, in the situation of non-relationship, disempowerment, and estrangement that characterizes the evil of pain, suffering and death of the innocent, the love of the triune God is made available in Jesus Christ. This is our mandate: the mandate to carry on with establishing and nurturing a harmonious relationship in whatever form of suffering in Africa. How can this be practically realized in the context of the three faces of suffering which have been described above?

With regards to the fulfilling of our mandate in the situation of suffering as a result of poverty, Jesus' resurrection calls for a commitment to strive to preach a wholistic gospel to the poor. This is the gospel of liberation of the poor as preached by Jesus Christ. The wholistic gospel not only focuses on the theoretical concept about God's imminent Kingdom, but it is also practical and realistic in nature. It is concerned with the teaching about politics (not partisan politics, but the well-being of the human endeavour), socio-economic systems and policies, international debt, poverty, employment and home management. A wholistic gospel should also be concerned with issues to do with illiteracy, droughts and floods, corruption, promotion of human dignity and rights and charitable giving to the needy. This is our mandate where we discourage the exploitation of the poor, and defend and support the victims of poverty in order to better the life of the poor. In this way, we make the resurrection of Jesus Christ meaningful for we become the source of the good news of hope to the poor. We truly become the "salt of the earth," the "light of the world" and the "yeast" that transforms humanity and makes hopeful living real in the world. It is imperative that we fulfill our God-given mandate because, as Theuri (2003:237) challenges, "to deny the poor people

the means necessary for them to attain their basic needs in life is to curtail their freedom and their search for full human development.”

The divine mandate also addresses the face of civil wars and refugees. Our mission in the situation of suffering as a result of civil wars and refugees is to be present to the victims and provide some forms of assistance. As we become present and provide aid to those who suffer the effects of prolonged exile, we render hope as proclaimed by the Easter event. Our presence promotes dialogue between them and the host communities in the foreign countries. As Kanyandago (1999:128) suggests, other practical forms of support which we need to render to the refugees so as to bring hope are such as organizing worship services at the refugee camps for the victims to feel the essence of relationship in God’s community and also to break out of their loneliness. Hopeful living in refugee camps can be enhanced by organizing ceremonies at which children born at the camps can be named and baptized (thus, giving them identity); marriages can be solemnized (thus, giving them legality and assurance of divine blessing); and the dead given descent burials. There is also a need to set up counseling clinics for the purpose of helping the refugees out of their deep depression so as to overcome their trauma. Finally, the refugees can further be supported by pressuring legislators to produce laws and policies that are based on the fundamental respect for and promotion of the human person’s dignity and development (Blume 2000:170).

As Louw (2008:436-437) outlines, the resurrection of Jesus Christ offers a comprehensive message of hope to people living with HIV. In the first place, through his resurrection, Christ overcomes death so that we could become participators in his righteousness that he won for us through his death. Despite the high levels of stigmatization, the resurrection establishes an identity of the victims. Secondly, Christ’s resurrection awakens and empowers an HIV-positive person to a new life of hope despite one’s status. Thirdly, the resurrection is a trustworthy guarantee of God’s final punishment of every mode of sin in Christ and therefore of our new freedom to love beyond labeling and stigmatization. Fourthly, the resurrection affirms physicality and embodiment in terms of the transfiguration of the resurrected body of Christ: one can be fully human despite one’s status as defined by testing and screening. Fifthly, the resurrection promises *victory over death* and instills a vivid hope in the midst of anxiety and the death of social stigmatization. Finally, the resurrection restores trust in life and provides security because it opens up a new hermeneutic: to experience the living God in every dimension of existence and in the whole of the cosmos. In this sense, life

becomes an opportunity to embody God's grace and to en flesh love within all stigma which we carry in our vulnerable bodies.

Therefore, God-given mandate calls for a concerted effort in addressing the devastating face of HIV/AIDS. First of all, we are called to show love and acceptance to the victims and their relatives. Through love and acceptance we are able to provide the message of hope. We are also able to provide counseling to the victims, their families and members of the local communities wherever AIDS has become common so that they withstand the psychological effects of the pandemic. We are also called to participate in awareness campaigns and encouraging preventive measures such as abstinence and faithfulness to one sexual partner in marriage. Our mandate also encompasses the encouragement of sex education at homes, churches and schools so that our society can change its attitude towards sexuality and morality. Furthermore, the mandate requires that we promote the development of policies which encourage recognition of AIDS as a serious problem that affects Africans across all sectors. We are also to protect human rights and dignity of HIV-infected persons to overcome the social stigma, discrimination and personal silence. A wholistic approach to the problem of HIV/AIDS provides assurance of hope as the event of Easter proclaims to us. Louw (2008:439-440) adds by suggesting that hope in suffering can be assured when suffering is interpreted from the perspective of the resurrection in a number of ways. He then proposes the following as appropriate measures in this hermeneutic: (a) *transformation* – the new reality within the reality of pain and destruction; (b) *freedom and liberation* – the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation; (c) *vision, imagination and future* – the motivating and driving force behind anticipation and expectation; (d) *witness* – the intention to reach out to others in their suffering and pain; (e) *faithfulness* – the guarantee for trust despite disorientation, disfiguration, and disintegration; (f) *support* – edification within the inclusive fellowship (*koinonia*) of believers; (g) *comfort* – the courage to be, to endure and to accept; and (h) *truth* – divine confirmation, affirmation and a guarantee and promise for life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is all about hope in suffering. The *One* who suffered the terrors of Golgotha, is also the *One* who emerged victoriously from the Tomb. Therefore, Africans suffering from the terrors of poverty, refugees and HIV/AIDS are assured of the resurrected hope for better life of peace, equality, joy, harmony, love, dignity, humanness and interrelationship. Our divine mandate is to make this hope a reality here on earth. To end the last section, and indeed the chapter,

the researcher finds the sentiments by Haddad (2005:37) quite striking in as far as the challenges posed by, and of course our response to, the three outlined “faces of suffering” are concerned:

This is the *kairos* moment, the moment in which the church is called to grasp the opportunity to become a place of hope, healing, and redemption. Now more than ever before, the world needs us to take hold of our mandate to become bearers of hope in a situation of deep hopelessness. The world needs Christians who become the people of a God who stands alongside the poor, the oppressed, and the suffering to provide acceptance, love, belonging, and hope. This is our moment to live out Christian community and hospitality, so that others may see and know that salvation lies with our God.

Indeed, this is our *kairos* to fulfill our God-given mandate in the real sense of the word, so that the resurrection of Jesus may truly be a concept that not only assures but also provides hope for the suffering Africans.

CHAPTER 6: SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION IN THE BIBLE

The Bible's approach to suffering is not about answering the historical questions of theodicy such as: "Where did evil come from?" or "How does a good God allow evil in the world?" The Bible is instead concerned with the question of what we can do about evil. Therefore, a number of perspectives are considered in the biblical treatment of evil (Towner 1986:336): (a) The world in which we live is one of divinely established orders, and yet human beings can authentically exercise their freedom within that world (Gen. 1:28); (b) God, however, does not withdraw from the human community as it goes about performing its responsibility (e.g. the Book of Job); (c) Occasions of suffering become occasions to glorify God: This means that when confronted with evil and suffering, the human being has the opportunity to respond with good qualities such as realism, courage, and trust, which are inspired by the helping presence of God (John 9:3); and (d) Jesus' own life, death, and resurrection are an extended illustration of the principle to glorify the victorious God over evil (Matt. 26:36-46; Rom. 8:28).

In a nutshell, one would conclude that the biblical treatment of suffering and evil demonstrates a coherent pattern in at least one regard: the experiences of suffering and hope cannot be sealed off and divorced from each other. In other words, the biblical call is to realize hope amidst suffering. But then, this hope in the experience of suffering can be realized if human beings participate by fulfilling their responsibility towards achieving this hope. In this sense, suffering and hope are rather inevitably interdependent realities which ought to be integrated in the midst of life's various contingencies. On one hand, if we dare divorce hope from suffering, then we become victims of illusion and create images of false hope. On the other hand, if we divorce suffering from hope, then we become victims of cynicism or despair and surrender hope altogether (Beker 1994:39). Therefore, the biblical coherent pattern ought to be located in and derived from God's saving purpose for the world which manifests in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This establishes the horizon of hope: the expectation of the coming triumph of God which will make an end to evil and suffering and bring about joy and peace in the world. This chapter, therefore, seeks to survey the voice of the Bible on the phenomenon of hope in the context of suffering as derived from the reality of Jesus' resurrection. It discusses the perspectives of both testaments on suffering and resurrection, and then synthesizes the biblical interpretation of the resurrection from the viewpoint of hope in the context of suffering.

6.1 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION

6.1.1 Suffering in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, suffering has both individual and social dimensions. Although suffering was perceived to have occurred to an individual member of the community, sometimes caused by such an individual, the entire community of the people of God were involved and affected by the suffering. Gerstenberger and Schrage (1980:13) testify that suffering in the Old Testament never developed only to the individual person, as though from personal fault. Other community members were involved as well, as the ones who caused it, as onlookers, or as friends. The question which deserves a clarifying answer is: what were the experiences of suffering in the Old Testament context? The following sub-section is devoted to answering this question.

6.1.1.1 Experiences of Suffering in the Old Testament

Like suffering in the contemporary African context, experiences of suffering in the Old Testament emerged in various forms at different periods in biblical history. At different times the people of the Old Testament underwent suffering in different ways due to their relationship with God at that particular period. Therefore, in order to have a picture of the Old Testament experiences of suffering, and how God could be perceived, the researcher finds it ideal to look at the experiences of suffering in these periods.

When we analyze the *Pre-Exilic* period, suffering takes a unique shape. This is the period where the power of the living and righteous God is overshadowing the problem of evil (Clarke 1964:51). Suffering is not so much an issue because God demonstrates his justice over all powerful rulers and nations (Gen. 18:25; Ex. 10:1; 2 Sam 24:17; Amos 5:15; Is. 14:7). The consequence of this seemingly silence of suffering in this period is that the true God is both revealed as the powerful God but also concealed to the suffering people: in fact, God does not seem to be immersed in human experience of suffering, though affected by it.

When it comes to the *Exilic* period, the problem of theodicy emerges: God seems so indifferent to the sufferings of the righteous. The being of God in the situation of suffering tends to be a mystery to the human mind. The Book of Habakkuk is a good illustration of this fact. According to Jeremiah,

the suffering of Judah was the fruit of their sins (idolatry and social injustice), but Jeremiah's own personal sufferings as the righteous prophet of a holy God remain a mystery. For Ezekiel, the concern is the glory of God which is at stake due to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, and the exile of God's chosen people. All these calamities had befallen God's people because Judah and the Northern Israel had alike brought dishonour upon God and therefore as nations were being punished. However, as Clarke (1964:55) argues, "Ezekiel prophesied a future resurrection of the nation. There is no question of *personal* immortality, but Judah [as a nation] will rise again." Hence, God's justice is demonstrated in Ezekiel in that sin and sufferings, as well as hope, are exactly balanced both for the individual and the entire community of the people of God. According to Madeira (2004:367-369), the Book of Daniel was written during a time when the Jews were suffering persecution and oppression. By using stories of his visions, the writer encouraged God's people with the hope that God would bring the tyrants down and restore sovereignty to God's people. In the Book of Daniel the Gentile powers are personified in the sins of Nebuchadnezzar: pride, idolatry (the worship of the state) and the misuse of wealth. Since the powerful elite of all nations were guilty of these sins, God put them on notice that they were doomed. For this reason, the Book of Daniel is meant to bring encouragement to God's suffering people: the promise is that such suffering is only temporary, but God's Kingdom lasts forever.

The *Post-Exilic* period is equally unique in that national resurrection and comfort are the core issues (e.g. Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah). The suffering and death of the Servant are seen as vicarious: the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed (Is.53:3-5). This is a positive significance of suffering in that the suffering Servant engages himself in pain for the sake of the other. The same understanding of suffering as a *problem*, thus, as something which distresses the mind and heart of the sufferer because of its unfairness, is carried over and dealt with in three Psalms. In Psalm 37 the message is an encouragement not to worry at the apparent prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the righteous. Psalm 49 takes over the message by emphasizing that this life is not all: Death is neither the end nor the gateway to an unwanted twilight existence, but brings reality to a world where wrongs are righted and where the righteous are received into communion with God. Clarke (1964:55) points out that "while there is no answer here as to the *origin* of evil in a world created by a good God, there is the great assurance that in the end goodness will find its reward and the wicked will be overthrown." The same stance is taken by Psalm 73 where the stress is on the unbroken fellowship/communion with God: the dawning of the conception

of life beyond death. In the life after death, the wicked will be overthrown, but for those who trust in God [even in suffering] there is a reward in the perpetual enjoyment of God's presence.

We can precisely describe the experiences of suffering in the Old Testament as *multifaceted*. Suffering manifests in various forms. Firstly, there is suffering as *loss*. The loss of property: an economic distress, the loss of the material basis of existence, is wholly embedded in faith and in a relationship with God, and this automatically means also, in worship (e.g. Neh. 5:1-5; Job 1:1-20; Lam. 2:10-12). There is also loss of other persons (e.g. 2 Sam. 1:12, 19-27; Ps. 139:8) and honour (e.g. Gen. 4:12; Lev. 19:16; Job 15:35; Ps. 1:1; 26:4-5; 120; Is. 14:19; Jer. 9:2-5; 19:7). Secondly, suffering is experienced in the form of *illness* (e.g. Lev. 13; Deut. 28:35; Job 2:7). This illness is of various kinds: leprosy (e.g. Numb. 12:12-16; 2 Kgs 7:3; 2 Chr. 26:19-21); bubonic plague (e.g. 1 Sam. 5:6-6:9; 2 Sam. 24:11-15); various kinds of fever (e.g. Deut. 28:22; Ps. 9:5-6); small pox (e.g. Ex. 9:8-12); and some mental illness (e.g. 1 Sam. 19:8; Dan. 4: 26-30). Thirdly, people suffered *violence*: in the family and the clan (e.g. Gen. 4; 25:19-34; 27; 37-50; Judg. 9:5; 11:1-7; 1 Kgs 2:13ff); in secondary forms of organization (e.g. Ps. 7:1-5; 42:1-2; Amos 2:6; 5:7,12); and conflict with enemies (e.g. Ps. 89:38-45; 129:1-3). Fourthly, there is suffering as a result of *fear*: of demons (e.g. Job 18:11-15; Ps. 22:12-16; 59:6, 14); of God and of one's own guilt (e.g. Ps. 32:3-4); and of God's arbitrariness (e.g. Job 9:15-23; 23:15-16; 30:15-23; Ps. 73:2-3; 44:17-22). Finally, people experienced suffering in terms of *failure*: of the individual (e.g. Is. 15:2-3; 19:8-10; Ezek. 32:24-25); of the meaningless of life (e.g. Job 14:7-12; Ps. 39:4-6; 90:5-6, 9-10); of the suffering of a commissioned person (e.g. Ps. 69:7-9; Is. 50:6; 53:3-5); of the people of God (e.g. 2 Kgs 18:13-16; 19:35; Lam. 1; 2; 4; Ezek. 16; 19); and God's suffering (e.g. Is. 1:2-3; Jer. 2:5-6; 4:19-22). In simple terms, as Simundson (1992:219) rightly testifies, suffering in the Old Testament could take the forms of "a loss in battle, destruction of the nation and the symbols of worship, ravaging illnesses, premature death, great physical pain, rejection and loneliness, spiritual torment such as guilt or disbelief about God's goodness and concern."

All the above are the forms of suffering which the people of God experienced at different historical periods. But then, what were the *causes* of these sufferings and for what *purpose* were the people going through such moments of pain in life? The researcher now addresses the causes and purposes of suffering in the Old Testament.

6.1.1.2 Causes and Purposes of Suffering in the Old Testament

The Old Testament regards suffering as an intrusion into the good creation of God. Due to the sin of disobedience by humankind, suffering found a way into the world. Genesis 3:16-19 testifies that the first sufferings which were emotional and the immediate consequences of disobedience were followed by God's curse. This curse characterized the promise of pain, toil and finally death. In fact, as Obeng (1999:129) argues, in many Old Testament scriptural instances God is portrayed as the dispenser who sends punishment to individuals and nations or as chastisement of his people designed to correct their ways. Suffering, in this case, comes as a result of disobedience which invites God's divine punishment. Suffering is also as a result of human finitude and creatureliness. In Edwards' (1988:650) words, "suffering in the Bible [in this case, the Old Testament] is a reality which is part of the normal human lot: childbirth, sickness, old age, famine, tempest, war, and eternal oppression (1 Kings 18:5; Job 14:1; Psalm 5; 6; 13; 34:10; 44; 74; Eccl. 8:6-8; 12:17; Amos 3:12)." However, it is important to note that this does not permit the perpetuation of oppression and inflicting of suffering to other human beings because suffering is a result of a number of causes. Some of the causes of suffering in the Bible are: fallen nature of humankind and the sinfulness of all; part of a sinful community; natural phenomena and illness sent by God; action of Satan or other spiritual forces and evil powers (Gen. 3; Ex. 7-12; 1 Kgs. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Is. 45:1-7; Am. 3:6).

Beker (1994:40-48) gives a systematic and comprehensive explanation of suffering in the Old Testament. He states that the realities of evil and injustices are the causes of suffering in the Old Testament. From this affirmation he selects four distinct and representative Old Testament testimonies to suffering and hope, particularly in the life of Israel: the Deuteronomist, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Daniel. The researcher, too, finds it reasonable to cite these as distinctive examples of causes of suffering in the narrative of the Old Testament. Therefore, the testimonies are discussed to give an indication of the main theological tenets and causes of suffering in the Old Testament.

In the theological account of the *Deuteronomist*, the doctrine of retributive justice stands out. Due to Israel's disobedience to God's law, coldness, apostasy, idolatry, immorality, social injustice and exploitation of the poor (e.g. widows and orphans) who had been trampled upon by the rich, God retaliated with punishment as a measure of God's justice (Ex. 21:22-25; Deut. 19:21; 28:3-6, 16-19; Is. 1:16-20; 3:11; Jer. 7:3-7; 13:23; 17:9-10; 50:15; Ezek. 7:8; Am. 5:10-24; 8:2 Obad. 15). For this reason, God's people experienced suffering in the form of punishment as God's judgment: foreign occupation, the destruction of Jerusalem and of the land, and a life of captivity in exile. However,

the people of *Yahweh* are not completely abandoned and forgotten by their God. The Old Testament also testifies to a final restoration of God's people after the judgment of suffering and exile. This is a unilateral manifestation of God's mercy through his judgment which transcends the scheme of renewal and punishment. This divine action confirms the Mosaic covenant where the scheme of mutual obligations and God's faithfulness to his election of Israel portray the fulfillment of the prophetic hope (Is. 54:9-10; 55:3; Jer. 23:5-6; 30:9; 31:31-34; Ezek. 17:22-24; 34:23-24; 36:22).

For *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* the testimonial focus is more on the general human issue of theodicy: the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. This scenario inevitably evokes a posture of cynicism and hopelessness (Job 6:8-9; 7:6; 30:16, 19-21; 42; Eccl. 3:16-19; 9:1-5). For *Job*, the issue is not about the power of God but of God's justice. *Job* questions the justice of God. Where is the justice of God when his righteous people are inflicted with pain and suffering? *Job* considers himself a righteous man and it is not just and fair for God to allow him to go through various kinds of suffering: the loss of the property, the illness and the taunts from the wife, and the continuous accusation from his friends. The preacher in *Ecclesiastes* seems to doubt not only God's justice but also God's omnipotence. If God is both just and all-powerful, why doesn't He intervene and end the suffering of his people? In a nutshell, as Beker (1994:53) concludes, the unjust or meaningless suffering is essentially inexplicable (incomprehensible and unexplainable) to both *Job* and the Preacher in *Ecclesiastes*. For *Job*, the suffering leads him to rebellion and an indictment of or blaming of God. In the case of the Preacher, it leads him to skeptical resignation and fateful submission.

In *Daniel* one finds an apocalyptic response to suffering. Although the apocalypticists still often view suffering as deserved punishment or as a form of divine testing and instruction, they attribute suffering basically to the activity of hostile powers (Beker 1994:54). They therefore view suffering in large measure as undeserved suffering. The good news is that suffering is endurable because the apocalypticists believe God will vindicate their undeserved suffering. Furthermore, God will soon achieve a final and complete triumph over the hostile powers that thwart God's redemptive purpose for Israel (Dan. 9:17-19). Therefore, this concept of God's intervention to the predicament of human suffering is significant in as far as hope is concerned. In the face of profound deepening awareness of the power and the scope of evil in the world and its attendant suffering, hope in God's ultimate triumph over evil becomes increasingly transcendent.

It should be affirmed at this point that there are a number of purposes of suffering in the Old Testament. However, three stand out to be distinguished as the main ones: *retributive*, *educative* and *exemplary* (chastisement) and *vicarious* and *redemptive* (Edwards 1988:650-651). For the retributive purpose, evil conduct brings divine retribution: a demonstration of God's justice in rewarding or punishing evil doers according to their works (e.g. Gen. 12:17; 42:21; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Amos 1:3-15). In the case of educative and exemplary purpose, we find God's chastening and disciplining his people in the form of testing by suffering (e.g. Gen. 22; Job; Prov. 3:11-12; Daniel 6). The chastisement could be due to sin and included sickness, plague, poverty, famine, drought and oppression (e.g. Gen. 18:20; Lev. 26:16-22). It also could be a desire by God to evaluate and approve his people: testing as a demonstration of commitment to God (e.g. Jer. 29:12-13; 30:14). Lastly, the vicarious and redemptive purpose is representative suffering in that one suffers for the sake of others who are to be forgiven by God (e.g. Numb. 11:1-15; Is. 52:13-53:12; Jer. 15:18; 20:7-12; Hos. 1-3). The prophets and others experience sacrificial suffering due to the persecution of world powers and satanic or demonic activities under the sovereign rule of God (Job 4:4-6; 8:1-3; Jer. 20:2; 29:6-7; cf. 1 Enoch 6-8; 89:13-21; 4 Maccabees 5:4). They go through this suffering solely because of the love for and faith in God. Suffering could as well be part of the distress that would be associated with the end times that would precede the Day of the Lord (Dan. 8:23; 2 Maccabees 6:12-17; 4 Ezra 5:46-55). This in the end alluded to hopeful expectation of God's demonstration of his justice by vindicating his righteous people. The various purposes of suffering in the Old Testament obviously made people to react in a number of ways.

To end the sub-section, it is essential to mention that suffering in the Old Testament could not be attributed to a single cause and purpose. Various causes and purposes were thought to have triggered and accelerated suffering at different periods in the Old Testament era. Simundson (1992: 221) helps us to understand the origin of suffering by pointing out some interpretations of suffering in the three major periods as witnessed by the Old Testament literature. In the *pre-exilic* writings, suffering is understood to originate from human sin which affects people both at individual and corporate levels. These pieces of literature further testify that despite the presence and effects of suffering, God is active to execute justice where he punishes the perpetrators and vindicates the victims of suffering. In these writings, however, the call is made that suffering should not be interpreted only from the perspective of retribution because suffering can take a multidimensional meaning and purpose: it can be used by God to teach, test, discipline, save and humble God's people. Above all, suffering

should also be understood as a mystery and complexity where God reserves an explanation to himself.

When it comes to the *exilic* and *postexilic* writings, Simundson (1992:223-224) makes comprehensive observations about suffering. First, retribution began to be understood as applicable to individual lives, without neglecting the suffering as incurred by a whole nation. Second, it was discovered that in suffering there is a redeeming value where the victim suffers either for others or for oneself. Third, in these two traditions there was much protesting of the perceived God's injustice. In other words, God was expected and called upon to act with all fairness against any form of injustice by punishing the wicked and exonerating the righteous. Fourth, the powers in the demonic world were also believed to have contributed to human suffering by causing the trouble either directly or by enticing humans to do what would bring suffering down on themselves. Fifth, both the exilic and postexilic traditions portrayed anticipation where they looked ahead into the distant future as the arena of the final and prevailing justice for all. Lastly, just like in the exilic writings, it is acknowledged and lived that suffering is a mystery. Hence, the blame for suffering should neither be directed to humans, thereby protecting God's justice and power, nor doubting God's justice and power, thereby protecting humans' integrity. Suffering, at least to a great extent, is incomprehensible and unexplainable by human beings; it is a mystery that must be left to God alone.

