

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

**THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS OF NAZARETH
AND THE FUTURE OF THE
HUMAN RACE**

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HUMAN RACE**

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Prof. S.A. Strauss
Promoter

Acknowledgments

The topic whether Jesus theologically can still be thought as “special” in the world of today is a very sensitive issue involving millions of people from different walks of life. In order to explore such a topic, one has to be bold, and can succeed only by contributions, insights and critical help from many other human beings of goodwill who care very much about this world loved so much by God (Jn 3:16f).

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the fundamental problem of whether Jesus Christ can still be thought to be that very *decisive, absolute* and *unsurpassable* revelation of God. And you may rightly ask: If this is the case, then what has gone so drastically wrong about that which was taken for granted for so long in the Christian world?

The truth of the matter is that *today* Christianity is remembered mostly by its systematic destruction of the *other-me* than by its perennial preaching of love of neighbour. *Yet* only *yesterday* Christianity seemed to make the whole world go round as “the *only* reliable religion” capable of answering adequately the very deep spiritual recesses of the human heart and human finitude in general. Today that privileged position has drastically changed. Christianity’s traditional bold claim of being a *unique* kairos moment in human affairs, in which God’s self-communication *cannot* be surpassed *in anyway by any other religion*, is seriously challenged. But lovers of this religion or this “New Way of Life”, with their immense faith; and in their hope against hope, refuse to throw in the towel no matter the cost. They are *now* doing their level best to *save* authentic Christianity from the systematic and rigorous onslaught, which opposes the Christ event as a “very special and absolute” theological *locus classicus* in human affairs. While these concerned, honest and committed Christians try to restore the healing face of the Christian faith, critics of religion (with their many faces), especially those of the *Democratic Rule*, give them sleepless and anxious nights. *Indifference* among the latter towards “who Jesus Christ is” is well pronounced; while confusion, divisions and scandals among the former about *how Jesus Christ ought to be understood*, are today well documented and are making headlines on regular intervals in the media and even within churches themselves.

This research joins these lovers of Christianity by proposing an *alternate* route in answering the perennial double question: “Who do *people* say that I am?” and “Who do *you* say that I am?” (cf. Mk 8:27-30). This *alternate* route is built on God’s Promises to Abraham without whom the universal *uniqueness* of Jesus *the* Christ = *the* Messiah would be concealed, disfigured and seriously betrayed. God’s Promises to humanity

through Abraham are the historical theological foundation of human salvation in all its mysterious beauty. And within this amazing mystery of God's Plan of our salvation, Sarah, Hagar, Mary, and Khadija¹, *equally* play a crucial role.

In addressing this problem of Jesus' uniqueness in the totality of human history, this thesis contrasts and juxtaposes three pillars of authentic revelation namely, *the reality of our fallen human nature, the incarnation of the Christ = the awaited Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, and Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), to date, as the last Witness (Prophet) of God's revelation.* These trinitarian pillars of our salvation are firstly pressed and shaken together, and are then put into a serious *healing* tension with each other for the enrichment of all peoples of the human race. The thesis argues strongly that the universal salvific truth lies in the fact that the theological watershed of human salvation has already been *sealed irreversibly* between God's covenant with Abraham and God's covenant with humanity at Pentecost; and that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) is the last reliable Testament/Witness of this universal, *historical* truth. Constantinian Christianity, in its many faces, is here held responsible for corrupting this universal truth up to our own time. Byzantine, papal and colonial evangelism will go down in history as the most heretical and corruptive Christian traditions that have ever emanated from that Constantinian Christianity.

This thesis concludes by calling all Christians of goodwill from Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic communities firstly to authentic acceptance of Kubler-Ross, and then repentance of John the Baptist in order to stop the further corrupting of *Jesus' name* where it is still being used *to mean anything, everything and nothing* today and beyond. The sin of Supersessionism, the sin of Hagarism and the sin of ecclesiastical *timocracy* (idoltrous sin of seeking *first* the kingdom of the Church), are here exposed as heresies and setbacks in the universal enrichment of all peoples of the human race. These are sins that have systematically concealed, disfigured and seriously betrayed (like Judas) the true *universal* meaning of "who Jesus of Nazareth really is" concerning the salvation of every human being from primordial time of the Fall to our generation of today and beyond.

¹ The wife of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h. = peace be upon him)

Uittreksel

Hierdie proefskrif handel oor die problematiek aangaande die stelling dat Jesus Christus as die deurslaggewende, absolute en onomwonde openbaring van God beskou moet word. Indien dit nie so is nie, mag ons dan vra: Wat het dan so verkeerd geloop dat dit so lank deur Christene nie bevraagteken is nie?

Inderwaarheid is dit so dat die huidige Christendom beter geken word as die stelsel wat die *ander-ek* sistematies uitgeroei het eerder as die onophoudelike prediker van naasteliefde. In die nabye verlede het dit voorgekom asof die Christendom die wêreld gedryf het, dat dit die “enigste daadwerklike godsdiens” was wat die diepste geestelike dors van die mens kon les en die vrae aangaande menslike beperktheid kon beantwoord. Op hede bestaan daardie bevoordeling nie meer nie. Die Christen toeëiening van daardie enige kairos oomblik in die menslike geskiedenis waarin die selfkommunikasie van God nie geëwenaar kan word in enige ander godsdiens nie, kom nou as vermetel voor. Die wat hierdie godsdiens liefhet, die navolgers van hierdie “Nuwe Lewensweg”, met hulle diepsinnige geloof, met hulle deurgronde hoop; weier, desondanks die koste, om tou op te gooi. Hulle vermag alles om outentieke Christendom te red van die sistematiese en deurgronde aanval teen die Christusgebeurtenis as die “spesiale en absolute” teologiese *locus classicus* in die menslike geskiedenis. Onderwyl hierdie betrokke, eerlike en verbonde Christene poog om die helende gelaat van die Christengeloof te herstel, gee die kritici van godsdiens (met hulle menigvuldige gelate), veral die aanhangers van die *Demokratiese Reël*, vir hulle slapelose en angsge vulde nagte. Onverskilligheid tenoor “wie Jesus Christus is” is goed gevestig onder diesulke kritici. Terselfdertyd is daar die verwarring, verdeeldhede en skandale in Christenkringe oor *hoe Jesus verstaan behoort te word*, wat op hede geboekstaaf word en dikwels as opskrifte in die media en die kerke voorkom.

Hierdie navorsing skakel in by die wat die Christendom liefhet en stel voor ‘n alternatiewe weg om die gedurige dubbel vraag: “Wie, sê die mense, is Ek?” en “Wie, sê julle, is Ek?” (vgl Markus 8:27-30) te beantwoord. Hierdie alternatiewe weg is gegrond

op God se belofte aan Abraham, sonder wie die universele inslag en enigheid van Jesus *die Christus (die Messias)* verborge sou bly, verwronge en verloën sou wees. God se beloftes aan die mensdom deur Abraham is die geskiedkundige en teologiese fondament van menslike verlossing in sy volle geheimenisvolle skoonheid. Dit is vanuit hierdie geheimenis van God se verlossingsplan dat Sarah, Hagar, Maria en Khadija² ewe belangrike rolle speel.

Deur die problematiek van Jesus se enigheid in die geheel van die mens se geskiedenis aan te spreek stel hierdie verhandeling teenoor mekaar die drie boustene van egte openbaring, naamlik, *die werklikheid van ons in sonde gevalle wese, die menswording van die Christus, of die verwagte Messias, in Jesus van Nasaret, en Muhammed (vrede wees met hom), tot nou toe, die laaste Getuie (Profeet) van Goddelike openbaring.* Hierdie drie-enige boustene van ons verlossing word eers langs mekaar gestel, dan geskommel, daarna word hulle in ernstige, dog helende, spanning teenoor mekaar gestel ten einde die verryking van alle volke van die mensdom te bewerk. Die verhandeling stel dit sterk dat die universele redelike waarheid daarop rus dat die teologiese waterskeiding vir die mens *alreeds onomwonde* verseël is tussen die gelofte wat met Abraham aangegaan is en die gelofte met die mensdom met Pinkster; en dat Muhammed (v.w.m.h) die laaste geloofwaardige getuie of testament tot hierdie universele, geskiedkundige, waarheid is. Konstantynse Christendom, met sy menigte gelate, word hier verantwoordelik gehou vir die besoedeling van hierdie universele waarheid, tot en met ons eie tyd. Bisantynse, pouslike en koloniale evangelisasie sal in die geskiedenis geken word as kettery en die mees korrupte Christelike tradisies wat uit die Konstantynse Christendom voortgespruit het.

Die verhandeling sluit daarmee af deur alle Christene met goeie wil, hetsy Ortodoks, Protestant of Rooms-Katoliek, op te roep tot 'n egte belydenis en bekering, eerstens volgens Kubler-Ross en dan volgens Johannes die Doper, tot 'n beëindiging van enige verdere korrupsie van Jesus se naam, waar dit nog uitgebuit word om, vandag en in die verdere toekoms, alles, enigiets en niks te beteken nie. Die sonde van Supersessionisme,

² Die vrou van Profeet Muhammad (v.w.m.h. = vrede wees met hom)

die sonde van Hagarisme en die sonde van kerklike *timokrasie* (die lasterlike sonde van om *ten eerste* die koninkryk van die kerk na te strewe), word hier oopgevelek as ketterye en terugslae teen die universele verryking van die mensdom. Hierdie ernstige misdrywe het tot die sistematiese verberging, skending en verloëning (nes Judas) van die ware, universele, betekenis van “wie Jesus van Nasaret inderdaad is” met betrekking tot elke mens, vanuit die oertyd van die Val tot ons huidige geslag, en ook verder die toekoms in, bygedra.

Important words and terms explained

Our endeavour here relies on some crucial terms that summarize the intention of this research and explain the title of this work. Without these terms *thought together*, our work will lose its noble focus about *universal* salvation unbelievably and uniquely captured in the life, death and resurrection of that son of the virgin Mary; that *ordinary* guy from a small village called Nazareth where everyone, like in any small village, knew the affairs of other people (cf. Mk 6:1-6).

1. Crucial terms in order to understand the logic and coherence of this work

The initial title of this work was “The Uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth in the becoming history of the human race”. But realizing that this title could be theologically unusual, it became better to entitle this work, “The Uniqueness of Jesus and the future of the human race”. Both titles mean the same thing except that the former is theologically formulated, while the latter can be said to use a layperson’s language. ‘*In the becoming history of*’ has the same meaning as ‘*and the future of*’. So, nothing is lost except that the logic and coherence of this thesis depend very much on philosophical and theological terminology. Therefore the reader will have to get used to certain key terms in this work and what they mean according to the author.

1.1 *Becoming*

This theological term captures well the fact that human history has always been dynamically heading for a decisive finality in God who is the Alpha and the Omega of human history (cf. Gen 3 vs. Rev 21). God’s *creating* was not a once for all finished project, but an ongoing historical work with a certain definite purpose involving even us today. In this sense, the incarnation of God in Jesus is not ‘a fact, but an event’. The richness of this term is taken seriously both in theology and philosophy today because it does its best to reconcile the abstract and the concrete, the metaphysical and the historical, the absolute and the relative, the transcendent and the immanent etc., thus

bringing about an intelligible meaningful reconciliation between God (Creator = the Infinite) and us human beings (creatures = the finite). The deep focussed meaning of this term is that from primordially God has always been at work actualizing *our fallen human nature* towards its highest possible glory. In the Random House dictionary this term, among other definitions, is defined as "... any change involving realization of potentialities, as a movement from the lower level of potentiality to the higher level of actuality" (Stein 1967:132). This definition accords well with our research here. As a theological term, "becoming" was coined within Process theology as an attempt to synthesize and to reconcile traditional *theology from above* (ontological Christology) and *theology from below* (functional Christology). The ongoing attempt of Process theology to reconcile the wholeness of human reality with the reality of the God of Jesus is done by seriously contrasting the apathetic, cyclic God of the Greek culture with a compassionate historical God of Jewish culture. Process theologians like Charles Hartshorne have been trying to make us understand ordinary human history not as a closed, inaccessible mysterious reality but as an open dialectical reality with great possibilities of a *dialogical* hopeful future between God and humanity:

Hartshorne's ... natural theology revolves mainly around ... two ... poles namely, that the true God should "change" (as "opposed" to classical theism) and that this God must be personal if He [sic] is to take human beings seriously. He is emphatic that God's Relativity means the inclusion of "all the divine absoluteness (or eternity) that logical analysis shows to be conceivable without sheer contradiction". The true God is all-inclusive and nothing exists outside Him and as a result of a true relativity, He is affected by our sorrows and joys. Not only does He affect us but we also influence Him one way or another, otherwise it won't be a true [authentic] relationship. [And] if anything exists outside Him, He won't be all-encompassing and this would be absurd for a God, because it would mean that He is surpassed [emphasis mine]. "The entire actual world is His to enjoy in all-embracing vision. We should ascribe to Him the potential possession of every possible value. Were such and such a possible value actual for anyone, it would a fortiori be actual for God, who would enjoy unsurpassable knowledge of it. ... The divine actuality is logically coextensive with all actuality and, in this sense, is actuality itself; the divine potentiality is coextensive with all possibility and is possibility itself. Any actual thing God enjoys actually; any possible thing would be His actual possession were it actual for anyone. From this 'modal coincidence' it follows that though God can increase in value, He can be surpassed by no other than Himself. For any increase anywhere is a fortiori increase in Him. [God] grows but His mode of growth is incomparably superior to all other modes. 'The perfection of God is His ideal mode of perfectibility'. If [God] surpasses Himself, it is in an unsurpassable manner" (Mosoeu 1993:29f).

Therefore, at the heart of our human history there has always been the reality of “becoming” between us and God; and this deep *relational* and *dialogical* engagement of God with the human world is unheard of (*in a conscious personal manner*) in other religions save Abrahamic faiths (cf. Jn 3:16. Rom 3-8). Acknowledging the immense impact Process theology is having on our modern conscience as far as an all-around meaningful God is concerned, P. Knitter summarises well the essence of this theology:

Among the various schools of philosophy within contemporary Western culture, there is one that proposes a vision of reality that many ordinary persons sense to be true of their individual lives: that the world and everything in it are evolutionary or in process. We are, in other words, not in a state of being but in a process of becoming. A number of philosophers articulate this view in different but fundamentally compatible ways. Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne see a world involved in an adventure of creativity through process. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s universe evolves painfully but steadily from the biosphere to the noosphere to the unity of the Omega Point, which he identifies with the cosmic Christ at the eschaton. Some contemporary Buddhists elaborate Gautama’s discovery of a constantly changing world through a process of dependent co-origination. Aurobindo’s Hinduism envisions a world in evolution toward divinisation. Thomas Berry’s and Brian Swimme’s grandiose evolutionary “Universe Story” has found great resonance among persons concerned with the plight of the environment. ... [What is most unusual and crucial is that] ... the vision these thinkers present is pointedly different from the worldview that guided the mind and imagination of Western civilisation for most of its existence. For the majority of Europeans throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, creation came forth from the hand of God as a finished product, stable, and hierarchically ordered. One was not to tamper with this order. Humans were to keep their place in relation to God [and to shut up even when seeing serious inconsistencies]. Within the divinely constituted order of things, social classes were also to keep their places; God willed serfs to be serfs and lords to be lords. Although change occurred, the medieval worldview considered change a corruption and a spur for Christians to desire the changing world of eternity with God. (Knitter 2002:8f)

1.1.1 History as always a becoming history and “to date” concept

The above definition adequately envisions the intention of our research here. Process theology takes seriously historical events like French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Darwin’s discovery of biological evolution, Newtonian universe and “new physics” pioneered by Albert Einstein, Jewish Holocaust, disruptive colonial evangelization, invasion of Iraq subsequent to the tragedy of September 11, Burundi-Rwandan Genocide, HIV/Aids pandemic etc. Therefore “God of the gaps” has no place in Process theology.

Human events are always being posited by history within time and space; always open to the “unpredictable” future act of God for a definite purpose (cf. Acts 1:6-8. Mt 24:36). That is why we can only judge God’s intentions by the present moment; hence the term “*to date*”, where we say that *only in Christ* can we be sure for now till God says otherwise. But this “otherwise” seems unlikely *in reversing the process already started in the God-“Man” concerning the total salvation of the human person* (cf. Gal 1:6-9). Therefore we agree with pluralist theology that history is an open reality in the hands of God alone; God as the Ultimate Reality, as the ineffable Mystery who has always been directing the destiny of *all-that-is from time immemorial* (cf. Acts 7:1-60. 17:23-29). While the Infinity of God cannot be exhausted, Trinitarian Theology is clear that in the meantime authentic Christians must boldly proclaim that Jesus, who became *the Christ* = *the* awaited Messiah by God’s will, is *unsurpassably* the Lord of all history to the glory of God the Father (cf. Eph 1:1-14). This is why even up to this day (“*to date*”) authentic Christian theology has been trying to be faithful to Jesus’ Good News from the “Father” (cf. Jn 3:16f), and woe to anyone who dares to proclaim a different gospel and still calls himself/herself an authentic Christian! (cf. Gal 1:6-10). The fact remains that in the story of Jesus of Nazareth, God has revealed Godself *uniquely* and *unsurpassably* (cf. Acts 4:8-22). When we say that “in Jesus salvation is closed and final”, we mean that God, not only *de facto* but also in principle (*de iure*), cannot bypass that which Godself has already started in Jesus as unique Messenger of Good News *unparalleled* in the history of human becoming (cf. Mk 1:15). We emphasise again that this does not prevent God revealing more of His/Her plans in the future, but that, whatever be the future plans of this God, *the* foundation *already* laid in Jesus of Nazareth can never be bypassed *in any way* (cf. Heb. 8).

1.2 The Uniqueness of Jesus

The question “whether Jesus is unique or not” among other religious founders of the world is a recent serious debate within Christian theology mainly introduced by *pluralist* theologians. Robust representatives here are Paul F. Knitter and John Hick. Several books and articles in recent years have increasingly been appearing and trying to clarify the

term as to be acceptable in the theology of religions because of the nature of our pluralistic society of a global-village mentality. Here are some examples of book-titles:

Myth of Christian Uniqueness (John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, editors), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Gavin D’Costa, editor), *Christian Uniqueness* (Gabriel Moran), etc. Making their point clear and without much qualm, John Hick and Paul F. Knitter define their new pluralist position in Christian theology as a way of “eliminating” once and for all ‘mythological sense of Christian uniqueness’: “... pluralistic model [of salvation] represents a new turn - what might be called a ‘paradigm shift’ - in the efforts of Christian theologians, both past and present, to understand the world of other religions and Christianity’s place in that world. The paradigm shift represents a turn that is both genuinely different from, yet dependent upon, what went before. ... Christianity, of course, is unique in the precise sense in which every religious tradition is unique - namely that there is only one of it and that there is therefore nothing else exactly like it. But [lamentably] in much Christian discourse, ‘the uniqueness of Christianity’ has taken on a larger mythological meaning. ... [and we must] ... move beyond the two general models that have dominated Christian attitudes toward other religions up to the present [namely]: the ‘conservative’ *exclusivist* approach, which finds salvation only in Christ and little, if any, value elsewhere; and the ‘liberal’ *inclusivist* attitude, which recognizes the salvific richness of other faiths but then views this richness as the result of Christ’s redemptive work and as having to be fulfilled in Christ. ... [On the contrary, the primary task of pluralist theologians the world over is to] ... explore the possibilities of a *pluralist* position - a move away from insistence on the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the participants in our project as the crossing of a theological Rubicon. In the words of Langdon Gilkey, it represents ‘a monstrous shift indeed ... a position quite new to the churches, even to the liberal churches’” (Hick 1994: vii- viii)³.

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³ John Hick and Paul Knitter, chief catalysts of Pluralist Theology, co-edited this book where *only* theologians of like-mindedness were allowed to contribute: “Through this collection of essays we hope to show that such a pluralist turn is taking shape, that it is being proposed by a variety of reputable Christian thinkers, and that therefore it represents a viable, though still inchoate and controversial, option for Christian believers. Our intent as editors, then, was to assemble a representative mix of Christian theologians - Protestant and Catholic, female and male, East and West, First and Third World - who felt both the urgency and complexity of exploring genuinely new Christian understandings of other religions and of Christianity in light of other faiths. We tried to spell out the conditions and objectives of our project as tightly as possible so that only those who felt they could clearly endorse them came aboard” (Hick 1994:viii).

As you can hear from the horse's mouth, this term was invented out of "politeness" by pluralist theologians who are so altruistic and so amazingly accommodating that they are not prepared to "hurt" people of other faiths by this "outdated Christian mythical nonsense of Uniqueness". Pluralist theology avoids classical and traditional terms in Christian theology namely, *only* and *absolute*. Pluralist theologians can no longer stomach statements that Jesus is the *only Son of God* and that he is the *only redeemer* of the human race. Neither can they stand the fact that, because of Jesus, Christianity ought to be understood as the *special and absolute religion, unique and unsurpassable in many ways*. This new term makes it easier for Pluralist theology to say that every religion and its founder is unique in its own way. Now, to beat pluralist theologians at their own game, we have accepted this term, but we use it together with other terms so as to re-inforce the original truth *intended* by classical formulations about the true ontological nature of "who Jesus of Nazareth really is", and we do this by taking the answer of St Peter seriously (cf. Mk 8:27-30). We stick to the original meaning of these classical statements following the early Church's advice that authentic Christians must always be ready to give "reasons" for their faith in a respectful but intelligible manner (cf. 1Pet 3:15-16). *The pervasive logic and coherence of the New Testament testimony is that Jesus of Nazareth, who was thought initially to be like any other person (cf. Mk 6:1-6), was later declared the Christ = the Messiah precisely by the virtue of God's unique presence of reconciling the whole world in Godself through/by/in that same Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Eph 1:1-14. 1Jn 1:1-4).*

1.2.1 *The Unsurpassability of Jesus*

This is what makes Jesus unique in the sense that his message of the wholeness of the human person cannot be bypassed in any way for total human liberation (cf. Acts 2:36). The history of the human race and its environment from humble beginnings can never ignore that hitherto (*to date*) the vision proposed by Jesus about the enrichment of the human race in all its totality, can never be bypassed concerning *what it means to be free, what it means to be human, and above all in what it means to embrace an all-round meaningful God*. The early Christian community summarized well this truth when they said that, 'Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah (the *Christos*) promised by God to Abraham

to *irreversibly* bless both the Jews and to all of us Gentiles’ (cf. Rom 9:1-18); and ‘it is this Jesus whom God the Father has made the *cornerstone of salvation* to both Jews and Gentiles alike’ (cf. Acts 4:1-12). Therefore statements and words like “Jesus is the *final* and *definitive* Word of God” or “Jesus is the only Way, Truth and Life”, etc., should always be put in tension with this proclamation of the early Church which is pervasive throughout the New (or the First) Testament; with St Paul being the unique and uncontested champion of this *kerygma*. God’s ways are not our ways and God’s ways are much more than what Jesus has revealed (cf. 1Cor 15:28). *But God’s new ways will always refer to, point to, and build on the foundation already laid in/by/through Christ Jesus = the awaited Messiah* (cf. Eph 2:11-22. 1Cor 1:10-17; 3:1-15).

It is our conviction, and in this research we hope to prove that, “to date” (2004), when it comes to authentic freedom, authentic humanity, and above all, when it comes to embracing an *all-around* meaningful God, as opposed to a “God of gaps”, Jesus of Nazareth and his God cannot be bypassed by anyone, nor by any religion. *To date* Jesus’ vision of Life is *unparalleled* when it comes to the totality of the human person in his/her dignity and in the meaningfulness of his/her environment in this life (cf. Rom 8:20-23; 31-39). And remember, we are talking here about “Jesus *before* Christianity”⁴. If due recognition is to be given, as St Thomas Aquinas was so insisting, then all religions, great and small, and all altruistic pluralist theologians, have to honour this reality. When this happens, then honesty according to Socrates of following truth all the way will surely mean something. Hans Küng has been consistent in showing that the so-called Western “civilized” society in its positive enrichment, is what it is today precisely because it is deeply rooted and “baptized” in Christian values (ethos) one way or another⁵.

1.2.2 All peoples of the Human race

The *universality* of the message of Jesus is a conscious reality to authentic witnesses without much theological speculation. Peter and Paul are such classic witnesses (cf. Acts

⁴ Albert Nolan’s book, *Jesus before Christianity*, is crucial in bringing the point home here. It is a must for those who would like to come closer to having a gist of “who Jesus Christ really is”.

⁵ Hans Küng in one of his monumental works, 1991, *Global Responsibility: In Search of A New World Ethic*.

11:1-18; 17:16-34. 1Cor 1:17). By “human race” we mean all people of the world before Christ, during Christ’s earthly life, and now during this time of him as the Risen Lord (cf. Acts 9:5)⁶. In other words, we are talking about the pre-incarnational period, the incarnational period, and the post-incarnational period. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection have a *universal significance* for all peoples of the human race. Without Jesus’ *eternal spark* (Holy Spirit), every human being is doomed, precisely because God has irreversibly decided that *only* in/by/through this Jesus, the world should move, exist and have its being (cf. Jn 1:1-18). It is our absolute conviction that only the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth can help every human being to move forward by *adequately* conquering evil with good within us and in the world (cf. Rom 12:14-21). And anyone who refuses in total maturity and in total freedom this new Vision of Christ or this new Way of Becoming or “being born again” (cf. Jn 3:16f), will be committing ontological spiritual suicide (cf. Mk 3:28).

2. Additional terms for more clarification on the universality of human salvation

2.1 Christendom: Christendom is understood here as the reality of faith lived within time and space by a certain people with a definite culture and worldview. It is a reality where the Gospel is already accepted, lived and interpreted according to the ethos and wisdom of that culture. *In this sense we contrast Christendom with Christianity.* We define Christianity as the purity of the Gospel in all its beauty before being inserted into any human culture. In other words, Christianity will always stay as a universal yardstick to all cultures of the human race, while Christendom is the already lived experience of this perennial Calling. This is why we distinguish between positive and negative Christendom well captured by the parable of the Sower concerning authentic and inauthentic faith. Positive Christendom is where authenticity is the reality of human becoming (cf. Mk 4:8), while negative Christendom is where inauthenticity is the reality of human becoming (cf. Mk 4:4-7)⁷.

⁶ This “resurrection” of Christ here is as powerful as the original one. Unfortunately, hitherto, Christian churches have underestimated it, save Pauline churches.

⁷ Mk 4:8 “And some fell into rich soil and, growing tall and strong, produced crop; and yielded thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold”. Mk 4:4-7 “Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on edge of the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found little soil and sprang up straight away, because there was no depth of earth; and when the sun came up it was scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away. Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew and choked it, and it produced no crop”.

2.2 The reality of our fallen human nature: “In the Judeo-Christian tradition, salvation is the story of the journey of humankind and the world – from the first creation (Gen 1:1) to the new creation (Rev. 21:1-5). It encompasses the story of Israel’s beginnings (Gen. 12-Judges), the subsequent story of the Israelite people (1 Sam - Ezra), and the perceived story of prehistorical beginnings (Gen. 1-11)” (Fabella 2000:180). This thesis takes for granted this given reality of our ontological selves concerning the essence of Christian doctrine. The essence of Christian revelation is that there is something seriously wrong, ontologically, with our human nature after the Fall, that necessitated the Messiah or the Christ to come (cf. Rom 3). The “Original Sin” concept should be understood within this theological foundation. But today it should be understood more according to Paul and less according to Augustine without, of course, writing off Augustine’s theological understanding altogether. It is St Augustine who coined this term for Western Theology. And while we sympathize with the original position of Pelagius, where the human person ontologically concerning salvation “naturally” is not an absolute *tabula rasa* (cf. Rom 1:19-20), we vehemently oppose neo-pelagianism of modern liberal theology where God has “literally” become redundant or “really” unnecessary in achieving authentic human salvation. Our vehement opposition here is fuelled by the fact that the logic and coherence emanating from the other two Abrahamic faiths (Judaism and Islam) also hold a diametrically opposed theological view to neo-pelagianism namely, that no human beings can save themselves, precisely because *only God the Creator saves* (cf. Acts 17:30-31).

2.3 Internal and External forums: Christian witness in this research is divided into two categories. The first category concerns those who consciously regard themselves as Christians. We call this *internal forum*. Unless these believers get their act together, no healing will be tangible in the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16. Jn 3:16-18; 16:12-15). The second category involves any human being who has not yet consciously and personally accepted Jesus as the universal saviour. We call this *external forum*. In other words, this forum includes all communities of other faiths or any religion, “atheists”, ideologies etc.

2.4 Supersessionism: This is a theological claim that Christians replaced Jews as God's chosen people because the Jews rejected and killed Jesus who is claimed to be the Son of God, the awaited Messiah; that Christians, are *now* the New People of God; that the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament; that the Church replaces the Synagogue as a holy place of true worship, and that Judaism is now obsolete, its covenant abrogated; hence justification of persecuting the Jews as God-killers (deicide). Today a forceful theological voice is growing to reinstate the Jewish People to what was "stolen" from them as the only chosen people *then* (cf. Rom 11). This reinstating should be done by asking immense forgiveness for the evil done over the years in *Jesus' name* to Jewish people. And for us that reinstating will be practically fulfilled when today, theologically, we recognise Islam as the "new" classical monotheism. This is why we define and understand Islam as *Judaism-in-emergence*.

2.5 Unique Monotheism: Authentic Christianity cannot deny the fact that God the Father is the Creator of other polytheistic cultures (cf. Acts 17:23-31). It cannot deny the fact that classical Jewish monotheism was also of God's creation in order to produce the Messiah (cf. Gal 4.4). In classical monotheism, idolatry in any form is not tolerated at all; it is at the heart of the "war" between God and human beings:

There are two kinds of idolatry: perversion, in which God is manipulated, and replacement, in which other gods replace God. The first type tends to be dominant in the churches, while the second is more common in society. In the latter case, consumer goods, technology, or even freedom are transformed into divine subjects, and sometimes human beings are transformed into objects. The perversion of all idolatry lies in the deification of a subject, in whose name domination can be carried out with a clear conscience and without limits. Idolatry is [also] the transcendent root of social sin (Fabella 2000:104).

Therefore the doctrine of the Fall cannot be taken lightly or rubbished away. The fact of the matter is that polytheistic religions should be understood as arenas where human beings "naturally" try to assert their sacred worthiness regardless of God's "revealed" will as the Creator and Sustainer of Life, while classical monotheistic religion (Judaism) is where God has been trying to assert His/Her will with much caution and love (cf. Job 38-42) preparing for the coming of the Messiah in order to bring everything back to the

Primordial lost Paradise (cf. 1Cor 15:28). Christianity, in our view, should be understood as a serious unique synthesis between “natural” polytheistic beliefs and classical monotheistic belief of Israel, hence Christianity as a *unique monotheistic belief* (cf. Rom 3-4) with *unique unsurpassable* contribution to human nature (cf. Rom 6-8. 1Cor 13. Jn 4:23-24). Lived to the full, unique monotheism ought to usher *unique unsurpassable healing* to our torn-apart world by fulfilling the Scriptures:

[In those days of the Messiah, the redeemed] ... will hammer their swords into plowshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be nor more training for war (Is 2:4; cf. 11:1-9). [Precisely because, says Peter,] ... God [in Christ] does not have favorites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him. [And Paul goes on] ...now in Christ Jesus, you [Gentiles] that used to be so far apart from us [Jews] have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier, which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man [New Humanity] in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace – through the cross – to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God. In his person he killed the hostility (Acts 10:35. Eph 2:13-16).

Inclusive language: In this research we will try our level best to be gender sensitive by using inclusive language. The reason is that in fairness to Jesus’ Message, no genuine Christian today can afford to ignore this universal Gospel demand in this millenium. Otherwise the Gospel will continue to be proclaimed in vain. We are aware that at times this inclusive language concerning the nature of the revealed God in Christ can be “tricky”, but we have to take a risk in Jesus’ name to glorify and enrich all peoples of the human race in this world in which, in many respects, our grannies, mothers and sisters etc, play an important crucial role⁸. Today in our continuing effort to build a new humanity in Jesus’ name we cannot afford to ignore the obvious sin of the “silencing of women in the Church”; enough is enough of continuing to use God’s name in vain:

First, aspects of Christian tradition are deemed to conceal Jesus’ ‘revolutionary’ approach to women in granting them equal status to men and thus restoring the original relationship God established between the sexes at creation. ... As a result of the patriarchal realities [of the early church era], the term Logos applied to Christ as

⁸ Today (maybe as has been the case in the past) women, as members of the human race, are said to make up 55% of world population.

creator also became associated with the rational principle of the human soul, presumed to be male. Therefore theological references to Christ became heavily androcentric, reinforcing the assumption that God was male. Only male metaphors were considered appropriate to speak of God; moreover, 'Christ had to be male in order to reveal a male God, and this was taken literally.' While man was understood to be made in the image of God, woman was only seen as the image of man and only saved through man. Such concepts about God and Christ in relation to man and woman colored the development of theology in Europe for centuries and consequently tainted perceptions of Christ brought by modern European missionaries to Africa [and the rest of the world] (Stinton 2004: 39f).

Abbreviations

CCL Code of Canon Law

DLSSA Divine Life Society of South Africa

SACBC South African Catholic Bishops' Conference

Chapter 1

An Introduction

Any religion [today] whose basic premise includes the ultimate disappearance of every other religion is ultimately a danger to [world] peace
(Tablet 5 January 2002:3)

This research tries to find out what is so drastically wrong that people can kill and destroy a neighbour and his/her property *in God's name*, let alone in the name of Jesus who is supposed to be the *universal* saviour (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-5). Our task is to face this tragedy, to analyse it and then, hopefully, to transcend it. The undeniable reality of modern culture as a pluralistic or multi-religious context faces our task here, and we passionately accept this challenge because pluralism seems to be here to stay. Fr Dupuis makes this clear, "... religious pluralism exists not simply *de facto*, but 'in principle' [*de iure*]" (Tablet 5/01/02: 1485). This new "unparalleled" reality today presents great challenges to religions in general and to Christianity in particular, and has "... made the subject of the Theology of Religions (*Theologia Religionum*)¹ extremely topical" (Meiring 1996:221).

1.1 Foundational Christian orientation

The actuality of Jesus of Nazareth *still being thought of today as a unique and unsurpassable figure in the totality of the becoming history of the human race*; what it means to be authentically free and authentically human, but above all, what it means to embrace an all-around meaningful God, will surely shock some people at the beginning of this third millennium; especially those people who find Christianity meaningless and annoying. *Genuine* persons today cannot understand why a *personal, loving* God appears to be so indifferent to so much pain and suffering in our world. Such people cannot stand *anymore* a God who "deliberately" appears to permit so much evil and suffering, especially when this howling misery in abundance always finds its abode among the

¹ "We must make a distinction between Theology of Religion (*Theologia Religionis*) and Theology of Religions (*Theologia Religionum*). The former concerns itself with a theological understanding of what religion is and the latter is concerned with the relationship between Christianity and other world religions" (Meiring 1996:221).

poorest of the poor. They see the dignity of the human person being daily trampled in large measure in our world of today by people calling themselves authentic believers in a Mighty loving God, especially those adhering to *Abrahamic faiths*. Mr David Kaplan of Pietermaritzburg, captures well the present agonizing dilemma found in any religion: “It is apparent that religion, like nationalism, is a great stumbling block towards world peace. Nothing epitomizes this more than the current situation in the Middle East. For here the three tribes of Abraham - Muslims, Christians and Jews – perpetuate the very antithesis of the love and service of the Creator upon which all three faiths are founded. And so the Western powers pray to [Jesus’] God, the Arabs to Allah, and the Jews to Jehovah before the killing commences. As for Father above, I hate to even consider the great sadness and despair that must surely be the consequence of this blasphemy and madness [among all people of the human race]. Quite clearly, it is time to forsake the discord, division and disharmony of dogmatic religion and embrace instead a common spirituality based upon love, tolerance, understanding and respect for the humanity that unites us, and the Creator to which we are mutually bound. After all, are we not all God’s children?” (Natal Witness: 4/4/03).

We *empathize*² with those who, like Mr David Kaplan, *are genuinely* concerned about the welfare of the human race; and with them, we will never allow a sadist and a brutal Job-like God to continue having the last word in human affairs. It is our fervent conviction that the amazing story of Jesus of Nazareth has the *unsurpassable* and *foundational* power of reversing our perennial human woes. This unique story of this “virginal” son of Mary is so crucial in understanding the fullness of the dignity of the human race (and its environment) from the moment of its primordial inception, that we are here compelled to share our faith point of view, hoping that, in this genuine and honest theological attempt of ours, humanity will be enriched even further³. Our objective is to explore deeply the

² The difference between empathy and sympathy is in the healing that is realistic. To sympathise with someone is to have compassion for that person and to understand his/her situation and stay there with him/her. But to empathise is to do all that *transcends* that situation in order to help. In the former, you stay with the person and cry together; you try your level best to be in the shoes of that person, while in the latter you help the person in pain or need to see a meaningful and an optimistic future.

³ The Incarnation or the timely coming of God in human affairs did not come at the beginning of human history, but came at a certain point in time; at the *kairos* moment (cf. Gal 4:4). Therefore it cannot be supposed that, when the Messiah = the Christ incarnationally arrived, humanity was a clean slate = *tabula*

ontological structure of the human person (cf. Gen 1-3), which is inextricably bound with the doctrine of the *Incarnation* (cf. Gal 4:4. Phil 2:6-8). It is in this enrichment that the uniqueness and the unsurpassability of Jesus of Nazareth in the becoming history of the human race will be found to be unmistakably crucial and captivating concerning authentic freedom, authentic humanity and authentic nature of a meaningful God.

Mr Kaplan's dilemma is the dilemma of many of us. Our *pluralistic* modern culture is fiercely haunting Christian conscience, and many of us find ourselves betwixt and between, running in circles, and in many cases getting nowhere. While the majority of Christians understand Christian values *still to be "absolute or unique" in the history of human becoming*, they are "embarrassed" in our pluralistic age to voice this publicly; there is a great hesitancy to proclaim the Gospel *boldly* according to Paul (cf. Gal 1:6-10). Some of us console ourselves by hoping that the Darwinian "natural process" will take over, and that other religions or faiths will soon fade away when Christianity swallows them up in great bulk. But Paul Knitter cautions against such complacency, "... plurality is not just a 'matter of fact' but a 'matter of principle.' If we boil the 'many' down to 'one' we would harm ourselves and maim the world. 'Logically and practically, ... multiplicity now takes priority over unity'. [We must] ... draw conclusions as to what this means for religious persons: 'The multiplicity of religions is not an evil which needs to be removed, but rather a wealth which is to be welcomed and enjoyed by all. There is more religious truth in all religions together than in one particular religion. This also applies to Christianity'" (Knitter 2002:7f). Knitter's contributive point here is that a way has to be found to explain "humbly" why Christianity is said to be "superior", if it is "superior or greater" at all. In a sense Knitter, and others like-minded, are prophets calling Christianity to *honestly* examine itself⁴.

rasa in knowing God. On the contrary, the Messiah came to fulfil that which was already there (cf. Mt 5:17. Acts 17:23-31), but the Christ was to re-arrange, and radically transform all creation for the betterment of the human race for a lasting future.

⁴ This does not mean that we agree with Paul Knitter all the way, as we will see later. We differ with him in some serious points. But in forcing Christianity to forego traditional contempt for other religions, he is absolutely right. His analysis of Christian history in spreading the Gospel is correct, but his conclusions concerning the nature, logic and coherence of Christianity is seriously problematic for us.

It is an undeniable fact that the *Pluralistic Cultural Age* is going to influence us for better or for worse; we might hate it or love it, but we cannot ignore it. As Christians, we should stop wallowing in the valley of complacency by taking things for granted just because we Christians in the last five hundred years or so, have been ruling and dominating the world all over, led by the Western World, with Europe (and North America) *as the only centre of the world*. This *dominance* is coming to an end, and it is happening fast. The reality of the matter is that, with a culture of global-village mentality, with its persistent virtue that “truth is whole”, now chickens have come to roost for Christian Creeds, and Christian theologians have to run twice as fast as before to explain *meaningfully* to the modern mind what is really cooking *within* these Creeds⁵. For us, the greatest task for any Christian theologian is firstly, to explain to the full what authentic freedom according to Jesus of Nazareth means; what authentic humanity means, and above all, to explain in full what it really means to embrace an all-around meaningful God in our pluralistic age of a “free” morality. Secondly, the greatest challenge for a Christian theologian is to give, *honestly and genuinely*, credible explanation to other religions and ideologies of this world “reasons” of our faith (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). In 1962 theologian Wilfred Cantwell Smith already warned: “How does one account, theologically, for the fact of humanity's religious diversity? This is really as big an issue, almost, as the question of how one accounts theologically for evil - but Christian theologians have been much more conscious of the fact of evil than that of religious pluralism. From now on any serious intellectual statement of the Christian faith must include, if it is to serve its purpose, some sort of doctrine of other religions. We explain the fact that the Milky Way is there by the doctrine of creation, but how do we explain the fact that the Bhagavad Gita is there?” (Knitter 2002:13).

⁵ A devout Christian, Mr Zamo Ngobese, is deeply disturbed by Christian hypocrisy and is looking for theological existential answers: “As a Christian, I’m very disturbed by the churches’ ineffectiveness lately. There is great passiveness or lethargy in our denominations. This is caused by useless strives about doctrinal differences, speaking (or not speaking in tongues), sexual immorality, even among pastors, hunger for power, abuse of authority, competition and hatred among believers. All these evils destroy our own faiths and hinder progress in our churches. There are important matters that Christians should be looking at, for example, the fight against HIV/Aids, the correct moral values in our society and giving hope to the masses. We have to address underdevelopment, poverty and fight all forms of darkness. I think a reconciliation progress needs to be started among different Christian groups that we can bury all our hatred, stereotyping and disunity. Remember, if our kingdom is divided, it won’t be able to conquer. If we stand together and work towards a common goal we shall be visible and our message will be more relevant to [our badly torn-apart] world” (Echo = Witness 09/10/03:10).

The serious challenge today to all religions, great and small, is crystal clear: Adapt or die a natural death! On the other hand, theologian Smith's honest and genuine question above is too delicate to be passed over in silence, and too serious to be ignored, if the *unique* enrichment of all peoples of the human race is to happen at all; and indeed, if Mr Ngobese's existential questions and Mr Kaplan's spiritual dilemma are to be resolved at all. And this brings us to the purpose and problematic nature of this research.

1.2 Research problem

1.2.1 The central topic of the research

Without Jesus as the foundation, Christianity will always remain flawed; and without the message of the Gospel as the Good News for *every* human being, salvation will always remain problematic, and *foundational revelation* (scripture and tradition) will always remain suspect. Modern pluralistic culture is no longer kind and patient with the "arrogance" of Christianity. Our contemporary *pluralistic age*, "... leaves theology with some serious questions about the self-perception of Christianity and the centrality of Jesus Christ. The old [classical] answers appear to be inadequate. In our so-called post-modern condition, theology seems in need of new patterns of thought, a new approach to address the challenges of Christianity's self-perception [logic and coherence] and the centrality of Jesus Christ herein, thus engaging in a new *fides quaerens intellectum*. ... For, in the eyes of many contemporaries, all religions are equal ... [and if so, why should Christianity and its founder *be unique* in the becoming history of the human race?]. Hence, no religious founder can be privileged. Jesus Christ must then be regarded as a religious genius like Buddha or Muhammad - human beings at the origin of a world religion, praiseworthy but nothing more. At the other end of the religious spectrum, the reactive rise of diverse fundamentalism expressing absolute truth claims about Jesus Christ, represent a major consequence of relativization of what is considered to belong among the central truths of Christianity" (Merrigan 2000:578f). As a result of this vehement and serious challenge, Christian theologians are divided as to whether Jesus can still be regarded as a *special* and *unique* Messenger/Mediator from God or not. The

researcher will argue strongly that this is still the case; hence the centrality of the title of the thesis: *The Uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth in the Becoming History of the Human Race*. By this we mean that any future of the human race that will continue to ignore the values imbedded in the Gospel, is not only doomed but suicidal, precisely because these values are foundationally unsurpassable in authentically enriching all peoples of the human race and their diverse environments (cultures), *including all known religions, both great and small*. Ignoring Gospel-values in any way will surely lead to ontological spiritual suicide (cf. Mk 3:28), which in turn will *surely* lead to physical death of *all-that-is* (cosmos = cf. Rom 8:14-27).

1.2.2 Stating the research problem

Central to the thesis to be investigated are the following:

- * Can the second person of the Trinity be bypassed in any way for any human being to know fundamentally and fully the nature of a true God as far as salvation in its totality is concerned? In short, can Jesus of Nazareth, who was later regarded as the Christ (Messiah/Saviour), be said to be the cornerstone of all human becoming and deep ontological human longing in the searching fashion of St Augustine?
- * How can the doctrine of the Trinity be brought to life and be used as a demonstration that this doctrine is at the heart of Human Life; and that it will always force the human race to appreciate God's nature in a renewed light as revealed in Jesus *the* Christ = *the* awaited Messiah?
- * How can it be demonstrated that Jesus' *kenosis* (cf. Phil 2:6-7. Gal 4:4), his pain and suffering on the cross and his subsequent resurrection, do give universal suffering and evil in the world and within human beings a unique and unsurpassable meaning of what the secret of Life in God is all about?

1.3 The purpose of study

- * To explore the ontological structure of the human person and see whether Christianity in its basic core is the *unique* answer to this structure⁶.
- * To analyse Judaism, Christianity and Islam and see whether they are compatible with each other; whether among them we have “three religions” or *basically one religion*. This does not mean that other religions are of no importance, but it is thought that once these three are sufficiently investigated, they will give us a reliable indication what the Creator God is saying to all religions in general. And it is our unwavering conviction that the future of the human race will then be clarified.

1.4 Basic hypothesis

- * Firstly, the vision of Jesus of Nazareth (in deed and person) will always stay as the unique and unsurpassable *cornerstone* for the fulfillment of all Peoples of the Human Race (cf. Acts 4:10-12). To bypass Jesus and his vision concerning human becoming in its wholeness is to commit ontological spiritual suicide within oneself (c.f. Mk 3:28) and will eventually destroy intrinsically one’s culture/environment/context (cf. Rom 8:18-27).
- * Secondly, all other religions will always have something to learn from Christianity, and to date, Christianity has unmistakably shown itself as the magnet and model of Human Becoming. Throughout the centuries Christianity has enriched many cultures, great and small, and the “magic” still continues even

⁶ Authentic anthropology. The modern age has too many “anthropologies” and one has to be very careful indeed. As Socrates sifted wheat from chaff concerning philosophies of his day, authentic Christianity has no choice but to do the same, otherwise humanity will be taken for a ride; and that is exactly what that man from Nazareth fought vigorously against (cf. Mk 7:9).

today⁷. And this is an undeniable historical fact (cf. Pelikan 1985:vii-ix). Only Judaism and Islam, *to date*, have been serious competitors in this enrichment of the human race.

- * Finally, the dictum ‘due must always be given where due is deserved’, must be taken seriously. Christianity, like other religions as a matter of fairness and respect, must be judged by its own *logic* and *coherence*. It is unfair for preachers and evangelizers to propagate throughout the world the very things that Jesus opposed vehemently during his time (cf. Nolan 1976:3). It is equally unfair to use the captivating “magic” of the Gospel to control people (converts) for one’s inhuman and ungodly self-interests (cf. Mt 23:15. Gal 5:16-17). Therefore, if Christianity can be said to be “superior or absolute” in any way over other religions in the enrichment of the human race, let it be so; let someone acknowledge that truth. After all, truth should not only be followed all the way, but it should also be acknowledged wherever it rears its beautiful face. Heidegger advised humanity always to be on the lookout to acknowledge this truth whenever it makes its presence felt from concealment in our midst. Hence our humble attempt here to recapture the original unique message of Jesus before Christianity became an organized religion.

1.5 Method of research

The aim of this study is to identify, interpret, argue, evaluate and synthesize all that has been said about the person and work of Jesus *the* Christ (= the awaited Messiah) from scripture, writings, articles, theological works, and other published data on the subject. To enrich the subject matter, the researcher will make sure that three main sources of Christianity are theologically scrutinized namely, Orthodox, Roman catholic and Protestant churches. In so doing, the rampant indifference to religion today, especially in

⁷ But the presence of the Spirit of the Risen Lord is found abundantly *outside* the confines of the official Church, precisely because at the centre of official Christianity *today* (Orthodox, Protestant and Roman churches) *baptised pagans* are in leadership. This will become clear later.

Christendom, will be clarified. And hopefully, this clarity will even come to be seen and understood as a modern prophecy against any inauthentic religion.

1.6 Limitation of the study

This study concentrates on the three Abrahamic faiths and uses them as the standard in determining authentic freedom, what it really means to be human, and above all what it really means to embrace an all-around meaningful God for us today. This may appear as a prejudicial and a fallacious premise in our pluralistic age. But the researcher is convinced that the logic and coherence of these three faiths will continue to enrich all the peoples of the human race *irreversibly*. While all other religions have a specific role to play in enriching humanity, these three will always remain *unique* in God's Plan of salvation, and for us the greatest of these is Christianity. In this sense the assumptions of the researcher are clear, and hopefully without any intentional harm towards other religions. After all what is honesty if not civilized rules agreed upon for meaningful coexistence. The limitation of this study is stretched further by the fact that it is still me as a Christian who interrogates and evaluates the self-understanding of Judaism and Islam, even other religions. Even though there is much truth of what is said about these faiths from reliable sources, this work would be much more enriched if authentic advocates of these religions would have been allowed to comment on our work. But we hope that the future will facilitate a better enriching climate where all advocates of different religions could have a say in works like this one without much dogmatic or prejudicial boundaries, precisely because we are all children of one God, even though groping in our different paths looking for Him/Her with honest and sincere hearts; this only one God who is the essence and finality of all human history (cf. Acts 17: 23-31).

At the end of the day, this research must be viewed as one of the many ways of trying to understand "The Holy", the Ineffable Mystery in its many multifaceted nature. So the research is much aware of its limitation in having the last word on the matter. Like all human endeavours, the findings and contribution of this research might be viewed as another "ism" on Jesus, who knows? We can only pray that, if the moment ever arrive,

we should be humble enough to say, “*mea culpa, mea culpa*; I am just your servant, Lord; let it be done to me according to your Word”. Human truth becomes trivialized when it refuses to accept its cultural and contextual limitation, and when this happens, humanity suffers greatly. The wisdom of Mercy Oduyoye, a notable African Womanist theologian, should be a wake up call to all of us as far as absolutising one’s view is concerned, no matter how contributive the view: “... Like capitalism, socialism, communism, and sociopolitical and economic ‘isms’ of all types, feminism [also] implies anthropology, a particular way of addressing itself to what it means to be human. The *logia* of each of these ‘isms’ imply commitment to that point of view with its breed, ideology, and practices. All these aim at achieving the *agenda* that issue out of the *credenza*. Ultimately all ‘isms’ are sectarian – such as Anglicanism, Methodism, Roman Catholicism, and Calvinism – yet they each have something to contribute to our search for a wholesome and meaningful way of being human, and each is an elaboration of what being human is all about. ... [each human endeavour in frailty is] ... part of God’s project of bringing us to full humanity” (Oduyoye 1986:120f).

1.7 Chapter division

Chapter one is the introduction. In the second chapter we trace the theological debate on salvation within Christian circles in the last 2000 years; a traceability without which the present theological positions on salvation won't be well situated. In chapter three we face and analyse what went so tragically wrong with Christianity that people today cannot stand the Gospel Message anymore *from official Church*; and we present serious challenges that face Christianity today. To achieve this goal, we analyse three Christian Traditions carefully: Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman catholic. Without these three pillars of Christianity seriously thought together, the power of the Gospel will continue to be *partially* proclaimed; and this will continue to rob the human race of the experience of the healing power of the Gospel in its fullness. Largely around the world, Christianity (since Constantine) has been proclaimed as divided according to nationalistic sentiments. “Believing” was based on the national belief of a “missionary” or colonialist. As a result, it is difficult today to show why Jesus Christ can be said to be “unique” among other

founders of world religions because of this inauthenticity and hijacking of the Gospel for selfishness (cf. Lk 16:16).

In chapter four we look at Jesus' core teaching and self-understanding. We analyse how Paul affirmed the speciality of Jesus in the history of human becoming, and we challenge inauthentic churches for using *Jesus' name* in vain. We also present objections to this "uniqueness" of Jesus in human history. We then go on to look at Prophet Muhammad's core teaching and self-understanding and how Jesus and Mary play a special role in the Qur'anic revelation. And we end up showing how both Judaism and Islam are at the heart of the Grand Plan of God in re-creating this world to be a better place for all peoples of the human race (cf. Acts 17:16-34. Eph 1:1-14). Without these two historic revelations, Christianity's self-understanding is an illusion. In chapter five we look at the ontological structure of the human person (*anthropology*) and see whether the message of the Gospel is a violation of it or not. This chapter is important in two ways (among other things) concerning our argument here:

- * By the *incarnation* (cf. Gal 4:4), God took our ontological selves *and our environment very seriously*. This initiative on the part of God, is Christianity's uniqueness par excellence. God in Christ took our "natural cultures"⁸ seriously. God's *personal* "insertion" in our broken human history is crucial in understanding what an all-round and meaningful God is all about.
- * Since this chapter deals with *natural revelation* (cf. Rom 1:19-20), it is a vital starting point to dialogue with other religions. The chapter is also situated within today's quest for global ethics as a starting point to realise the *humanum* ("humanness") or *uBuntu* in this world. Our humanness is crucial in determining whether we need salvation or not. The doctor is only effective if the diagnosis is correct. Theology "from above" (traditional trend) tends to be anthropologically naïve thus making authentic kerygma ineffective; yet on the other hand, theology

⁸In this sense Christianity will always be *a unique, revealed culture* wherever it is realized in any person, family, clan, tribe, people, nation or group.

"from below" (modern trend) tends to favour "hide-and-seeK" anthropology, which does us no good *eventually*. Traditional theology must take other disciplines on the study of the human person seriously, while modern theology must take seriously the demands of the revealed Scripture concerning "Fallen" human nature (cf. Gen 3). It must also take metaphysical realities very seriously (cf. Eph 6:12). A meaningful synthesis between the two is a desired goal in this research.

Chapter six looks at *human experience*, and this leads to the discovery of a reliable *yardstick* towards the dynamics of a World Ethic according to Hans Küng. This *moral yardstick* will then test any religion in our argument here whether at its core it has the basic meaningful nature of the human person (authentic anthropology). Process Theology of Charles Hartshorne comes into play here in order to vindicate Christianity *to date* as a *unique classical monotheism* surely unsurpassable in enriching that *mature* humanity in every way possible. Chapter seven will be a general conclusion. To facilitate an easier flow of our argument, at the end of each chapter, a brief concluding summary will follow.

1.8 Appendices I & II

It was crucial to insert these appendices in this work in order to make our point strong that Islam is nothing else than Judaism in emergent situations where idolatry in its many phases/faces seriously gnaws at the fibre of human spirituality and religion. When Constantinian Christianity (classical inauthentic Christianity) started to gobble up Judaism ruthlessly, God in His/Her Wisdom raised Muhammad as prophet par excellence to seriously challenge neo-paganism of the Byzantine church. In so doing, God fulfilled what was promised to Abraham concerning the enrichment of the human race in/by/through Ishmael (cf. Gen. 18:7-18; 21:13, 20-21). Theological richness in Islam, and Islamic similarity with Judaism, are unbelievable.

Chapter 2

Background to the debate

This chapter situates the historical debate concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his importance regarding the essence and finality of human history. Why “suddenly” today is there such a fierce debate about Jesus’ uniqueness? Is it because Jesus’ uniqueness is already dying a natural death as Rabbi Gamaliel cautioned against some religious leaders two thousand years ago (cf. Acts 5.34-41)? Indeed, why should Jesus’ story or vision (*Christian Movement = Christianity*) still be regarded at all as a *unique fulfilling* and *unsurpassable* saving activity? These questions have a long historical and theological background, and this theological confusion and apparent impasse about Jesus’ uniqueness is summarised well by Paul F. Knitter⁹:

Over the past decade or two, the question of whether/how Jesus is unique among other religious figures has become somewhat of a theological stall, which to a great extent has blocked the flow of scholarly and pastoral traffic. The issue has been 'driven' by so many people, with such 'heavy feet,' and in so many contrary directions that it seems to have broken down hopelessly. Indeed, there have been and continue to be voices, some of them in these pages, that urge Christians to leave the stall and move on to more productive concerns that will enlighten Christian theology and dialogue with other religions. (Swidler 1997:145)

Paul F. Knitter, as one of our contemporary leading theologians, continues to contribute immensely on the subject. He is author of *One Earth Many Religions, Jesus and the Other Names*, and *Theologies of Religions (An Introduction)* etc. In 1985 he published his landmark book titled, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes towards World Religions*, in which the uniqueness of Jesus as the *only* son of God and as the *sole* saviour of all peoples of the human race was thrown into full swing of Christian self-evaluation, maybe in an unprecedented manner than ever before. Knitter’s immense theological reflection on the “specialty” of Jesus Christ in human affairs seems set to

⁹In this book titled, *The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*, editors (Swidler and Mojzes) urged Knitter to present his position in the form of five theses on the uniqueness of Jesus, to which some influential theologians (women and men) responded: John Hick, Karl-Josef Küschel, Seiichi Yagi, Harvey Cox, Monika Hellwig, Hans Küng, Wesley Ariarajah, Jose Miguez Bonino, Clark H. Pinnock, John McQuarrie, Raimon Panikkar, John Sanders, John Mbiti, Ingrid Shafer, Michael Amaladoss, Kajsa Ahstrand, Michael von Bruck, John B. Cobb Jr., Kenneth Cragg and Antony Fernando. Swidler and Mojzes also make their personal contributions in the book.

continue to create many discussions on the issue¹⁰. His reflection raises more genuine questions: Is what being said every Sunday from the pulpit; in every catechism class or Sunday school, in conferences, seminaries, scholasticates and synods *truly* faithful to “who Jesus really is”? Is the communication emanating from the Roman church, the Orthodox church; and from influential Protestant church-centres around the world an asset to humanity or a liability *in Jesus’ name* (cf. Mt 7:15-27)? To be able to confront Knitter and pluralist position in general, we now look at theological portrayals of “who Jesus really is” throughout the centuries up to our time.

2.1 Contemporary christian attitudes towards other faiths

Theological positions always represent certain faith-communities; no theology or even a dogma exists in a vacuum, precisely because evangelization is always culturally and contextually bound. Present official positions of different Christian churches towards communities of other faiths are not exceptions to the rule. The fact of the matter is that, *in the final analysis*, “... Religions, like, languages, are cultural inventions; they are human-made and handed on from generation to generation. As products of human creativity, religious forms, structures, rites and beliefs are variously modified as they are appropriated and reassessed by subsequent generations borrowing continuously and sometimes extensively from both the creativity of their own respective generations and from the genius of other peoples. Human beings become religious in a manner similar to their achieving fluency in a language. For most people both religious sensitivity and linguistic proficiency develop gradually without much self-conscious reflection or close scrutiny. For most people the religions they follow, like the languages they call their own, are determined for them by their place of birth and by obscure political events in the remote historical past of their progenitors. In such matters, as Pascal said, ‘a meridian

¹⁰Paul F. Knitter is a professor of theology at Xavier University. In 1966 he got his licentiate in theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and in 1972 he got his doctorate in theology from the University of Marburg, Germany. Apart from his foundational work (No Other Name?) on the subject, he has become an authority or a heavyweight in the debate publishing, alone or with others, much on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. He has travelled to Asia and Moslem countries acquainting himself with the dynamics of world religions. Presently he is the general editor of Orbis Books’ Faith Meets Faith series, and for over ten years he has been active in peace groups working with the churches of El Salvador (cf. Swidler 1997:ix).

decides' what is appropriate. On the other side of that imaginary line there is usually another religion and different language" (Hillman 1989:5).

2.1.1 Position of the Orthodox communities

The theology of the Byzantine imperial Church, maintained that the basic understanding of Christianity is to *fulfil other religions*, because the seed of the Gospel/Word (*spermatou logou*) is already there if one looks carefully: '... the *Logos* is already implanted (*emphuton*) in the human race' (cf. Dupuis 1997:58). The Church was then understood as a place of *divinisation* in order to form individuals to participate in the Glorified Exalted Jesus Christ; *who is found only in the Church*. The hope was that, by recognizing the presence of the Spirit of the Exalted, glorified and risen Lord in the Church, "pagans" (*pagani*) will be attracted and will indeed join (cf. Bosch 1991:195). As a result of this understanding of salvation, conscious missionary effort was not the priority. If anything, missionary activity in great bulk was done by the monk (cf. Bosch 1991:201f). One of the main tragedies of the Byzantine Church theology was to mistaken "Church = community of believers" for the Kingdom of God; and once this identification was made, hell broke loose (SACBC 1985:66-68). The end result was an unfortunate theological understanding in defining Christian salvation as, 'Outside the Church no salvation' (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*). This will become clearer as we go along. The Orthodox church in large measure still subscribes to this position with some modifications today.

2.1.2 Position of the Roman (catholic) communities

Most catholic¹¹ Christians still believe that everyone, one way or another, broke from them and that the true Church of Christ *subsists* in the Roman catholic church. Counter Reformation is still at the heart of these attitudes. For a long time, especially before the Council of Vatican II, catholics were made to preach the message of “returning home” like the prodigal son. This is why an individual catholic person feels so much little responsibility for spreading the Good News, this was left to congregations and religious orders which, in most part, are well controlled in the fashion of the Spartan military army (cf. Vidler 1961:250); and assessing the present situation, it will take a miracle to change these theologically prejudicial attitudes. The main reason is that “... [in their history Roman] catholics showed no lack of interest in convert-making, but again the thrust was not evangelical; the gospel was hardly at the centre. This apostolate was mainly directed to showing, against Protestants, that Christ had founded a hierarchical Church, which was to be accepted as the organ of divine revelation. The focus was more on authority than on content. [Roman] catholics were to believe whatever the [Roman] Church taught precisely because it was Church teaching” (Dulles 1991:1–2). The Roman church, unlike Orthodox and Protestant churches, is still highly institutional, sacramental and hierarchical in its structures. Like a cog in a machine, the individual has little room for maneuvering; the individual either conforms or simply suffers in silence. The latter in many cases is theologized as one’s cross (martyrdom) at the hands of divinely chosen

¹¹This adjective "catholic" is used as a courtesy toward Roman Christians; thus making “The Roman Catholic Church” a misnomer. The proper name of that church is the Roman church, precisely because all other churches (Protestant and Orthodox) are also catholic, they profess the same creed. This tragic arrogant theological ideology found within Roman tradition must be challenged today with every opportunity we get. But as far as things can be assessed on the ground, it is going to be a long way to let sanity prevail; and some individuals might be hurt on the way. Why? Because when the Vatican gets angry; and when it really gets angry "in order to preserve the deposit of the faith", even Jesus can get into trouble; serious trouble. If you don't believe us, ask secular prophet Dostoevsky in his theological and powerful novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and maybe you might start to understand the dynamics of human becoming within some Christian denominations/communities/congregations *today* (2004). In the story Jesus returns to earth and is arrested by the Inquisition. In the trial, the Grand Inquisitor *tries to justify his decision of torturing and destroying the other-me in Jesus' name*. The heart of [the Inquisitor's] argument is that Jesus lived to set mankind free but that we [as human beings] do not really want and cannot bear freedom" (Clark 1981:131). The Inquisitor knows better than Jesus of what it means to be free, what it means to be human, and above all the Grand Inquisitor knows the secret of the ontological creation of the human person better than Christ: The Grand Inquisitor is God incarnate!; he *replaces* Jesus in deciding what God the Father wants. *This story is a lesson to all Christians today, and not only to Roman "catholic" Christians. One way or another, the other two traditions (Orthodox and Protestant) have also sinned in his name*. This will become clearer as our research progresses. The three traditions are faced today with the

authority (the magisterium). The self-understanding of the Roman church is still highly puzzling today and we quote directly from its Canon Law and from its last important Council:

One is the Church, which 'after his Resurrection our Saviour handed over to Peter as Shepherd' (cf. John 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to propagate and govern her (cf. Matt. 18:18ff.) and which he erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth' (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). And this Church of Christ, 'constituted and organized in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and the bishops in union with that Successor'. This declaration of the Second Vatican Council is illustrated by the same Council's statement that 'it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the general means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained, and that same Catholic Church 'has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all the means of grace' with which Christ wished to enhance his messianic community. This is no obstacle to the fact that during her earthly pilgrimage the Church, 'embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified', nor to the fact that 'outside her visible structure', namely in Churches and ecclesial communities which are joined to the Catholic Church by an imperfect communion, there are to be found 'many elements of sanctification and truth (which), as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity'. For these reasons, 'Catholics must joyfully acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments derived from our common heritage, which are to be found among our separated brethren', and they must strive for the re-establishment of unity among all Christians, by making a 'common effort of purification and renewal' so that the will of Christ may be fulfilled and the division of Christians may cease to be an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world. But at the same time Catholics are bound to profess that through the gift of God's mercy they belong to that Church which Christ founded and which is governed by the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, who are the depositories of the original Apostolic tradition, living and intact, which is the permanent heritage of doctrine and holiness of the same Church. The followers of Christ are therefore not permitted to imagine that Christ's Church is nothing more than a collection (divided, but still possessing a certain unity) of Churches and ecclesial communities. Nor are they free to hold that Christ's Church nowhere really exists today and that it is to be considered only as an end which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach (Flannery 1982: 428ff).

reality of witnessing to "who Christ ought to be" for our present culture (cf. Acts 1:8). We should know better now "who Christ is" (cf. Mk 8:27-30).

Following in the footsteps of the Council's theological position, the Code of Canon Law¹² of the same church is clear about who is in charge in this world. Who is that human being who has a unique theological right of 'taking the place of God' on earth?:

Can. 331 - The bishop of the Church of Rome, in whom resides the office given in a special way by the Lord to Peter, first of the Apostles and to be transmitted to his successors, is head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal church on earth; therefore, in virtue of his office he enjoys supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he can always freely exercise¹³.

Can. 333 - §1. The Roman Pontiff, by virtue of his office, not only has power in the universal Church but also possesses a primacy of ordinary power over all particular churches and groupings of churches by which the proper, ordinary and immediate power which bishops possess in the particular churches entrusted to their care is both strengthened and safeguarded (CCL 1983:119).

Both the Orthodox and Protestant churches vehemently disagree with this theological self- understanding of the Roman Pontiff and his church. "The first among equals" is the best possible honour that could be given to the bishop of Rome by virtue of the sacredness of the Roman City (diocese), not theological position of "power in the Church". The logic and coherence from the Council and from Canon Law is very clear: *Playing God at all cost!* It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that the Church and the Kingdom, human history, and God's free action in history as the *only* Lord of history, are highly confused here. It is highly noticeable also that the Roman teaching is very much selective in presenting its theological position. For example, St Paul is passed in silence, yet he is the main heavyweight concerning what Christianity is all about. Again, it is simply not true that the Risen Lord gave Peter the task of "universalizing" the world in his name; it was Paul of Tarsus who was given this noble task (cf. Gal 2:1-10). If we follow the mission of Peter to the marrow, then the Jewish people should be our preoccupation; but the sin of Supersessionism made sure that they are destroyed in Jesus'

¹² It is amazing that the Jewish community had about 600 laws of "how to be holy", but the Roman Christians now have about 1752 laws of "how to be holy" (cf. CCL 1983). What innovation! Christ himself reduced the Jewish Law to about two basic "Laws". I don't know whether to rejoice with the Roman church for innovation taken or to lament its inauthenticity for using the name of Jesus in vain. Judgement is yours.

¹³ *Can.: 331 - Ecclesiae Romanae Episcopus, in quo permanet munus a Domino singulariter Petro, primo Apostolorum, concessum et successoribus eius transmittendum. Collegii Episcoporum est caput. Vicarius*

name. When it comes to power control, the Roman church does not wince; it will try everything to hang on; and we mean everything¹⁴. It must also be admitted that with this stand today, confusion of what attitudes to adopt, run high in the Roman catholic communities. Stern official position of “non co-operation” on principle, confuses catholics and they do not know in reality how to appreciate other Christians, let alone believers of other faiths; and to “enlightened” catholics this stern official stand in many instances is sheer annoyance and total embarrassment.

2.1.3 Position of Protestant¹⁵ communities

Despite the diversity within Protestantism, there exists a nerve that binds "different confessions" together in relation to understanding Christian salvation. This existential-faith-nerve can be summarised by ‘ ... the four "alones" that undergird and continue to inspire Protestant Christianity namely, *By grace alone, by faith alone, by Christ alone and by Scripture alone*’ (Knitter 2002:24f). Two basic streams present themselves within this Christian tradition: Fundamentalist or "Evangelical" Christian communities and the main-line churches like those of the Reformed tradition. Convictions of these communities, with different emphases, agree that the Christian religion is there to *replace* all other religions until all people and cultures of the human race succumb to one religion,

Christi atque universae Ecclesiae his in terris Pastor; qui ideo vi muneris sui suprema, plena, immediata et universali in Ecclesia gaudet ordinaria potestate, quam semper libere exercere valet.

¹⁴ In the famous Film, “Archbishop Romero”, one of the political dictators says to the “unrelenting” archbishop, ‘Don’t tell me about the [Roman] Church, she will always spread her legs for any power and wealth’. That is how bad things are today in this Church when we forget the dangerous memory of Jesus concerning power as authentic “service”. But what is more frightening for us today is to see the number of vocations rising phenomenally, especially in Africa, toward Roman priesthood. Why? If the priestly business is so inauthentic according to the Gospel standard, why aspire to pursue the authoritarian path of serving the faithful? We don’t have a satisfactory answer, except to say that to be a Roman priest (any priest for that matter) in the Christian community does not *necessarily* mean to be faithful to Jesus (cf. Mt 7:21-23). Maybe the “African psyche” to power (chieftancy) could explain the present phenomenal vocational response. Also, how much unemployment, suffering, hunger, frustrations, extreme hopelessness etc., contribute toward the present divine calling? We let you be the judge, but finally, history will tell. If this *mysteriously* comes from God, it will last; if not, then, forget it! (cf. Acts 5:38-39).

¹⁵ Positions of Protestant communities are highly varied. I found the best source being Paul Knitter in this book of his titled, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. This recent book of 2002 summarises well and does justice to those varied positions of the Protestant communities. This is why I am using him here exclusively precisely because he is reliable. This exclusion does not put him above par with other theologians who are competent in the issue, for example, Köning, Maimela etc. In his updated summary Knitter considers well all three traditions of Christianity namely, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic. The book deals with and contrasts well four Models of salvation and suggests the way forward: The Replacement Model, The

God's religion: Christianity. "If the other religions have any value at all, it is only a provisional value. Ultimately, Christianity is to take over. So for this Replacement Model, the balance between the universality and particularity of God's relationship with humanity clearly comes down more heavily on the side of particularity. God's love is universal, extending to all, it is realized through the particular and singular community of Jesus Christ. ... it is God's will to make all peoples Christians" (Knitter 2002:19). From this tradition we find "born again" Christians in their different shades who like to pester other Christians of "not being saved", mainline churches being main targets. This type of Christians are the very ones who stand at the corner streets and preach from the early hours of the morning (especially Sunday mornings and Good Fridays to Easter) *denouncing endemic faith-inauthenticity among other Christians*. While this in itself might not be bad, the manner of arrogance and holier-than-thou attitudes, which in most cases accompany this "preaching", leaves one wondering "who really needs to be saved here". While mainline church communities are to some extent cautious in accommodating other communities of other faiths today, the Fundamentalist/Evangelical communities (in differing degrees) are moving in an opposite direction denouncing "those pagans still living in the clutch of the devil".

With their roots in the USA, we cannot afford to ignore them "simply as mad or fanatics of religion" precisely because they command a sizeable portion of the Christian people; about 40% of Christians in the United States alone are in membership (cf. Knitter 2002:22). If they are so many in the USA, how many more around the world? Therefore we must take their "proclamation" seriously if the uniqueness of Christ is going to mean anything at all to all peoples of the human race: "To look at American religion and overlook Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism would be comparable to scanning the American physical landscape and missing the Rocky Mountains" (Knitter 2002:19). A shift has been developing within the Fundamentalist/Evangelical coalition from the 1950's where accommodation of modernity and science has been taken seriously. Evangelists in the likes of Billy Graham moved in this direction. Today we do have the

Fulfilment Model, The Mutual Model, and the Acceptance Model. We encourage everyone to read the book.

differences between the Fundamentalist and the Evangelicals but this difference is very thin indeed, "The differences between Fundamentalist and Evangelicals are clear, but they are also more a matter of style than of substance. As one specialist put it: 'A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something. Fundamentalists are not just religious conservatives, they are conservatives who are willing to take a stand and to fight.'" (Knitter 2002:21). In the 1970's "New Evangelicals" or "Ecumenical Evangelicals" came into being and are those who are prepared to work with mainline churches and they also reject total lack of error of the Bible as Fundamentalists do, and they have opted for the "limited inerrancy" (cf. Knitter 2002:21).

Within this "New Evangelicals" we find ... *'New Evangelical Left' which insists that one cannot follow Jesus without being actively and politically involved in trying to bring justice to the oppressed*". *From the Fundamental, Evangelical, and New Evangelical Christian communities came the Pentecostals or Charismatics who emphasise experiential baptism in the Holy Spirit. Mainline churches (especially Roman catholic church and Protestant churches) are also affected; this movement is known as "Charismatic Renewal" in the mainline churches. 'Differences between Pentecostals and other Evangelicals, however, are more in the intensity of their Spirit-empowered spirituality than in the content of their theology. ... The common foundation among Fundamentalists, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals that supports their differences in style or theological detail, are four solid pillars underlying their beliefs and theology: The Bible is the rock-bottom guide to all that a follower of Jesus does and claim. Christian living must be more than a verbal "I believe" in the Bible or what the minister says. It is Jesus who makes all the difference in their lives - and in the life of the world. In their lives, in the course of history, Jesus can make a radical difference because he has made a radical difference. He is Saviour. And he is the only one to be followed. Because of the wonder and power of what they have found in Jesus the Christ, these Christians are committed to sharing with others the gift they have been given. They want others to see and feel what they have seen and felt. That means they do want to convert the world, not because they feel superior to others but because gifts are to be shared'* (Knitter 2002:21-22).

Karl Barth's theology has had a profound influence within Protestant circles across the board in the last century, fiercely attacking liberal theology.

But whatever self-understanding all Christian communities may have in their official positions, the bulk of them are unanimous in one thing: *That Jesus of Nazareth is unique and unsurpassable in the total Liberation (salvation) of the human race.* For the three

traditions with their different shades of Gospel proclamation, *total salvation without Jesus Christ is impossible*; Jesus is the only way, truth and life. But how did these churches come to take these positions today? And are these positions authentic and faithful to the early Petrine and Pauline Christianity? What is important at this stage is to look at the logic and coherence of Christian theology in the last 2000 years concerning salvation of all peoples of the human race. This back-step will help us to evaluate which church *today* is closest, if ever, to “who Jesus really is” concerning authentic human salvation.

2.2 Jesus' uniqueness from the early Church to the Schism (c.33-1054 A.D.)

*If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty and our belief comes to nothing.
And we become false witnesses of God
(1 Cor 15:14-15)*

2.2.1 The early Church (c.33-313 A.D.)

The above text summarises well the conviction of the early Church about Jesus' uniqueness concerning authentic human salvation. We take St Peter and St Paul as good representatives of this Church, precisely because the logic and coherence of the early Church without them remain shallow.

St Paul (c.5-68 A.D.): Paul was convinced that he met the Risen Lord who was the same person from a little village of Nazareth in Galilee (cf. 1Cor 9:1). He regards himself as having the same privilege as the apostles who were with Jesus in his earthly ministry (cf. Gal 2:6). Jesus sent him to *convert* the Gentiles ("universal culture") in the same way that Peter was sent to *convert* the Jews ("particular intermediate culture"). Paul had personal experience of Jesus on several occasions as well as knowing him from tradition handed

down (cf. 1Cor 11:23). He is vehemently convinced that Jesus is the cornerstone of authentic redemption for all. For him, God the Creator in the person of Jesus of Nazareth has said the final¹⁶ word concerning human salvation in its totality; *Jesus is the unsurpassable door to delve in the exploring of the mystery of the Holy Abyss we all call God*. 'If I cease to proclaim the Good News of the man from Nazareth, let me or anyone for that matter be "damned" ' says Paul (cf. Gal. 1:6-10). Jesus *himself* chose Paul to be the cornerstone of "who Jesus really is" especially to Gentile; that is, to the whole world at large (cf. Acts 9:15-16. Gal 2:7-10). Cementing this truth, McKenzie says, "No one questions his [Paul's] position as the most creative thinker in the history of Christianity; indeed some have [even] gone too far, asserting that historic Christianity is more Pauline than Christian. ... One should notice also that none of the great movements of Christian thought have developed without a base in Paul. In him for the first time the Church and Jesus living in the Church encountered world civilisation; and the Church has never learned a better language in which to address the world than the language of Paul" (McKenzie 1965:651). It is true, without Paul the content of the Christian Message in its totality is almost empty; and the four synoptic Gospels become even more problematic as authentic message from the Risen Lord unless they are balanced with Paul's deep insight of "who Jesus really is"; but above all, "what does it mean to be a new creature in Christ Jesus" (cf. Rom 6).

St Peter (d. around 64-67 A.D.): Jesus, despite Peter's constant misunderstandings of Yahweh's mysterious ways (cf. Mt 16:13-23. Acts 10:1-48, *especially* verses 34-35), trusted Peter even to a degree of strengthening other *apostles*. And later in tradition, "symbolically" representing the "seat" of St Peter, the Bishop of Rome got an *honorary title* "the first among equals" as compared to other four centres¹⁷ of the Christian Church. Peter, like Paul, seems to have died in Rome. Tradition has it that they were both martyred for their faith. St Peter was as convinced as Paul was, about the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth. Several times (before Pentecost) he failed to grasp the implications of

¹⁶"Final" here is limited as having a certain target; Human Salvation (Original Sin concept) or Ontological Human Brokenness. Jesus is said to have admitted that there are other things beyond him as the incarnated son of this God. Jesus' uniqueness has to be understood within this sphere of the Creator's Universal Plan.

¹⁷ Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople.

following Jesus; he even denied Jesus in the midst of that cruel and unjust trial. When troops appeared to arrest Jesus he first resorted to bloody violence (cf. Jn 18:10), and then in fear he followed from a distance (cf. Jn 18:15). But once the Spirit of the risen Lord got hold of him, a new and radical Mr. Peter was born; he became the main spokesperson for the early Church in Jerusalem against Jewish authorities. Like Paul, he was convinced that without Jesus of Nazareth authentic salvation is not possible, precisely because God the Creator and the Father of all, has acted decisively and *once for all* on behalf of all peoples of the human race (cf. Acts 5: 28-42).

Peter and Paul, the pillars of the early Church, died convinced that *without* Jesus' vision of Life, humanity and its environment is doomed. For them, this inauguration of new and alternate eschatological age in Jesus, *every human being* is called to participate freely as an eternal member of the kingdom of God (cf. Mt 5: 1-12. 1 Cor 13. Jn 10:1-21). Peter witnessed the first Pentecost whereby only Jewish believers from all over the "world" were present (cf. Acts 2:1-5f), and the second one where Gentiles were *equally* accepted by the same God (cf. Acts 10:34-48). Peter and Paul both died around 70 A.D. (cf. McKenzie 1965:648 & 664). The Church of Peter and Paul defied emperor worship and the liturgies of the Roman emperor, thus proving how *different the* Christian religion is from imperial religions. This stubbornness made horrible tortures and persecution inevitable (cf. SACBC 1985:63-66). Combined with the Jewish faith that there is only one God and Lord, a compromise on the economy of salvation *outside* Jesus *the* Christ = Messiah or *Mediator par excellence* (cf. Heb 1:1-4), was totally not allowed. In this sense it can surely be said that the uniqueness of Jesus from the conception of the Christian faith had always been the bone of contention among other religions including Judaism. Even "... pagan authors, such as Celsus (ca. 170-180), objected to the idea that a God who wished to save humankind would take such a long time and such a convoluted path to do it. Perhaps the best-known among the early Christian attempts to deal with the problem is the so-called Logos theology of St. Justin Martyr (+ ca. 165), according to which all people have some share in the divine life in view of their participation in the eternal Logos which became incarnate in Jesus" (Merrigan 2001:2).

2.2.2 The Era of Church Fathers (c.313-1054 A.D.)

Again for clarification, the "biblical" early Church (of Peter and Paul) must be distinguished from the Patristic Church. The latter finalized the canon of Scripture and decided the essence of the Creeds/Confessions/Symbols of Faith. The immediate *difference* in these "two" Church traditions is evidenced by the *increased* waning off of the power of Jesus' Spirit in the latter (cf. Bosch 1991:196). The *absence* of the plenitude of *shalom* (cf. Is. 11:1-9) started to rear its ugly head; and the stifling of the Spirit of the Risen Lord culminated with Christianity becoming an *official*¹⁸ religion by Constantine and his followers (Bosch 1991:201-202). We now look at how that misfortune befell the true living Church of Christ¹⁹.

With the fall of the Temple around 70 and 134 A.D., Judaism tried its best to retain its particularity from the early Church, but at the same time the early Church was also struggling to retain its particularity from both Judaism (*classical monotheism*) and Hellenistic religions (*classical polytheism*). Eventually Greek culture won the battle of the day because of its philosophy, especially Platonic, that appeared to be so conducive to Christian ideas. Then Patristics emphasised similarities that were there between Christianity and "paganism"; and without much caution, they got carried away. Initially prophets like Tatian and Tertullian resisted this walking "peacefully" together with "paganism" all the way, but the apologists won the day (or did they?). Then in 381 A.D. when emperor Theodosius I's Edict of Thessalonica made orthodox (Nicene) Christianity into *the only* State Religion, hell broke loose (SACBC 1985:67). Bosch summarises the mood of the time:

The Apologists, in particular, often went out of their way in their efforts to emphasise the resemblance between the new and the old. Justin and Clement adopted a friendly attitude toward the best in paganism and regarded Greek philosophy as a 'schoolmaster' leading pagans to Christ. ... [For most of the Church Fathers] the many parallels between pagan

¹⁸Or becoming a "world power" as Merrigan rightly interprets (cf. Merrigan 2001:2).

¹⁹ The four marks of *the true living Church* of Christ basically, are: *Apostolic* (loyalty to the Church of Peter and Paul), *One* (no division in *Jesus' name* = cf. 1Cor 1:10-13), *Catholic* = *Universal* (welcoming every human being who is prepared to leave his/her old self (cf. Rom 6), and *Holy* (living the kingdom of God already in this world by fulfilling the Golden Rule (cf. Mt 5. 1Cor 13).

religions and Christianity were, in a real sense, a great help to the Church in its mission and defense of the faith. The message about God in human form, about salvific sacrifices, the victory of resurrection, and new life, fell on ears that did not find it entirely unfamiliar. It was easy to regard Christianity as the fulfilment of other religions. For the early Christian faith, it was not its dissimilarity with the religions of the environment that was the problem, but its similarity. The new religion [therefore] could easily slip into the mould of the old without causing much more than a ripple on the surface (Bosch 1991:192f).

Other prophets of the time who felt that *something* was seriously eroding Church Foundation (cf. Mt 16:18-20) were Marcion and Irenaeus, to mention a few. Because of the waning of the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the Church, *basic unique truths* of Christianity were hesitatingly passed over without much consideration. In most cases the emperor (highest political authority) was called in to influence Creed verdicts in which, in most cases, the minority voice (even though prophetic, e.g. of "heretics"), was just ignored or simply silenced (at times without mercy) in order to appease the emperor who was thought by the *Magisterium* of the time to be a gift from God to the Church. This was confirmed in 325 at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea where about 318 Bishops from all over the Empire assembled to decide matters of the Christian Faith under the directorship of Constantine (Baus 1980:23):

Since the church [building] of the congregation of Nicaea scarcely offered adequate space for all the activities of the Council, the Emperor had placed his own palace in the city at its disposal for the entire period of the sessions. Eusebius enthusiastically and lyrically described the solemn opening, which took place on 20 May 325. The bishops had taken their seats along the two long sides of the meeting hall and eagerly awaited the entry of the Emperor, for whom a gilded chair had been set up. It made a strong impression on them when the tall figure of the Emperor, adorned in purple, strode through their ranks and did not take his place until he gave a sign directing the bishops to sit. After a brief greeting by one of the bishops, the Emperor began a speech in Latin in which the admonition to peace and harmony within the Church was of unmistakable emphasis: an exhaustive discussion of the causes of the conflict should open the way to reconciliation and peace, and in this way the bishops would also render to him, their 'fellow servant,' a vast fervour. Then he turned over the floor to the presidents of the synod (Baus 1980:24f).

The Emperor was present throughout the Synod. Towards the end of the Meeting, among the agenda Easter was fixed as a solemnity on the Sunday after 14 Nisan. The Emperor

saw to it that the schism in Egypt was resolved amicably so as to avoid disunity of the Empire. The following extract is crucial in understanding the spirit under which the first five Ecumenical Councils happened, from Nicaea to Chalcedon. This summarises well the *dilemma* and *serious suspicion* of the foundation and understanding of the Christian Faith after Peter and Paul, and their early loyal church communities, who were always on their guard ‘to render to Caesar what belongs to him, and to render to God what belongs to God’ (cf. Lk 20:20-26):

Constantine tried quickly and effectively to assure the newly won unity in the faith, first by means of a solemn and impressive closing of the Council. Probably after the adoption of the Creed and in connection with the twentieth anniversary of his accession [to the throne], he gave a splendid banquet for the Council Fathers [both Bishops and Archbishops] in his palace at Nicomedia²⁰; Eusebius, always so easily enthused, compared it to the glory of the heavenly kingdom. The bishops gladly accepted the presents which Constantine gave to each of them on this occasion. Before their departure he asked all of them to come to him once more, admonished them henceforth ‘to maintain peace among themselves, to avoid the envy that leads to strife,’ and recommended himself to their prayers. Soon afterwards, he sent a comprehensive report on the Council ‘to the churches’ - this probably meant chiefly those not represented at Nicaea - and in it he unambiguously attributed to himself the initiative for the great Synod. The Emperor assured the faithful that all questions [threatening the unity of the Empire, especially Arianism] had been carefully examined and unity in the Church had thereby been achieved. He devoted much space to the decree on the uniform date of Easter and stressed in surprisingly sharp words the necessity of holding Christianity [as from then on] at a distance from Judaism. A special letter went to the congregation of Alexandria in which Constantine expressed his joy over the restoration of unity of faith and once again rejected the errors of Arius (Baus 1980:27-28).

The euphoria of “non persecution” was too much to contemplate for Church leadership; it was unbelievable to say the least; and we can understand this with much regret today. But with eschatology waning in the Patristic Church, the experiences of Peter and Paul were soon forgotten and *the dangerous memory of Jesus was taken for granted about changing this world for the better* (cf. Mt 5:13-16):

[Slowly but surely] ...there already was a notable shift from the historical ministry of Jesus to the context of the first generations of Christians and the earliest New Testament writings. Subsequent generations would perceive themselves as being even more distant from the birth of the movement. Christianity was still in its infancy, still a minority faith

²⁰ The New Rome or Constantinople was still being built.

in a pluralistic world, still a religio illicita, despised if not always persecuted by the Roman authorities. Yet it had, on the whole, lost much of its early fervour and distinctiveness; it was increasingly resembling the world it wished to win for the faith. More specifically, it gradually lost its apocalyptic-eschatological character, gave up the hope of an imminent parousia, and settled, even if rather awkwardly, into this world. The change took place almost imperceptibly. It is, of course, impossible to draw a hard line between what is sometimes called the New Testament period and the ensuing era. Some of the traits which were to dominate in the second and subsequent centuries are already discernible in some New Testament writings. ... [Therefore it comes as no surprise] that Paul was soon forgotten or even silenced. Papias, Hegesippus, Justin Martyr, and the other Apologists do not appeal to Paul at all. Where Paul is accepted in the Hellenistic Church, he is thoroughly domesticated. Where he is quoted, this is always in terms of his moral injunctions, not of his apocalyptic hermeneutic (Bosch 1991:191 & 196).

This tragic marriage between altar and throne *in the name of Jesus of Nazareth* (cf. Baus 1980:89f) made the Byzantine church to condemn itself by bringing red-hot coal upon itself (cf. Rom 12:20); it condemned itself to the point of no return. Soon idolatry, unheard of for a long time among “Christians”, returned in full force (cf. Baus 1980:331-334); and this ended up with Icon controversy (“icon worship”). To accommodate this ugly affair, the Byzantine imperial church developed a theology that covered up its *developing* unGospel “pagan” behaviour and came up with the following tragic consequences (cf. Bosch 1991:197-198):

- * Historical thinking was replaced with metaphysical categories. No distinction was then made between “this age” and “the age to come”; what mattered was a “vertical” relationship between time and eternity. This meant that salvation had to do with the future world (heaven), no more found in this world. *Fuga mundi* spirituality became a reality.

- * The “christology” of Pauline church that looked forward to its culmination by reconciling seriously this world to Godself in Christ, was replaced with Greek Christianity of the exalted Christ who came to be identified as the timeless Logos. The Jewish understanding of time as lineal was lost to Hellenistic understanding of time as cyclic, as the myth of eternal return. In this theology the Christ event was radically spiritualized away. As a result, “ ... the interest shifted from

eschatology to protology, to Christ's eternal pre-existence, his relation to God the Father, and the nature of his incarnation. It became more important to know *whence* Christ came than *why*. The interest in his incarnation, so common in this period, therefore had little to do with his entering a human form and identifying with the plight of humanity; rather, it was moved to the level of metaphysics, where discussion centred on the *nature* of the incarnation and its 'pedagogical' significance" (Bosch 1991:197).

- * Mysticism replaced the original eschatological expectation which translated itself later into pneumatology where "... through the indwelling of the Spirit the soul becomes spiritual and eventually progresses into the angelic order. 'Let us become spiritual' (*pneumatikoi*), we read in chapter 4 of the Epistle of Barnabas. And Origen interpreted the reign of God in terms of the apprehension of a spiritual reality, or as the seeds of truth implanted in the soul. Preaching came to focus almost exclusively on the topic of God and the individual soul, without having anything to say about the relation of the gospel to nature and the structures of the world; in the process the cosmic expectation of 'a new heaven and a new earth' was spiritualised away" (Bosch 1991:198). Salvation *for* the world was replaced by salvation *from* this world (*fuga mundi* theology). Christian religion was then understood as saving *from* this earth; *not changing or renewing it at all*. Immortality of the soul became the main focus to the unbelievable point where "... the Eucharist became a *pharmakon athanasias*, a 'medicine of (or unto) immortality'. The vindication of creation in the glory of God made way for the idea of individual bliss and of the immortal heavenly status of the individual after death. Through various degrees and stages of the spiritual life the soul progresses to perfect union with God" (Bosch 1991:198).

This led to an ecclesiology that replaced God's future intervention in history with rewards for those doing good now; that they will get their rewards in heaven. Since salvation would not be achieved visibly in this world, except in the future world, divided pockets of Grace to accompany the Faithful had to be theologically imagined and created

where Graces could be preserved *ex opere operato* (“without so much relying on the worthiness of the priest or minister”); these came to be known as Sacraments. “To escape the perpetual threat of hell, many good deeds had to be performed, many [long] prayers poured forth, and the intercession of many [easily made saints of all sorts] invoked. Irenaeus, in particular, portrayed the ascent of the soul in terms of a pedagogic process toward perfection. Martyrdom [a-la-Islam of today], in particular, was a sure gateway to immortality. In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* it is even said that the martyrs were ‘*purchasing* at the cost of one hour a release from eternal punishment’. Many other examples can be given of moralism ‘spreading itself like blight over Christianity’s expectation of the hereafter’” (Bosch 1991: 198). It was in this type of church that groups longing for the power of the living Spirit of the risen Lord a-la-Pauline strongly came forward, among them that of Montanus. Gnosticism also made its presence felt in a church that neglected authentic Kerygma (cf. Bosch 1991:199-202).

South African theologians are even more poignantly damning about what happened, and about the impact that faith-tragedy would have on later generations of Christians like us:

... At [this time of the Council of Nicea] there is a syncretist confusion of Christ with sun worship. From then on church affairs and the imperial administration begin to be increasingly intertwined, with Christianity gradually occupying the place of paganism as the ‘civic religion’ of the empire. The chief apologist for this is Eusebius of Caesarea, whose theology dropped eschatology, and increasingly identified the reign of God with imperial rule. In this way the enemies of Constantine and his son, Crispus, were unquestionably held to be the enemies of God. There was thus no real way of distinguishing the peace and the blessings of God from the Pax Romana (SACBC 1985:67)²¹

What we are discovering here is very important especially for authentic Christian theologians who are serious and genuine in seeking *today* "who Jesus really is". As you can see, we are now starting to discover that much of what we have been told as Jesus' Spirit at work in the world after 500 A.D. up to this day, *might be something else* than the

²¹ Building of cathedrals (e.g. St Peters in Rome) and churches around the entire empire and fighting enemies of the Church, conceding on taxes and giving the Church much land needed, etc. All these perks were given on condition that the Church in turn was also loyal and faithful all the way to the sensitive needs of the Emperor and his Empire.

Spirit of the Risen Lord at work. *The Spirit of God the Creator yes, but not the Spirit of the Risen Lord* (cf. Dupuis 2001(Tablet): 1484). Nevertheless, the enrichment that Patristic Church brought to Jesus' unique story in the history of human becoming is in the formulation of the Creeds where God *only* in Jesus is the one bringing salvation *unsurpassably*. But the Patristic theology, with the help of the crown, subjugated other religions and never really expounded theology of salvation for all peoples of the human race as Paul and Peter tried so hard to formulate. Any action taken to save this world, the early Christians always said, “It is us and the Holy Spirit” or “The Spirit has said that ...”. On the other hand, the Patristic Church did much to control the movements of the Spirit of the Risen Lord and forgot the mysterious and gratuitous nature of this Spirit of the Risen Lord (cf. Jn 3:8). The end product of the Patristic theology was to take Christianity’s “superiority” *for granted*. In short, *theology of religions (theologia religionum)* stagnated with Christianity becoming official religion; *with the persecuted becoming the persecutor*. It is this inauthentic consciousness that was developing and that would culminate into tragic consequences *in Jesus’ name*²²: Persecution of heretics, crusades, Inquisition, burning at stake, burning of witches, Just war theories, colonialism, slavery, apartheid, Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, etc. But thank God that the prophecy of great theologians of today in the likes of Fr Nolan will always call inauthentic Church to sanity concerning “who Jesus really is”: “Jesus has been more frequently honored and worshipped for what he did not mean than for what he did mean. His [Gospel] has been twisted and turned to mean everything, anything and nothing. His name has been used and abused to justify crimes, to frighten children and to inspire men and women to heroic foolishness. The supreme irony is that some of the things he opposed most strongly in the world of his time were resurrected, preached and spread more widely throughout the world – in his name” (Nolan 1976:3). D. Bonhoeffer calls any Christian with such inauthentic and false consciousness *a baptised pagan*. The conclusion is that Patristic Creed theology does not help much in the uniqueness of Jesus as *the Christ = the Messiah* as far as other religions are concerned; and theologians would be wise not to force matters and spend too much time and energy in “looking for

²² This is why today those daily holy Masses and *Nagmale* or whatever, are so empty rituals (cf. Mt 7:15-29). No one will ever be *healed* by them till authentic repentance ala-Kubler-Ross and ala-John the Baptist takes place as a matter of urgency.

the living among the dead". A stern warning here goes to the official Orthodox and Roman catholic traditions for "worshipping" too much Patristics²³ in this regard.

First Schism (1054 A.D.): Operating more and more in its self-understanding as mainly the guardian of the "deposit of faith", the "Church" lost much of the compassion and an enriching grasp of what it means to be free, what it means to be human, and above all what it means to have come to embrace God in the person of Jesus *the* Christ. As we saw above, even the disciple of liberty (cf. Gal 5), Paul of Tarsus, was forgotten. By that time the perennial question, "who do you say that I am?" (cf. Mk 8:27), had become the relic of the past, and the new question had taken over, namely, "who is the greatest bishop or spiritual power on earth?". Our contention is that in the final analysis the main reason for the Schism was not so much about doctrinal differences, but more so about "who is the greatest?" (cf. Lk 22:24-27). Theologians came from all sides to give answers to this unbecoming question. This was the beginning of the Dark Age Period in the world²⁴. The two bishops, in particular, went at loggerheads about "who's who" to represent Christ on earth, namely, bishop of *New Rome* (Constantinople) and/or bishop of *Old Rome* (Italia). The *filioque* debacle sealed a long story of self-seeking in the "Church" and the first *serious* Schism of the *Body of Christ* became a *visible and tangible reality for the first time among the followers of Jesus; among those who supposed to be the world ahead of itself*²⁵. But instead of the two sides heeding the call of *metanoia* to bury the hatchet for the sake of the Risen Lord, hatred and insult became the reality in the "Church"; hearts hardened on both sides, and excommunicating each other became a regrettable farewell²⁶. Surely *anathema sit!* (Be damned!) became a normal greeting on a daily basis among so-called Christians; and surely prayers were composed *for God to "damn" the other*;

²³ The so-called Church Fathers. But one wonders, "where are the Church Mothers?" You mean the Church of the living God consists only of 'Fathers'? If so, what a pitiful God!!!. No, the living God of Jesus *the* Christ = Messiah has both Fathers and Mothers in the history of salvation (cf. Gen 1:27-28). Only inauthentic Christianity falsified historical salvific facts.

²⁴ Some will object vehemently saying Dark Age Period only belongs to "Europe", but I say that when Jesus of Nazareth is involved, the whole world is involved. But if it is a different Jesus, OK I concede, after all it would not be my business at all.

²⁵ That is how World Council of Churches define the Church.

²⁶ From now on the Orthodox churches would contribute as little as possible to the universal theology; or, since the farewell was ugly, the church in the "west" applied sanctions about anything that came from the "east". Church historians must sort this dilemma out so as to enrich or re-discover anew the message of the Gospel of the risen Lord in its fullness.

indeed, to destroy the other-me in Jesus' name (cf. Nolan 1976:3). This tragedy happened in 1054 A.D. What a pity!

2.3 Theology of the Latin church on universal salvation (c. 1054 - 1526)

This period affects both the Roman church and the Protestant church. Remember that during this time in the Latin-speaking church (western church), the second *serious* Schism of Christianity has not yet taken place. This is the height of the Middle Ages in the church²⁷ of the "west" where Thomas Aquinas and other theologians had to deal with the question of salvation for "non-Christians". This is the time of the *Summae*; long well argued theses to explain and defend the Christian Faith in the "western" style. It is the time when the pope was at the height of his temporal power, his sphere of influence going all over Europe and Great Britain. Theologians of the time, especially Thomas, "... contemplated the possibility that non-Christians might indeed be saved without being members of the church, the official teaching largely reflected the more rigorous view that non-membership meant damnation" (Merrigan 2001:3). Again I would like to emphasise that Aquinas and all other theologians of the time up to the Reformation in the 16th century belonged to the one, visible "western" church led by the mighty pope²⁸. In this sense, later on Protestantism would reflect much of the same belief of the Middle Ages in dealing with other religions. *Compassion* and human tolerance and understanding (*uBuntu*) would be the same as that of the Roman "catholic" church varying only in degrees as far as official policy was concerned²⁹. For example, let us take the attitudes of M. Luther and J. Reuchlin towards the Jewish people:

²⁷Since the first schism concerning the true Church of Christ in its visibility and tangibility (four marks of the Church), a small "c" is appropriate for all the three present traditions of Christianity: Orthodox, Protestant and Roman. It must be understood that all these three traditions are catholic in their grounding even though they are not practicing that catholicity yet. Pity resides with the Roman members who still delude themselves that "everyone broke from them" as if the pope died on the cross for humanity. A serious and special *novena* (special prayer) is needed for this *part* of the Body of Christ.

²⁸St Sir Thomas More is a good example here. The difference is that what *later* came to be known as the Roman church adopted much of the old "western" church while Protestantism reformed in varying degrees. Hence some of their churches are still being called 'those of the reformed tradition'.

²⁹Martin Luther, Calvin and many leaders of Protestantism in its foundationality were once under the leadership of the pope; the reality that is usually avoided to affirm. This does not necessarily need to make us less "holy", precisely because history is history. In fact, affirmation will strengthen and justify Protestant

In the early days of the Reformation, it appeared that greater toleration would be extended to Jews. Among the early leaders of the Reformation, both humanist scholar Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) and Martin Luther (1483-1546) objected to the burning of the Talmud. Reuchlin was an accomplished jurist and linguist, whose excellence in Hebrew enabled him to study Kabbalah (Jewish mystical literature). Luther entitled one of his early pamphlets That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew (1523), and accused the ‘popes, bishops, sophists and monks’ of dealing ‘with the Jews as if they were dogs and not human beings.’ Were such views representative of their theology as a whole, they would be remembered not only as ‘Protestant’ reformers but as leaders who championed a dramatic shift in Christian thinking about Judaism. However, a closer look at Reuchlin and Luther, reveals quite the opposite. Both the supersessionism of the early Christian writers and the intensified hostility toward Jews of the Late Middle Ages had been passed along intact to them. But the proper focus is less ‘Luther and the Jews’ (or Reuchlin or Calvin, etc.) but rather ‘Jews in the Age of the Renaissance and Reformation’; Luther and Reuchlin’s views were shaped not only by the supersessionist theology they inherited but also by the civic unrest and upheaval of the sixteenth century, with its Peasants’ War and tensions with political authorities. Tolerance was not the hallmark of the era, and dissenters of any stripe were unwelcomed. Heiko Oberman is particularly helpful in understanding Luther’s context. Scholars often contrast the ‘early Luther’ of That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew (1523) with the ‘later Luther’ of On the Jews and Their Lies (1543). Without question, the latter pamphlet is horrifying. It speaks of ‘damned, rejected race of Jews,’ and advises that they be dealt with by ‘severe mercy’: their synagogues set afire, their homes destroyed, their prayer books taken away, their rabbis forbidden to teach, their passports revoked, and their moneylending prohibited. Clearly, by this later juncture, Luther saw Jews as the enemies of society; [for him by then] a Christian society had no room for dissenters (Boys 2000:67-68)³⁰.

In large measure, the wisdom of Jesus of Nazareth *that power should be understood as service* and not as a tool to destroy the *other-me* in any form (cf. Lk 22:24-27. 1 Cor 13), continued to fall on deaf ears. The tragedy is that compassion and justice with mercy became unthinkable in that kind of church; "holier-than-thou" consciousness prevailed. And the dynamics of the principle of *alterity* (golden rule) were thrown out with the

Reformation as God’s authentic intervention in the history of the Church. Without forgetting that the true Church of Christ is always self-renewing (*semper reformanda*).

³⁰ Things became so bad that Luther’s hatred towards the Jews became to be the same as that towards the Roman catholic church: “Luther presented the Jews as theologically misguided – in the same way as were the ‘popes, sophists and monks.’ For Luther, Roman Catholicism and Judaism were both ritualistic religions of works-righteousness. Indeed, in many respects criticism of Jews and Catholics was of one piece. Luther’s colleague Martin Bucer (1491-1551) claimed: ‘Except that the Papists venerate icons and idols and set them up for worship, while giving lip service to Christ. ... the faith and religious practices of Papists and Jews are really identical. A Lutheran hymn vividly illustrates this pairing. ‘Salvation Unto Us Has Come,’ which seems on the face of it to be anti-Jewish in its negative deception of the law, is really directed against Rome” (Boys 2000:69).

bathwater. Saints and Freethinkers in the likes of Scotus, Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, J. Huss, early M. Luther, Nietzsche, Kant, Rousseau, Hegel, K. Marx, Kiekegaard, M. Heidegger, B. Russell, Camus, Fanon etc., would be the ones to bring sanity back in the western church; to remind that church about the dangerous memory of Jesus³¹. Most of the Freethinkers evoked the dangerous memory of Jesus among their contemporaries without being aware that they are spreading the Gospel. And this evoking still continues today, if only one knows where to look; *but surely not in the official Church.*

2.4 Modern Age: Uniqueness of Christianity Revisited (1600-1927)³²

Colonial Period: The discovery of the so-called “New World” shocked the church in Europe in hearing that “other” peoples were part and parcel of this world; indeed the church in the "west" was awoken from its dogmatic slumbers. Evangelization then took a new turn; a new reality of "who Christ is" opened new avenues and new frontiers in the theology of salvation. That ship of Christopher Columbus was like Apollo 11 to the moon in 1969; and the world theologically would never be the same again. The three traditions of Christianity, especially Protestant and Roman, were tested to the limit and all theories came up with "what God could be saying to the churches". Merrigan captures well the mood of the time when he says that, “The conviction that the whole world had heard the Gospel was shattered completely when Christopher Columbus discovered the 'New World'. Suddenly, the [western] church became aware that whole races and nations had never been exposed to the Word of life. Within [Roman] Catholic theology, this realization led to the development of a variety of theories to explain how those who could not be members of the church might nevertheless be saved. The most familiar of these theories were the idea of *limbo* and the possibility of ‘baptism by desire’” (Merrigan 2001: 3). Unfortunately we hear little from the Orthodox church concerning salvation of

³¹In the same way that the atheist Saul (Acts 9:13-16) was chosen by the Most High to put Peter straight on the path of authentic salvation (Gal 2:11-14), the Most High has done the same thing with (apparent) atheists of our time. What a marvel in our age! Great things God is doing for our salvation, precisely because even if we disown Him/Her, God is always faithful since He/She can never disown Himself/Herself.

non-Christians at this stage. Apart from heroic witness under Islamic and Communistic rule, the Orthodox contribution theology-wise towards other religions is still inadequate. *But unless the three streams of Jesus' story (Christianity) come together and speak with one, visible voice on "who Christ is" and "in which way he is unique", the Christian Message will forever be left wanting as a dangerous liability for the human race.*

From above it is clear that a certain status quo became the reality of the church in the West. Complacency concerning the "superiority or absolutism" of Christianity continued to be *taken for granted* as with the era of the Church Fathers. The "western church", in its evangelization, then became a *normative* model for what it meant *to be religious by any human being* in the world. But as more contact with other cultures intensified, *the unique dynamics* (internal logic and coherence) of the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth *pressed for a change of attitudes*, and here we look at how some theologians and philosophers in the West at that time started to change attitudes towards other religions. It will suffice to mention Lessing, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Troeltsch.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781): Lessing's disgust with superstition, religious wars and religious intolerance made him take other religions seriously. After his deep study of Judaism, Islam and Christianity he concluded that " ... existing religions are stages in the development of *a more inclusive rational and moral religion which is the goal of human history and struggles*" (Maimela 1990:95) He understood the main purpose of religions as channels of morality; as channels to make people behave and respect each other universally. His method of knowing the nature of each religion was to study and understand its history fully. Historical process of any religion always reveals the truth inherent in that religion. In this sense, religious truth is evolutionary; it can only manifest itself from point **A** to point **B**. Positive religions are a case in point, "... Judaism, Islam, Christianity are not to be dismissed as unnecessary or false or as distortions of some original non-historical religions as deists and other rationalists would have us believe. These three main monotheistic religions are necessary in the teleological process

³² Much of my reliance will be on Maimela in this period since I found him appropriate in summarising relevant issues. Of course this does not make him exhaustive on the topic but very competent in it.

in which God's revelation is given because he would not have revealed the divine absolute truth all at once. ... positive (historic) religions must be understood as the arena in which human and divine activities are at work in the moral development of humanity, as humankind moves (or is led by God) to the 'fullness of truth' which God possesses" (Maimela 1990:96). Lessing, therefore, believed that each religion contains some element of truth, a truth that, in the final analysis, cannot be demonstrated on historical, metaphysical and logical grounds, precisely because 'religious truth is ultimately more a matter of personal conviction than of demonstration because every religion claims to have had a miraculous beginning' (cf. Maimela 1990:96f)

F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1763-1834): Schleiermacher also acknowledged some kind of truth in other religions even though he still held on to the superiority of Christianity. The nature of each religion, according to him, is awareness of human beings' absolute dependence on the Ultimate Reality (*the* God). For Schleiermacher, Christianity reflected the highest form of God consciousness precisely because Christianity has "... the concrete and historical existence of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth" (Maimela 1990:100) Schleiermacher shared Lessing's evolutionary view of religion and he divided this evolutionary historical process into three categories: Animistic, polytheistic and eventually monotheistic. Only Judaism, Islam and Christianity qualify for this process, but Christianity is still *more special and unique* over the other two. Schleiermacher "... regarded the passionate character and sensuous content of the religious ideas of Islam as a betrayal of strict monotheism, and thought that Islam shared in polytheistic emotions. However, ... Christianity is free of the ethnic weakness of Judaism, ... these qualities make Christianity stand higher than the other two" (Maimela 1990:98f) For him the task of Christian theology is not to prove the superiority of Christianity because other historical religions also possess truth, however faulty it may be. But it is rather the task of philosophy of religion to achieve this comparison and give due credit to the logic and coherence of Christianity in the becoming history of the human race.

G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831): Like Lessing and Schleiermacher, Hegel had a historical and evolutionary view of religion. He contrasted two types of religious development:

Primitive (immediate) religion and religion of free spiritual subjectivity. These two types of religion summarise our journey as human beings from immaturity (governed by instinct; by nature) to maturity (governed by reason; being free spirits). For Hegel this journey of religious evolution goes through four stages: *Religion of magic* which is either direct (Eskimos, Africans, Chinese, Mongol Shamans etc.) or indirect (official Chinese religion of Taoism). *Religion of subjectivity* is the reality "... in which the highest power is grasped as the substance (being-in-itself), as for instance the religion of fantasy which combines an abstract of being-in-itself with extravagant imagination. Buddhism is a typical example of such a religion" (Maimela 1990:100). *Religion of Nature* ('abstract subjectivity') which prepares us for the religion of individual freedom, espouses the strife between good and evil and "... takes a form of suffering and estrangement" (Maimela 1990:101). Hinduism, the dualism of Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism are cases in point. And *Religion of Individual Spirituality* is where the independence of the *subject* is absolutely affirmed and Nature domesticated. In this fourth and final stage Hegel included Judaism, The Greek Religion of Beauty, and Christianity. Islam is not mentioned.

Hegel regarded the Christian religion as *unique* and *unsurpassable* in espousing Truth/Being since Christianity seems to sum up the maturity of the human person according to Hegel's philosophy of history. *For him Christianity is a religion of love and reconciliation; a religion of dialectical bonding of extreme opposites: The Infinite and the finite.* For Hegel the theology of the "God-Man" fits well with the dialectical dilemma of the opposites in the reality of the human experience and human becoming: "In Christianity, therefore, the Universal Idea (God) can be shown to have passed into actuality through the particular person. Hence God's Spirit is known 'in-itself' only because it has appeared and revealed 'for itself' in and for itself through the history of Jesus. It is for this reason that Christianity can rightly be portrayed as the highest stage in the unfolding of the Spirit, because here we have to do with human being's consciousness of God as God's own consciousness of God-self in the human being. ... For in becoming the final development of the subjectivity called the Absolute Spirit (God) in the God-Man, Jesus, Christian religion brings into expression the absolute identity of finite and

infinite Spirit" (Maimela 1990:103) In this sense it can be said that Hegel understood the *logic* and *coherence* of Christianity to be a cornerstone in understanding the full implication of human maturity, human freedom, human dignity and "a meaningful God" *relating to* His/Her creation within which human beings with rationality play a pivotal role (cf. Gen 1:27-31).

Ernest Troeltsch (1865-1927): Troeltsch is regarded as the founder of the new school of the History of Religions (Maimela 1990: 106). As a pupil of Ritschl, Troeltsch strongly reacted against his teacher. He objected to Ritschl claiming Jesus of Nazareth *as the final and full revelation of God*; and for dealing with Christianity as if it is the only important religion in the world. This is why he was convinced that fundamental ideas of Christianity are also found in other religions, especially world religions. With his school, Troeltsch followed in the footsteps of Schleiermacher's understanding of religion as a *scientific* theology. While Troeltsch adopted the Hegelian evolutionary view of religion, he rejected " ... Hegelian speculation which saw the divine nature unfolding itself by logical necessity to form the final stage in the self-evolutionary Divine Spirit embodied in Christianity as the absolute religion" (Maimela 1990:106). *Troeltsch rejected the special uniqueness of Christianity and the idea of the special and unique revelation that goes with it*; "... he believed that Christianity had emerged out of Judaism and had incorporated elements from other religions. The same is true in other religions, therefore *it is false to argue for the superiority of Christianity by claiming for it an isolated position or dignity because of a special or supernatural revelation. For all religions claim to rest on some unique revelation.* ... Even miracles and prophecy, taken at face value, are by no means a monopoly of the Bible" (Maimela 1990:107). In this sense Troeltsch vehemently rejected the Christian community's 'special experience' in the dynamic becoming history of the human race. For him only arrogance can lead to this kind of affirmation on the part of naive Christians. This is why he found foreign missionary activities of '*converting*' the other ridiculous and revolting, precisely because *Christ is not the final or only revelation of the God*. What he approved in foreign missionary activities was the benefits of science in health, education etc. For him no religion (including Christianity) is valid universally because it is always *historically*

conditioned; it is meaningful and powerful within a certain historical situation/context. "For this reason what is presented in the gospels has to be understood as but one aspect of the Divine Spirit which seeks to make itself known to all human beings through a variety of religions" (Maimela 1990:107)

This position of Troeltsch described above only came later in his life after much reflection. In his earlier work, *The Absoluteness of Christianity* (1901), he agreed to a large extent with his teacher Ritschl that Christianity was undoubtedly a superior religion. He even belittled other religions like Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. But later in his life he overturned the tables.³³ And what a Copernican turn it was indeed! But as long as he was honestly searching for Truth in all its manifestations, due credit must be given him, and we think that he must be applauded for his intellectual honesty. And taking into account the religious climate of his time, surely he was highly ridiculed by "Christians" of the time, maybe even persecuted for his views, precisely because he was a prophet ahead of his times in searching for authentic freedom, authentic humanity, and above all, searching for an authentic meaningful God.

2.5 Late modern age positions (1928-1976)

There is no doubt that K. Barth, P. Tillich, and R. Bultmann enriched theology immensely in the first half of the twentieth century, and the debates on the *uniqueness of Jesus* are well situated within their theologies, with differing positions of either *being inclusive, exclusive or pluralistic in relating to other faiths*.

³³"Troeltsch believed that the only evidence for the truth of Christianity is a 'profound inner experience', and 'inward absoluteness'; and 'existential certainty' which Christians have. It is only this which enables them to believe that Christianity is better than the fatalism of Islam, the monastic ideal of Buddhism, and the arbitrariness of the Jewish Yahweh. In contrast to these, Troeltsch argued, Christianity preaches the value of individuals as members of the kingdom of God who are to be governed and guided by love. Troeltsch says of this 'profound inner experience' that it 'is undoubtedly the criterion for its validity, but, be it noted, only of its validity for us. It is God's countenance as revealed to us, it is the way in which, being what we are, we receive and react to, the revelation of God. It is binding upon us, and it brings us deliverance. But this does not preclude the possibility that other racial groups living under entirely different cultural conditions, may experience their contact with the divine in a quite different way. ... Troeltsch thought that the time might come when people would become conscious of new needs which the Christian gospel does not satisfy. The growing fascination of the Christian West with Eastern religions and mysticism seem to support Troeltsch's contention" (Maimela 1990:107&109)

Karl Barth (1886-1968): Barth led the *theological attack*. Disillusionment with the progress of science and subtle modern pelagianism, brought Barth to break with the past theological thinking and embark on something quite original. His disillusionment led to his intense study of the Bible, especially St Paul's Letter to the Romans. Many insights were revealed to him through the study of this Epistle. He vehemently rejected the *anthropocentric* nature of Liberal Theology as the final "court" in matters of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ. For him rational religion is unchristian and smacks of paganism. Only in Jesus Christ does a genuine Christian theology find its rightful place because that is God's initiative not *man's* initiative; Christ is a gift (gratuitous grace) to humanity. Barth's anthropology is that human beings, basically, are totally corrupt (*corruptio totalis*), thus totally incapable of obeying (pleasing) God through their natural reason. For him "... there is an infinite qualitative difference between God and human beings because human beings are creatures created by God while God is uncreated and, in one sense, wholly other and unapproachable. ... [only] in Jesus Christ God had already bridged the gulf [unsurpassably] that separates God and human beings by judging and redeeming the human race in the person of Jesus Christ" (Maimela 1990:122).

Karl Barth understood any human religion *per se* as incapable of knowing fully about true nature of the living God, therefore *in the final analysis* no other religion (save Christianity) can show the way to God. He was horrified about Roman catholic theology where general revelation is said to lead to some kind of true *reliable* knowledge of God. In this sense he rejected any claim of any religion having true knowledge of God other than taking Jesus Christ as a personal saviour *first*. Because of original Sin, all human beings are blind, so he had no time for other religions: "As part of [his] attempt to turn the whole of nineteenth-century theology upside-down, Barth declared war on all religion, which he believed was inherently wrong. Religion [outside revelation in Jesus *the* Christ] was for him nothing but human imagination which tries to create a false God of this world, a god capable of human manipulation," and he concluded that, "... liberal theologians tried to turn Christianity into a universal religion, and tried to turn the Christian God into a universal God. In opposition to this tendency, Barth maintained that

there was an unbridgeable gulf between Christianity and [other] religions. He tried to undermine the alliance between theology and religion and between theology and philosophy, and sought to eliminate confusion that liberal theology had created between God and human beings, and between Christianity and the world religions” (Maimela 1990:126f).