6.1.1.3 Reactions to Suffering in the Old Testament

The Old Testament presents us with various ways of reacting to human suffering. The researcher summarizes these reactions in two categories: hopeless and hopeful responses. The researcher considers hopeless reactions as those which show a sense of loss in hope due to the devastation from the suffering situation. Hope dwindles because the situation tends to be unbearable. There are examples of reactions to suffering in this category (see Gerstenberger and Schrage 1980:116-129). Due to the intensity of pain, the reaction would be *flight* (e.g. Gen. 27:41ff; 31; Ex. 2:11ff; Judg. 9:21; 11:3; 1 Kgs 19:3-4; 2 Kgs 25:4; Jonah 1:3, 10). One would try to find relief by trying to free from the suffering experience. However, flight does not solve the problem. The other hopeless reaction is *immobility* in the affliction (Deut. 28:65-67; 1 Kgs 20:30; Job 4:4-5; Is. 8:6-10). This is where one becomes passive without any hope at all. One feels discouraged and dismayed due to the experience of suffering. Sometimes people immediately react to the affliction with *resistance* (Ex. 2:23; 5:15-16; 2 Kgs 1:9-12; 2:13-14). In most instances the characters in the Old Testament would

resist going through rough situations. It took God to assure and uphold them so that they could carry on with God's mission despite the anticipated suffering.

The Old Testament emphasizes the need for hopeful reaction to suffering. According to Warrington (2006:155-156), the Hebrew people expressed hope in God despite challenging situations of life in their day. In the first place, they believed that God would vindicate the righteous and deliver them from their suffering. In other words, they called for persistence of trust in God and patience as they awaited God's promises to be fulfilled (Ps. 35:24; Is. 50:8-9; 53:10-12). They also believed that God used suffering for his purposes such as religious-political changes in the history and life of the people of Israel (Gen. 50:20; Maccabees 8:2-4).²⁸ Suffering to the people of Israel was perceived to have a vicarious value. It was meant for the atonement for the sins of others (Is. 53:1-12; 4 Maccabees 1:11; 6:27-29; 17:20-22). Hence, they accepted to undergo afflictions of life for the sake of other people. This in the end gave them confidence in that suffering was not in vain, but for the good of others. The people of the Old Testament also believed that suffering provides opportunities to demonstrate care for those who were experiencing suffering in life (Gen. 18:16-33; Numb. 11:10-15; Deut. 15:1-8; T. Job 38:8-40:3; Sir. 4:3-10; T. Jos. 1:4-2:7; 1 Enoch 8:4; 95:1-3; 4 Maccabees 5:23). In this sense then, the reaction to suffering was practical because it aimed at doing something in order to liberate the victims of suffering from the affliction. Finally, the people of Israel believed that suffering was always to be viewed in the context of a future hope where God would transform this world (Is. 46:19b; Micah 4:4; Pss Sol. 3:3-12; 10:6; 15:1; 4 Ezra 8:57). In their experience of suffering the people of Israel never ceased to trust in God's final and future renewal of the world. God would establish his reign on earth and bring about the peace (shalom). Suffering would come to its final end and harmony would resurface

In most cases the Old Testament presents scenarios of hope in suffering. This hope was based on the nature and acts of God in history. The reaction to suffering was hopeful because God would act one day to end suffering. *This biblical motif makes a link to the belief in the resurrection.* Suffering due to persecution and martyrdom caused the yearning for a better life in the now and afterlife. This yearning was based on the love and justice of God, and His ability to deal with evil as promised in the prophetic and apocalyptic literature. In other words, suffering in the Old Testament resulted in hope in God who would vindicate the martyred righteous bodies by resurrecting them and restoring

²⁸ The researcher uses extra-canonical sources in order to indicate the need to cross-reference and compare the available literature on suffering. This helps to fully understand various perspectives on the way the people of the Old Testament reacted to human suffering. The extra-canonical help to shed more light on areas about suffering which may appear unclear in the canonical sources.

them with new life. In that sense, suffering in the Old Testament entailed both existential and metaphysical perspectives: On one hand, it was existential in that faith in God was never lost even in the situation of suffering. As already stated, the people of Israel never ceased to trust in the God of their forefathers despite the experience of suffering. On the other hand, suffering in the Old Testament was metaphysical in that it was viewed beyond the present experience. The people of Israel believed that suffering was always to be viewed in the context of a future hope where God would transform this world. God would establish his reign on earth and bring about the peace (shalom). Suffering would come to its final end and harmony would resurface. This hope, therefore, resulted to the Old Testament's resurgence of belief in the resurrection. This view makes a link with the African understanding of suffering, which is essentially socio-political. Despite the continued perpetuation and intensity of suffering in Africa, it is believed that God will in the end eliminate this pain and suffering and bring fullness of life. Just like in the Old Testament, the basis of hope in the African scenario of suffering is God and his promise of renewal of all things.

How then do we account for the belief in the resurrection in the Old Testament? The next section is devoted to developments of faith in the resurrection as narrated from the Old Testament perspective. Therefore, before connecting the concept of suffering to that of resurrection, the researcher considers it reasonable to first give an analytical survey of the resurrection in the Old Testament.

6.1.2 Resurrection in the Old Testament

The concept of resurrection is not alien in the Old Testament. The people of Israel had hope of existence with their creator after this life. However, this existence with their creator after this life would occur only after the corpses have been restored with life. Belief in the restoration of life to the dead would then be perceived as resurrection as in the New Testament terms. As Vidal (2006:49) argues, "the decisive element of the Israelite scenario was *with God*, as this underpinned communion within the people and within creation. If God were truly the Lord of the living and the dead, this communion with God had to overcome the barrier of death itself." In this sense, the concept of resurrection had a community dimension: hope to be in communion with the creator and liberator God. But then, belief in the resurrection had to develop among the Israelites for initially it was nonexistent. In what sense, therefore, was faith in the resurrection absent among the people of God?

6.1.2.1 Absence of Faith in the Resurrection

Initially, the concept of resurrection was not so much an issue in the Old Testament. According to Crossan (2003:34-37), the Israelites disbelieved in the existence of human beings after this life. Their faith was anchored in the view that after death all individuals, good and bad alike, go down to *Sheol* (to nothingness or end of life, underworld, dust, death, darkness) (2 Sam. 22:6; Job 17:16; Ps. 6:5; 16:10; 18:5; 30:3; 116:3; Prov. 1:12; Is. 14:15). For the Israelites, the idea of immortality or life after death was just a mere act or expression of faith, and *not* a belief in life after death or resurrection. They believed that life before death or life here on earth was enough, adequate, sufficient and the end of it all (Deut. 28:1-68). In short, they believed in a this-world-only situation.

The view of Hans Küng on the Old Testament absence of faith in the resurrection is worth taking. For Küng all the patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) passed from this life into darkness (*Sheol*), and yet they had previously lived and acted in an unswerving or persistent belief in God. Küng (1984:109) further explains, “For more than a thousand years, *none* of these Jews *believed in a resurrection of the dead* or in an eternal life in the positive sense of the term, in a ‘Christian’ heaven. With remarkable consistency they concentrated on the present world, without bothering about what was in any case a dismal, dark, hopeless hereafter.” The people of old were very much concerned with the life here on earth and not with that of after this world. In fact, Küng claims that the usage of the term “resurrection” in the various Old Testament statements was figurative and metaphorical which cannot be taken literally as real in their imagery (Ps. 30:3; Is. 26:14, 19; Ezek. 37:1-6; Hos. 6:2). The concept of resurrection in these statements specifically referred to the national restoration of Israel: a national re-awakening to life. Israel would be restored to her status as the chosen nation of God. The significance of this Israelite cosmology is that the emphasis is not on the restoration of Israel as an “after this life reality,” but a restoration that would take place in the present life. Therefore, the idea about resurrection was not an issue in the initial Israelite cosmology.

We have seen that the concept of faith in the resurrection as we have it in the Christian community was initially absent among the people of the Old Testament. However, although the doctrine of resurrection is apparently absent in the Old Testament, the “Old Testament... does not teach an extinction of the human being at death but a passage from this life into a shadowy, underworld existence in *Sheol*, the place of the dead (Ps. 6:5; 115:17; Is. 38:18-19; Eccl. 9:10)” (Muller 1988:145). There is a sense of continued existence in *Sheol* after this life. This Old Testament sense

of continued existence after this life, and other factors such as martyrdom eventually led to the development of faith in the resurrection.

6.1.2.2 Development of Faith in the Resurrection

For about two centuries before Christ, an increasingly clear expectation of God's intervention came to prevail due to distress and danger. The people of God experienced persecution from the world rulers. According to Küng (1984:111), the oldest and the only undisputable reference to the resurrection of the dead in the whole of the Hebrew Old Testament comes from the second century (about 165/164 BC). This was the time of resistance to that of violent hellenization of the Jews which the Seleucid Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to carry out. Jewish worship of *Yahweh* was prohibited, and instead they were compelled to venerate the imperial god Zeus Olympios and the ruler herself in the Temple. Consequently, Antiochus' ruthless policy of hellenization soon led to a popular revolt headed by one of the Maccabees, which eventually ended with victory of Judaism. As a result of the crisis in the Maccabean times, the apocalyptic writers as interpreters entered the scene, replacing the prophets who had been active in the crisis from the eighth to the sixth century. Therefore, the apocalyptic proclamation reached its full development in the Book of Daniel. This was after several preliminary stages in the prophetic literature. Apocalyptic proclamation in itself indicated the development of belief in life after death. Many symbolic hopes or hyperbolic prayers could be taken quite literally in reference to resurrection and even to bodily resurrection when an after-life belief was finally affirmed (Is. 26:19) (Crossan 2003:37).

In what ways then is the faith in the resurrection affirmed in the Old Testament? According to Collins (1993:394-395) there are two strands in the Hebrew Bible that were conducive to believe in resurrection or in meaningful immortality. The first one was the desire for unbroken enjoyment of the presence of God as attested in Psalms (e.g. Ps. 16:9-10; 73:23-26). For instance, in Psalm 84:10 the Psalmist is primarily concerned with the presence of God in this life, which is an experience that transcends time. The other strand is more concerned with the restoration of the people of Israel as attested in Isaiah 26:14-19; Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Hosea 6:2. As Israel was in exile it is assumed that this nation was actually dead in that hopeless and suffering situation. However, Israel's restoration to the Promised Land meant revival of life; its restoration is as miraculous as resurrection. This understanding provided language for the belief in resurrection as expressed in Daniel 12. This chapter speaks of a double resurrection of the righteous and the wicked and a judgment of the dead.

As Collins (1993:396) testifies, “it is beyond doubt that the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes gave a great boost to the acceptance of the belief in resurrection and judgment after death. The resurrection in Daniel 12 is quite specifically set in this context.” The last chapter of the Book of Daniel, which was originally apocalyptic and presumably influenced by Persian ideas, makes a clear affirmation about the concept of resurrection. For the author of the Book of Daniel, at such a time of persecution (a time of distress before the end-time), when men, women and children were cruelly tortured because of their faith to the law of God, the question emerged as to whether injustice would be avenged solely in this life. The apocalyptic proclaimers had to respond to this crucial question. Their answer was that the time of distress will be followed by the end-time when Israel will be saved and – here in the new feature – the dead (both the witnesses to the faith in God and their persecutors) will rise. According to Daniel 12:1-3, the dead will return to life as complete human beings (not merely as “souls”) into this present existence which will now go on forever, endlessly: “for the wise in the form of eternal life, for the others in the form of eternal shame” (Küng 1984:112). Precisely, the apocalyptic proclamation here was actually an eschatological resurrection. The anticipated fellowship with the angels in the eschatological future would forever be enjoyed in the present existence. In a nutshell, the Hebrew Bible confirms that belief in some form of resurrection was widespread in Judaism by the first century. What still remained controversial was the form of the resurrected bodies (Collins 1993:398) – which is not the interest of the researcher at this point; the interest is to confirm the Old Testament development of faith in the resurrection.

The same eschatological affirmation of the resurrection is attested outside the Hebrew Bible. For instance, in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), there is further evidence of the awakening hope of resurrection, mainly in the second Book of the Maccabees. In this piece of literature, there is the continuation of the earliest accounts of Jewish martyrs, which in the end became a model for the Church’s Acts of the Martyrs (Küng 1984:112). The Maccabean literature presents four interpretations of the Maccabean martyrdom (Crossan 2003:40-43). The first two interpretations talk about Eleazar. In the first interpretation, Eleazar as a righteous servant of the Lord dies a noble and justified death (2 Mac. 6:18-31). But then, this suffering servant is perceived to benefit from vicarious atonement as interpreted in the second understanding (4 Mac. 5:4-7:1-41). The third and last interpretations are talking about the mother and seven sons: in the third interpretation the immortality of the soul is clearly highlighted (4 Mac. 8:1-17:6); and the fourth interpretation alludes to the bodily resurrection of the faithful servants of Lord. *The mother and the seven sons find the assurance of being corporeally resurrected as a demonstration of God’s justice upon his faithful*

ones (2 Mac. 7:1-41). It is clearly noticed here that the final texts from Maccabees, more even than in Daniel 12, bodily resurrection is not about the survival of people but the *justice of God*. Bodily restoration is affirmed so that the persecuted are vindicated as a demonstration of God's justice to the battered bodies of the martyrs (Crossan 2003:42). God demonstrates his justice by awarding those bodies that were unjustly tortured and murdered with life. In other words, the restoration to life of the dead bodies is not primarily for the enjoyment of life everlasting by the individuals, but ultimately for the demonstration of the justice of God: God awards the righteous with life everlasting and the wicked with judgment and everlasting punishment.

Lichtenberger (1993:24-29) mentions other diverse literature outside the Hebrew biblical evidence which speak in a wide range of variations about resurrection and eternal life. He cites two categories of literature: the *Apocrypha and Pseudepigraph* of the Old Testament and the *Qumran texts*. From the Apocrypha and Pseudepigraph we find a number of interpretations: The *II Maccabees* (which has already been discussed above); *Ethiopian Enoch* which talks about hope of resurrection for the righteous (1 Enoch 92:3-4; 23:13) and the judgment of the godless (1 Enoch 92-104); the *Psalms of Solomon* speaks clearly of the resurrection of the righteous (Pss. 3:12); the *Testament of the Patriarchs* emphasizes future resurrection, especially the resurrection of the forefathers and the twelve patriarchs, and the general resurrection (TJud. 25:1-4; TSim. 6:7; TSeb. 10:2; TBenj. 10:6-10); the *Similitudes of Ethiopian Enoch* stress that the wicked will not take part in the resurrection, only the righteous will live on earth after the resurrection (1 Enoch 51:1-5; 46:6); the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* says that God acts to bring about the general resurrection followed by the judgment and a glorious end-time on earth (3:10; 15:3; 23:13); the *IV Ezra Apocalypse* presents two traditions: the resurrection and preservation of souls in chambers which appear to depict the end-events with the judgment of the world; and finally, the *Syrian Apocalypse of Baruch* (SyrBar) stresses the resurrection of the body (SyrBar 49-51): the dead will arise in their original bodily form to show those who live that the dead are living again, after that is the judgment (SyrBar 50:3). The *Qumran texts* explain that there is the resurrection of the dead by the Messiah (4 Q 521:12). They interpret the resurrection from the messianic expectation as attested in Isaiah 26:19; 61:1.

It is clear that the resurrection belief crystallized due to the persecution of the righteous ones of the Lord. Both the canonical Hebrew literature and that outside the Hebrew written narratives testify that the resurrection indicates the demonstration of God's justice by vindicating the righteous and punishing the persecutors. This is crucially significant in understanding the resurrection of Jesus

Christ. In other words, all these testimonies are potentially pointing to the Christ-event: Christ's fate of death and his resurrection into glory. How precisely, then, does the Old Testament interpret the resurrection?

6.1.2.3 Meaning of Resurrection Faith in the Old Testament

Interpretation has much to do with an effort towards finding meaning of something in a specific context. In this sub-section the effort is to discover the meaning of belief in the resurrection from the Old Testament perspective. The Old Testament literature shows that belief in the resurrection of the dead is a *consequence of belief in the Creator*. Therefore, the basis of faith in the resurrection is in fact faith in the God who had acted in history. What did the Old Testament writers mean when they affirmed the concept of the resurrection? A number of factors deserve to be noted in order to understand the resurrection faith in the Old Testament.

In the first place, as noted earlier, death in the Old Testament meant entering into *Sheol* (the underworld) – a place of nothingness or hopeless state. When the Old Testament writers proclaimed belief in the life after death they meant *revivification* (Muller 1988:145). This entailed that a person who dies is brought from *Sheol* to life (1 Sam. 2:1-10; 1 Kgs. 17:17-24; 2 Kgs. 4:18-37; 13:20-21). One is brought from the state of nothingness and hopelessness to the state of life and hope. This is where hope lies because it takes God to revive a person from the state where hope is lost to one where hope is regained. “For, according to the Old Testament, what survives is not a human soul in virtue of its own substantial spirituality and divinity; here the one whole person is raised by an act of God: by the miracle of a new creation, rooted in God's fidelity to his creature. Thus, nothing, not even the underworld [*Sheol*], remains outside the dominion of him who is Creator of all things” (Küng 1984:114). With regards to the subject at hand, God revives a person from the hopeless state of suffering to that where the wholeness of life is enjoyed. God revives the material body which is shattered in *Sheol*, and restores life in this body. The reason for this restoration to the material body is that since God created the physical world, *resurrection in the Old Testament is about honoring of materiality in God's creation*. Therefore, through the act of resurrection God revives his suffering creation (including humanity) and grants the totality of life and shalom.

Secondly, the Old Testament testimonies affirm belief in the resurrection as *transition* (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kgs. 2:9-11). Enoch and Elijah did not face death and go into *Sheol*, but were taken alive by their

Creator. Therefore, just like these two great men of faith were brought into the heavenly realm, resurrection faith in the Old Testament means believing in the assumption into heaven before death. Now, this does not seem to be compatible with the reality in our situation. We know that in no way will any person avoid death; all have to die and decompose in the grave. However, there is a theological meaning, rather than a literal assumption, in this understanding. Jesus indicated in John 11:25 that he is the resurrection and the life. Therefore, anyone who believes in him will live, even though s/he dies; and whoever lives and believes in him will never die. Belief in the resurrection in this case, means having hope of escaping eternal damnation: being brought into the eternal glory where there is no suffering and death.

Thirdly, the people of Israel were taken into exile due to their apostasy. This meant the destruction and extinction of this chosen nation. Hope of survival was no more. The opportunity to worship *Yahweh* in the holy temple apparently was not seen to be eminent. The glory of the Lord had departed them. Therefore, in such a scenario belief in the resurrection as attested by the Old Testament narratives meant having faith in God who would bring about *rebirth or renewal* (Is. 53:10-12; 26:13-14, 19; Ezek. 37:1-34; Hos. 6:1-2; Dan. 12:1-2). Just as God the Lord is able to create life among the hopeless and dry bones, God will also renew his righteous people through the righteous servant. God promises hope of life-in-relationship with his apostate people: a new life where suffering in exile is ended and a brighter life of fellowship with *Yahweh* dawns.

Finally, the climax of resurrection belief is the fact that God demonstrates his justice in his act of vindicating the righteous and punishing the wicked. *Resurrection faith is about God's justice*. In the Old Testament testimonies resurrection faith is presented as based on God's ability to act in times of injustice. This is so because the resurrection is presented as a basis for *God's self-justification* (Küng 1984:115). God will eventually vindicate his cause for the benefit of his people in this world where there is so little justice. Perkins (1984:39) testifies to this fact, "The circles of the pious who were responsible for the Daniel apocalypse clearly see resurrection as the crowning vindication for their piety and fidelity (Daniel 12:1-3)." Though God vindicates the righteous and faithful ones, the intent is to his glory – his self-justification. This point leads to the link between the experiences of suffering and belief in the resurrection as attested in the Old Testament. How do we tie together the two concepts in order to indicate that the Old Testament understanding of resurrection really provides hope in suffering? As seen from the survey, the emphasis on justice makes a clear foundational link.

6.1.3 Old Testament Resurrection Hope in Suffering

Hope in the Old Testament was a cardinal motif for the people of Israel. Due to the experience of suffering as a result of persecution, the Israelites based their hope in God who would liberate them from their persecutors. Vidal (2006:50) states, “The horizon of hope in the Israelite scenario was the ultimate renewal of the *history* of the Israelite people in a transformed land and, through this, the renewal of the history of all the other peoples on earth.” This simply means that the people of the Old Testament expressed hope in the final implementation of God’s liberating justice. God’s liberating justice would in the end transform God’s people who were suffering from every form of slavery and oppression. God would bring about this liberation and transformation in order to provide enjoyment of total peace and fullness of life. Vidal (2006:51) further argues that this horizon, the ultimate renewal of history, provides the setting for hope in the resurrection of the dead. Hope in the resurrection of the dead entailed the renewal of the complete historical existence of the people, within a renewed creation (Is. 11:6-9; 32:15-20; 35:1-10; 52:13-53:12; 65:17-25; 66:2; Ezek. 37:1-14; Hos. 6:1-3; 13:14).

Therefore, the researcher is of the view that the ultimate purpose of the complete historical existence of God’s people in the Old Testament is communion with *Yahweh*, the God of Israel. In this sense, the resurrection definitely unveils the deepest sense of hope in the situation of suffering. *Yahweh* will end suffering by establishing the harmonious community and interrelationship amongst the creatures of the earth – all human and nonhuman creatures. This is what the prophet Isaiah preached about. He foretold a time of worldwide peace with the coming of a descendant of David as King, who would bring peace and security to his people. Israelite expectation was that the Davidic heir would be the governor, the wonderful counselor, and Almighty God, through him suffering and death would be swallowed up in victory, Satan would be defeated and God’s reign would be established eternally (Is. 25:7-8; 26:19). This prophecy was actually pointing to Christ who would experience suffering and emerge victoriously through the power of the Holy Spirit in the event of the resurrection. Therefore, as alluded to in Isaiah 9:6-7; 27:5; 32:17, the way of hope and peace is only available through Jesus Christ.

The requirement for the people of Israel to realize this hope in suffering was simply faithful living. After the fall of Samaria, living by faith was the message given to the remnants of Israel. The prophets of this period (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Ezekiel) challenged the people of God to trust God and not to depend on their circumstances as the basis of their faith and hope.

They would overcome suffering and oppression by looking to God alone because God's promises were true even in extremely difficult times. Hope in suffering is challenging in that it does not only require faithful living. It also requires taking a decisive action in order to deal with pain and suffering amongst the victims. According to Kunhiyop (2001:11), the Old Testament testimonies stress the fact that God cares for the poor and he desires God's people to do likewise by caring for the poor. God made and gave special laws to enable his people to care for the poor adequately (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36; Deut. 23:20; Job 29:12-20; Ps. 10:4-7; 35:10-11; 72:2-14; 109:11, 31; 140:5, 9; Prov. 5; 21; 19:1, 22; 28:6; Is. 10:1-2; 11:4; Amos 4:1; 2:4). To oppress the poor was to incur divine displeasure. When a compassionate and caring attitude is shown towards the poor, it was regarded as the will of God. In the Old Testament, it was the virtue of the leaders, especially the kings, and the duty of the common people to show concern and care to the poor who were experiencing suffering in various forms.

It is equally our virtue and duty today not only to show concern to the poor, but also to make hope real in the suffering situation. Hope in suffering from the Old Testament point of view is anchored in the fact that God is acting in order to demonstrate justice by vindicating the victims of suffering and punishing the perpetrators of suffering amongst the victims. In short, the Old Testament resurrection hope is based on God of justice who calls his people to reciprocate by living and practicing the same justice. Having surveyed the perspectives of suffering and resurrection in the Old Testament, it is also ideal to listen to the voice of the New Testament on the two concepts.

6.2 NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION

6.2.1 Suffering in the New Testament

The Old Testament is the basis and preparatory foundation for the fulfillment of hope and promises in the person of Jesus Christ. The promises of hope in suffering which are made in the Old Testament find their realization in the particular person of Jesus Christ as attested in the New Testament. Suffering is further elaborated in the New Testament, and Jesus Christ shows concern for the suffering poor. He shows keen interest in those who are down-trodden, the outcast, the poor, and oppressed in his contemporary society. Jesus goes further to find ways of liberating people who were suffering various forms of oppression and affliction. Simundson (1992:224) argues that the main concern of the New Testament with regards to suffering is twofold: How to make sense out of

the suffering Jesus Christ, and how to understand the suffering as experienced by the early Christians because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ. Hence, the suffering of the early believers could be understood as suffering for others and for the sake of the gospel, following the example of Jesus Christ. God would demonstrate his justice by rewarding the sufferers through the experience of joy, lessons learned through suffering, realization of humility, and reassurance of hope where God promises his everlasting presence with the sufferers in the midst and depths of suffering. What characterized suffering in the New Testament which prompted Jesus to take the action for the benefit of the suffering people? In what follows the researcher gives an overview of suffering in the New Testament.