Paul Tillich (1886-1965): Tillich's main concern was to make the Christian message meaningful to the culture (age = generation) in which it finds itself. A dialogue within a given culture is the best way to incarnate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His methodology is called *method of correlation* which is totally apologetic. Unlike Barth's non-apologetic approach, Tillich took the human situation seriously. In order to interpret this existential situation, he developed a correlation of metaphysics; a philosophy to deal with the dynamics of "The New Being". His was a theology "from below" where "... painting, theatre, politics, economics, history, sociology, science, depth psychology, literature, philosophy, and patterns of life, are all the raw data which the theologian must analyse in order to determine the questions people are asking about life's problems, successes, failures, and hopes. Once these have been investigated, and the theologian knows what questions people are asking, it becomes possible to frame whatever answers the Christian gospel might provide in reply. It is no use for the theologian to give splendidly accurate answers to questions no one is asking" (Maimela 1990:137). Tillich's theology raised some difficulties. For example, his portrayal of *the* God as the *ground of being*, rather than a *personal* God, does not go well with some theologians, especially those of the Barthian thinking. But Tillich must be lauded for his attempt to "inculturise" the Christian message in a modern culture. The ball is in our theological court today to continue his good intention, but at the same time the appropriate and striking insight of Barth must never be underestimated or *taken for granted*, especially in our heavily infected *pelagianistic* modern culture.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976): Bultmann followed in the footsteps of Tillich and tried to "liberate" the Gospel from the "outdated" language of the biblical times for our own times today. He was convinced that the Gospel wisdom must be presented to the concrete

existence of the world in which we find ourselves. For example, he concluded that the Bible was written within the framework of a different world-view from ours, therefore sifting has to be made. As a result, Bultmann came up with a method of separating the *positive content* of the Gospel from what he called "Biblical mythical world-view". He employed *existential philosophy*³⁴ in order to interpret the Gospel (*kerygma*) to the modern world. Bultmann called his sifting-process, "Demythologisation". For him demythologisation strengthens the authority of the Bible in the sense that, "... it is the only way in which [the Word of God] can be set free from outworn beliefs and so get across to men [and women] who regard the scientific world-view as axiomatic" (Vidler 1961:222). While Bultmann did well in his attempt to make the Gospel *meaningful* to the modern mind, by reducing almost everything to being *symbolical*, to being non-historical, he shot himself in the foot because the Christian faith, without some historical verification one way or another, is meaningless as far as the *incarnation* can be verified concerning Jesus *the* Christ (cf. Gal.4:1-5). In this sense, it is important that the continuation of *actual* and *reliable historical events* of the Gospel and its embellishment must be maintained. Liberation Theology, the anti-thesis of the classical European theology, is wiser in dealing with Jesus' story because it takes history very seriously (theology from below): "[For example] Latin American theology reminds us to take the opportunity in realising that the relation between liberation and salvation is meaningful if it is located historically. In other words, the total and definitive liberation of Christ is always mediated in partial historical liberations" (Geffre 1974:13).

2.6 Contemporary Theological Positions (1977-2004)

The situation on the uniqueness of Jesus in the becoming history of the human race can roughly be divided today into three positions: *Exclusive*, *inclusive*, and *pluralistic*. The first two positions, from different points of view, affirm the uniqueness of Jesus over all other religions of the world. The latter annuls and denies this conviction. The division of the entire issue of a Christian *theologia religionum* into these three basic categories is accepted universally among theologians. Theologian Nurnberger divides them differently

³⁴This is the analysis of the human existence according to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.

as *relativistic, dialectical* and *antithetical* (Bosch 1991:478). H. Küng divides the same categories into *exclusivism, fulfillment* and *relativism*. He has added the position of “atheism” where “‘no religion is true’ or ‘all religions are equally untrue’” (Bosch 1991:478).

Exclusivist Position: The basic position taken here has always been the dictum of Cyprian: *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. The teaching of the Roman catholic church still clings tenaciously to this understanding³⁵. Barth, arguing from a different perspective, would somehow be the best representative of this view. Instead of "outside the Church" no salvation, Barth would say, "outside Christ" no salvation. Karl Rahner would have one foot in this view while the other foot would be in the Inclusivist view.

Inclusivist Position: The main representative here is Karl Rahner with his *Anonymous Christian* dictum. The position is also an old understanding within classical theology where God is said to have prepared everyone to receive and recognise the Gospel/Word (*sperma tou logou*). St Justin was one of the first ones who saw the preparation of the Word-incarnate in other cultures (Merrigan 2001:2). This position also tries to put the fairness of God among all the people of the world. People of other faiths, who do good, are seen as implicit Christians = anonymous Christians. The "anonymous Christian" position says that God in Christ is present in all other religions and beliefs outside *explicit* Christianity even if believers in these religions are not aware of it; therefore, '*outside the Church, there is a possibility of valid salvation*'. In this sense, all people of good will know Christ, even if *unaware* of him, and could be saved if their consciences lead them to do the Good³⁶. This position seems attractive in saying that (humanly speaking), *ontologically all roads lead to the recognition of the incarnation of Jesus*: “... God, on account of his universal salvific will, has graciously embraced the whole of human history and in it has offered all [people of different cultures] his salvation and that his grace and justification have been concretely and historically realized in humanity. Saving history also means the history of these experiences and embodiments of salvation

³⁵The recent document, *Dominus Iesus*, is a definite case in point here.

³⁶Plato and Plotinus will also affirm that salvation is found in seeking the Good sincerely.

throughout the human race. And finally, saving history means that pre-Christian and extra-Christian experiences of salvation are dynamically ordered to the *kairos* and the age of salvation *simpliciter* in Jesus Christ (as so many different epochs which the theology of history seeks to ascertain)" (Rahner 1965:464).

Pluralist Positioning³⁷: Main representatives here are Paul F. Knitter and John Hick. The Pluralist Theology distinguishes between the "historical Jesus" and the "real Jesus". The "real Jesus" is that man who left nothing of himself in writing; that "illusive" Jewish man³⁸ of the first century of whom we know so little, or of whom we will probably never really know anything, as far as hard facts are concerned about his *real* life: The "... 'real Jesus,' either in his 'total reality' or [in his] 'reasonably complete biographical portrait' is unknown and [is] unknowable" (Merrigan 2000:61) Hence, that "Jew" of Nazareth will always remain an ever-silent yet powerful mystery in the journey of the human race in its becoming³⁹. The "historical Jesus", on the other hand, means "... a modern abstraction and construct, the Jesus whom we can 'recover' and examine by using the scientific tools of modern historical research" (Merrigan 2000:61) As a result, pluralist theologians have ended up with a position that "... moves away from insistence on the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways. Within the framework of pluralist discourse, the term, 'plurality', no longer denotes the mere fact of multiplicity or diversity. It now includes the concept of 'parity', or at least of 'rough parity', that is to say, 'the quality or state of being equal or equivalent'. [In short] the pluralist theology of religions advocates the 'recognition of the co-validity and the co-efficacy of other religions'" (Merrigan 2000:62).

³⁷I have named the above two positions as "nouns" while this one is a "verb", why? The latter position is currently being hotly debated in our pluralistic societies, even here in South Africa, and solutions are urgently sought. The other two positions had had their day but can only be interpreted anew within this current debate in order to bring "new" meaning to what Christianity can offer the human race.

³⁸I doubt very much if Jesus of Nazareth can be said to have been a *real Jew*.

³⁹As the Human Race journeys towards the final presence of the Ultimate Reality. The Council of Vatican II in the dogmatic constitution on the "Church" (*Lumen Gentium*), calls the "Church" the *People of God* (Flannery 1982:359). But this is a misnomer because all the people of the human race are, in fact, the Real People of God (cf. Acts 10:35). The proper way to call the "Church" is to see it as the people of God *according to Christ* or simply the People of Christ; people of a new Way of Life according to Christ = Christians (cf. Acts 11:26)

Pluralist theology rejects Exclusivist theology because, by its arrogance, it belittles other religious traditions of the world. It sees this as religious imperialism at its worst form: "Exclusivist theology, which makes salvation dependent on the explicit confession of Jesus Christ, assigns the world's religions an essentially negative role. They are, at best, expressions of humanity's flawed quest for the transcendent and, at worst, expressions of a sinful attempt to manipulate the deity" (Merrigan 2000:63). Pluralistic position sees Inclusivist theology also as flawed because it "... holds that Jesus Christ is at least implicated in the salvation of every man and woman, [and this] appears to accord other religions a more positive role in the salvific process, but cannot grant them equal status with Christianity" (Merrigan 2000:63). Inclusive position is seen as extremely annoying because it seems to be saying: 'Well there is not much difference between you and me except that you have no clue who you are, and here am I ("the greatest" chosen by the Most High) to tell you about yourself.' Pluralist theology regards itself as doing more justice to other religions of the world than these other positions. Remember that pluralist theology is the latest in the development of Christianity's self-understanding *vis a vis* other religions today. So, it still has a long way to go in defining itself. Nevertheless, it believes it is on the right track in recognizing the signs of the time: "According to pluralist theologians, exclusivism and inclusivism exhibit two major shortcomings. In the first place, they are unable to integrate in a convincing fashion the doctrine of God's universal salvific will. Secondly, they cannot provide an adequate theological account of the manifest achievement, whether ethical, doctrinal, or devotional, of the world's major religious traditions. Pluralist theology, on the other hand, regards the achievements of other religions as empirical evidence of the operation of God's universal salvific will in history. In line with this conviction, it recognizes the other religions as equal players in the economy of salvation" (Merrigan 2000:63f).

We agree that every religion is "unique" in its own right, but the meaningfulness of each religion to the enrichment of one and the same human race can never be on the same scale, precisely because "two or more truths on the same thing" are a fallacy. Fundamentally, truth is one and the same. In the same way that fundamentally, despite all "appearances" to the contrary (Plato), that-which-is can never be something else other

than *this-which-is*; thus making the *isness* (the grounding of present reality) of the *is* (present reality) the ontological structure of *all-that-is*; all religions of the world (including Christianity) have to concede their limitations. Truth must be followed all the way it leads, till one *humbly* but *genuinely* comes to give credit where it is due. The dynamic nature of "all-that-is" is nothing else than our groundedness-reality (*universality*) realising itself in the *now* as history is being made (dynamic-present-reality or truth concretely manifesting itself = *in particularity*) in a harmonious mysterious unison. Hopefully, this will become clearer as we go along.

Conclusion

The uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth in the history of the Christian faith is, therefore, not a new issue, but the reality in the form of historical consciousness and search for Truth today, is new. Historical attestation, both from biblical and non-biblical sources, shows very clearly that the *historical* Jesus or Jesus of Nazareth one way or another, had something unusual or unique about him especially in influencing people *for the better*; it seems as if he had "a unique magic" in captivating persons, people and crowds. The *logic* and *coherence* of the scriptural witness is summarised in the creeds of era of the Church Fathers.

Therefore, for any Christian *to deny the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth one way or another, is to deny the essence of Christianity which amounts to heresy; and St Paul is adamant and uncompromising on this (cf. Gal 1:6-10)*. Any story on Jesus that avoids the traditional "twofoldedness" of his nature (*truly Human and truly Divine*) will be proclaiming a different Jesus from that of the new Covenant; such Jesus would not be *that particular one who was born of the "virgin" Mary* (cf. Lk 2). Our position here is that to be faithful to Jesus in our pluralistic society, reinterpretation of his story is a must; indeed new wine needs new skin-bags, new cultures will always need new idioms, but the reality of human longing in view of salvation ("undoing" Original Sin) *will always* be confronted and *answered unsurpassedly and uniquely* in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth who came to be *recognised* as the Messiah = Christ = Saviour of the human

race. Therefore, authentic theologians on the unique story of Jesus should continue to devise ways and means of making and proclaiming, like foundational apostles, the uniqueness of *this* Jesus of Nazareth (and no other) in the history of the human race *regardless* of objections from those who do not subscribe to a *unique Vision of Life already* revealed in Jesus *the* Christ: "...So, if the question of the uniqueness of Jesus bears on (religious) dialogue ..., and if prior Christian approaches to this question now seem either problematic or insufficiently developed, then the time is ripe for reconsidering, reinterpreting, the uniqueness of Jesus. Indeed, there is some moral imperative to do so. Christian theologians need not feel this moral pressure as something foreign to their craft or calling. From New Testament times, 'faith seeking understanding' has entailed responding to the question and needs of a given era, church, or socio-economic group. There is no blackmail, then, in saying that the dialogical signs of today's times require Christian theologians to think again about the uniqueness of Jesus, and those who propose getting on with their task need not resort to moral earnestness" (Swidler 1997:45).

For us the crucial levelling field comes when we distinguish the *Internal Forum* from the *External Forum* concerning the mysterious dynamism of human salvation. To reaffirm the uniqueness of Jesus needs a vigorous homework from authentic theologians. The Internal Forum is a daunting engagement directed towards all those theologians who claim to profess the Christian Faith, those who claim to be authentic followers of the Risen Lord. A house divided against itself cannot stand for sure (cf. Mt 12:25), let alone be an example/witness to those *still* "outside the house" (cf. Jn 10:16); after all, charity starts at home (cf. Mt 7:1-5). The External Forum is directed towards those "who are *still* outside the house", hoping that, after hearing "the *simple* reason of our Faith" (1Pet 3:15), *they might be attracted to belong to the new home ('heimat'); the foundation whose cornerstone is none other than Jesus of Nazareth who was chosen by God the Creator to become the Christ = the Messiah of all people of the human race (Acts 17:31)*. We now look at those two Forums.

Chapter 3

The internal forum

The purpose of this chapter is to level the classical theological field by seriously interrogating present faith quality of church communities in their many faces as Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic. Before we discuss “who Jesus really is”, we must start by seriously questioning “who Christians really are” today. This fair play will determine without doubt the *uniqueness* of Jesus of Nazareth in the whole history of the human race.

It is now accepted scholarly that *actually* Jesus never started a movement, but that if there was a person to be pinned down on the Christian movement, it is Paul of Tarsus (cf. McKenzie 1965:651). What is certain is that Jesus, the son of Mary, revolutionized “who God is” to a point of no return within classical Jewish monotheism, to a point where a theological high treason was the logical appropriate verdict according to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin Supreme Council/Court (cf. Mk 14:63-64). *Historically* it is certain that the *real Jesus* of Nazareth was tried, sentenced and executed under Pontius Pilate for high treason one way or another (cf. Mk 14:63-65). Yet this does not make him unique because many other Jewish and Gentile rebels and revolutionaries were crucified by the Roman authorities in the same manner. But the “historian” Luke correctly attests⁴⁰:

⁴⁰ ‘We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah (the Christ), a king’ (cf. Lk 23:2).

... the inscription above Jesus' cross (*The King of the Jews*) leaves no doubt about the charge that was brought against him. Was he or was he not guilty? Did he incite people to revolt? Did he oppose payment of taxes to the Romans? Did he claim to be the Messiah who should be ruling over the Jews instead of Herod or Pilate or Caesar? Did he plan to overthrow the government [of the day]? (Nolan 1976:92).

Putting it differently, can it be true that Jesus' *uniqueness* and *unsurpassability* concerning authentic freedom, authentic humanity and an all-round meaningful God lie in the way he revolutionized the understanding of *power*: *The law* (political power), *money/natural resources* (economical power) and *prestige* (social power)? (cf. Nolan 1976:68-72). Answering this question *honestly* is crucial for the credibility of the Christian Message today the world over. It is crucial for us to answer this, especially for those of us at pulpits every Sunday, and those of us traversing our streets and dusty roads daily foaming at the mouth shouting, "Jesus is the answer!" Even more so, great challenge is with those obsessed with converting Jews and Moslems and other peoples of the human race at all costs *in Jesus' name*. In America, in the wake of attack on Iraq, thousands of Christian fundamentalists are flocking there in the hope of using Iraq as a gateway to rescue Moslems out of the hand of Satan and teach them about the true Compassionate God, and convert them all to the true Faith (cf. Time Magazine 04/08/03:40-47). What a pity of wasting so much energy that could be unleashed otherwise to enrich the human race! If only such "evangelists" can take seriously the advice that charity starts at home (cf. Mt 7:1-5). This advice will become clearer as we go along.

Generations of Christians throughout history did their best to answer the perennial double question "who do *people* say that I am? And who do *you* say that I am?" (Mk 8:27-29). While we give thanks to the God of Jesus Christ, the Creator and the perennial Sustainer of all peoples of the human race (cf. Mt 5:43-48), that in the last 2000 years or so the seeds of the Gospel were sown in most parts of the world, we also lament that the majority of the Gospel messengers, concerning the *original* authentic Gospel Message⁴¹, ' ... were false prophets in sheep's clothing while inwardly were ravenous wolves with

⁴¹ There are many prophets who sounded the alarm in this regard, among whom we mention Nietzsche, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, etc.

hidden agendas' (cf. Mt 7:15. 2Pet 2:1-3). Today, because of the corruption of these "Christians" (or evangelists), Christianity is honestly and genuinely judged as hypocritical and dangerous to humanity, especially by young intelligent and educated people. As a result, the majority of the world youth do not take Jesus' vision of Life seriously anymore. We now look at the obstacles (conscious or unconscious) which militated and *still militate* against that "something extra = unique" concerning "who Jesus really is". We now look at the obstacles that have disfigured that unique face of Jesus (cf. Jn 14:8-9. Phil 2:6-7) in the becoming history of the human race.

3.1 Authentic evangelization is always cultural⁴²

All human beings live, move and have their being (cf. Acts 17:28) *always* within a certain bi-polar dialectical perennial tension or opposites: *Particularity* and *Universality*. The reality of *One-and-the-Many* always represents two sides of the same coin. Within each culture, Platonic *isness* of life (generic or universal form of life) is *always* present, as well as Aristotelian *is* = *this* context (this particular and unique form of life). There is no religion that happens in a vacuum; all religions happen within space and time, within a certain *historical* context. This historical context is always a tensional and dialectical bi-polar reality, indeed a dialectical reality in the many ways of Hegelian philosophy. This is one of the strongest points of Liberation Theology within its many faces. Theology and Faith are not exceptions to this dialectical dynamism of human becoming. In this sense theology and ideology always go together, and in most cases unawares. The struggle of Paul with *officiality* of Israel's identity is a case in point (cf. Rom 9-11). The myopic national ideology of the people of Israel/Jews (*volksideologie*) blinded official Judaism from seeing the new theological era dawning in Jesus as the awaited Messiah. Ethnocentric, national-political religiosity was the main obstacle in reading the signs of the time. Religious leaders were much more concerned about preserving the status quo by giving theological sanction to the prevailing establishment of the time (cf. Boesak 1977:103). This can happen to any religion if it is confused with human will. In fact, with the Constantinian Christianity, this has been the case. Since Constantine, slowly but

⁴² Prof. Stuart Bate captures well this sacred factor of human life in his book, *Human Life is Cultural*.

surely the persecuted became the prime persecutor *in Jesus' name*. The Gospel was twisted constantly to defend one's own interests and one's own society. Hence it is a fact that *evangelization is always cultural*.

If we do not learn from history we will continue to do the same mistakes *in God's name*. But human arrogance, greed and pride a-la-Lucifer *always forget this human primordial depravity in ourselves* (cf. Genesis 3); especially if "our God" in this context seems to be more "powerful" politically and economically than "your God". One of the *constant reminders* of the purpose and identity of Israel by Yahweh, was that they *should never forget who they were before* Yahweh raised them up to be a great people/nation (cf. Exodus 19:4). Thus the core of the Decalogue Covenant made a dialectical bi-polarity, "who Israel was before the calling" and "who they are now"; therefore they should not think themselves better in principle (*de iure*) than all other peoples of the human race when their mandate of bringing the Messiah was completed (cf. Exodus 20:1. 19:4-6. Malachi 3:22-24). This was also the core of Paul's evangelization (cf. Rom 3).

The humble early life of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) also gave him enough wisdom to remind followers of Islam to be always gentle with strangers and outsider, always treating one's enemies humanely (cf. Lings 1983:58-59). For him an authentic prophet is discernible by three characteristics: Acknowledging that God always sends prophets in each culture, and therefore no culture should be despised; secondly, whenever one finds truth in any culture, credit must always be given where it is due; and lastly, a true prophet follows truth all the way unconditionally, regardless of costs. More will be said about Muhammad later. In the meantime our bone of contention concerns the Holy Finger of God among those *who boldly claim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah; the universal Saviour of the world*. We look briefly at the special features of the following churches: The Jewish-Hebrew or *Petrine church*, the Jewish-Gentile or *Pauline church*, the Byzantine/Greek or *Imperial church*, the *Arabic church*, the *Orthodox/Eastern church* and the colonial or the *Latin/Western church*. Through our interrogation, we will do our best to separate wheat from chaff while giving credit where it is due.

The Petrine church (Jewish culture): Basically the Good News here is the Gospel of Jesus according to Jewish culture in which *circumcision epitomizes salvation*. This church consists of those who actually walked, dined and talked with Jesus of Nazareth. They are his twelve apostles and many other disciples including his own mother Mary. Its leadership has Peter as its head; and it is referred to by Paul in full, while at the same time Paul makes the crucial distinction between his mission and that of Peter: “On the contrary, they [Jerusalem church leadership] recognized that I had been commissioned to preach the Good News to the uncircumcised just as Peter had been commissioned to preach it to the circumcised. The same person whose action had made Peter the apostle of the circumcised had given me a similar mission to the pagans [i.e. all other peoples of the human race]. So, James, Cephas and John, these leaders, these pillars, shook hands with Barnabas and me as a sign of partnership; we were to go to the pagans and they to the circumcised. The only thing they insisted on was that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do” (Gal 2:7-10). The headquarters of this church initially was in Jerusalem but with the increasing persecution the last remnants seem to have fled to Pella because of that persecution (cf. Brown 1990:1251f). Some like to call this Jerusalem church the Ebionite church because of its theological understanding of the nature of Jesus. This church emphasised more the humanity of Christ and would not have much difficulty with the understanding of Fr Arius that Jesus’ divinity should not be put on a par with that of God the Father. The First Council/Synod of the Christian Church took place under the leadership of this Petrine church (cf. Acts 15). This church eventually came to resent Paul’s understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation; it resented the Pauline church because the Petrine church could not understand why salvation “suddenly” should exclude circumcision (cf. Gal 2:11-14). Paul belongs to this church by default; he loved it dearly but he had to *abandon* it (but not *reject* it) because of the Good News through/by/in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 9-11).

The Pauline church (Jewish-Gentile culture): Basically the Good News here is the Gospel of Jesus according to all cultures of the world. The central leader here is Paul of

Tarsus; the persecutor of the Church of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Acts 9:5⁴³), and murderer, if not actually so, at least in complicity (cf. Acts 8:1). It is this “enemy” of the Church who was chosen by the *Risen Lord himself* to reconcile the world to God the Creator of all humankind by even overtaking former “historical” apostles including Peter (cf. Acts 9:15-16). It is the Christianity of this “enemy of God” that became unique and unparalleled in the history of human becoming (cf. McKenzie 1965:651). Paul’s church became a vibrant place of the Holy Spirit of the Risen Lord where healing, miracles and radical witness were tangible realities (cf. 1Cor 2:1-16). Paul’s church is there for “all rainbow people of the human race” and nothing else (cf. Acts 22:15), precisely because God wants everyone saved (cf. 1Tim 2:4), and there is only one redeemer of humankind who is Jesus *the* Christ = Messiah (cf. 1Tim 4:10). The *authentic* body of Christ (the Church) has nothing much to do with speculation and the guarding of “the deposit of the Faith”, but has everything to do with the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the believing community (cf. 1Cor 2:4). It has little to do with debates on “apostolic succession and salvation by faith alone or the importance of Patristics”, but has everything to do with the unique and highest quality of *actual*⁴⁴ existence concerning what it means to be free, what it means to be human, and above all what it means to embrace an all-around meaningful God (cf. Mt 5. 1Cor 13). In short, the true Church of Christ “subsists”, at least as a minimum requirement, where authentic, compassionate real love is the *constant* tangible reality (cf. Mt 7:1-27. 1Cor 13.13). It is through this Pauline church that today we have almost all the scripture concerning what it means to be free, what it means to be human, and, above all, what it means to embrace a true meaningful all-around God *revealed* in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit of the Risen Lord is at the heart of this church already *uniquely reconciling* this whole world to God in Christ (cf. Jn 3:16f), not by oratory or polished sermons and university degrees theses, but by power of the Risen Lord. For the Pauline church the Good News is that *now* in Jesus of Nazareth all are equal before God, both Jews

⁴³ “Saul asked: Who are you, Lord? The reply came, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting’”. The Risen Lord goes on to say, “*I myself* I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:16)

(classical monotheism) and Gentiles (polytheism with its many faces), and no person can *now* afford to say he/she is more important than others in the eyes of God the Creator of *all-that-is* (cf. Rom 3-8). In Christ Jesus, no person can *now* afford to be “more equal than others” before God as in the *Animal Farm* story; precisely because God is the “Parent” of all humankind (cf. Gen 1:26-30; Mk 10:6f; Acts 17:16-34). Oh yes!, God, according to God’s mysterious Ways, might have allowed divisions and favouritism in the past for a hidden salvific purpose (cf. Eph 1:1-14), but *not anymore* for those who embrace Jesus of Nazareth in true Faith (cf. Rom 1:16-17). These become true sons and daughters of Abraham (cf. Gal 3-4).

Therefore, no distinctions *anymore* should be made between Jews and pagans, between slaves and those freed, between men and women, between the learned and the unlearned, between the touchables and the untouchables, between those so-called “non-straight” and those called “straight”, between witches and non-witches, between abortionists and non-abortionists, between drunkards and non-drunkards, between Hippies and non-Hippies, between Tsotsis and non-Tsotsis, between serial killers and non-serial killers, between rapists and non-rapists, between dictators and non-dictators, between child-molesters and non child-molesters, between masturbators and non-masturbators, between Christians and non-Christians, between prostitutes and non-prostitutes, between Americans and the so-called Red Indians, between Canadians and the Inuit, between Afrikaners and *ander volke* (other peoples), between the poor and the rich, between the haves and the have-nots, between capitalists and communists, between the ugly and the beautiful, between the tall and the short, between the fat and the thin, between the sick and the healthy, between smokers and non-smokers, between tax-payers and the non tax-payers, between employers and workers, between students and teachers, between black and white, between parents and children, between girl and boy, between husband and wife, between married and unmarried, between barren and fertile women, between lady and gentleman, between girl-friend and boy-friend, between young and old, between local and expatriate, between the HIV-positive and the HIV-negative, between proletariat and bourgeoisie,

⁴⁴ The actual “is” of life as opposed to wishful thinking/dreaming of what is supposed to be the case; the question of the “ought”.

between kings, presidents and citizens, between Makwerekwere⁴⁵ and citizens, between priests, ministers, *Dominees*, and all preachers (great and small), between church-goers and non church-goers, between clergy and people, pope and people, bishop and people, nun and people, between my family and your family, between my children and your children, between your wife and my wife; between your girl-friend and my girl-friend, between my boy-friend and your boy-friend. No more difference is to be made in the treatment between Jews and Palestinians, suicide bomber and non suicide bombers, between thieves and those who do not steal, between wife-bashers and good husbands, between hijackers and non hijackers, between those who wage wars and those who do not. No more difference is to be made between my property and your property, between my money and your money, between Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox, between Jews, Christians and Moslems, between Christians and Hindus, between Christians and Buddhists, between Christians and Tribal Traditionalists etc., precisely because of the *unique and unsurpassable position Jesus of Nazareth occupies in the primordial reconciling Plan of God concerning all peoples of the human race* (cf. Mt 5⁴⁶. Gal 3:23-29).

For the Pauline church to encounter God in Christ is to be forgiven unconditionally without charge; it is to live abundantly in grace, and it is to give abundantly with amazing gratitude because this, in brief, is what the kingdom of God is all about (cf. Mt 20:1-16. Gal 5:13-24). Using a modern monetary parable today, the late Fr Tony D'Alton OMI, captures well the unique nature of the kingdom of God for us: "Yesterday is a stale cheque – forget it. Tomorrow is a promissory note – leave it. Today is ready cash – spend it [and spend it abundantly with great gratitude offending no one; *and we mean no one*]" (cf. Orsmond 2000:33). That is how the Pauline church would understand God's love today.

If any weakness can be directed against this type of church, it is that maybe meaningful authentic freedom was brought too soon for human beings. The best accusation we can

⁴⁵ Discriminatory name in South Africa given to Africans from other African countries.

⁴⁶ "It-was-said" sayings are crucial here because Jesus of Nazareth has the audacity of putting himself on par with Yahweh; it is as if *creating* takes place as in Genesis.

imagine here is the one levelled against Jesus regarding his second Coming, and this is described in the famous novel of Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, where Jesus is arrested by the Inquisition for disturbing the peace, for threatening law and order in the world: “The Grand Inquisitor tries to justify his decision [of arrest by defining to Jesus ‘what “true” freedom is all about’]. The heart of his argument is that Jesus lived to set mankind free but that [in fact humankind] does not really want and cannot bear freedom” (Clark 1981:131). Unfortunately, as we saw above, it was when the Spirit of this church was dispensed with in the Byzantine church, that the Spirit of the Risen Lord also dispensed itself from that heavily hellenised church (cf. Bosch 1991:196).

The Imperial church (Greek culture): Basically the Good News here is the Gospel of Jesus according to Greek culture (Hellenisation). The benevolence in this church is Emperor Constantine who felt indebted to thank the “God of Christians” for giving him military victory over Licinius in 324, so the story goes (cf. Baus 1980:3). The Church Fathers, especially the “first” ecclesiastical historian Eusebius (cf. Boys 2000:50), saw in this man the first Christian King on earth⁴⁷, despite the fact that in 326 Constantine shockingly executed his son Crispus and his own wife Fausta in suspicion of illicit relationship. Fausta was stepmother to Crispus (cf. Baus 1980:12f). This type of behaviour for the “unbaptised” Christian King or Emperor did not deter the Bishops to give thanks to the “Risen Lord” for unbelievable blessings unleashed through Constantine. Constantine made sure that he flatters and buys his way in every way possible. From building Christian churches all over the empire, giving power and prestige to the hierarchy, and persecuting or suppressing any rival religions to Christianity.

As we saw above, by gaining official approval, the Church was to exist *unopposed*; and this self-understanding gradually took an unfortunate turn to the point of no return. The

⁴⁷ “Although, at the beginning of Constantine’s sole rule, the adherents of the Christian religion in the Roman Empire constituted only a considerable minority, they were without any doubt infected by an unbounded optimism in regard to the future. To the Church historian Eusebius and his readers, Constantine was the servant and friend of God, who had had him ‘shine out of the deepest gloom and the darkest night as a great light and as a deliverer for all.’ ‘Now every fear that had once oppressed men was taken from them. Festive days were celebrated with splendour and pomp; everything was full of light. In the cities as well as in the country, in [cultural] dancing and [liturgical] singing they gave honour first to God, the King

Church replaced the Kingdom of God, and leaders and the emperor within the Church took the centre stage replacing Christ, and the Sacraments replaced the power of the Spirit of the Risen Lord (cf. Boff 1985:201). Beker puts this succinctly: “A mystical doctrine of the church catholic displaces the idea of the church as proleptic reality. (It) is now regarded as the company of the spiritual elite, which with their endowment of the Spirit already actualizes the kingdom of God in their soul. In this setting, the preexistent status of the church, its ontological character, and its status as an imperishable body become [for the first time] the focal concerns” (Boff 1985:201). The Faith-tragedy is a triple *coup de grace*:

- * The Kingdom of God as the focus of salvation (cf. Mk 1:15) was *replaced* by the kingdom of the Church.
- * Jesus as the Head of the Church was *replaced* by Church officials (especially the bishops) as the head of the Church in their *collegiality*.
- * The graces given by God through the Holy Spirit were *replaced* by the Sacraments where bishops-in-collegiality (later magisterium in the West) could have monopoly on the Holy Spirit.

These blasphemous replacements are at the heart of inauthentic Christianity that is *still* doing havoc in the world today *in Jesus' name* (cf. Nolan 1976:3). The replacing of Jesus Christ as *the only Head of the Church* led to horrible consequences where *salvation* could take place *only* in the "Church"; a Church in which human beings could decide "who goes to heaven and who goes to hell", and certain texts were manipulated to deliver accordingly (cf. Mt 16:18-19; 18:17-18). Some theologians of the time even dared to proclaim the annoying news (as opposed to Good News = *euaggelion*) that *outside the Church there is no Salvation*. “This meant that anyone [visibly and officially] outside the church, was there as matter of choice. Jews, heretics, 'pagans', and later, Muslims - indeed more or less anyone - who was not a member of the church had no one but themselves to blame. It is especially in this context that a famous and haunting slogan

of Kings, as they were instructed, and then to the pious Emperor and his sons, beloved by God [the Almighty]” (Baus 1980:3).

was born, namely, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ('outside the church, there is no salvation'). For a person to be outside the church could only mean one thing, namely, that the person had taken a free and deliberate decision to reject the Gospel of salvation. There was no other explanation, no other excuse" (cf. Merrigan 2001:2). Today we still hear the same theological nonsense that "in the Church there is no democracy". Bishops and inauthentic church officials are still doing their best to barricade Jesus outside human salvation. By the time of the Chalcedonian Council, Jesus' unique story had slowly but surely moved towards a point of no return, and the Church in a large measure had in reality become a *museum for the deposit of Faith*⁴⁸. *Much of the dangerous memory of Jesus of Nazareth, as Metz beautifully puts it, had already faded away. For us the first great schism confirmed the forgetfulness of that saving power of the Spirit of the Risen Lord and Jesus as the only unsurpassable and unique Saviour of all people of the human race.*

But there were still some positive experiences at these Councils, especially in the participation of theologians and "ordinary" Christians in formulating doctrinal matters concerning *authentic apostolic* Christian Faith. The most important thing to learn from those who attended the Nicea Council is that, "Even at [this] first general council there were men who would today be called *periti*, theological advisers of the bishops, as, for example, the youthful [African] deacon Athanasius of Alexandria, who accompanied Alexander [bishop of Alexandria in Egypt] often intervened in the debates. In addition, there were present a number of interested educated laymen, who eagerly discussed the progress of the discussions among themselves" (Baus 1980:24).

The sin of Supersessionism⁴⁹: One fatal mistake made by the Patristic church was to think that Christians were *now* a New Israel (*a new people of God*) replacing the Jews in a different way that Paul understood it (cf. Rom 9-11):

⁴⁸This is when "faith" is reduced to "right" belief; and this belief becomes an end in itself. It would take centuries before Martin Luther would try to challenge this kind of unbecoming (dead) faith in the 16th century.

⁴⁹ "Supersessionism, from the Latin, *supersedere* (to sit upon, to preside over), is the theological claim that Christians have replaced the Jews as God's people because the Jews rejected Jesus. Three interrelated

Christianity shared in the Jewish dream of universalism but carried it much farther [especially in Pauline churches]. Many of the Jews had long claimed universality for their faith and had foretold a time when all [peoples of the human race] would benefit from it (Book of Jonah. Is 2:1-4). Few if any, however, had been able to divorce themselves from their racial exclusiveness. The main currents of Christianity broke the bounds set by this restrictive racialism. Here lay much of the secret of their power. While Christianity went farther toward inclusiveness than did Judaism, it inherited something of the latter's pride. Christians thought of themselves as the true Israel, the people whom God [Yahweh] had chosen from among the nations after the majority of the Jews, by their refusal to accept [Yahweh's] Messiah, had been cast off. Salvation, so they held, was only through Christ. Hospitable though they often were practices and intellectual conceptions from other faiths and systems, toward the systems themselves they continued intolerant and often scornful. Seers and philosophers outside the Jewish-Christian tradition might have some angles of the truth, but the full truth was in the Christian revelation (Latourette 1964:302-303).

The replacement theory fuelled by Johannine apparent hatred against “Jews” was construed from the second century through the mighty Imperial church to our day where the horrors of the Holocaust forced many a theologian to reconsider our ugly past of twisting historical and theological facts to fit our evil ways. “Jewish brothers and sisters [today] point out what they felt should have been obvious: that the flames of anti-Semitism that burned in Nazi Germany (and throughout European history) were fed, if not caused, by Christian convictions that Jesus was the Messiah meant to bring Jews from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Jews who refused this invitation were guilty in heavenly courts – therefore, also in civil courts. And so [Roman] Catholic theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether voiced her well-known verdict on Christian theology: ‘Theologically, anti-Judaism developed as the left hand of christology. Anti-Judaism was the negative side of the Christian affirmation that Jesus was the Christ.’ If Jesus is understood to be the replacement or fulfilment of Judaism – and of all other religions – then all those who have not yet known him, and certainly all those who turn their backs and adhere to their ‘old’ testaments and ways, are underdeveloped to say the least – or, in the words of the old Good Friday [Roman] Catholic liturgy, ‘perfidious’.” (Knitter 2002:136). The sin of Supersessionism will continue to haunt Christianity for a long time to come. It was within this kind of atmosphere that the coming of Prophet Muhammad

claims are inherent in supersessionism: (1) the New Testament fulfils the Old Testament; (2) the church replaces the Jews as God's people; and (3) Judaism is obsolete, its covenant abrogated” (Boys 2000:10-11).

(p.b.u.h.) as the “awaited prophet”, and the crucial importance of the (“heretical”) Nestorian Christianity, make perfect sense.

Tragic consequences of being “New Israel”: The era of the Church Fathers paid heavily for the sin of Supersessionism, and that error is still with us today; and unless Christian attitude changes radically in this regard, *dialogue with Judaism will remain a non starter with the ball squarely in the Christian court*. Syncretistic understanding of Christian salvation led to a point where the understanding of “holiness” in Christ became highly confused. Instead of transforming the “yeast of this *Old World*” with authentic salvation (cf. Lk 22:24-27) in the Spirit of the Risen Lord (cf. Rom 3. Gal 3-5), the imperial Church gave in without being aware, and the foundation of inequality in sharing *equally* the graces from Christ in the Church was laid. As in the theocracy of Israel, believers were then to be divided into two basic categories in the history of the Church: Priests (the clergy) and “people of God”⁵⁰. What facilitated this disgrace *in Jesus’ name?*:

In 416 Theodosius II issued a decree that only Christians were allowed to do military service. Nevertheless in the exemption of the clergy from military duties, and the rise of monasticism, the Christian ideal of non-violence and keeping clear of worldly affairs was still preserved [even though in a highly compromised manner], but as an evangelical counsel binding on only some of the faithful (SACBC 1985:67).

Later on St Martin Luther would be sent by God to undo this unGospel behaviour. Unfortunately even up to this day in some Christian traditions we still find this unGospel division of Christian believers. Only acceptance of Kubler-Ross and repentance in the calibre of John the Baptist might help. Prof. Kubler-Ross’ conversion goes through five stages of accepting deep crisis, but eventually transcending it in a mature, responsible

⁵⁰ In theocratic Israel Priests (Pharisees etc.) and theologians (Scribes) called such people the “rabble”; those who do not know the Law. Today we call the Laity or “People of God” those who really do not know much about Canon Law and Scriptures. They are not a special elite for “holiness”. This is why to become a priest or religious (nun or monk) came to be understood as the highest calling to serve *the* God of Jesus Christ. What a pity! Today in some Christian traditions or churches women still cannot occupy high positions sacramentally precisely because of misplaced Jewish consciousness in the *unique theocratic* Church of Christ (cf. Mk 3:28-29. Gal 3:28-29). By playing Jewish, the Patristic church did the Gospel a great disservice (cf. Mt 23:13-15). Only authentic repentance of Kubler-Ross and that of John the Baptist will save the situation, and vindicate once more that the parable of the prodigal *child* (cf. Lk 15:1-32) is still relevant even today especially for those of us *who still think of ourselves as “self-righteous”* towards other faiths, especially Judaism (cf. Lk 18:9-14).

manner: Denial and isolation, anger, negotiation/bargaining, depression and acceptance.

The personality and fiery preaching of John the Baptist is well known:

There had been no prophet in Israel for a very long time. Every one was painfully aware of this as all the literature of the period attests. The spirit of prophecy had been quenched. God was silent. All one could hear was 'the echo of his voice'. It was even felt that certain decisions would have to be postponed 'until a trustworthy prophet should arise' (1 Macc 14:41; see also 4:45-46). This silence was broken by the voice of John the Baptist in the wilderness. His style of life, his way of speaking and his message were a conscious revival of the traditions of the prophets. The evidence we have about him, both within the New Testament and outside of it, is unanimous on this point. John's prophetic message was a simple one. God was angry with his people and he planned to condemn and punish them. ... God's fiery judgement upon Israel would be executed, according to John, by a human being. John spoke of him as 'the one who is to come' (Mt 3:11 par; Mt 11:3 par). He is even now standing ready with his axe or his winnowing-fan. 'He will baptize you with ... fire' (Mt 3:11 par).

A prophecy is not a prediction; it is a warning or a promise. The prophet warns Israel about God's judgment and promises God's salvation. Both the warning and the promise are conditional. They depend upon the free response of the people of Israel. If Israel does not change; the consequences will be disastrous. If Israel does change; there will be an abundance of blessings. The practical purpose of a prophecy is to persuade the people to change or repent. Every prophet appealed for a conversion. ... John appealed to everyone to change: sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors and soldiers as well as scribes and Pharisees (Lk 3:12, 14; Mt 21:32). He even challenged the Jewish king or tetrarch, Herod Antipas (Mk 6:18 par; Lk 3:19). (Nolan 1976:14f)

Jesus approved very much this dynamic "unusual" preaching of John; he chose to be baptised by him rather than by other preachers of the time (cf. Nolan 1976:10-19). If this repentance can take place among us inauthentic Christians, then prophet Micah will accompany us and will remind us of what the God of Abraham always wants among his/her *obedient* children: 'What does the Lord Yahweh ask of you? Only this: to act justly, to love mercifully and tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God who is the Creator of all peoples of the human race' (cf. Micah 6: 8). If we are sincere in longing for "The things that make for peace", then '... the [same] Lord of peace *personally* will give us all peace at all times and in all ways' (cf. 2Thess 3:16).

The Eastern church (Greek culture): This church today is known as "Orthodox" in its many faces. After the Great Schism it retained much of what the Imperial church was all

about with some adaptations. But God had already raised up the Arabic culture to high prominence in Islam in order to enrich the human race even more. God did this so that later, in our time, those with a racial superiority complex should be abandoned and shunned beyond belief; *abandoned but not rejected*. Today we are all witnesses to the fact that God's ways are not our ways, and God's wisdom is beyond reach, thus making salvation a pure gift from God for peoples of the human race (cf. 1Cor 1:17-31). This will become clearer as we go along.

Arabic church (Arabic culture): The early Arabic world had long been in intense interaction with other peoples in Palestine and Africa. When christianisation started in the Roman Empire, many Arabic tribes were also baptised and played an influential role in spreading Christianity long before Muhammad founded Islam (cf. Latourette 1964:286-291). But since later on the Imperial church treated them badly and became so inauthentic by marrying the State, when Islam appeared, the Arabic church in great bulk embraced it much easier because the *Islam of Muhammad*⁵¹ had no problems with Christianity as long as it was not Byzantine. Also, when Nestorius and others were expelled by the "Orthodoxy" of Byzantine (at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.), they found the Arabic church ready to absorb them. The truth of the matter is that "There were, however, also Christian churches outside the borders of the Roman Empire. What is more, these churches were often far more actively involved in mission than the increasingly monolithic 'main' church [of Byzantine]. Western Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) tend to give attention only to the westward movement of the faith, from the primitive Semitic church, via the Greek church to the Latin church and other European churches and those which were founded through their missionary efforts. It is high time that Western Christians took notice also of the missionary fervour and expansion of the Nestorians and other groups further to the East. In the first centuries the church indeed spread its arms widely. It did not incarnate itself only in the cultures and thought-forms of the Greeks and the Romans but also expressed itself through the liturgies of other cultures: Coptic, Syriac, Maronite, Armenian, Ethiopian, Indian, and even Chinese" (Bosch 1991:203).

⁵¹ We here mean "pure" Islam of Muhammad; the real Prophet Muhammad *before* Islam.

Many a Christian will be shocked to hear that this type of church ever existed. Prejudices, twisting and falsification of historical facts and pure hatred for the “Muhammadans”, will blind many towards this historical fact. Yet without this church Monophysite, Jacobite and Nestorian Christianity won’t make much sense. And the crucial importance of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in the history of God’s Grand Plan of reconciling the world to Godself would be completely missed (cf. Acts 17:16-34). There are more revelations coming out that maybe Paul’s *first* missionary activity was somewhere in Arabia (cf. Gal 1:17), probably among the Nabataeans whose ruling affected the Antiochene church in many ways (cf. 2Cor 10:32-33). The history of this Arabian nation, direct descendants of Patriarch Ishmael, is extricably intertwined with the descendants of Patriarch Isaac (cf. Nolan 1976:16f). If true (which we suspect to be so) Paul’s activity there would have taken place 536 years before Muhammad was born⁵². While the positive achievements of the Byzantine church lies in the fact that it formulated the Creeds that are foundational in many ways to the Christian Faith today, unawares, it strengthened the Arabic church or Syrian (“Nestorian”) church which later welcomed Islamic religion easily. The success of Islam is unthinkable without this “heretical” church. The “worshipping” of idols, especially in the form of icons, destroyed the Byzantine church and eventually capitulated to a stronger religion with a strong message of monotheism namely, Islam. Within a short space of time famous Biblical centres of missionary journeys of Paul fell like dominoes to Islam, or should we say fell like dominoes to the “Islamic church”?⁵³ It is as if Yahweh refused the populations of the Greek Empire to go back to former forms of paganism (idolatry). In this sense, as we will see later, the coming into the scene of the Prophet was not a mistake or outside the Grand saving Plan of the Father of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Gal 4:21-31)⁵⁴.

⁵² Paul’s conversion and call took place around 34 A.D. (Jones 1966:252), while Prophet Muhammad was born 570 A.D. (Cruze 1999:13).

⁵³ What is the true Spirit of the Risen Lord happy with? Religion that worships idols under many shades of justifications and slippery inauthenticity or the one that cries out in total dedication: “Set up no other deity alongside the only One God = Allah”?

⁵⁴ Be aware that it is clear here that Paul held the covenant through Ishmael in a high esteem; and we are convinced that he preached there in Arabia about the Risen Lord one way or another (cf. Gal 4:21-31).

The Western church (Latin culture): After the Great Schism, this came to be known more and more as the western church. This church actually came into being through Charles Martel's grandson Charlemagne around the year 800 A.D. Charles Martel, Frankish ruler, stopped the "spiritual greediness" of Islam near Poitiers in 732 A.D., in a way paving the way for the great Charlemagne. "[Charlemagne, like Constantine,] enjoyed pomp and ceremony, and the company of women; he had five wives and numerous mistresses. If Charlemagne was a man of large appetites, he was also a man of large vision and enterprise. His vision was no more, no less than to restore the power and glory of the imperial Rome replacing the imperial Constantinople that had fallen to Islam. He succeeded brilliantly. Through him the Bishop of Rome, the first time in the history of Christianity, slowly but surely asserted himself lord over all other Christian traditional sees (papal infallibility). From the time he became King of the Franks in 768 to his death in 814, all of Western Europe except England, Scandinavia, southern Italy and Moslem Spain had fallen to him. On Christmas Day in 800, Charlemagne's triumph was consecrated by his coronation in St. Peter's as the new head of the Roman Empire in the West. Few events were to leave a deeper mark on the history of Europe. Although under Charlemagne's weakling heirs the Empire was fated to fall part, some 150 years after his death it was to be revived by a great German King, Otto I, as the Holy Roman Empire, minus France this time, but incorporating Germany and northern Italy. It would flourish as a great reality until the 13th century and linger as a reality of sorts until the 19th. It would be mocked by Voltaire as neither holy nor Roman nor empire, its borders would be reduced, yet to its declining days it would continue to cast its shadow on the map, the politics and the shifting strategies of Europe" (Fremantle 1966:19).

Christianity in Europe spread faster after this period, and all people of Europe systematically were brought under the banner of the cross. Before that, the large number was still as pagan as all of us⁵⁵. Before this time the Christian centre was Constantinople or New Rome. It is with the Crusades that one can say that Old Rome started to assert its power in the West as the spiritual centre of Europe or the Latin church. In other words,

⁵⁵ The tragedy is that many European Christians today are not conscious of this fact, and are so arrogant that they attribute Christianity an "European religion". What ignorance!

God allowed the Latin church to Christianize Europe through people like Ireaneus, Augustine, and believers in the likes of the tough and strict Irish monks etc; and later on God would choose the Latin church to spread the Gospel to most parts of the world, save China, India and Japan. *It is through colonialism that Europe is much of what it is today.* It is from this church that the Roman catholic church and the Protestant churches came into being 487 years ago⁵⁶. While God chose the Latin church to “civilise” Germanic tribes and many other tribes in Europe, he also chose Islam to “civilise” many Arabic tribes, but disallowed them both, in large degree to interfere with China, India and Japan. Why? Only God the Creator knows. Our estimate is that about two billion human beings have never embraced Islam or Christianity in any way in these three countries. Maybe God made things to be in this way so that these two religions namely, Islam and Christianity have nothing to boast about in the numbers of their converts. The Final Grand Plan of Salvation lies with God, God the Ultimate Reality (Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba). We will have to stop our traditional fierce, imperial and colonial missionary consciousness in which playing God the Creator, and harming and disfiguring humanity, have been the order of the day since the benevolent era of “Saint” Constantine.

Over time the Latin church, in deep hatred, divided itself further into Protestantism and Roman “catholic” churches. While the Protestant tradition tried its best to purge itself of inauthenticity and exorcise its members of the Byzantine baggage, the Roman catholic church retained much of the ugliness of the Byzantine/Imperial church. But when it came to colonialism, both traditions in different degrees shared the “holy” spoil gladly. Enrique Dussel, one of the Liberation theologians of our time, summarises well the sin of this Western church which is still eating at the fibre of the Gospel today:

The expansion of [colonial] Christianity from the fourteenth century onwards, that is to say in modern times, had many positive aspects, but also a fundamental limitation. It was the expansion of Christendom [meaning inauthentic Christianity], as a total historical package, which included, implicitly although not always explicitly, the Christian religion, the churches (first the [Roman] Catholic, then the Protestant from the eighteenth century

⁵⁶ 2004 - 1517 = 487 years. And this contradicts vehemently the Roman catholic version that, *unlike other traditions*, their tradition goes all the way back to Jesus himself; what nonsense! Spiritually and “historically” all three traditions go back namely to Jesus one way or another.

onwards). Kiekegaard criticised Christendom in the name of Christianity. Christendom was the 'making worldly' of Christianity, making it a Church identified with the State, a 'positive', objectified, alienated Christianity. The prophet of Copenhagen based his criticism on the subjective, internal values of tormented individuality which called for a 'world turned upside down'. In fact Christianity is Christendom turned upside down, but perhaps this inversion should have a more radical, essential basis (Elizondo 1981:44).

It must be borne in mind that Western church, because of its present political and economical control in the world, despises all other theologies and spiritualities. Any theology and spirituality not Western enough and not white enough cannot be the standard for Truth, precisely because it cannot be salvific enough (cf. Dussel 1985:1-15. Johnson E. 1997:42). Yet the "truth" of this church is the *furthest* from the Pauline church as compared with other churches today. The Byzantine church might have done some blunders, but the Latin/Western church should have done better coming after it. The Protestants should have done even better after the warning of Reformers, but the wealth and riches of this world seem to have throttled that unique divine insight (cf. Mk 4:18-19). It is ironic that the Roman catholic church that prides itself so much of following in the footsteps of St Peter, know so little of him (cf. Mt 16:13-20, 30-35; Mk 8:27-38; Lk 22:31-34, 54-62; Jn 18:10-27; Acts 10:1-43, 15; Gal 2:11-14). By elevating the Petrine church at the expense of the Pauline church, can only mean that the Roman catholic church will always run in circles concerning what is authentic freedom, authentic humanity and, above all, what is the *nature of power* as envisioned in the life and deeds of the man from Nazareth. Unless authentic repentance takes place within traditional churches, i.e. among those who call themselves Christians today, the preacher will continue to sweat in vain (cf. Mt 7:15-27).

3.2 A crucial authentic verdict according John Zizioulas and other theologians

The early Church at the Jerusalem Council under the leadership of Peter and James, was faced with the first challenge of the reality of other religions and different ideas of salvation; about who "goes to hell and who goes to heaven", who is acceptable to God and who is not. After much deliberations, that *foundational* Christian Council resolved

the impasse by *rejecting* what was thought to be contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and *accepted* that which was positive and agreeable with the Gospel demands (cf. Acts 15). That should have set the pace in Christian theology to recognise that *there was a time when Jesus of Nazareth was not there historically in the world* (cf. Gal 4:4), and God the Father was always there sustaining everyone prior to the coming of Jesus “in flesh”. Some Orthodox theologians call this the *two-handed-theology* of the presence of the Spirit of the living God in the world from time immemorial. It is wrong, therefore, to have ever imagined that pagans do not know God one way or another. Inauthentic Christians, drenched in immense neurotic spirituality, fuelled by intense eagerness to destroy other human beings who believed differently accordingly, became highly selective in reading the Scripture (cf. Acts 17:22-34. Rom 1:18-25). Unfortunately, by ignoring this fact, they diminished their own humanity (cf. Mt 23:15). Simple logic tells us that there were people of other religions besides Israel, and that Jesus was not so stupid not to realise that (cf. Mt 5: 47-48). Unfortunately nothing has changed much, even today.

Is it not true that the following is still taking place even today?:

‘Oh no! no! no!, we know you Roman Catholics!’. *‘Oh no! no! no!, we know you Protestants!’.* *Oh no! no! no!, we know you Orthodox!’.* *‘Oh no! no! no!, we know you Moslems!’.* *‘Oh no! no! no!, we know you Christians and Jews!’ etc.*

Turning original intentions of great religious leaders into ideology; fuelled by twisting and falsifying historical facts, is at the heart of blurring and obliterating the Holy Finger of one Creator, the one Parent of us all, reconciling the world amicably to Self (cf. Jn 3:16f). And this hardening of heart to us is the reality of original sin in the human race and its environment (cf. Rom 8:18-21). What frightens me is that, by the look of things, this hardening of heart seems to be here to stay. I see much hardening of heart coming from the Latin church (from both Protestant and Roman catholic believers) since they are presently so powerful in the world politically and economically. Islam only hardens its heart as an opposition to Christianity; historically and by comparison, Islam has always been on the defensive in attacking or provoking any religion or a people. It is the Latin

church, even more so than the Orthodox church, which is the champion of provoking, attacking and ruthlessly destroying other human beings in great magnitude in the name of its colonial God; hence the Latin church will answer more on the Judgement Day unless someone outclasses it, or authentic repentance becomes a tangible reality on its part.

Prof. John Zizioulas, contemporary prominent Orthodox theologian, lays bare the ugliness and sinfulness of Christians in the world today as we enter the third millennium, and he sees no way out except authentic repentance as preached by John the Baptist. In 2000, at the beginning of the third millennium, he summarised the achievements and failures of both the Eastern and the Western churches and pointed out challenges ahead⁵⁷. His urgent theological call to all Christians (collectively and individually), is to have a special reflective time of "... self-examination and self-criticism. It is in such a spirit that I propose to submit ... certain reflections on the way the Christian Church [can] understand its [unique] ministry and its [unique and unsurpassable] witness in the beginning of the new millennium [of who Jesus of Nazareth really is]" (Zizioulas 2000:1). Below follows his honest and critical summary of where the Christian Church is today.

Achievements: Against all odds, God has preserved the preaching of the Gospel in the Church for the glory of all peoples of the human race. And for this we are thankful. God gave the Church grace to maintain the identity of the Gospel despite many cultures she encountered herself. We are thankful. The fact that wherever the Church goes she makes an impact with the message of the Gospel, even in 'atheistic' countries and places. We are thankful. We are also very thankful for the Orthodox church that, under the communist rule, it survived the official atheistic onslaught.

Failures: The failures and the disappointments are so shocking and telling that I reproduce all of them here lest I am branded a liar! With Zizioulas points here, you will come to understand the lamentations of Niebuhr, Bishop Robinson and Nolan later, and why "atheism" is thriving so easily and is making a mockery of the Gospel Claims,

⁵⁷ www.balamand.edu.lb/theology/ZizioulasLecture.htm.

especially on Sundays and on Christian “holy” days (e.g. Christmas, Good Friday and Easter).

1. There is a failure to truly and deeply christianise the world. The Church’s mission has been either insufficient, as is the case with us Orthodox, or essentially unchristian, as it has happened with much of the missionary zeal and activities of the western Christians. We have mixed up the Gospel with the national and cultural values of a particular time. And we have thus failed to achieve a true inculturation of the Church. In many cases, Christian missions have been confused with the imposition of Christianity on certain peoples without regard to cultural particularities. Christianity has not loved the human beings as much as its Lord did, and we must be sorry for that.

2. There is the tragic division of Christianity itself. Especially the second millennium has witnessed a polemic and hatred among Christians previously unheard of in history. There is little point in trying to prove who is to be blamed for that. Our Desert Fathers have always taught us that we should always blame ourselves for the sins of all the others. Today there is a tendency among the Orthodox to stress the responsibility of the western Christians for the evil of division and for the wrongs done to the Orthodox Church by our Western brothers [and sisters]. History is, of course, clear in witnessing to the fact of a great deal of aggressiveness against the Orthodox on the part of the West. Deep however in the tragic reality of Christian division lies also an inability of the Orthodox to overcome and rise above the psychology of polemic in a true spirit of forgiveness and love. Confessional zeal has often proved stronger than forgiveness and love. The second millennium has been in this respect almost an unfortunate period of the Church’s history.

*3. There has been a failure to interpret the Gospel in existential terms. Fundamentalism, confessionalism, and conservatism have killed the Bible and the dogmas of the Church, turning them into formulae to be preserved rather than lived and experienced. Dogma and ethics have been separated. And the same has happened with the *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*. Piety and theology have become two different domains. In fact the more pious one is, the less of a theologian he or she is. Similar dichotomies have occurred between dogma and canon law, or ecclesiology and Church administration. Bishops have become administrators, and it is almost a disqualification for them if they happen to be theologians. All this has led to a marginalisation of theology from ordinary life, even from Church life.*

4. There is particularly for us Orthodox an infiltration of the Church by nationalism and sometimes ethnophyletism. The idea of autocephaly has become autocephalism, that is a means of serving national or phyletic interests by using the Church for that purpose. The situation with the Orthodox Diaspora in the 20th century is in direct and open violation of Orthodox ecclesiology. There can be little that we can be proud and happy with such a situation, although unfortunately we seem to have blessed it in the most official way. This is what we have inherited from the past, from the two millennia of Church history, some of it offering us reasons to be thankful, while another part giving us grounds for repentance. An awareness of both of these will be extremely helpful as we approach the

new millennium. The problems that this new historical period brings with it will demand a lot of reconsideration of our past (Zizioulas 2000:3).

In the West, in 1957 Richard Niebuhr dropped a bombshell: “[Western Christianity has created a faith by which] the romantic conception of the kingdom of God involves no discontinuities, no crises, no tragedies, or sacrifices, no loss of all things, no cross, and resurrection. ... [And now we have a Church with a very nice God]; a God without wrath bringing men and [women] without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross” (Vidler 1961:212f). In 1963, Bishop John Robinson published his famous/“notorious” book entitled, *Honest to God*. Out of pure disillusionment, the Bishop came to the conclusion that maybe classical Christianity has always been “a fraud”; maybe the time has come to simply admit *out of honesty* that we have got it all wrong. By this book, he "... wanted to clear his own mind and give expression to his dissatisfaction with accepted ideas about God, Christ, the Church, prayer, etc. The Bishop of Woolwich seemed to be saying instead that nowadays there was more truth to break forth out of the writings of Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer [than what is going on in churches every Sunday and the year around]. ... *Honest to God* quickly became a best-seller on a world scale and a universal talking-point. ... Certainly, no bishop had sparked off such a commotion [since a long time]. While some of the devout were shocked by *Honest to God*, multitudes of readers welcomed it both as a frank and patently honest acknowledgement of the need for a new deal in theology and as an attempt to express the gist of the Christian faith in a fresh frame of reference" (Vidler19961:274f). Then in 1976 Albert Nolan concluded: “Jesus cannot be fully identified with that great religious phenomenon of the Western world known as Christianity. He was much more than the founder of one of the world’s great religions. He stands above Christianity as the judge of all it has done in his name. Nor can historical Christianity claim him as its exclusive possession. Jesus belongs to all [peoples of the human race]” (Nolan 1976:3).