6.2.1.1 Overview of Suffering in New Testament

Suffering in the New Testament is described in relation to the treatment, concern and attention paid to the needs of the poor. The term “poor” is derived from two Greek words which appear 34 times in the New Testament: *penes* and *ptochus* (Kunhiyop 2001:12). *Penes* refers to the man who cannot live from his property but has to work with his hands. It is used for the people who are economically and legally oppressed. They are economically and legally handicapped at the hand of oppressor(s). *Ptochus*, which occurs mostly in the Gospels (24 times, and of these, 10 times in Luke), signifies utter dependence on society. It denotes someone who totally depends on the help from members of society. As a noun, *ptochus* means a beggar and stands in contrast to *plousios*, meaning “rich, owning property.” Both terms, *penes* and *ptochus*, emphasize the fact that some people in the New Testament time were economically and legally suffering and depended on the handouts from others. As a result of this scenario some evil-minded elite took advantage and oppressed the poor. We now concentrate on the overview of suffering in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, especially in the synoptic Gospels, suffering of the poor was a cultural, social and political concrete reality. According to Longenecker (1984:29-30) the Greco-Roman world in which the Gospels were written was a multicultural society: It was an open, sophisticated and tolerant society. In other words, it was a mixture of western and eastern cultures with more than five hundred thousand inhabitants – Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Jews, Arabs, and Persians. As a result of the mixture of cultures “... people lived in an atmosphere of cultural tension and racial animosity” (Longenecker 1984:30). There was tension amongst peoples, classes, religious creeds, and philosophical stances. Therefore, the cultural tension obviously brought suffering amongst the

poor in society. Furthermore, slavery in this society was a judicially protected institution: slaves comprised roughly one-third of the entire population of the empire (Longenecker (1984:48). Slavery was recognized as part of the Greco-Roman economy where the middle and upper classes could afford to have slaves. As Longenecker (1984:49-50) testifies, in some cases, slaves were treated humanely: many faring better than lower-class free men in matters of food, housing, clothing, education, and spending money. Yet in many circumstances slavery was an oppressive system causing suffering to the poor: fear, malice, resentment, severe ill-treatment (particularly those working on the land and in mines) and being considered as “a thing,” “a mortal object,” not a person, and had no personal or human rights except as permitted by their masters. Unlike in the Greco-Roman world, although slavery was also accepted in the Jewish world as part of the fabric of society (with roots in the legal provisions of the Pentateuch), it was generally less extensive and less exploitative among the Jews. Perhaps this is because of Israel’s memory of the agony of her own slavery in Egypt. Hence, slaves were generally treated with a greater degree of kindness by Jewish masters, and some human rights were built into the system (Ex. 21:7-11; Lev. 25:39-55; Jer. 34:14).

Tenney (1985:48-49) further explains the socio-political scenario in Judaism which was characterized by political and economic role of the landowners. Tenney argues that although the rich and poor lived side by side both in Judaism and in the pagan world, the wealthy aristocrats had an upper hand over the poor. In Judaism a religious group, consisting chiefly of the families of the priesthood and of the leading rabbis was politically and economically powerful. The Hasmoneans’ clan dominated the Jewish society from the Maccabees’ days until the time of Herod the Great. During Herod’s reign and that of his sons, the Hasmonean priesthood was in control. The glimpses of the hierarchy that appear in the Gospels show that they were political and economical rulers of Judea. They controlled the business traffic that was connected with the temple. They also participated in the revenues that were derived from the sale of animals for sacrifice and from the exchange of money involved in the temple taxes. Among the members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council, were well-to-do elites like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. These powerful people were also landowners who rented out their farms and in most cases exploited the poor by earning huge profits from the share of crops cultivated by the poor peasants. The majority of the people in the Jewish world were poor who basically survived on peasant farming, working as artisans and a few were businessmen. Some, like the fishermen of whom some became disciples, owned small independent enterprises that supported them fairly well. Therefore, most of the people in the society suffered a lot at the hand of exploitative and oppressive powerful leaders.

The Gospels clearly recognize that suffering abounds and needs to be combated and alleviated (Edwards 1988:651). For instance, the synoptic gospel writers affirm the role of the Holy Spirit to guide people in their suffering (Warrington 2006:157). Matthew's audience needed the Holy Spirit in the suffering due to the marginalization by their religious constituencies. Mark's audience needed the Holy Spirit due to suffering from persecution. In the case of Luke's audience, they needed support and defense for their belief and steadfastness in the face of opposition from the sophisticated philosophical gentiles. The intention of the Gospels is not to speculate on the causes of suffering; that is not their primary concern. The primary intent of the Gospels is to bring out the fact that Jesus has power to end suffering by healing and make people whole again. In fact, Jesus is presented in the Gospels as one who is filled with compassion at the sight of human distress caused by sickness (Mt. 14:14; Mk. 1:41), hunger (Mt. 15:22) and spiritual hopelessness (Mt. 9:36). In actual sense, Jesus himself experienced suffering in many forms: physical (from hunger, weariness, scourging and crucifixion), emotional (he wept for Lazarus – John 11:35 and sorrow for the fall of Jerusalem – Matt. 23:37; Luke 1:41), mental/spiritual (his agony in the garden – Mk. 14:34) and the desolation of the cross – Mk 15:34). The difference of Jesus' suffering from all other human suffering is that Jesus saw his suffering as the predetermined will of God for the liberation of the suffering humanity in fulfillment of scripture (Mt. 26:54; Mk. 8:31; 9:12; 14:49; Lk. 24:45f; Jn. 19:24, 28). Edwards (1988:651) affirms that through suffering, Jesus entered his glory (Lk. 24:26; Jn. 12:23). In a nutshell, the Gospels acknowledge the reality of suffering and therefore seek to offer hope in the scenario of suffering.

In the early church, the poor and needy were seriously taken care of (Acts 2:44-45; 4:33-35). This demonstration in favour of the poor was actually a positive response to Jesus' sacrificial sufferings and death. Edwards (1988:652) explains that for the early Christians Jesus' "sufferings and sacrifice were the very heart of the gospel, part of God's eternal plan foretold in Scripture." This emphasis, therefore, dominates the early apostolic proclamation of the gospel as attested in Acts (Acts 3:18; 4:11; 17:3), first Peter (1:18-20; 2:22-24) and the Pauline literature (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:3). The same concept is prominently featured in the book of Revelation (e.g. Rev. 5:6; 7:14). The affirmation in all these writings is that Jesus stands out not only as the role model of suffering for the right cause, but also he suffers for the liberation of those who are experiencing suffering.

Paul has a specific perception and interpretation of suffering. For Paul “suffering is associated with the lives of those who were called to Christian leadership and is normative for believers, not just in terms of persecution or martyrdom but also as a result of believers living in a fallen world” (Warrington 2006:160). Because of the fact that believers reside in a perverted world, they are vulnerable to suffering. For this reason, Paul advocates for prayer as a right response to suffering. In the case where suffering persists, he suggests that believers should develop an awareness of God’s presence in that situation of suffering. This is because God’s presence becomes a sure source of comfort in any calamitous situation. On this point, Warrington (2006:160) comments by affirming, “The presence of God in the life of the suffering believer is a powerful truth that should be encountered, explored and applied.” Indeed, God’s presence calms the storm of suffering in the life of the believer. Paul’s further understanding of the concept of suffering is heightened in his concern for the poor in some churches, and also his own experiences of suffering. The Pauline epistles record that some churches were encouraged to get involved in the collection of gifts for the other churches in need (Kunhiyop 2001:13). In fact, Paul personally conveyed these gifts and urged the churches to remember the poor (Rom. 12:13; 15:2; 1Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1-2). In his experience of suffering, Paul talk of dishonour, bad reports, hunger, sleepless nights, emotional distress, imprisonment, beatings, despairing of life, and even death (e.g. Acts 16:16-24; Phil. 1:13, 19; 3:4-10; 2 Tim. 1:9, 12; 2:3, 8-9; 4:5). Sjogren (2010:15) summarizes Paul’s sufferings as emotional, light physical and great physical sufferings. In short, for Paul a Christian believer is not immune to suffering because that is the road Jesus Christ trod on.

The General Epistles, too, add a voice to the understanding of suffering in the New Testament (Heb. 2:9-18; 10:5-7, 18; 13:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1; Rev. 5:12; 7:14). These epistles were written mainly to the Christians scattered in the dispersion caused by persecution, which increased greatly after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Since many of the early Christian believers were Jewish, the expectation regarding the coming of the Messiah was very high. The delay in return of the Messiah caused a lot of anxieties among these believers. This prompted the epistles’ writers to give words of encouragement in the midst of terrible times of stress, storm, trial and much suffering. To be specific, the book of Hebrews emphasizes the fact that God disciplines those whom he loves (Heb. 12:5-11) and that suffering is a test of obedience which was extended to Jesus as well (Heb. 5:8). The epistle of James was directed to the Jewish believers who were struggling due to the oppression of the rich and other people who were antagonistic to the Christian faith (Warrington 2006:162). Therefore, James encourages them to pray, recognize that their suffering can be beneficial to their

faith in God, and also to remember that God does not overlook the oppressors. He also urges them to minister to those experiencing suffering in many forms such as sickness, physical and spiritual weakness, and emotional trauma (Jam. 5:14ff). James further condemns the unfair treatment of the poor in the church (Jam. 2:1ff).

The context of the book of Revelation indicates a ‘perceived’ oppression of the Christians. Thompson (1990:171-172) argues that the persecution of the Christians and Jews was actually ‘perceived’ oppression in that “Domitian did not prosecute either Jews or Christians with exceptional vigor.” Domitian was believed to be a benevolent emperor towards Jews and Christians alike. He was so effective in administering provincial affairs that he checked the excesses of both greedy senators and the provincial aristocracy. Moreover, during Domitian’s reign the province of Asia prospered and therefore it is most probable that Christians benefited from the prosperity in terms of free travel, large houses, and shared common life of cities and empire (Thompson 1990:172). Thompson further argues that the Imperial officials did not get involved in seeking out Christians to persecute them: If anything, Christians lived peacefully in urban Asian life and Roman political order alongside their non-Christian neighbors.

Thompson may be right in his argument. However, it cannot be ruled out completely that Christians did not experience any form of persecution. In fact, Thompson (1990:172) admits that the imperial officials at times were forced to carry out trial of the Christians who were reported by their opposing local residents. There were some forms of persecution of Christians in the Greco-Roman world where many of them were dying for the sake of the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The imagery in the book of Revelation portrays the struggle by believers with world rulers due to their allegiance to Christ. Among the various reasons for their being persecuted, they refused any form of Roman imperial worship. This made John, the author, pastor and bishop, get concerned (Madeira 2004:371). As he was at the Isle of Patmos, he had many visions, which he shared to encourage his audience (primarily the seven churches) so that they could endure suffering. John portrays Jesus as one who has power over death and the world of the dead (Rev. 21:6). Therefore, believers should not be afraid despite the suffering at the hand of world powers. In the end, John climaxes his message by giving hope to the suffering people that Jesus is the Lord of lords, King of kings who has already overcome (Rev. 22:12-13, 17, 20), and those who endure to the end shall overcome as well. It is also worthwhile to note that, as the book of Hebrews stresses, Revelation also sees suffering as a form of testing (Rev. 5:8), and to those under persecution it urges faithfulness and endurance to the end.

The above survey on the experience of suffering in the New Testament can therefore be summarized as that comprising of a number of factors: economic exploitation, political dominance and oppression, general hardship, existential reality of being part of the fallen world, and cultural discrimination in the Greco-Roman and the Jewish society. Therefore, the next sub-section discussed the purpose of suffering in the New Testament.

6.2.1.2 Purpose for Suffering in the New Testament

The New Testament seems to presuppose the same basic purpose of suffering as in the Old Testament. However, according to Edwards (1988:651) in the New Testament the concept is transformed by the message of the good news of Christ's vicarious redemptive suffering, which brings reconciliation between God and humankind (Mk. 10:45; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20; Heb. 2:17f; 1 Jn. 4:10). A few texts such as 1 Cor. 11:28-30 refer to retribution in this life. There are solemn warnings about future judgment of the unrepentant, whose suffering is described in terms of exclusion from God's presence (Mt. 25:10-12; Lk. 13:28; 2 Thess. 1:9). Furthermore, the lake of fire symbolizes tribulation, distress and eternal punishment (Mt. 8:12; 13:42; 25:30, 46; Mk. 9:48; Rom. 2:9; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10). However, all these references to retribution should be read in the light of the good news of God's forgiveness of sins for all who accept it through God's grace. The reason is simple: the main emphasis of the New Testament is not necessarily the threat of punishment but the promise of pardon, peace and joy. The purpose of suffering in the New Testament should also be understood from the perspectives of naturalistic explanations and, as highlighted in the previous sub-section, from the socio-political structural realities of the Roman Empire where issues like landowning and landlessness were at stake.

In this sense therefore, one would affirm that suffering is not only (and primarily) as a result of retribution (God's displeasure or one's sin), but also has positive benefits. In the mind of Paul, some of the positive benefits of suffering include: (a) his personal experience of suffering was actually a divinely ordained plan (2 Cor. 12:7-10; Gal. 4:14); (b) suffering is an appropriate feature in the lives of believers who seek to do the will of God (Rom. 8:17); (c) the Holy Spirit is associated with and works through suffering (Acts 14:22; 21:11; 20:22); and (d) there is glory through suffering – the power of God is made perfect in suffering (Rom. 8:26). Sölle (1975:81) talks of God's "painful love:" Due to the evil of the world, God suffers and even dies. This shows God's full and utter

solidarity with, and love for those who suffer unjustly. In other words, the glory of God is demonstrated in that God in Jesus Christ hangs on the cross for the sake of the victim (Jn. 12:27-28; Heb. 10:1-4). Moltmann (1974:248) also testifies, “There is unwilling suffering, there is accepted suffering and there is the suffering of love.” What is displayed by God in Jesus Christ is the suffering of love for all humanity. Nolte (2003:51) contends that the theology of the cross is well articulated in the Pauline text of 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5. In this text, Paul highlights the key thematic paradoxes of wisdom-in-foolishness, power-in-weakness and the motif of God’s hiddenness in the cross of suffering. God reveals God’s power and glory through the weakness, hideousness and seemingly hopelessness of the cross of Christ. Therefore, Christians are called upon to *participate* not only in the death (and resurrection) of Christ (Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 6:14), but also in the earthly life of Jesus in order to be true disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, the call’s emphasis is to participate in the socio-economic-political earthly struggles. It also stresses the need to depend on God who demonstrated his glory through both events of the cross and Easter.

The main thrust of the New Testament on the purpose of suffering is God’s glory in his redeeming love as demonstrated by the cross of Christ. As Christians, we are invited to accept this gift by participating in the suffering and passing on the invitation to others. The obvious question one would ask is: how can we possibly accept and live God’s offer of his love through the suffering of Jesus Christ? The wisdom of Gerstenberger and Schrage (1980:207-227) is worth taking. The two writers highlight a number of central New Testament interpretations of suffering which the researcher regards as appropriate in the accepting and living of God’s portrayal of redemptive love. Firstly, we are called upon to be in *fellowship with Christ*. Christian’s participation in suffering is actually a sign of one’s belonging to Christ (Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8; 26:15-16; Gal. 2:20). Secondly, we accept God’s love by allowing ourselves to be endowed with power from God. Gerstenberger and Schrage (1980:210) use the term *vis aliena* which means “strange power” or power not from within. Suffering compels a Christian to depend not on one’s power and confidence, nor in oneself, but in God’s power and ability to pull through the calamitous situation. Thirdly, the offer of divine love needs to be realized through what the two theologians have termed as *disillusionment* and “*eschatological reserve*” (1980:213). This implies that suffering is not only “suffering with Christ” in the present, but also suffering for the yet-unredeemed world and the yet-unfulfilled “redemption of the body” (Rom.8:11, 23; 1 Cor. 13:10-12; 2 Cor. 4:11; 5:4). Fourthly, as Christians we need to accept to undergo suffering as a form of *testing*. Sufferings are meant to test and exercise one’s faith, and to mobilize one’s powers of resistance and steadfastness (Mk. 13:13; 1 Cor. 4:12; 10:13; 2

Cor. 8:2; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 10:32, 36; 12:1-2; Jam. 5:11; Rev. 2:2-3, 19; 13:10; 14:12). Fifthly, God's redemptive love motivates Christians to live with *hope* in suffering. Sufferings evoke hope in our lives and cause us to keep a watch for the end of suffering in the present. This hope is grounded in and guaranteed by the Christ-event, and also by participating in Christ's sufferings (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:14; 13:4; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:21; 4:13; 5:1). Lastly, God's offer of redemptive love calls us to the task of *witness*. This is so because sufferings always possess in a peculiar sense the character of testimony to others, especially to non-Christians (Mk. 13:9-11; Lk. 21:13-14ff; Acts 7:54ff; 8:1-4; 11:19; 16:25; 22:20; Phil. 1:13-14; Rev. 1:2; 2:13; 11:7; 12:11-12, 17; 17:6).

Christian living in the situation of suffering is based on the love of God. The Christ-event is the basis of the Christian's assimilation of suffering in the present. Therefore, it is cardinal to understand Jesus' perspective of and attitude towards suffering.

6.2.1.3 Jesus' Perspective of Suffering

The poor occupy a prominent place in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus himself was a poor person residing in an insignificant village of Nazareth, whose parents and contemporaries were suffering the oppression from Roman colonizers (Mt. 5:23; 8:20; 19:16-21; Mk. 12:38-40; 14:1-9; Lk. 6:20; 9:50; cf. Deut. 15:11). When we read most of the key parables, we discover that Jesus' concern for the poor in terms of compassion and care is central (e.g. Mk. 10:20; Lk. 14:10-24; 16:19-31; 18:22; 19:1-10; 21:2). Kunhiyop (2001:13) testifies, "Jesus not only taught about the need to help the poor, He was also compassionate to the poor and provided for their needs (Mk. 6:33-44; 8:1-9; Lk. 7:12)." Later, Jesus indicated that caring for the sick, needy, and homeless it is actually caring for him, and if the poor and needy are neglected it is likewise neglecting him. In advocating for the poor and needy Jesus stood out as a role model for a positive perspective and attitude in the scenario of suffering. Suffering of the people in his time was a cancer that needed serious attention and address. In fact, the reason for his coming was to liberate humankind from all forms of suffering; be it physical, emotional, socio-economical, legal and spiritual. He did this by assuming the human life-pattern of his contemporary world.

Crossan (1991:418) explains that in the world and time of Jesus there was Hellenistic Judaism which responded to a Greco-Roman culture undergirded by both armed power and imperial ambition.

Jesus' peasant village was close enough to a Greco-Roman city of Sepphoris, but his work was among the farms and villages of Lower Galilee. Capernaum, which lay on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, was the centre of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus' strategy in his work was the combination of free healing and common eating, a religious and economic egalitarianism which were contrary to the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power (Crossan 1991:421). Crossan's explanation indicates that as a Jewish peasant and contrary to the religious and political rulers of his time, Jesus worked amongst the poor Jewish peasants for their emancipation from suffering. Most of his lifetime, Jesus lived and did his ministry amongst the oppressed and exploited people of his time. His aim was to preach and make the liberative message of the Kingdom of God real to the people who seemed to have lost of the fullness of life due to oppressive systems.

Theissen and Merz give a comprehensive testimony to Jesus' perspective on the suffering of the poor. The two theologians affirm that though the political situation in Galilee was relatively peaceful, the region "was riven by deep structural tensions, by tensions between Jews and Gentiles, town and country, rich and poor, rulers and ruled" (Theissen & Merz 1996: 175). One of the many sources of such tensions was land as the primary economic drive in the region. At that time large landowners and smallholders lived side by side. However, this caused tension because of the exploitation by land owners over the poor. The landowners leased out land to the local peasant farmers and expected a certain portion of the produce. These farmers could hand over their produce with inner resentment. When Jesus preached against such oppression he obviously attracted attention from the poor peasants and provoked opposition from the aristocrats (Theissen & Merz 1996:570-571). Jesus' attention was to the suffering poor people. No wonder he travelled through Palestine as a homeless itinerant preacher of the Kingdom of God, focusing his attention on small places north-west of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus believed in God who "was a tremendous ethical energy which would soon change the world to bring deliverance to the poor, the weak and the sick" (1996:570). God would soon end the suffering of many people in the world. Jesus' perspective of suffering was actually shaped by his personality. In the words of Borg (1994:119), Jesus' personality was "a spirit person, subversive sage, social prophet, and movement founder who invited his followers and hearers into a transforming relationship with the same Spirit that he himself knew, and into a community whose social vision was shaped by the core value of compassion." The core value of compassion for the suffering poor and needy compelled him to portray a unique attitude towards them.

Analyzing the Gospels, one discovers that Jesus' extreme sensitiveness to the poor and diseased people emerges as the most outstanding and characteristic feature of the historical figure of Jesus. The Gospels writers portray Jesus as one whose primary mission was to advocate for the right cause of the suffering part of the population. Bart & Dovey (1981:211) beautifully put it this way, "His eyes singled them out from the midst of the crowds that pressed upon or followed him; his ears heard the cry of their appeal; he had compassion upon them, touched them – and healed them." Jesus' attitude and action towards the suffering people actually evoked in his disciples the same concern for such people.

What transpired at that time which prompted Jesus to have a contrasting perspective towards suffering people? Kanyandago (1997:123-124) explains that in the Gospels Jesus shows an uncompromising attitude and actions to liberate people from suffering. However, this stand offends the established Jewish civil and religious authorities. The Pharisees, chief priests, scribes and elders felt threatened in their power and influence over the people whom they kept under control with the way they interpreted the Jewish laws and traditions. In other words, the Jewish leaders amassed enormous power, authority and wealth through exploitation and oppression of the poor ordinary members in society. Consequently, when Jesus came on the scene and performing actions that were meant for the emancipation of the suffering populace the Jewish civil and religious leaders felt threatened. The cleansing of the temple, which in John comes at the beginning (Jn. 2:13-22) and in the synoptics at the end (Matt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-48), play an exceedingly significant role in this regard. According to Sanders and Davies (1989:343), Jesus' overturning of tables was apparently a symbolic gesture which was pointing to Jesus' socio-political programme: the programme for socio-political transformation of society. In other words, he was challenging the oppressive religious and political authorities who through exploitation were perpetuating the suffering of the poor. Hence, they plotted to eliminate Jesus, which seemingly and ironically worked to their advantage. Jesus suffered and was executed for the right cause. Therefore, one can conclude that Jesus' passion and cross took a political dimension. Kanyandago (1997:123) understands politics in this sense as the processes of gaining, maintaining, administering and handing over power. Well, the researcher views Jesus' political dimension as one that addresses all faculties of human existence for the wellbeing of the whole person. Jesus' advocated for the liberation of the whole being of his contemporaries from the situation of suffering. In this sense, Jesus' perspective of suffering was unusual and a confrontation to the status quo of the time, and it was meant for the ending of suffering and promotion of coexistence and equality. Kanyandago (2001:124) states, "The

suffering of Jesus is not just a result of a free decision to deliver himself for our sins, but is a result of his stand against and opposition to religious and civil authorities who perpetuate the suffering of others.” Jesus’ passion and cross are a resistance to and non-acceptance of human suffering.

It is interesting that those who benefited (the poor and needy) from Jesus’ liberating action applauded him and spoke well of him. The reason is simply that Jesus addressed issues that were appealing to their situation. For instance, in Matthew 12:1-8 and Luke 6:1-5 Jesus appeased hunger: He presented an original understanding of the law by putting the human person above the Sabbath. In Mark 1 we find a number of instances where Jesus performed acts of healing with urgency, efficaciously, thoroughly and in an inclusive manner: the cure of a man possessed by an evil spirit (1:21-28); the cure of Simon’s mother-in-law (1:29-31); mention of several cures (1:32-34, 39); and the healing of a man with a dreaded skin disease (1:40-45). He had power to heal indiscriminately. Reading further on in Mark 2:1-12, it is reported that Jesus cured a paralytic and forgave the sick man’s sins. Jesus also performed the unusual act of eating with sinners and tax collectors: He ate with people who were suffering socially because of the type of life they were leading (1:15-17). Even if the suffering of these people was self-inflicted, Jesus still acted with great compassion and care for them. Kanyandago (1977:131) adds, “The condemnation and the resultant crucifixion of Jesus do not come about all of a sudden but are a result of Jesus’ choice to side with those who are suffering and this brings him in confrontation with the Jewish authorities.” Jesus’ attitude toward suffering was not a philosophized kind of perception where one talks only of theories. It was real understanding of suffering which directly looked for ways of taking away people’s suffering, irrespective of how this is caused. His concern was the relief of the distress of the poor in society.

Jesus’ perspective on the subject of suffering, as has been highlighted above, was that suffering was a serious situation which needed redress for the emancipation and well being of the victims. In this way he commanded a lot of support and following from those who were experiencing suffering in his time. Jesus sought to bring hope where there was no hope; not just mere hope, but real and pragmatic hope in suffering. However, the well-to-do and powerful in society felt challenged and threatened. This is typical of the attitude of the elite in the contemporary world. Anyone who tries to emerge as an activist and advocate for the well being of the poor and suffering may be seen to be a potential threat and standing in the way of the elite and oppressors. It is indeed a risky business! The critical call is that despite being risky, we still have to fight for the good cause of the poor and needy

in our society. At this stage, it is important to end this sub-section by highlighting key motifs on suffering in the New Testament.

6.2.1.4 Key Motifs about Suffering in the New Testament

The major key motif concerning suffering in the New Testament is the good news of *God's love for all humanity*. Suffering is not primarily as a result of their personal irresponsibility (retribution), although this motif should not completely be ruled out. It is meant to show the glory and power of God. In this sense, God demonstrated his glory and power through the act of the passion and cross of Jesus Christ. God gave out the self, his love, for the liberation of the victims of suffering. Bonhoeffer (1966:109-118) gives a clear movement of how God gave the self: the movement of incarnation to humiliation or lowliness, and then to exaltation or glorification. The God who incarnated in Jesus Christ is also the God who was humiliated through the suffering and the cross. But then, "the humiliated One is present to us only as the Risen and Exalted One" (Bonhoeffer 1966:116). In short, God is the incarnate, humiliated and exalted God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, for Bonhoeffer (1966:109) the incarnation is the message of the glorification of God who sees his honour in being human. Putting it the other way, "God freely binds himself to the creature, and freely glorifies himself in the incarnation" (1966:110). Moltmann (1990:196) links the motif of God's self-glorification to the liberation of humanity by stating, "Through the justification of the unjust, and the creation of justice for those who know no justice, God glorifies himself on earth." God is glorified through God's own demonstration of love and grace for the sinner and the establishment and enhancement of justice for all on earth. This is only and ultimately realized in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when suffering is viewed from this divine perspective, it tends to be a hope-offering perspective. It is only from the event of God's suffering and glorification in the person of Jesus Christ that one can find real hope. This is so because the suffering of Jesus Christ turned into glory through the Easter event and ascension.

Another motif which is worth-reflecting on is *solidarity in suffering*. Suffering does not come from God and is an inhuman experience that cannot be justified in any way without taking into account how it comes about (Kanyandago 1997:124). Therefore, a true Christian response to the plight of suffering, like that of Jesus Christ, must be to fight against it for the well being of the victims. There is need to reject any form of theology, ideology, spirituality or devotion that integrates, perpetuates and exalts suffering. There is need to pull down all structures that tend to encircle and embrace

suffering. Solidarity with the poor and needy requires that one advocates for the good of the victims of suffering. However, as pointed out earlier, one has to be cautious enough to realize that this path is a risky one. Before embarking on this journey one has to count the cost that it is about carrying the cross of Jesus Christ and following him. The reason is that in most cases solidarity as a liberating action provokes those who enjoy oppressive and repressive power like the Jewish civil and religious leaders. It questions the status quo and the way authority and power are exercised. In this sense, we can conclude that solidarity for the poor is a political dimension, and this is the Christian mandate and task.

Related to solidarity with the victims of suffering is the motif of *empowerment*. The event of Jesus' cross is a direct critique of the abuse of power. "The cross of Jesus therefore judges and condemns all powers that render people powerless and incapable of determining their destiny" (Kanyandago 1997:135). It is a symbolic stand against abuse of power and advocates for suffering for people, not the oppression of the people (Matt. 20:20-28). The cross judges any form of misusing political or religious power by putting in place the right perspective of power and authority; thus, sacrificial and liberation power and authority. In this way such power and authority empowers the victims of suffering. In this sense, liberating action must be empowering in that it must enable people to act on their own. It must be able to restore the lost ability to use one's God-given human gifts in participating in the divine mission of liberating others and of recreating the world. In other words, both religious and political power must allow participation by all, especially of those over whom it is exercised, in the establishing of a harmonious and egalitarian community.

Human charity is another New Testament motif with regard to suffering. Bart and Dovey (1981:214) testify that "... all the New Testament writers do invest the care of the poor with an ultimate sanction and embrace it in an ultimate divine imperative." What this means is that the poor and needy are the first objects of charity in the New Testament. They are pronounced to be of supreme significance in their poverty and distress. In actual sense, according to the New Testament portrayal the acts of charity lie within the range of God's Kingdom. For one to comprehend and believe in the Kingdom of God, s/he needs to take the acts of charity seriously because these are signs which contain the hidden pattern of the will and power of God (1981:216). Preaching about the good news of God's love is a cardinal requirement of the Kingdom. However, proclamation of the gospel of God's redemptive love in Jesus Christ needs to be supplemented by the acts of charity towards the victims of suffering. In this way hope in suffering becomes a real and practical entity.

Having elaborated on the New Testament perspective of suffering, it is imperative to state the basis of hope in such a scenario of suffering. The researcher is of the view that the basis of hope in suffering according to the New Testament is *God's redemptive love*. This love reveals God's divine essence and relational acts towards his people, and it is made manifest in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Hope-offering is actually the work of the triune God. Africans find real hope in the New Testament because it is based on the promise of God's love. God's love is an all-inclusive, community-forming and interrelationship, establishing and promoting love. Therefore, the resurrection is the climax of God's offer of hope in suffering. The researcher discusses the concept of resurrection in the New Testament in the section that follows.

6.2.2 Resurrection in the New Testament

In talking about resurrection, the New Testament mostly uses metaphoric language. Terms that are used are such as: awakening from the sleep of death and rising from the earth; exalting one who descended below; and ascension into heaven. As Barboglio (2006:56) explains, it makes sense therefore to note that the function of these metaphors is "to communicate realities and experiences that go beyond the confines of our human world and express events belonging to the divine sphere attainable only through the eyes of faith." This could be true for us who can only reflect on the event of the resurrection through the eyes of faith. On the other hand, for the disciples the resurrection is a reality that took place because they saw the resurrected Christ. The aim of this section, and indeed the entire research project, is not to prove whether the Easter event took place or not, but to understand how the New Testament interprets the resurrection.

6.2.2.1 The Context of Resurrection in the New Testament

Every concept must be understood from a specific perspective, and therefore the context plays a major role in comprehending that perspective. In this case, the resurrection should be interpreted from a specific New Testament context in order to find out whether hope in suffering was at play. Before discussing the context of resurrection in the New Testament, it is important to understand the term, "resurrection," itself.

According to Muller (1988:147) two pairs of Greek terms are employed in the New Testament with reference to Christ's resurrection. The first is the verb *anistemi* and the derivative noun, *anastasis*. This term has a more general significance, and can refer to rising up in rebellion (Mk. 3:26; Acts 5:36), to rising or standing to read, pray or speak (Lk. 4:16; 22:45), and even to raising children (Mt. 22:24). In actual sense, *anistemi* does not necessarily refer to Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament, although it also expresses a re-awakening from sleep and raising from the earth and is used in metaphorical sense. The noun *anastasis* is used almost universally, and mostly refers to the "resurrection of the dead." Therefore, the term which is more appealing is *egeiro* with its noun form, *egersis*. *Egeiro* has a general sense of stand (Mt. 2:13f), appear (Mt. 24:11, 24), or awaken (Lk. 13:25) as well. Paul uses this term, with only one exception (Phil. 1:17), for God's act of raising Christ from the dead (e.g. Rom. 4:24f; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:4, 12, 15; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20), for the raising of other believers (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 5:14; Col. 2:12), or for the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 1:9) (Muller 1988:147). As for the noun *egersis*, it only occurs once in reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Mt. 27:53). In a nutshell, one would conclude that Paul used *egeiro* exclusively in reference to God's act of raising Christ, but employed *anistemi*, not *egersis*, for the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12-21). The two Greek verbs are used to express the re-awakening from sleep and raising from the earth. As Barboglio (2006:58) nicely puts it, Jesus who was crucified "is awakened by God from the sleep of his death; God has raised up from the ground the deceased Jesus lying in the earth (Rom. 10:7; Col. 1:18)." This is proved by Jesus' appearances (what is commonly known as *Christophanies*): his coming to meet his disciples, and showing himself gifted with divine power capable of transforming their hearts and their lives – rejuvenation of their faith (Mt. 26:56; 28; Lk. 24; Jn. 20-21).

Wright and Crossan give comprehensive understandings of the term "resurrection." Wright understands the resurrection to mean a physical reality: Jesus' resurrection is a real event which took place in history. Jesus was indeed bodily raised from the dead. He was raised corporeally (physically, with the whole body and soul). According to Wright (2003:685), the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was bodily raised from the dead is widely held, consistently shaped and highly influential (Wright 2003:719). Hence, his resurrection is a physical reality though with a transformed body. Crossan, too, believes that the resurrection is real (Crossan 2003:29-35). However, Crossan redefines the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He understands the resurrection as metaphorical: first, it is meant to provide hope; second, it points to Jesus' continued presence in the church; third, it means that God has reversed Rome's verdict on Jesus; fourth and most importantly, the Easter happening

seeks to stress God's expected transformation of the cosmos, the vindication of his people in the general resurrection and the demonstration of justice in the judgment of the wicked. All the above meanings of "resurrection" must be considered if one is to have a holistic perspective of the term.

What then is the context of resurrection in the New Testament? The events of the Old Testament were actually preparatory for the fulfillment of promises and hope in the person of Jesus Christ. These events develop until the inter-testamental period. Hence, as Pfeiffer (1959:7) argues, the inter-testamental period was characterized by "the development of synagogue worship, the success by Maccabean revolt, and the emergence of those parties [Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes, etc] within Judaism which have set the pattern for Jewish life and thought during the past two millennia." In the inter-testamental period, the concept of the Kingdom of God is the climax of the apocalyptic literature. People in this period were anticipating the coming of the Kingdom of God which would mark the end of the present age and consequently the end of evil (and suffering) in the world. In Perkins's (1984:22) understanding, "resurrection symbolism emerges during the Maccabean times within the larger context of apocalyptic symbols. These symbols portray God's impending judgment of a world that is dominated by powers of evil." Therefore, within this apocalyptic schema the resurrection emerges as a mode of transcending death whereby humans participate in the heavenly sphere of reality where peace and harmony prevail. In other words, the presumption of resurrection in all apocalyptic visions is a radical new creation to follow upon the divine victory.

Setzer (2001:95-96) gives a comprehensive summary on the function of resurrection faith to the Pharisees which helps in understanding the Jewish reliance on the anticipated divine victory. The resurrection belief was first of all an instrument of self-definition for both the Pharisees and the Rabbis. Secondly, the resurrection served as an implicit protest, against the world as it was, against Roman hegemony, and against the powerlessness of Israel. In other words, it served as a confrontation against any form of injustice in society. The resurrection also functioned as a means or element of social control for any form of disbelief in it. Lastly, and of utmost importance, the resurrection faith was certainly seen as a solution to the human fear of death. This entailed that the resurrection was the source of hope because it served as an effective strategy for solving the problem of Israel's powerlessness due to immense martyrdom. Belief in the resurrection (of the dead) revived hope in God who would show his favour upon the suffering righteous people. According to Vermes (2008:6) the resurrection, particularly bodily resurrection, is a Jewish idea which carries the message of hope in that it "entails the corporeal revival of the dead, the

reunification of the spiritual soul and the material body of a deceased person.” There is an assurance that the body that is separated from the soul at the time of death shall be reunited with the soul where life in its fullness will be restored.

A close look at the New Testament witnesses shows that resurrection is quickly divorced from its originating context. Perkins (1984:23) points out that this separation from the original context is in part due to the spread of Christianity among the urban population outside Palestine. Due to the fact that a new age was seen as having begun with Jesus, the Christian image of resurrection initiated *a metaphoric shift within the symbolic patterns of the apocalyptic code*. The whole perception shifted in a number of ways: Firstly, Roman imperial power was looked upon as beneficent, not as the embodiment of evil shortly to be overthrown by divine intervention (Rom. 13:1-7); secondly, for Jewish apocalyptic perspective the mythic story of the divine victory over evil and the renewal of creation is no longer located in the present divine decisive act over evil, but in the future, at the *parousia*; and thirdly, the first Christians’ attachment of resurrection symbolism to Jesus collapsed the apocalyptic scheme.

Another influencing factor for the New Testament divorce from the original context is the shift that was initiated with the Platonic revolution in human consciousness, which originates with an intellectual elite (Perkins 1984:23). The concept of resurrection is no longer perceived with an apocalyptic eye, but with an intellectual-philosophical mindset. It is not just about faith in the Easter event, but it must also make sense to the human rational faculty. This is perhaps the reason why Paul argues the resurrection with philosophical connotations. As mentioned earlier, the concept of resurrection in the New Testament context in a way “acted as a low-level protest against competing groups and the larger Greco-Roman society without and as an instrument of self-definition and social control within the community. Dearly held ideas of God’s power and favour to Israel were reconciled with the reality of her suffering and subjection to an alien power” (Setzer 2001:97). In this world the resurrection affirmed the existence of the individual physical body and collective body of the chosen community of God within an alien society. In short, we would say that the context of resurrection in the New Testament was no longer confined to the existence of the people of God who were suffering from persecution and martyrdom. The Jewish community was to view resurrection as affirming their role in a society which, though hostile to their faith, needed to be inclusively approached with the promise of future hope at the *parousia*. The resurrection was now to

be understood as a promise and realization of hope not only for Israel alone, but also for all humankind in the world. Let us now survey the concept of resurrection in the New Testament.

6.2.2.2 Survey of Resurrection in the New Testament

The resurrection in the New Testament is presented as the culmination of the biblical story of human captivity and God's deliverance. It is an event about God's gracious act to deliver humankind from the bond of slavery. As Perkins (1984:19) confirms, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is affirmed in two major categories: that of the narratives which concludes the gospels accounts and that of the *kerygmatic* formula as in Romans 4:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. The researcher therefore takes the same route of presenting the two categories in surveying the resurrection in the New Testament.

The narrative account of Jesus' resurrection is mainly presented by the writers of the gospels (and the book of Acts), and each is uniquely an integral conclusion to the story of the historical Jesus. Two aspects stand out as points of emphasis: some centre on the finding of the empty tomb and others stress the appearances of Jesus to his disciples. Resurrection in all these narrative accounts is seen to be the resumption of life with all its relationships (e.g. Mk. 12:18-27). Jesus was resurrected for the purpose of entering in a continued relationship with the Father and all humankind. As Moltmann affirms, the resurrection is also unique in that it is an event of promise. It is the daybreak of the new creation holding out the promise of renewal of all things: the resurrection is "the promise of the kingdom of God in which all things attain to right, to life, to peace, to freedom, and to truth, is not exclusive but inclusive" (Moltmann 1967:224). Therefore, the resurrection is not all about what transpires in the world and its history, but "a new possibility altogether for the world, for existence and for history" (Moltmann 1967:179). It contains the promise first for the crucified Jesus himself in that he stands vindicated by God, and then for the entire world which is yet to be fulfilled in the eschatological future, but at the same time has already begun to be realized in the present. The evidence and interpretation of the resurrection in the narrative accounts is so overwhelming and widely spread that the space in this sub-section cannot contain it. Therefore, the researcher discusses selectively in this survey as a way of supporting the centrality of the concept of resurrection in the New Testament.

Reading the narrative account, one finds specific testimonies about Jesus' resurrection. The Gospel according to John alludes to the fact that Jesus' resurrection derives from God's salvific plan.

According to John, Jesus had power over life and death by laying down his life and taking it up again. “The cross/resurrection events link Jesus in a unique way to the Father, the living God, who has power over life and death. By illustrating his access to that power over life and death, Jesus convinced his disciples of his divine identity. This conviction is expressed in the climatic confession of Thomas in 20:28: ‘My Lord and my God’” (Van der Watt 2003:127). The other way of putting it is that Jesus was entrusted with power over life and death by the Father and therefore, he fulfilled God’s plan of salvation through the events of cross and resurrection. Jesus had power to give out his life in death and to take it again in resurrection for the sake of the salvation of the fallen people of the world. What is required of the saved fallen people is a response in faith (Jn. 20:29) – a mature faith which can promptly detach itself from any need for apparitions (Williams 2002:94).

In the Gospel according to John the resurrection theologically implies a number of elements: First, it implies that Jesus as the Son of Man is manifested in the event of resurrection who bestows upon his people the life which was given him by the Father (Jn. 5:18; 6:53-58; 10:33; 20:25, 28). The resurrection is an event of hope (in suffering) because through it God grants life to the lifeless in Jesus Christ. Second, John emphasized the ethical ground for the resurrection in and through Christ: one must believe, hear the voice of the resurrected Son, and experience spiritual renewal (Jn. 5:25f; 6:40, 52-58; 20:25-31). The Easter event’s meaning becomes apparent to the person who is born from the Spirit (the one who has experienced spiritual renewal) and responds in faith to what God offers in Jesus Christ. Third, Jesus’ resurrection legitimizes the mission and message of Jesus (10:30; 11:24-26; 20:28): the message that he has power to give life to the lifeless and the mission to manifest that power in him, the power of resurrection, which defeats and paralyses the sting of death. Lastly, the Johannine narrative of Jesus’ postresurrection appearances demonstrates that Jesus’ postresurrection body had both a spiritual nature (Jn. 20:19, 26) and a physical nature (Jn. 20:20, 27; 21:13, 15) (Muller 1988:148). Though he was seen with a physical body (with flesh and blood), he was already glorified and exalted through the resurrection event. This offers us with hope in suffering in that though we may be experiencing pain now, new life and glory are assured in the glorified Son of Man. We are already exalted to the status of being co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

Luke presents the disciples who firmly testified to the resurrection of Jesus in Acts 2:24-28 and 13:34-37. In this regard Johnson (2004:147) argues that “the orientation and direction of the images Luke uses to portray the risen Son begins to (re)orient the eschatological imagination of the audience by offering a glimpse of God’s final future that is characterized by transformed

physical/material, even fleshly, embodiment.” The apostles are portrayed as the primary witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:32). In this way they publicly testify to God’s confirmation of Jesus’ claims. Therefore, the narrative of Jesus’ resurrection as a whole is a *testimony or witness* to God’s act in Jesus Christ. In other words, Luke testifies that God’s eschatological reign has arrived and is provisionally confirmed by the flesh-and-blood resurrection of the Son (Johnson 2004:161). Luke testifies to the truth of God’s in-breaking Lordship and deity which is confirmed by the Easter event (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32). The resurrection in this sense has a bearing on the salvation of humankind. According to the narrative of Luke in Acts salvation is particularly dependent on resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Hence, resurrection has both a Christological and soteriological significance: “through being raised, Jesus becomes above all the one in whose name salvation is given; it is faith in the risen Jesus ... which brings the possibility of repenting and receiving forgiveness, and therefore brings salvation at the judgment (Acts 10:41-43)” (Delling 1968:91). Resurrection is the climax of the Christ-event, and therefore makes salvation for humankind possible. Reduction criticism has to a great extent helped us to understand that the resurrection narrative in each Gospel has its special meaning: each Evangelist emphasizes a specific focus. The overall emphasis, however, is that Easter is an event of hope to the lost and hopeless humankind.

The *kerygmatic* tradition mainly refers to the appearances, rather than the empty tomb, of Jesus Christ. Perkins (1984:22) states that no single, unified picture of resurrection is presented in this tradition. The resurrection is not so much about the climatic story about Jesus’ life. Rather, it is about the significance of the Easter event in the Christian’s life. It is about the need for the believer to proclaim the significance of resurrection to humankind. For instance, 1 Corinthians 15:4ff is considered to be the earliest text in the New Testament to speak of the resurrection of Jesus from the point of view of its witnesses (Delling 1968:78). Here Paul testifies how the postresurrection appearances of Jesus were visibly seen by various individuals and groupings. On this point, Wright (2005:675-676) notes that each of the four canonical Gospels ends with the stories about the Jesus’ appearances to his disciples (and discovery of the empty tomb). Therefore, he concludes that the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus together constitute a necessary and sufficient condition for the rise of the early Christian faith. Wright also believes that the empty tomb and appearances traditions convey the message that God’s new stage has been opened for God’s purposes of which Jesus’ disciples must carry forward. The Gospels, therefore, testify that the

disciples were to proclaim the risen Christ as evidenced especially by Jesus' appearances to various groups of people.

Pauline literature is mainly about the proclamation of the resurrection. Pauline theology on the resurrection is basically about proclaiming the Easter event in two ways: the promise of the future event and the transformation of believers. Paul teaches about the future resurrection of believers to salvation, and this is intimately related to his expectation of the coming kingdom and the eschatological appearance of Christ. In this regard, the foundation of Paul's emphasis is faith in the past event of Jesus Christ's resurrection as the basis of future hope (1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:10f, 20f). The present suffering of believers cannot be compared to the future glory which will be bestowed upon them in the second coming of Jesus Christ. Beker (1980:135) argues that "Paul's thought is anchored in the apocalyptic world view and that the resurrection of Christ can only be understood in that setting." Therefore, for Paul the resurrection is about the imminent dawn of the general resurrection and the total renewal of all things in the eschatological future. But then, resurrection is also a "historical-ontological category, manifesting in this world the dawning of the new age of transformation" (Beker 1980:153). The dawning of the total renewal has been inaugurated by Jesus' resurrection and is carried on in present life until the eschatological future where the general resurrection will occur. The resurrection is in this sense not only a future anticipation, but also a present reality in the lives of the believers. That is why the Deutero-Pauline literature also elaborates the representation of the Easter event itself as a transformation of the individual believer in the present life. Since Jesus Christ has been transformed into glory through the resurrection, humankind has been set free from sin and death in the glorified Christ; and through the transformation of humanity the rest of the creation has experienced renewal (Rom. 8:19-23; 1 Cor. 15:35-53; 2 Cor. 5:1-4, 15-17; Col. 1:15-20). The power of God in Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit continues to give life to the renewed bodies. The believer experiences the power of Jesus' resurrection through the blessings thereof already in this life.

Like the Pauline literature, the *general epistles'* teaching, too, rests primarily on the fact of Jesus' resurrection which defines the life of faith and the preaching of the gospel about God's love in Jesus Christ (Muller 1988:148). The book of Hebrews considers the resurrection of the dead to be one of the most basic doctrines for the new convert. The convert is promised hope in that s/he will be brought to glory in Christ and will have the vision of God at *parousia* and the final judgment (Heb. 2:10; 6:1f; 9:27f; 10:37; 11:19, 35; 12:14). Peter's first epistle sets forth even more briefly the

promise of a heavenly inheritance which is given to those born again. The fact that Jesus' resurrection took place gives confidence to believers who have been born again "of imperishable seed" (1 Pet. 1:3-4, 21, 23). The book of Revelation uses imagery to speak of the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5f) that precedes the final resurrection to judgment. Muller (1988:148) argues that this "first resurrection" may refer to a populating of the millennial kingdom or it may refer to the new birth of believers during the age of the church preceding the end. Whatever the "first resurrection" means, the fact is that there is an allusion to the fact of resurrection of believers based on Jesus' unique Easter event in the book of Revelation.

The survey of the New Testament on the concept of resurrection reveals two important facts for our hope in suffering. The first fact is that through the resurrection of Jesus a believer is placed in a status of glory. By this status the believer becomes the *recipient* of God's grace where s/he enjoys the benefits of God's love and forgiveness. The second fact is that the Easter event entrusts the believer with a responsibility. In this sense the responsibility is that the believer becomes the *participant* in enhancing hope in one's own life and that of others. Hope in suffering then entails receiving God's offer of salvation with joy and in humility, and giving out that offer to others through the proclamation of the good news of God's love. In order to comprehend one's status and to achieve one's responsibility, there is need for the believer to have a right perspective of Jesus' resurrection. Hence, the sub-section that follows seeks to address Jesus' resurrection in its right perspective.