3.3 Third World church calls for authentic repentance from colonial church

Third World theologians and Christians are unanimous that colonial Christianity and European and North American church owe them a great deal for reducing them to lap dog status *in Jesus' name*. But since revenge is not Christ's way, authentic acceptance in the fashion of Kubler-Ross and authentic repentance in the fashion of John the Baptist would suffice if *samewerking* (pulling together anew) is going to be meaningful at all. But is the First World church prepared to honestly say, "*mea culpa, mea culpa et mea maxima culpa?*" Only history will tell. What should this church repent from? Theologians Oscar Bimwenyi and Leonardo Boff summarise it all:

Twelve years ago [1982] the Zairean theologian Oscar Bimwenyi lamented that African Christians are obliged to pray to God with a liturgy that is not theirs, to live a morality which takes no account of their own life context, to follow a Canon Law which has nothing to do with African juridical realities, and to reflect on the truths of faith using the philosophical and theological categories of the other Christian communities which evangelised them. Leonardo Boff tells the same story when he recounts the history of the 'colonial evangelisation' of Latin America. This evangelisation included a great deal of violence. There was no dialogue, no mutual listening, and no reciprocal learning. There was just direct domination by the European invaders, undoing by bad example what the missionaries taught by their catechesis. Indigenous culture was deliberately undermined. The people were enslaved; their material possessions seized. On the one hand, they were required to accept the Christian Gospel; on the other, the rule of the Iberian monarchs. The African captives who were brought by the heinous slave traffickers to the New World were also forcibly robbed of their culture, and could only preserve their traditional beliefs by giving them an outward appearance of [Roman] Catholicism in the syncretic cults which survive to this day in places like Brazil and Haiti. Such are the sad consequences of an evangelisation which does not dialogue with the culture of those it addresses (Shorter 1994:28f).

In his challenging, daring, and provocative book, *The Coming of the Third Church*, Walbert Bühlmann goes for the jugular at the Church, especially the European tradition: "He sees the Church's mission to humanity entering a new phase, one in which new questions are being asked and radical answers [sought after] because the situations in which men [and women] find themselves cannot be handled along time-honoured lines. ... Now is not a time for lamenting the passing of earlier glories [if they were glories at all *in Jesus' name*]: It is a time for realistic appraisal of the nature of the tasks ahead and for courage and resourcefulness in using the means available for tackling them. The frustration and disillusionment to which many in the western Church are at present a prey

can be overcome. But facts have to be faced – not only by the western Church (for so long the centre of the Church, mothering and nurturing young ‘local Churches’ in the Third World) but also by these ‘young Churches’ themselves, [New wine in fresh containers please!], so that the [true] universal Church may [be born to] serve the needs of ‘the whole person’ [all peoples of the human race] in the revolutionised world of today and tomorrow” (Bühlmann 1974:cover).

From these theologians, representing many others, Christianity is called to self-inspection maybe never paralleled before. And with so much “cheap grace” floating in churches today, as Bonhoeffer rightly diagnosed, each sincere believer must take the ringing bell of these theologians seriously “lest it might be tolling for thee.” This theological bell should be understood both as *alarm* as well as an *invitation*. In 2002 Paul Knitter summarised this existential-faith-calling bell very well when he said, “As an alarm, [this theological challenge] seeks to alert Christians (but not only Christians) to the pressing need to take other religions more seriously, to get to know them, talk with them, work with them. As an invitation, [this call to existential-faith-inspection] intends to show the exciting, life-giving, world-benefiting, faith-deepening benefits that result from engaging and learning about persons who follow other religious ways. [In this sense] the urgent need is also a promising opportunity” (Knitter 2002:xi).

Time Magazine reveals the naked truth about the present undeniable situation of the *official* “Mother church” in Europe:

Christianity is becoming a minority faith in Europe, as church attendance falls, the clergy ages, and scandals and harsh doctrine drive people away. But the faith is reappearing – and thriving – in all sorts of unexpected places. A search for God in Europe, 2003. ... Believers [in Europe are] in the Church, but not in Church. ... In all of Ireland, just one Jesuit priest – Tony O’Riordan from County Cork – will be ordained this year. At least he believes in God; last week, the Church of Denmark suspended a pastor after he told a newspaper that God doesn’t exist. [Things have reached unbelievable proportions that European] governments are severing official ties to the [Christian] faith that has been inextricably linked with European history since the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century. This week the European Union is debating a draft constitution that nods at the ‘spiritual impulse’ in Europe’s ‘heritage’ but makes no mention of God or Christianity – despite the best lobbying efforts of Pope

John Paul II. Most countries no longer have state religions, and there's pressure to disestablish in Britain and Norway, two that still do. The crucifix has long since been taken down from the public schoolhouse walls; today's argument is about whether teachers – or students – should be allowed to wear the Muslim veil. That's a reminder that Europe has good reasons to make the Christian God a little harder to find. In a pluralist society that takes pains not to exclude any religion or culture – and now includes more than 37 million Muslims – the days of Christianity [at least in Europe] as the 'official' religion should be over. This article is very clear that the crisis is in Europe, not the whole world. Top Vatican official confirms this sad state of affairs: "Parish life is essentially dead"⁵⁸. Yet Europe is still the centre of Christianity in many ways.⁵⁹ Thirty seven years ago, that is, in 1966, "...a Time [Magazine] cover story pondered the fate of Christianity and asked, is GOD DEAD? The magazine wasn't the first to pose the question – theologians have lamented society's secularisation for centuries – nor would it be the last. [God] is still not dead, but these days in Europe, [God] is not always in the same old [traditional] places. So it's worth asking: Where has God – and Christian faith – gone? (Time Magazine 16 June 2003:14).

God has gone somewhere for sure! The God of the Risen Lord, as had happened with Paul the persecutor of the Church, will be found today in places where European Christianity thinks impossible precisely because the Spirit of the Risen Lord blows where it wills. So, of European Christianity we say: 'Let go!'. You did your best for 1160⁶⁰ years in trying to understand "who Christ is" and in carrying the Gospel all over the world; now it is the time for you *also* to be led in what it means to be free, what it means to be truly human and above all, in what it means to embrace the living God in the person and vision of Jesus of Nazareth. After all, evangelization is a relay for all peoples of the human race because the true living God, the Father and Mother of all, has no favourites

⁵⁸ "Church attendance has dwindled by more than 30% in Britain since 1980. Over the same period, the percentage of the population [in Europe] claiming membership in a religious denomination has dropped more than 20% in Belgium, 18% in the Netherlands and 16% in France. Christianity remains Europe's main religion, with about 550 million adherents. But the number of Europeans who identify as [Roman] Catholic – by far the biggest denomination on the Continent – has fallen by more than a third since 1978 (Time Magazine June 16, 2003:15).

⁵⁹ It seems the Spirit of the Risen Lord is not there anymore. What an irony! The sooner the European church (both Roman catholicism and Protestantism) realises that, like the Jewish people (Rom 9-11), God has abandoned them (but have not rejected them) and that this Just God is now preparing some places in the world to tell the unique story of Jesus. This truth will be hard to swallow by European Christianity but God gave it a chance and they did their best.

⁶⁰ From the time of Charlemagne (800 A.D.) till 1960's. The 60's in Europe will always be remembered as the theological turning point in many respects.

(cf. Act 10:34-35)⁶¹; this kind of a God proclaimed by Jesus will continue to give each person (each race/tribe, nation etc.) a chance to know Him/Her *till this one and the same God* “becomes all in all” (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

But within the First World church, God will always send prophets to force it to seriously repent and acknowledge that, since Constantine, ecclesiastical timocracy systematically took over. Mr Matteo Artuso from Padua in Italy is one of those prophets. Responding to the Time Magazine quoted above, he had this theological contribution to make to the editor: “Your excellent report on the state of Christianity in Europe missed an important perspective [Time Magazine June 16]. In the *Gospel of Mark*, Jesus says, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.’ Thus Jesus advocated the separation of church and state. In the history of Christianity, many adherents became more interested in the symbols of belief than in the faith itself. Now each of us faces a critical choice: Will I believe and act upon my faith even if it is no longer popular? Christianity is not dead; it is time for the church to abandon the temporal power it has held for centuries and regain its spiritual mission” (Time Magazine 21 July 2003:10). Agreeing with Mr Matteo Artuso, Fr Rohr (the famous critic of the Western Church) rightly concludes:

I am convinced that all Christian denominations are [today] being forced in the West to an inevitable honest and somewhat humiliating conclusion: The vast majority of Christian ministries has been concerned about churching people in the symbolic, restful and very ethnic [and in one’s cultural] belonging systems, rather than real transformation in the Mystery of God. ... And this has legitimated the False Self at the expense of the true living Gospel of the Risen Lord (Rohr 2001:side two)

For us this is the reality of a faith where *seeking first* the kingdom of God has been overtaken by the ugly, heretical reality of *seeking first* the kingdom of the Church⁶². And with this kind of Church, it is impossible for the world to know why Jesus can be said to be unique at all! In this kind of Church Jesus really appears hopeless to save anyone! In

⁶¹ “Then Peter addressed them [the house of Cornelius], ‘I now really understand’, he said, ‘that God has no favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears [this living God] and does what is right is acceptable to [this true and an all-embracing God]’”.

⁶² We call this Ecclesiastical timocracy (cf. Mt 7:15-16; 21-23. 1Tim 4:1)

the meantime the people of Europe, ontologically as sacred beings, will continue to look for God in ‘climbing the Alps, taking long walks across Spain following Santiago de Compostela and Crusade routes of old, in cycling and football tours, strolling in England’s finest gardens etc. “Organized religion may be on the wane in Europe, but one tradition is thriving and changing: the pilgrimage. Some travelers still follow ancient roads of faith. But most others now take a secular path [of discovering the Holy]” (Time Magazine 5-12 July 2004:3).

Conclusion

The Petrine and the Arabic churches will be taken up in the next chapter. But looking at the Orthodox church and the Latin church (both Protestant and Roman churches) and contrasting them with the Pauline church, we regret the reality of the following serious charges, which are totally against the Gospel of the Risen Lord.

Hatred against each other in Christ’s name, idolatry in loving money/wealth (*capitalism*) and prestige (especially in the Western church), and “worship” of icons and images (especially in the Orthodox church) under all theological justifications, summarise well today the serious crisis facing the three traditions of the Church “of Christ”. Christian Faith has been reduced unbelievably to ideological self-interests. Now, if hatred amongst the baptised is so basic, how much more hatred towards those not Christian? The complacency in these divisions proves without doubt that the Spirit of the Risen Lord is somewhere else⁶³ (cf. 1Cor 1:1-31). Christian theologians belong to these churches. Now tell me: How can they have the audacity to go out and tell the “Good News” when “Good News” is nowhere to be found among them? (cf. Mt 7:15-23). Who’s fooling who here? How can such people talk convincingly about Jesus’ uniqueness when it is just a matter of speculation and honouring the national/cultural flag? We can fool some people all the time, and we can fool all people some time, but we cannot fool all the people all the time

⁶³ Self-interest, love of money and idolatry with its many faces, are totally against authentic Christian Message. The Pauline church is very clear on this point: “When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and

about a God, whom we too do not take seriously, but only use as a tool and ideology for our diversified selfish interests.

In this sense John Hick and Paul Knitter are right in saying that maybe there was nothing there in Christ from the beginning; his uniqueness was just a mythical story void of any real substance. Was it to defraud the world? If so, what a *magna cum laude* fraud in the becoming history of the human race! But unfortunately theologians in the likes of Hick and Knitter are *absolutely* wrong (cf. 1Cor 15:20). Like theologian Zizoulas, the moment has come for all Western and Eastern theologians seriously to say “Farewell to innocence”, and seriously confront their own pseudo-innocence. One of the well known Third World theologians, Allan Boesak, captures well this naïve innocence that is presently eating intensely at the fibre of the unique and unsurpassable Christian Message. “When people face issues too horrendous to contemplate, they close their eyes to reality and make a virtue out of powerlessness, weakness, and helplessness. This innocence leads to a helpless utopianism – either as idealisation of the present (bad) situation, or an escapism into a ‘better’ world other than the present one. This pseudo-innocence cannot come to terms with the destructiveness in oneself or in others and hence it actually becomes self-destructive. It is this innocence which uses ‘the ideal’ to blind people so that they do not see the atrocities of the present. It blinds, paralyses, and cunningly uses all means at its disposal to cover up and rationalise guilt and sin. It is an innocence which, for its own justification, does not include evil. It therefore becomes demonic. ... [It is demonic because] it effectively blocks off all awareness and therefore the sense of responsibility necessary to confront the other as a human being. This [then] leads to an inability to repent which in its turn makes genuine reconciliation impossible” (Boesak 1997:3f).

Farewell to innocence, therefore, exposes hypocrisy done worldwide in Jesus’ name. In large measure, theologians throughout the history of the Church (in all three Christian traditions) have sinned in this regard because inauthentic theologies from the East and the

rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. ... [and such people] will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:18-21).

West have blinded us all to be highly myopic and selfish in understanding properly the authentic salvation coming from this strange and enigmatic man of Nazareth. Cunningly with a smooth tongue⁶⁴ (especially every Sunday) the liberating Message of the Risen Lord had been covered up and rationalized away in those “powerful sermons”. That we ever embraced slogans like “Outside the Church no Salvation”, is really a shame. Solution only lies in humble repentance and by going back to the Pauline church where the Spirit of the Risen Lord was the Master and Lord. We thank the God of our Lord Jesus Christ that in every age he/she always sends prophets. In the First World, fuelled by historical consciousness of the modern mind (especially from Liberation Theology), a serious shift is developing from ecclesiocentrism to christocentrism. This shift gives hope to Western Theology and Spirituality, and opens up channels of seriously challenging this imperialistic and ideological Christianity, which is creating havoc in the world today.

One serious obstacle to authentic repentance of Kubler-Ross and that of John the Baptist is the perennial sin of clinging to the past at all cost (cf. Mk 7:1-13): Returning genuinely back to the whole truth of ‘who Jesus really is’, is going to be seriously frustrated by official Christianity. Fr Hans Küng exposes the danger from whom this fierce resistance is likely: ‘ ... [Roman] catholics today who [still] live spiritually in the thirteenth century (contemporaneously with Thomas Aquinas, the medieval Popes and an absolutist church order). [Equally so] there are some representatives of Eastern Orthodoxy who have remained spiritually in the fourth to fifth century (contemporaneous with the Greek church fathers). And [again] for some Protestants the pre-Copernican constellation of the sixteenth century (with the Reformers before Copernicus and Darwin) is still normative. ... This continuity today, is one of the main causes of conflicts within the religions and between the religions, the main cause of the different trends and parties, tensions, disputes and wars’ (cf. Küng 1990:126). But such “Christians” should not deter us, because anyone who refuses the change of heart at the *kairos moment* in order to enter the kingdom of genuine love (cf. 1Cor 13), like an ancient star, has already collapsed from within and only our prayers can help; not condemnation (cf. Mt 7:1-5).

⁶⁴ Cf. Ps. 5:9. Rom 3:13.

Chapter 4

The external forum

4.1 Has God only *one* blessing for humanity?

This chapter deals with the undeniable historical fact that authentic salvation comes from Promises made by Yahweh to Abraham (cf. Rom 4:1-25. Gal 3:1-29). It scrutinises Judaism and Islam as unique and unsurpassable biblical sources of *honest* Christian self-understanding. Hence the question: Has the true living God been blessing some peoples of the human race and not others from time immemorial?

The letter to the Hebrews summarises well the *unique* and *unsurpassable* historical Covenant God made with Abraham, within which the purpose of Jesus' coming into being historically to this blue planet would be missed (cf. Heb 6:13-20). Inauthentic Christianity since Constantine missed this crucial point in reconciling this torn-apart world *back* to God (cf. Jn 3:16f). Mary C. Boys and other contemporary theologians are keen to fight these historical theological prejudices of inauthentic and dishonest Christianity, because it is becoming clearer today that "... Both religions [Islam and Christianity] received a mission to produce human dignity and human rights [in this world], and work for justice and peace, and for the betterment of the world. It would be very difficult to achieve a desired goal if they are not united in their efforts" (D'Cruze 1999:237).

We affirm strongly that this *desired unity* is impossible unless it is situated within God's promises to Abraham concerning salvation of the world. Humanity's unique blessing in Christ (cf. Acts 4: 8-12) is inextricably intertwined with primordial Judaic and Islamic blessings (cf. Gen 17:1-27). That historical drama of salvation was to happen in a triangled territory (cf. Gen 15:18-21) namely, Egypt ("Cairo"), Palestine (Jerusalem) and Persia = Arabia ("Medina"): "The promise [to Abraham] of the land rests on God's honour. The boundaries, from the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) to the Euphrates, the NW border, refer to the greatest extent of the land under David, another pointer to the great king in these stories" (Brown 1990:21). Arabia as crucible of Islam is indeed inextricably intertwined with the larger religious context of the Far and Near East, commonly known as Mesopotamia: "This was the region in which the Judeo-Christian family of religions first flourished. From this perspective the origins and content of Islam cannot be viewed in isolation from the religious history of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity, which also have their roots in the Near East. Though different in orientation, the three religions share certain basic features⁶⁵" (De Gruchy 1991:203). Today, with the war in Iraq, it is as if God is re-creating the world as it was in primordially in the Garden of Eden around the two great biblical rivers Tigris and Euphrates (cf. Gen 2). This is why seven areas are so crucial in understanding historically how Judaism (*classical monotheism*), Christianity (*unique classical monotheism*) and Islam (*classical monotheism in emergence*) are mutually related. *Unless these three religions are thought together as one journey with specific finality, Jesus' uniqueness will continue to make no progress.* Here are those seven crucial areas concerning human salvation in its wholeness:

- * The blessings promised to Abraham through Ishmael and Isaac.
- * Re-evaluating the Route of the Exodus Spiritual Journey by seriously taking Arabic peoples into account in being part and parcel of that *unique journey* one way or another (cf. Brown 1990:1179f. Meiring 1996:174f).

⁶⁵ "[These three religions] are all transcendental, holding that beyond this life there is a higher world, the realm of the divine, which can be attained through ethical action and faith in God; each one claims God exclusively, as a monotheistic deity; and they are all universal, believing that God created and continues to govern the whole universe and all people" (De Gruchy 1991:205).

- * The long *relational history* of the Nabataeans with the people of Israel and the people of Arabia in general, especially the tribe of Muhammad, must seriously be taken into account.
- * The early activity of Paul among the Arabs (cf. Gal 1:17). Was he preaching about the Risen Lord that *eventually challenged* the Nabataean king, Aretas IV (cf. McKenzie 1965:53), so much so that Paul had to escape through a window (cf. 2Cor 11:32f)? Was Waraqa, the uncle to Prophet Muhammad's wife Khadija, one of many Christians emanating from Paul's first converts among the Arabs (cf. Sura C.32)⁶⁶?
- * The unfortunate sin of Supersessionism.
- * The "sudden" coming into theological scene of Prophet Muhammad, and the rapid taking over of classical Christian places by Islam.
- * And why these three religions today are a force in the world to be reckoned with.

The benign unity of these three *historical* faiths was to do with God's Fulfilment of a Grand Plan which was *eventually* to save all peoples of the human race; and this mystery of how God *eventually* is going to bless all peoples of the human race, will continue to be hidden in God alone (cf. Eph 1:9). Unfortunately, self-interests and theological prejudices of believers led to massive falsifications of facts in the holy books of these three religions; thus proving Einstein right: "It is more difficult to smash prejudices than atoms" (Bosch 1991:185), especially if these prejudices are held *in God's name*.

4.1.1 Theological prejudices are more stubborn to smash than atoms

"Originally ideology meant 'science of ideas' devoted to unmasking prejudice. Later it came to mean any system of ideas typical of a social group. To this Marxism added the qualification that ideology is in reality a false consciousness or a collective illusion which veils the true nature of a given society" (Sundermeier 1975:11). This is true today

⁶⁶ "She [Muhammad's wife] went and consulted her cousin Waraqa. A devout worshipper of God in the Faith of Christ, learned in spiritual lore, he listened, and with her rejoiced that he, Muhammad, was God's Chosen One to renew the Faith".

concerning “who Jesus really is” in the history of the spreading of Christianity throughout the world. There is too much false consciousness and collective illusion (folly) which is veiling the true and authentic nature of Christianity since the time of Constantine, through *Christian Nationalism*⁶⁷ in Europe and North America, and up to our time where being a Christian in the Third World mainly means ‘anything, everything and nothing’. Thank God that the Pauline church will always stand as a sign of contradiction when the unsurpassable *liberating* Gospel of the Risen Lord is left to ruinous inauthentic human beings who will always try their level best to “invade the kingdom of God by force and violence” (cf. Lk 16:16). When ideology is falsified as Faith, it is the most dangerous; it rears its ugly head in situations where God the Almighty is “our God” and is always on “our side”, and “our prayers” are the only ones “more” audible to God. “[In South Africa] an Afrikaner priest once instructed a congregation of [black] farm labourers not to say ‘Onse Vader wat in die hemel is’,⁶⁸ since Jesus was understood to be a white man and therefore only white [people] could say ‘Our Father’” (Pace Magazine, May 2003:37). Of course “this God of ours” is always construed as having empowered “us mysteriously in the faith” *to teach a lesson to those pagans out there, all those who, unlike us, are still dwelling in the power of darkness, in the power of the Devil*. And of course “our God” is always right and has absolute power over “their” *funny useless gods*. Theocratic ideologies always justify *everyone* to fit theologically into a divinely allotted place in the economy of God’s plan of salvation within a given society. For example, again within the Apartheid *Weltanschauung* = outlook, “... the Afrikaner nationalists came to see themselves as the chosen People of [Jesus’] God in Africa by reading the activities of God in their history [despite its inherent evil]” (Keteyi 1998:16).

⁶⁷Official Christianity in any form, including the abhorrent and blasphemous practice of having “Christian political parties” in a country.

⁶⁸ ‘Our Father who art in heaven’.

The truth of the matter is that salvation history in more cases than one has been interpreted differently and opposingly, with historical facts either deliberately distorted, or falsified out of sheer ignorance, ‘not realising what one is doing’ (cf. Lk 23:33-34). Many religions today, for possible converts, still continue to twist and distort scriptural historical facts. In most cases converts are “our enemies in the faith” (*pagani*) out there. Such theological prejudicial convictions have marred human relations in the world beyond doubt; thus making *meaningful* interreligious dialogue highly impossible, even as a starter. However, those who are honestly working hard to make this world a better place to live in for every human being on the blue planet, should not be deterred! If there is *only one* God who is *the same Creator* of all peoples of the human race (cf. Acts 17:1-34), then someone is absolutely wrong *in reading God’s Holy Finger in History*. After all, no person who longs for a true and meaningful God can afford *to continue* to divide humanity into “us *versus* them” scenario (cf. Gen 4: 8-9). The daunting task for every authentic Christian theologian, therefore, is two fold:

- * *Firstly*, to convert the present tragically divided church-communities (Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic) to embrace each other as the baptised (*new creation*), and
- * *Secondly* to convert them to embrace all other peoples of the human race *unconditionally* as children of one and the same Creator in the Spirit of the Risen Lord (cf. Mt 5, 25:31- 46. Acts 17:28-31. 1Cor 13).

If this becomes a committed reality among all theologians of Christian spectrum without present day strings attached, meaningful interreligious dialogue will then follow naturally with much peace and deep mutual appreciation. To use Thomas Kuhn’s scientific phrase for a meaningful change of heart, ‘... authentic theologians should respond to “flashes of

intuition”, indeed, of “conversion”⁶⁹. Otherwise they will find themselves defending and arguing unproductively at cross purposes; or worse still, they might find themselves *eventually* fighting God in being prejudicial towards other religious movements (cf. Acts 5:34-39). Unfortunately, in most cases, the old school will resist “challenges with deep emotional reactions, since those challenges [are thought to threaten and] destroy their very perception and experience of [faith] reality, indeed their entire [past Christian] world” (Bosch 1991:184f). But by letting God be God in re-shaping this world in the image of the Risen Lord without prejudice (cf. Acts 10:1-43), theologians would have gone a long way by proving that in their own right they are indeed ambassadors of Christ (cf. 2Cor 5:16-20).

4.1.1.1 An American tourist in Pakistan

Here is a powerful captivating example of a classical prejudice. This incident illustrates concretely what happens when prejudicial hearts harden; when one is not prepared for authentic change, but continues to pour new wine into old skin bags (cf. Lk 5:36-39). This classical example proves the fact that those hatreds (within and without) imbedded in the bosom of our cultures, are die-hards: “In town I got picked up by a van of Pakistani workers on their way out of town to a factory. I sat in the back and took a swig of some lemon-flavoured dehydration salts in my plastic canteen. The Pakistanis looked at me and with disdain said, ‘Whiskey!?’ I laughed. ‘No, it’s not whiskey,’ I told them in Arabic. ‘It’s water. Here, try some.’ ‘Oh, no, it’s whiskey!’ they said. ‘All Americans drink whiskey!’ This was the familiar ‘James Bond’ syndrome: Americans (or Europeans in general) are all men who are government spies, drink whiskey like water and sleep with a different woman every night. There is little you can do to convince them otherwise, after all, *they’ve* seen those movies. *They* know! By the way, James Bond films are X-rated in

⁶⁹ Thomas Kuhn is the well-known physicist and historian of science. In his paradigm theory, Kuhn “... breaks fundamentally with preceding theories of science, particularly logical positivism’s emphasis on ‘verification’ as well as Karl Popper’s idea of ‘falsification’ as sure ways in which scientific research advances. It is widely accepted today, in all that knowledge belongs to a community and is influenced by the dynamics operative in such a community. This means that not only ‘scientific data’ are tested, but also the researchers themselves. [In this way] science does not really grow. Metaphorically speaking, the one is playing chess and the other checkers on the same board” (Bosch 1991:184). Theologically speaking, Kuhn’s methodology can help us to accept each religion in a meaningful dialogue in order to enrich the one and the same human race.

Muslim countries. ‘No, really, it’s not whiskey, it’s water. Here, smell it. I’m not drinking whiskey, really!’ But no matter what I did, I could not convince them that I was not drinking whiskey, and they wouldn’t try it themselves” (Childress⁷⁰ 1989:191f).

4.1.1.2 Christian prejudice in *Jesus’ name*

Christians were not exempt from the ideological faith in the history of the Church. If we take the Medieval Christianity, we find the “Unredeemed Self” still using God’s name in vain. In the 13th century in the Latin Church (the West) few thought civilisation was possible beyond themselves, and it would take Mr Nicolo Polo and his son a long way to convince the West that “God has many blessings” for humanity: “When 13th century traders returned to Venice from Asia’s Silk Road, along with the textiles and spices they brought back vivid accounts of other Eastern wonders, from eyeglasses to ice cream. But there was suspicion in the Occidental mind about whether this fabled bounty truly existed. Venetians didn’t begin to believe the tales until 1295, when Nicolo Polo and his son Marco returned from their second trip along the legendary route laden with some of the treasures that Nicolo claimed to have seen on previous journeys. Even at Marco’s deathbed, in 1324, a priest came to ask whether he would be willing to confess his lies. ‘I did not tell half of what I saw’, Marco replied” (Time July 5 2004:78). One of the notorious theologically well-construed prejudices against Islam is the concubinage of Hagar. Recently I talked with some of the scholastics for the Roman catholic priesthood about whether they know who Hagar is. Immediately they demonized her: “She is a concubine of Abraham”. I was so hurt, but I understood because I too had been under the heavy weight of theological prejudice taught by missionaries from Europe and America. And with the unfortunate happening of September 11, you can be sure that bastardization of Islam will be deepened. The twisting of historical facts on this theological issue is long

⁷⁰ This story comes from the book, *Lost Cities & Ancient Mysteries of Africa & Arabia*. In it the author, David Hatcher Childress, puts down in scientific form what Africa and Arabia were before facts were twisted mainly by Europeans. He was born in France, and raised in the mountains of Colorado and Montana. At nineteen, he left the United States on a six-year journey across Asia, Africa and the Pacific. An ardent student of history, archaeology, philosophy, and comparative religion, he has authored numerous articles, which have appeared in publications around the world. His many books include *Lost Cities & Ancient Mysteries of South America*, *Lost Cities of North & Central America*, *Anti-Gravity & the Unified Field*, and others” (Childress 1989:5) In this story above he was in the United Emirates. The book was published in 1989.

and ugly. Describing the famous battle of Lepanto in 1571 between East and West, Wheatcroft summarises this unfortunate theological prejudice *in Jesus' name*:

The battle they [Christians and Moslems] fought in the Gulf of Lepanto has a double character: the event itself and its burgeoning afterlife. This afterlife, the mythic Lepanto, came to stand as a synecdoche for the contest between the Islamic and the Christian worlds. In deciphering the meaning of Lepanto, we may find a point of entry into the deeper mysteries. The greater struggle had deep roots. For almost a thousand years the Christian world had felt threatened by the power in the East. Sometimes, with the Crusades in the Levant for example, in Sicily and in Spain, Christian Europe had taken war to the enemy. Over the centuries a brooding sense of Muslim threat came to mesmerize Christendom. By the sixteenth century conflict was accepted as the natural and inevitable relationship between East and West. Like a child's see-saw, the rise of the East required the fall of the West. In 1571, the two adversaries sat roughly in balance. Scholars reinforced a common belief in the danger and evil of 'Islam'. The Muslims, according to the Venerable Bede, who wrote in the eighth century, were descended from Hagar, the Prophet Abraham's concubine. Many Muslims believed that she and her son Ishmael lay buried under the kaaba, the great black stone in Mecca, which was the focal point of the Islamic faith. Christians, however, were descended from Abraham's lawful offspring Isaac. Worse still than the stain of bastardy, an even darker curse hung over the people of the East. Christians inferred that while all men traced their line back to Adam and Eve, the Muslims were the lineal descendents of Cain, thrust from the presence of God for murdering his brother Abel. For his crime, Cain bemoaned that he would 'be a fugitive and a wanderer upon the earth ... and everyone who finds me will slay me.' They had been forced to dwell 'east of Eden'. Between the children of Cain and the other descendents of Adam, there could be only mutual slaughter and revenge for the primordial crime of fratricide. So this struggle grew from a long tradition of atavistic hatred between the peoples of the West and East (Wheatcroft 2004:4f).

Indeed it is easier to smash atoms than to let go of ideologies and convictions, and God save us all if these convictions are religiously motivated. We now look at Jesus *before* Christianity and then analyse other religions, especially Judaism and Islam; hopefully, without much prejudice.

4.2 The 1st Fulfillment of God's Promises to Abraham (Gen 17:1-27. Is 2:1-5)⁷¹

We are here dealing with Jesus *before* Christianity. It must be absolutely clear to everyone that we are here concerned about Jesus and not so much about the Church

⁷¹ It is interesting to realise that the *promises* through the first born (Ishmael) are fulfilled lastly in the person and life of Muhammad.

(community of believers); we are dealing here with Jesus the Nazarene before anyone could have professed him "Lord" and fulfiller of the First Testament prophecies (Dunn 1990:203-231). This "fulfillment" here has to do with what God promised to Abraham in Gen 17:19. To come to know "who Christ is", care must always be taken that, *in the final analysis*, "the historical Jesus" is *distinguished* from (but not opposed to) "Jesus of Faith". In the same way that Plato cannot be reduced to Platonism, Jesus cannot be reduced to Christianity either; he cannot be reduced to the Church in any form or appropriation. At the same time, to know Platonism is not a guarantee that you know Plato, while the inverse could/might be true. In the same way, to be a member of the Church (being a 'Christian'), is not a guarantee that one has the same vision and love for the human race as Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Zizioulas above). Therefore a certain portrayal of Jesus is needed for our *common agreement* lest we are deceived concerning the true nature of this Jesus who is so mysterious and yet so simple (cf. Eph 1:1-14. Jn 1:1-5. Mt 5). Fr Nolan rightly cautions us about the constant danger in dealing with this "simple" and mysterious man from Nazareth:

Nothing about Jesus [should] be presumed or assumed [because] ... many millions throughout the ages have venerated the name of Jesus, but few have understood him and fewer still have tried to put into practice what he wanted to see done. His words have been twisted and turned to mean everything, anything and nothing. His name has been used and abused to justify crimes, to frighten children and to inspire men and women to heroic foolishness. Jesus has been more frequently honoured and worshipped for what he did not mean than for what he did mean. The supreme irony is that some of the things he opposed most strongly in the world of his time were resurrected, preached and spread more widely throughout the world - in his name (Nolan 1976:1&3).

The following portrayal of Jesus re-inforces the need to exorcise inauthentic Christianity whenever it rears its ugly head, and in so doing, we will be strengthening our argument in this research of Jesus as the unique and unsurpassable personality in the total becoming history of the human race concerning what it means authentically to be free, to be human

and, above all, what it means to have a meaningful idea of the "Holy" in order to *enrich and liberate all peoples of the human race in their differing sinful environments* (core argument of Liberation Theology).

Life And Death Of Jesus: John W. de Gruchy summarises well Jesus' *paradoxical* historical situation when he says that, "We know very little about Jesus' early life for the only records which we have about him are not biographies [in the strictest sense of the word] but testimonies of faith" (De Gruchy1991:151). But when reliable sources are pieced together, and after much scrutiny and perusal (based on biblical and extra-biblical material), the following picture of Jesus emerges.

Jesus was born within a Jewish cultural setting, with his putative father being Joseph (the carpenter)⁷² and his mother Mary. There is no doubt that Jesus' world of the first century was a complex cultural reality of a melting pot between the Roman Empire and other "entities" including Jewish. The more we know about this cultural milieu, the more we are able to situate Jesus and his people, the Jews. Simply put, Jesus⁷³ was born about 2003 years ago (6-4 B.C.E.) and lived at an obscure hill town called Nazareth in S Galilee (cf. Brown 1990:1319). It was near the end of the reign of Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.E.). A certain monk named Dionisius Exigius who, in the sixth century, was instructed to make a Christian calendar made the error of his birth⁷⁴. In his error of

⁷²Joseph does not feature at all during Jesus' ministry, presumably he had died (cf. Brown 1990:1319). On the contrary, Mary the mother is mentioned regularly in the Gospels '... as well as his brothers, James, Joses (= Joseph), Judas (=Jude), and Simon (Mk 6:3; Matt 13:55). Sisters also are mentioned, but unnamed. (From patristic times controversy has raged over the precise relationship of these figures [siblings, children of Joseph by a previous marriage, cousins]?) Most Gospel references indicate that the relatives of Jesus did not follow him during the public ministry (Mk 3:21, 31-35; Jn 7:5; Jn 2:12). This, strangely, stands in marked contrast to their influential position later on in the Jerusalem church' (cf. Brown 1990:1319).

⁷³The name Jesus (Greek *Iesous*; Hebrew *Yeshua* or usually shortened to *Yeshu* means 'Yahweh helps or saves' was common among the Jews when Jesus was born (cf. Brown 1990: 1319).

⁷⁴"Luke (1:5; 2:1) records Jesus' birth in the days of Herod and of the emperor Augustus (Matt 2:1). Though the year is not reckoned with certainty, the birth did not occur in AD 1. The Christian era, supposed to have had its starting point in the year of Jesus' birth, is based on a miscalculation introduced ca. 533 by Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk, 'abbot' of a Roman monastery, who objected to the

calculating, the monk made Jesus to be born four years to six years before he was actually born (cf. Meiring 1996:128). Jesus' life-story started as a "hopeless" case. His conception was from the beginning a scandal. *No human father* is said to have had sex with Mary and this became very suspicious to Joseph who, out of shock, decided to divorce/leave the very young mother-to-be (of about 14 yrs old) in secret (cf. Mt 1:19). Some theologians today are bold to affirm the scandalous conception of Jesus. They go on to say that Jesus was born out of wedlock and that he was born out of fornication⁷⁵. They go all out to prove that, "Matthew's and Luke's infancy narratives were about the illegitimate conception of Jesus and not about his miraculous virginal conception" (Szesnat 1997:15).

But Gospel narratives and the logic and coherence of the entire Second Testament, are consistent with the fact that, *in the conception of Jesus, no human male played an important role*; hence the emphasis on the *virginal conception*, thus making Jesus' conception *unique in the history of human becoming* (cf. Gal 4:4). Apparently Jesus spent most of his "hidden/secret" thirty years around Nazareth (cf. Lk 1:80), and was later known as Jesus of Nazareth or the son of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth (cf. Mk 6:1-6. Lk 4:23). Anyway, he grew up like any other Jewish child. "[He was known as the]... son of a modest family, with nothing unusual about his background, apparently much like any son of a humble artisan in a small town. The absence of mystery in Jesus' origin was later called to the attention of the people who listened to him: 'Yet we all know where he comes from' (John 7:27). If he was a descendant of David, in accord with the genealogies

prevailing system of dating according to the era of Diocletian, the 'impious persecutor,' and decided to use the incarnation for the years of 'the Lord'. Equating *annum Domini* with AUC 754, he erred by about four years; how he did this is not certain" (Brown 1990:1247).

⁷⁵This should not be taken immediately as an insult or blasphemy. Scholarly research here seems to be genuinely wanting to put forward what Scriptural evidence (both canonical and non-canonical) appears to be saying. The argument in favour of this way of looking at things seems to be based on John 8:19,31; Mark 6:3; Acts of Pilate and the Gospel of Thomas. "All of these texts reflect that Jesus was charged with illegitimacy and his opponents were the source of that charge. They thus reflect a socio-historical context of Jesus' birth" (Szesnat 1977:17).

the evangelists added at a much later date to the narrative of his acts, or if at the time he was born there were extraordinary happenings, these facts were unknown to his followers. To the eyes of those to whom he began preaching, there was nothing especially extraordinary about him. He was only the son of a poor family" (Comblin 1979:9f). Mary is said to have given birth to Jesus in a stable (cf. Lk 2:7); and Jesus' parents are said to have been *materially poor* from a lower class (cf. Lk 2:24). Some scholars argue that he came from the middle class family, maybe through Joseph's trade of carpentry, which Jesus should have learnt well. "Jesus came from the middle class. He was not by birth and upbringing one of the poor and the oppressed [of his time]. It has often been pointed out that Jesus, unlike Paul, was not a Roman citizen and therefore did not have the rights of a Roman citizen. But within the society in which Jesus lived that was no real disadvantage. His only disadvantage, and that was a slight disadvantage applying only in Jerusalem, was that he was a Galilean. The orthodox Jews in Jerusalem tended to look down upon even middle-class Jews from Galilee" (Nolan 1976:27).

In his ministry Jesus felt sent to Israel to announce the good news of *unique* peace and love which prophets for many centuries had been proclaiming *would eventually come* to Israel (cf. Lk 4:16-21). Jesus is recorded as an itinerant preacher and healer moving from one village to the next. Apparently he never married and had a group of close friends or few disciples (about 12), *some of whom later carried forward his vision of Life* (cf. 1Jn 1:1-4). During his life some people thought of him either as completely mad or absolutely crazy; a nincompoop (cf. Mk 3:20-21⁷⁶; 6:1-4); some thought of him as possessed beyond doubt by the evil spirit (cf. Mk 3:22), while some thought he was a genius and a prophet (cf. Mk 4:41; 5:42; Lk 23:40-43). Some thought he was the true light of Israel (cf. Lk 2:34) while others thought he was a fraud par excellence (cf. Mk 15:16-20; Lk 23:32c-

⁷⁶Jesus went to his hometown and such a large crowd gathered that he and his disciples had no time to eat. When his family heard about it, they set out to take charge of him, because people were saying, "He's gone completely mad".

39). Eventually this so-called "king" (cf. Mk 14:61-62. 15:2, 12, 18; Mt 27:42; Lk 23:35-38) died a criminal death. He is said to have been executed during the reign of Pontius Pilate in Palestine, and suffered a criminal death, hanging on a tree like a wild dog pierced to death. He was buried like anyone else (cf. Mk 15:42-47). His untimely death, as we would say today, happened when he was only about 33 years old.

But with the Easter and the Pentecost events (cf. the Gospels after the Resurrection & Acts 2-10), the *unimaginable* happened. The disciples were mysteriously transformed beyond human reason. They were never the same; their sorrow turned into joy and *fear disappeared*, and they started to proclaim boldly that the same Jesus of Nazareth that was crucified and died had been raised to life by the living God as approval of all that Jesus did and died for. They boldly told the Jewish people, especially the Sanhedrin, that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah promised to Abraham and successive prophets and leaders of Israel (cf. Acts 7). Peter summarised their renewed faith and unique conviction, this Good News which later would go out to the whole world till it reached us today: "That man from Nazareth you crucified has been raised by *the* God (Yahweh) as the only one chosen to bring us fullness of salvation. *The rejected stone has become the cornerstone.*" "There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other Name given to humankind all over the world by which we may be saved" (cf. Acts 4:10-12). It is because of this *unique* and *unsurpassable* conviction of faith that even trials, anguish, persecution, hunger, lack of clothing, any danger, a sword or gun, threats of death or torture of any kind will never dissuade⁷⁷ an *authentic follower* of Jesus from proclaiming that *only* in Jesus of Nazareth does humanity *unsurpassably* move, exist and have its being (cf. Rom. 8:35; Acts 17:28). A mysterious existential power (spirit) beyond human speech seems to

⁷⁷... neither death nor life, neither angels nor spiritual powers, neither the present nor the future, nor cosmic powers, were they from heaven, or from the deep world below, nor any creature whatsoever will separate us from the love of God, which we have in Jesus Christ, our Lord. ... in all this we are more than conquerors, thanks to him who has loved us much *in this particular Nazarene within space and time*' (cf. Rom. 8:37-39. Gal 4:4).

have gripped these early Church witnesses including Paul of Tarsus (cf. Acts Gal.1: 6-10).

4.2.1. The core of Jesus ' teaching

Around 28-29 A.D., during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, Jesus from Nazareth is said to have started his ministry saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel" (Mk 1:15). The new era in his person was dawning, the bringing of meaningful and *lasting shalom* the people of Israel had longed for so long (cf. Is 2:1-4. 11:1-9); God's loving embrace in him welcomes all who accept his message (cf. Acts 10:34-35). The basic message of the new era is summarised by the idea of the Kingdom of God through parables in words and deeds, and he radicalised Mosaic Law (or any law for that matter) when it *continues* to *restrict* and to *tribalise* Love and Mercy from Yahweh (cf. Mt 5. Lk 4:16-22; 15:1-32. 1Cor 13):

The remarkable thing about Jesus was that, although he came from the middle class and had no appreciable disadvantages himself, he mixed socially with the lowest of the low and identified himself with them. He became an outcast by choice. Why did Jesus do this? What would make a middle-class man talk to beggars and mix socially with the poor? What would make a prophet associate with the rabble who know nothing of the law? The answer comes across very clearly in the gospels: compassion. 'He was moved with compassion for the crowds and he healed their sick'. 'He was moved with compassion because they were distressed and dejected like sheep without a shepherd'. He was moved with compassion by the plight and the tears of the widow of Nain. 'Do not cry,' he says to her. We are told explicitly that he had compassion on the leper, on two blind men and on those who had nothing to eat. ... Over and over again Jesus says to people, 'Don't cry', 'Don't worry', 'Don't be afraid'. He was not moved by the grandeur of the greatness of the Temple buildings, [but] he was moved by the poor widow who put her last cent into the Temple Treasury. While everyone else was excited about the 'miracle' of Jairus' daughter, he was concerned that she should be given something to

*eat. What made the good Samaritan in the parable different was the compassion he felt for the man left half dead on the roadside. What made the loving father in the parable different was the excess of compassion he felt for his prodigal son. What made Jesus different was the unrestrained compassion he felt for the poor and the oppressed (Nolan 1976: 27-28)*⁷⁸.

The focus of his ministry was not to the rich, the well-off and the "educated", since in a way he did not *really* come for them in the *first place*⁷⁹; but to the poor and the most abandoned in order to bring *shalom* (peace) in its totality to all (cf. Lk 4:16-22). This does not mean that Jesus hated the rich; Jesus hated no one (cf. Jn 3:16f. 1Cor 13); he just warned the rich that if they do not share their riches and their talents with those who have nothing, those who need help to reach *authentic* maturity in every way possible, the future of the human race is going to be bleak indeed (cf. Mt 6:24. 1Tim 9-10).

In his ministry and everyday living, he took sides with certain classes of society of his cultural setting. It is important here to emphasise that Jesus was considered a layperson through and through during his earthly life (cf. Heb 8:4). "This helps to account for his slighting reference to both priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37), something of an anticlerical joke. More important, it helps to explain why only once in the Synoptic tradition is Jesus presented in dialogue exclusively with Sadducees (the largely priestly party), with hostility obvious on both sides (Mk 12:18-27). Most important, it helps to explain why the priestly and lay aristocracy in Jerusalem (i.e. Sadducees) was most prominent in bringing Jesus before Pilate. The mortal struggle between Jesus and his opponents has elements not only of Galilean versus Judean, of the

⁷⁸ "The English word 'compassion' is far too weak to express the emotion that moved Jesus. The Greek verb *splagchnizomai* used in all these texts is derived from the noun *splagchnon*, which means intestines, bowels, entrails or heart, that is to say, the inward parts from which strong emotions seem to arise. The Greek verb therefore means a movement or impulse that wells up from one's very entrails, a gut reaction. That is why English translators have to resort to expressions like 'he was *moved* with compassion or pity' or 'he felt sorry' or 'his *heart* went out to them'. But even these do not capture the deep physical and emotional flavour of the Greek word for compassion" (Nolan 1976:28).

⁷⁹This point is vital to the ontological structure of us as human beings and it must be followed in full later because it re-enforces the *uniqueness* of this religion based on Jesus 'the rebellious, and the uncultured Jew'. In this sense, as *an uncultured Jew*, Jesus *the* Christ should always be a 'good' model for *Inculturation Theology*.

poor versus the rich, of the charismatic versus the institutional, of the eschatological versus the this-worldly, but also of the laity versus the priests" (Brown 1990:1319). Jesus seems to have distinguished well between what human beings *need* and what they *want* (cf. Lk 18:18-30. Acts 4:32). Greed in any form always destroys peace and pulling together (*samewerking*). The downtrodden, the outcasts (e.g. prostitutes and homosexuals) and the forgotten or despised of society (e.g. widows and orphans), all found a compassionate friend in this Jesus of Nazareth without condoning sin (cf. Jn 8:1-11).

He summarised the vision of a better world for all in the "Our Father Prayer" (cf. Lk 11:1-4). The core meaning of this prayer is that *the One and the Same* God (the Father/Mother/Parent) of all peoples of the human race, is the grounding of our existence and that we are called *in total freedom* to respond to this in the person and life of Jesus. Jesus vigorously challenged the First Covenant Spirituality by bringing to an end its *immature spirituality* and *judgmental Attitude of exclusiveness* based on the "Ten Commandments". He seems to have understood himself one way or another, as *equal* to Yahweh in the "It-was-said ... but-I-now-say" declarations (cf. Mt 5:20-48). He shattered the lofty position of Israel by declaring that the special treatment of Israel had come to an end *in his presence*, but above all, that a new era for all peoples of the human race had *then dawned in his preaching of the kingdom of God* (cf. Lk 4:14-21; Acts 10:34-36). The Mosaic Law has no more power now; what counts is God's mercy to all people of the human race so that they can be friends *with God again* (cf. Gen 3 vs. Jn 3).

In other words, in the person of the Son, one way or another God the Father is asking forgiveness from the human race. God the Creator is "asking forgiveness from us creatures" for being *irresponsible* in allowing a '*mess* in the beginning = primordially" (cf. Genesis 3) to happen in the first place; a necessary "mess" in order to bring about

authentic freedom, thus making God's Creating still a continual process even up to this day (cf. Rom 8-9). The *preamble* to the core of the dignity of the human person is found in the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:1-12), and is summarised by the *golden rule*. For Jesus, true and authentic maturity is not to kill or harm the *other-me*, but to fight one's self; to discern good and evil within one's self, and *eventually* to *choose* freely to overcome evil with good (cf. Mt 5:43-44. Rom 12:20). His *incarnation* (God taking our "human form"), became a mockery and big joke to some (cf. Mk 15:16-20. Acts 17:32). While to some *the incarnation* was conceived as blasphemy number one (cf. Mk 14:63-65), to others it became a great mystery of God's love to all peoples of the human race (cf. Acts 1:1-5; 4:1-12. Jn 20:30-31). Paul is unique in capturing well this great mystery of God in the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth, for him the Risen Lord.

4.2.2 The unique and unsurpassable story of Jesus according to Paul of Tarsus

The uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth, the Risen Lord, in the becoming history of the human race is well understood by Jesus' great prophet and apostle, Paul of Tarsus. For Paul, God in Christ *is* reconciling the world in a mysterious way to Godself (cf. 2Cor 5:18-21). For Paul all peoples of the human race are children of Abraham by faith, not necessarily by biological ancestry (cf. Rom 4:16-17)⁸⁰. Paul's main thrust had been to differentiate between two types of "God": The one revealed by God-self taking initiative, and the one constructed from human ingenuity (cf. Gal. 1-2. Acts 17:22-31). He rejected

⁸⁰ "These texts and many others cannot be dismissed or even under-stated by the Christian proponents of Abrahamism. No matter how they read other Pauline texts regarding the two covenants or other New Testament passages which refer to the Abrahamic claim, they cannot turn away from the verses, in the gospels, which refer to God being able 'from these stones to raise up children to Abraham' (Matthew 3:9) or, in the same vein, lay emphasis on 'doing what Abraham did' (John 8:39). On the other hand, Christian Abrahamists often assume that Islam has identified itself with Ishmael's ancestry, whereas Islam itself does not confirm this view. Muslims consider themselves as children of Abraham by faith and not by biological ancestry. The Qur'an mentions both sons, Isaac and Ishmael, and does not specify which of the two sons has been offered to God. [By the way] Islam takes no pride in its Abrahamic-Ishmael ancestry" (Mitri 2000: 3).

that both polytheistic religions and monotheistic ones as capable of knowing God *fully*, unless God-self decides so (cf. 1Cor 1:18-20). For him *only* in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Risen Lord, does authentic self-communication of God the Creator reach its unique and unsurpassable point (cf. Rom 5:1. Gal 4:4. Eph 2:14-17. Phil 4:7). *This makes Jesus (and no other human being) the cornerstone of all human salvation.* After genuinely getting in touch with his Jewish religious roots (cf. Phil 3:1-7), Paul overcame his *oldself* and embraced all human beings as his brothers and sisters in God the Creator and Sustainer of all-that-is (cf. Acts 17: 28-29):

What Paul proclaimed was in all essentials the apostolic kerygma, i.e. that Christ had been crucified and raised from the dead and that this had been foretold in the scriptures; what he calls 'his' gospel, was identical to the faith held by the other apostles, but he had no reservations about the admission of gentiles, and his first missionary activity was at Antioch among gentile converts of the Hellenists 'scattered in the troubles over Stephen'. Paul accepts and sometimes appeals to the apostolic tradition, to which he was deeply indebted. Though he probably never met Jesus during his earthly life, Paul was familiar with his teaching, and confidently claimed to have seen the risen Christ, not only on the Damascus road, but on several occasions subsequently. He also had revelations and ecstasies, but everything he had received from apostolic tradition he could also attribute, and justly, to direct communication from the Lord (Jones 1985:1851).

Peter also came to realise that the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth has no favourites *anymore* by loving certain “chosen” people over other human beings (cf. Acts 10:34-35). For both Peter and Paul the God revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth transcends all ethnic, national and cultural differences and wants to unite all peoples, languages and wants all cultures to be aware that there is only one living God; to Him/Her alone does humanity owe absolute obedience. It is within this reality behind Jesus' story that Church Councils, starting with the Jerusalem Council (the First universal/“catholic” Council of the Hebrew-Aramaic Church)⁸¹ up to the Chalcedon Council, formulated certain confessions that aimed at understanding and defining, as far as possible, "who Jesus

⁸¹ Cf. Acts 15:1-29.

really is". Like Peter (cf. Mk 8:27-30), the Christian communities of different contexts later tried their best to understand that enigmatic Jesus of Nazareth. It must be clear from the beginning that the road travelled by Christians from the ancient Church through the Nicaean confession to the Chalcedon⁸² confession was long, tedious as well as enriching. But what has to be emphasised here for our research is that it was not an easy road to travel for sure. At times "heretics" were declared along the way. At times they were denounced and treated in an un-gospel manner; and this destruction of the "other-me"⁸³ *in the name of Jesus* is today the battle ground in assessing whether Jesus can *still* be said to be unsurpassably unique in the history of the human race or not. Put differently, can it be said that *to date* Jesus is the *cornerstone of human becoming* concerning what it means to be free, what it means to be human, and, above all, what it means to "know" a meaningful God; an all-round embracing, healing and empowering God? Fr Rohr⁸⁴ summarises well the uniqueness or finality of God's love revealed in Jesus. He shows how Jesus' attributes of God belong to the new unparalleled unconditional loving in the becoming history of humanity:

The great, great Good News is that in fact [in Christ] we come to God not by doing it right but ironically, shockingly and amazingly by doing it wrong! And if you're going to call me a heretic, then you better throw out the story of the prodigal son; you better throw out the story of the Republican and the Pharisee; you better throw out the parable of the weeds and the wheat etc. In Jesus you always have one who does it right and he/she is totally wrong; and the one who does it wrong and he/she is totally right! Deal with that! Deal with that! ... Why did Jesus tell such stupid stories like that [about the reign of God]? Why? ... In this sense it is clear that Jesus was not a good founder of religion where we want it black and white; where we want to see reward and punishment system; who is in and who is out etc. [In this sense Jesus] aimed at transformative side of religion [that heals] rather than at a belonging system [the Church]. We can then understand why the Rabbis, the Scribes and the Pharisees and the chief Priests were not comfortable with Jesus. He did not put the belonging system first, but genuine transformation first. He knew that when religion (in its good side) is healthy people

⁸²Truly human and truly divine-a-la-Yahweh (cf. Mt 5:23-48). *The latter (his divinity) grounds Jesus' uniqueness.*

⁸³This dynamic concept concerning the ontological dignity or worth of every human being (the CILL) will be taken up in full in the two following chapters.

⁸⁴Renown preacher and theologian of our time.

would be healthy. But he also knew the tragic consequences of the contrary (cf. Rohr 2001: side one)⁸⁵

Indeed why such stupid stories? What Jesus has revealed to us through these “stupid” stories is the love of God in all its depth and breadth.

4.2.2.1 The Paulicians: in the footsteps of Paul

Paul of Tarsus will forever remain the cornerstone of “who Jesus of Nazareth really is”. All the utterings on Christ Jesus go through him, and to bypass Paul is to bypass the Great Mystery of our salvation; it is losing sight of what the Incarnation or God’s unique love for the world is all about. Many individuals and movements in the history of Christianity had Paul as the centre of their departure; and among these we hear of the Paulicians. We might differ with some areas of their faith understanding, but they have a lot to teach us all, especially the Orthodox and Roman (catholic) traditions. The Protestant tradition will feel much more at home in their theology. By the fifth century, as we said earlier, many were disillusioned by the Imperial Christianity and many sects and

⁸⁵ Within the Western Church, one of the prophets of this universalising love is St Francis of Assisi. Fr Patrick Noonan OFM captures well God’s authentic love through Francis against disciples of ecclesiastical timocracy. While “St” Bernard of Clairvaux preached hatred, Francis preached love. Motivating Christians to join the crusades, Bernard, maybe foaming at the mouth, cried out *in Jesus’ name*: “When the knight of Christ kills the malefactor, his act is not homicide, but, if one can use the expression, ‘malecide’; he is in all and for all the agent of Christ’s vengeance on those who commit evil” (Trefoil 2004 (267):32). On the other hand, Francis understood love as the only weapon to overcome “the enemy”: “Early one humid, Tuesday morning (9 July 1219) during a year-long lull in the attack on the Muslim forces in Egypt during the fifth Crusade, Francis Bernadone made another spectacular peace move. ... [He went to see the Sultan] Hearing this, the bishops, archbishops, women-soldiers and [Christian] mercenary crusaders were startled. ‘What madness is this?’ ‘What will the Pope say when he hears of the treasonous behaviour?’ [Will he] deny Francis the plenary indulgence (a way to instant Paradise) promised to all decent hardworking, Godfearing, Muslim-massacring crusaders?’ But you have to admire Francis’ singular determination, even daring, at the coalface of international politics. His understanding of the Gospel was clearly different from that of Pope Innocent III (and St Bernard of Clairvaux). And this was just five years before Francis received the stigmata. The military chaplains, especially the pompous Cardinal Pelagius, accompanying the Christian army, never talked to Francis after that. Since the former playboy never wanted to be a priest, they didn’t miss him at their daily celebrations of Mass for the soldiers. They simply ignored him when he returned after two weeks with the Muslim Sultan of Egypt Melek-el-Kamel, leader of the ‘evil empire’. And, according to history, this Christian *jihad* (holy war) failed” (cf. Trefoil 2004 (267): 32 & 65)

prophecies arose to feed the spiritual vacuum. Like the Montanist movement⁸⁶, the Paulician movement was not an exception:

Prominent, but less disturbing to the religious life of the Byzantine Empire as a whole, were the Paulicians. ... Their first leader of whom we know and their reputed founder was one Constantine from Mananalis in the region of the upper Euphrates. Set on fire by the Gospels and Paul's letters, in c. 657 he began preaching and founding churches and continued for about a quarter of a century. His missionary journeys were up the Euphrates and across the Taurus into Asia Minor. He called himself Silvanus, after Paul's missionary companion. A new leader came at the beginning of the ninth century in the person of the gifted Sergius, who had been referred by a member of the sect to the Gospels and Pauline epistles and through them had entered on a new life. For more than thirty years he preached throughout the central plateaus of Asia Minor, supporting himself as a carpenter [like Jesus?]. The iconoclastic Emperors tolerated the Paulicians, but the Orthodox rulers [from the New Rome] persecuted them. When the iconoclastic movement was finally broken, the persecution became more severe. Some of the sect rose in a revolt which was crushed in c. 874. In the eighth and tenth centuries many were transported to Thrace and once there, they were accorded a certain degree of home rule. While outwardly conforming to the established Church, they sent missionaries to Bulgaria – at the time when Christianity was in its early stages among the Bulgars and their subject Slavs. At intervals for several centuries we hear of Paulicians or of those much like them in belief. Even in the nineteenth century some were found in Armenia. ...

Their Christology was adoptionist, and they may have been the spiritual offspring of those Christians of the early centuries who took that view – that Jesus was a mere man until his baptism, when he became the Messiah, the second Adam, the elect Son of God, to the end that all men (sic), by repentance, faith, and baptism, should [also] become sons [and daughters] of God. The Paulicians professed to base their teachings upon the New Testament, all of which they accepted. They also apparently valued at least parts of the Old Testament. Admission to the Church, they held, could be only by adult baptism. After baptism the Holy Spirit was said to enter the believer. Their only sacraments were repentance, baptism, and the eucharistic; the latter celebrated at night. They abhorred monasticism. They did not accept the intercession of the saints or the kind of honours paid by the Orthodox to Mary. They repudiated the use of images, crosses, relics, incense, and candles, and did not resort to sacred springs. They celebrated on January 6th the baptism and spiritual birth of Jesus (Latourette 1938:440f)

⁸⁶ “A sect of enthusiasts in the 2nd century A.D. founded by a prophet, the Phrygian Montanus, and two prophetesses. ... Its principal adherent in the West was the important African ecclesiastical writer Tertullian. The sect survived for many centuries in small groups” (Rahner 1965: 318)

4.2.3 Objections to Jesus' unique story

While we affirm Jesus as the unique “unusual” person in the history of human becoming, others think differently. There are some scholars who dispute these “*glorious convictions* concerning the Risen Lord” and see them somehow as fraudulent and simply not as *historically true, but having much more to do with mythologization*. Jesus is a great man no doubt, but his contribution to humanity should not be exaggerated. Barbara Thiering, for example, a specialist in Dead Sea Scrolls, in 1992 published a book, *Jesus The Man*, which became a best seller; it even became a TV documentary in Australia. In the book Prof. Thiering dares to say that Jesus of Nazareth was nothing else than only the *moral leader* of a radical faction of Essene Priests. She is convinced that the *real Jesus* was not of virginal birth; that he was not divine in the strict sense of the word as the kerygma (*Didache*) made him to be. Jesus' true story, she says, is that he married Mary of Magdala (Magdalene), fathered a family, and later divorced. St Paul is said to be Jesus' son-in-law. She says that Jesus of Nazareth died sometime after 64 A.D., probably somewhere in what is France today. The whole story about *his divinity* was constructed by his *simple and uneducated* early followers called apostles. Whatever Barbara and other scholars may say, their academic conviction surely goes against the convincing rapport of those simple witnesses (cf. 1Jn 1:1-4). Unfortunately, maybe too quick to please the modern mind that has no place and time for miracles, angels, divine dreams, they have become very suspicious of any sense of the *holy* and the *sacred*. Such scholars, readily tend to take short cuts about something so complex and so mysterious. After all, if God will only disclose Godself to the sophisticated and the highly educated, then how many would really be *saved* (if salvation is needed at all)? Was Paul out of his mind when he said that when it comes to authentic salvation from the living God human wisdom is pure folly and totally incapable (cf. 1Cor 1:20-24)? Immanuel Kant cautioned about taking “simple

people” for granted when it comes to the mystery of human Life; for him the complexity of morality is for the “simple” as well as for the “educated”, even though the educated must lead the way with total respect towards the “uneducated”. Therefore scholars like Prof. Thiering should be very cautious lest the presence of God in the world (the kingdom of God) *passes them in silence* or ignores them (cf. Mk 2:17. Lk 18:9-14).