6.2.2.3 *Jesus' Resurrection in Perspective*

From the onset, it is important to affirm that *the resurrection is first and foremost a word about God himself*. It points to God's final triumph over the executioners – the perpetrators of oppression (Sobrino 1988:130). The resurrection is a word of God where God declares that through Jesus' resurrection death is defeated and new life is attained. This word of God grants hope for victims of suffering through oppression. The victims live liberative hope generated by the resurrection of Jesus directly for the world's victims. Hence, in as much as the researcher devotes much of this sub-section to the discussion of Jesus' resurrection in perspective, the focus is on the word and act of God as expressed through the Easter event.

There is no any other right perspective of Jesus' resurrection other than the fact that this event is the climax of God's salvific drama and Christian faith. Human salvation in Jesus Christ and the Christian faith are based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Delling (1968:98) argues that "the cross of Christ is not a real saving act without the resurrection." What was started on the cross is fully accomplished in the Easter event. Through Jesus' resurrection human life and existence by God are reconstituted (Rom. 4:25; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:17; 2 Cor. 5:15). In other words, according to the New Testament witness the raising of Jesus is actually the decisive act of God's saving work. God manifested his ability and power to save humankind through the act of raising Jesus from the grave. The resurrection is also central and decisive for faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:12ff; 1 Thess. 2:13). Our union with and faith in Jesus are realized and make more sense in the fact that Christ opened the door for new life and new beginning. In this sense, the resurrection provides hope to the believer. This hope is not only that which will be realized in the eschatological future, but also the eschatological action of God which has already taken place in Jesus Christ. Johnson (2004:161) puts it in another way; the risen Son of God has enacted "the eschatological jubilee of God's coming reign *in the present* flesh-and-blood life of the church."

What then does it imply to situate Jesus' resurrection in the perspective of the climax of God's salvific drama? Leon-Dufour's (1974:220-228) three New Testament interpretations of the Easter message help in answering this crucial question. These interpretations explain the significance of the resurrection in the whole drama of salvation for humankind. In the researcher's view these interpretations not only put the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the right perspective of God's salvific act, but also act as the basis for hope in the situation of suffering.

The first interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is the affirmation by Luke that *Christ is alive* (Lk. 24:5-8, 22-24; Acts 1:3; 25:19). The fact that Jesus is alive is proof enough to show that God triumphed over death – the word about God. The other way of putting it is that the significance of Jesus' resurrection does not lie in the actual occurrence of the Easter event but in the result of the event – Jesus Christ is alive. This is significant in that Christian hope is not in a dead person, but in the person who is living and has power over death. No matter the reality and power of suffering, Christ lives above any form of suffering. Therefore, our faith and lives are well vested in the living person who tested suffering and death and emerged a victor in the end. We too, shall surely triumph over the suffering and death. Christ is alive, and alive for our hope in suffering and any other life-threatening situation!

Paul affirms the second interpretation: *Christ lives in me*. The reason for Paul's affirmation is to urge his audience how a believer should live as a function of the Easter message. Jesus' resurrection for Paul is significant in the lives of believers in various ways. Firstly, since Jesus was raised from the dead and lives in the life of the believer, the believer is assured of resurrection after death (1 Cor. 15:12, 20, 45). In other words, on the basis of Jesus' resurrection the believer is assured of life after death since the one who resurrected lives in the believer. Secondly, Christ's death and resurrection are the pattern of the believer's life (Rom. 6:3-11; 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12; 3:1). The complete sequence of Jesus' death-burial-resurrection becomes the prototype of the present existence of a believer and offers true hope in pressing situations such as suffering. Thirdly, the risen Christ is the life of the believer (Rom. 6:4; 8:16; 1 Cor. 1:23; 6:12-20; 2 Cor. 4:16; 5:4; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16; Phil. 3:21). For Paul, the living Lord Jesus Christ initiates and guarantees the believer's future and provides the pattern for existence. Christ is already present to the believer. Therefore, God's glory was at the actual event of Jesus' resurrection, but also constitutes the body of Christ which is a glorious body. This glory is at work in the life of the believer in all situations, and hence grants hope in suffering.

John's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection shows a significant uniqueness. John states that they shall behold him whom they have pierced. According to Leon-Dufour (1974:225), in John's mind Jesus' resurrection is not simply what gives meaning to ultimate humiliation, but is already present at the very lowest point of descent upon earth. The cross is the beginning of glorification (Jn. 2:19, 22; 7:30; 8:20; 11:25; 12:16, 23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). For John this glorification shines into Jesus' earthly life (Jn. 1:14; 2:19; 3:13; 6:62; 7:37-38; 9; 10:16-18; 13:1, 4, 12; 19:34; 20:17). John perceives the cross not as a shame or scandal, but the throne of glory on which Jesus who gives life is to be found (Jn. 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:33; 13:32; 19:37). Though the cross is not identical with glorification, it is the beginning of the movement which concludes in the ascent to the Father (Leon-Dufour 1974:227). In this sense, for John Jesus' resurrection is the *inauguration of the exaltation*: the lifting up of Jesus inaugurates his exaltation. Jesus who was raised from the dead is exalted into glory. This gives hope in that those who believe in him are as well exalted with him in the glory of the Father.

The right perspective of Jesus' resurrection is the salvific drama. In this drama Jesus is alive, lives in the believer and is inaugurated into the glory of the Father. Therefore, the right perspective of Jesus' resurrection grants hope to the believer in that there is an intimate relationship between the believer

and the risen and glorified Christ. We conclude the sub-section, therefore, by highlighting major theological affirmations about the Easter event.

6.2.2.4 Theological Affirmations about the Resurrection

What does the New Testament mean when it affirms that Jesus arose from the dead? The overarching theme in the New Testament (especially in the Synoptic Gospels) is the establishment of the kingdom of God. This is clearly explained by Hagner (1998:118):

The Synoptic Gospels have as their common theme the establishment of the kingdom of God. The announcement of the coming of the kingdom means the new experience of God's rule or reign in the present age, in advance of its fullest coming at the end of the age. Everything in the Gospels – including the resurrection of Jesus – is to be related to that overarching theme.

The resurrection is about *the fullness of God's victorious kingdom on earth*. It is about the inbreaking of God's kingdom on earth and the divine triumph over the forces of evil and suffering. It is also about the anticipated future eschatological glory to be experienced and enjoyed in the coming kingdom of God (Hagner 1998:120). From this overarching theme, the resurrection conveys a number of theological affirmations. Firstly, to affirm that Jesus arose from the dead is to state *the power and ability of the one who raised him from the dead*. The event of Jesus' resurrection as affirmed in the New Testament is not a mere human act, but the act of God's power and authority over death. Through Jesus' resurrection the power of God is demonstrated. When one thinks of hope in suffering, one thing that should be realized is that this hope emanates from the fact that God supersedes all human limitations and experiences. In other words, one should realize that it is God who grants hope in the situation of suffering. Hope does not come from human ability, but from God who makes the realization of hope possible where the experience of suffering seems to prevail. Resurrection is about redefinition of God's nature – the God who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:9). God raises the dead simply because he is the *God of life*. Therefore, as Gutierrez (1991:189) expresses hope in the God of life, "... hope is born in the midst of suffering; it takes the form of life that comes through death. Its ultimate motivation is found in the living God, the God of tender love, who stoops to us in our suffering, our faith, and our efforts to be in solidarity with the Latin American poor and to win their liberation." The God of life grants the fullness of life and hope amidst the experiences of lifelessness and hopelessness in the situation of suffering.

Secondly, to affirm that Jesus arose from the dead is to acknowledge the use of *metaphorical language of the Easter event*: the resurrection implies Jesus' *glorification, exaltation and ascension* into heaven. The "lifting up" in Philippians 2:6-11 points to this fact. Barboglio (2006:61) argues that "if the incarnation is descent (*katabasi*), the resurrection is *anabasi*, raising up to the divine sphere." God has honoured the crucified one by clothing him in his divine splendour (glory). He passed from the human sphere to the divine sphere (Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 5-6, 24:50-51; Jn. 3:13-15; 17:5; Acts 1:11; Rom. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:14, 17; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:18). By moving from the realm of the dead and giving him new life, God rendered justice upon, legitimized and proved him right. The crucified one was vindicated for the work of salvation through the exaltation into a glorious life. Therefore, the resurrection points to God's act in demonstrating justice in the world.

Thirdly, to affirm that Jesus arose from the dead is to allude to *God's life-giving power in Jesus Christ*. Jesus Christ is the centre of the divine life-giving act. "As beneficiary of liberation from the dominion of the dead through the intervention of his God, he has in turn become the one who is capable of giving life to the dead" (Barboglio 2006:59). Although Jesus already had power and authority to raise people from dead, through the rising from the dead Jesus continued to demonstrate power and authority to give life. The power and authority to give life starts in the present life of the believer, and also extends to the eschatological future reign of God. Those who believe in him are assured of life in eternity – in the transformed world.

Fourthly, to affirm that Jesus arose from the dead is to attest to the *anticipated eschatological victory over death*. The Easter event implies a promise to be fulfilled at the end of the age – an immortal inheritance kept in heaven (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Pet. 1:4). Jesus' resurrection actually points to an eschatological act of God where God will renew the world. In the transformed cosmos the individual creatures (both humans and non-human creatures) will be clothed with renewed bodies. The resurrection of Jesus opened the door to the new life for all those who believe in him. In fact, the Easter event is both a basis of and pointer to the renewal of all things. On one hand, the resurrection points to the present existence. It is about how the Christian can live and exercise faith in the present: realizing of the renewed presence of the divine in the world. On the other hand, the resurrection is about the future glory promised to those who will remain faithful to the end. This reality calls for a responsibility on the part of the believer in the present existence: a responsibility to stay steadfast as well as to participate in the process of renewal of the world. The question, then, is: how is the concept of the resurrection linked to hope in the situation of suffering?

6.2.3 New Testament Resurrection Hope in Suffering

The New Testament perspective of resurrection offers hope in the context where suffering has a grip on human life. Clearly, the New Testament depicts the early Christian church as a community of faith which was experiencing suffering. The New Testament underscores both the intensity and scope of experiencing suffering by the church due to hostile social, religious and political structures (1 Pet. 4:12-16; 5:1, 10; Rev. 6:10; 14:4; 21:1). In such a scenario, hope in the imminent coming of God's definitive victory and glory was a motivating factor. This hope was directed toward the imminent coming of the renewed heaven and earth; the time of the last judgment which will destroy the world evil powers and reward those who faithfully follow the Lamb that was slain. God's power has already won the battle through Jesus' resurrection, and therefore, Christian hope can be sure of God's victory on earth despite the intensity and scope of suffering.

However, the New Testament also acknowledges that both suffering and hope must be embodied and concretized by the "hopeful" suffering of the church at the hands of powers of injustice (Beker 1994:89). According to the New Testament, authentic hope for the community of faith in Jesus Christ entails suffering. The Christian church finds itself in a situation where it paradoxically exercises hope in suffering (Rom. 5:12; 8:17-30; 1 Cor. 15:26): On one hand, the church resists suffering by fighting any form of injustice; on the other hand, embodies and internalizes suffering by emulating the Master who himself underwent through grave suffering. Hope in suffering as portrayed in the New Testament requires that a Christian exercises faith in God who is able to end the suffering. As stated in this research project, Moltmann talks about the *promissio* (promise) and *missio* (mission) in relation to hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He explains that the *missio* of Jesus Christ becomes intelligible only by the *promissio*. "His future, in the light of which he can be recognized as what he is, is illuminated in advance by *the promise of the righteousness of God, the promise of life as a result of resurrection from the dead, and the promise of the kingdom of God in a new totality of being*" (1967:203). Our hope originates from God's promise of the righteousness of God and life which was already fulfilled through the mission of Christ. Jesus' resurrection is therefore both the basis and fulfillment of human hope in God in that through it God promises and fulfills new life for humankind.

Hope for the resurrection of the dead is based on Jesus' resurrection. Hope for resurrection of the dead further came into being in the context of an expectation of the end of the world, history and human life (Loning 1993:67). Basically, this climaxes in the fact that God in Jesus' resurrection emerged victorious over death and has inaugurated his reign and new life of his kingdom. This triumph will seal the final defeat of the mysterious and evil power of death at the consummation of world history. Hope for the resurrection of the dead in the New Testament is bound up with an apocalyptic perspective in the future. Therefore, the resurrection will involve *transformation*: God will bring humanity and the entire cosmos "to taste at last the gift of life in all its fullness, a new bodily life in a new world where the rule of heaven is brought at last to earth" (Wright 2003:373). However, as Loning (1993:74) explains, the expected future is not thought of as detached from the corporeal personal and social existence of believers in the present, but is still seen as its consistent consummation by God. The eschatological hope must be seen to be a reality in the present. Such an understanding of hope in turn compels a Christian to live and practice hope in the present. In a nutshell, the New Testament resurrection hope in suffering is founded on God's redemptive loving grace and action to save humanity from suffering; and this divine act demands a faithful response through participation in the realization of hope in suffering.

6.3 A SYNTHESIS

To conclude this chapter, the researcher seeks to synthesize the biblical interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the framework of suffering to offer hope. As has been discussed in the chapter, suffering is not an alien concept in the Bible. It is a constant motif throughout the biblical witness. Suffering in the Bible appears in various forms. For instance, in some instances it is portrayed as being a consequence of sin, while in other instances it is associated with persecution and the way of Christian growth. In whatever form suffering appears in the Bible, the reality is that God is ever present and powerful in the experience of suffering to encourage and empower the victim. In this way, God demonstrates God's grace and glory. In fact, God shared in the experience of human suffering through the incarnation and cross of Jesus Christ.

Further, the chapter has surveyed the experiences and types of suffering in the Bible. The result of these forms of suffering is that the biblical narrative categorizes suffering in three main types (Ryken, Wilhoit & Longman 1998:824). The first one is *punitive* or *retributive* suffering. This is the deserved punishment in suffering for human-made mistake. Another type of suffering is *innocent*

suffering where a victim unmeritedly undergoes pain and affliction either from the natural calamities or by other people. Lastly, the Bible talks of *redemptive* suffering: the suffering either for the sufferer as s/he is refined by it or for the benefit of others (e.g. the suffering servant motif). How does the Bible deal with suffering in order to grant hope?

As noted by Edwards (1988:652), we do not find a single solution to the problem of suffering in the Bible. What the Bible offers is the affirmation of God's goodness and care through the giving of his Son Jesus Christ who suffered, died and resurrected for all the suffering humanity. Through Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection Christ brings hope, dignity and comfort to those who suffer. The Bible teaches that God demonstrates care for those who experience suffering. In the Old Testament God made special laws to cater for the needs of the poor in the Israelite community of faith. According to the Old Testament, any person who oppresses the poor shows contempt for *Yahweh*, but whoever is kind to the needy honours the God of Israel. Similarly in the New Testament any disregard for the poor and needy is considered as sin. The Bible then bears a consistent testimony to the fact that compassion and care for the poor and needy is a divine command for the Body of Christ: To be charitable was considered a noble virtue throughout the biblical history (e.g. Rom. 8:35-39; 12:19-21). Therefore, Christians are called upon to emulate Christ's example in relieving the suffering of others and bearing it patiently.

God's demonstration of love and care for the suffering people is ultimately revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' resurrection is an image of new beginnings – the dawning of the seemingly lost hope in the cross of Jesus (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1). Jesus who suffered and was shamefully nailed on the cross was raised and enthroned into glory by God's power in order to open the door for new beginnings. The Easter event is therefore the source of hope because the believer is also raised to the exalted status. Christian hope in this sense is based on God's faithfulness to his salvific plan for the world as ultimately fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In that case, as Beker (1994:88) suggests, authentic hope in suffering has a threefold dimension (a) the *ground* of its hope is Christ – in Christ's cross and resurrection Christians celebrate God's faithfulness and love for them and his creation. Real hope which is primarily grounded in Jesus Christ triumphs the situation of suffering; (b) the *horizon* of its hope is the promise of the Kingdom of God, which will mean the cessation of the power of injustice and idolatry in the world. The promise of God to end suffering in the world is realized both in the "already" of Jesus' resurrection and the "not yet" in the eschatological future; and (c) and the

objects of its hope are those strategies and possibilities that the church devises as inroads of the dawning Kingdom of God in the midst of an idolatrous and suffering world. To deal with suffering in the present world requires a thorough participation by the church through putting in place and implementing practical strategies as mandated by God.

The Bible does not divorce the experience of suffering from the prospect for hope. A meaningful integration of suffering and hope is the dominant view in the Bible. When hope is divorced from the reality of suffering in the world it becomes false and cheap. The end result is that such a hope tends to be non-liberative to the suffering person or community. The biblical perspective of hope as portrayed by the Easter event is real and practical. In acknowledging the reality and power of suffering, hope in the Bible posits God's triumph over the powers that perpetuate and escalate suffering. It is meant to uplift and liberate the victims of suffering. Hope in the Bible in this sense is comprehensive and addresses the corporate dimension of human suffering. Thus, it incorporates individual suffering into the final solidarity of all humankind (Beker 1994:122). This solidarity encompasses joy and enjoyment of life in full. The significance of such a message of solidarity is that hope offers a promissory word in the face of suffering of any kind. Since God in Jesus Christ triumphed in the face of an agonizing burden of suffering, the Christian finds hope in a situation of suffering. The Biblical message therefore is that God still emerges triumphant despite the escalation and power of suffering. Jesus' resurrection clearly demonstrates God's assurance of triumph in suffering. In that way, Jesus' resurrection as interpreted in the Bible is a sure source of hope in suffering.

CHAPTER 7: A PROPOSAL TOWARDS AN AFRICAN INTERPRETATION OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

In this research project the researcher has been advocate an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection so that it can offer hope in the African context of suffering. The idea behind this call is the assumption that through Jesus' victory over death in the resurrection real life is rejuvenated. In this sense, there is both a promise and a realization of hope in suffering as we interpret the Easter event properly. A right interpretation of Jesus' resurrection offers hope in suffering because, as De Gruchy (1994:64) affirms, "Our future lies no longer in the grave but in the resurrected life, and we can therefore face life with hope." Jesus' resurrection, when correctly interpreted, gives a balanced perspective of hope in suffering: it does not only proclaim hope, but also gives victims hope in the midst of despair, anxiety, uncertainty and suffering.

Having surveyed different perspectives of the subject at hand (hope in suffering), the researcher proposes an approach for the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection so that hope in suffering can be realized. Therefore, chapter seven addresses the principles in the proposed roadmap towards an appropriate African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. These principles of the proposed roadmap include a spirituality of the resurrection faith and an ethos of the Christian life. An authentic African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection has to do with the human response to God's act of victory through the Easter event. In this sense, the researcher is of the view that a response towards God's act is to reflect a spirituality that is in line with the resurrection faith, and which is manifested in the right ethos of the Christian life. Hope in suffering is therefore realized with a proper response to God's act in Jesus' resurrection: the response through sound a spirituality of the resurrection faith and a right ethos of the Christian life. What then encompasses a spirituality of the resurrection faith and an ethos of the Christian life? We now discuss the principles in the proposed roadmap for an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection.

7.1 SPIRITUALITY OF THE RESURRECTION FAITH

In Rahner's (1981:8) words, Christian's spirituality has to do with "the conscious and [to some extent] methodical development of faith, hope and love." The spirituality of the Christian believer involves a believer's whole life: it comprises the past experiences, present existence and future anticipation of the believer. Ultimately, Christian spirituality is secured in the Christ-event; and in

faith in the resurrected Jesus who was once crucified. It is based on the fact that the Jesus who was crucified was raised by the power of the living God. How, then, does a spirituality of the resurrection faith look, and in what sense does it offer hope to the suffering African? The first section of this chapter looks at the spirituality of the resurrection faith. The researcher acknowledges the fact that the term “spirituality” is a complex one which cannot be defined from a single particular perspective. Schneiders, too, acknowledges the difficulty in defining “spirituality.” She says, “Spirituality is as difficult to define as experience, and precisely because it is a particular kind of experience. Although *spirituality* was originally a specifically religious and indeed Christian term, it is today used much more broadly, not only for experience that is not Christian but even for experience that is not religious ...” (Schneiders 2000:342). Therefore, the definition of the term has to include a number of elements because “spirituality” encompasses a diversity of perspectives.

For the sake of this research project, the researcher utilizes the definition as provided by Schneiders. For Schneiders (1989:692) spirituality may be defined as “the field of study which attempts to investigate in an interdisciplinary way the spiritual experiences as such, i.e., as spiritual and as experience.” It can further be defined as the experience of conscious striving to integrate one’s life through self-transcending in light of the highest value perceived. She (1989:692-693) explains that spirituality as a discipline is distinguished from all other related fields through characteristics or elements: (a) It is *interdisciplinary* – it includes biblical studies, history, theology, psychology, and comparative religion; (b) It is a *descriptive-critical* rather than prescriptive-normative discipline – a critical study of practical application of theoretical principles, theological or other to concrete life experiences; (c) It is *ecumenical, interreligious, and cross-cultural* – the context for study of spiritual experience is “anthropologically inclusive”; and (d) It is a *holistic* discipline – it examines all the elements integral to spiritual experience (e.g. the psychological, body, historical, social, political, aesthetic, intellectual, and other dimensions of the human subject of spiritual experience). With regard to the subject at hand, spirituality is about the life experience which integrates elements of faithful present existence, hopeful future anticipation, and life in freedom and joy. Such spirituality is comprehensive in nature.

7.1.1 Faithful Present Existence

Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ entails that we no longer live to our own way of life, but to that of Jesus Christ. Jesus who was raised from the grave inaugurated the new life for the

believers, and so “to believe in the resurrection means that we are accepting Christ’s life as the norm by which we define our present existence” (Kraftchick 2007:18). To believe in the resurrection is to acknowledge the promise of heaven as an indescribable consolation and reward (1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Cor. 12:4). But this does not imply that the believer should live a passive life in the present while awaiting the promised heaven. It neither allows Christians to tolerate and submit to evil in this world, and peacefully endure the present life of suffering, pain, exploitation and alienation. The resurrection faith calls upon Christians to exercise faith in the present life through a practical spirituality. As Kraftchick (2007:19) suggests, spirituality in the present life is “an existence that is open to risk; it is a commitment to seek God’s ultimate goals of righteousness and peace while at the same time relying on God to achieve them.” The Easter faith in the present life is a spirituality that totally depends on God’s ability to bring about the *wholeness of life*.

Spirituality as a present life expression of utter dependence on God who resurrected Jesus from the shackles of the grave is the basic principle for the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection in Africa. Therefore, spirituality as dependence on God is a spirituality of victory over pain and suffering. For the suffering African, the resurrection of Jesus should be interpreted and recognized as an act of God, the Creator of *life*. This is important if hope has to be real in the African situation of suffering because the question of survival in such a context does not depend on human effort. According to Thiselton (2007:554), “the resurrection does not depend upon some innate capacity of the human self, but upon a promised, sovereign, gracious, and creative act of God.” Therefore, the resurrection should be understood as such: God’s act of sheer grace, sovereign will, creative wisdom and power, and pledge of what is yet to come in the final resurrection of the dead. The God who raised Jesus from the state of death has power to make life’s sustenance possible. All life depends on him; hence, people experiencing suffering need to truly portray faithful existence in the present life. Faithful existence in the present can be expressed through life in relationships: commitment and obedience to God the author of life; and communal interrelationship and mutual existence with others. Faithful living in complete dependence on God therefore becomes a recipe for hope in suffering to an African. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is understood as the act of God who demonstrates justice by vindicating the victim of suffering, then faithful existence in the present is to hope in the completion of God’s purpose to end suffering in the world. It is to believe in God’s ability to show justice and let life prevail over death, wholeness of life to eliminate suffering and glory to replace shame. Faithful existence is therefore depended on the triumph of God’s justice where evil and suffering are eradicated and the victims of suffering are rewarded with the wholeness of life.

One of the many ways of faithful existence in the present African life is devoting oneself to Jesus who was raised from death and has power over life and death. Rahner (1981:10-12) suggests a balanced unity of devotions. On one hand, there needs to be devotion to the person of Jesus in loving participation and personal involvement in the actual life of Jesus; from earthly life to the crowning victory of that life in the resurrection. On the other hand, there needs to be devotion to the person of Jesus through the invocation of the transfigured Lord; a direct and prayerful trusting, loving and adoring relationship to the transfigured Lord in his own blessedness and glory. An African understanding of Jesus' resurrection needs to call for a faithful devotion that is based on the past Easter event as well as that which reveres the glorified Jesus Christ through the resurrection. In this sense, this devotional life should do two important things in as far as faith in God is concerned: On one hand, it should let the God of infinite, eternal and unassailed fullness of life be in truth the God of a history of abiding validity. On the other hand, that devotional life should lay hold on the God of history as being the God of fullness of life and reality already possessed from eternity to eternity (Rahner 1981:12). God should be trusted because as he acted on that Easter day, he also has power to act even in the African present situation of suffering. Therefore, the devout and suffering Africans are encouraged to unreservedly turn to the exalted Lord in faithful prayer, obedience and commitment. However, all these spiritual exercises are aidless without the empowerment and energizing of the Holy Spirit. As Thiselton (2007:561) puts it, "The resurrection mode of existence carries with it 'somatic' identity and capacity for communication, characterized by the fullness of the agency of the Holy Spirit, who promotes Christ-likeness, and glory within the new raised humanity." Living the anticipated future resurrection of the dead in the present implies an honest realization of one's human identity (flesh and blood) in a mutual communal relationship and total dependence on the working of the Holy Spirit in that present existence. The Holy Spirit exemplifies and actualizes the fullness of life of the resurrection in the present, and does so even to the suffering African.

It is imperative to mention here that faithful present existence in the life of Jesus does not rule out the possibility of continued suffering in Africa. As Küng (1984:146-151) argues, resurrection faith entails an initiation into the discipleship of the Jesus who binds us to follow our own paths of suffering, concrete conditions, opposition and antagonism in accordance with his guidance. In other words, resurrection faith involves a daily struggle against death: a protest against a society in which death would be misused for the maintenance of unjust structures or a critique of a society marked by

death in which the powerful can exploit the weak and poor with impunity. For Küng, this is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection for an individual here and now. The resurrection faith is therefore about *daily struggle for justice*, but also with total dependence on God who is able to grant hope of life in that situation of suffering and despair. This remains a challenge for African present existence because in as much as total faithful dependence on God is cardinal for this existence, the believer in Africa is also called upon to fight against the structures that disrupt hope in the world today.

Latin American liberation theology provides an example of faithful existence by way of fighting against the structures that disrupt hope in the world today. Its emphasis on *praxis* (the combination of theoretical articulation and practical application of the Christian faith) is crucial for interpreting the resurrection in a context where human life is diminishing as a result of oppression, exploitation and effects from natural circumstances. Liberation theology makes an appeal to put into practice the act of faith in the resurrection by a corresponding act of justice, service, solidarity and love (Casaldaliga 2006:123). The poor need to be assisted to realize their dream of utopia in the present (Libanio 1993:716, 726). For Susin (2006:125) the resurrection is the heart of life and faith. In Susin's mind, resurrection does not primarily have to do with establishing a firm basis for composing a doctrine or a religion. It has to do first and foremost with human life: life lived in joy and suffering, shared in compassion and in nonconformity. Therefore, for the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in Africa to be relevant, such a hermeneutical enterprise must praxically address the plight of the suffering Africans: It must continuously aspire to bring hope to these people by addressing and challenging the structures and systems that perpetuate suffering. Faithful existence in Africa must endeavour to deal with injustice and encourage the wholeness of life for all. But then, faithful living in the struggle for justice is attained through total dependence on God whose justice triumphs over evil as witnessed in the Easter event.

However, such spirituality of faithful existence is not just entangled by the present life experiences; it hopefully anticipates a future life as promised through the Easter event. This brings the researcher to the next principle for the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the context of suffering in Africa so that hope can truly be realized. The present experiences of suffering in African compel one to look to the promised future life. Despite the pain which is experienced as a result of massive suffering, an African looks forward to the grand finale of God's justice.

7.1.2 Hopeful Future Anticipation

The expectation of an African believer in Jesus Christ is that God should completely remove suffering and pain. In fact, this is the anticipation of every Christian regardless of the context: as Kress (1971:42) argues, “The Christian always has the hope that there will indeed be wholeness of life, that his efforts and those of all men in the world do not end in the darkness and destruction of death.” For a Christian death does not hold the final word: Jesus defeated death when he triumphed through his resurrection. Christ’s resurrection is the basis for the anticipation of the wholeness of life in the future. The God who restored life to the crucified Jesus promises to grant the wholeness of life to the suffering Africans. In that case, the spirituality of the resurrection faith in Africa should rest on the principle of hopeful future anticipation of new and whole life as promised by God in Jesus’ resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ can therefore suitably be interpreted in the African context of suffering by embracing not only the principle of faithful present existence, but also that of hopeful future anticipation. This is so because, as Thiselton (2007:545) equally bears witness, “eschatology entails looking to God both in terms of the future and in terms of the present waiting.” It is about the newness of the in-breaking of the future into the present as signified by the Holy Spirit. According to O’Donovan (1986:22), the resurrection does not only compel us to look back to the historical Easter event itself, but also makes us to look “forward to our eschatological participation in that order [the anticipated created order].” His awaited world-redemption has an anticipation of a future reality which is already present through the believers’ freedom to act by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to practice a sound spirituality in the present, but also the future is hoped to be fulfilled by the God of Jesus’ resurrection.

The question still remains: How can Jesus’ resurrection adequately be interpreted in Africa in terms of hope and promise of the future? Mudge (1980:159) states that the task of hermeneutics of Jesus’ resurrection [in the context of suffering in Africa] is to reinstitute the potential of hope – to tell the future of the Easter event. The interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection in the African context of suffering is to offer hope not only in this life but also in the life beyond. The event of Jesus’ resurrection can only make sense if it is linked to the promise of the whole of life in the eschatological future. True spirituality, in this sense, will unceasingly and hopefully anticipate the fulfillment of this promise. Therefore, an interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection should never neglect the fact that resurrection faith focuses on the promise of the future life; otherwise, it would not be

real hope at all to the African context of suffering. Without the eschatological complement, the present existence remains void and empty of hope. Peters (2006:151) agrees by saying that “the passion and energy of Christian living come from reliance on the biblical promise ... Christian belief is dependent upon an as-yet-unfulfilled future expectation of the resurrection.” Based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christian spirituality anticipates the resurrection to new and whole life in the eschatological future. In a nutshell, an authentic interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection ties the Easter event to the eschatological new creation that has been promised by God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the African understanding of Jesus’ resurrection should be seen as the dawning of the new reality of God’s Kingdom where God promises peace, equality, life in its fullness, respect of other lives and justice for all. Hopeful future anticipation is cardinal to practice the spirituality of the resurrection faith.

The anticipation of God’s future does not entail an attitude of passive resignation. Brown (1971:520) contends that “the Christian who lives from the future is inflamed by an intense desire to bring this future into the present. ‘Pie in the sky when you die’ is the very opposite of Christian hope. True hope comes alive only when we strive to make the future become present, when the present is not permitted to remain as it is.” The resurrection of Jesus Christ calls for an active participation in the realization of hope in suffering. As Africans anticipate the fulfillment of life in its wholeness in the future, there is need to actively participate in the realization of that whole life in the present. This also depends on how one responds to the situation of suffering and the offer of hope by God. This brings us to the next principle on the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection so as to offer hope in the African context of suffering.

7.1.3 Life in Freedom and Joy

The spirituality of the resurrection faith entails a unity of life that encompasses faithful existence in the present and hopeful anticipation of a brighter future. The result and continuation of that life is an experience and expression of freedom and joy. Such a spirituality entails a realization of hope both in the present suffering and the desire to enjoy life in its fullness in the eschatological future. Therefore, another principle to consider in the African interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection is an inclusion of freedom and joy in that hermeneutical enterprise.

Freedom in the light of hope means an existence in the light of Jesus' resurrection. Thus, an interpretation of freedom in the light of hope is a hermeneutic of freedom in conformity with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The researcher finds Moltmann's treatment of freedom from a liberative point of view applicable if one is to understand freedom in the African context of suffering. Therefore, it is worthwhile analyzing Moltmann's view of freedom at this point before relating it to the African context.

Moltmann (1992:99) discusses freedom as the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. For him an experience of God is the experience of liberation – an experience of being set free for life. Biblical history portrays such an experience at two occasions: at Exodus where God is the liberator of the people of Israel from the power of the tyrant, Pharaoh, for the promised land flowing with milk and honey; and at resurrection where God is the liberator of all humanity from the tyrant of death for the new creation of all things for the eternal life in which death will be no more. Moltmann (1992:101) therefore affirms, "In both cases, to believe God simply means getting up out of oppression and resignation, and laying hold of our freedom, and living." The basis of freedom is God, for as Moltmann (1992:103) puts it, "to experience God is to experience freedom." There is no freedom from a personal alienation from God the source and basis of real freedom. Africans can only experience real freedom if they lean on God who demonstrated his power to liberate Jesus Christ from the power of death. In fact, once people endeavour to search for their own freedom they discover that they are actually running away from freedom (Moltmann 1992:104). It is in God alone where real freedom can be experienced. In this way, the experience of freedom in God energizes the desire to advocate for justice for the poor, and to raise up those who are the victims of various forms of suffering.

Moltmann (1992:114-120) elaborates the aspects of the experience of freedom. He calls this experience of freedom the "true liberty of life" (1992:114). In a sense, the experience of freedom is actually the experience of life in its fullness. True liberty of life encompasses the realization and experience of liberating faith, love and hope. According to Moltmann (1992:114-115) liberating faith is freedom as subjectivity. Therefore, he explains the understanding of faith as subjective freedom:

It means becoming creative with God, and in God's Spirit. Faith leads to a creative life which is life-giving through love, in places where death rules and people resign themselves, and surrender to it. Faith awakens trust in the still unrealized possibilities in human beings – in oneself and in other people. So faith

means crossing the frontiers of the reality which is existent now, and has been determined by the past, and seeking the potentialities for life which have not yet come into being.

Faith in that case has to do with the ability and courage to go beyond one's present state of existence for the realization of freedom in its fullness. For the African situation of suffering, freedom from such suffering can be attained when it is coupled with the desire and potential to go beyond the present state and experience of pain and suffering. This may sound as escapism. Nevertheless, it is an encouragement to free oneself from the spirit of passivity in the situation of suffering. It is to awaken from the life of complacency to an experience of freedom beyond suffering.

Liberating love as social freedom is another aspect of liberation spirituality which Moltmann (1992:118) discusses. For him, freedom as sociality "is a qualification of the relationships in which, and from which, the people concerned live." This entails communicative freedom where the truth of subjective freedom is mutual love, solidarity and the coming together of individuals for interrelatedness and mutual goals. Where people experience life in fullness there is also the sense of unhindered and open community in solidarity. This is the spirituality of the resurrection faith that comes from the experience of life in God and produces hope in the African context of suffering. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection should be interpreted as a source of freedom in love to offer true hope in suffering.

Moltmann (1992:119) talks about liberating hope as future freedom. He states that in the light of the hope of resurrection, freedom is the creative passion for the possible. This freedom is directed towards the future of the coming God. It longs to implement new, unguessed-at possibilities. In actual sense, this freedom longs for God's possibility to end suffering and bring about new and whole life. Such longing is based on the Easter event where God brought an end to the dominion of death and life in its fullness through the resurrection of Jesus Christ began. For the African situation of suffering, freedom in actual sense implies having the sense of God's possibility to end suffering and establish the wholeness of life. It is experiencing freedom already in the present despite the despair, pain, anxiety and suffering. The experience of life in God is the basis of such an anticipation of real life in the future because God is the fountain of such hope. The resurrection of Jesus Christ should thus be interpreted as such in order to offer and realize true hope in the African context of suffering.

An appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from a perspective of hope in suffering regenerates a joyful spirituality. For it is hope which makes the future present and which changes suffering from a cause for sadness into reason for joy. And the basis of this hope is the resurrection of Jesus. Brown (1971:515) explains that a shout of joy was the original form of the Easter *kerygma*. The spirituality of the resurrection faith was actually a proclamation which expressed an exultant exclamation (Luke 24:34). This joy that flows from the resurrection faith is both lived in the present and anticipated in the future. Such is the joy which Africans are required to express amid suffering. According to Brown (1971:522), "joy is the proclamation that life has succeeded, that it has carried off the victory, that death will not have the last word." The result of a spirituality of the resurrection faith that is produced by the hope of new and wholeness of life is an experience of joyful life. When the resurrection of Jesus Christ is interpreted in light of hope it revives joy amidst the experience of suffering. Therefore, an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection should consider this cardinal principle of joy so that real hope in the context of suffering is experienced.

This section has been devoted to the discussion of a spirituality of the resurrection faith so that hope is realized amidst suffering in Africa. Such a spirituality offers hope in suffering because it employs an African hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection which comprises faithful present existence, hopeful future anticipation and life in freedom and joy. The basis of this spirituality is God. As Moltmann has suggested, it is about the experience of God that grants real hope amidst suffering. How, then, do we practically exercise this faith in the present life in order for hope to be relevant in the African situation of suffering? The spirituality of resurrection faith calls for the application of a corresponding ethos in the Christian life. In other words, the spirituality of the resurrection faith should in the end result into the ethic life where one practically integrates the experience of God. There is a link between Christian spirituality and Christian ethos because the experience of God is practically lived in the present life despite the challenges.

7.2 ETHOS FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Christian ethos to a great extent depends on the experience that comes from the historical event of Jesus' resurrection. Experiencing God's triumphant act in the resurrection empowers us to live a meaningful life in the present. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the act of God to his creation. By raising Jesus from the dead God inaugurates new life in which all humanity is redeemed and transformed potentially! We all receive God's offer of new life in faith. But then, the receiving of

this new life must translate into action for the well being of all humanity and the non-human creatures. But then, an ethical application of the new life depends on God's work in Jesus Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit actualizes the work of Christ in us so that we realize hope in suffering. Weber (1983:254) affirms the Spirit's actualization of Christ's work in us: "... he frees us from every kind of dependency on ourselves; he breaks open our self-isolation. In that he is the Spirit of sonship, he prepares us for the inheritance and frees us from the force of the law and the dominion of the powers. In that he is the reality of the 'spirit rule of Christ,' he gives us the freedom to recognize in faith that the powers in this world are merely temporal and to defy them in hope."

In this section therefore, the researcher suggests three important ethical principles for interpreting Jesus' resurrection for the realization of hope in the African context of suffering: love in relationship, solidarity with the victims, and social and political involvement. In the researcher's mind these three components are significant for the practice of the resurrection faith in the context where many Africans are suffering due to poverty, wars and refugees and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The experience of God's work in Jesus Christ is actualized by the Holy Spirit in many ways. For the researcher the Holy Spirit actualizes God's work in us by empowering us to practice an ethos of love in relationship, solidarity with the victims and social and political involvement in the situation of suffering. The surveys on theological approaches such as those of Latin American liberation theology and feminist theology have greatly influenced the researcher in the selection of these elements of the Christian ethic. Both theological approaches stress the triumph of God's justice in Jesus' resurrection as the basis of *praxis of liberation*. For hope in suffering to be realized Africa needs an ethos of love, solidarity and socio-political involvement which are some of the key components of praxis of liberation.

7.2.1 Love in Relationship

All humankind was created in the image of God to live in relationship with God and with one another; and so each individual is unique and highly valued by God. Hence, due to this value and dignity that God has bestowed upon us as the *imago Dei*, there is need to realize that we are created for love in relationship and should have regard and respect for other people. We need to become instruments of God's redeeming love as Isaak (2004:59) charges. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not only a demonstration of God's victory over death, but also an expression of deep love in

relationship with humankind and the entire creation. Jesus arose from the grave for life-in-loving-relationship. Therefore, one cardinal ethical principle for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering is love-in-relationship. To illustrate this principle the researcher values an analysis of O'Collins' understanding of love from the perspective of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

O'Collins (1984:39) interprets the resurrection as the model of love. He considers the resurrection as the model of love in that it is a mystery of divine and human love. The resurrection as the model of love finds its meaning in the trinitarian life-in-relationship. It is about loving relationships: "that of the Father towards the crucified Son, that of the risen Jesus towards his Father, that of the Holy Spirit towards the Father and the Son, that of the risen Jesus towards all men and women, and that of human beings towards the risen Lord" (O'Collins 1984:44). The resurrection, in this sense, can rightly be interpreted as the climax of the demonstration of love by the triune God to all humankind, and human beings are to reciprocate with the same love towards the triune God and one another.

O'Collins (1984:44-46) further highlights five implications for understanding the resurrection as the model of love in relationship that overflows from the trinitarian life. The first one is that, in the resurrection the Father's love showed itself supremely active. In raising the dead Jesus God's love worked for his ultimate welfare and highest good; God demonstrated that God's love is directed towards the other, in this case, towards Jesus. As scripture witnesses, love wills the good of others; it acts and works for their welfare (Lk. 10:28, 37; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 Jn. 3:18). God showed love by raising Jesus from the dead so that we, too, may extend the same love to others so that hope in suffering may truly be realized. The triune God is the God of life as well as the God of love. Therefore, as life-giving God, he demonstrates love to the Son whom he resurrects, and, through the Son and actualization of the Holy Spirit, grants total life and love to suffering humanity.

The other implication of understanding the resurrection as the model of love is that in the resurrection the Father's love 'healed' Jesus who had suffered the final wounding of death. By the event of the resurrection Jesus was saved from definite decay and destruction: he was taken up into the radiance of divine glory (Lk. 24:26; Jn. 17:1; Acts 2:24-31; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:21). Love has power to deliver others from all kinds of evil, suffering and danger; it can heal wounds, both great and small. Love brings to life those who have suffered spiritually, psychologically and physically. It acts to transform persons who in different ways have become

disfigured; love can make the ugly beautiful. In this sense, love can be the basis and source of life thereby granting hope in suffering because it transforms oppressive structures and individuals and heals the wounds of hatred and discrimination. Love compels human beings to move beyond their personal needs and interests in order to respond to the suffering of others and bring about true hope in that the plight of suffering.

Thirdly, O'Collins presents the resurrection as the model of love in that in the resurrection the Father's love regenerated and recreated new life to the dead Jesus whose human existence had been terminated by crucifixion. God restored life to Jesus who seemed to have had disappeared from life-existence here on earth. But then, the life which was restored to Jesus was new life in that it was the glorified life-in-loving-relationship with the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the entire humanity. Love not only saves and changes what is already in existence, but it also generates and creates that which does not yet exist. In the suffering situation love brings hope by transforming the present experience of life, and generates and creates new life where there is co-existence, respect for human dignity, justice for all and mutual and intimate relationship amongst members of society. For Africa's suffering to be alleviated, and possibly eradicated, there must be a willingness to be transformed and regenerated on the part of both the victims and perpetrators of suffering. Understanding the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the perspective of love that brings change and new life is a sure way for hope in the African context of suffering.

Fourthly, the resurrection is the model of love because in the resurrection the Father's love revealed Christ in his divine glory and saving power. The love of the Father received Jesus into a full presence and perfect communion of life (Acts 2:33f; Rom. 6:10; 8:34; Eph. 1:20). Jesus was welcomed by the Father into the glorious life and was granted all authority and power to ultimately save humankind. He was also welcomed to life-in-communion with the Father, as well as for the communion with the rest of his creation. Besides 'being for' others, love also welcomes others and desires to 'be with' them; it seeks the presence of those whom it loves and communicates with them as we read in John 5:20 and 15:15. Love-in-relationship is all-embracing and tolerant even to the perceived opponents. It includes the poor and needy in society. Furthermore, love seeks to uplift those who are downtrodden by oppressive and exploitative systems and structures. In that way, it not only assures, but also grants hope in the African situation of suffering.

Lastly, O'Collins understands the resurrection as the model of love in the sense that in the resurrection, the Father showed the fidelity of his love (Acts 2:25-31; 2 Cor. 1:18). The resurrection was actually a confirmation of God's redeeming love as promised through Jesus' life and teaching. It proved that God was true and faithful to his promises. This is equally an assurance of the future fulfillment of the promised resurrection of the dead and transformation of the entire cosmos. In this sense, God's love extends to be eternally faithful. O'Collins (1984:50) affirms, "Easter first happened through the freedom of God's love and will never cease to invite the free, life-long commitment of our love." For hope to be realized in the African context of suffering, love must be seen to be working for the benefit of the suffering masses in Africa. For instance, the politicians must be true to their promises to change African economies for the benefit of the many Africans who are experiencing suffering. Donor funds must be seen to be directed to the intended projects and the affected people. In this way, the love of the triune God which is demonstrated in the Easter event can truly grant hope in suffering.

The resurrection in the African context of suffering must be interpreted as love in relationship so that real hope can be assured and realized. Such love-in-relationship is an ethics which embraces a number of factors such as having regard for the good of others, liberating others for the fullness of life, transforming any form that perpetuates suffering, uplifting the outcasts and downtrodden to real state of life and faithfulness to fulfill the promises made to the needy and poor people. Love-in-relationship is an important ethical principle for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in order to give hope to the suffering masses in Africa.

7.2.2 Solidarity with the Victims

The second important ethical principle for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in order to realize hope in the African context of suffering is solidarity with the victims. The challenge here is real identification with the plight of the needy and poor. Jesus' life presents a model of real solidarity with people who were going through pain and suffering in his contemporary society. He identified himself with the rejected and stigmatized people in society. In fact, the Bible records that most of Jesus' life was spent in Nazareth and other poor and rural places in the region of Galilee. He is cited by John to have made his appearance to the public domain in Jerusalem on a few occasions, and most significantly at his spectacular and triumphant entry in the capital city. Even then, the entry was meant for self-exposition to the would-be executors of the Lord Jesus Christ. This execution

was also for the purpose of liberating the suffering humankind. Therefore, Jesus' suffering at the hand of the political and religious authorities was actually a self-identification with the suffering of many people. He then rose from the dead in order that together with those who undergo pain and suffering may be emancipated from their pain and suffering and uplifted into glory. The resurrection in this sense must be understood as an event that calls for real solidarity with African communities in order to give hope in their situation of suffering. The researcher finds that a better way of demonstrating the principle of interpreting Jesus' resurrection from the viewpoint of solidarity with the victims of suffering is to highlight specific theological views and also refer to a figure, apart from Jesus Christ himself, in the history of the Christian church. For this particular research project, theological views of two authors (Judith M. Gundry-Volf and Miroslav Volf) and Oscar Romero's life model have been selected as real demonstrations of solidarity with the victims of suffering. The researcher admits that these selections may not truly portray the African model for solidarity with the victims. However, there are some insights from these selections which may be applicable and enriching to the African pursuit for solidarity with the victims of suffering.

Gundry-Volf and Volf give theological views which were shaped by three contexts: (a) urban violence between various ethnic and cultural groups in the multicultural city of Los Angeles where they resided; (b) the war between Croats, Muslims, and Serbs in former Yugoslavia their original setting; and (c) the struggle of women for their own voice and their own deserved place in both Western and non-Western settings (Volf 1997:10). Gundry-Volf focuses on the encounters of Jesus with the Samaritan and Syrophenician women which are all about crossing boundaries and mission across boundaries. Volf's essay "Exclusion and Embrace" aims at suggesting new theological categories in order to help the church deal with conflicts between cultures. Both theologians call for opening ourselves to the Spirit of God, the Spirit of mercy, justice, and truth; and for the healing of our world by embracing "others" as we remain true to ourselves (Volf 1997:11). In other words, both theologians are guided by the notion of "embrace" in their theological and missional reflection. Volf (1997:10) explains that "embrace stands for reaching out to 'others' and finding a place *within ourselves as individuals and cultures for 'other' while still remaining ourselves.*" Embracing means while still maintaining our identity we open doors for people other than ourselves, and who are different from us so that they too may find a room within ourselves.

According to Gundry-Volf (1997:12) Jesus' encounters with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 and the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28 concern the inclusion of

“others.” They are about crossing the boundaries caused by ethnic, religious, social, and gender otherness and bringing about a new, inclusive community of salvation. Gundry-Volf argues that the two stories convey the message that exclusion can only be overcome in two radically different ways: firstly, through the divine gift of the Holy Spirit that breaks down barriers between people and leads to reconciliation and fellowship; and secondly, through human insistence on divine mercy which dramatically reverses a pattern of exclusion. In this case, we can conclude that the working of reconciliation and fellowship by the Holy Spirit and human insistence on divine mercy bring about an inclusive community of salvation. Solidarity with the victim of suffering requires crossing the ethnic, religious, socio-political, gender and cultural boundaries for the sake of the liberation of the victims. This is the case in the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman. Gundry-Volf (1997:30) writes that her challenging “exclusion through divine mercy and wrestling for the divine blessing was for the sake of a child, a powerless one, and for that child’s liberation.” Solidarity with the victims of suffering through inclusion is and should be targeted at the liberation of the “other”; in this case, the “other” could be referred to as the victims of suffering.