The true and meaningful God is the God of both the educated and the uneducated; this was the central message of Jesus of Nazareth, which made the cross and God's self-emptying in him a scandal and a nuisance to the wise of this world (cf. 1 Cor 1:17-31⁸⁷). In this sense, the “educated” must always guard themselves against any tendency to evaporate Jesus into any timeless moral leader of a Gnostic type or just a symbolic figure of psychological longing emptied almost of all historical facts. According to scholar and theologian Paul of Tarsus, the scandal of the Word made flesh will continue to shock some of us concerning the identification of the fullness of God's revelation with a particular Jew of the first century Palestine. But to some of us who believe in the story of the apostles, Jesus, in an *unsurpassable* manner, is the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6). Profs. Elizabeth Johnson and Susan Rakoczy, in contrast to Prof. Thiering and her school, have this to say concerning the true nature of Jesus:

[Authentic Christians put their] feet in the footsteps of Jesus and walk the way that he walked. ... We cannot define, ultimately, the mystery of the person of Jesus, the mystery of the suffering of the cross, the mystery of the victorious love of God that breaks through in the midst of it all. We are dealing here with the very depth of our faith. We can make affirmations about Jesus but we cannot grasp him in our concepts. Would it be possible to rephrase Chalcedon in the terminology of our day, and say, 'Jesus is in total solidarity with God' (divine nature); 'Jesus is in total solidarity with us' (human nature); and 'both of these solidarities form who he is and constitute his person (one person)? ... [Authentic followers of Jesus, therefore] are called to tell the story of Jesus, recall his dangerous

⁸⁷Such scholars must not forget that St Paul (Jewish scholar from Tarsus) was an educated man who later came to regard everything as nothing in order to comprehend and live what God had done in that simple man of Nazareth (cf. Phil 3:2-15). To doubt the story of the eleven apostles is also to doubt the story of St Paul, which is *so historical*.

memory, walk in his footsteps, and, in the power of the Spirit, struggle against the forces of [evil, suffering and] death. These actions will shape a practical, living christology in our own time (Johnson E. 1997:41).

These *well educated* Christians warn us to guard ourselves against any tendency of subjecting and reducing Jesus into a timeless Gnostic or mythic symbol grounding perfect human becoming in its totality; as well as guarding ourselves against mystical or docetic forces that try to coerce the nonconformist Jesus, who deliberately put himself on the side of the religious and social "low-life" of his time, by denying his humanity. But at the same time Jesus as historical figure must not *naively* be forced to be a social revolutionary, precisely because "... the historical Jesus [will always] escape all our neat categories and programmes; he [will always] subject them all to question and judgement by unmasking their limitations. In this sense [the historical Jesus will always remain] 'eschatological'. While at first glance attractively relevant, the historical Jesus will always strike the inquirer as strange, disturbing, even offensive. The exact opposite of the Jesus of the 'liberal lives' (who served as a clear pool into which scholars gaze to see themselves), frustrates all attempts to turn Christian faith into relevant ideology, right or left, and is a constant catalyst for renewing theological thought and church life [any church life; be it Orthodox, Protestant or Roman catholic]" (Brown 1990:1319).

Despite these objections which are necessary lest 'we forget the dangerous memory of the person from Nazareth', we hope we have presented a clear and adequate picture of the logic and coherence of the Christian Faith, especially at its inception. This picture of "who Jesus really is in core" makes it clear that much still has to be done in levelling the playing field by Christians themselves; chaff must be separated from the wheat as a matter of urgency (cf. 1Cor 5:11-13). From the last chapter, it is clear that more work is *within* the *internal forum* rather than *with* the *external forum*. Existential worry is that, faith-wise, some of us "Christians" seem to be betwixt and between; we are too busy trying to please everyone but at the end we satisfy no one. Anyway, whatever the "final" outcome of our "intellectual" endeavour to make our Faith understandable to other human

beings (cf. 1Pet 3:15), St Paul's warning must not be taken lightly *if we still want to trot Jesus' road with its dangerous memory for the human race*: "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty and our belief comes to nothing; and we become false witnesses of God" (1Cor 15:13-19); and if this is true, then we should stop preaching lies! But the same Paul goes further, "In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep" (1Cor 15:20f). He was equally adamant with Christians at the town of Galatia in what is Turkey today: 'If we do not preach the gospel of the risen Lord to all peoples of the human race, let us all be damned' (cf. Gal 1:6-10). In this sense, *authentic* Christians have no choice but to proclaim the Good News: Only in the God of Jesus of Nazareth, does humanity move, exist and have its being *uniquely* and *unsurpassably* (cf. Acts 17:28). Our eyes must stay focused, therefore, on the one crucified. As the scripture says, '... for the unique ontological healing, all peoples of the human race must have their eyes focused upon the one hanging on the cursed tree' (cf. Jn 19:37).

4.2.4 Theological evaluation of historical churches

To avoid inauthenticity repeating itself in the history of Christianity, we now summarise theologically what went wrong in the proclamation, self-understanding, and living out of the Christian Message by different churches throughout the ages up to our time. But above all, we see what should be preserved at all costs concerning Jesus' core teaching. Authentic Church of Christ is always faithful to the original authentic *Apostolic Message* (cf. 2Cor 5:11-21) concerning authentic freedom, authentic humanity and above all, concerning *unique* reconciliation with a truly meaningful, *universal* God.

The Petrine church: God the Creator, out of his/her mysterious Plan, chose the Jewish people to produce the Messiah (cf. Gen 17:21); and this church/community was the first to recognise that mystery in Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Jn 1:45-51). The first fruits of the Holy Spirit were poured out on this church at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2: 1-13). The prophet here is

Paul who *constantly* challenged the exclusivism found in this church, where salvation or entering the kingdom of God meant becoming a Jew first, through circumcision. Because God wills all people of the human race to be saved (cf. 1Tim 2:4), when it comes to salvation in Christ (the promised Messiah), there are no more differences, separations and walls in any way or in any form (cf. Eph 2:11-22), precisely because in Christ, God is creating anew all things (cf. Rev 21:5). This is why unbecoming behaviour of Peter was vehemently challenged by Paul himself: "... However, when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, then I did oppose him to his face since he was manifestly in the wrong. Before certain people from James came, he used to eat with gentiles [uncircumcised Christians]; but as soon as these came, he backed out and kept apart from them, out of fear of the circumcised. And the rest of the Jews put on the same act as he did, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity [hypocrisy]. When I saw, though, that their behaviour was not true to the Gospel [of the Risen Lord], I said to Cephas in front of all of them, 'Since you, though you are a Jew, live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how can you compel the gentiles to live like the Jews?'" (Gal 2: 11-14). This Petrine (or James'?) church struggled with this new, unique reality revealed in Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Acts 15). It was very difficult to accept that in Christ (*the new Moses*) new *unique* consciousness has dawned, and that in the new community of faith (authentic Church) '... there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female, there can be neither rich nor poor, there can be neither Black nor White. Indeed there can be neither the educated nor the uneducated, because, simply put, by being in Christ all are the *progeny* of Abraham, the heirs named in the promise' (cf. Gal 3:28-29).

The Pauline church: The Risen Lord *himself* chose this church to be the unique light to all peoples of the human race (cf. Acts 9:15-16). The presence of the Risen Lord through the Spirit was everywhere to be seen. Salvation has to do with the power of the Holy Spirit at work, not with arguments and oratory (cf. 1Cor 2:1-16); and this salvation is unique and unsurpassable because it has as its firm foundation, *genuine love* (cf. 1Cor 13). It is this firm foundation that the man of Nazareth had in mind when he said: "... So I

now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church⁸⁸; and the gates of the underworld [evil] can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:18-20). Of course with *genuine love* led by the Spirit of the Risen Lord everything is possible under the sun (cf. Rom 13.8-10); genuine love always forces heaven and earth to meet and to kiss each other in a *perichoresis* fashion. Anyone who loves, genuinely *led by* the Spirit of the Risen Lord, is always given the keys of the kingdom of God to enter and live in peace with everyone, great and small, in this world and the world to come (cf. 1Cor 13. Gal 5).

The Byzantine/“Orthodox” church: God chose this church to write ecumenical (universal) Creeds. Prophets here are monks, “heretics” in the likes of Bishop Nestorius and Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in particular. The weakness here is that this church eventually became the State church. Salvation, or entering the kingdom of God, has to do with belonging and entering the visible church structure so as to be divinised, as well as helping the individual soul to reach immortality a-la-Greek Natural Theology (“philosophy”). Spirit of the risen Lord eventually ran aground here by mistaking the Church to be the kingdom of God, and by Church leadership replacing Christ as the head of the Church. Then tragedy struck: Constantine’s military victory was believed to be backed by Christ; and then syncretistic faith, slowly but surely, crept in where Christ was confused with the sun worship: “From then on church affairs and the imperial administration began to be increasingly intertwined, with Christianity gradually occupying the place of paganism as the ‘civic religion’ of the empire. The chief apologist for this is Eusebius of Caesarea, whose theology dropped eschatology, and increasingly identified the reign of God with imperial rule” (SACBC 1985:67). In this way enemies of Constantine or the Empire became unquestionably the enemies of the God of Jesus Christ. To oppose the emperor and the bishops in a Synod or to oppose official Imperial Decrees, was [tragically] construed as also opposing the Risen Lord.

⁸⁸ We understand this to mean a *New Alternative Way of Living* in this world = Community of Believers in Christ (The Church).

The Arabic church: God chose this church to be the protector of the peoples of Arabia from relapsing into worse idolatry, magic and superstition. Later on this church was to preserve the Greek civilisation for the Western church through monks and then through Islam. Majority of “simple”(rural) Christians, welcomed Muhammad as a prophet and protector from both the Persian Empire and the Byzantine Empire (cf. Baus 1980:21, 463-483). For the Arabic church, salvation or *total submission to God* has to do with concrete life not speculation, especially in combating vehemently pelagianism and idolatry in different forms. Again we emphasise strongly that without this church the role of Islam in the Plan of salvation is lost (cf. Gen 17:20). The weakness in this church is that the theology of the Pauline church was not known in depth and purity. When *honest* and authentic evaluation is made concerning many heretics during the Patristic period (in fact during the whole Church history since Constantine), we firmly believe that many will be shocked to find that many declared saints of that period will become new heretics, and many declared heretics will become new saints. Not only that, but many in Islam will be appreciated in a totally different light. Indeed, when truth is followed all the way without falsifying historical facts to fit our ideologies (*in God's name especially*), the first will always become the last, and the last first (cf. Lk 18: 9-14).

The Western church: The unfortunate division started in 1517 when St Martin Luther vigorously protested against the inauthentic Church, and culminated in 1526 with the bishop of Rome refusing to repent. Before it divided itself so tragically, the Latin Church had been a “State Church” led by the Pope, while the Byzantine one had formerly been a State Church⁸⁹. The Pope here *had already* replaced the Emperor in occupying the place of Christ as head of the Church *after the collapse of the Imperial church*. The Magisterium or Holy Office took the place of the Holy Spirit, and it was said to speak on behalf of the Risen Lord. Prophets here are John Scotus, Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, but eminently the Reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and today's Freethinkers. But wealth and prestige through colonialism killed this unique noble calling of Reformers and many other prophets like them in the West. God chose this church to take Greek

⁸⁹ In the Eastern or Greek Church the Emperor had the last word in matters of the Church, while in the West or Latin Church the Pope or bishop of Rome had the last word in matters of the State.

civilisation from the Arabic church and Islam and to spread it throughout the world. This church was called also to explore scientific natural laws to the full in a unique manner in the history of human becoming. Material greed, excessive love of money (*classical capitalism* in its many forms), and “playing God” etc. have reduced this church to faith rubble today, as we saw in the last chapter. We look in particular at the following two church traditions making up the Western church since these two traditions are still controlling the politics and the economics of this world through Europe and North America; this world of ours in which pain, misery and untold suffering are a daily bread for many, while the many in the north live in an unbelievable world of wasteful plenty.

The Protestant church today: The main prophet here is still Karl Barth. He made it clear that the Western church, through Liberal Theology, have confused natural general revelation with the special unique revelation in Christ Jesus. He is adamant that there is no salvation outside this Jesus of Nazareth (Bosch 1991:478f). For him the truth of the matter is that salvation to modern Christians in the West has become extremely pelagianistic, thanks to liberal theology for the fruits delivered over the years. “God is dead” theology is proper to this way of being church. Remedy? Only if Barth can be revisited *and seriously be listened to* here with a careful theological eye.

The Roman (catholic) church today: Prophets here are Erasmus, Reformers, Küng, Liberation Theologians with their many faces, and Mother Teresa, to name few. Salvation here mainly means guarding and explaining the “Deposits of Faith” from one generation to the next till Kingdom come, thanks to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*) for being the watchdog of this “Museum of Faith”, and of a “Fossilised God”, and thanks a million to the “loyal” Thomistic theology for the service rendered and the fruits delivered. Remedy? Only if Reformers in general and Liberation Theologians in particular are revisited *and are seriously listened to* here.

4.3 The 2nd Fulfillment of God’s Promise to Abraham (Gen 18:7-18; 21:13, 20-21)

It must be absolutely clear here that we are dealing with Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) *before* Islam. When Moslems mention the name of Muhammad, they conceive him as the final and definite Witness of God's last and final Prophet; and as a divine reverence, they cannot help but add immediately after calling the name in an appreciative manner: "Peace be upon him" (p.b.u.h). This respect is also extended to Jesus. For them Prophet Muhammad was called by God in time and space, when the *kairos moment* came, to "prophesy or recite" (like "OT" prophets), the impending doom for all those who ignore the precepts of the Most High and worship idolatry or false gods. This calling and conversion of Muhammad has to do with the promise God made to Abraham in Gen 17:20. God's first revelation through the archangel Gabriel to Muhammad happened around 610 C.E. while he was meditating, as usual, in the cave of *Hira* outside the ancient but well-known traditional holy place called Mecca. The revelation has been proven to be beyond self-delusion:

Though traditionally this Sura [text = verse] is considered the very first revelation to Mohammed, but at the same time it is also evident that Mohammed has a kind of preparatory period for three years. This call to recite the revelation was the beginning of his Public ministry. There are no good grounds for doubting that Muhammad's prophetic experience began with 'true vision'. There is no mention of Gabriel in the Qur'an until the Medina period (D'Cruze 1999:23 footnote).

To confirm D'Cruze, the Qur'an reads:

The Chosen One was in the Cave of Hira. For two years and more he had prayed there and adored His Creator and wondered at the mystery of man with his corruptible flesh, just growing out of a clot, and the soul in him reaching out to knowledge sublime, new and ever new, taught by the bounty of God, and leading to that which man himself, knoweth not. And now, behold! A dazzling Vision of beauty and light overpowered his sense, And he heard the word "Iqraa!" (Qur'an: C.29).

"Iqraa!" - which being interpreted may mean "Read!" or "Proclaim!" or "Recite!". The unlettered⁹⁰ Apostle was puzzled; He could not read. The Angel seemed to press him to his breast in a close embrace [like the purification of Isaiah and Jeremiah for their mission]⁹¹ and the cry rang clear "Iqraa!". And so it happened three times⁹²; until the first overpowering sensation yielded to a collected grasp of the words which made clear

⁹⁰ The one not learned or the one not educated; one really not knowing how to read and write.

⁹¹ Isaiah 6:1-13. Jeremiah 1:1-10.

⁹² Numbers "Three" and "Seven" are also very rich theologically in Islam.

his Mission; its Author, God the Creator, its subject, Man, God's wondrous handiwork⁹³, capable, by Grace, of rising to heights sublime; and the instrument of that mission, the sanctified Pen, and the sanctified Book, the Gift of God, which men might read, or write, or study, or treasure in their soul. [Then] the veil was lifted from the Chosen One's eyes [like St Paul's scales from his eyes when he was converted and called for a specific mission to the gentiles]⁹⁴, and his soul for a moment was filled with divine Ecstasy [like St Paul who was caught up in the third heaven, "... hearing things that are not to be told that no mortal is permitted to repeat (2Cor 12:1-6)]" (Qur' an C.30-31a).

The prophecy of Muhammad in essence is that of the Jewish prophets: "Prophets in Israel were persons who interpreted the actions of God in the events of history. They tried to keep alive the memory of the Exodus and re-interpret the meaning of the ancient faith for new times, to proclaim God's will (based on Sinai covenant) in national crises. After the national disasters of the fall of Israel (722) and Judah (598-586) they began to speak words of hope and comfort" (Brown 1990:797).

With Muhammad, it can be said that he was a unique person who interpreted the actions of God in the events of the history of Hagar and Ishmael and their promised descendants, namely, the peoples of Arabia in particular. He kept alive the promises of Ishmael's expulsion and his mother, and re-interpreted meaningfully and positively that sad ancient separation of Abraham and his family. In that ancient "divinely sanctioned divorce", Muhammad saw *a problem* and *a promise*. With his calling, he realised that God wanted to reconcile and heal that separation and that God had *finally* and *definitively* decided to close that sad chapter in his person once and for all:

'And Waraga, the Christian 'disciple' at that time, [like Ananias commanded by the Risen Lord to accept Saul "the enemy of the 'Faith'" in Damascus]⁹⁵, joined Muhammad's wife Khadija, and [like Simeon and Anna in the Temple over baby Jesus]⁹⁶ they rejoiced when they realised that God eventually had visited Arabic people in the person of Muhammad, in order to form out of them a formidable nation in the world, and

⁹³ This theology is similar to that of Psalm 8 and that of Socrates: "There are many wonders in this world; but none are greater than man!" (Childress 1989:94)

⁹⁴ Acts 9:18.

⁹⁵ Acts 9:10. Much of Muhammad's trade was done in Damascus. Who knows whether a church a-la-Ananias met him and instructed him in the Ebionite Christianity? The undeniable historical fact is that after the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E., 'The Judeo-Christians dispersed in Transjordan and Syria, and they formed in time the sect of the *Ebionites* (the 'Poor'), with the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; they did not accept the divinity of Christ and rejected the Pauline Letters' (The New Jerusalem Bible 1985:2074).

⁹⁶ Luke 2:22-38

to remind all mankind about the uncompromising and true Faithfulness of the oneness of God: "A devout worshipper of God in the Faith of Christ; much learned in spiritual lore, listened to Muhammad's revelations and together with Khadija rejoiced that he, Muhammad, was God's Chosen One to renew the Faith of his people"' (cf. Ali 1983:10).

In this profound and moving personal story, Muhammad lived a particular spirituality born out of the dusty desert of Arabia. Out of nowhere he led a spirituality so powerful in the world that mighty Biblical centres of Paul and the early Church collapsed within a short space of time. Surely there are definite reasons why God allowed that victory, and it is up to honest and unprejudiced theologians to find out these reasons.

His life and death: Like Jesus *before* Christianity, there is also Muhammad *before* Islam. Unless this distinction is *clearly* and *carefully* made, the beautiful healing face of God in/through/by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) will continue to be concealed to all peoples of the human race, both great and small.

Mohammed belonged to the Arabic tribe of Qureysh which '... descended from Ishmael and held the custodianship of Ka'ba. The sanctuary of Ka'ba was well known throughout Arabia for pilgrimage. Muhammad was born in one of their noblest families on Monday the twelfth Rabi-ul-Awal, corresponding to the twenty-ninth of August 570 C.E. 'Abd Allah, father of the prophet, died about two months before his birth. His grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, took the responsibility of bringing up the child. According to the Arab custom, the child was entrusted to a Bedouin woman, Halima by name, of the tribe of Bani-Sa'd for upbringing. When Muhammad was only six years old, he lost his mother as well. At the very early stage of his life he was deprived of the love of his dear ones. Then Abu Talib, uncle of Muhammad, took up his responsibility and trained him to be a caravan manager, a dangerous and highly respected profession. He did not have any formal education. Perhaps because of this situation he is described in the Qur'an as an orphan and indigent (D'Cruze 1999:13).

As it is said above, it is clear that from an earliest age he grew in a very religious family following in the religious traditions evoked by the Ka'ba's Holy Place or Sanctuary known throughout Arabia from time immemorial. Pilgrims came there from all over the "the world" to worship. Tradition has it that the finger of God was with Muhammad from an earliest age to prepare him to be a holy and unique prophet. He grew to manhood with the reputation of reliability, sincerity and humbleness, very much lacking to many at that time. "Because of his sincerity and sense of responsibility Khadija, one of the richest

women of the tribe, entrusted her mercantile goods to him for sale in Syria. She was so impressed by the personality of Muhammad that she proposed to marry him. She was a widow and fifteen years older than Muhammad was. At this stage of his life people were so touched by his uprightness, integrity, fidelity, purity of life and his good sense of duty that they called him *'Al-Amin,'* the Trusted. Muhammad remained in sole wedlock to Khadidja until her death. After the death of Khadidja, Muhammad had plural marriages⁹⁷. In the beginning of his vocation to Prophethood, Khadidja [was placed by God = Allah, to play] an important role as his strong moral support” (D’Cruze 1999:14). Prophet Muhammad died from fever in 632 C.E. in the hands of his younger wife ‘A’ishah; he was 62 years old (cf. Lings 1983:340f). Muhammad underwent a natural death while Jesus underwent a violent death.

4.3.1 Prophet Muhammad’s core teaching

The core of Prophet Muhammad’s teaching and the essence of Islam, even to this day, basically are threefold:

1. *To fight idolatry* with all the might one can get under God’s guidance. Hence the holy cry, ‘Behold there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet!’ “Muhammad had a strong dislike for idolatrous worship even before receiving the revelation. He received the first revelation at the age of forty during a holy night between the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh of *Ramadan* in 610. The injunction was to ‘Read’ or ‘Recite’ to which his reaction was [initially] dubious and negative. He feared lest he had been beset with malicious *djinns* [evil spirits/*les spirits mauves*]⁹⁸ or was the victim of a destructive [religious] illusion sent to mock him [as Freudians like to say]. [But] slowly and gradually [by God’s grace] his misunderstanding was clarified [by his wife and Christian disciple Waraqa⁹⁹]” (D’Cruze 1999:14).

⁹⁷ Most of them out of mercy and responsibility to take care of the clan.

⁹⁸ Like Socrates, Jesus and Descartes.

⁹⁹ Our strong suspicion, supported by much evidence, is that Waraqa belonged to Nestorian Christianity disgruntled by extremes both in the Ebionitic/Hebrew Christianity (emphasising too much the humanity of

2. *To prophesy* (“recite” = *Iqraa!*) that he himself, Muhammad, was chosen as the last prophet to fulfil what God promised to Abraham through Ishmael (cf. Gen 17:20). “During the first five years in Medina, Muhammad tried to draw [Jews’] attention with the hope that they would accept his claim to be God’s true Prophet to the Arabs. He had a great desire to have a true reconciliation between Muslim and Jewish communities, because for him it was the same religion of worshipping God and he was only the messenger. ... [Official Jewish refusal made Muhammad] change the direction of prayer (*kibla*) towards Ka’ab instead of Jerusalem, at the command of the revelation 2, 144” (D’Cruze 1999:58)”.

Many other revelations from God, mainly through the archangel Gabriel, took place, proving that, indeed, he was a prophet of the true living God, in Judaism called Yahweh, and in Christianity called Abba, the Father of Jesus *the* Christ (universal Messiah). It was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel that Jesus, the son of Mary, was the culmination of all God’s promises to Abraham through Isaac (cf. Ali 1983:131). The Qur’an is very clear that Jesus’ coming into being was not an accident; God made sure that when an appointed time came (cf. Gal 4:4), Jesus was born from a “biological” woman: “God’s truth is continuous, and His Apostles from Adam, through Noah and Abraham, down to the last of the Prophets, Muhammad, form one brotherhood. Of the progeny of ‘Imran, father of Moses and Aaron, sprang a woman, who devoted her unborn offspring to God. The child was Mary the mother of Jesus. Her cousin was the wife of the priest Zakariya, who took charge of Mary” (Ali 1983:130). The Qur’an affirms clearly that “God [Allah] prepared the birth of Jesus long ago. Jesus would be a great prophet. God has chosen and elected Mary to be the mother of Jesus” (D’Cruze 1999:64f). “Mary occupies a very unique and special place ‘among all women of the world’ in the history of human becoming on account of Jesus who came to be born of her” (cf. Deedat 1984:8-

Christ) and Byzantine/Greek Christianity (emphasising too much the divinity of Christ). Waraqa and his church were resolved to wait for a prophet that would bring sanity especially concerning rampant idolatry at the time. Another theory of ours is that, since Waraqa was cousin to Muhammad’s wife, and it is clear that he was well versed in scriptures (cf. Qur’an:C.32), he also taught Muhammad a lot about Christianity and Judaism and related problems both in Byzantine Christianity and Hebraic Christianity in accepting Christ. There is high probability that Muhammad’s in-laws could have been Christians one way or another.

11). Muhammad was very firm concerning *inculturation*; he believed that in every culture or people God always raises up prophets¹⁰⁰. But concerning promises to Abraham, Islam regards Muhammad as the last prophet, because Jesus had already fulfilled promises to Abraham through Isaac. “Muhammad received more revelations concerning Abraham. Abraham was revealed [also] to be the father of the Arabs. ... [through revelation] Abraham founded the sanctuary of Ka’ba with the help of his son, Ishmael. ... Abraham’s religion is simply the pure religion of God [not idolatry], since all the prophets have received the essentials of the same revelation. In the light of this revelation Judaism and Christianity were considered as imperfect manifestations of this religion of God” (D’Cruze 1999:58f).

* *To purify and preserve eternally the corrupted revealed Text* to former People of the Book namely, Jews and Christians. The main charge against Judaism is its constant fall into idolatry and not recognising in Jesus their awaited messiah. The main charge against Christianity is the liberty Christians have of “altering words [The Word of God] from their proper meanings [mainly through scholars]” (D’Cruze 1999:59). But there is doubt that Islam acknowledges true divine revelation before it: “The Qur’an sees Judaism, Christianity and Islam as three parallel religious faiths: God first sent the Torah to Moses for the people of Israel, thereafter the Gospel to Jesus and eventually the Qur’an to Muhammad” (Meiring 1996:174). Human greed and self-indulgence forced God to abandon (but not reject) both official Judaism and official Christianity, and to bring into being both Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and Islam: “The Qur-an revelation has, step by step, confirmed the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus. It is a guide from God, and appeals to reason and understanding. ... [On the other hand] the People of the Book had only a portion of the Book, and if they rereject the complete Book, the people of Faith [Moslems] must part company with them, [because] this day is done [or it would be useless to continue arguing] (Ali 1983:121) . “According to Islam the original Abrahamic monotheism was changed or distorted by Jews and

¹⁰⁰ Therefore theology of inculturation is at the heart of Islam, therefore, Islamic theologians better pull up their socks if they want to be faithful to the great Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) so that humanity should be enriched even more.

Christians, and then Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam restored it to its original purity and simplicity. [In this sense] Islam is not a new religion, it simply reestablishes true monotheism, restoring humankind to the place of faithfulness toward God” (De Cruze 1999:195). Great appeal in Islam is also made to Christians to understand and accept this completion of revelation in Muhammad (Ali 1983:121). In this sense, revelation through Muhammad implies that Islam without its roots in Judaism is a futile exercise, and a Christianity that refuses to take both Judaism and Islam seriously as two basic sources of its own self-understanding and authenticity, is an illusion. At the core of Prophet Muhammad’s teaching and Islam, is the purity and the quality of the Word of God with Muhammad as God’s last Prophet (cf. Sura 3). At the core of Jesus’ teaching is the purity and the quality of love with Jesus as the *only* Risen Lord (cf. Rom 3). And nowhere in the Petrine and Pauline kerygmatic proclamation was Jesus ever preached as the last prophet, but as the *only Saviour* promised primordially because of the Fall (humanity’s fall from original grace). It is the Constantinian Church that later confused everything.

4.3.1.1 Theological status of Jesus and Mary in Islam

Because of this high esteem of Jesus and his mother by the Prophet, every Moslem is demanded to give reverence to these two with all great respect (Deedat 1984:2f). For this highest theological esteem, the name of Jesus of Nazareth and that of his mother, appears several times in the Qur’an, and the well known South African Islamic theologian makes this clear:

[Most Christians] do not know that the true spirit of charity which Moslems display, always, towards Jesus and his mother Mary spring from the fountainhead of their faith – the Holy Qu’ran. [Many Christians, unfortunately] do not know that Moslems do not take the holy name of Jesus, in their own language, without saying Hazrat Eesa (meaning revered Jesus) or Eesa alai-hiss-salaam (Jesus, peace be upon him). Every time the Muslim mentions the name Jesus (p.b.u.h.) without these words of respect, he would be considered disrespectful, uncouth or barbaric. ... Jesus is mentioned twenty-five times in the Quran, five times more than the number of times the prophet of Islam is mentioned in the Book of God. [Jesus’ titles among others are]: ‘Ibne Maryam’ – son of Mary; Masih

– (Heb) Messiah – translated as Christ; ‘Abd-ullah’ – servant of Allah; ‘Rasul-ullah’ – Messenger of Allah. He [Jesus] is spoken of as ‘the word of God’, as ‘the spirit of God’, as a ‘sign of God’, and numerous other epithets of honour spread over fifteen different chapters. The Holy Quran honours this mighty Messenger of God, and the Muslims have not fallen short over the past fourteen hundred years in doing the same. There is not a single disparaging remark in the entire Quran to which even the most jaundiced among the Christians can take exception (Deedat 1984:4f).

Islamic theology is very strong in defending *the Virgin Birth, the sinlessness of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, and the Second Coming of Jesus*¹⁰¹. It is unbelievable how Judaism, Christianity and Islam in their core are so intertwined; thus exposing how much harm has been done by hypocrisy and falsification of theological historical facts by inauthentic believers. But above all, inauthentic Christianity will go down in history as the most unfortunate way to use God’s name in vain (cf. 1Cor 15:12-19).

4.3.1.2 Historical enrichment of all peoples of the human race by Islam

Islam’s contribution in enriching¹⁰² the human race is without doubt. Propaganda and false consciousness are well entrenched among many Christians today from inauthentic churches and preaching, so much so that before we close this chapter we have decided to make sure that all are convinced that Islam’s foundation is the same God of Jesus Christ in order to enrich humanity. Here is how Islam has enriched all of us throughout the ages:

In many respects it was the Muslims who preserved Hellenistic culture after the collapse of the Greco-Roman world, communicating it to Europe through Spain, thereby making

¹⁰¹ See <http://answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/uniqueness.html> (pages 1-16).

¹⁰² Islam is not a fanatical religion, as the West wants many of us to believe. Hatred, racial prejudice and jealousy of what Moslems have achieved over the years have blinded the West to see God’s beauty in Islam’s achievements in the history of the human race. Generally, Islam is presented as “a more violent and dangerous religion than, say, Christianity” (Dyer 2003:10). But not everyone can be fooled. Mr Gwynne Dyer, one of the authentic journalists in the West managed to see beyond this vicious Western prejudice: “[While the BBC might be said not to be anti-Muslim, its bias] is responding to a definition of international news that makes ‘violent Muslims’ more newsworthy than violent people in other places. It is largely a Western definition, following an agenda set mainly by the dominant U.S. media. It is [deeply] rooted in Western perspectives on the long-running Arab-Israeli conflict, and has been vastly strengthened by the Islamist terrorist attack on the United States two years ago. It is also a huge, steaming heap of horsefeathers. I’m not preaching pious nonsense about Islam being a ‘religion of peace’: the only peaceful religions are dead religions. And I’m not denying that the Muslim world has a big historical chip on its shoulder: having run one of the most powerful and respected civilisations on the planet for the first thousand years after they burst out of Arabia and conquered large chunks of Europe, Asia and Africa, Muslims have spent the past three centuries being overrun, colonised and humiliated by the West. But the image of Muslims that the rest of the world gets through international news coverage is deeply misleading. ... [Please don’t be so easily] misled by [western] television [and its media in general, particularly in USA and Britain]” (Dyer, *The Natal Witness* 25/08/2003:10). *Mr Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.*

an essential contribution to the Renaissance and so, indirectly, to the Reformation. By means of a variety of developments in the building of arches, Muslims were able to link the dome to right-angled walls, minarets and decorative inscriptions, producing work of outstanding quality. In the field of art and the history of art were emerging ornamental design; the indigenous astrolabe (an instrument for measuring the height of the sun and other celestial bodies in order to tell the time with a view to the ritual prayers); Arabic decorative lettering; metalwork and metal inlay; ceramics; glasswork; embroidery (even European medieval liturgical vestments [long before prejudice and jealousy got the upper hand in Jesus' name] were decorated with Arabic lettering); ivory carving; Persian carpets; bookbinding and [much] more. Arabic words like 'algebra' and 'algorithm' bear testimony to Muslim mastery of mathematics. Arabic numbers are even today the means whereby we keep count. Arabic has an enormously extensive literature of the most divergent kind covering a period of roughly 2 000 years, ranging from that of the simple Bedouin to the most profound thinker. In the tenth century the Muslims not only included powerful merchants, but also producers of a great many important geographical works in Arabic. They knew the world was round when the West regarded such knowledge as sacrilegious. They were in Africa long before the West. They marked maps of the world with longitude and latitude, important trade routs, descriptions of countries, including reasonably accurate descriptions of Africa. The European voyages of discovery were made possible by good navigational maps and instruments like the quadrant and the astrolabe. The standard and enthusiasm of Muslim scholars is astounding. It is said of l-Tabari (d. 923), famed theologian and historian, that he wrote 40 pages of scientific work every day (Meiring 1996:157f).

What an achievement for all peoples of the human race! Who, then, despises Islam as being barbaric and philosophically poor? As the Pauline church rightly proclaims, 'God will always shame the wisdom of the "clevers" of this world when it comes to authentic salvation' (cf. 1Cor 1:19-20). Theologian Tarek Mitri summarises well this biased Christian (as well as Jewish) position when he says:

The common Bible reading among Christians, of all persuasions, hardly denotes a need, or a desire, to appropriate the material heritage of Abraham, let alone share it. Abraham was often looked at in terms of roots or origin, a prototype with discontinuity with paganism. Much was said about Abraham's obedience and his 'estrangement'. His faith was portrayed to be a sort of certitude of hope. His hospitality was also a source of inspiration in art. Suffice it to mention the remarkable and popular icon of Andrei Roublev and, beyond Christian iconography, the numerous Persian and Ottoman miniatures. ... [As a result] ... the Christian tradition has not been tender to Ishmael. As soon as Islam emerged and started to expand beyond the Arabian Peninsula, Byzantium evoked the spectre of Ishmael as portrayed in Genesis: 'Wild with his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him' (Gen 16:12). In the time of the Crusaders, war was waged against the sons of Ishmael, the Hagareans or the Saracens, interpreted to mean those expelled by Sarah [only 'legitimate' wife of Abraham?]. Recently, a group

of [Orthodox Christians], reviving ancient Christian apologetics and blending them with a string of modern research, chose to characterise Islam as 'Ishmaelism' or 'Hagarism'. They see it as a 'fruit of the Judaic tree', while it is meant to be, at the same time, an expression of protest against Judaism. On a more theological note, Islam is placed, in the Christian history of salvation, under the sign of Ishmael rather than Abraham. A 'mystery of Ishmael' grounds itself in a text of the Old Testament that has no respondent in the rest of the Hebrew Bible, let alone in the New Testament. In this way, the Abrahamic heritage is not inclusive, inter-communal or ecumenical but an object of an unequal distributive sharing. This Christian Abrahamism pretends to reconcile but it turns into a denigration of Islamic integrity and universalism. [The irony is that even today] many believers, Jews, Christians and Muslims increasingly boost their relation to Abraham before they even know or say what figure he is (Mitri 2000:1ff).

As you can see, smashing natural prejudices is a more difficult task than smashing atoms, but smashing theological prejudices is even a colossal daunting task. The three faiths may boast that their common reference is Abraham the model of Faith in God; but when self-interests etc. (cf. Gal 5:18-21) get in the way of listening obediently to that God of Abraham, hell breaks loose. So much so that today many people are *understandably* loathing religion. One of the famous Freethinkers of our time summarises it all: "My own view on religion [any religion] is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery to the human race. I cannot, however, deny that it has made some contributions to civilisation. It helped in early days to fix the calendar, and it caused Egyptian priests to chronicle eclipses with such care that in time they became able to predict them. These two services I am prepared to acknowledge, but I do not know of any others. ... [What I am crystal clear about is that] religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown, and partly, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. Fear is the basis of the whole thing – fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone [or always go together] hand-in-hand" (Russell 1957:25,27). Honest Freethinkers, or secular prophets like Bertrand Russell, will be forced to reconsider their antagonistic stand towards religion only if believers in these three faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) can start to curb and forego their twisting of historical facts concerning the Finger of God in the becoming history of the human race. Looking at the constitutions of these religions below, one cannot believe how much God has enriched us

all in these Abrahamic faiths. Therefore, authentic theologians have no excuse in this regard; for the sake of their credibility in this world so torn apart by hatred, greed, suffering and pain always done and inflicted *in God's name*, they have to challenge this falsification of historical facts and this gross distortion of God's Finger in shaping human history irreversibly for the better, including the pain and suffering ontologically embedded in it (cf. 1Peter 2:11-25. James 1:2-3. Mt 5:11-12. Rev 21:1-4).

4.4 “God's essence as Compassion”: Same root in all Abrahamic faiths

The root of the name “God” in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is the same. The Copernican revolution brought by Jesus concerning God's attributes, is the Creator's unconditional and abounding love; it is Yahweh's unconditional compassion, so much so that Jesus called Yahweh ABBA (*Daddy*), thus taking “who God is” to majestic heights and unique fulfillment in the mysterious, complicated history of human becoming (cf. Is 2:1-5. 55:1-13. Ezk 37:1-14):

The freedom of Jesus, born of God's love for him, found fulfillment in his love or passionate concern for people. He synthesized the love of God (Dt. 6:4-5) and the love of neighbour (Lv. 19:18) into a new commandment (Mt. 22:34-40), where the second is seen, not as a consequence, but as an explanation of the first: to love God means concretely to love the other. [Authentic] love of God in us (1Jn. 4:4; Mt. 5:43-48), reaching out to others, does not allow any distinctions based on caste, race, gender or class. It must be unconditional and embrace all. It has no limits, except death (Jn. 15:13). It includes even 'enemies' (Lk. 6:32-36)” (Amalados 1997:96).

It can be said without exaggeration that, to date, the experience of *Shalom* (cf. Is 11:1-9) brought by Jesus is overwhelming, so much so that all religions of the world combined seem like a footnote. In the person of Jesus it has been shown beyond doubt that in the final analysis ‘... the living God does not delight in horses [tanks] nor is God's pleasure in warriors' [soldiers'] strength. The Lord delights in those who revere him [sic]; in those who wait patiently for God's compassionate love’ (cf. Ps 147:10-11). While these attributes are there within Judaic and Islamic consciousness, they fail to reach the

intensity and passion that Jesus' consciousness had (cf. Mt 5. 1Cor 13); so much so that a "pagan" soldier, almost out of nowhere, met the real Jesus on the cross and declared in complete surprise: "In truth this man was the Son of God" (cf. Mk 15:39). Paul later saw in Jesus the image of the invisible God (cf. Phil 2:6). And later on still, Irenaeus also saw in the Son the Father made visible; and Clement saw the very face of God in that Jesus of Nazareth. While to authentic Islamic consciousness, *Allah* is the most Compassionate, the most Merciful (Qu'ran), and while to authentic Jewish consciousness, 'The Lord *Yahweh* is the most Merciful and full of Compassion' (cf. Ex 34:6), authentic Christian consciousness informs the believer that *Abba* is not only the most Compassionate and the most Merciful, but God (Yahweh/Allah) is authentic love itself (cf. James 5:11b. Jn 3:16f), and in the final analysis understood as a tri-personal God (cf. The Creeds). Scripture scholar, Dr Jack Driscoll summarises well the root of "who the living God really is":

Whatever the man [sic] called each living creature: that was its name (Gen 2:19). God was called THE NAME (NA SHEM), known in the Torah as YAHWEH (YHWH) and spoken of only as YAH by Jews to this day. The Lord God found such merit in Abram and Sarai that [God self] gave them part of God's name – from Ya(h) we(h), Abram became Abra(h)am and Sarai became Sara(h) (Gen 17:5). On being given his prophetic mission Moses asked God, 'If the Israelites ask me what is your name, then what shall I tell them?' (Ex 3:13). God answered Moses quizzically (?): ENYEH ASHER ENYEH = 'I will be there – whosoever – I will be there'. This is the original Hebrew of the Torah in past, present and future tense. In our scriptures this is interpreted as "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14). ... The Lord, the Lord – repetition in scripture means – 'This is very important'. [The 'Lord' is as important and as so close as] mother's womb. YAH YAH EL RAHOOM/ROHEM (RHM) is original Hebrew of the Torah (Ex 34:6). 'Mother's Womb' is masculinely interpreted in our scriptures as 'mercy/compassion'. 'The Lord, the Lord is mercy and compassion' (RHM). [Among unique attributes of YHWH we find] 'slow to anger, abounding in love, faithful, maintaining love, forgiving and punishing.' For Islam the name of God is AL ILLAH 'ALLAH' meaning: 'THE GOD'. Earlier scripture scholars interpreted YHWH, from devah 'light, to shine' and hawah 'to be, exist' as JEHOVAH (YEHOWAH)' (Trefoil 2002 (265):24).

This compassionate God (Yahweh/Allah//Abba) historically has been experienced in differing degrees, which is shown by the following common basic ethic in these three religions.

4.4.1 THE COMMON BASIC ETHIC¹⁰³

The Jewish Decalogue

(Exodus 20:1-21)

I am the Lord your God

*You shall have no other gods
besides me*

*You shall not make for yourselves
any image of God. You shall not
take the name of the Lord your God
in vain.*

*Remember the sabbath day, to
keep it holy.*

Honour your father and mother.

You shall not kill.

*You shall not commit adultery
You shall not steal.*

*You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbour.*

*You shall not covet your neighbour's
house*

*You shall not covet your neighbour's
Wife, or his manservant or his
Maid servant, or his ox, or his ass, or
anything that is your neighbour's.*

The Islamic Code of Duties

(Surah 17:22-38)

*In the name of God, the merciful
Lord of mercy.*

*Set up no other deity alongside
(the one) God.*

*Your Lord has commanded that you
serve no one but Him*

*Show kindness to your parents.
Give to the kinsman his due and to
the needy and the wayfarer.*

*Do not kill your children for fear of
poverty. Do not kill any man - a
deed God forbids.*

*Do not come near to adultery.
Handle the property of the orphan
with integrity.*

*Keep your bond. For you are
accountable.*

*Give full measure when you measure
and weigh with just scales.
Do not pursue things of which you
have no knowledge.*

Do not strut proudly on the earth.

¹⁰³ Küng 1995:30.

A Unique and Unsurpassable Christian Ethic
(Mt 5. 1Cor 13. Rom 3. Eph 2)

*Then in total perplexity the apostles asked him: Who can be saved then? (Lk 18:26).
Then Jesus answered them:*

Love God [Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba] with all your being (mind, heart and will) and love your neighbour as yourself, because, even if you speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, you are a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if you have prophetic powers and great educational skills and knowledge with many university degrees, and you understand all human mysteries and all scientific knowledge, and if you have all faith so as to move mountains and perform miracles and heal people; helping them and comforting them in all their illnesses and depressions, but do not have love, you are nothing. If you give away all your possessions or deny yourself married-life and choose a life of celibacy, poverty and obedience and you have no love, you are wasting your time. If you deny yourself basic comfort or if you hand over your body to be tortured so that you may boast about your sufferings in the missions in Christ's name but have no love, you gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing or in the weakness of others, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never tires doing good, and it never ends. ... And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love¹⁰⁴!

The deep theological nature of God in the Abrahamic faiths can be summarised as follows; and this can only be said to mature people in faith:

The theme of themes that runs through the Bible [and the Qur'an] is that God breaks every one of Biblical [Qur'anic] rules sooner or later. There is no perfect consistent pattern of anything in the Bible [Qur'an]. This God of Abraham is always willing to break the rules; His (sic) own rules right in front of Him. And the word for that is Mercy; the word for that is Providence. The Biblical [Qur'anic] word for that is the unconditional love of God. And this love reaches its peak in Christ Jesus. As Dalai-lama has said, 'You got to know the rules real well so that you can know how to break

¹⁰⁴ This *unique* universal love for *unique* renewal of humanity is summarised well by Fr William Burke about the criteria of emotional maturity: "Emotional maturity consists of the following: The ability to deal constructively with reality. The capacity to adapt to change. A relative freedom from symptoms that are produced by tensions and anxieties. The capacity to find more satisfaction in giving than in receiving. The capacity to relate to other people in a consistent manner with mutual satisfaction and helpfulness. The capacity to supplant in directing one's instinct hostile energy into creativity. *And* the capacity to love! Therein lies health! [and sanity]. This last one is only able to operate if the other six are operating as well" (Burke 2001: side 2).

them properly'. And that is exactly what [Abraham's] God does. Every time this God forgives; God is breaking God's own rules. That means God is untrue to His own system: Saying "Yes I know but....!" He/She must be a real "Softy"; He/She just softens up and breaks His/Her own rules because of His/Her natural self as immense compassion. We see this with our primordial parents. God is angry with them and wants to kill them, but He softens up and designs another plan to restore the friendship. This pattern of compassionate love runs through the whole Biblical story. In the prodigal son story, as far as God is concerned there never was a separation. The son devised the separation in his head [as we always do ourselves thinking God is stingy with His/Her Blessings] (cf. Rohr 2001: side two)

It is crystal clear that God's Plan of salvation is a gift to all people of the human race and this *depends on God alone* (cf. 1Cor 1:17-31). If we take seriously the historical story of Abram and his calling (cf. Gen 12), then classical monotheism in Judaism (Jerusalem) should be contrasted in a balanced manner with polytheism in religious classical Greece (Athens). In mature polytheistic consciousness, "the human person is the measure of all things". In mature monotheistic consciousness, "God is the measure of all things". Judaism and Islam reflect the latter in *differing* degrees, while classical Christianity a-la-Paul tries its best to make a synthesis from the two consciousnesses. Dynamics of authentic transactional analysis tells us that the human person is at his/her best when related to as an adult, and not as a child. This "Relational Ethic", to date, makes authentic Christian vision of "what Life is really about" the champion unparalleled in human history, precisely because its logic and coherence is adult consciousness through and through. Hence we call authentic Christianity unique monotheism since it fulfils well the classical monotheism (Judaism) and classical monotheism in emergence (Islam). For us, therefore, the ontological vision of the human person revealed in the life and person of Jesus of Nazareth, is so unique that if lived to the full, enemy and foe alike can never cease to wonder at such a great unique gift from God. For us, that Jesus is the Messiah for healing the ontological structure of the human person, is difficult to dispute. Our conclusion is that, in the final analysis, these three *Abrahamic faiths are one religion in three differing modes given by God* (Yahweh/Allah//Abba) to challenge all other non-Abrahamic religions so that all people of the human race can *eventually* be blessed (cf. Gen. 12:1-3); so that one day when the Christ gives back everything to God the Creator,

everyone should have been given a chance to choose God or Mammon (cf. 1Cor 15:28. Mt 6:24):

It will happen in the final days, that the mountain of Yahweh's house will rise higher than the mountains and tower above the heights. Then all the nations will stream to it, many peoples will come to it and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.' For the Law will issue from Zion and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. Then he will judge between the nations and arbitrate between many peoples. [Then] they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, no longer will they learn how to make war (Is 2:1-4).

4.4.1.1 One Abrahamic religion or many?

Can it still be said that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are three differing religions, or should we call them one religion in three historical manifestations, basing their relation to each other as much as possible as the dynamic relation of One God but three persons (Doctrine of the Trinity)? Can't it be true that God's mystery in the doctrine of the Trinity is so deep that what humanity knows to date is the tip of the iceberg? Honest and unbiased researches from scholars like Mary Boys today seriously challenge the "blasphemous" notion that Judaism is a separate religion from Christianity. The noble purpose of her recent book (year 2000), *Has God Only One Blessing?*, is crystal clear:

Christians involved in educating in faith – whether as teachers, preachers, pastoral ministers, or theologians – are the primary audience for this book. It is intended also for the many Christians who live their faith with great conviction and seriousness and want to deepen that faith. Both groups have typically not given much thought to the negative assessment of Judaism woven into their understanding of Christianity. This book raises awareness of the problem, traces its development, and proposes alternatives. While this is a book principally directed to Christians, it may also be of interest to Jews [and Moslems], both in situating the bitter legacy of anti-Judaism and in showing Ecclesia's changing view of Synagoga (Boys 2000:10).

Another honest scholar, Tarek Mitri above, also challenges seriously the "blasphemous" notion that Islam is unconnected with both Judaism and Christianity, and that Islam is by

nature a violent religion. The fact of the matter is that the problem is not with the original message of these three faiths, but with followers; with our eagerness to destroy each other *in God's name* citing all sorts of justifications, trepidations and nullifications. For example, "There are two extreme positions in the attitude of Christians towards Islam. Islam is [normally] presented as objectionably as possible in order to make it easy to condemn the caricature. The 'worst' in Islam is compared to the 'best' in Christian belief. Historically (and still, in South Africa) this has been the customary attitude of the church. Those who make positive observations regarding Islam are often suspected of being in the process of becoming a Muslim" (Meiring 1996:198). For us it is really a tragedy that Jews, Christians, and Moslems do not recognize themselves in each other in a comprehensive way as we are trying to do here. This can prove how deep religious prejudices are and how dangerous they are for the enrichment of the human race. Only gross ignorance can lead to prejudicial statements like the following:

But no Jews, whether conservative or liberal, regard the New Testament or the Qur'an as divinely inspired. ... Christians do not accept the Qur'an as part of God's revelation to humanity. [But it is amazing that on the other hand] ... Muslims accept both the Torah (the Old Testament) and the Gospel as coming from God, though without the same authority as the Qur'an (O'Sullivan 2002:9-11).

There is no doubt that the uninformed Christian conscience must go, otherwise the universality of Jesus Christ will continue to mean anything, everything and nothing. But with the openness towards Islam, and Islam towards Christianity, it will become clear also that the theological divide between Judaism and Christianity is uncalled for, save for our self-interests and human blindness (c.f. Jn 1:11). But we are confident that history will prove us right when we say that Jesus is the unsurpassable cornerstone through which all peoples of the human race, *as a rainbow reality before God the Creator*, have to go through in order to make a glorified unique prismatic mosaic of what it means to be free, to be truly human, and, above all, what it means to know the true living God face to face (cf. 1Cor 13:12).

4.4.1.2 One religious consciousness in three historical modes or not?

We are now in a position of speaking about one great blessing from God the Father of all (cf. Acts 17:28-29) in three modes. Humanly speaking, for parents to have three children does not mean that the first born is more precious than the last one and vice versa; *but that each will have to play his role well in the family*. Definition of religion in its basic nature can be said to be a dynamic communal dialogue with God within a certain historical cultural context. And as we said before, every religious culture is always a bipolar reality oscillating between particularity and universality. The depth of that loving dynamic communal dialogue within each religion increases the chances of universal acceptance by all the peoples of the human race. Analysing the effect of these three faiths emanating from Abram in stages (historical modes), one realises the captivating depth they have had on individuals. But a closer look shows that, like differing roles of children in a family, each has the *unique unsurpassable* depth and *unrepeatable* contribution of its own. Historically, Judaism was the first step taken by God to effect salvation (cf. Gen 12:1). Then came Christianity, and finally Islam. The three faiths are monotheistic but in differing degrees. While Judaism remains a classical model of monotheism in its long history and promise (cf. Gen 17:19), Islam arose when Christianity failed or forgot the dangerous memory of the Risen Lord and resorted to neo-paganism and the sin of Superssionism. By defending classical monotheism, the second promise to Abraham was fulfilled (cf. Gen 17:20).

4.4.2 A time for a meaningful repentance

It is now clear that differences among the three faiths lie in the way revelation is interpreted as fulfillment. But there is no doubt about the unity of these “religions”. In this sense, followers of these faiths are called to question what is meant by *The Word of God* in their religious traditions, because any statement like the following one of Hans Küng cannot now go on unchallenged: “... The Christian churches have one and the same foundation in the one Jesus Christ. They can and should, despite all their differences, form a unity. The great religions however have very different bases. They cannot and

should not form a unity. But the world would be sufficiently helped if they could live in peace with one another” (Egan 1999: 69). The truth of the matter is that believers of these three Abrahamic faiths have sinned against the promises to Abraham. Through twisting and falsifying facts embedded in the core of the Torah¹⁰⁵, falsifying facts about Jesus *before* Christianity, and falsifying facts concerning Muhammad *before* Islam, we have ended up with a totally broken world *in God’s name*. Denials won’t help much that the followers of these religions or *differing* faiths of “one religion” in different degrees, got it all wrong. Only meaningful repentance of Kubler-Ross and that of John the Baptist by understanding Christians, will greatly help nations and peoples to achieve lasting peace in this world.

4.4.2.1 Advice to Jews

Jewish people must look for the new coming churches in the Third World for a better appreciation of Judaism; even though initially this is not going to be easy. But in the meantime Jews must take the person and work of Paul of Tarsus seriously and see what made him tick. The churches of Byzantine and of Rome have made their point that they cannot be trusted when it comes to the unconditional respect of the Jewish culture, which culminated with the extermination of about six million Jews in the name of the *Christian God*. We know that hypocrites will try to blame Germans for the atrocity, while Germans in turn will blame the Nazis for this crime against humanity. But for those who know better (Boys), truth cannot be changed just to fit our heretical shame and guilt. Auschwitz was the long drawn systematic hatred against the Jews in the name of the “Christian” God perpetrated by Greek and Latin cultures. Lastly but not least, we request humbly, that the Jewish people reflect deeply on Romans 9-11 as to be able to know how much Yahweh chose them to enrich uniquely and unsurpassably this world through one of their own blood brothers called Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Gal 2:1-10). They must also take seriously the Holy Promises of God: Yahweh/Allah to Abraham through Ishmael and

¹⁰⁵ “Then he said to them, ‘You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ [Messiah] should suffer before entering into his glory?’ Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself” (cf. Lk 24: 25-27).

Isaac (cf. Gen 17:19-22) and to realise that Islam is in fact Judaism-in-emergence. Judaism should realise that, to persecute the Jews, is to persecute Jesus and Paul and Peter etc. Only inauthentic Christianity could have committed those atrocities to Jews throughout history. Wasn't Dietrich Bonhoeffer right in calling the majority of us "baptised pagans"¹⁰⁶? Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German, was eventually executed by the Nazis for opposing their evil in the extreme. His resistance against the evil policy of the Nazis woke him from his dogmatic slumbers and he came to realise how dangerous and evil inauthentic Christianity is all about. Official Christianity in Germany went along with Hitler without much problems. After realising how much the true Gospel of the Risen Lord had been hijacked and used for all sorts of greed and the destruction of the *other-me* (my neighbour), he denounced Christians of the day. For him that type of inauthentic Christianity can only happen in a church that is a, "... poor, feeble, boring petty bourgeois church" (Ford 1997:37). In his famous book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer warns against a cheap Faith: "Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. Costly grace [on the contrary] is not governed primarily by doctrine, ethical principles, or religious ritual, but by the call of Jesus Christ to follow after. Costly grace has pervasive iconoclastic consequences, waging war against the idols and against all competing claims on the disciple [including sin of Supersessionism]" (Ford 1997; 46f). We now know today that not only the German church drips with blood in the Holocaust, but all official Christianity since the second century. Sincere forgiveness is what we ask from the Jewish people. Hopefully, then, there will never again be the Holocaust in any form, till the Messiah appears *publicly* before God the Creator, and before all peoples of the human race (cf. 1Cor 15:28).

4.4.2.2 Advice to Christians

The unique contribution of Jesus does not depend on whether one is baptised in his name or not, but on the power and tangible love emanating from that baptism (cf. Col 3:1-17). The unique contribution of Jesus the Christ to the human race is null and void unless

¹⁰⁶The fact that such people *are still* called "Christians" proves the fact that Christianity is totally irrelevant or a great suspect in its present "official" state.

Christianity answers right questions. Paul Tillich is absolutely right in saying, "It is no use for the theologian to give splendidly accurate answers to questions no one is asking" (Maimela 1990:137). *All human sciences must be explored and carefully listened to lest Christian theology gives splendid accurate answers to questions no single human is asking; lest Christian theology answers irrelevant questions.* Kant once said that the reason why theology as a science does not advance like other sciences, but keeps going in circles, is that it is too theoretical; preoccupied too much with questions outside our human experience (*noumena* world). Like Tillich, Kant takes seriously the *analysis of the human situation* as the first step in understanding the metaphysical world (if any at all). Even voices that were not listened to historically by Christian theology must be listened to. This is the time; it is now the *kairos* moment to explore anthropology to the full with all knowledge humanity has gathered over thousands of years in the history of human becoming from time immemorial. If "anthropology" *is imposed* in any way upon humanity, thus making out of us what we are not ontologically, humanity will then continue to be corrupted because the medicine applied will always be wrong since the diagnosis would be wrong in the first place. Christian theology must not continue to repeat the mistake of Trotsky who, in Russia in October 1917, denounced his menshevik opponents as a hopeless crowd, just because they lost power, forgetting that (in history) that which goes around comes around: "You are miserable isolated individuals. You are bankrupt. You have played out your role. Go where you belong, to the dustheap of history" (Joll 1979:viii). Even Gnostics and heretics have a contribution to make in the history of the human race precisely because they are human beings in the first place (cf. Lk 23:34). No human being has monopoly on what constitutes the nature of the human person (anthropology), human reality/life and its future; and indeed on what constitutes Truth. As moving makers of reality (participators in *all-that-is*), we all have responsibility towards other human beings. The difference always comes in the interpretation and understanding of what it means to be human, what it means to be free, and above all what it means to embrace an authentic and a meaningful God. Hans Küng calls this commonality of our humanness *humanum*, and every responsible human being has a global duty to shape it for a better world ethic. Byzantine and Roman Christianity must "let go", and accept that they have "tribalised" the Gospel too much, and that it is

because of them (especially the West) that the world is “atheistic”, as Zizioulas has observed. We agree wholeheartedly with Panikkar and other Asian theologians that over centuries, and especially during the colonial period, the Eastern and the Western churches ‘... have made Jesus into a “tribal God” – meant to conquer or subdue all the other gods. This, for Panikkar, is the challenge of the new millennium: “to the third Christian millennium is reserved the task of overcoming a tribal Christology by a Christophany which allows Christians to see the work of Christ everywhere without assuming that they have a better grasp on or a monopoly of that Mystery which has been revealed to them in a unique way” ... A new vision of religious dialogue should compare well with that of the authentic Greek theologians of the early centuries of “dancing together” (*perichoresis*) of the Trinity¹⁰⁷, (cf. Knitter 2000:130f).