Volf believes that embrace, after forgiveness and repentance, is the only way to and assurance of peace. He explains that embrace involves always a double movement (Volf 1997:58): (a) *aperture* – opening arms to create space for the others, as a sign of discontent at being myself only and of desire to include the others. It is also a gesture showing that the others are invited in and should feel at home with me and to belong to me; and (b) *closure* – gently closing my arms around the others so as to tell them that I do not want to be without them in their otherness. It also shows that “I want them to remain independent and true to their genuine selves, to maintain their identity and as such become part of me so that they can enrich me with what they have and I do not” (Volf 1997:59). Volf further explains that the reason for embracing the “others” is that the others are part of my true identity. I can authentically live by welcoming the others into the very structure of my being. Both the others and I are created to reflect the personality of the triune God. Just like the “Son is the Son because the Father and the Spirit indwell him intimately ... [every person’s identity] is conditioned by the characteristics of other persons in their social relations.”²⁹ Volf (1997:60) concludes that for us to overcome our powerlessness to resist the evil of exclusion we need “the energies of the *Spirit of embrace*.” This is so because the Spirit of embrace creates communities of embrace: places where the power of the Exclusion System has been broken and from where the divine energies of embrace can flow, forging rich identities that include the other. Embrace is a sure and practical way of

²⁹ Ibid, page 59

demonstrating solidarity with the victims of suffering because all people, the rich and poor, feel welcome to live in mutual and harmonious life. No one is impoverished because once the victims of suffering are embraced what follows is interrelationship and mutual sharing of life that emanated from the triune God.

Oscar Romero, a Latin American Catholic priest, has also been chosen as being particularly a model of solidarity with the victims of suffering. Tombs (1999:221) explores Romero's understanding of Jesus' resurrection and his theological foundations in making the defense of the poor central to the work of the church. Tombs (1999:227-246) therefore narrates that Romero was compelled to defend the people and the church, thereby remaining a tireless advocate for the victims in the conflict and repeatedly condemning violence on all sides of the Salvadoran society. Despite his life being in danger, continued intimidation and threats, Romero persisted in his stand until the time of his assassination on 24 March, 1980, while he was celebrating mass in the chapel of the cancer hospital where he lived.

What is the vital force that compelled Romero to practice real solidarity with the poor in Salvador? The Latin American Bishops' Conference at Medellin in 1968 played a significant role in Romero's life and ministry. The Conference taught that the inequalities and injustices of the Latin American society are structural sins and made these of primary importance for the church (Tombs 1999:229). Based on this teaching, Romero was forced to confront the abuses of power and the social injustices of the Salvadoran society. Tombs (1999:230) further testifies that during his first months as Archbishop, his homilies reflected Medellin's social orientation more and more forcefully. He increasingly emphasized the social sins that arose from the political and economic structures of the country as the root cause of the problems (of suffering). Therefore, due to the alarming of the sinfulness in society Romero chose to identify himself with the suffering of the people, and hence, he developed a defense for the poor. The ultimate purpose for Romero's defense of the poor was to give hope to the people who were suffering. For that reason, Romero sought to recognize the possible redemptive role of suffering in salvation. He believed that the suffering of the people, when endured in faith and love, had a redemptive quality that paralleled Christ (Tombs 1999:235). Romero interpreted suffering as redemptive because he believed in resurrection as a mark of salvation. Therefore, as Christians we participate not just in the crucifixion of Christ but also in the resurrection of the Son of God. Even in the situation of suffering of the cross, our faith requires and

guarantees that death is not the final word. God who demonstrated that he is the God of life will certainly and ultimately be victorious.

Romero's option and defense for the poor (solidarity with the victims) provides a cardinal basis for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African situation of suffering and death. Just like Romero's society, Africa needs people who would rise to their occasion and speak with conviction of resurrection of Jesus Christ. The basis for this conviction should be the experience of Christ's crucifixion in the suffering of the people. Once one identifies oneself with the people as such, it becomes inevitable to confront the social and political problems of society with honesty and integrity. As Tombs (1999:246) charges, "Romero's example challenges Christians everywhere to face the realities of oppression [in solidarity with the victims] that deform the world. Theological reflection on the Christian gospel should be in response to social reality not in isolation from it." Christians in Africa are challenged by Romero's life and ministry to address the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in the context of today's suffering in the world with the same urgency and integrity. To face this challenge, one needs to interpret the resurrection as an invitation to be in solidarity with and advocate for the well being of the victims of suffering so that hope may be relevant to them. Africa requires a spirit of vitality which empowers individuals who are willing to take a risk of relinquishing one's luxuries and be with the vulnerable in society despite being hostile and dangerous so that hope for the fullness of life may be experienced by the victims of suffering. In other words, this calls for social and political involvement. The next sub-section discusses this principle for interpreting Jesus' resurrection.

7.2.3 Social and Political Involvement

Another principle for interpreting the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the context of suffering in Africa has to do with the social and political dimension. Jesus' life and ministry was characterized by confrontations with the religious and political authorities. Jesus advocated for the emancipation and well being of the rejected and poor in society. This was in fact a provocation and challenge to the status quo of the time. The end result of Jesus' advocacy, therefore, was the crucifixion on the cross and eventually death. The crucifixion seemed to signal the end of all human hope. If Jesus had remained in the grave and decayed like it happens to any human being after death, his advocacy for freedom of humankind was going to be pointless. Therefore, the social and political involvement by Jesus makes more sense and has meaning through the Easter event. Hence, the purpose of the

resurrection is not only an assurance of hope for a new life which God promises and fulfills through Jesus' resurrection. It should also be understood as a call for social and political participation so that hope in suffering cannot just be a mere advocacy for hope, but a true realization of that hope. This is why Welker (2002:34) understands Jesus' resurrection as "the presence of the fullness of his life and his personhood." For him the resurrection of the pre-Easter Jesus shapes the lives and bodies of the witnesses of this event, and the witnesses are called upon to participate in the glorified life; a participation which in turn transforms the lives of the same witnesses. Therefore, the resurrection can become a reality in the witnesses' mode of engaging and transforming gospel. For society to be transformed in all its dimensions there is need to emulate Jesus by participating in the bringing about of societal transformation.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ symbolizes God's triumph over death and the powers that enhanced suffering. Therefore, the resurrection is a political event in that God's triumph over death entails advocacy for political theology: current struggles for justice, freedom, peace and human rights for all in the world (Migliore 2004:384). As explained in chapter one, Wright (2006:22) understands the resurrection as a politically revolutionary doctrine and that it remains so for the early Christians. He explains that for Herod Antipas the tyrant, death was the last weapon he possessed, and if someone was raising the dead, then everything would turn upside down to him. Here now comes Jesus who is believed to have been raised from the dead and that he is the Messiah and Lord, the true King of the Jews and the true Lord of this world. This posed a great challenge and threat both to Herod and Caesar, the rulers and lords of the time. Furthermore, the bodily resurrection of Jesus was a decisive blow to all forms of evil and called the kingdoms of the earth to submit to the eternal and powerful Kingdom of God (2006:23). Easter also challenges the social and political pretensions of modernism. It is a challenge to contemporary radical politics. Wright (2005:678) further observes that the central figure of the resurrection is God. It is about God the Creator who reclaims, judges and renews the created world. The resurrection points to the activity of God in reclaiming, judging and renewing the world by bringing that which was hopeless to the hopefulness, and the lifeless (dead) to the fullness of life. Therefore, any Christian person who believes in the resurrection, inclusive of an African Christian who is experiencing suffering, is called to the confidence and hope that working for the Kingdom of God or socio-political involvement in the present is not an in vain undertaking.

The concept of the resurrection as an act of God's justice which calls for our involvement is also developed by Peters. He develops his line of thought from the concept of "prolepsis" as Pannenberg. Usually the term "prolepsis" is understood to mean *anticipation*. But for Peters (2002:304) the term does not just mean anticipation – a present incarnation of a future reality as in 1 Corinthians 15:20. It also denotes incorporation or inclusivity – being incorporated into Christ's resurrection as witnessed in 1 Corinthians 15:22. Based on this understanding, Peters argues that the concept of resurrection (especially our anticipated future resurrection of the dead) is a divine act of justice. He explains, "As a part of that act of raising us, just as God raised Jesus on Easter, God will provide what is necessary to maintain continuity of our identity while transforming us into the new creation" (2002:321). He advocates the corporate nature of the resurrection by tying individual resurrection to the renewal of all things. While the present creation was brought into existence *ex nihilo*, the new creation (including our resurrection from the dead) will be *ex vetere* – a transformation of the existing creation. By granting us our existing (incorporating us) in the new creation, God demonstrates his divine justice in that "the experience of unjust suffering, especially victimage from persecution, has given rise to anticipation of divine righteousness exalted in the next life ... What has been experienced as unfair in this life will be righted and made fair in the next, where the righteous will be rewarded and the unrighteous punished" (2002:306). Our role now in the whole process of divine renewal is to actively get involved in social and political ventures that are aimed at promoting God's justice for all here on earth. In that way, the victims of suffering are not just encouraged to anticipate the new creation, but they are also incorporated in that anticipation and realization of the new creation in the present.

Understanding the resurrection as a call for social and political involvement requires an approach which seeks to confront and transform all the structures in society, especially those that perpetrate suffering. Kraftchick amplifies this point about the resurrection as a call for social and political involvement. He says that the resurrection belief is a "direct challenge of every political, religious, and civil reality that ignores or eliminates those it sees only as different – it calls us to protest against every state and religious body that confuses its own desires for the will of God and its own reasoning for God's wisdom. It is to resist the expressions of power that do not reveal the pattern of God's Christ in death and resurrection" (Kraftchick 2007:12). The resurrection faith calls for the desire and courage to stand up and speak out against any form of injustice. Furthermore, it calls for participation in programmes and activities that seek to end suffering and bring wholeness of all humankind. As Isasi-Diaz (2001:164) argues, liberation cannot take place and really be a possibility

unless people are courageous and willing to take a risk. Without courage and willingness to take a risk hope in suffering is actually an impossibility. If we believe that in the death and resurrection of Jesus sin, evil and death have been overcome and conquered, it should be understood, then, that the resurrection indeed provides the possibility, the horizon, and the motive for social and political involvement and action (Kress 1971:40). The belief in the conquering of death by Jesus through his resurrection motivates us to confidently attack evil and anything else that is against life and the realization of hope in suffering. The resurrection faith does not encourage the believers to be complacent and tolerate evil and all forms of suffering; rather, they are obliged to continuously work for the elimination of evil and suffering in the world.

Lehmann (1980:37-43), too, discusses the resurrection event from a political point of view. He calls this perspective “the view from below” – the view from the perspective of those who suffer. The argument from this perspective of the Easter event is that what matters most is “to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if only (one) may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11)” (Lehmann 1980:42). He argues that the power of Christ’s resurrection is the power to live in this life prepared for death and free from fear of death. It is the power to live in this life without taking this life for granted, or making any of the values and achievements of this life the measure of its meaning and purpose. The power of Christ’s resurrection is the power to live in this life with a lively and liberating confidence that God’s new world is the warrant for and confirmation of hope (1980:43). God’s new world is already under way in all those struggles in which we are called to share his sufferings in conformity with his death. In this sense, then, to share Christ’s sufferings is to stand with and for all in this life who are without opportunity, power and hope, and make their cause, experiences and claims our own. In Lehmann’s understanding, the resurrection is actually a political feast which needs to be celebrated in the present life through our total involvement in the social and political activities.

The idea of social and political involvement as one of the hermeneutical principles in understanding Jesus’ resurrection has practical implications in the African context of suffering. In most cases it is argued that among the reasons for the experiences of suffering in African is the claim that Africans display an attitude of passivity: they do not work hard to bring development on the continent. If that is true – which to some extent is a reality not only to Africans, but also to some people in other contexts – then Jesus’ resurrection calls upon all African individuals to get involved and participate

in the efforts intended to bring to an end suffering and install hope of life in its fullness. Africans are called to work in the present, rather than waiting for the renewal of the world as seen to take place in the eschatological future. In fact, that renewal in the eschatological future requires that we participate in its realization in the present life. This implies that for hope in suffering to be a reality Africans need to change a mindset; a change of thinking which does not only require others to do things for you, but a change that aims at taking a personal responsibility for hope in suffering. It calls for a radical change from being indifferent and passive to self-examination and activeness to take action for the newness of life. It further requires a change in the ultimate power structures that prolong suffering. In short, the understanding of Jesus' resurrection in terms of social and political involvement is about addressing the individual perceptions and transforming social, religious and political systems and structures in order to realize hope in the African context where suffering has taken toll. This requires courage, willingness to take risks, hard work, change of mindset and commitment to improve human existence. The last section closes the chapter by way of suggesting a way forward as a direction for hope in the African situation of suffering.

7.3 TOWARDS HOPE IN SUFFERING

Resurrection is an event about God's dealing with God's creation in Jesus Christ. It is about hope in the living God who through the Easter event emerged victorious over death and all other powers of evil and suffering. Therefore, the future of God's creation belongs to God; and so the way forward towards hope in suffering ultimately lies in God's ability to transform the world and establish his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. However, this does not imply a spirit of passivity on the part of humankind. The way forward towards hope in suffering requires a human response to God's act through full participation in the renewal of the world. Therefore, this section calls for a way forward towards hope in the African context of suffering in two ways: on one hand, it calls for basing our hope on the divine ability to renew the creation; and on the other, it calls for a wholistic human participatory approach for hope in suffering. However, the researcher is mindful of the fact that this way forward does not fully exhaust the desire and efforts to bring hope in suffering. Hence, the researcher calls for further continued research on the subject. Hope in suffering cannot be realized from one perspective only; it requires concerted efforts. Ultimately, the way forward for hope in suffering is the work of the Holy Spirit not human undertaking: It is a pneumatological reality. The Holy Spirit empowers humanity to achieve hope in the African situation of suffering. Hope is re-

energized through the empowering and life-enhancing work of the Holy Spirit who gives meaning to life in the situation of suffering.

7.3.1 Trinitarian Basis of Hope in Suffering

The resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals something about the being and act of God. It discloses that God in his being intends to love and live in relationship with the creation. The reason why God raised Jesus from the grave was to continue to share love and life in relationship. As the triune God exists in relationship, God desires to share that life and love in a mutual relationship. Additionally, God's act in resurrecting Jesus Christ is to indicate God's intent to transform individuals and the entire universe for a conducive and harmonious condition for sharing love and life in relationship. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is primarily about God's mutual love and life in relationship with the creation which are actualized and enhanced by the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life who empowers the victims of suffering to live a life of hope. Hope in the context of African suffering is based on the triune God. The Father gives new life to the Son through the Spirit (e.g. Romans 8). The triune God should therefore be the basis of hope because all life's experiences are understood by God who knows the direction of every existence.

Discussing from the perspective of revelation as God's own self-disclosure ultimately in Jesus Christ, Smit (1994:45) argues that Jesus' resurrection "was not only a disclosure of God's approval and a demonstration of God's power, but also of God's heart, will, character and nature." On one hand, the resurrection of Jesus Christ discloses God's immanence in transcendent power. On the other hand, it reveals God's relationality; God's desire to share relationship in life and love with the creation. As Smit (1994:51-53) further explains, Christians become part of the story of God's own self-disclosure in Jesus Christ through remembrance of the past and hope for the future. This becomes evident in the worship, prayer, spirituality, commitment, dedication, discipleship and obedience of the Christian community of faith. From Smit's argument we see that hope in suffering can and should be based on nothing else but God's own self-disclosure in Jesus' resurrection. Hope that disconnects itself from the self revelation of the triune God is but a futile hope. The triune God who disclosed Godself in the Easter event is and should be the foundation of hope in the situation of suffering and despair in Africa.

The basis of hope in suffering is the triune God because this God acted in the historical past and promises to act in the eschatological future. The present experiences of suffering tend to thwart hope in the God who has the ability to act. God who acted by raising Jesus from the power of death is expected to act to end suffering in the present and establish a harmonious eternal existence in the future. This was actually Israelite expectation as well as it is the Christian hope-in-anticipation. Peters (2006:168) ably explains this point:

Built into the very definition of the resurrection is the prophetic expectation of Israel's Messiah, the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the rising of the dead into the new creation. This expected transformation included the expectation of the divine action, of a decisive transformation that only God could bring about. Easter could not help but mean that this man, Jesus, was raised by God as part of this eschatological transformation. Or, better, Easter is a prolepsis of the eschatological event yet to come.

For the African present context, the resurrection entails the transformation of the creation in terms of addressing suffering so that hope for new life can be realized in the present. Africa's only hope remains in God who is expected to deal with suffering in all its forms so that the fullness of life cannot just be talked about, but also be seen to be realized and experienced in African societies. God is also expected to end the ecological crisis by renewing the entire world. God promises a better earth where there are no assaults on creation in form of air pollution, deforestation, depletion of the ozone layer and emission of corrosive gases.

God is the basis of Christian hope in Africa. This hope is made manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus Christ emerged victorious over death and evil, Jesus offers hope through the destruction of evil, and consequently all forms of suffering. Through the resurrection, Jesus discloses himself as the Redeemer-Messiah who assures God's forgiveness and reconciliation with humankind. According to Kress (1971:41), evil can possibly be eradicated because Jesus destroyed death and evil by his death and resurrection. So, Christian hope lies in the fact that Jesus lives, and the life of Jesus is one of excluding evil from the world. In this sense, an African is consoled and encouraged that hope in the situation of suffering is eminent. God promises ultimate victory over all the individuals and systems that escalate suffering in Africa.

Therefore, the direction which needs to be taken for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African situation of suffering is to base hope on the sovereign and relational triune God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is the source of all human hope, and is able to deal with and

end suffering in Africa. There is need, therefore, to trust, obey and commit to this God even when the situation seems to be getting worse. The fact that suffering tends to be tense in Africa does not erase the reality that the triune God is sovereign and establishes a communal relationship for the fullness of love and life. God still remains faithful and is committed to strengthen the victims of suffering and ultimately end suffering in the world. In fact, there is a dialectic of cross and resurrection in as far as God's nature in relationship to suffering is concerned. On one hand, God suffers the pain of the cross which portrays God's vulnerability to pain and suffering. On the other hand, God emerges a victor through the resurrection of Jesus Christ which demonstrates God's triumph in power. This shows that God manifests Godself in the African situation of suffering both as a victor in resurrection and in the hiddenness of the Godself on the cross. God's triumph over suffering is made manifest in the state of vulnerability. Therefore, Africans are called upon to participate in the vulnerability of suffering so that hope in suffering is realized in God's triumph over suffering. Humankind has to play a part as a way of response to what God is doing in the process of cosmic renewal. That response needs to be a wholistic approach which offers hope in suffering.

7.3.2 Wholistic Approach for Hope in Suffering

God promises hope of flourishing to humankind. Humankind participates in the realization of the newness and fullness of life. This participation is made possible through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers humanity through the Word and sacraments. In God's providence, God works through humankind to fulfill God's purposes for the entire creation.³⁰ In this sense, human participation and engagement in the practical activities that seek to enhance the fullness is actually God's work through the Holy Spirit in human beings. The emphasis for this participation should be a response to what God has already done in Jesus Christ and a commitment to enhance the wholeness of life on earth. The researcher, therefore, is of the opinion that a wholistic approach is required for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering. Such a wholistic approach is multifaceted and offers real hope in suffering. A wholistic approach should involve and address a number of aspects that affect life: human rights violations, poverty and wealth, gender inequalities, violence, children's women's abuse, political and social injustices,

³⁰ The researcher acknowledges that though nature in relation to resurrection hope is not worked out in this research, Christian hope includes the non-human creatures. The resurrection encompasses the cosmic and ecological significance: Easter also alludes to the fact that God's *salvific* program entails cosmic and ecological transformation in the present life and eschatological future as we read in Romans 8.

ecological crisis, spiritual transformation, renewal of cosmos, and divine promise of future life-existence.

A number of theologians have called for the need to deal with the realities that affect human life in the present. The resurrection of Jesus Christ should be interpreted in such a way that it not only addresses the present realities of life, but also makes hope a reality in the present African context of suffering. Calvin's call for ethic of work is an example of how the resurrection can be approached in the present.

Calvin's discussion on ethic of work is a response to the medieval perception of the world, which in the end affected human attitude towards work. Monastic Christianity in the medieval times advanced a theology which denigrated the world and those who work in it were considered as unholy. McGrath (1997:220) explains, "Monastic Christianity which had been the source of virtually all the best Christian theology and spiritual writing during the medieval ages treated the world and those who lived and worked in it with a degree of disdain." Their thinking was that real Christianity should withdraw from the world and only confine itself to the monastery in its quest to serve God. The end result of this thinking was a gradual alienation of the monastic life from the ordinary lay people and practical life. Therefore, Calvin presented a contrasting viewpoint. His new emphasis on the doctrines of creation and redemption which were world affirming rested upon the "utter ontological distinction between God and the world while denying the possibility of separating the two" (McGrath 1997:221). God and the world are not to be separated though the two need to be distinguished. The refrain "distinction *sed non* separation" underlines much of Calvin's theology of creation. The refrain asserts that since nature is God's creation it is distinct from God, and therefore, God deserves loyalty, reverence and honour (Calvin: Inst. I.12.1-3). But at the same time, God is related to the world in that he created and cares for the world (Calvin: Inst. I.16.1-9). Thus, humanity is called upon to display relationship with creation through regard and care for God's creation. As McGrath (1997:222) puts it, "In revering nature as God's creation one is worshipping God not worshipping nature." God who created the world requires that human beings display God's glory by being good stewards of God's creation.

Calvin therefore contended that being a Christian does not mean escaping from world's realities due to the perception that the world is evil. Being a Christian requires that one works in the world to redeem it as part of human participation in the renewal of the world. A Christian is not only called to

faith, but also to service of God in the world with great commitment. Now that Jesus has defeated death by rising from the grave, and that the believers await to be resurrected, there is need for Christians to stand firm in the Lord and devote themselves to God's work in the present as they anticipate the general resurrection in the eschatological future (1 Cor. 15:58). The fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ took place is an assurance of hope that all work done in the Lord will never be in vain. The word "talent" which literary means "gold and silver" was interpreted metaphorically in the medieval times as spiritual gifts or graces bestowed upon Christians, especially pious people. To the contrary, Calvin interpreted the word as worldly calling of Christians with the abilities and aptitudes given by God so that they may function more effectively in the world (McGrath 1997:223). This understanding gave a more positive attitude towards ethic of work; it revived an attitude where one works in the present world with much praise to God who created the world. Christians were now inculcated with the ethics of being productively active in the world, rather than being passive and escaping the realities of the present world. McGrath explains that though Christians are not supposed to become immersed within and swallowed by the world, they are to live in the world and affirm it as God's creation and gift. "The believer is not called to leave the world and enter a monastery, but to enter fully into the life of the world, and thus to transform it" (1997:232). Calvin's theology of work in the end helped to reverse the view of work from being fit for those considered socially inferior to a dignified glorious means of praising and affirming God in and through his creation. As a result of this ethic of work, countries which adopted Calvinistic style soon found themselves prospering economically (McGrath 1997:237).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ should be interpreted as an event which leads to a realization of new resurrection life. In this new life doing work in the present world is part of the participation in God's cosmic renewal. Many times the Easter event is understood as only being related to the spiritual reality in the future. The resurrection has always been viewed only as signifying the anticipated renewal of all life and the universe in the eschatological future. This is true, we all are expecting the time when Christ shall come and establish God's Kingdom here on earth which would signify the end of all human suffering and pain. However, the danger of emphasizing only the futuristic eschatology is that, as it was the case in the medieval times, it tends to encourage a spirit of passivism and escapism; a this-world-is-not-my-home kind of thinking and approach. In as much as we need to bear in mind that we are awaiting a future reality of human existence in another world, we should equally realize that we have a task here on earth in the present human existence. Therefore, Africans have a huge responsibility to work for the eradication of suffering on the

continent. To put it in another way, hope of the end of suffering and of the fullness of life cannot be realized unless Africans themselves commit themselves to work for the betterment of Africa. This requires an understanding that the resurrection of Jesus is actually a call to work for the realization of the new and better life in the present. Hope in suffering comes about with the right attitude and practical efforts to bring about that hope.

The suggestion by Koopman (2003:15-19) of an appropriate agenda for doing public theology could be applicable here. A comprehensive interpretation of Jesus' resurrection needs to include political, economical, civil society, and public opinion spheres. An African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection as a source of hope in the context of suffering in Africa should be taken as a wholistic enterprise which deals with the realities of life in the present. The public theological approach is not only new and inclusive, but also seems to be wholistic in nature for it seeks to address almost all aspects of society and thereby attending to the plight of many people on the African continent. Therefore, it is reasonable that the quest for the African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from the framework of suffering covers the elements of public theological discourse: a hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection should consider addressing the four spheres which Koopman suggests.

A wholistic approach in interpreting Jesus' resurrection for hope in suffering in Africa needs to encompass a number of components. It has to involve the application of Calvin's ethic of work and Koopman's public theology. According to the researcher, all this can truly take place only when there is transformation of the human mindset in Africa. Resurrection faith demands a transformation of human will; human will needs to align itself to God will. This transformation of human will in the end work towards enhancing mutual relationship in society. This transformation, furthermore, requires more than mental ascent; it demands moral courage and willingness to admit that our lives belong to someone other than ourselves (Kraftchick 2007:20). Our lives belong to God who has all power and ability to end suffering and bring the fullness of life. There is also need to realize that we have a part to play to achieve hope in suffering. Grudem (1994:616) emphasizes an ethical significance of Jesus' resurrection. In this regard, the resurrection has implications to the Africans' lives in that, first of all, they are called to be obedient to God in this life – obedience to do and accomplish God's will here on earth. Secondly, as Africans work towards the transformation of the present life, they need not to lose faith and hope in the renewal of life now and in the eschatological future. Furthermore, Africans have an obligation not to yield to any form of evil that world

perpetuate and escalate suffering and pain. Instead, they need to fight against injustice and exploitation at all levels.

West (2009:163-179) makes a significant contribution on the need for wholistic approach. He does three important things with regards to the plight of the poor: firstly, he identifies the *problem* which brings about the situation of the poor; secondly, he provides what could be the possible *solution* to the problem; and lastly, he calls for an *action* for the solution to be a reality. According to West (2009:168-169), “the constraint on the poor and marginalized is not language but the social space in which to act.” He explains that the poor already have the language to use in the articulation of their theology, but this language is constrained by the structures of domination to the extent that they find it difficult to express and articulate their embodied theology. This scenario in a sense hinders them from flourishing and perpetuates suffering in their lives. The obvious solution to this problem is to create space where the embodied theology of the poor and marginalized is “communicatively shared.” West (2009:178) calls for “the transformation of the public theology of our churches by the theologies of struggle of many of its members, so that the church will have the theological capacity to return to its prophetic task of working with the poor and marginalized for the transformation of our society.” By allowing theologies of struggle to be heard, the plight of the poor and marginalized is addressed. But this requires putting into practical action the concept of grassroots theology. Therefore, West (2009:179) proposes the doing of *Contextual Bible Study* as one among the many ways through which a space can be created for theologies of poor and marginalized to be heard. Through Contextual Bible Study lines of connection are constructed between lived theology and the particular detail of Scripture.

What does West’s line of thought imply for the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection in the context of suffering? It simply implies that in the quest for understanding the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is need to *incorporate* the theological-thought patterns and life-experiences of the suffering Africans. A wholistic approach requires that all dimensions of life experiences and theological reflection are taken on board. Once this is done the marginalized and poor start to realize their potential to interpret Jesus’ resurrection from their own perspective, and in the end they are emancipated from theological structures of domination. Hope becomes real hope in suffering when people are given enough opportunity to realize the significance of their theological language in the broader scope of theological undertaking.

To conclude the chapter, it has to be noted again that the direction for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering which has been established in this project does not exhaust fully the concept of hope in suffering. Hence, the researcher calls for further continued research on the subject. This is so because hope in suffering cannot be realized from one perspective only; it requires concerted efforts and continued reflection. Such a continued reflection on Jesus' resurrection so as to provide hope in suffering needs to embrace specific guidelines (Banda 2007:28-29). Firstly, there is need to consider *the centrality of scripture*. This means that reflection on Jesus' resurrection needs to maintain a biblical soundness; thus, reflecting on the integrity of God's own self-disclosure to humankind in the Easter as attested in scripture. Secondly, reflection on Jesus' resurrection has to be sensitive and respond to *the needs and problems* (in this case, the problem of suffering in African) faced by the locals in the African context; thus, being attentive to the unheard voices and experiences of the suffering communities on the African continent. Thirdly, in as much as there is need to be sensitive to the needs of the victims of suffering, reflection on Jesus' resurrection requires being *honesty and realistic* about the experiences of the African context of suffering; thus, avoiding the temptation of exaggerating about the intensity of the needs and problems of suffering. Fourthly, Africa is not "an island" which is completely isolated from the rest of the world. Therefore, in the quest of reflecting on the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is need to *study the global social, economical and political mega trends*, and how in a way they influence the African continent; thus, being sensitive to and conversant about the mega challenges and changes in the world such as the global financial recession. Lastly, the reflection on Jesus' resurrection has to consider the usually *neglected voices of the victims of suffering* in Africa; thus, the need to seriously include the plight and suffering of women, children and nature in the reflection. The researcher has tried to embrace these aspects in this project. In the final analysis, hope in suffering lies in the triune God because the future of Africa ultimately belongs to God who intends that all may enjoy life in its fullness.

CONCLUSION

The central thesis of the research project has been to find an appropriate hermeneutic for Jesus' resurrection from an African perspective in order to offer hope in the African context of suffering. The idea behind this thesis is that despite the many hermeneutical approaches to the Easter event, an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African perspective seems to be neglected. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been rendered with different interpretations in the contemporary theological history. However, one unique fact is that the Easter event is significant not only for the Christian faith, but also it is the basis and source of hope in a situation of suffering. Hence, in this research project the emphasis has been to devise an appropriate hermeneutical approach to Jesus' resurrection within a framework of suffering in Africa. The research's interest is concentrated on the theological interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in Africa, rather than to engage in an endless debate on the historical occurrence of the Easter event. The researcher assumes that by now the resurrection is generally accepted by a good number of orthodox theologians that it took place at a specific time of history. The research has also confined itself to the experiences of suffering in the sub-Saharan Africa so as to offer hope in that context.

To address this thesis, chapters have been developed with specific foci as a line of argument in the research. The first chapter has surveyed the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the contemporary theology from the twentieth century. Therefore, Bultmann, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino, Wright and Crossan have been selected as notable and prominent theologians who act as representatives of major theological interpretations of Jesus' resurrection in the period. Basically, this chapter has given an overview of different interpretations by these theologians in the contemporary scholarly world. Each of them interprets the resurrection of Jesus Christ from a specific and unique perspective. However, each of the theologians acknowledges the fact that the Easter event is actually God's act of victory in Jesus Christ. Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino and Wright stress that Jesus' resurrection really took place; the discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances to various people prove the occurrence of this historical event. Bultmann and Barth emphasize the significance of the event in that it revived faith in the disciples, and it was a catalyst for the proclamation of the gospel. For Moltmann and Sobrino the resurrection is unique in that it is about the promise and hope for the renewal of all things in history in the eschatological future. The promise of hope is not only to be anticipated in the eschatological future, but one that must be realized in the present. Hence, Moltmann and Sobrino have also ably elaborated the themes

of justice and politics for the contemporary world. The climax of the first chapter is an emphasis that the resurrection is about the revelation of God. It is an act of God's self-disclosure for the purpose of reconciling humanity with the divine community. This is significant to the African context in that Jesus' resurrection demonstrates that God is the ultimate source of hope in the situation of suffering. God is concerned with the plight of Africans and desires to redeem them from all forms of suffering. Therefore, hope can be realized by participating in the world transformation through acts that aim at enhancing peace, justice and human solidarity; and also by preaching the truth that justice has been done to the victims of suffering through God's triumph over evil and death in the resurrection.

Chapter two has argued that the quest for an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection requires a thorough understanding of African theology. Hence, the dimensions in African theology have been discussed in the chapter. The purpose for this discussion has been to establish the basis on which an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is sought. The crucial question in the chapter has to do with the disparity of the celebration of God's victory in Jesus' resurrection as compared to the pain and suffering by millions of Africans. It is also clear that African theologians have understood the resurrection to mean the experience of freedom from life-threatening forces and powers. However, this freedom must be made to be a reality in the present situation of the African life-experiences. Many people on the continent, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are still experiencing 'the passion of Jesus Christ' rather than the joy emanating from the Easter event. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection needs not only to be viewed as an event which took place about two thousand years ago, but also it needs to be considered as an event which demonstrates the reality of Christ's presence among us today. Christ meets us, and should continue to do so, through and in present day African life-experiences such as hunger, poverty, corruption, poor health services, low standards of education levels, and sharp increases in food, fuel and transport costs. In this sense, an African interpretation of the Easter event needs to aim at pursuing hope where the fullness of life is enhanced. To achieve this, a number of approaches in African theology such as inculturation, liberation, public theology and women emancipation need to be considered.

Contemporary Christology has two main streams of approach: Christology "from above" which begins from the divinity of Jesus, and the concept of incarnation as the structure of Christology stands at the centre; and Christology "from below" which starts by honouring the historical man, Jesus of Nazareth, and then recognizes his divinity. This approach is primarily concerned with Jesus' earthly activity (works, message and fate). Chapter three has been devoted to a survey of the

Western theological, the Latin American praxic and the African Feminist critical approaches to Jesus' resurrection. The main reason for surveying these approaches has been to understand the hermeneutical methods used to interpret the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The chapter has also analyzed these approaches to find out if they are appropriate for interpreting the Easter event in the African context of suffering. In the end, it has been discovered that most of these hermeneutical approaches are actually articulated 'from above.' For this reason, they seem not to be down-to-earth in as far as addressing the plight of the poor and the deprived in the African society. For that reason, an African authentic and comprehensive hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection must, without neglecting a Christology 'from above,' embrace and present a Christology 'from below.' With this approach, Jesus is viewed from within the socio-political context of first-century Palestine as the one who identified himself with the poor and marginalized members of society. Since Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God which demands the radical reordering of life and society, the resurrection in Africa must hermeneutically be approached from this premise of the radical transformation of life and society. An African hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection needs to move further by emphasizing the praxic perspective so that the Easter event becomes relevant to and addresses the African context which is entangled by the daily life-experiences of suffering. It also must be critical of the *status quo* with the intention of participating in the struggle for the transformation of social, cultural, political and economic structures which bring about suffering.

As clearly stated in the research project, the chosen research framework for interpreting the Easter event is the experience of suffering. The assumption behind this framework is that an appropriate hermeneutics of Jesus' resurrection will address the plight of suffering by many people in the world, especially Africans, and thereby provide hope in such a situation. Suffering, in this sense, is simply an experience of pain, misery or difficulty. Many communities, particularly in the African context, have undergone experiences of suffering in terms of pain, misery or difficulty as a result of either human hostile activities or natural calamities in the course of world history. Therefore, the fourth chapter has dealt with the general perspective of suffering as a hermeneutical horizon. The idea has been to create a broad platform for understanding suffering in the African context so that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is appropriately interpreted with the intention of providing hope in a suffering situation. The chapter stresses the need to pay much attention to the suffering of the victims. In this way, an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection provides a reasonable ethical (and any other) response to the situation of suffering in Africa and on the global scene.

It has been argued in the project that theology makes more sense and can be considered to be relevant when it is pursued by considering the cultures, times, circumstances, and concrete situations of a particular people of such a context. It is for this reason that the researcher has consistently insisted that Jesus' resurrection can only be suitably interpreted with the framework of suffering in the African context. In chapter five, the researcher has explained specific portrayals of suffering in Africa and the divine mandate in the African suffering context. The premise for this explanation has been the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is all about hope in suffering. The *One* who suffered the terrors of Golgotha, is also the *One* who emerged victoriously from the Tomb. Therefore, the suffering Africans from the terrors of poverty, refugees and wars, and HIV/AIDS are assured of the resurrected hope for better life of peace, equality, joy, harmony, love, dignity, humanness and interrelationship. And so, the Christian mandate as commissioned by God is to make this hope a reality here on earth. The resurrection of Jesus Christ needs to truly be interpreted as a promise that not only assures but also provides hope for the suffering Africans.

The research project has also stated that the biblical treatment of suffering and evil demonstrates a coherent pattern in at least one regard: the experiences of suffering and hope cannot be sealed off and divorced from each other. Suffering and hope are rather inevitably interdependent realities which ought to be integrated in the midst of life's various contingencies. Therefore, to avoid the two extremes of *fantasy* due to overemphasizing hope and *cynicism* due to overemphasizing suffering, the biblical coherent pattern ought to be located in and derived from God's saving purpose for the world which manifests in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This establishes the horizon of hope: the expectation of the coming triumph of God which will make an end to evil and suffering and bring about joy and peace in the world. To pay attention to the biblical voice, the sixth chapter has surveyed how the Bible develops the two concepts of hope and suffering. As has been discussed in the chapter, suffering is not an alien concept in the Bible. It is a constant motif throughout the biblical witness. Suffering in the Bible appears in various forms. For instance, in some instances it is portrayed as being a consequence of sin, while in other instances it is associated with persecution and the way of Christian growth. In whatever form suffering appears in the Bible, the reality is that God is ever present and powerful in the experience of suffering to encourage and empower the victim. In this way, God demonstrates both God's grace and glory. God shared in the experience of human suffering through the incarnation and cross of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus' suffering and resurrection God brings hope, dignity and comfort to those who suffer. The Easter event as attested in scripture is therefore the source of hope in the situation of suffering. The Bible testifies that God

still emerges triumphant despite the escalation and power of suffering. Jesus' resurrection clearly demonstrates God's assurance of triumph in suffering. In that way, Jesus' resurrection as interpreted in the Bible is a sure source of hope in the African context of suffering.

Throughout the research project the call has been for an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection so that it can offer hope in the African context of suffering. The basis for this call is the belief that through Jesus' victory over death in resurrection real life is revived. As already mentioned earlier, an appropriate interpretation of Jesus' resurrection should not just concentrate on the proclamation of hope, but also it should give the victims real hope in the midst of despair, anxiety, uncertainty and suffering. Chapter seven, therefore, has suggested an approach for the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection so that real hope in suffering can be realized. It has addressed the principles and direction for hope as a pursuit of an appropriate African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the context of suffering. To interpret Jesus' resurrection in the premise of hope in suffering, an African resurrection hermeneutics has to include the principles of spirituality and ethos, and then offer a way forward towards hope in suffering.

Spirituality of the resurrection faith as an interpretive principle needs to embrace faithful present existence, hopeful future anticipation and life in freedom and joy as crucial components. The basis of this spirituality is faith in God who grants real hope amidst suffering. Christian ethical life to a great extent depends on the historical event of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. God's offer of new life must translate into action for the well being of all humanity and the non-human creatures. Therefore, an ethical principle in the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection for the realization of hope in the African context of suffering needs to include specific components: love in relationship, solidarity with the victims, and social and political involvement. In a nutshell an appropriate hermeneutics in the African context of suffering needs to embrace both a spirituality and an ethos of the resurrection to offer hope in the context where many Africans are suffering due to poverty, wars and refugees and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Therefore, on the one hand, the way towards hope in suffering ultimately lies in God's ability to transform the world and establish his Kingdom. On the other hand, it requires a human response to God's act through full participation in the renewal of the world. In other words, a way forward towards hope in the African context of suffering calls for basing our hope on the divine ability to renew the creation, and also needs a wholistic human participatory approach for hope in suffering.

Chapter seven has concluded the research project by suggesting that the direction for interpreting Jesus' resurrection in the African context of suffering is to engage in continued research on the subject. But then, the chapter has also advised that such a continued research on Jesus' resurrection with the aim of providing hope in suffering needs to embrace specific guidelines: considering *the centrality of scripture*; being sensitive and responding to *the needs and problems* faced by the locals in the African context; being *honest and realistic* about the experiences of the African context of suffering; *studying the global social, economical and political mega trends*, and how in a way they influence and impact the African continent; and considering the *neglected voices of the victims of suffering* in Africa such as women, children and nature. Above anything else, hope in the African context of suffering ultimately lies in the triune God to whom all life and the future for Africa belongs and who intends that all may enjoy life in its fullness.

Lastly, it is necessary to mention that the researcher feels the research problem of unclear and insufficient interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from an African perspective has been addressed. By developing a hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection which includes the principles discussed in this dissertation, the researcher suggests that Jesus' resurrection can be interpreted in Africa from the perspectives of God's act of justice and human wholistic response to God's work. Therefore, the developed hermeneutic of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the African context is a valid tool for providing hope in a situation of suffering. Suffering, in this sense, is an applicable framework for interpreting the resurrection of Jesus in the African context. In short, the developed interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from an African context would assist in reviving *hope in suffering*.

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KEY TERMS

African Christology

African interpretation

African theology

Christian ethos

Christian spirituality

Hermeneutic of the resurrection

Hope

Hope in suffering

Human suffering

Jesus' resurrection

SUMMARY

The research project discusses *Hope in Suffering: An African Interpretation of Jesus' Resurrection*. It develops an appropriate hermeneutic for Jesus' resurrection from the African perspective. This is because interpretation of Jesus' resurrection remains insufficient in African theology. Generally, Africans understand Jesus' resurrection as liberation from spiritual forces. However, this is inadequate in the African context of suffering. Hence, the research addresses the problem by developing a hermeneutic from an African perspective which provides hope in suffering.

In order to understand how the resurrection has been approached in the scholarly world, chapter one surveys various interpretations of the Easter event as articulated by Bultmann, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino, Wright and Crossan. The main motif from these interpretations is that the resurrection affirms Christian faith as ultimately based on the triumph of God's justice in the situation of suffering. However, most of these theologians neglect critical issues that affect common people in contexts of suffering.

In the second chapter, it has been argued that the quest for an African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection needs a thorough understanding of the trends and tenets of theology in Africa. Thus, African theology forms the basis on which African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is sought. The researcher focuses on theological trends in sub-Saharan African thinking in this pursuit of an African hermeneutic for hope in suffering.

The research surveys the hermeneutical approaches to Jesus' resurrection in Western, Latin American and African Feminist theological thoughts. The analysis of these hermeneutical approaches in the third chapter reveals that most of these approaches are actually articulated 'from above,' which makes them unable to address the plight of the poor and deprived in the African society. Hence, it is necessary to develop an appropriate African hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection which embraces an approach 'from below': an approach from the premise of the radical transformation of systems in society.

It is further contended in the research project that African experience of suffering is the specific framework within which the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is sought. Therefore, chapters four and five discuss the effects of suffering on the sub-Sahara African scene. While chapter four looks at

the general perspective of suffering as a hermeneutical horizon for interpreting Jesus' resurrection, the fifth chapter gives specific portrayals of suffering in Africa. The two chapters stress that despite the nature and reality of suffering, hope of victory over the terrors of poverty, refugees and wars, and HIV/AIDS is assured in Jesus' resurrection.

The research project also discusses the biblical perspective of suffering and resurrection. What clearly comes out in the Bible is that the situations of pain and suffering lead to developing and sustaining of faith in the resurrection. The resurrection demonstrates God's intervention in the people's experiences of suffering. In this way, God showed that he is the God of justice who grants life and hope to the lifeless and hopeless. The sixth chapter therefore, emphasizes that despite the form through which suffering may appear in the Bible, God through the Easter event remains an ever present and powerful source of hope in suffering.

In the last chapter, it is suggested that the developed African interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in the context of suffering requires embracing specific principles of Christian spirituality and ethos, and a clear direction with specific guidelines for continued research on the subject. Above all, an African hermeneutic of Jesus' resurrection needs to affirm that hope in suffering ultimately lies in God's ability to transform people's lives in Africa. Their participation in the divine process of renewal is a response to God's work of renewal.

OPSOMMING

Die tema van die navorsing is: *Hope in suffering: An African interpretation of Jesus's resurrection*. Dit ontwikkel 'n gepaste hermeneutiek vir die opstanding van Jesus vanuit 'n Afrika perspektief. Die motivering hiervoor is dat die interpretasie van Jesus se opstanding in Afrika teologie onvoldoende is. Mense in Afrika verstaan Jesus se opstanding hoofsaaklik as bevryding van geestelike magte. Dít is egter nie genoegsaam in 'n Afrika konteks van lyding nie. Om hierdie rede spreek die navorsing die probleem aan deur 'n hermeneutiek te ontwikkel vanuit 'n Afrika perspektief wat hoop bied in lyding.

Om te verstaan hoe die opstanding in die akademiese wêreld benader word, ondersoek hoofstuk een verskillende interpretasies van die opstandingsgebeure soos geartikuleer deur Bultmann, Barth, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Sobrino, Wright en Crossan. Die hoofmotief by hierdie interpretasies beklemtoon dat die Christelike geloof gebaseer is op die triomf van God se geregtigheid in 'n situasie van lyding. Die meeste van hierdie teoloë verwaarloos egter kritieke kwessies wat mense raak in kontekste van lyding.

In hoofstuk twee word daar geargumenteer dat die vraag na 'n Afrika interpretasie van Jesus se opstanding 'n deeglike verstaan van tendense en aksente van teologie in Afrika vereis. Juis om hierdie rede vorm Afrika Teologie die grondslag waarop 'n Afrika interpretasie van die opstanding gesoek word. Die navorser fokus op teologiese tendense in Sub-Sahara Afrika denke in die soeke na 'n Afrika hermeneutiek van hoop in lyding.

Die navorsing bied 'n oorsig van hermeneutiese benaderings tot die opstanding van Jesus in Westerse, Latyns-Amerikaanse and Afrika Feministiese teologiese denke. Die ontleding van hierdie hermeneutiese benaderings in hoofstuk drie bring aan die lig dat die meeste van hierdie aanpakte geartikuleer word 'van bo', wat dit moeilik maak om die nood van die armes en diegene wat swaarkry in die Afrika samelewing aan te spreek. Daarom is dit nodig om 'n gepaste Afrika hermeneutiek van Jesus se opstanding te ontwikkel wat 'n benadering 'van onder' voorstaan, d.w.s. 'n aanpak met die veronderstelling van radikale transformasie van sisteme in die samelewing.

Dit word betoog in die navorsing dat die Afrika ervaring van lyding die spesifieke raamwerk is waarbinne 'n interpretasie van Jesus se opstanding gesoek behoort te word. Hoofstuk vier en vyf

bespreek die gevolge van lyding in die sub-Sahara konteks. 'n Algemene perspektief op lyding as die hermeneutiese horison vir 'n verstaan van Jesus se opstanding word in hoofstuk vier gebied, terwyl hoofstuk vyf spesifieke profiele van lyding in Afrika teken. Hierdie twee hoofstukke beklemtoon dat ten spyte van die aard en werklikheid van lyding hoop op die oorwinning van die verskrikking van armoede, vlugtelingskap en oorloë, en MIV/VIGS verseker word deur Jesus se opstanding.

Die navorsing bied ook 'n bybelse perspektief op lyding en opstanding. Wat duidelik blyk in die Bybel is dat toestande van pyn en lyding kan lei tot die ontwikkeling en versterking van geloof in die opstanding. Die opstanding demonstreer God se ingrype in mense se ervarings van lyding. Op hierdie wyse toon God dat Hy 'n God van geregtigheid is wat lewe en hoop bied aan die sonder lewe of hoop. Hoofstuk ses onderstreep dat ten spyte van watter vorm lyding ook al mag aanneem in die Bybel, God deur die opstandingsgebeure 'n altyd teenwoordige en kragtige bron van hoop in lyding bly.

Die laaste hoofstuk suggereer dat die hermeneutiek van die opstanding van Jesus, wat ontwikkel is vir 'n konteks van lyding, vereis dat spesifieke beginsels van Christelike spiritualiteit en etos aanvaar moet word. Riglyne word ook gebied vir voorgesette navorsing oor die onderwerp. Bowenal word beklemtoon dat 'n Afrika hermeneutiek van Jesus se opstanding bevestig dat hoop in lyding in finale instansie by God se vermoë lê om mense te lewens te verander. Hulle deelname aan die goddelike proses van vernuwing is 'n antwoord op God se werk.