4.4.2.3 Advice to Moslems

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) is indeed the last prophet in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham the father of all those who have faith. We believe in the divine authentic revelation that came through Muhammad: “As the People of the Book had received ‘Clear Signs’ and inspired Books before, so also God’s Message came to the Prophet Muhammad through the Qur-an, which superseded the earlier revelations, already corrupted in the hands of their followers” (Ali 1983:667). We believe strongly that God chose Islam first to protect classical monotheism, while Supersessionism from inauthentic Christians towards Jews was rife; and secondly, to be an anti-thesis to unbecoming colonial Christianity of the West. We strongly believe that God, in God’s mysterious ways, will make Islam in this regard to “prevail against the gates of evil and hell” (Mt 16:18). What Moslem theologians should seriously reflect on is the deep mystery sealed in the Prophet concerning “who Jesus really is”. This should be done by opening the Qur’anic text to exegesis that is authentic; scholars and theologians should not fall into the trap of “protecting God/Allah” as is presently the case with corrupted

¹⁰⁷ “Just as the three persons of the triune God receive, maintain, and deepen their differences precisely by dancing in and out of each other, so the religious traditions of the world can dance in dialogue with each other and so grow in both difference and togetherness. Paradoxically, the very incommensurabilities

Christianity; Islam must continue to remind us all that the Word of God is the Word of God, and is not of human origin (cf. Acts 5:38-39; Gal 1:6-10). One of the prophets in the Western church has this to say concerning the fact that Truth protects itself, and that we can only be servants of this Truth if we really want to be free: “Faith in Jesus is not our starting-point, but it will be, I hope, our conclusion. However, this does not mean that the book was written for the apologetic purpose of defending the Christian faith. Jesus does not need me or anyone else to save him. He can look after himself, because the truth can look after itself. If our search for the truth leads us to faith in Jesus, then it will not be because we have tried to save this faith in Jesus, then it will not be because we have tried to save this faith at all costs, but because we have re-discovered it as the only way in which we can be ‘saved’ or liberated. Only the truth can make us free (Jn 8:32)” (Nolan 1976:1). We believe that the same God who spoke and chose Jesus, also spoke and chose Muhammad for different missions yet not opposed to each other; so let us all let Truth save itself. Through responsible and authentic scrutinizing the Qur’anic text, Islam will come to see the radical connection between the message of Paul and that of the Prophet Muhammad. By knowing much more from Pauline church and theology concerning human salvation, Islam will undertake a Copernican revolution in understanding “who Jesus, the son of Mary, really is”. It is unfortunate that some eminent Islamic theologians and scholars are still blinded by much prejudice about “who the real Paul of Tarsus really is”. For example, just listen to the following jaundiced statement from one of those eminent theologians:

... The gallant St. Paul [is the] self-appointed thirteenth apostle of Christ. Jesus had twelve apostles, but one of them (Judas) had the Devil in him. So the vacancy had to be filled, because of the ‘twelve’ thrones in heaven which had to be occupied by his disciples to judge the children of Israel (Luke 22:30). [But the real] Saul was a renegade Jew, and the Christians changed his name to ‘Paul’, probably because ‘Saul’ sounds Jewish. This St. Paul made such a fine mess of the teachings of Jesus (pbuh) that he earned for himself the second-most-coveted position of ‘The Most Influential Man of History’ in the monumental work of Michael H. Hart: ‘The 100’ or ‘The Top Hundred’ or the ‘Greatest Hundred in History’. Paul outclasses even Jesus because, according to Michael Hart, Paul was the real founder of present-day Christianity. The honour of creating Christianity had to be shared between Paul and Jesus, and Paul won because he wrote

between religious experiences become opportunities to connect with each other and to learn from each other” (Knitter 2000:130).

more Books of the Bible than any other single author did, whereas Jesus did not write a single word. ... [But here and there this Paul does speak some truth, therefore] let us give the devil his due (Deedat 1984:26ff & 28 footnote).

Such prejudicial convictions as these are really unfortunate, and can only continue to keep the unity of these three Abrahamic faiths in the periphery. If all of us can do our innermost to follow truth where it leads, *Islam need not wait till the Last Judgement for the mystery “who the son of Mary really is” to be revealed. The mysterious Finger of God is already there moving in this direction somehow through the Baha’i religion¹⁰⁸. If only Orthodox Islam could let “scales fall from its eyes” (Acts 9:18).*

Conclusion

Has the true living God only one blessing for humanity? No! But there is one foundational trinitarian blessing captured so well, yet mysteriously, in the three Abrahamic faiths. It has become very clear today among scholars that to talk of Christianity without seriously taking into account the religious context of Jesus, Peter, Paul and the early Church, is not only dangerous for the faith, but reduces faith to ideology a-la-Goebbels. Any Dogma on Jesus without a reliable historical context, is very dangerous (cf. Gal 4:4); and a history of salvation without dogmatic declarations on the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth one way or another in the *authentic* history of human becoming, is an illusion (cf. Gal 1:6-10). In the same way, to wrench Muhammad outside the Judeo-Arabic-Christian cultural setting of his time, will be reducing Islam to an ideology and a dangerous faith (cf. Gal 1:17. Amaladoss 1997:116f).

When Hegel was made aware that his philosophy of absolute Spirit did not fit the facts, he was flabbergasted but cool: ‘Well if that is the case, “too bad for the facts!”’¹⁰⁹ (Nichols 1999:177). Many in the Latin church (both Protestant and Roman catholic) will be astounded by the way we talk about and “glorify” prophet Muhammad here, but we hope that they will allow the Spirit of the Risen Lord to help them to keep “cool” so as to

¹⁰⁸ This religion arose from Islam in Iran and its main aim is lasting peace.

¹⁰⁹ In German: *Zu schlimm fur die Tatsachen*

be able to stop “changing” historical facts by trying to protect the Truth concerning “who Jesus really is”. As Nolan puts it, “Jesus does not need me or anyone else to save him. He can look after himself, because the truth can look after itself” (Nolan 1976:1). If we follow truth through our intellectual honesty (1Pet 3:15f), then even twisted Biblical historical facts will have to be untwisted in order to enrich all the people of the human race who play part in our journey about what it means to be free, what it means to be human and above all, what it means to embrace a meaningful God. We cannot, like Hegel shrug it off, “It is too bad for the facts!” But why so much prejudice and “cold war” hatred against Islam in the Western church? J.A. Naude¹¹⁰, a Christian theologian, summarises this “Islamic threat” which to us, fundamentally, is clearly *unfounded fear*: “After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the [apparent] accompanying failure of communist ideology, the [white] Western world began anew to regard Islam as its next and greatest threat. This fear is rooted in history. Within a century of the death of Muhammad, the Moors conquered Spain and were prevented from extending their dominance even further only when Charles Martell, the father of the Frankish emperor Charlemagne, stopped them at Tours in 732, a mere 365 kilometres south of Paris. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople and began penetrating further into Europe through the Balkans, a process that came to an end only in 1683 with their unsuccessful siege of Vienna. In the [white] West the revival of Islam as a political force (as in Iran) has given substance to the spectre of Islam as a threat. The [white] Western world’s prevailing perception of Islam includes a militancy which cannot be wished away. Even within the Arab world, Islam, in the form of ‘fundamentalism’, is seen as a [great] threat” (Meiring 1996:149). Only if the Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic churches of white people can go beyond their “*unfounded fear*” of Islam, and learn about Prophet Muhammad before Islam, will interreligious dialogue bear tangible fruits. Islam has enriched Europe immensely. After all, the achievements of European Renaissance, Spanish culture, and great men like Thomas Aquinas and Descartes, are unthinkable without Islam. At the same time, Islam is there to stop the colonial madness of Western Christianity; and that struggle still goes on even up to this day. In many respects Islam is

¹¹⁰ Professor J.A. Naude is head of the Centre for Islamic Science at the Rand Afrikaans University and in his field he is renowned world-wide as a master in Arabic (Meiring 1996: iii)

a blessing to the Third World, and is held in great esteem there; while to the Western World, in large measure, Islam is conceived as the greatest threat to human civilisation.

Close scrutiny of human longing in all religions, both great and small, shows three realities: *Hope* for a better world for all, steadfastness (*faith*) in that hope, and hoping that one day *love* will have the lasting word in that coming world (cf. Rev 21:1-4). Judaism delivered that hope by giving the world that so long awaited Messiah (cf. Mt 13:16-17). And when the sin of Supersessionism took over, Islam became faithful and steadfast in vindicating Judaism. Authentic Christianity has shown what lasting love is all about; thus showing authentic Christianity as the crowning answer to all the deepest recesses of the human heart; and it is because of this incarnational reality that the uniqueness of Jesus should be understood. Hope (Judaism), steadfastness = faith (Islam), and homeliness = love (Christianity) are *sine qua non* ontological realities for our human salvation. Yes, as it is, these three remain, faith, hope, and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love (authentic Christianity). Recently on a local radio station I heard a minister of religion, in his preaching, say that what distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is hope. He got it all wrong! Love is the answer; *universal* loving is the hallmark of authentic Christianity (cf. Jn 13:34-35.1Cor 13:13).

The uniqueness and unsurpassable reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the special gift from God the Creator for all peoples of the human race, does not depend on accusation and counter accusation, but on concrete actions of a saving God *already* at work in Christ. Authentic Christianity, in the final analysis, is not a religion of the Word and Preaching, as some people have made us to believe; but it is a religion of an enriching *Eucharistic Communal Experience*. The Pauline church is very clear on this (cf. 1Cor 11:17-34). *The new life in Christ* (cf. Rom 6) *is not a matter of talking and oratory, but of an enriching life-experience beyond doubt*. It is not a matter solely of faith and hope, but, at the end of the day, of *a tangible concrete love* (cf. 1Cor 13:13). Authentic faith is the one that “boasts” *only* in the power of the Risen Lord (cf. 1Cor 1:31), changing this world and making it a better place for all peoples of the human race to live in; and, therefore, not occupying the space of the poor with their many faces (cf. James 2:1-26). As the Pauline

church puts it, the only perennial debt allowed by the God of Jesus Christ *to all* authentic Christians still on this side of the grave, *is genuine love*: “The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfil the law” (cf. Rom 13: 8; 12: 1-21; 13: 1-7). Below follows an analysis of authentic love in all its possible richness. In trying to make this world a better place to live in, and in talking so much about authentic salvation of the human person, it is crucial to explain from the outset what we mean by authentic anthropology that is worthy to be the perennial strong foundation on which to build “new world ethic” (cf. Lk 6:47-49) in order to enrich all peoples of the human race (cf. Mt 6:33-34; 25:31-46).

Chapter 5

In Search for a new alternative World Ethic

5.1 Inescapable structures of the human person

What is “Man¹¹¹”? “To a scientist a man or a woman is only a mass of electrons. To a tiger he or she is an object of prey. To a man of discrimination the body is a combination of flesh, bone, urine, faecal matter, pus, perspiration, blood and phlegm. ... to a passionate man or woman the body is an object of enjoyment” (DLSSA 1980:655). Unless a New World Ethic a-la-Küng is seriously sought after, self-interests and greed¹¹² will continue to thrive unchallenged wreaking havoc in the world. The ball of “global responsibility”, above all, is in the court of each religion to come up with something *unique*. The above quotation is shocking where the human person can be anything, everything and nothing. But this is the reality of human existence, apparently, from time immemorial after the Fall. Backed up by religions, humanity has gone, and is still going through a tragic time of self-destruction. Cultures, despite their beauty, can be so demonic and destructive to other people. One's culture and upbringing in most cases, determine each one of us. Let's take a few historical examples.

¹¹¹Because of the kind of history we have, at times it is not easy to bypass some words, like “man” here. In our modern age terminology like this one (as exclusive and discriminatory) is not only shameful “in Christ”, but outdated as well. For the sake of the usage of “man” historically in scholarly circles, I can't do otherwise, but the terminology will be used to the minimum.

¹¹² Paul takes *greed as sin* so seriously that he likens it to idolatry which is a total abomination to God: “That is why you must kill everything in you that is earthly: sexual vice, impurity, uncontrolled passion,

When human rights declaration was conceived in USA by the "founding fathers"¹¹³, in their good intention the declaration did not cover *Blacks*¹¹⁴ because at that time *Blacks* were not yet thought to be human beings in the fullest sense of the word as *Whites* were. Darwinism and the search for the *Missing Link* dominated the scene then. Human slavery¹¹⁵ and other atrocities perpetrated by Nazi Germany against Jews and other groups are well documented. Apartheid had its own equal share of the systematic destruction of the other-me. Recent Bosnia and Burundi massacres will always testify to the monster within all of us. Here in South Africa during the political struggle, political parties, in the name of liberation, slaughtered each other, and innocent people paid heavily for occupying space in this world. During the so-called "The Seven Days War" around Pietermaritzburg, Fr Jabulani Mtolo OMI, who was caught in the cross fire,

evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; it is precisely these things which draw God's retribution upon those who resist" (Col 3:5-6).

¹¹³What about "founding mothers" who, I am sure, suffered greatly in atoning silence for the creation of the mighty USA of today? Can we afford always to lord men only? Authentic heaven forbids!

¹¹⁴*In authentic anthropology Black and White people do not exist, only Negroids and Caucasoids do. Being Black and being White are racist political definitions originating basically in USA in the 1920s. In this sense, authentic and true God never created either Black people or White people, but politics did, and is still doing, even up to this day for the sake of power struggle and resistance to live together as authentic human becoming demands. The author of this work detests in the strongest possible terms the usage and the hearing of these unfortunate labelings in the history of the human race.*

¹¹⁵ The ugliness and extreme inhumanity of slavery is summarised well by Wheatcroft describing slave under the hands of both Christians and Moslems when God's name was *consciously* used to do evil in the extreme: "When a Muslim vessel took a Christian ship, all non-Muslims aboard would be immediately enslaved. Often the crew and any passengers would be the most valued prize. Some could be ransomed, and others sold for a good profit in the markets of North Africa or Constantinople. If a Christian galley intercepted a Muslim ship, exactly the same transactions would take place. ... Galley fleets became larger during the sixteenth century as trade grew along the shore, and the predators prospered. Mostly these were ships exclusively engaged in raiding, from parts such as Muslim Algiers, the greatest port on the Barbary (North Africa) shore, or from Christian Fiume, at the head of the Adriatic. ... On each ship, there would be more than 100 men, most chained to their rowing station, with sometimes a few oarsmen free to move within the constraints of the narrow deck. Most lived out their lives within the two feet allotted to them. They slept, ate, defecated, bled, suppured and often died at the bench. Rats and cockroaches thrived in the decaying piles of food scraps mixed with ordure and urine that built up beneath their feet. A wise galley captain, knowing how rapidly epidemic disease would spread under such conditions, would regularly wash down the rowing decks of his vessel. When the rats and lice had bred uncontrollably, the ultimate solution was to put the crew ashore under guard, unship the masts, fill the galley with stones and sink it in the shallows until the deck and superstructure were wholly underwater. The vermin that could not, or would not, 'desert the sinking ship' drowned ... For the chained men, whether slaves on the ships of the Ottoman sultan and the corsair captains of North Africa, or condemned prisoners on the galleys of the Most Catholic King of Spain or the Most Christian King of France, to serve at the oars was a form of living and death. ... The men who filled the benches on most Christian warships were either Muslim villagers or prisoners of war. But they also included many Christians ground out through the machinery of the law. In Spain debt, sedition, even petty crime, could bring a sentence to the galleys" (Wheatcroft 2004:9f & 10-11). Surely this type of inhumanity was experienced also by those who were shipped in thousands like animals to the so-called "New World" by Western Christianity. *All in Jesus' name!*

relates the following: "... By Tuesday night, March 27 [1990], I, as the parish priest, had already opened the church doors for the refugees. By the next afternoon, Wednesday 28 March, the number of displaced people had swollen to several thousand, bringing with them horrifying stories of the massacre of the old and the very young who could not escape the burning homesteads and the looting. ... some running kilometres barefoot. In one case a crippled woman was pushed down the hilly highways by her husband, with her small child on her lap. One woman lost her child in a swollen river after very heavy rains that week. Another pregnant woman gave birth to her child in the forest, only to be massacred that afternoon and her baby taken and smashed to death" (Levine 1999:49). It is obvious that our fallen human nature is not an illusion, but a reality of every human being, great and small.

The famous theologian Thomas Aquinas, for example, is said to have defined a woman as "a biological accident caused by an unfavourable wind"¹¹⁶. Protestantism in its inception did not do well either: "[At that time] women were believed to be oversexed, best restrained by dull clothing, no cosmetics, and seclusion. 'A woman does not have complete mastery over herself,' Luther claimed. 'God created her body that she should be with a man and bear and raise children. The words of Genesis clearly state this, and the members of her body sufficiently show that God himself (sic) formed her for this purpose.' He held that men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and 'accordingly they possess intelligence.' Women, by contrast, have narrow shoulders and broad hips. 'Women ought to stay at home,' he divined from this. 'The way they were created indicates this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon.' Refusal to have sex with a husband was grounds for divorce. 'Here it is time for the husband to say, "if you will not, another will; the maid will come if the wife will not,"' Luther maintained. The dangers of childbearing did not concern him: 'If women grow weary or even die while bearing children, that does no harm. Let them bear children to death, that's

¹¹⁶ The view of women was very low and degrading then. For example in Geneva at the time of the Reformation (around 1545), while "Protestants pressured city officials to close public brothels [on account of the arrival of syphilis], some of which were owned by city councils and employed salaried civic officials as brothel-keepers; the Catholics often regarded whorehouses as sewers which kept the rest of society clean and protected the virtue of respectable women. A Dominican monk, asked for advice by the town council at Cracow, recommended setting up a civic brothel as 'the lesser evil.'" (Moynahan 2002:388f).

what they're there for'" (Moynahan 2002:389f). Yet according to Jesus of Nazareth women are our mothers and sisters (cf. Mk 3:20-21 & 31-35). "St" Thomas and "St" Luther ought to have known better as theologians, but when prejudice of the time and implicit hatred is at work, even the "enlightened ones" among our midst in this world just go blind (cf. 1Cor 1:19-21. Rom 1:22). This vindicates the core argument of Liberation Theology that *structural sin* is the basic reality of our existence; and unless it is dealt with decisively in wholeness, human history will continue to be a slaughtering world-altar where human beings are sacrificial lambs for our primordial sinfulness (cf. Gen 3:16-19 & 4:1-16). *Individuated sin* will continue to mean everything, anything and nothing, unless *structural/social sin* is taken seriously. *In fact, God-Talk will continue to be the Mother of all divine lies.*

But on the other hand, from our ontological calling as sacred beings (including women), we *ought* to behave positively. Our primordial created state before the Fall seems to be the opposite of what is going on in the world today. This is evidenced by cultures of the world in their myths, legends and religions. In them we see a strong deep longing (ontological nostalgia) to be at home with God once more. Fr Rolheiser, a renowned authority on the sacredness of the human person, captures well the primordial beauty of the human person evidenced by different cultures of the world:

Great cultures of the world teach us a lot on our original sacredness. As human beings we are born with the gift of timelessness, unlike animals. Plato says that 'when we are born we are fired into life with the madness that comes from the gods. Before our birth we pass before God where God touches us and seals us with the divine spark of eternity.' And Qoheleth [from the OT] says that 'God has put eternity or timelessness in the human heart.' In the anthropology of Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism etc.), every human being is understood as being imbued from birth with nostalgia for the Infinite. Henry Nouwen talks of the "memory of the first love." He says that 'inside ourselves, long before we were born, we possess the memory of once being kissed by God.' Before the soul is conceived, God kisses the soul. And then during life we always remember that somehow in a dark way. In fact, we judge everything whether it is true or false by that unconscious memory. Hence the reality of the longing for the Infinite within every human being. It is within this sense that St Augustine's prayerful wisdom should be understood: Oh God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are forever restless; until they find rest in Thee (cf. Rolheiser 2000: side one).

Indeed how mysterious and complicated the human person is! Here follow crucial universal insights concerning the nature of the human person (“Man”). It is a fact that the human person in all cultures of the human race has experienced himself/herself as both negative and positive. Unfortunately, while each person strives to do good to the best of his/her ability, most of the time we fall short of the good intended:

Our humanity were a poor thing but for the divinity that stirs within us (from Bacon)¹¹⁷

We are the miracle of miracles, the great inscrutable mystery of God (Carlyle)

Every man (sic) is a volume, if you know how to read him (William Ellery Channing)

There are times when one would like to hang the whole human race, and finish the farce.
(S. L. Clemens (Mark Twain) – *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur’s Court*).

Man (sic) is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be (Hazlitt)

Does man (sic) differ from the other animals? Only in posture. The rest are bent, but he is a wild beast who walks upright (Philemon)

Men (sic) in general, are but great children (Napoleon)

Man (sic) is the measure of all things (Protagoras)

When faith is lost, when honour dies, man (sic) is dead! (Whittier – *Ichabod*)

Man (sic) is an animal that makes bargains; no other animal does this, - one dog does not change a bone with another (Adam Smith)

I teach you beyond Man (sic) (superman), Man is something that shall be surpassed.
What have you done to surpass him? (Nietzsche – *Thus Spake Zarathustra*)

What a piece of work is a man! (sic) how noble in reason how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And, yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling, you seem to say so (Shakespeare – *Hamlet. Act II Sc.2*)

¹¹⁷ Henry 1952:125. The following quotes are taken from the same book pp. 167-169.

*Chaos of thought and passion, all confused; Still by himself (sic) abused and disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall; Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all; Sole judge
of truth, in endless error hurled; The glory, jest and riddle of the world!*

(Pope – *Essays on Man*)

Man (sic) that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble (Job 14:1)

*When I look at your heavens, shaped by your fingers; at the moon and the stars you set
form – what is man (sic) that you spare a thought for him? Yet you have made him little
less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and beauty, made him lord of the world*

*of your hands, put things under his feet, sheep and cattle, all of them, and even the wild
beasts, birds in the sky, fish in the sea, when he makes his way across the ocean*

(Psalm 8:3-8)

These realities of life raise serious existential as well as ontological questions: What is “Man” then? What makes a human being to be so cruel (*evil*) to other human beings, and yet *at the same time* to be so charming and loving (*good*) to his/her own family or group? Do human beings really sin, knowingly or not? How does it come that, even after a serious warning, history repeats itself and people continue to commit the same old genocides, killings and destruction of the other? When shall *we* human beings ever learn? Unless these questions are answered, religions or any meaningful Talk about God will remain forever puzzling, disheartening and even disgusting to an honest, mature and searching mind. The New World Ethic can only be possible if we all arrive at a *common ground; common agreement*. After all, within Christian anthropology, the human person is indeed very complicated (cf. Gen 1&3. Ps 8. Acts 17:22-31. Rom 1:1-32. 3:9-20). Our view is that, because of the complicated nature of the human person, *the* evil and *the* good are also complicated realities of our Life. The more we understand how the human person is constituted ontologically, the more clarity will come on the nature of good and evil. And by exploring to the full dynamics of *natural theological alterity*, we will be in a better position to synthesize *good* and *evil* in the world and within ourselves today. Therefore the analysis of “who the human person really is” theologically, is a necessity. We are basically dealing here with the dynamics of Natural Theology. God loves all the peoples of the human race so much that we are *naturally* created as sacred beings *already*

sharing deeply in God's nature *even before being born anew in Christ* (cf. Gen. 1:27. Rom 1:19-21).

5.1.1 In search of a universal theological alterity

*Alterity*¹¹⁸ has always confronted human cultures from time immemorial. According to Judeo-Christian scripture, creation started with *alterity* as its cornerstone for humanity to succeed (Gen 4:9-10)¹¹⁹. This perennial question of our humanness¹²⁰ as human beings “Where is your brother/sister/neighbour?”, will always confront the human race as *children of one and the same God*, as captured by the poet John Donne, ‘No one is an island unto himself/herself’. Today, thank God, much is being done in philosophy and theology and other disciplines to explore deeply the dynamics of *relating to the other*; the dynamics of *respecting the face of the other*. The search is intense today because there is much awareness that, to survive on this planet, co-existence is vital. We are convinced more and more that human beings ontologically “... are not separate individuals. Nobody is an island unto himself or herself no matter how much they might think they are. None of us would be here at all without our parents who in turn came from their parents going all the way back to Adam and Eve. Without other people we would have no language and no knowledge [and culture]. We are [by nature] social beings who could not survive without one another. Moreover, no human being could survive for a second without the environment of planet earth: air, water, the right temperature, oxygen, plants and other animals. We are part of a complicated eco-system without which we could not exist. We are not just on the earth, we are part of the earth. Together [with all other races], with all other living things we constitute a total system known as the earth” (Challenge¹²¹ 2001 :10)

¹¹⁸ “Alterity” is the philosophical term associated closely with the famous French philosopher of our time, Emmanuel Levinas, who passed away recently. It is also known as the “Philosophy of the Face”. This philosophy, at its core, confronts the abyss of the freedom of the “other-me” by exposing the banality of alienating human exclusivity. Theologically, it deals with ontological dynamics of “loving the other person as one loves oneself” (cf. Mt 7:12). Philosophically, it deals with our existential life where the “face of the other (or the *other-me*)” is unconditionally as sacred and respectful as like any other face.

¹¹⁹God confronts Cain who had killed his brother, Abel: "Yahweh asked Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I do not know' he replied. 'Am I my brother's guardian?' 'What have you done?' Yahweh asked".

¹²⁰*Ubuntu* or *humanum*

¹²¹South African Theological Ecumenical Magazine within the Roman catholic church.

Process theology is one serious case in point in searching for a better understanding of the dynamics of that mysterious "beautiful face" of the *other-me*. There are sensitive ontological structures of the human person that go beyond individual interests and self-glorification. When confronted with the question of *basic human values* (*humanum = ubuntu*), the principle of alterity must be sought in every discipline of human knowledge, because "... the search for values [in every age] must be conducted in an interdisciplinary way. [This has to be so because] values are not generated by science. Similarly, values as defined by theologians and philosophers are not born in a vacuum, without reference to the real world. ... [In this sense, asks bishop Mark Hurley], are there not some things so basic to humanity, so fundamental to [any] society that we can agree on them?" (Origins 1976: 405). Therefore *alterity*, in a certain sense, should be understood as an unavoidable Divine Calling for the human race to succeed in knowing what it means to free, what it means to be truly human (*ubuntu/humanum*), and *eventually*, what it really means to be at home with the Ultimate Reality: Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba.

5.1.1.1 The primordial mysterious nature of the human person: A moving mover

The human person can be described as a *moving mover* because while he/she makes things happen on this blue planet of ours, he/she cannot deny the fact that *all-that-is* is not caused by him/her but that *all-that-is* is found there already. As Heidegger put it, our reality at birth is an already thrown-in-existence. Creation stories in all religions and in all ideologies affirm this reality. Even those ideologies that deny a personal God in any form, at least acknowledge *the somethingness* that precedes the coming into being of every human person ("man")¹²². As a *moving mover*, the human person will always remain a mystery; he/she will always surprise himself/herself (cf. Rahner 1965:288). As a *moving* being, he/she ought to accept himself/herself as the *given* (either good or bad or both). As a *mover*, he/she is always responsible "voluntarily" to make himself/herself what he/she wants himself/herself to be in his/her environment. In this sense, the human

¹²²Even the great proponents of matter as the sustaining ground of being (e.g. Aristotelianhylomorphism) or scientific socialism (e.g. Marxist-Leninism) cannot deny the *movingness* of the human person as far as the beginning of the *totality* of life (*unmovingness* of life) is concerned.

person is always capable of creating and making the world a better place to live in, and in so doing, he/she would be civilising himself/herself and his/her context. Because of this achievement as a *mover* or maker (*homo faber*), a human being can be said to be an object of scientific study to be understood; *naturally-self seeking self-understanding*.

But as a *moving* entity; as a given reality already in motion, the human person is a faceless “divine” subject beyond self and always transcending self. He/she is beyond scientific analyses, because in the final analysis he/she is the one already determining the purpose and method of these sciences anyway. It is like creating human images in our likeness and then calling them “God” afterwards; this is absurd and, theologically, simply stupid (cf. Is. 45:20-21. Acts 17:24. Rom 1:22-23). Science must be given its due credit; not less and not more. Kuhn made a fundamental point when he cautioned us all, especially scientists, that our different methodologies in *human* sciences are pregnant with our own certain and limited paradigm shifts of which we must be aware, lest we delude ourselves as being objective beyond reproach (cf. Bosch 1991:183-185). As a result, a human being *as a mover* is an object of scientific analyses and manipulations (physicality), but *as a moving* entity/being (or a being already in motion primordially = “spiritually”), he/she is the incomprehensible mystery beyond scientific manipulations and analyses. A human being is structured; created *in such a way that* he/she will always remain ineffable and inexhaustible: “Many sciences are concerned with [the human person] and are able to make statements about him/her which, while accurate as far as they go, are restricted in their scope” (Rahner 1965:288). The human person is both a police and a judge in the world. This is why Christian anthropology cannot afford to ignore other human sciences concerning human nature; this is why it is imperative to move together to create that commonly accepted anthropological ground, *A New World Ethic*. Therefore, any theology or religion, to be credible, sensible, meaningful and relevant, has to take other scientific fields on anthropology seriously. Theology must respect other scientific disciplines since the *common object* is the same old human person (“man”) and his/her environment. As Paul Tillich put it:

[A serious theologian] makes an intensive study of the human situation in all its manifestations. As a result of this he comes to a sensitive appreciation of all his contemporaries' hopes, concerns, anxieties and fears. ... painting, theatre, politics, economics, history, sociology, science, depth psychology, literature, philosophy, and patterns of life, are all the raw data, which the theologian must analyse in order to determine questions people are asking about life's problems, successes, failures, and hopes. Once these have been investigated, and the theologian knows what questions people are asking, it becomes possible to frame whatever answers the Christian gospel [or any scripture for that matter] might provide in reply (Maimela 1990:137).

We emphasise again that a *common theological alterity* with other disciplines is a *sine qua non* in searching for this new Global Ethic. How did the human person civilize himself/herself throughout the ages then? Let's start the exploration.

5.2 Evolutionary history of cultures of the human race

*Suffering which falls to our lot in the course of nature, or by chance,
or fate, does not seem so painful as suffering which is
inflicted on us by the arbitrary will of another.*
(Schopenhauer)

Fighting and war are as old as human history itself. There is no doubt that human history has largely been written in blood, and the trend continues even up to this day, even though in some cases it is said to be done in a *civilized*¹²³ manner. "That someone must die at the end of the day", seems to be the integral part of the human spirit. No one teaches a baby to be so selfish; let alone to be selfish so early. The saying is true that, "peace does not mean the absence of war". Hatred today¹²⁴ is as pronounced as it was thousands of years ago when our first parents became aware of themselves *reflexively*. Preparation for war and rumours of wars are as real today as they were then. Küng tells us that today, "Every *minute*, the nations of the world spend 1.8 millions of US dollars on military armaments. Every *hour*, 1500 children die of hunger-related causes. Every *day*, a species becomes extinct. Every *week* during the 1980s, more people were detained, tortured, assassinated, made refugees, or in other ways violated by acts of repressive

¹²³In this sense all civilizations of humanity (great and small) are a suspect. Can they be trusted? It all depends on whose camp or side you are. Civilizations are both good (enriching humanity) and evil (destroying humanity).

regimes, than at any other time in history except World War II. Every *month*, the world's economic system adds over 7.5 billions of US dollars to the catastrophically unbearable debt burden of more than \$1.500 billions now resting on the shoulders of Third World peoples" (Küng 1990:2). Here in South Africa it is said that 600 people die of Aids related diseases every day¹²⁵. It is so terrible, yet the government seems to be dragging its feet.

The earliest tools of warfare are said to have been made of stone. As early as the Stone Age, we fought and killed others whom we called *our enemy*. Yet that "enemy" was nothing more than my other-self as a human being (the *other-me*). Families, clans and nations in Africa, Asia, Europe, north and south America and the whole world over, maimed, enslaved, oppressed, looted, raped, killed and murdered *the other-me* for all sorts of reasons. Wars and skirmishes outweighed co-existence, peace and tolerance. And since *nature* was experienced as hostile and as a great "mystery", superstition and *fear* were rampant, and as a result, magic, witchcraft, sorcery, suspicion and self-justification of destroying "the enemy" became the order of the day. Life was experienced as a living hell; life was as harsh as it could be, thus proving the fact that Life *experienced* by the majority of the human race is *basically* un-loving¹²⁶. Even today Life is experienced by many as nothing less than a bottomless abyss; a living hell, a damned journey of becoming. Hence the high suicide rate today. Surely terror and violence (hatred/evil) are constitutional to the primordial ontological structure of the human person since time immemorial. Imagine our history without the following persons, and determine whether they have enriched humanity or whether they have harmed it: Hitler, H. Verwoerd, Idi Amin, Mao Tse Tung, Stalin, Hoover, Moses Sithole, Jack the Ripper, Peter the Great, Inquisition masters, etc.? The answer is: Yes and No! "Yes" because human beings learn from their mistakes and human weakness; after all, from *evil* always comes the *good* (or does it?). "No" because, as Archbishop Buti Tlhagale puts it, '... to harm even one

¹²⁴Forty thousand years after the achievement of reaching our pinnacle of being *homo sapiens*.

¹²⁵ Findings of International Conference on Aids held in Durban, August 2003.

¹²⁶ Ps. 90:9-10. '... Surely our life passes away; it passes away like a sigh. Our span of existence is seventy years or eighty for those who are strong. And most of these years are emptiness and pain; they are in most part only toil and sheer trouble. They pass so swiftly and then we are gone into the land of Sheol'

human being, no matter how little or insignificant in society, is already one case too much!' (cf. Trefoil 2003 (266): 34).

One and the *same* human history seems to be based on hatred (*evilness*) and love (*goodness*) at the same time. In our primordial *awareness*, we experience ourselves *everyday* as killers, murderers, and also as people with love, who try to preserve *our own*¹²⁷ life. In the history of these opposites, *hatred* and *love*, the former has always been experienced in large measure, while the latter is always experienced in small quantities, even though *the latter is desired all the time* (experienced as a question of the *ought*), thus making history basically a negative experience¹²⁸. No wonder human beings are simultaneously both hateful and loving in their nature. One of our greatest attributes as human beings is that *negativeness* (*evilness*) and *positiveness* (*goodness*) are the reality of ourselves. Naturally as human beings we *are both hating (evil) and loving (good) beings*¹²⁹ in our natural constitutional selves. No matter how horrific and sickening the last sentence may sound to some, this is the reality of human life, and things seem to have been like this from time immemorial. No *mature person* can deny the fact that "... light and darkness, hope and despair, love and fear are never very far from each other, and that spiritual freedom often requires a fierce spiritual battle" (Nouwen 1972: xiii).

5.2.1 Original Sin: The reality of "classical" cultures

"Original sin [in the final analysis] is the sin we inherit. It is a given. It is something we are born into" (Nolan 1988:90). There are so-called great world cultures of humanity, and

¹²⁷This "our own" life is the mother of all evils as far as human beings are capable of doing something to their neighbour. But then who is my neighbour? Every religion, at the centre of its spirituality, has been trying to answer this basic question of humanity (human race and its environment). "Our own" life has rendered the world ungovernable, and has left the moving *mover* helpless in the making of his/her own history. If ever there is anything at the core of Jesus' message, it is the sin of absolutising "our own" life.

¹²⁸This is why in some religions people cry when a child is born into this world, but rejoice at the death of someone, since death is understood as liberation *par excellence*. The dynamics of life (good) and death (evil) are interestingly reversed from how some of us have been taught to see reality. For such religions life is basically evil (meaningless suffering) while death is basically good (liberation from suffering to eternity).

¹²⁹This may sound like Manichaeism. While I agree with the founder of this religion (a certain Babylonian by the name of Manes) as far as the analysis of the reality of the nature of the human person is concerned, I disagree with his solution to the impasse. We will deal with this point later since it is at the heart of evil and

we mention a few: Aztec, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Persian, Israelite, Greek, Roman, Chinese, etc. Surely, evil and destruction of the *other-me* accompanied these cultures. The Aztecs in order to appease the gods, sacrificed thousands of their fellow human beings (at times even babies and children) daily. No mercy was shown to *enemies* either. This destruction of *the other* was also a daily reality with the mighty classical Egypt. Today we might admire gigantic pyramids of the pharaohs as one of the greatest miracles of human achievement, yet we might be forgetting thousands (maybe millions) of other human beings called *slaves* who were crushed under those beautiful, miraculous achievements. The nature of a human being is so amazing; it is as if we are created in such a way that in most cases when we face evil we normally *pretend* to be *nice*¹³⁰. This is why the man from Nazareth, the son of Mary, named *hypocrisy* as one of the most corruptive sins of the human person. Mesopotamia and Persia became great through land grabbing and slaughtering. Israelite history is a clear witness to this where the land of other people was captured and many were killed and slaughtered for Israel to inherit under the instructions of Yahweh. Methods were even invented by some religions "out of mercy" of how to kill *pagan*¹³¹ children. One way of applying this mercy was to hold *pagan* children and babes by their feet and to smash their heads against the rock. Christendom used this method in South America when the local people *refused to be converted by force* to Christianity. There might have been other places where inauthentic Christianity did like-wise, but records are not available. The South American case is well documented.

For example, today "Alexander the Great" is still a celebrity to many. Yet this man, (taught by Aristotle), with his army, captured much of other people's territories, killing thousands, if not millions, in his path. How can such a person, and all other persons like

love in the world; it also involves St Augustine who did so much to enrich and to distort the *uniqueness* of Jesus of Nazareth.

¹³⁰The secular prophet Bert Russell wrote an interesting average book titled "Nice People". In it he mocks Christianity in general but British Christianity in particular. It is a must reading for those who want to know the tricks and true colours of pagan Christians as Bonhoeffer would say from Nazi prison. Sir Russell exposes corruption of the human person through Christian religion, hence proving Karl Marx right in his analysis of religion during his day.

¹³¹The best way to understand this word today is to mean anyone who does not share my faith, who does not share my world view (Weltanschauung). In this way all human beings are pagans; even atheists are pagans to us and we to them.

him, be declared "great"? But then that is how we are taught to read history; that is where we are today. Aristotle contributed a lot in the achievement of this Alexander, but have you ever heard Aristotle being labelled an old *evil* man? No way! We are taught to see history the way we see it by those who make history or by those who "rule" us. K. Marx's superstructure theory of power might be relevant here. It seems as if we are created in such a way that we *can* believe *anything to be true*¹³² provided we benefit from it. Classical Rome is known for its brutality and cruelty in the Colosseum where vicious wild animals devoured thousands of human beings for amusement. Today we are happy that the Roman Legions covered large areas as far as Britain to bring civilisation. But at what cost to human life? We might laud *Pax Romana* as the model of civilisation, but at what cost to human life? We might laud *Pax Britannica*, but at what cost in destroying the *other-me* in colonies (including Ireland)? We might laud modern *Pax Americana* today, but at what cost in defending democracy and stamping out terrorism in the world? Apartheid might have brought a strong infrastructure in the economy and development of South Africa and Southern Africa, but at what cost to human life and human dignity? Colonialism brought tremendous scientific benefits to the Third World; no doubt about that (and we are thankful), but at what cost to human life and human dignity? Men (males) have achieved a lot in making this world a better place to live in, but at what cost to the other gender and the environment? Capitalism and Communism have achieved much, but at what cost to humanity? Religions have done a lot to enrich the human race, but at what cost in fuelling hatred and loss of life?¹³³ Most of these questions remain a taboo; and to pursue them, one might be labelled a lunatic, a pervert, who is the enemy of human progress, or an unrealistic ungrateful Third World lazy bum.

5.3 Life experienced as the contradictory arena for authentic human becoming

Our dilemma always as human beings is the temptation to describe history from the context of one's group, and the constant danger here is always to try to universalise this

¹³²Goebbels, at the height of his power as the Nazi minister of propaganda, boldly declared that he could make the German people believe that white is black and that black is white. And indeed he was excellent and *talented* (God-given) in corrupting the truth.

¹³³See Küng's book, *Global Responsibility: In Search Of A New World Ethic*. 1990: 73f.

valid, yet particular point (especially if it involves the suffering of *my group*). Rationality and common sense was supposed to have *uniquely* come with the classical Greek civilisation (under the leadership of Socrates), which attempted to conquer evil within us with "rationality" (*natural* powers), but even that attempt was a slow and gradual battle to vindicate the human person. It is an historical fact that classical Greece of Socrates was also founded on blood. Many wars were fought and many were killed in order to achieve "the first great democracy" of the human race.

Without the yin-yang philosophy of becoming, and without male-female repulsive-attraction (love-hate dynamics), life is *inconceivable*. A *contradictory life is a life as we have come to know it*. Bishop Mark Hurley captures well this inescapable structure of ourselves as created beings when he says that, "Perhaps the portrait of mankind in this new [modern] age aborning, might well show homo sapiens cradling in his right hand the miracle drug penicillin to the glory of human life [*the good*], and brandishing in his left hand a fusion hydrogen bomb to the consummation in holocaust of human life and its immolation on the altar of war [*evil*]. Man can indeed self-destruct. In the great game of life as it is lived on this planet, man is not only a player of the game, but also the cards that are played, and the stakes as well" (Origins 1976:407f). *It is as if life, as contradictory, is made for a purpose, and it is our task here to find this purpose.*

5.3.1 The Gospel of Manichaeism on good and evil

Morally, most of the time in life we find ourselves doing the opposite of what we intended to do. This dilemma of ours reaches its climax between doing good and doing evil; doing good seems always more difficult to achieve than doing evil. Why? Is it not that Life is built on opposites and that our task, as movers (*homo faber*) endowed by the Creator with rational powers, is to harmonize this "cotractoriness" in order to continue creating as God did primordially (Gen. 1-2)? Could it mean for sure that authentic freedom arises from this "cotractoriness"; *of making hard choices in this life of vale and tears?* The structure of authentic human becoming; authentic total freedom, seems to consist (at least elementally) of three realities *influencing each other* simultaneously:

Two opposites and the choice left to the moral agent to make a difference in this world of vale and tears. Without these three realities, Life as we know it, would (and we repeat) *be inconceivable, thus meaningless.* We would continue to experience life one damn thing after another, and destroying the other-me and committing suicide would continue to be spiral unabated. The best known attempt to synthesize evil and good rationally and theologically is Manichaeism.

Manichaeism is a religion of a kind founded in the third century by a Babylonian called Manes. St Augustine of Hippo, in trying to synthesize good and evil, initially followed this religion. The founder, Mr Manes, "... believed that he was the last great prophet, in succession to Zarathustra, Buddha, and Christ, among others, and that his mission was to perfect their religions¹³⁴ (incomplete, as he supposed, because the founders had not themselves committed them in writing). ["Prophet"] Manes was accused by the priests of the State religion (the Magi) and put to death for his faith (about AD 277). His religion was set forth in an enormous literature (it is lost, but fragments were discovered in the 19th and 20th centuries)" (Rahner 1965:289). Manichaeism taught a special kind of knowledge (*gnosis*) that understands the history of salvation in *dualistic* form. For Manes, salvation history has *three* periods within itself: The period of primeval separation, the period of the mingling, and the period of restoring the primeval separation. Manes' story of creation, in brief, is like this, "During the middle period the Son of God, the *Urmensch* or primordial man, was defeated, his soul mingling with matter. God's envoys (Jesus among them) are repeatedly vanquished during a long process of redemption; they are not able to free the souls from their state of banishment in bodies, who can only return to the realm of light by accepting the gospel of Manes, the Paraclete. Those who believe in him compose the Church of the mind. Salvation consists in entering into knowledge of ourselves (this linked with strict ascetical discipline). The imperfect are subject to continual rebirth in the world of bodies. Manichaeism, which was also known in the West (St. Augustine professed it for nine years), expanded into Central and Eastern Asia, where it finally disappeared in the 14th century" (Rahner 1965:289). It means that Manichaeism disappeared after almost 1000

¹³⁴Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) would later say the same about perfecting Jewish and Christian religions.

years, which means that it meant so much to some members of the human race for so long, that it cannot just be wished away. Manichaeism splits the history of the world into two absolute principles, one good and one evil. These two principles restrain each other and are mutually hostile; these two opposing principles can be compared to two horses paired together to each other but running at pain because each tries to pull in opposite direction. The *nous* (*logos*) principle is the one expected to bring some kind of order here; the *logos* is expected to recreate and make anew.

Is it not true, then, that within ourselves we experience this reality of being torn between doing good and doing evil? At times we want to do good but we find ourselves doing badly, or at times we are so determined *not* to help someone who mistreated us, but then suddenly we find ourselves full of mercy and starting to treat the person nicely. It is also true that in *one* and the *same* world of ours there are people who seem to be full of hatred (evil people), people who like to inflict pain on others; *yet* there are also people of goodwill who genuinely want to see the world and all its people succeed (good people). *While Manes did well to analyse our reality of becoming, he failed to give a satisfactory solution.* This is why the young searching Augustine left the religion and found deep solace in Christianity. But it is unfortunate that “prophet” Manes was killed, because in every *heretic* there is also an element of truth.¹³⁵ Anyway, our point is that human beings are at home and rejoice with what they regard as *the good* (positiveness) and feel exiled and disappointed with what they regard as *evil* (negativeness).

We conclude by inferring that Life, in its total ontological self under the sun, constitutes good and evil simultaneously, and that this ontological structure of ourselves constitutes the structural reality of the human person. We cannot, therefore, wish pain and suffering away in our Life, but we *ought to decide* (exercise of free will, if possible) to *overcome* evil with good in ourselves *in order to be authentically mature* in the world. We need not lose heart; the history of *human rights* is a case in point where *the good*, slowly but

¹³⁵In the same way that when the pope declared Martin Luther a *heretic* and then wanted to burn him at stake, the pope at that moment became a *heretic* for wanting to harm someone in the name of Christ. In the same vein that Martin Luther also wanted harm to be done to the pope in one way or another, he declared himself a heretic for doing that in Christ's name.

surely, seems to be *overcoming* the evil in the world and within ourselves. But the history of human rights is still to be seen whether in the long run it will bear lasting fruits, given the power of evil within us. *Authentic religions will show themselves by aiding peoples of the human race not to fail in this noble task.* Manichaeism failed to restore the primordial separation satisfactorily and dichotomized life instead. Young Augustine left this religion precisely because of this unresolved dichotomy of Life. Today we also reject this, and we are adamant that Life ought to be seen as *a whole*. But the problem of Manichaeism is still our difficulty today: How do we reconcile *good* and *evil* in our Life if these realities are at the core of our anthropological ontological structure? *Or, better, how should good and evil be understood in such a way that Life is seen as one and the same, not as a dichotomy?*

5.3.2 The nature of good and evil

Our ontological selves challenge us to take our human experience seriously (unlike the wisdom of an ostrich) that the reality of the-good and that of the-evil is the-given in our human existence from time immemorial. It is a fact that in Life there are *always* nice (good) people and bad (evil) people, but there is also the dynamics of how these two types of people influence their contexts and neighbourliness: “Life is full of excitements and surprises. There are so many wonderful possibilities within us and around us ... But being a human being is not easy [even though exciting with potentialities]” (Burke 1991:1-2). Every new-born baby in the whole world, if sane, potentially constitutes three realities from the moment of conception: Potentiality to be a good person; potentiality to be a bad person; and the potential of deciding/choosing which one of these realities is *eventually* going to dominate. In this sense, a life under the sun without the presence of *goodness* is inconceivable, and a life under the sun without the presence of *evilness* is also inconceivable. But even more demanding is a life under the sun with people who are capable of making authentic, responsible decisions. People who refuse to grow; who

refuse to make decisions for their existence¹³⁶; who refuse to be mature, become the unnecessary burden to every community or household (cf. 2Thess 3:10-12).

This means that to be a human being means to be both nice (good) and bad (evil), and to be able to differentiate between what one *needs* and not what one *wants* in life. What we mean here has little to do with good or evil acts; but has everything to do with our ontological structure as human beings, as we experience it from God, *as the given*. We are here beyond good and evil in a moral sense. *We are here exploring the conditions that make that morality possible in its unsurpassable, unique, basic, and elemental form as a common denominator*. This means that each religion has to reflect and affirm this anthropological ontological common denominator in its beliefs, otherwise a lot of violence will be inflicted (as has been in the past, and even today) on the members of the human race in its efforts to "convert" others (including the propagandists of that particular religion¹³⁷). *Hence the crucial importance of establishing basic, elemental anthropological "agreed-upon space", in which "converting" (if necessary) other human beings with a different vision of life (lifestyle or culture = Weltanschauung), may take place without doing violence to other believers' authentic becoming as human beings.*

People seem to be more at home with the good than with the evil. Why is this so? Fr Nolan says that, "To survive, evil must always be clothed or dressed up to look [like] good. ... when the devil comes to tempt us he [always disguises]" (Nolan 1988:86). As human beings, we seem to be created by "God" in such a way that we ignore the negative (evil = non-good) within ourselves, if done by me or my group; in this context it is difficult to admit the evil within us, especially if my group is in political power or in economical power or in both. We would rather blame someone or others who do not belong to our group. So the evil within me or within my group is a constant thorn in the

¹³⁶Remember the colonial slogan: "A White man's burden?" Who refused to make an authentic decision between the oppressor and the oppressed?

¹³⁷This is most important to mention because the majority of "upholders of values in each religion" (in all religions of the world), tend to except themselves from the laws they enforce on ordinary believers. Animal Farm morality in Owen's famous book, *Animal Farm*, fits well into this group or class of these "holier" than the rest of believers, where "some animals are more important than others". This is common to all religions of the world but in deferent intensities (including Christianity).

flesh to all human beings; it always sticks out like a sore thumb, suddenly and without warning, and it is very deceptive.

The final deception, the deception that makes [any group of human beings] diabolical, is its projection of its own evil onto others outside itself. Projection is a well-known psychological phenomenon. A person who cannot face his or her faults projects them onto other people and then accuses them of the very things that he or she is doing (Nolan 1988:86).

What do we do to get rid of this evil within ourselves? *Mature people will decide to conquer or try to conquer this evil within themselves with the good within themselves.* The immature ones will project the evil within themselves or to others, and blame them for all sorts of calamities or unexplained mishaps around them. Blaming others is at the heart of our ontological selves (Gen 3:8-13). We always wish bad things to happen to our enemies but not to my group or me. When we get into the car, we really do not think that an accident will happen to/with my group or me. If I did not think that, the car would not even move; no one would ever get into that car, unless they were crazy. Evil, therefore, is always possible with someone or others who do not belong to my group. This is why some people conclude that good is basic to human beings since we always wish ourselves this good. But we beg to differ here. It seems we tend to forget that, in seeking that good for my group or myself, at the same time we deny our enemy that one and the same good, thus wishing the other and his/her group evil. All of us belong to a certain group, one way or another, and in this sense we are always at war with someone else or with a certain group, unconsciously or consciously. *Hatred¹³⁸ of the other outside my boundary (circumference) is always there; and we assume that the loving Creator approves it. In the same way, love of the other inside my boundary/camp, is always there, and it is also assumed it is given by the same Creator. In this sense, the history of humanity has always*

¹³⁸In the final analysis "enemy" is the imagined someone (rightly or wrongly) who threatens me/us and my/our space of becoming. In this sense "hatred" has to do with the circumference of my/our camp: who should stay outside and who should be allowed in. "Love", on the other hand, has to do with the opposite: it is a consistent determination of destroying all walls no matter what and including everyone according to my capacity as a human being. The former has to do with conditional loving while the horizon of the latter is unconditional loving which is more demanding to carry out than the former. Sin comes from the exercise of deciding who to include and who to exclude; sin does not come from the given condition of ourselves as human beings created by God in His/Her image. In this sense free will is crucial in the morality of each

been between *three* realities: My/our environment/context/culture, his/her/their environment/situation/culture, and how the *relating* takes place between these two opposites. It should be remembered that there is no neutrality in morality; no such human being has ever lived¹³⁹:

One of the most serious and widespread ways in which we deceive ourselves about our sin is by saying to ourselves (or to others): 'But I didn't do anything.' Doing nothing when I should have done something is a sin. We call it a sin of omission. ... the most serious in the world today is the sin of sloth or apathy. It is the sin of not caring, not deciding, and not taking responsibility and of avoiding the issue by saying that it is not my business. We allow ourselves to be passive objects and part of the crowd, instead of becoming subjects of our own history (Nolan 1988:41).

It is a fact, then, that we are always inclined towards the good or the evil; even Jesus Christ (or any other great religious leader) never escaped this reality of human existence of always being tempted, or forced to make up one's mind (cf. Heb. 5:7-10). Islam also underlines this structure of ourselves in its faith: "I believe in God and in the angels and in His books and in His apostles and in the awakening after death and that God has predestined all things, the good and the bad, and in the final reckoning of sin and in the scales (in which good and evil will be weighed against one another on the day of judgement) and in paradise and hell, and that it is all true" (Meiring 1996:164). The reality of evil and good within our natural selves as human beings is a fact, and it has to be faced squarely if salvation is to mean anything at all.

There are seven commonly known boundaries/walls¹⁴⁰ used by us human beings to accept (bless) or reject (demonize) the other-me: Individual pride; clan (family = dynasty); tribe; nation; race; states, and continents (empires). Religion, as an ontological reality of the "holy" within each person is neutral; in itself it neither rejects (curses) nor embraces (blessings). Hell on earth (evil) or heaven on earth (the good) comes about in

mature human being. This "hatred" and this "love" is usually inherited from the culture or environment one grows in.

¹³⁹This includes all the atheists with their many faces. Even Sartre, one of the great atheists, was highly moral and highly principled. His views on the dignity of the human person, has enriched millions of people.

¹⁴⁰Here you must not forget what Einstein said, "It is more difficult to smash prejudices than atoms" (Bosch 1991:185).

the appropriation of that "holiness" within ourselves; religion is always modeled after the image of that appropriation of the "holy". *In this sense "religion" means the choice (moral freedom) taken either to conquer evil with good or to conquer good with evil* (cf. 154). It should be borne in mind here that historically within our human experience, the understanding of "God" has always been conceived in *three* stages:

- * Innate "idea" of God within ourselves. The *natural given sense* of the "holy".
- * Taking initiatives ourselves by appropriating this "idea" of God within our particular context (culture) for survival.
- * Godself taking initiative to come to us. God's self-communication; God's *voluntary* self-disclosure.

The first two in most cases go together, while the third always presupposes the first two. The constitutional good and evil within us are always interacting; and as we said above, they are like two horses pulling a cart, mutually pulling in opposite directions, until the cart-driver *brings control and decides the direction* through the *nous/principle* of life/soul.

What we have just said here sums up the dynamics of history from time immemorial till today. Hell, in this sense is "rejection of the other", while heaven is "embracing of the other" no matter how strange the other may look or appear, as long as "that one in front of you" is a human being (principle of *alterity = ubuntu*). The principle of alterity will keep knocking at the heart of every human being till the embracing of the other globally is realised concretely, and it is our fervent prayer that authentic religions come aboard and assist. Otherwise the search for peace and stability in the world by the human race will remain an illusive goal. Therefore, good and evil are necessary ingredients to make our

freedom possible. God in His/Her mysterious primordial Self decided things to be this way so that eventually we can possess ourselves in total freedom. If it is true that to be a human being means to be *both* good and evil, what does this really mean in real terms? We elaborate further.

A good person: A loving, good person is someone who has *systematically and fundamentally decided* (exercise of free will) to let the other side of himself/herself (the good side) to *overcome* or try to *overcome* the other side of himself/herself (the evil side). Such a person can be said to be morally good. But we have to be sure that such a person really acted *intrinsically* on his/her own; that there was no coercion from without. Take Mr Nelson Mandela for example. He is regarded as the "saviour" of South Africa and as one of the greatest statesman in the history of becoming. Is he worthy of the title? Many think so.

An evil person: On the other hand, a hating, evil person is someone who has *systematically and fundamentally decided* (exercise of free will) to let the other side of himself/herself (the evil side) to *overcome* or try to *overcome* the other side of himself/herself (the good side). Such a person can be said to be morally evil. But, again, we must make sure that fundamentally such person acted *intrinsically* out of his/her free will; that he/she was not forced from without. Take Mr Eugene de Kock for example. He is regarded by many as the *Prime Evil of South Africa*. Is he worthy of the title? Some think so.

This *fundamental decision* is crucial in determining the moral worthiness of a person. Without this *foundational decision*, the person continues to float morally in life; oscillating between public opinions and opinions of authorities on moral matters. Such a person is eventually torn between dogmatism and relativism. According to Socrates, the majority of people "enjoy" floating with the stream; morality a-la-carte (free for all) appeals to such people. Such people are neither good (nice) nor evil (bad) in the strictest sense of the word, until choice is effected; till then, such people are just floating. And this brings us to the nature of *free will*. Socrates makes it clear that "no one can do evil

knowingly". For him *ignorance* is at the heart of people acting wrongly. As we saw above, some thinkers of the 18th century in the likes of Rousseau and Voltaire thought more or less with the same pulse as Socrates. Right education, it was believed then, would put everything straight. Today we know better; today too much optimism about human nature needs some cautioning. If there is something so delicate and central to the core of the human person, it is *free will*: the capability to choose otherwise. However, at the same time, the one thing so misunderstood concerning our freedom, is *free will*. The mysteriousness of the human person emanates from the nature of this free will¹⁴¹. It is this capacity to choose which seems to separate us, without doubt, from other brutes. In this sense, any authentic religion is the one that gives meaning to this ontological constitution of ourselves as created in God's image. And since freedom has to do with *free will*, it can be said that it is the depth of that freedom in a person that determines the intensity of the presence of God in that person. The less the freedom, the less the presence of God in that person, as far as the dignity of the human person is concerned¹⁴². A person with diminished freedom is not much different from animals in following basic human *survival instincts*. *Such a person always lives in fear*, especially the fear of the unknown.

5.3.3 Victim theology versus traditional theology on the nature of free will

Free will basically means that in reality human beings are created by God in such a way that they are able to make decisions, *choosing fundamentally* to do good instead of evil, or choosing fundamentally to do evil instead of good. While we agree with this thesis on the understanding of free will for the sake of our freedom, we dispute vehemently that all human beings are created in such a way that this can be realized *authentically* in them, or that it is *meaningfully* possible in their (daily) life. For us, it is as if God, primordially, had given us the gift of choice that is actually denied to many in our daily existence. *We call this today Victim Theology which classical and Traditional Theology tends to*

¹⁴¹All cultures have educating and interesting sayings to capture this mystery of the human person. In seSotho it is said: *Ha o tshaba o tshabe motho o tlohela buka o ithute motho* ("A human being is the most difficult and slippery animal" or "leave the formal school education and study a human being as he is in his/her natural self").

¹⁴²This is why ordinarily in everyday life people say, "Ha a na Modimo" ("He/she has no presence of God within"), when one behaved in an animal way towards the *other-me*.

overlook. In this sense, exercising one's free will, can be understood as chasing the wind; a strong *desire* within, but never quenched. This is why Sartre says, 'Life is a useless passion'. Sartre is not alone in taking this stand. Taking the dynamics of our modern culture, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the majority of people to exercise fundamentally and authentically their free will, precisely because most of us just 'float with the flow'. Constitutional disorders of the human person are real and seem to be here to stay as long as humanity exists. The discoveries of human sciences (psychology, sociology, biology, genetics, etc.), and the insights of *victim theology*, bring the reality to the fore that the human person is more complicated (is a mystery) than was ever thought before. And we hope authentic religions take this seriously, so as not to impose morality *from above* or from without *in vain*.

During the intrinsically evil system of apartheid, it was *simply* thought that all "whites" in general, and Afrikaners in particular, were *personally responsible* for oppression. But with the confessions made at the South African Truth Commission (if these confessions are genuine), it became difficult to find anyone to blame. Almost everyone of the "whites" either said that they were instructed by higher authorities, or that they had no real picture of what was happening because the government was so good at propaganda; they claimed that they just did not really know the truth on the ground. The same scenario is true with the Nazis in Germany: Are all the German people to blame; are they morally responsible individually or collectively in exterminating about six million Jews? What about the Burundi - Rwanda conflict: Who is to blame, people themselves or Belgium (the former colonial power there)? What about colonialism in general: are only colonialists to blame or the indigenous peoples as well, where others collaborated? What about Bosnia etc.? At what point can we surely say that a person has really freely chosen on *his/her own*? Marriage in South Africa is breaking down constantly¹⁴³, and when you ask, "But what has happened to 'till death do us part'?" The answer is basically the same: "Had I known that he/she is the 'devil'; had I known that things would turn out to be so bad, I would not have committed myself to the bond!"¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Apparently South Africa is one of the countries in the world with highest divorce rate.

¹⁴⁴ Some have even come to question whether God is present at all at these solemn marriage oaths: "The [Roman] church's policy on remarried catholics puzzles me. Why should it be that if a couple is married in

While we accept that the *unconditional* ("absolute") commitment is necessary, the question is how to understand that *unconditionality*? In this sense, victim theology and victim philosophy must be taken seriously. *It is now clear that our constitutional composition as human beings is in such a way that no human person can be blamed for all that happens in the world, even when we are sure we are in charge.* The Nazi and apartheid atrocities are good cases in point. Many forces around us (especially culture) make us to do things *we can only regret later*, after much damage has already been done. Also, as moving beings, no human being can be blamed, thus making God responsible for "throwing us" into this world. As a result, areas of concern like war, rape, murder, homosexuality, euthanasia, bestiality or abortion should be tackled with great caution before the agent can be blamed in any way. This brings us to the conclusion that human beings cannot *very easily* be blamed for all that happens in their Life. *There are areas of violence and suffering where human beings should be exempted, and God, the Ultimate Reality, Qamata, be blamed. Our conclusion is that, for all natural sin (natural/physical evil), God is also responsible* (cf. story of Job. Rom 9-11). *Some religions like Manichaeism and Greek religions understood more about God's "sin".* Manichaeism, as a natural theology, understood better the difficulty of God within Himself/Herself *to be only all-good.* Manichaeism was excellent in analyzing the good and evil in the reality of our existence, but its solution was full of holes as far as *dichotomizing God* is concerned. How do we overcome Manichaeism or a dichotomized Life?

5.3.3.1 Life experienced both as one and the same

The teeth of the crocodile are dangerous and cruelly crushing, but one and the same teeth are also as gentle as a dove when carrying the little ones, little crocodiles. The same is also true with lions; those powerful teeth that swiftly bring great beasts to their death are

church, it is for keeps. Of course I am aware that in Mark 10:9 it says: 'Man must not separate what God has joined together.' But when do we *know* if God has [actually] joined two people together? How can the officiating priest know for certain that God intends joining two people together, even when these people are getting married for all the wrong reasons? In cases where people married for wrong reasons, is it God's will that they be joined together forever? ... We have to ask ourselves: when is a marriage actually joined by God, and when is Mark 10:9 applicable?" (Southern Cross 10-16/09/03: 8).

as gentle as breeze when carrying the young ones. From one and the same entity, emanates danger and love; from one and the same entity, emanates good and evil. What about human beings? Take a lady for example. As mother, she is the most loved person the world over; without her, the little ones are lost; males are lost, and the whole culture seems lost. It is well known that "agter elke man' daar is 'n vrou" ("behind the success of every man there is a woman"). Yet, at the same time, she is the most hated person in the world: Genderwise from time immemorial she has been a property; all *graphic and heavy* insults depict a woman's natural (God given) physical gifts. Most religions have not been sympathetic to her at all, except to see her mainly as a property "to be used and enjoyed in every way possible"; yet the same religions have also seen her as the "grounding = mother earth" of becoming (fertility cults throughout the centuries). God has endowed a woman with "sacred fertility assets", but throughout centuries these sacred assets have been at centre stage for bringing life and destroying it; they have been the central altar for sacrificing other human beings (both male and female) for better or for worse.

Yin-yang natural theology, therefore, is at the heart of all-that-is. Dictators like Hitler, Idi Amin, Stalin etc., are good to their families but evil to other people; *one* and the *same* person. From one person emanates cruelty (evil) and joy (good) at the same time. Therefore the one and the same person has to *make a choice* of how to express himself/herself concerning the same thing he/she is looking at. The *decision* (choice) of what to say is in the person depending on the mood of the moment. The choice of expressing yourself is yours, knowing fully that whatever you say and do will have consequences. Moral norms of the community or society are there to judge one, so a better choice of expressing oneself is highly advised here, and anyone who behaves accordingly, is regarded "worthy of respect". But the opposite behaviour is regarded as rude and totally unbecoming. This confirms the fact that Life is one, that Being is one, that Human Morality is one, that history is one, and from authentic religions, that God is One, etc. In short, reality is *one* and the *same*. In this sense good and evil make sense if they come from the same reality or source, precisely because this is human experience from time immemorial. As we will see later, the Cappodocian Fathers understood *the* God as *monarchia*, as one undivided source of Life in any way. For Parmenides *Being*

(Reality) is always one and the same, and undivided (Miller 1927:17); indeed '... thought and being are the same' (Heidegger). *One and the same* human being is both good and evil. With the capacity of evil implanted within him/her, a human being has to make a choice; there is no neutral behaviour, as we said earlier.

What shall we say then, except to say that the value of free will in human beings is as important to us as we are to it; without its proper function, the world becomes meaningless and nothing more. Today an existential calling to exercise our free will for the sake of the sanity of the human race is imperative; a calling to make better choices can never be overemphasised: "With the cracking of the atomic code, [one and the same human being is] capable of destroying life on earth on a scale undreamed of in his/her philosophies; with the cracking of the genetic code, [he/she] is capable of manipulating and controlling human nature itself. Both discoveries empower the same person to threaten his/her own dignity, his/her own freedom and his/her own very existence. [But] by the same token, [and] supported by science and armed with technology, [one and the same human being] has it within his/her power and grasp to protect and preserve life, to promote and enhance human dignity and human freedom" (Origins 1975:405).

5.3.3.2 The "is" morality versus the "ought" morality

It has rightly been said that *communication* is central to good relationships. It is also true that in morality, the question of "the ought" is constantly confused with the question of "the is" while the question of "the can" seems to come somehow in-between. On human development, this is what Fr Albert Nolan has to say: "Spiritual development is largely a matter of coming to terms with our selfishness in all its forms, including the group selfishness of nationalism and racism. It is difficult not to be selfish. Some people would say it is impossible and that we should not even try because that is how we are. That is not true. Our Christian faith urges us to love God and one another. Selfishness leads to conflict, wars, bloodshed, pain and endless suffering for humankind" (Challenge 1991:10). Both Fr Nolan and his opponents are right. His opponents are realistic about human experience in its "isness" (what is happening *now*), while the compassionate priest

contemplates the possibility of a better world which is the question of the "ought". Kant would be sympathetic to Fr Nolan, but he would also warn Nolan that in reality there is a long, long journey between the "is" and the "ought" in our daily life; history has taught humanity this through the ages. As someone said, "The longest journey of the human person is between the mind (knowing) and the heart (living). Savagery, selfishness, murder, destruction of the *other-me* and his/her environment (alterity) has been our basic experience as human beings. Good intentions in the likes of *Truth Commissions* in the world try their best to reduce the deficit, but to no avail and one wonders whether we will ever overcome this deficit. The reality of Original Sin, or reality of Evil, seems to be too basic to be ignored in our cultures. The reality of the Good is so thin and so scattered that many people are tempted to agree with Sartre that, *basically*, Life is "a useless passion". Traditional theology on "Evil" has always been ambiguous and in most cases irrelevant to what seems to be the human experience as far as *the reality of evil* is concerned. Existentialism, process theology, and victim theology (especially) have made the traditional Christian thesis on *evil* unattainable, and have left us all with "a God of gaps". Here I put down some reflections which might not go down well with the "theology of nice people", where everything must be made (*pretend*) to appear nice; where the idea of God must appear nice; indeed where *God must be protected* at all costs, as if God cannot defend Himself/Herself, and where God needs human beings to come to His/Her rescue. What a funny God indeed!

The morality of "the can" (*what can actually be construed and achieved*) has to do with our freedom or choice in order to realise and reach the "ought". It is a bridge to make morality *possible* either for the worse or for the better. Dynamics of "the can", in this sense, stands for the future; for possibilities to come. Positively, Martin Heidegger would see the morality of "the can" as the crucial *calling* for humanity to reverse our *thrownness* and realise *our project* (our possibilities) of making this "existence" (this world) a better place to live in for all the people of the planet earth. *Victim theology*, on the other hand, deals more with the question of the "is" than with the question of the "ought". Victim theology arose as a way of balancing up the mixing-up of morality as an "ought" (supposed to be = potentiality/theory/wish) with morality of "is" (actuality = categorical

imperative). The former is found mainly within religious contexts where what God is said to have ordered *is imposed* on the human race without taking its *actual disposition* into account (actual anthropology). Today this kind of an imposing-God on humanity is totally unacceptable. A meaningful God *ought* to come to us without violating our ontological structure as human beings. An authentic God is expected to know our ontological structure better, otherwise why should such an “almighty” being be called God at all? Only an impostor God can afford such existential and spiritual fraud. That people *can* do many things, or behave differently following their choice, is a fact. But the most confused situation is where morality as the *ought* is confused with morality as the *is*. As we saw above, we seem to be created in such a way that we love good and hate evil; our morality in most cases is a wishful-thinking by confusing the *is* and the *ought*. *Religions are the biggest culprits here*. Take homosexuality as an example. Are not some of us created genetically this way, like any other natural human trait? If so, what to do? To answer this question, let's take our sexuality in its comprehensiveness.

Our Sexuality: Is it a monster within ourselves or not? Some think it is¹⁴⁵. But for us, and for many we hope, sexuality as *the given* = natural (given by the Creator) is "beautiful", provided the purpose is authentic and is non-harming to any human being and to his/her environment/space. But we must be realistic that to appear *nice* in dealing with this area seems to be common to all cultures of the world since time immemorial. We have no problem if this *niceness* means more than a respect for that sacred area of the human person. But we would have a big problem if the *Victorian* understanding of sexuality is the grounding of this *niceness*. Our sexuality *ought* to be accepted even if some of its dynamics embarrass us. Authentic morality is not only found in accepting our sexuality in its wholeness, and leaving things as they are naturally; but it is also in *deciding* what to do in order to enhance that sexuality positively for the glory of the human person. For example, compare the values of the old and the new South Africa. In the old South Africa sexuality was a taboo in the extreme, but in the new South Africa the pendulum seems to have swung *too quickly* to the other side. Our sexuality is a mystery in the sense that it

¹⁴⁵The so-called world religions would fail dismally in this regard as compared with many of Traditional Religions.

involves both beauty and ugliness. Historically, human cultures tried to suppress its ugliness *by force* and concentrated on its beauty, but within democratic and modern cultures, the reverse seems to be the goal. As a result, traditional beliefs on sexuality seem to be losing ground. This is unfortunate.

The correct way is to understand sexuality in its totality, both in its ugliness and in its beauty. Fear of our sexuality in any way can only lead to dysfunctional societies all over the world. Even our sexual urge *ought* to be understood and respected, not hidden in order to control it in a *mature way*. No normal human being can avoid the sexual instinct, precisely because "the sexual instinct is the greatest urge in human life. Sex energy or lust is the most deep-rooted instinct in man (sic). Because the whole creation of this universe is to be maintained, God has made the sexual desire very powerful. The sex energy fills the mind, intellect, senses and the whole body. It is the oldest of factors that has gone into the constitution of every person. Each person has a thousand and one desires. But the central, strong desire is the sexual desire. The fundamental desire is the urge for a mate. All other desires hinge on this central, basic desire. Desire for money, desire for children, desire for property, desire for houses, desire for wealth and other things come later on" (DLSSA 1980:651). In short, sex and ego have ruled the world from time immemorial, "Ego is the chief thing, the basis. Sex hinges on the ego". (DLSSA 1980:648) What people *are* (in actuality) and what people *ought to be* (or called to be = possibility) *can* only be won or balanced by mature morality, mature cultures.

In short. there is a long journey between morality as given (the undeniable question of the "is") and as we would like it to be (the imperative question of the "ought"). In the *is-morality* things are done "on the spur of the moment", and the chorus is almost the same: "I don't know what happened". But in the *ought-morality* conscious control is the mother of all battles. We, as *created*¹⁴⁶ beings (*is-morality*) in total freedom have to *make* ourselves what we want to be (*ought-morality*). But we would be wise to rely in total obedience to what the Creator has to say as far as the horizon/vision of our ontological

¹⁴⁶Here we contrast "creating" with "making". Only "God" *creates* and we can only participate in that creation by *making/recreating* ourselves according the freedom *already* given and mapped out by God the Creator.

selves is concerned. In our freedom (if it is authentic and proper) the meaningful Creator *ought to enable us* to reach our perfection as authentic human beings, and not block our natural growth against our will.

5.3.3.3 "Evil": A necessary ingredient for authentic maturity?

It has rightly been said that too much intelligence borders on insanity. It is also true that the more one is close to God, the more the Devil becomes *jealous* and tempts the person. The opposite is also true. All religions, great and small, attest to this reality. Life is a terrible, shocking, and tedious experience with all sorts of possibilities. That Life is bigger than our individual selves, is indeed a fact. The constitutional structure of the human person is very complicated and extremely mysterious. For example, is it true that "penis envy" revitalizes and re-energizes a woman? "Durban-based sexologist Glenda Hicks says women are turned on by strength: 'It equates to the penis, and psychologists like Freud say women have always suffered from penis envy. Women also want to be powerful - and being with a powerful man gives them power'. She says women often want to sleep with serial killers [because serial killers] possess power, too, even if it has become distorted" (True Love Magazine 2002:76)¹⁴⁷. What if this observation is true? And what about men, what makes them tick? Is it true that it is the continual thinking of having sex or mounting the strong "tiger-in-bed" in order to tame her?

Great scriptures, saints and mystics present *good* (joys of life) and *evil* (sufferings) as necessary ingredients for authentic maturity. In this sense, the negative side of us is also the window of opportunity for authentic growth. Therefore, our "enemies" (exteriorized-self; projected evil) possess some kind of truth in their conviction, hence there is truth in the saying, "Even a heretic has some truth". In this sense, in a democracy, opposition parties make a lot of sense. Maybe within democracy we must come to terms with "horrible sins"¹⁴⁸ which are tolerated and even promoted; we must distinguish in

¹⁴⁷This South Africa's Magazine (apparently) is published mainly to "advise" and "empower" women.

¹⁴⁸Abortion, infanticide, prostitution, some violence, euthanasia, free cheap sex, etc.

democracy the dynamic reality of the “is” from that of the “ought” as we said above. St Augustine accepted the result of the sex act (a baby), but regarded the sex activity in itself as brutal and evil. He came to define evil in the Platonic fashion as an absence of *the Good*. In this sense he acknowledged *evil* as a necessary part for growth.

Hard decisions have to be made in this Life by mature people in order to live an enriching life to bless all. To be a worthy person in this Life involves hard decisions to mature people in order to share a meaningful human space with others. Heidegger said that this Life is the project to be fulfilled in total freedom; that this world is the impossibility of the possible. Heidegger's observance of reality is optimistic concerning our existence. But Sartre disagreed by saying that this world is the possible of the impossibility, and this is pessimistic concerning our existence. But in Life we always have opposites (adversary); there is always an opposition to all that we do, and this is necessary, otherwise there is no progress. *To be* is at the same time *not to be*. Not-to-be is also to-be because how can not-to-be affirm itself without being there? Even the Creator needs His/Her opposite (adversary) in order *to be*¹⁴⁹. Christian scripture is consistent that evil happened to Jesus “in order to fulfil the scriptures” (cf. Lk 24:25-27). Evil and pain in the world is there in order to prove “who God really is” (cf. Jn 9:1-3). Jesus’ betrayal by Judas and the killing of Jesus were what God had planned from the beginning of time (cf. Eph 1:1-14). Therefore to deny God’s hands as “dripping blood”, is to deny divine revelation (cf. Jn 3:16f). In the same manner, for anyone to deny enemies as constitutional to Life is to live in fool’s paradise. Having enemies is a challenge calling us all to maturity; it is not an impediment but an opportunity for growth; it is part and parcel of who we are as human beings (*the is-morality*). Hence it is vital to know who we are in the *given*, and to make authentic decision of who we want to be in the future self-made project (*the ought-morality*). Unless this is taken seriously, our Life will run in circles, gaining no step. In this sense "God" would need the negative of Himself/Herself (adversary = evil) *to be*

¹⁴⁹But since it would really be absurd and silly to suggest that God in His/Her originality depends on someone or something to be held in being, this has to be put straight immediately. Authentic God ought to consist of two modes of "Being" in order to understand His/Her nature: Ontological existence in which humanity and its environment participate, and existence of Infinity. According to Christian revelation, Infinity of *all-that-is* (grounding) has God the Father as its structure, and Ontology holding *all-that-is* in

"powerful" if that God is to be free at all. And since God ought to be powerful and unique in the world, if this freedom as a foundation of all His/Her creatures is real, then that adversary of His/Hers has to be unique and powerful in some way in order to match "God" in one way or another. An authentic religion has to reflect these realities in the attributes of the "God" they proclaim boldly, otherwise the preached "God" would have failed to assume into Himself/Herself our given natural selves as free beings; such a "God" would be far removed from our understanding of the structure of human existence and human environment, and such a "God", as Camus¹⁵⁰ said, 'must be rejected by all authentic human beings'.

Human existence in reality is a mystery, yet this mystery must be shown why it is a mystery. It is theologically understandable, therefore, to say that in a mysterious way good and evil originate from the same Source/Reality = God¹⁵¹. We have been saying "shocking" things precisely because our Life, as given by God, and as we try to make ends meet, is overwhelmingly shocking, isn't it? The above heading: "'Evil': a necessary ingredient for our authentic maturity", is the reality of our daily human life; it is the reality of our human history which we cannot wish away. Our human experience has taught us that mishaps (evil) can enrich us, but at the same time good acts can "impoverish" us, unless we do them with *a loving conviction*, otherwise that good will soon fade away and despair will set in. For example, in our love of helping and sharing with other people, we sometimes end up like fools; while in some instances our generosity may be rewarded by being killed so that even the little we have is taken away. On a rainy day on the road you feel pity for someone and you give him a lift, only to find out that you gave "your murderer or crook" a lift. During the apartheid era, South Africa developed so much technologically and economically that today South Africa is a haven for many Africans; from that evil system good also came. It is said that with the horrible experiments done by the Nazis on human beings, the medical world benefited greatly in

place has God the Son as its structure. Infinity (the Father) is greater than Ontology (the Son). This will become clear in chapter six.

¹⁵⁰Camus was the French existentialist who took human suffering and pain seriously and did a lot to build a better world for all people of the human race. He died tragically and untimely in 1960 by car accident. As someone said, "What a nincompoop of a God! Why didn't he take one lazy fool from somewhere and leave Camus alone!?".

such a short space of time. Do we applaud apartheid? No way! Do we applaud Nazism? No way! But it is crucial and imperative to realise that human Life is highly complicated and hard decisions have to be made in some cases. In this sense one cannot deny that "history has no accidents" as Hegel observed. Therefore this unfortunate saying is true, "One man's bread is another man's poison and vice versa". The seemingly cruel yet courageous dying of the female viper in giving birth says a lot about our point here concerning human Life as a mystery. In giving birth the female viper just dies while the little ones come out through any part of the body. What a sacrifice! This reality seems to be also true among some bees where the males, after "doing their thing" to the queen, just die. What a shocking ending! Our conclusion here is that good and evil emanates from one and the same source. After all Parmenides has shared the secret of Life with us, "Being is simply One and whole".

It is therefore, not a bad thing to say that human beings ontologically are both good and evil, provided that you know what you are talking about. Also, to say that God is *also* "evil", or that He/She is *also* the source of evil, is not a bad thing or heretical, provided this understanding is the background; one has to be careful in choosing one's words here. The Greek religion (and many others for sure) took for granted that gods are both good and evil. They resolved this impasse by naming good gods and bad ones, each representing how Greeks experienced Life as contradictory. Evolution theories, especially that of Darwin, should not be underestimated here: Life is indeed really cruel, hence the common saying, "Life is a constant struggle". Anthropomorphism in this sense is not a myth or something just to brush off, but must be taken seriously because it says a lot about our human archetypal representations of the holy (the good) and the bad (the evil) within us. In the final analysis, what is evil or good, if not fundamentally choosing freely, either to reject principles of alterity within oneself (*evilness*) or to embrace principles of alterity within oneself (*goodness*)? Our ontological structure as rational beings with the capacity to make a difference is the capacity to choose (free will); and this differentiates us in great measure from animals. Ideas like "being made in God's image", "participating in God's divinity" one way or another, make the capacity to choose

¹⁵¹ Cf. Parmenides Natural theology on Being. The story of Job's suffering. Rom 9:14-33.

between evil (death = destruction of the other-me) and love (building up, empowering the other-me) the noblest gift from the Creator. In the final analysis Life is about choosing fundamentally between *good* and *evil*. If we choose evil *fundamentally*, human existence will be bleak indeed. Choosing evil means greed, despair, and hatred; and eventually it means the destruction of the self and the other-me. If we choose the good *fundamentally*, human existence will then be graced and blessed indeed. Choosing good means hope, trust, and love for the human race, and the greatest of these is the love of the self and of the other-me. Any religion that *refuses*, in large measure, to embrace hope, trust and love for the sake of the sanity of the human race in totality, is a fraud, and humanity will then do better to rid itself of such a religion.

5.4 The exponential impact of global consciousness in our daily life

There is no doubt that global consciousness (“globality”) is the supreme criterion of authentic human becoming today; its dramatic sudden growth throughout the world is a fact. Even the most remote regions of the human race cannot hide from this consciousness any longer. Dividing the human family in its basic, elemental constitution on a global level seems to be a fading relic of the past. “Global village ethic” seems to be on the future cards of the human race. While everyone might agree with this oneness of the human family in principle, we seem to differ on how this noble human project can be implemented. Küng, in his frantic search for a new global ethic, is adamant about this new *global responsibility*, “No survival without a world ethic. ...No human life together without a world ethic for the nations” (Küng 1990:xv & 138). Küng goes on to say that “world ethic” is impossible without a certain basic, elemental God-consciousness, or consciousness of the divine, one way or another within ourselves, since the human person is more than “human reason alone”, as Kant might be interpreted by some to have given directives in this regard (Küng 1990:38). But our reading of Kant in chapter one is that a belief/faith without authentic rational principles can be as venomous as a viper to the maturity and authentic becoming of the human race, hence Kant’s perennial dictum: *Have the courage to make use of your own understanding! (Audire sapere!)*. It is Kant who vigorously opposed David Hume in his classical scepticism and brought back

metaphysics in the arena of human existence and human becoming. Kant's description of God as *immanent* within our ontological structure as human beings (ontology from below), is a contribution that has enriched humanity so much, especially in the understanding of an authentic individuality and a meaningful, responsible freedom.

Karl Rahner is in concert with Immanuel Kant in saying that, by nature we as human beings, are created *in such a way* as to acknowledge the existence of something bigger and greater than ourselves. In all our every day affirmations, at least implicitly, all human beings affirm "... absolute being as the ground of the metaphysical principles of being and knowledge that are assumed without qualification when any statement is made, and further affirm absolute being as mystery and, in the eminent sense, as personal being. This nameless being we call God. This absolute, incomprehensible reality, which ontologically is always the silent horizon of all [human] encounter with being, is thus always implicitly conjointly affirmed in every affirmation as infinitely different from the knowing subject that is man, and from the particular finite beings that are known" (Rahner 1988:100). Unless we scrutinise this structure of our anthropological selves as human beings *made in God's image*, we will be in danger of gobbling up any religion, thus encouraging the hurt, the fragmentation and the immaturity (original sin) of the human race. And if we do not succeed in diagnosing human structure in its *natural form*, the human spirit will always remain restless till it acknowledges God (Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba) as our Ultimate Reality/Creator.

At this stage you will agree that war, or the capacity for war (hating) within ourselves, is real. But you will also agree with us that peace, or the capacity for peace (loving) within ourselves, is also real. Does this, then, mean that a human being is a hopeless entity of dichotomy or impasse? The answer is a stern No!. No, because we, as human beings, always behave in a certain way, either positively or negatively towards the other. The right question, therefore, is whether a human being ontologically can be saved (made whole) in his/her apparent moral dilemma? Here the answer can go both ways depending on certain fundamental conditions: If, like Hitler or Amin, a human being *decides fundamentally* to conquer the good within himself/herself with evil (hatred), then

salvation (healing) is impossible. But if, like Mother Teresa or Mandela, a human being decides fundamentally to conquer the evil within himself/herself with good (love), then salvation (*shalom*) is possible. But there is still a final dilemma: In the same way that in many cases "one's bread is someone else's poison", morality can be highly complicated. For example, it is true that in different contexts what is considered good here can be considered evil there and *vice versa*? This is why it is imperative to have *one agreed upon universal standard* without which even to talk of one human race would be a joke. This is why people like Hans Küng and others are trying hard to establish "global ethic" fitting global consciousness. In his long search for *basic* universalizing ethics, Hans Küng is passionately adamant that:

... the international community cannot exist without common values. ... What is truly human [must become] a universal criterion [of the human race in one way or another]. Should it not be possible to formulate, with reference to the common humanity of all men and women, a universally ethical, truly ecumenical basic criterion which is based on the humanum, that which is truly human, and specifically on human dignity and the basic values which are subordinate to it? The basic ethical question in terms of criteria is: What is good for human beings? The answer is: What helps them to be what is not at all obvious, i.e. truly human. Accordingly, the basic criterion is: human beings should not be inhuman, purely subject to their drives, 'bestial', but should live in a rationally human, a truly human way. So what would be morally good which allows human life to succeed and prosper in the long term in its individual and social dimension: what enables the best possible development of men and women at all levels (including the levels of drives and feelings) and in all their dimensions (including their relationship to society and to nature) (Küng 1990: 89ff).

Thank God that today we are in a better position not only to deserve such a universal, moral standard, but to demand it for the sake of a better co-existence of the human race. What follows here is a bold attempt at this *imperative* universal criterion of the human race's *inevitable* becoming (*humanum*). In exercising our free will (freedom) is there a limit? "A new world is [already] born before our very eyes, a radically different age, different in every dimension. Yet this brave new world's needs must answer the searching and inexorable challenge of [our time] namely, 'The Value of Life.' ... [In the final analysis] are there not some things so basic to humanity, so fundamental to [any society] that we can agree on them?", asks Bishop Mark Hurley (Origins 1976:405). Our answer

is in the affirmative, and here follows our bold attempt to answer the reflective Bishop with his existential, crucial and authentic question for the survival of the human race.

Conclusion

An earnest search for world ethic is a must for us today with our global consciousness. Fr Hans Küng has done well to steer us into it. Once this world ethic is established and agreed upon, all religions must be serious in responding accordingly in order to heal our broken humanity. Sometimes religions “create” their own anthropology and then try to heal humanity by their own creation. Today we find many psychologists, spiritualists, retreat masters/teachers, Sangomas, Shamans, Gurus, etc. who claim to know the secrets of our human ontology. While some have something to offer, others are just chancers, who half-heartedly deal with our mysterious nature. Therefore an authentic anthropology should be decided upon and regularly evaluated to see how far humanity is coping in healing human ills. Such anthropology should be as deep and enriching as possible, and not the one that should be begging the question. While we agree that the First World Church should play an important role in this regard, we are equally aware that this Church in a serious way is part of the problem in making this place a better world to live in the Third World Church should be allowed to take the lead in finding and defining reliable anthropology and theology for our world today. In this regard the wisdom of Albert Einstein should be our reliable companion on this journey of self-searching as human beings:

No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that caused it
(Rohr 2001: side two).

When the Creeds were formulated, the bone of contention was whether Jesus as *the* Christ was of the same nature as ours (of fallen nature) or not. And the conclusion was yes and no; hence the Chalcedonian (historically limited) theological conclusion: *Fully*

God and Fully Man (sic). We now look at the universal dynamic nature of this World Ethic.

Chapter 6

Perennial calling towards experienced human substantivity

Experiential human substantivity is *only* manifested and possessed by human beings; it is a *humanum* or *ubuntu* that always eludes brutes out there in the animal kingdom. It is a humane gift from God destroyed *only* by a serious conscious self-choice (cf. Mk 3:28). This is a firm grounding yardstick towards world ethic. This unique human capability and calling, has alterity as its hallmark; alterity which is a *sine qua non* in determining what it means to be free; what it means to be really human, and what kind of a God should be allowed to influence human affairs:

Only the human being has sufficient substantivity to be considered something individual, autonomous, separate, and independent. The systematic coherence of essential human notes is of maximum closure: it is the only thing really totalized constitutively. This is so not only because of possessing the constitutive note of intelligence, but more because of possessing the note of real alterity: it is a being for the other. Arms and legs, sexual organs, cranial configuration, speech apparatus – a person's entire bodiliness is orientated not only to its intelligence, but also – to say it once more – to its metaphysical reference to the other. It is the openness to the other, to other-directedness, that enables a person to be a person, to be substantivity properly so called (Dussel 1985:111f).

Pascal's attempt at an apology of the doctrine of Original Sin is well known, "Nothing, to be sure, is more of a shock to us than such a doctrine, and yet without this mystery, which is the most incomprehensible of all, we should be incomprehensible to ourselves. The tangled knot of our condition acquired its twist and turns in that abyss; so that man is more inconceivable without the mystery than the mystery is to man. Whence it seems that God, desiring to make the mystery of our nature intelligible to us, hid the knot so high up, or better, so low down, that we are quite incapable of reaching it" (Durbarle 1964:9).

Classical theology has tried its best to present intelligently the *riddle of existence/life*¹⁵² understood from the standpoint of the Christian faith. But the attempt has brought in more questions than answers, and about this Fr Copleston rightly remarks:

It may be objected that the various philosophical systems of the past are merely antique relics; that the history of philosophy consists of 'refuted and spiritually dead systems, since each has killed and buried each other.' Did not Kant declare that Metaphysic is always 'keeping the human mind in suspense with hopes that never fade, and yet are never fulfilled,' that 'while every other science is continually advancing,' in Metaphysic men 'perpetually revolve round the same point, without gaining a single step?' ... Platonism, Aristotelianism, Scholasticism, Cartesianism, Kantianism, Hegelianism, all have had their periods and popularity and all have been challenged: Thought may be 'represented as littered with metaphysical systems, abandoned and unreconciled.' Why study the antiquated lumber of the chamber of history? (Copleston 1944:3).

While we affirm that 'thought' (reason) is our gift from God to recognise the truth (cf. Rom. 1:19-20), we fully agree that metaphysics will forever be a pawn in the history of the human race if it does not give us a sure ground to test the claims of any religion before we can *assent* in faith to "any God." We can never come to know a reason for our "Fragmentariness"¹⁵³ (Original Sin) if our idea of God is a false one or a superficial one, and we can only know a meaningful authentic God¹⁵⁴ from the claims of each religion, *at least* from its logic and its systematic coherence. As a starting point, a certain *ontological moral rational universal standard*¹⁵⁵ will take the dialogue and exchange among all religions of the world, both great and small, very far indeed. A yardstick is needed, therefore, in order to verify such claims. Not just because a religion *is in fashion* should we fall in like a fly in the milk and gobble it up. Otherwise our faith will be "a leap in the

¹⁵²It is Vatican II's catch phrase in analyzing human reality in need for salvation.

¹⁵³To borrow Charles Hartshorne's terminology

¹⁵⁴By "true God" here is meant an idea of God (Supreme Being/Ultimate Reality) accepted by all sane human beings. A reliable God to advance humanity; a God who/that has deep love for humanity at least as the starting point (grounding). The standard vision of the United Nations on Ethics/Morality is a case in point.

¹⁵⁵ I developed this *ontological moral rational universal standard* during my studies in Leuven (Belgium) where I majored in metaphysics in the philosophy department. I called it "The Categorical Imperative Life of Love" (or simply "the CILL"). The thesis was entitled, *The Idea of God In the Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne Facilitates A Better Understanding of the True God In the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. See bibliography of this work*. Our research here builds on this earlier discovery of mine.

dark"¹⁵⁶ governed by confusion, uncertainty and fear of believing wrongly. If our idea of a meaningful and authentic God is wrong, then human life will always be a perpetual hell. The importance of finding a rational human measure in order to sort out and weigh religions that (*to date*) make us fully human (*authentic mature* beings) from those that still have a long way to go; those religions that still hold us in tutelage, holding us in suspense as Kant pointed out, can never be overemphasized.

6.1 The ontological dialectical dynamics of human love

As human beings, constitutionally we consist of three aspects namely, potentiality (*moving beings*), actuality (*beings as movers*) and the dialectical relation between the two (*free will*). We can observe that our human historicity seems to constitute the transcendental experience as well as the categorical experience and the dialectical relation of how these influence and affect each other. Our human experience is the sure ground and valuable starting point *by which, through which, and in which* we can judge if humanity, especially the human race, is authentically becoming or not. In this sense human experience can be said to be "the measure of truth" (but of course not of *all* truth). Our human reality is the sure step of finding this truth, and this is what is called "truth from below"¹⁵⁷.

Truth from above" makes no sense if it overlooks this first and pre-ceding human reality (anthropology); centrality of human experience is vital for human beings to be fully alive. "(Our) belief in God as faith in an absolute knowledge is detrimental because it leads to relativism or fanaticism. Relativism and dogmatism are the two errors Merleau-Ponty combats and they are inevitable when one forgets the reality of the basic phenomenon: the contingent, historical, truth and value-revealing relation of man and his world. If I do not realise that meaning arises from being-in-the-world, then I am tossed to and fro between arrogance (dogmatism) and uncertainty (relativism): I fluctuate between uncertainty and presumption without ever finding the right point of the human situation (Van der Veken 1993:20).

¹⁵⁶Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) would call this "a leap of faith" by which he meant that "... becoming a Christian is not merely a matter of the intellect, as Hegel assumed" (Maimela 1990:113). I am certain today that Kierkegaard would modify his stand concerning Hegel's philosophy.

¹⁵⁷This is the emphasis or starting point of Liberation Theology.

What then can we learn and infer from our human experience? For the answer we turn to Kant's idea of the *Categorical Imperative*. What Immanuel Kant achieved there in the *Categorical Imperative maxim* is a valuable insight into our human experience, and *we take his theory further*. While doing this, we are consciously aware that,

The liberal or revolutionary reduction of Christianity [to mere ideological pursuits] reveals its fragility precisely when faced with the incompleteness and the violent nature of ideologies, based on the self-celebration of the power of human reason. Christology reduced to anthropology is simply unable to criticize the limits of historical subjects and of their plans to change the world and life (Merrigan 2000:105).

Yet what we do here is a *sine qua non* condition of establishing a common grounding with any religion before the internal logic and coherence of Christianity can be manifested. Without basic, common agreed upon principles to start the dialogue, the Gospel message will not even be heard from "hostile" religions. We are confident that since a meaningful and authentic God Himself/Herself gave human beings the power of reason, He/She can never refuse His/Her own creation (cf. Rom 1.18-32. Acts 17:23-34). Let us start our exploration.

A responsible, authentic and meaningful human existence should not be lived in such a way that we want "to be thanked" but that we are worthy of "being thanked". The quality of our existence should not be determined from without, but from within. A person who has a "backbone" is the one who lives authentically, and such person is trustworthy and is appreciated in any sane *human* society or community. We show gratitude to such a person because the quality of his/her life enriches us all. He/she becomes a role model, an example to us all. Such a person is called a *saint in any sane culture*. Life, in the final analysis, is justified not in terms of achievements or goals but because it is good in itself. The prerequisite condition, therefore, of such "honour" to be a "good" person is an authentic and meaningful existence. We call this prerequisite condition the "possibility of a positive Life" and it can only be discovered and understood on the basis of "Meaningful Authentic Love". While we take into account consequences of our acts of this Love and its achievements, we affirm that we can discover human

principles which are universally valid for all human beings only in the inner dynamics of Love itself. What then seems to constitute positive, authentic meaningful Life? What seems to make Life hang together? What is the *Alpha* and *Omega* point of human becoming?

The source and centre of Human Life is "a *desire* to be loved" (self-love). There is nothing so valuable and precious (in all human circumstances and situations) in the world without doubt, except "a desire to be loved". This condition of "longing to be loved" accords well with *duty*, and only *persons* possess it; it belongs to us by virtue of our capacity to love deeply and genuinely as autonomous beings. When we live in accordance *with duty* of loving, we do well by leading a noble humane existence, but since we are extrinsically motivated (not by Love itself from within), our life ought to be judged neither as exemplary nor trustworthy. But when we live *from duty* of loving; when we are intrinsically motivated by Love itself from within, our life is said to be exemplary and trustworthy. In the first case our life is built and motivated by *negative* self-love of using others and their situation (including disrespect of the self and the situation of the self), while in the latter case our life is built and motivated by *positive* self-love of respecting others and their situation (including the self and his/her situation). Indeed at times it may even be disadvantageous for us to lead an intrinsic life of love, but that is precisely what authenticity concerning human becoming is all about, and it is the only basic requirement which justifies an individual deserving an authentic and appropriate praise (*uBuntu = humanum*). Such persons are "loved and thanked" for what they *are* above what they have done or achieved. Such persons we can as well call saints of humanity¹⁵⁸, and they leave non-erasable imprints of positive exemplary existence in our personalities; they stay in our hearts precisely because anything done in Love never fades into nothingness.

All of us, in our individual-selves, in our little worlds, always live in this Love as the grounding of our true/genuine selves, it is just a matter of how we appropriate it and live

¹⁵⁸Moses, Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, Muhammad (peace be upon him), Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa are definite cases in point.

it out in our daily autonomous, rational, responsible and conscious selves: Parents sacrificing for their children; loving your spouse or partner; teachers instructing; workers and managers seeking honest and fair settlement; taking care of the environment; driving conscientiously; practicing safe sex; a preacher urging us all (including himself/herself) to beat "the bag of sin"; taking care of the aged and most abandoned; comforting HIV/AIDS patients; seeking lasting peace among religions; seeking peace between scandalously divided Christian denominations; genuinely combating racism and sexism; challenging unfair distribution of world resources; "fighting" for fair reduction or cancellation of world debt for poorer nations of the human race; nations seeking genuine tolerance etc. No one lives outside the embrace and presence of this condition of "a desire to be loved." Even people like Engels and Karl Marx¹⁵⁹, who some of us may think were cold human beings when it came to love, needed "to be loved" in their lives. The youth of today need to be loved in every way possible. Their songs and lyrics have at their core, "the desire to be appreciated and loved". We as human beings, are, in our constitutional *ontological* selves, always overshadowed by this "desire to be loved" so much so that we can say that this ontological constitution is the pristine and primordial structure of ourselves as human beings. *The glory of the human person is to be fully loved unconditionally.* As Fr Gerard, one of the famous Christian missionaries from France in Southern Africa puts it, 'We must love the blacks with all our hearts even if our background militates against it; we must love them as we love ourselves' (cf. O'Hara 1985:24). Fr Joseph Gerard (1831-1914) did his best to live this to the full, and the Basotho people are witnesses to this power of love in his life. A life of this nature, a life of authentic, autonomous loving, has at its core a *law* (a maxim): It is a life that is lived regardless of achievements or goals in order to be applauded. It is a *law* of authentic existence that is both *a priori* (mysterious = *primordially grounded* in Divinity¹⁶⁰) and an *imperative* (inbuilt command).

¹⁵⁹Engels never married formally, but when his partner passed away in 1864, he has this to say to Marx, "I cannot tell you what I feel. The poor girl loved me with all her heart ... I feel that I have buried with her the last particle of my youth" (McLellan 1977:21). Marx, also, dedicated his life in the midst of his enormous work, "... he retained a lifelong attachment to his wife, who bore him seven children" (McLellan 1977: 66).

¹⁶⁰ In the Abrahamic theological tradition (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) this is called "Being created in *the* God's image (cf. Gen 1:27f). In the Qur'an the human person is understood as created from a "clot of blood", signalling Divine sacred-ness in the ontology of the human person. Then, for authentic Christianity, in the person of Jesus *the* Messiah (cf. Heb 4:14-16), all peoples of the human race are called to be graced

The imperative part is either *hypothetical* or *categorical*. As hypothetical, this law of authentic existence should be understood as the practical necessity of a *possible* life. The latter (the categorical), on the other hand, understands the authentic law of existence as a life which is objectively *necessary* in itself. The categorical authentic existence as a necessity is vital for our thesis here and we follow its implications all the way. We call this ontological human scenario the "Categorical Imperative Life of Love (CILL)"¹⁶¹. The CILL is at the centre of human becoming in its totality. The entire human existence hinges on this supreme principle, which is the omega-point of our existence. Without this Life-Kernel, authentic existence according to Heidegger is not possible, and inescapable structures of the human person in their authenticity and total wholeness just collapse from within. This "Categorical Imperative Life of Love" consists of two basic formulations (maxims) concerning Authentic Existence:

- * To live in such a way that *always* in your existential life you are open to the truth as it may present itself in all dimensions (both from within and from without if that may be the case); *always* giving credit where it is due as, Thomas Aquinas advised us. After all, what is the secret of Life? It is the unprejudiced existential relation to the truth in all situations, circumstances and events; this is the wisdom of Life.

- * To live in such a way that *always* your existential life is exemplary and you can be trustworthy towards everyone in what it means to be human, in what it means to be really free; but above all, to live in such a way that people may come to know what it means to embrace a meaningful and authentic God (whatever God one believes in). To live in such a life that *at the same time* you will urge everyone *also* to lead such a life. By this constant consciousness of the other-me, you will be letting the face of *the other* (alterity) be your constant companion.

abundantly in order to live to the full this *image* or this ontological primordial *clotting* as "born anew" children of *the one* God (cf. Acts 17:28. Rom 8).

¹⁶¹ As I noted earlier, this ontological human insight is based on my original work of 1993 in the Catholic University of Leuven, cf. Mosoeu 1993.

These maxims are vital as pointers to the core of what constitutes the dignity of the human person and his/her situation/environment. It is important to emphasise the fact that without the autonomy of the human person in this possibility of the capability of loving, we are nothing more than persons destined to live in a certain way. The importance and centrality of the human person in self-possession in this kind of existence is indispensable. "The Categorical Imperative Life of Love" (CILL) tells us about the mysterious dynamics of the "ought"; it informs us that human existence is "imposed"¹⁶² by a loving relationship, and it emphasises this reality of "a desire to be loved" in every person as a reality that legislates the universal law. This necessity inevitably leads to the idea of the "Community of Becoming" where capable, autonomous persons construct a system of laws that can provide the framework for authentic and meaningful *relations* among individuals and their appropriate roles in a given culture¹⁶³. Human beings in this ideal human family legislate in such a way as to make laws which are universal and thus applicable to every living human being¹⁶⁴.

Living according to the CILL means that we live as members of the ideal human family of free and equal members, each of whom, in realising her/his own purposes, also furthers, at the same time, the aims of other members of the ideal "Becoming Community" which has, as its *grounding*, the idea of autonomous, positive self-love. Thus every struggling loving person lives according to an innate law in herself/himself and yet, at the same time, also lives in harmony with everyone else. Talking universally, if something is a duty and a right for me, and if I love and value it dearly, it must also be a duty and a right for everyone else. It is binding universally on all the peoples of the human race. It is under these conditions that the ideal "Community of Becoming" is inescapable for authentic living. Therefore the dignity of the human person and her/his situation are above all value and are valid in all circumstances; they are an end in

¹⁶² This must be understood within Heidegger's dynamics of "throwness".

¹⁶³ St Augustine and many theologians within Christian tradition, understand the relations within the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit = *immanence* of the nature of God) as eternal Model of total Human Becoming (*economy* of salvation). Augustine specifically called the tri-personal relations within the Godhead the Foundational Model of the "Community of Love".

¹⁶⁴ Racists, women-haters, ethnic-cleansing-monsters will forever hate Kant for this moral implication.

themselves and not a means. Intending to hurt someone or her/his situation/environment is always a contradiction in the metaphysical human sense because it is, in a way, a self-harming act of one-self and one's situation/environment. The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Reverend Njongonkulu Ndungane, captures well this reality of authentic becoming in his reflection on the diversity of the human race:

Each person is created in the image of God and therefore has intrinsic worth and dignity. There is a Rabbinical saying that before each and every person there walks the angel proclaiming: 'Make way, make way for the image of God'. No individual or race or culture is superior to others. Each has its own 'native' wisdom to bring to the common life - wisdom gleaned from experience, the lessons of history, human advancement, philosophers, mystics, and wisdom figures. Some of the riches of overlooked minority or ethnic groups are being discovered and recovered by those engaged in Creation Theology (Challenge 2001:5)¹⁶⁵.

Therefore, anyone who violates the "Categorical Imperative Life of Love" goes against humanity in its ontological meaningful self, which, in the final analysis, means fighting oneself, and which could lead to ontological suicide if carried *constantly* and *fundamentally* to a point of no return. In this way such a person becomes a terror to Life. She/he declares herself/himself a terrorist, a life's *persona-non-grata*. Terrorism in this sense, in the final analysis, is nothing less than self-hatred and an anti-human project. Such a person is a self-declared outcast and must be dealt with appropriately and accordingly for the sake of humanity's sanity.

But what are ontological constitutional dynamics of this "Love" to which we are *called*? Primordial Dynamics of this Love have to be examined and known so that we can come to see and conceptualise this Love in action. It is not enough to say "God is love"; what do you *really* mean? "I love you"; what is *really* meant here? Or "I am in love"; what do you *really* mean? We now turn to the "Essential Elements"¹⁶⁶ of this Love. But we can only come to know the Structure of this "Love" if we examine what is meant by "a desire to be loved". If we are "the object" of this "Love" (*to be loved*), it means that constitutionally as human beings (*made in God's image*) we are *already grounded and*

¹⁶⁵The Archbishop was addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on 27 January 2001.

called to fully participate in total self-giving in order to *actualize* that positive self-love. On the other hand, "the subject" of this "Love" (*one calling to love*) is lovingly waiting for everyone to respond. In this sense, by the dynamic calling offered to us, we cannot afford to go against the CILL precisely because that will be doing violence to our authentic true selves as human beings. We now look at the inner Structure of the human person, and by so doing we will be examining the essential "Elements" of the CILL (the ontological core-self).

6.2 "Elemental" Constitution of the Categorical Imperative Life of Love (CILL)

Central to our daily living is *numbering*, and the success of big businesses is unthinkable without this numbering. Calculation has to do with numbering; mathematical calculations, etc.: Banking, lottery, ID (being numbered), police statistics etc. We must, therefore, first find a *numerical number* that is stable and constant to hold this theory of ours together. This *number* must reflect the reality of our human experience in itself, and must be the least common denominator (substratum) through which reality revolves¹⁶⁷. If we can get this "*magic*" *number* that seems to "make the world go round"; this number to which the *form-of-the-self* can be reducible, we will then adopt it for our theory here. Which Number do we go for then?

We opt for Number Three (3). Why? The coin gives us the clue: Normally we say that there are two sides to a coin, but we find that in fact the coin always consists of three sides; we always (somehow) forget to count the rim. *Yet* the rim plays a very important and crucial role of *relating* and joining the two sides. In our Life three aspects in the *same* activity are a daily dialectical routine effecting and influencing each other. In every action we do, activity in threeness is a *fundamental* reality: interpenetrating, communicating, and relating. These are so basic and always there as *a priori* that we take them for granted; for example, driving the car (me and the car and the relation), eating (me and food and the activity), fighting (me and the opponent and exchange), making

¹⁶⁶"Elements" here must be understood within the early Greek philosophy (pre-Socratic) where original elements of what brought about the cosmos were intellectually sought.

¹⁶⁷This reminds us of Pythagorean philosophy about the core of reality.

love (me and the other and the mysterious yet exciting communication), preaching (me and the audience and communicating the message) etc. In other words, reality *cannot* be reduced to less than three Elements. It has been observed that a meaningful community needs at least three people to reduce tension. After all, the normal natural family is not reducible less than Mother, Father and child/children¹⁶⁸. The Core-Self (the CILL) is unmistakably reducible to three Elements namely, *autonomy*, *rationality* and *intuition*.

Autonomy: We said earlier that without this element our individuated selves and our authentic responsibility would disappear like a drop of water in the ocean. When this individuation disintegrates, one's situation becomes a burden and unintelligible; *life* as a whole either becomes a big mystery or it becomes an absolute absurdity. Without this element, Sartre would then be vindicated, "... (in life) we lose ourselves in vain; man is a useless passion" (Van der Veken 1993:17). The Self (Ego) in its pristine and primordial constitution, is *called* to possess itself in a total, fully realised freedom. *All of us* as persons, are *called* to *freedom*. We ought to be our true authentic selves (mature) in order to make our existence meaningful and to participate gracefully in that "Community of Becoming".

Rationality: The Core-Self also possesses intelligibility. There is logic and coherence in our human selves. Without this element *life* won't make sense: The world of linguistic communicability and connotation would be an impossibility. We are by nature self-questioners precisely because of this element. It is this part of ourselves that makes us as human beings "superior" to brutes and other beasts in creation (cf. Ps 8).

Intuition: The Core-Self has the ability to grasp and to see the difference; it has power to discern. This element is the "seat" of discernment (conscience); decisions of the "heart" come from here.

¹⁶⁸ Any single parenthood is insufficient to raise up children. Today in South Africa the effects of only the mother raising up the children while the father is absent, is reaping havoc in South African society. South African males are hasty in making children, but they don't give a damn in accepting the consequences of

All these, together, participate in that *Subject of Love* to which we are *called* to respond, precisely because this Love is the grounding of that *Object of Love* we have already mentioned above. These three elements are our source and centre as human beings. *A situation/context is said to be human only if all these Elements (as a minimum requirement) are respected in each individual person.*¹⁶⁹ When we speak and explain, we differentiate these elements; yet they influence and affect each other in one move: My autonomy has to be rational as well as intuitive; my rationality has to be autonomous as well as intuitive, and my intuition has to be autonomous as well as rational. Throughout the history of the human race (within their different cultures), these *three realities of our ontological selves* were given different names¹⁷⁰ and associations, and at times one element was emphasised at the expense of others:

<u>Autonomy (spleen/genitals)</u>	<u>Rationality (brain)</u>	<u>Intuition (heart)</u>
<i>Call to Equality (égalité)</i>	<i>Freedom (liberté)</i>	<i>Community (fraternité)</i>
Goodness & Evilness	Goodness Only	Choice
Judgement	Justice/Fairness	Healing/Contentment
Wisdom	Reason/Logos	Discretion
Willing	Thinking	Discerning
Obedience (ordering creation)	Planning/Creating	Unity
		(communication/making worthy = sanctification)
Authority (seat of power & majesty)	Order (seat of sense, logic & coherence)	Harmony (seat of belonging/ <i>heimat</i>)
<i>Obedience</i>	<i>Poverty</i>	<i>Chastity</i> ¹⁷¹

When we take *autonomy*, *rationality* and *intuition* as summarising the human person at core, we can now say that Love is "an ordered, harmonised authority." This *authority* is the "self-imposed" one of the CILL. Through the *categorical imperative life of love*, we

the act. The Sesotho idiom captures well male dilemma here, "E bona mahe ha e bone leraba" ("Enjoyment without responsibilities and duties"). What a shame!

¹⁶⁹The Golden Rule of the Gospel of the man of Nazareth is nothing less than this requirement.

¹⁷⁰Some here speak of a "God" with many faces. Much is written and is being written on the subject especially within the theology of religions.

¹⁷¹Within certain theological customs of Christian commitment/expression of intent, these three "virtues" correspond well here.

now come to appreciate our "thrownness-in-love"¹⁷² which translates itself, if authentically followed, into an obedience-in-calling; a *call* to our "desire to be loved." When our "thrownness-in-love" is appropriately actualised, existence suddenly takes a meaningful rhythm. Who or what put this innate *calling* in us can be understood and interpreted differently for sure, *but the noble calling as a fact of Life is undeniable and inescapable to every human being*¹⁷³; *it is a calling to a believer of any religion precisely because every believer is a human being before he/she is inserted into a culture.* We can therefore affirm that the dignity of the human person comes from this *calling* that is *unique* and *sacred*. The human person is holy and sacred; she/he is a kind of a god (cf. Ps 8) and worthy of being "worshipped" (absolute respect). We affirm that by nature we are religious beings and that, by ignoring this sacredness of ourselves in total freedom, eventually we would lead ourselves to absolute self-destruction (Heideggerian hell = a non "project-enabling life")¹⁷⁴.

The Categorical Imperative Life of Love, therefore, means that Love is the core of our being as humans and our situation/context; without this core, we simply die (1Cor 13). The CILL and its formulations is a dynamic *rational measure* and *yardstick* to discern the truthfulness of Human Life in its wholeness. We now go to the "Categorical Experience" (historicity) and test this theory of ours. Again we emphasise that the "Transcendental Experience" (pristine and primordial) and the "Categorical Experience" and the "Ongoing Relation" between the two (*actual history*), are *three* aspects of *one* and the *same* Human Reality. Dichotomy here is unthinkable. Here we would rather speak of stages of Reality than fragmentation or compartmentalisation of human existence.

6.2.1 The validity of the Categorical Imperative Life of Love in history

¹⁷²Borrowing from Martin Heidegger's language-use of what it means to be a human being.

¹⁷³Regardless of whether one is a Christian, Moslem, Jew, a believer in any of African religions, Buddhist, or is of a Hindu religion etc.

¹⁷⁴ While a mature person *ables* herself/himself by making *a meaningful project* out of this life to achieve authentic freedom she/he must, *at the same time*, be aware that she/he is *already thrown* as a moving being; she/he is already *abled* to move. Therefore *abl-ing* means the ability to move oneself and, *at the same time*, *to be aware* of the undeniable reality of *already* being put into a process of Life.

Can our theory stand the tide of historical proof? Let's examine Human Culture as our starting point. There are four (4) areas always taken as basically constituting any human culture: Religion, Politics, Economics, and Society (Community). But closer examination shows that, "religion" does not stand on the same footing as the rest; precisely because "religion" is generally and basically understood as "worshipping". "Worship" is a kind of praying in supplications for different needs and awareness of one's (or communities') context/situation, yet at the heart of this "praying" is that ever-present reality, "a desire to be loved". When we are motivated by the fear of the gods or the mysterious and brutal forces of nature; or engulfed by the real hatred of our neighbour¹⁷⁵, we hope to be spared one way or another; we want to be protected and to be treated with care. It is a cry to be accepted in the midst of a hostile, howling existence. In modern culture there is still a cry (even more so) of "a desire to be loved". Küng captures well the dilemma of our higher civilisation:

[Modernity and] postmodernity ... cannot be content with a radical pluralism or relativism ('truth, justice, humanity in the plural'), which in fact are characteristics of the disintegration of late modernity. Randomness, colourfulness, the mixing-up of all and everything, the anarchy of trends of thought and styles, the methodological 'anything goes', the moral 'all is permissible': this and similar phenomena cannot be the signature of the post-modern period. To this degree conservative criticism of modernity is quite justified (Küng 1990:22).

There is no doubt about the fact that high civilizations (in any culture) also demand genuine "Love". *Without the CILL concretely put into practice, there is little to hope for in any culture.* Lack of the CILL in any society or community can only mean that existence there becomes absurd; years there would then seem to pass into nothingness; each morning would be experienced as one damn thing after another (a hellish drag), and Life as a whole would eventually become to be perceived as "a useless passion". This strongly suggests that "religion" is not so much about God or Supreme Being/Ultimate Reality as the "object of worship" but about ourselves *in the first place*. Otherwise the

¹⁷⁵ Ps. 27: "Yahweh is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear? Yahweh is the fortress of my life, whom should I dread? When the wicked advance against me to eat me up, they, my opponents, my enemies, are the ones who stumble and fall. Though an army pitch camp against me, my heart will not fear, though war break out against me, my trust will never be shaken". Ps. 23:4 '... Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death, I should fear no danger, for you O Lord are at my side ... '

holiness of God would then depend on human beings He/She has created¹⁷⁶. This would really be a great absurdity for a meaningful God (cf. Acts 17:24-25). The holiness of the true God does not depend on our prayers or wishing God well, precisely because we are what we are thanks to this God. The nature of human beings as the "object of worship" makes sense because (as we said above) we are created in such a way that there is "a spark" of holiness, sacredness in us; somehow we are created in such a way as to be gods, and this takes us back to *self-love*. "Worship", in its basic elementary nature, is nothing else than this *self-love*. Yet this *self-love* is called to *actualize itself in total freedom in the participation* of that "Subjective Love"; that "Love" that grounded us as human beings and *enabled us* to be what we are constitutionally, namely, *moving movers* (cf. Acts 17:28).

What we mean here is that "worship" should be understood as "thank you for what I am as a person"; thanking God or other human beings for what I am *positively, wishing myself/my family/my community or group well*. "Worship", therefore, inspite of what might seem to be the case, is an inward-looking reality. The desperate cry for help and "thank you (buddy)" are done in order to protect my human self and my human situation (culture). Through this deep and profound "thank you" (sometimes made through cantations and sacrifices) we come to trust that all will be OK (at least for the time being). But as long as there are people who are appreciating us and making us feel that we *do* belong somewhere, then "thank you" abounds towards God and the other-me; I can then thank God for who I am. But if there is not much to be "thankful for"; that is, the moment the opposite is experienced and love becomes zero within oneself, then hell breaks lose. When God and other human beings are fundamentally and systematically experienced *negatively* over a period of time, then "worship" suddenly becomes problematic, and in most cases it just stops. At this stage "prayer" loses all meaning, and the doors of a hopeful horizon of authentic human becoming start to shut down slowly but surely. This is when *self-love* is radically negated and life for the *self* becomes a damned thing; a survival pit of death and absolute chaos, and it is at this stage that, at

¹⁷⁶In the Message of Jesus of Christianity definitely this is not even alluded to, precisely because it does not make sense at all.

times, suicide becomes a serious contemplation¹⁷⁷. The more people appreciate us, the more we are "worshipful" to ourselves-in-them. In this respect, the appropriate word for "worship" is *self-respect*. So, any society or community in "prayer" relates to God-conditions of its culture: political, economical and social.

In "prayer" we tell God about our-conditioned-selves; about our conceptualisation of the world (our *Anschauung*). And since human beings in their different conditions are the ones binding everything in meaning (essence of religion); since human beings are the centre of every culture, then without human beings Life becomes meaningless precisely because in "Dasein is the place where Being 'happens' [shines]" (Van der Veken 1993: 23). *It is vital to realise that any idea of a God that violates inescapable (natural) structures of the human person cannot be authentic concerning the reality of a true God/Ultimate Reality. Therefore, the word "religion" is the summing up of the totality of Life of Love in every human community.* In this sense no human being can live without some kind of "religion" one way or another; thus making religion the summing-up of one's value system (or community's or society's value system). Therefore there are always official and unofficial religions in the world. And since "religion" has to do with *binding*¹⁷⁸; it has to do with making whole and making our Life hang together. We then affirm that "religion" is nothing less than the CILL manifesting itself in all cultures; it is nothing else than ourselves in primordial self-search. Politics can pass away, economics can collapse, and societies can fight and hate each other, but the dignity of the human person (self-worship) and his/her space to be under the sun, will always stay and take precedence; and a God that is the absolute grounding of the CILL *in every way possible, has a right*, and qualifies to be the Lord of History of human becoming, but above all, such a God has a right to be *worshipped* and prayed to, precisely because that is His/Her due.

Any culture, therefore, basically constitutes three entities namely, *politics, economics,* and *society*. Taken further, these three realities of our existence correspond to our

¹⁷⁷Here in South Africa just before and after 1994 General Elections (up to now) the rate of suicide, reflecting the South African situation, increased dramatically.

¹⁷⁸One of classical definitions concerning "religion".

primordial selves as authority, planning/creating (*homo faber*) and community respectively. In this sense, politics, economics and societies are there to "worship" or to serve the human person; they are there to fulfil the CILL. Therefore, in the final analysis, every political system, every economic system, and any society/community is there for the human person, *not the other way round*. Any culture or authority (be it *secular* or *religious*) going against the CILL declares itself a terror to Life and it has to be dealt with appropriately and accordingly for humanity's sanity. This includes all the "religions" of the world, that is, all appropriated realities of *the holy*. The dynamics of each "religion" (logic and coherence) will tell how far or near that religion is in honouring or fulfilling the Categorical Imperative Life of Love (CILL). This *Measure* or *Yardstick* puts us in a better position to discern (not so much to judge or condemn) if a "religion" brings good news to the human race, or if it is a fraud, or has a long way to improve. In the meantime any "religion" that is at the service of, or fulfils better, the inescapable demands of the CILL, ought to be given due where due credit. Soren Kiekegaard did much of the spade work for modern culture concerning the CILL and it is appropriate to summarise his theology in this regard.

6.2.2 Soren Kiekegaard and the centrality of the CILL in his theology

The dignity of the individual is very central to the theology of Kiekegaard; he is the one, maybe for the first time in theology, to fight tooth and nail in combating theologies that try to reduce the human person to a level of just being "a cog in the machine" as far as human freedom and conscience are concerned. Soren Kiekegaard (1813-1855) "... is a difficult man to place in the cross-currents of theological debates which raged throughout the century. Yet ... 'no one account of leading modern types of theology would be complete, or even intelligent, which omitted the work of Soren Kiekegaard', who has been dubbed 'the greatest Christian thinker of the past century and the greatest of Christian psychologists'. ... [He] influenced Barth when he wrote in his *The Epistle to the Romans* of 'the infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity and of God who is in heaven while humans are on earth'" (Maimela 1990:111).

Existentialism, especially of Heidegger, found a fertile ground in this great Danish theologian. Kierkegaard challenged in a brilliant way the idea of God and of the human person (the individual) prevailing during his life-time, especially Hegelian philosophy that was adored during his time. In fact, it is Hegelianism that 'woke him from dogmatic slumbers'. Kierkegaard "... thought that Hegelian philosophy destroyed the distinction between human and Divine Spirit, thereby confusing human questions with divine questions. It subjected the divine truth to the autocratic supremacy of human creative reason; it confused humanity with God. ... [Kierkegaard] wanted Christianity to return to the *uniqueness of the biblical revelation in its finality*. [He] argued that the Christianity that Hegel had talked about and which permeated European culture was not the Christianity of the New Testament" (Maimela 1990:111ff). For Kierkegaard to be a Christian has little to do with the intellect but much to do with a "leap of faith" where paradoxically a new subjectivity takes over in creatures through Jesus Christ the Incarnate¹⁷⁹, thus making one to become a new creature ontologically. On the idea of the centrality of the human person in the history of becoming, Kierkegaard understood *truth as subjectivity*¹⁸⁰. The calling of *the individual* (subjective-self) in this *existence* that is so tough, is *to make a decision either* for God in the God-Man *or* against God. Every individual human being in Life must make a choice in order to be authentic. In this sense he found the debate about the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith irrelevant, and in fact *evasive* of the real issue of the individual making that existential decision for God in Christ or refusing to make it. "Becoming a Christian by the miracle of a new birth through faith enables one to become contemporaneous with the historical Jesus, thus overcoming 'the awe of history' which Lessing, Strauss and others have referred to. ...

¹⁷⁹"According to Kierkegaard, the gospel is the *absolute paradox*, namely, that the eternal and absolute reality confronts us in history and in time. Christian faith arises amidst the absolute paradox that God became this particular man, Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore that in and through this particular history of the man Jesus we are confronted with the absolute paradox and are exposed as sinners, something pagans know nothing about. ... In this confrontation our sins are exposed, and this is *the offence* of Christianity, an offence which demands a response from us. Our response may be positive - to receive a new condition from God *through faith*; or it may be negative - to refuse to lose the old 'self' and to become the new 'self', thus continuing in sin before God" (Maimela 1990: 113).

¹⁸⁰"By holding that truth is subjectivity and subjectivity is truth, Kierkegaard did not mean to deny that truth is also something that is fundamentally objective, a reality which we can encounter. This is axiomatic for Kierkegaard because for him the human soul feeds on the objective reality of truth external to the individual self. What he meant by saying 'truth is subjectivity', is that the only truth which edifies is the truth which is

[because] faith cannot be built on the shifting sands of historico-critical research whose results can never be assured" (Maimela 1990:113ff).

While Kiekegaard relied on the pedagogy of Socrates in discovering the truth, he differed with Socrates in the fact that salvific truth within people is impossible unless given from without ("from above") in Christ: "...While Socrates assumed that the truth was in people and only needed to be discovered, Kiekegaard argued that the truth of the gospel is a *new truth*, which was not there before" (Maimela 1990:116). In other words, the requirements of the truth "from below" (naturally given by God), of which the CILL is the centre point of human becoming, would come to naught if the truth in Christ (truth from above or from without) is not taken very seriously, thus making Christ fulfiller par excellence of the CILL. In the final analysis, therefore, life in Christ is a *gratuitous gift* from God precisely because "*Faith is a miracle, not a logical and natural consequence of an inborn human consciousness of God*" (Maimela 1990:117).

The CILL that refuses to *recognise* in Jesus of Nazareth the highest, unique, unsurpassable existential meaningfulness of human becoming, would be *inauthentic* and *alienating*, precisely because " ... *to know God's truth in Jesus Christ, and to believe, belong together, one cannot have one without the other*" (Maimela 1990:116). Interpreting Kiekegaard's theology, we find that the authenticity of the CILL shows itself in recognising *three* stages of human becoming: *Aesthetic*, *ethical* and eventually a *religious* stage. We conclude by saying that the centrality of the dignity of the human person in the theology of Kiekegaard cannot be overemphasized.

6.3. Authentic anthropology always seeks an all-around meaningful God

God, understood as the grounding and infinite Source of *all-that-is*, cannot escape the implications of our observations here regarding human nature. It even becomes more acute to say that "human beings are created in God's image", because one way or another

personally apprehended. Coldly objective truth edifies no one, and counts for nothing in itself" (Maimela 1990: 113f).

that Creator, to be meaningful, has to have much to do with this ontological structure of human beings. Otherwise the whole thing becomes a farce and eventually God-Talk becomes fraudulent (Migliore 1991:57f). In this sense, the difference between "God" revealing Himself/Herself *naturally* (general revelation = from below = immanently) and revealing Himself/Herself *un-naturally* (particular revelation = from above = transcendentally) must be a reality of any authentic religion; the logic and coherence of any religion must have this dialectical tension as point of departure, towards a meaningful God. The dynamics of this "tension" will separate religions of the future from those of the past (outdated). Any religion that still parades a "God" that does not accept blame in "messing up" the creation of human beings and *all-that-is*; a God that is blameless in every way possible; an exonerated blameless God; *cannot be the God who created all-that-is; therefore He/She cannot be a true God*. And any religion that opposes this conclusion of ours here, is viewed by us as very dangerous to the authentic becoming of the human race. In fact such a religion would be *atheistic in a real sense*; not believing in the possibility of the impossible: that "God", *one way or another could also* be said to be *imperfect* (cf. Rom 9-11). For some of us, if the Jewish wisdom and insight is something to go by, then God's revelation through the prophet Jeremiah will not shock us:

Thus says the Lord: Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up [at will] - that is, the whole land. And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not; For, behold, I am bringing evil upon all flesh, says the Lord; But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go. (Garrison 1982: introd).

Yahweh in order to fulfil "His" eternal purpose of salvation sacrificed some human beings; Yahweh committed "sin" in order to save us all (cf. Rom 9:14-21). Unless we stop making God always to appear "nice, thus tamed", in vain shall humanity exist. An authentic God is the one that has created all-that-is, and all-that-is is held by Him/Her in place (cf. Acts 17:24). To make our point clear we take a few examples: It is not in vain that God allowed the diversity of races in the world, the diversity that has brought so much pain and suffering to the human race. Why did He/She allow the diversity then? It is not in vain that God allowed the "Whites" to oversee the globalisation of the world from the 1600s, the globalisation that did so much harm and hurt to millions of human

beings. Why did He/She allow it then? It is not in vain that apartheid came into being; a cruel system that caused so much inhumanity in South Africa. But why was it allowed then? Deformed people, albinos, cripples from birth, "bad genes", etc.; why are people born this way then? It is not in vain that God, after the Second World War, put Americans to be in charge of the world; till then, Europe has been in charge. One time God made Russia to be an opposition to America, and now it seems the "Arabs" or China might lead as that opposition in the world today. Why should God allow this; why does God allow so much pain and suffering? For us, in all this, *God has a Purpose* (cf. Rom 9-11; Eph 1:1-14); and this is why He/She has to take the blame, the blame for which human beings are not responsible in any way. In trying to protect God, humanity has everything to lose; a true God protects Himself/Herself, and does not need human beings to protect Him/Her (Nolan 1976:1). These are inescapable claims for any religion to be authentic and meaningful. In this sense the idea of a God "committing sin" *somehow* in His/Her own right should be understandable. After all, as Heidegger made us aware, there is (or ought to be) qualitative *difference* and *similarity* between *Being* and *beings*. The implications for us here is that a healthy discontinuity and continuity between the Creator and creatures is a must; unity in diversity for the divine is a must; and personal relationships is crucial for a meaningful God of the human race. Such a God has to be beyond our human creation otherwise we are back to square one. It must be a God who comes from without; surprising our natural way of anticipating "what God should look like or act like". But at the same time an authentic God should be the one that does not violate what He/She has already created (cf. Mt 5:17-18). In this sense an authentic God is both hidden (transcendent a-la-classical monotheism) and revealed (cognitively recognisable a-la-classical polytheism). Heidegger, referring to the same realities of human existence, in the final analysis sees Truth as both *concealed* and *un-concealed*.

We hope all religions of the world, for the sake of sanity in the world, take very seriously the idea of a God who is *somehow also* imperfect, but at the same time such a God should be in position to redeem Himself/Herself, otherwise He/She cannot (as God) be said to hold all-that-is in being all the time as the *ineffable mystery*. Here are the four things that

must be the core of any authentic religion preaching a meaningful God that cannot violate the ontological structure (the CILL) of the human person.

1. The “absoluteness” of the sacredness of the human person: It is amazing that proponents of human dignity will have no difficulty with the word "absolute" being applied to the intrinsic value of the human person, but that the same word cannot be allowed to be used to describe "God" or any religion as having unique and unsurpassable ethic. In our case here, we are about to show that the story of Jesus concerning the dignity of the human person will take a very long time before it can be surpassed by any religion as far as the relationship between God and ourselves is concerned. Nevertheless, it remains an unsurpassable fact that any religion, that does not have the dignity of the human person at core will do badly today to challenge modern culture on God-talk. Modern consciousness makes it clear that the value of each one of us is non-negotiable; that it is an end in itself. While we accept this sacredness of the human person, we would like to qualify this *non-negotiability*. If this non-negotiable sacredness or goodness of the human person is not balanced with the reality of the wretchedness or evilness of that same human person, then in vain will humanity prosper. Our fallen human nature is not a fiction of the theological mind (cf. Ps 8. Rom 1:18-32). In this sense, the sin of modern culture, from the “glorious” days of the Enlightenment, was the shift of replacing God as the centre of any consciousness (including human consciousness), and replacing it with “the individual thinking being” as its centre; thus a kind of a theological “coup” concerning God’s place in our life, subtly began. The ironic discovery is that modern culture claims to have Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as its foundation, but has become highly selective in reading them on the question of the reality of the Holy:

Modernity made a mark in history that will never be forgotten. But at times this contribution is exaggerated and right down selfish and arrogant. Modernity is about 1600 years old, while humanity is far older, but the way this culture brags about its achievements, is unbelievable. Thank God that the last two world wars, racism, holocaust and Apartheid have made this boasting of scientific success little bit of a nuisance. Modernity claims proudly that their foundation is Greek wisdom, especially Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. But these three ... would be surprised about attacks done in their name on philosophies [concerning] theologike. They will [surely] understand attacks on inauthentic Church and its institutions, but to go for religion in

itself; to deny the existence of God, will be too much for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to swallow (Mosoeu 1998:43f).

Therefore, it is the task of any authentic religion to warn the human race about our brokenness (primordial = original Sin), where human beings treat each other cruelly; it is the task of a meaningful religion to pave the way for this impasse to be overcome in order to start and recreate anew (cf. Rev 21:1-5) everything for a better future for all people of the human race. In this sense, the "global ethic" proposed by theologians in the likes of Hans Küng can never be overemphasized.

2. *The conditional necessity of Pelagianism:* Pelagianism's contribution to the history of human becoming is that, whenever human beings "think they have become of age", they will always come up with something better in order to *try to save themselves*; they will always come up with something in order to *try to surpass a God that has left us with "a mess of living"*. Whenever appropriation of the "Holy" is suspect in any culture, some people will try to put themselves "in the place" of God, and try to better the situation, and this can be understandable in certain contexts, *thus acceptable*. In this sense, with qualification we regard such move as necessary at times. Pelagianism presupposes the inherent natural capability of the human person to save himself/herself. But this is only understandable and maybe possible with "agreed-upon principles" of human becoming. In this sense one common authoritative source (monotheism), as a minimum requirement, is a must according to sound rationality. It is up to the meaningful religions to make this clear and to show the importance of the free will in this regard *within that monotheism*, without forgetting our ambiguous ontological structure as human beings (the reality of good and evil within ourselves).

3. *Heaven (good) vs. Hell (evil) within ourselves:* Our ontological selves is nothing else than either heaven (good) or hell (evil) realising themselves for the better within us. Since human life is all about *a process* of making a choice *Either Or* (Kiekegaard); making a fundamental choice of either embracing good (heaven) or evil (hell), heaven or hell are, therefore, our daily experiences. To some this happens in big doses, while to others it

happens in small doses, depending on the day¹⁸¹. If free will is at the centre of either going to heaven or going to hell; and if that choice has to be made in this world, then few people will qualify for either of the places. How many people pass away (die) everyday in their "ignorance" of authenticity concerning ethical maturity as the norm? Maybe the question of heaven and hell is taken too much for granted by religions; maybe there is still another world where a better exercise of our free will might be much more meaningful or given more chance, otherwise free will does not make sense at all; we may as well eat, drink, make love and be dead because life is meaningless anyway. That someone goes to hell or heaven does not have to be left to God alone; anyone who is well versed with the dynamics of the CILL, is naturally graced by the Creator to discern a cursed life (hell) and a blessed life (heaven) *already in the here and now*. But again, to live a cursed life or a blessed one instinctually means nothing unless a person is regarded as worthy (mature exercise of free will). The reality of good (heaven) and evil (hell) as our structure, cannot be denied by anyone, and we urge fraudulent religions to take this seriously.

4. A need for an "'evil' or 'imperfect'" God: It is clear that evil has a grounding, and this grounding must have one and the same source as the "good", otherwise Life loses its meaning. As we have seen earlier, any religion that tries to create two separate sources of evil and good will end up with the Manichaeistic dilemma of dichotomising reality. This necessity of a "God who is evil as well as good" will unsettle traditional theology; yet this unsettling is necessary if the comprehensive mystery of "what kind of a God we have in Jesus" can be exposed once for all as far as our historical knowledge of Christ *to date* is concerned. Our existence and our ontological structure (*if we are really made in the image of God*) warrant this "blasphemy" as basic to an authentic religion. Can a Father-God who deliberately allows His only son to be slaughtered like an animal (cf. Is 53:7) be said to be exemplary to human ethics? Yet a "God" that dies on the cross as if committing suicide; the "God" that goes to toilet like you and me (cf. Phil 2:6-7); and the "God" that is bound by space and time (cf. Gal 4:4), are at the core of Trinitarian revelation through Jesus.

¹⁸¹Remember: Each dog has its own day!

It is within this grounding that the *uniqueness* and the *unsurpassable nature* of Jesus' story will be highly visible and *absolutely* appreciated by authentic human beings in their mature historical becoming/calling.

6.3.1 The nature and "conditions" of a meaningful God

This is the central problem because by dealing with it adequately, all other problems are somehow immediately answered. Can we know this God? How is God in Godself? It has rightly been said that "the question 'whether God exists' (*an Deus sit*) is intimately linked with the question concerning how we are to envisage God (*quis Deus sit*)" (Van der Veken 1993:17). If we want to know this meaningful God who is a Parent for all peoples of the human race (cf. Acts 17:26), through our natural rational powers, then we must look at how humanity hitherto has understood the nature of God in general. Otherwise we will end up thinking in circles, "gaining no step" as Kant cautioned us already. Our position is that creation is not perfect as the result of the "Fall"; it is still continuing to regress (degenerate) in bounds and dialectical forms. Theology on the "Fall" is still inconclusive: Some theologians emphasise total "wretchedness" or total loss of grace after the Fall, while others emphasize "natural goodness" or natural graced humanity. This debate is still with us today. Whatever the case, God seems to have had a headache in bringing into being His/Her creation. E. Schumacher summarises well "God's dilemma" then:

When the Lord created the world and people to live in it - an enterprise which, according to modern science, took a very long time - I would well imagine that He reasoned with Himself as follows: 'If I make everything predictable, these human beings, whom I have endowed with pretty good brains, will undoubtedly learn to predict everything, and they will thereupon have no motive to do anything at all, because they will recognise that the future is totally determined and cannot be influenced by any human action. On the other hand, if I make everything unpredictable, they will gradually discover that there is no rational basis for any decision whatsoever and, as in the first case, they will thereupon have no motive to do anything at all. Neither scheme would make sense. I must therefore

create a mixture of the two. Let some things be predictable and let others be unpredictable. They will then, amongst many other things, have the very important task of finding out which is which' (Schumacher 1974:187)¹⁸²

Whatever God thought primordially, what is attestable even today is that, *historically*, there are *three* steps that *lead*¹⁸³ to a true, meaningful God: *natural* idea of God, a *postulated* understanding of God, and a *revealed* understanding of God. These steps follow each other to attain a better nature of God; no short cuts here.

First step (Natural idea of God): Every human being is born with an idea of the Supreme Being. "God" here is speculated as a possible necessity. This is constitutional to our structure as human beings: "Yet even the fool, in order to say in his heart that there is no God, must know [at least] in his mind what it is he is denying in his words. God, whether affirmed or denied, is conceived [by all normal and sane human beings] as 'that than which nothing greater can be thought.' But surely if a being is such that we cannot think of anything greater, it cannot be confined to our understanding. For if it were there only, we could also think of it as existing in reality; and this would be something greater. That is, we should not, in the first place, have been considering 'that than which nothing greater can be thought.' Hence it follows that there exists both in the understanding and in reality a being greater than which nothing can be thought" (Clark 1981:168f). St Anselm's natural theological construction (*faith seeking understanding* despite Gaunilo's limited and justified objections), is the reality of us all throughout the history of different cultures of the world since homo sapiens ever came into being. As Heidegger puts it, 'No one can deny the fact that *there is something rather than nothing*' concerning our existence; "something" greater than ourselves, precisely because we find ourselves already *grounded* (*thrown-in-existence*) as human beings even before we start questioning the whence of our existence: Why are we here and what is the total purpose of this *thrown* becoming? This confirms us as *moving beings*. Plato summarises well the

¹⁸²"And this, indeed, is a very important task, particularly today, when people try to devise machines to foretell the future. Before anyone makes a prediction, he should be able to give a convincing reason why the factor to which his prediction refers is inherently predictable" (Schumacher 1974:187f).

¹⁸³Anthropologically and ontologically, we here mean a God-given (natural) progression of perfect becoming as mature human beings to be in charge of all creation in total responsibility on behalf of the Creator or as friends of God (cf. Gen 1:24-31; Rom 8:18-25; Rev 21:1-5).

idea of God within us all as a deep longing when he says that, '... life is worth living when [each human being] reaches the vision of absolute beauty. Once [such a person] has come to contemplate this, he/she will never again be seduced by the charm of lesser things' (Clark 1981:148)¹⁸⁴. The religiousness (sacredness) of all people of the world since time immemorial confirms the idea of God or the idea of the "Holy" as innate to all human beings as we said earlier; all peoples of the world without distinction possess this grace/gift (cf. Acts 17:22-28; Rom 2:18-23).

Second step (A postulated idea of God): This step follows the first one. What do we do then as we find ourselves in the world; as we start to experience it; as we come to be aware of ourselves in our thrown-in existence? Since we are created in such a way that "the one who created all this existence" must always bless our efforts¹⁸⁵, we begin to interpret possibilities of how to appease that "being greater than which nothing greater can be thought" (= God). As rational beings we start inferring or, as Feuerbach puts it, projecting our deepest longings as if coming from God (outside ourselves) in order to survive our environment/existence which at times is so hostile.

Existence as inherently hostile¹⁸⁶, urging the best in human beings to survive, is a reality captured well by Darwin's theory of survival. It is within such conditions that human beings are forced to postulate some moral laws as if coming from God so that law and order can be realized, otherwise communities and societies would be for the birds. It is here that God is postulated. It is here that we create our concept of God; it is here that communities and societies start to differ because each community or society will postulate its moral laws according to its context within their highest possible rational capabilities (culture). This confirms us as *movers* of our existence as human beings. At this stage it is still guesswork, even though we might convince ourselves otherwise, as to

¹⁸⁴From the *Symposium* 211.

¹⁸⁵As we said in the previous chapter about "natural" human groupings, each sane individual always posits himself/herself and his/her group in the positive; "God" is always protective and beneficial to his/her group but usually not to others in the same manner. *Otherwise the other group ceases to be other* (strange = *strangero* as Italians say). This is the "natural way" of conceptualizing "God".

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Ps. 90:4-10: 'Lord, you brush human beings away like waking dreams, they are like grass sprouting and flowering in the morning, withered and dry before dusk. ... Our days dwindle under your wrath, our

whether God agrees with us or not, concerning our moral laws. We still do not know here whether we are right or wrong, and at times when uncertainty engulfs one's believing, especially if one uses his/her reason authentically (questioning the famous "leap of faith" axiom), we found ourselves dumbfounded. Inauthentic authorities here will torture, silence or even kill anyone who questions "conventional moral norms of a society". And with so many conflicting reports on the "Holy" from religions, philosophers on meaning (The Vienna Circle) concluded that God-Talk is pure nonsense because it is unverifiable, "For us, something is 'real' through being incorporated into the total structure of [human] experience" (De Pater 1989:8).

Our best measuring standard here, is whether we survive, better or worse, in a hostile world of human existence. It is at this stage that "the Tower of Babel on the Morality of the Human Race" rears its ugly head concerning morality as approved by God. Other people with different contexts will come up with different ways of formulating and understanding moral laws, and instead of sorting out our differences amicably, history has shown us that this is more easily said than done. Spilling of blood (as if to appease the gods) has been the order of the day as we saw earlier. That human history has been written in blood is a fact, not fantasy, and unless we listen carefully to Immanuel Kant, more blood will be spilled to appease the morality of "my 'God'". Kant is helpful here in leading us all to what is the best possible postulation of this Moral Law as we have already seen. Hence the next stage is imperative.

Third stage (A Revealed idea of God): This step is where a meaningful God ought to reveal Himself/Herself one way or another without human assistance in such a way that we can come to recognise Him/Her. The main problem here is how do you recognise this kind of a God. As a starting point the logic and coherence of the story of that revelation (theory) would suffice. Children are the most interesting human beings in teaching us how to settle disputes. Each child thinks that "my father can beat your father!". And the first thing they do when they get at home is to go to Papa, "Papa! So and so said that his

lives are over in a breadth – our life lasts for seventy years, eighty with good health. But these years all add up to anxiety, pain and trouble – over in a trice, and then we are gone!

father can eat you alive, but I told him that you will smash his father to pieces! Is it not so Daddy?" And the best solution for the kids would be to see the two Papas going out in the middle of the road to exchange blows like that of Mike Tyson where the stronger one wins. The same is true concerning an authentic and meaningful God. Eventually such a God has to come from "beyond" at the right time (kairos moment) and come to sift chaff from wheat concerning claims of different religions. Otherwise corruption and distortion of the idea of the "Holy" will continue to destroy the dignity of the human race in its call to authentic becoming; a calling where God will be all in all and where the inherent hostilities of existence will be no more (cf. 1Cor. 15:20-34; Rev. 21:1-8). But if we continue to depend solely on our human rational powers to legislate morality; if God is not going to *confirm* certain human values and reject others as unbecoming, then only Goliaths of this world will survive and Sartre and prophets of doom will have won, "vanity of vanities. All is vanity; life is a hopeless passion". Why don't we just "eat and drink today, because tomorrow we shall be dead anyway" (cf. 1Cor.15:33). This confirms the fact that, *human reality with all its natural good, needs God to advance*; otherwise, in vain shall it labour. And for us this kind of a God is none other than that of the man from Nazareth: Jesus, who was later declared the Christ, the Messiah of the whole human race.

To date, much more must be done still to distinguish Jesus' story as unique and unsurpassable in the history of Becoming among all religions. Because of the well positioned place of "Christian countries" in the world, it is *taken for granted* in large measure that Jesus is the son of the true, meaningful God, to be obeyed and listened to by all people of the human race (What a bold claim!). But when you insist that one must be accountable in verifying his/her bold claim (at least a minimum rational requirement), then we reach an impasse. Some might start swearing against reason (philosophy) declaring "sola fide" (theology) as the only answer about Christ. Yet in their theologizing they use reason to prove those mysteries of faith, what a contradiction! To close our point here we are adamant that without the CILL (or something like it), it is difficult, if not impossible, to convince any *reasonable* person about the Jesus' story. God-Talk (theology), for moderners, will forever be a pawn of history unless "a miracle" happens; a miracle which, I hope, does not "suspend" laws of nature from one and the same God of

Jesus Christ. As we said repeatedly earlier, assenting follows the "Aha" experience where one comes to be convinced that Jesus is the unique one in bringing unsurpassable fulfilment to us as human beings.

What is central in the CILL is the personal relationship which is central to human communication. The bold claims from Christian scripture say that Jesus wants us to see God as our "Daddy" (cf. Gal. 4:6), and that we are unique and very special (cf. Lk 15:11-32). We are not created to be slaves in any form; our calling is to be God's friends. We are called somehow to authentic freedom as to be gods in order to share Life of Love (as an eternal Community) with God (cf. Jn 15). Jesus' message is that God takes care of all the people of the human race even if we are not aware of it; even if we do not yet know Him/Her in Christ; God takes care of us because He/She loves us so much since we are His/Her children (cf. Matt.5: 45). Jesus' God is the one who fulfils the CILL par excellence (cf. Jn 3). Jesus' God is "in love" with us in such a way that Hartshorne is right in saying that as human beings we *do* influence God one way or the other. In this sense process philosophy as natural theology is vindicated in that a true God, one way or another, *does change*. The dynamics of the incarnation of Jesus is the highest proof of the mysteriousness of a changing God, defying our natural, human idea or understanding of God. This ought to be so if the Love of God can be manifested to the full uniquely and unsurpassably. These divine actions from Jesus' God fulfils the CILL a hundred fold, as we shall try our best to prove later. We now look at conditions of a meaningful religion according to Charles Hartshorne.

6.3.1.1 Essential conditions of a meaningful religion

As we have seen above, there are indeed minimum requirements from any meaningful religion in order to advance and enrich the human race. We explored conditions under which a religion can be accepted or rejected, either as a fraud or a blessing, to the ontological structure of the human person. We now employ a philosophical-theological

perspective that provides *essential* conditions¹⁸⁷ of a meaningful religion, especially towards our modern world. This kind of theology is none other than Process Theology according to Charles Hartshorne.

Charles Hartshorne's theology is grounded in Process Theology. Process theology deals with God's (divine) temporality. It conceives God as *di-polar*, both *temporal* and *atemporal*. What gave birth to this kind of theology? Barrett gives the background, "One of the present concerns in the debate [about divine temporality] is the question of how God relates to the passage of time [and] what this implies for the existence of human free will and, indeed, the freedom of the physical world to unfold strictly in accordance with its divinely established laws. ... Does God know the future in all its detail?" (Barrett 2000:140f). It is within this context that Hartshorne comes into the philosophical-theological scene (Natural Theology)¹⁸⁸. Process philosophy conceives Reality both as a transcendental (abstract) aspect/pole and categorical (concrete) aspect/pole. For Charles Hartshorne Reality cannot be conceived as dichotomised, precisely because these two poles are two sides of one and the same Reality; one pole cannot exist without the other. Coming into being of Reality depends on these two sides and how they interact with each other. Therefore, "The *abstract pole* consists of that which necessarily exists regardless of the particular course of the world-process; these elements are the pre-conditions for any universe whatsoever, the 'modal aspect' of Reality. They are the stable elements of the universe, the absolute aspect of the universe. The *concrete pole* includes in its concrete actuality (hence determinateness), the particularity of beings which exist. The concrete pole is not somehow 'less' than the abstract and absolute pole, because concrete actuality necessarily has the features of the abstract pole¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁷Minimum requirements; *sine qua non* for any religion to be considered at all in its logic and coherence as of any worth as far as meaning of Life in its totality (wholeness) is concerned.

¹⁸⁸Natural Theology is meaningful when it makes a synthesis between God (creator) and human beings (creatures) within "general" revelation, but the moment it confuses "particular" revelation (revelation in Christ = *explicit* transcendence = sacredness from without) with the general one (revelation *outside* Christ = *implicit* = immanence = sacredness from within), then "hell" and profound confusion break loose. In this profound confusion at times God is mistaken to be purely human and human beings at times mistaken to be purely God (Playing God or taking the place/replacing God = Pelagianism). This is the "sin" that Liberal Theology constantly commits if one is not very careful (cf. K. Barth).

¹⁸⁹Never forget the Judeo-Christian understanding of human creation: We are made in God's Image (Gen 1:26). Which religion *to date* can beat this in our ontological selves as human beings?

... Reality (*Being/beings*) has both a concrete and an abstract aspect. Being is both the necessary pre-condition of everything whatsoever (= *Being as ground; Being as cause*), and in its actuality, Being is the concrete *de facto* maximal achieved totality (new developments in the world become a part of its concrete actuality) (Van der Veken 1993:26).

Hartshorne's process philosophy is *Natural Theology*¹⁹⁰. It revolves mainly around these two poles namely, that true God should "change" (*as opposed to classical theology where God does not change*). The other pole is that *God must be personal if He/She is going to be meaningful to human beings*. In this sense a "God" that does not fulfil the CILL can as well "go to Timbaktu"¹⁹¹. Hartshorne is emphatic that God's Relativity means the inclusion of "... all the divine absoluteness (or eternity that logical analysis shows to be conceivable without sheer contradiction" (Hartshorne 1948:ix). True God is all-inclusive and nothing exists outside "Him", and as a result of a true relativity, God is affected by our sorrows and joys. Not only does "He" affect us but we also influence "Him", one way or another, precisely because otherwise it would not be a relationship. If anything could be said to exist outside God's control, then we would not be having a true God, an all-encompassing Ultimate Reality. Then God won't be God at all. Traditional theology rightly puts it, "God is both source and sustainer of the created order" (Barrett 2000:152). When God is understood and presented as not all-encompassing in sustaining "His" created order, then this is a great absurdity, and it also means that such a "God" is surpassed. But a "true" God sustains everything all the time, and how this happens, is up to theology to sort out. The truth of the matter is that, "The entire actual world is [God's] to enjoy in an all-embracing vision. We should ascribe to him the potential possession of every possible value. Were such and such a possible value actual for anyone, it would a fortiori be actual for God, who would enjoy unsurpassable knowledge of it. ... The divine actuality is logically coextensive with all actuality and, in this sense, is actuality itself; the

¹⁹⁰Process theology "... fits well with the complementary aspects of the *being* and *becoming* of the God who is the faithful fount of love in eternity and a continuing expression of love in history. The temporal pole is seen to be an essential aspect of what it is to be personal and thence to be aware of a succession of states of mind. Thus the notion of openness in physical process is linked to the questions of divine temporality and human free will - and ultimately to the metaphysical question of the kind of universe that might be expected as the creation of a personal God of utmost love, who responds to prayer and warns through the prophets" (Barrett 2000:141-142).

¹⁹¹Such a "God" must get lost!

divine potentiality is coextensive with all possibility and is possibility itself. Any actual thing God enjoys actually; any possible thing would be his actual possession were it actual for anyone. From this 'modal coincidence' it follows that though God can increase in value, he can be surpassed by no other than himself. For any increase anywhere is a fortiori increase in him. He grows but his mode of growth is incomparably superior to all other modes. 'The perfection of God is his ideal mode of perfectibility'. If he surpasses himself, it is in an unsurpassable manner" (Hartshorne 1967:71f).

The aim of Hartshorne's theology is to present the meaningful Idea of God today in an intelligible way. Traditional theology has been found to be "passing many things in silence", thus falling short of making God meaningful to this critical, questioning age. His aim, therefore, is to enrich Traditional Theology; he is an ally to it, not a rival. As he puts it, "A new day seems to be dawning in religious thought, which for several centuries has been struggling to free itself from the intellectual chains in which Aristotelian and so-called Platonic or neo-Platonic influences have long held it confined. Some bad guesses of early secular reason, often accepted by theology as part of its own message, have been increasing subject to criticism, both theological and philosophical. From now on, the religious idea may at last have a good chance to be judged on its merits, not on those of a spurious substitute. The philosophical 'absolute', which Barth correctly terms a 'pagan' idea, can no longer pose unchallenged as the Worshipful One of religion. ... The question of rational or natural theology, I hold is open, not closed. Once this is granted, I am not much worried about the eventual outcome. For at least the 'path of inquiry' will no longer be 'barred'" (Hartshorne 1948:ixf). Hartshorne sees his philosophy not only as surrelativism but also as panentheism where the 'relative' or 'changeable' God (as excellent and concrete) retains His/Her absoluteness and immutability while at the same time undergoing and experiencing supreme relativity or surrelativity. On the divine attributes Hartshorne maintains that God's attributes must be presented in such a way that they are "... abstract types of social relationship of which the divine acts are concrete instances or relations" (Hartshorne 1948:156). He understands the divine *compassion*

... not merely, as Anselm said, something in God, other than compassion, which produces upon us the effects of compassion, but is rather an actual sympathy in God (Hartshorne 1948:157).

For Hartshorne, for God to be a meaningful God, "He" has to be *personal to be in relationships*, thus God has to be *an individual* one way or another. On this point he says,

If I have called God an 'individual', this is with the understanding that, as the unique because of the unsurpassable individual, he is also absolutely cosmic or universal in his capacities, interacting with all others, relevant to all contexts, and in this sense absolutely universal, the only strictly universal individual, or individual universal. ... 'Being' is God as enjoying creatures: the creatures he does enjoy are the actual beings, along with the enjoyment itself as the inclusive being; the creatures he might enjoy, along with the possible ways in which he might enjoy them, are the possible forms of being (Hartshorne 1967:136).

Unless we unchain ourselves from limiting Greek philosophy today concerning "who God really is", we will continue "to run in circles gaining no step" as already Kant warned. Humanity is indeed in serious trouble for us to fiddle while Rome is burning.

6.4. Is human life *increasingly* heading for horrendous explosion or not?

That our existence needs salvation (primordial wholeness) is a fact. Eschatological religious predictions (biblical ones included) of God *eventually* being the final Judge (Rom 2:2-4) in the world may be taken as illusion by some "prophets" of this progressive modern age, but such judgement misjudges facts, because chaos and unfairness are our daily experience; they are our daily bread. The question of the "ought" concerning our life cannot *forever* be left unfulfilled, hence making final "retribution or rewards" a logical necessity in our finite existence; otherwise morality would mean nothing and the ethics of "the superman" of Nietzsche would be the only conclusion, and that would be proving the fact that life is, indeed, a useless passion. In this sense the value of human life in its totality ought to be the top priority of each authentic religion, because unless human life is protected in its foundations, humanity is doomed; unless human life is protected comprehensively, the value of human life might as well be thrown to the dustheap of history. Bishop Mark Hurley's insight is striking here: "There hangs over the entire earth

the sword of Damocles, more properly called war and warfare, abetted and changed radically by the new science and the new technology. And what are the ABCs of warfare? 'A' stands for atomic, which promises fusion bombs annihilating major portions of the world's population in a twinkling; 'B' stands for biological, which promises exotic weaponry capable of setting loose a killer Andromeda strain not unlike the current concern about recombinant DNA. 'C' stands for chemical which presages noxious gases that kill on contact and fiery and pyrotechnic napalm" (Origins 1976:407).

The ABCs of warfare *do* say something very disturbing about the value of Life that is supposed to be "getting better everyday"; or what *exactly* do our academic philosophers on the value of Life mean by "Life getting better?" Who's fooling who? Violence in our homes, cities, suburbs, townships, shanty-towns, is our daily experience: abuse of women, children, and handicapped people seem to be on the increase. Abuse of alcohol, drugs, and an increase in suicide is a fact the world over. Corruption in governments and the collapsing of economies in the world point to a gloomy picture of the future. Indeed humanity seems to be dying slowly: And is this death natural (God-given) or self-imposed by the human race? The answer is yours! The steady increase in the number of serial killers globally is striking; so can we say then that Life is getting better? Experimentation with human genes in every way possible is surely on the increase. With our science and technology and know-how, millions still suffer hunger everyday. And where are our proponents of human Life in its basic form; where are our big-mouths concerning science as the "God" to solve everything; where are these proponents of science then? Abortion in "progressive" countries (with South Africa taking the lead) has been accepted and legalized. Is this authentic progress for the human race?

While experts carry on learned debates about unusual cases such as those resulting from rape or incest or those concerning the unborn with mental defects ..., over [hundreds of thousands] healthy, normal fetuses are destroyed on demand [in South Africa every year]. And thanks to amniocentesis and genetic screening, some are destroyed precisely because they are not of the opposite sex. This balancing of the convenience of the mother as weighed against the value of life, this philosophy of expediency certainly has something to say about the value of life in our country. It has brought about, at the very least, the derogation - if not the abrogation - of the Hippocratic Oath in our medical schools (Origins 1976:407).

What these proponents of abortion are inferring with their inauthentic reason and cold logic is that essentially there is not much *essential* difference between a foetus of a few weeks and an animal. Bishop Hurley has shown, therefore, how determined the enemies of the CILL are, within their *evil* reasoning and convictions. Where does this path of evil eventually lead the human race? Today we terminate the life of a foetus of a few weeks; tomorrow one of three months; and then later we terminate the life of a retarded child. Soon after, a prostitute is terminated (killed); next week a gypsy or any minority in society is eliminated; a week later it will be one of the other races, especially those who are poor and most abandoned (the orphan or a widow), and *eventually* we turn guns and bombs on ourselves, and kill our parents in the form of euthanasia. Once we *fundamentally* make a choice to be an enemy of the CILL, *evil* will *eventually* crush the very one who has made that fundamental choice of following that evil (killing) path. Once one is trapped, there is no escape, except to die a horrible, cruel death. In this sense anyone who declares himself/herself the enemy of the CILL, in fact declares himself/herself to be the devil, to be Satan in one way or another. And soon, I am sure, in the post-modern culture, abortion, reasoned infanticide, homosexuality, euthanasia, divorce, and "cheap sex"¹⁹² will become the global standard way of Life to many; and I am positive that when that becomes a tangible reality, free will and freedom would have become so inauthentic that there would then be a *strong Link* between animals and us human beings, precisely because, by then, we would have *eventually* discovered the Missing Link puzzle.

The truth of the matter is that the Missing Link theory has more to do with free will and freedom than with physical or biological attributes. We conclude by saying that unless humanity becomes wise *globally*, and agrees on basic human values, in vain will the human race labour and prosper; in vain will Life be. Our existence is engulfed by much evil, and unless there is a limit to our madness, unless there are basic grounding principles guiding humanity, in vain shall the human race exist. As we will see in the next

¹⁹²Instinctual without direction; without purpose, using the other and caring less. No more "giving a damn" about Life or about anyone.

chapter, if we ignore the wisdom and vision of the man from Nazareth, the drama of the human race will be a hopeless one indeed. It is then that the prophesy of the classical Greek drama of Aeschylus or Sophocles would be fulfilled: "First, the servant is killed; then the beloved daughter of the king is murdered; next, the beloved younger son is poisoned; then, the eldest son, it is reported, is killed in battle, followed by the suicide of the queen and, finally, the king plunging off the walls of the fortress in utter despair and agony. And the play is over because everyone is dead" (Origins 1976:408).

Our humanness, including that of Jesus of Nazareth, now and then needs assurance of support either from other human beings or from God (Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba). The easy but complex, agonizing question about the *unique* Galilean will forever plague each individual, each clan, each tribe, each community, each society, each political state, each economical class, each church, each organisation, each gay group, each criminal club; "Who do people say that I am?" (cf. Mk. 8:28). Concerning our research here, the same question is asked from a different angle, "What constitutes a human being?". Unless this question is answered satisfactorily, Pope John Paul II's solution for the human race, "Christ is the answer" (Saward 1995), will forever remain an ontological puzzle. This anthropological and ontological question is crucial to see whether human beings need a messiah from without (the revealed one) or not. While we today might regard Jesus as "the greatest personality" in the history of becoming, in his time he was not extraordinary at all (cf. Mk 6:1-3). During his activity; when his work "revealed" to be extra-ordinary, high powered authorities and learned personalities (Jesus' contemporaries), dismissed Nazareth as a hopeless town, "What good can come from Nazareth [anyway]?" (cf. Jn 1:45-46). It is correct, therefore, that any Christology must be preceded by what any theologian means when he/she says we need a saviour in our ontological selves. As pelagianism affirms, maybe a saviour-messiah theology is wishful thinking, unnecessary and a waste of energy and time; maybe such theology is the meaningless (ontological) human search of "the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind" as Freud thought (Küng 1990:45). This chapter is important in understanding the centrality of the ontology of the human

person *before any revealed religion can be assented to as a final fulfillment of the self in total freedom.*

6.4.1 Crucial steps for Christianity to heal our torn-apart world

1. The first point to be made clear here is that authentic Christian Faith is fundamentally different from natural faith which comes from natural revelation; meaning revelation coming and being sustained by the Spirit of the God as the Creator of all-that-is. Particular or Special revelation in Christ takes this natural one for granted (cf. Rom 1:19-20, 2:14-16) but supersedes it for a better life with neighbours, and understanding of who true God is (cf. Rom 3). Therefore to believe in Jesus is to leave one's natural world outlook and to take on a new one (cf. Rom 6:1-14). All churches have mistaken particular faith for the natural one; as a result, today we have given our old ways the name "Christian"; thus making blasphemy complete in misusing *Jesus' name* (Nolan 1976:3). The point here is that all people who practise the faith according to their national or cultural churches are not Christian proper. The worst is to call them baptised pagans according to Bonhoeffer. We prefer to use *theologia negativa* (negative theology) to describe the reality here.

The truth is that we lost the reality of the true Church of Christ with the coming of Constantine where authentic Faith was legalised and enforced. Now, what is sure is that what is found in churches today, as Zizioulas has rightly said, is not the true Church of Christ at all. From Rome to Lutheran and Calvinist centres, through Canterbury to America and the Third World, we do not have the Church of Christ existing *visibly*, and therefore no one has a right to claim to be an authentic Christian, and still be in these official churches. The challenge is with authentic theologians who should bring this inauthenticity to the attention of humanity. Unfortunately, for the time being, the majority of them keep quiet, knowing well that, what we have now in these *official*

churches/denominations the world over, is not the Church where one can find the Risen Lord, but it is a Church where the prophecy of Nietzsche has been fulfilled = God is dead!. Therefore salvation, if the present situation is not changed as a matter of urgency, will continue to be found outside official or institutionalised churches. Going to church in this sense is a waste of time provided that at least one prays at home. I also agree with those who say that church structures are there, not really to know Christ the Risen Lord, but as social centres where people lack meeting facilities, especially in the Third World. It must also be remembered that Third World people become Christians in droves mainly as a way of escaping poverty in all its forms. This is clear in those who become priests, brothers and nuns in the Roman catholic church. In Europe as well, the majority of people became “Christians” and leaders in church for inauthentic motives¹⁹³ (Nolan 1988:1). *Is all lost then? No; but only if repentance is pursued by all who call themselves Christians today; that is you and me, lay people, nuns, Brothers, priests, “predikante”, bishops, cardinals, popes, patriarchs etc.*

2. The doctrine concerning the expulsion of our primordial Parents from Eden must always be held in good tension with the announcement by the angel to Mary of the Messiah’s conception. Traditional theology would say that unless we hold in good tension the doctrine of the Fall (Original Sin) with that of the Annunciation, Jesus as a unique salvific gift from God will always escape humanity.

2.1 An authentic Christian believes in the reality of the spirit world, precisely because NT revelation takes for granted angels, spirits (both good and evil) and dreams as God’s revelatory spheres. This reality is also taken for granted in all other religions of the world. Our “scientific” modern culture, especially in the West, is a stranger to this kind of culture. Demythologisation method might help us to some extent, but we will have to admit that, unless God intervenes, we will never fully understand that metaphysical

¹⁹³ This is not only peculiar to Third World: the tragic Potato Famine in Ireland, Two World Wars in Europe, Russian Communism in Poland and Eastern Europe in general, Apartheid etc., saw “suddenly” the Lord being so generous choosing those who are to work in God’s vineyard. History has shown that the majority accepted the “call” mainly to survive in this hostile and cruel world and in many cases to serve and honour as well their government’s flag and their national culture (mostly unawares), but the flag and

culture of spirits and invisible powers moving the world and our lives. Instead of denying Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, “Primal Religions” etc., and the reality of their times, we should first admit that we have lost the weight of that metaphysical culture of spirits in our modern cultures of today.

Latin theologians (both Protestant and Roman) will always find it difficult to dialogue with those theologians whose worldview is governed by this metaphysical reality. I regard Orthodox theologians as being half there. Liberal theology is so endemic within the churches and among theologians that metaphysical realities are interpreted away in such a way that they are either symbolical or that they never existed. Prof. Thiering and other liberal theologians represent this unbelievable extreme liberal position well:

*Barbara Thiering, a specialist in Dead Sea Scrolls, in 1992 published a book, **Jesus The Man**, which became a best seller. It even became a TV documentary. In the book she dares to say that Jesus of Nazareth was nothing else than only the moral leader of a radical faction of Essene Priests. She is convinced that Jesus was not of virgin birth; that he was not divine in a strict sense of the word. Jesus’ true story, she says, is that he married Mary Magdalene, fathered a family, and later divorced. St Paul is said to be Jesus’ son-in-law. It is said that Jesus of Nazareth died sometime after AD 64 probably somewhere in what is France today. The whole story about his Divinity was constructed by his simple and uneducated¹⁹⁴ early followers. Others like her suggest that Jesus was born out of wedlock and that he was born out of fornication¹⁹⁵. They go all out to prove that ‘Matthew’s and Luke’s infancy narratives were about the illegitimate conception of Jesus and not his miraculous virginal conception’ (Mosoeu 1993:1f).*

Pragmatism according to David Hume, the philosophy dominating the West, is causing much havoc in the world of today in politics, economics and in the moral fibre of nations.

national culture were served and honoured nevertheless with tragic consequences for the people preached to. In fact the intended Good News became very Bad News.

¹⁹⁴ Implication here is that today, because of our highest education we should know better about God’s dealings in the world or there is nothing God can do without human beings not understanding it. This is neo-pelagianism at its highest expression.

¹⁹⁵ This should not be taken immediately as an insult or blasphemy. Scholarly research here seems to be genuinely wanting to put forward what Scriptural evidence (both canonical and non-canonical) appear to be saying.

3. Confusing natural believing in a God with revelation that comes by its own from without, will always send the Christian theology to dance in circles, gaining no meaningful rhythm attractive to anyone.

4. All churches must admit that they have sinned, and they must plan and eventually hold a forum for authentic repentance of what they have done in the name of Jesus Christ. This must be done sincerely and honestly without pointing fingers, as Zizioulas has requested. How?

4.1 Firstly, the Latin church must disclaim self-imposed superiority over the world and must be reconciled within itself first; both Protestant and Roman catholic hatred and prejudice in Christ's name must cease at once. This church must sever its umbilical cord with the capitalistic mode of worshipping money and material things.

4.2 Once authentic reconciliation is effected, reconciliation between Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Latin) churches would be easy because the Orthodox has not as many hang-ups as the Western church.

4.3 Thirdly, once authentic reconciliation has taken place between Eastern and Western as main representatives of partial truth of "who Christ really is", re-evaluation of the ecumenical Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) will have to take place. We believe that it will then become clear that maybe Bishop Nestorius was not really so wrong, and many other insights will come out, and we will come to appreciate the Arabic church and to accept Prophet Mohammed as truly the last prophet. It will be the duty of authentic Christians to dialogue with Islam (cf. 1Pet 3: 15-16) by explaining to them the amazing story of Paul of Tarsus. It is our absolute belief that the eyes of Islam will be opened and so confess that Jesus the son of Mary is really the Christ. Moslems need not wait for the Last Judgement to find this truth hidden in Jesus and his Mother. Their eyes will be opened in the same way that the angel Gabriel opened the eyes of Prophet Muhammad (cf. Qu'ran Sura: C. 31).

4.4 After this, a way will have to be found to be one with the Coptic church, and if the Ebionite church is still a reality, to also unite meaningfully in Christ with them.

5. Finally, Liberation theologians, in their manifold theologies, should always be taken seriously in the future critique of “being Church”, because they are the very ones who have set up the alarm concerning “who Christ really is”. Institutionalised religion is always in serious temptation of fossilising Faith. Christendom, which is a corruption of Christianity in many ways, contributed a lot to the "crisis of faith" today. In the same way that Karl Barth dealt a deadly blow to liberal theology, liberation theology cannot understand pious preaching in the midst of so much misery and suffering of the great majority of human beings in the world; the unbearable suffering for which Christians, especially from Europe and North America, have much more to answer. For this reason we have to ask: Are Christian theology and Christian preaching not too readily accommodating themselves to the status quo of "Western" society? The fact that Communism seems to be dead, aren't some Christians fooling themselves by thinking that Capitalism has won and therefore Christ is on the winning side? Liberation theology is in dialectical opposition to traditional theology in order to balance the reality of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Without liberation theology's emphasis, the beauty of traditional theology is doomed. The perennial problem is that traditional theology occupies itself with theoretical definitions of dogmas with much speculation on "God". Küng summarises well this crisis of arm-chair theology:

It is institutionalised religion, the Christian churches, which at least in Europe are in crisis because of fossilisation and isolation (in the case of the [Roman] Catholic church) or exhaustion and lack of profile (in the case of the Protestant church), which they have brought down on themselves (Küng 1991:45).

Liberation theologians were awoken from their dogmatic slumbers in order to redress this impasse in theology. For them theologising without praxis is a joke, and a praxis without serious theologising is blind. Hence Liberation Theology is a necessary, dialectical part of Traditional Theology where a new way of theologising and understanding God in a new language is inevitable, so that the Message of the Gospel can always be expressed in

the idiom of each age, and bear fruit regarding what it means to be truly human, what it means to be truly free, and what it means truly to be a new being in Christ.

6.4.1.1 The true nature of inauthentic Christianity

The three stages of the idea of God namely, natural, postulated and revealed, correspond to the three natures of religion according to our understanding: Polytheism, monotheism and unique monotheism. Natural religions are usually dominated by crass “fear of the Gods” in a hostile environment (e.g. animistic or primal religions). Postulated religions are usually dominated by rational appropriation of the environment in God’s name in order to control and subdue it. Philosophical (rational) religions are either mystical (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism etc.), or rational (e.g. Greek, Roman etc.), or both (e.g. Aztec), and are found here. Oscillation between the natural and the postulated is also a possibility. But all these religions in this category are polytheistic in nature. Monotheistic religions in a classical sense are only Judaism and Islam; and Christianity in its original sense is a unique monotheism because of its doctrine of the Trinity. In this sense, to be a Christian involves three conscious movements or *personal* decisions: One has to make a conscious decision to part with the values of his/her own natural culture, and embrace the Gospel values. Then one has to embrace monotheism, giving *allegiance only* to the true living God. After that, one recognizes that revelation from Jesus involves a personal unique relationship, and then one commits oneself to that by transcending classical monotheism. In the strict theological sense for authentic salvation, it can be said that unless one becomes a Jew or Moslem, one cannot become an authentic Christian. What happened with Constantinian Christianity (or State Religion) is that new recruits in many cases were literally forced to be Christians; Christianity was used to replace old natural religions: *Old self yes, but with new naming*. And since by nature we are sacred beings, no one saw much difference; and tragedy struck without much awareness. *This is our unfortunate present situation.*

Polytheism is not bad in itself when God allows it for a purpose (cf. Acts 17:23-31). It becomes evil when it is mistaken for the Gospel values (cf. Rom 1:18-32). God prepared classic monotheism so that all peoples of the human race would be mature in recognizing

the final stage of God's unique and unsurpassable self-communication in the religion started by Peter and Paul, called Christianity. All three natures of religion, therefore, have a specific purpose in our lives; God has destined us to follow that sequence for authentic salvation. The main difference is that in the polytheistic religions, the human person is at the centre; everything is moulded in His/Her image and likeness. In the monotheistic religions, God is at the centre, and everything is moulded in God's image and likeness. Authentic Christianity affirms the latter, except that Christ in God plays a determinate role in human salvation. Religion is ambiguous in enriching humanity; it can be a blessing but, historically, in most cases it has been a hindrance in the healing of all peoples of the human race:

Religion itself has always performed two important but very different functions. One, it acts as way of creating meaning for the Separate Self. It offers myths, stories, tales, narratives, rituals, and revivals; and taken together, help the separate self make sense of and endure what Shakespeare calls "the slings and eros of our outrageous fortune". This function of religion does not usually or necessarily change the level of consciousness of a person; it does not deliver radical transformation, nor does it deliver a shattering liberation from itself at all! Instead, it consoles what Merton would call "the False Self". It fortifies it; it defends the Imperial Ego. It promotes the Autonomous I; this little wretched thing I think I am. As long as the Self believes myths; performs the ritual, mouths the prayers or embraces the dogma, then the Self (fervently believed almost in all established religions), believes it is saved. Either now in the glory of being like God or with God forever in eternity. ..But religion has also served another function. And usually in a very, very small minority. Maybe this is why Jesus talked about it being the narrow road. This function of religion is that of authentic transformation in the Paschal Mystery; by exposing the nakedness of the Imperial Ego; the Autonomous I. It does not fortify the False Self but utterly shatters it; this function of religion forces the Imperial Ego to die like a grain of wheat in order to regain itself" (cf. Rohr 2001:side two).

Inauthentic Christianity followed the former and forgot the latter. Baptised pagans are those who took a shortcut in becoming Christians, and refused to be monotheistic in knowing God in Christ; and as result, today we have dead church communities where '... what is important is not commitment to God or the Gospel, but to one's group. This is what is called horizontalisation. To join, one has only to pass membership requirements: "Are you worthy to be a member or not? Are you a bona fide member? Are you worthy of the benefits of this group [denomination] or not? Who has the rights to sacraments and good burial liturgies?" What is important is what the priest wears and candle sticks on the

altar, and taking care of regular Mass attenders, and all those who pay, pray and obey. Much of the time these churches deal with dispensations, annulments, rules for communion and inter-communion, faculties and suspensions etc. Self-delusion in these churches goes like this: “Since I am a qualified member keeping all the rules, and no one calls me a heretic or a ‘sinner’, then I think I have met God or I have fallen in love with Jesus.” This kind of Church gives *a false sense of having arrived*, and protects the “Separate Self; the Autonomous I” that refuses to be transformed in the Mystery of God in Christ’ (cf. Rohr 2001:side one).

You can see how far the present *official* Christianity still is from “knowing who Jesus Christ really is”. This is what has made the uniqueness of Jesus impossible to be known and appreciated throughout the world since the days of Emperor Constantine. In short, Christians of the Constantinian Church are disguised pagans (cf. Mt 7:15-27). Of course many innocently are not aware of their unfortunate faith-state; hence the proper name for such Christians: Anonymous pagans.

Conclusion

Barrage of questions face humanity today: Is humanity becoming better/improving or not? Is Life in its core improving? Is it true that in a real, authentic moral sense the world, *to date*, is *increasingly* becoming a better place for all people of the human race? How to discover the truth concerning all these questions? If truth can come from any quarter, especially from those people or places we never expect it to come from, like the small "insignificant" village of Nazareth (cf. Jn 1:45-46), maybe humanity has to be more careful in refuting any theology without thorough scrutiny. Also Science must not be taken as the fullness of truth concerning the totality of human becoming; maybe science and technology, despite their heyday successes, have also deceived us in large measure as far as our Ultimate Calling towards the CILL is concerned, this CILL that imprints in us global consciousness. Maybe Life in its totality and in its deepest self is not improving so greatly at all, thus making some of us prophets of doom for shouting peace and love where they don't exist. We must admit that chaotic existence is also 'our daily bread'; that

modern life with all its technologies and know-how cannot fulfil the human person in his/her wholeness, precisely because the human person is greater (as a *moving mover*) than science and theology combined.

It is only when this procedure is taken that dialogue with other religions will not only be possible but desirable. In fact by then Christians will not go out to tell who Jesus really is, because everyone will be already pressing at the door because of sheer witness given. As you can see, Christianity or proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ without Judaism and Islam as an integral part of it, does not make sense and will never make a logical meaningful whole concerning salvation of the world. The answer, therefore, about the uniqueness of Jesus is not in the external forum but with the internal one.

Therefore, in the final honest¹⁹⁶ analysis, it can be said 'boldly' (cf. 1Pet 3:15-16. Gal 6:1-10) that in the face of Jesus of Nazareth the mystery and splendour of the Most High (Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba) is pleased to dwell *uniquely* and *unsurpassably*. For our salvation, Jesus' life has become for the world a sacrificial-altar where, unbelievably and fully, Human Sin in all its symptoms and gravity; in all its primordial pride, pretence a-la-Lucifer, inauthenticity and hypocrisy, is *irreversibly* exposed, shattered, and perpetually and finally broken down. Then the Son himself will accomplish his holy, unique mandate of handing everything back to the Parent of humanity (cf. 1Cor 15:28). This was the intention of God's Grand Plan of Salvation from the foundation of the world (cf. Eph1:1-14). In this *historical* Divine Plan, Jesus of Nazareth, that son of the *Virgin* Mary, will always remain *the Christ = the Messiah* (the alpha and omega) through whom God has *finally* chosen to reconcile humanity once for all to Godself:

From now onwards, then, we will not consider anyone by human standards: even if we were once familiar with Christ according to human standards, we do not know him in that way any longer. So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there to see. It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us, and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to

¹⁹⁶ Avoiding a *selective* reading of history in order to fit our 'human' conviction concerning "Truth".

be reconciled to God. For our sake he made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God (2Cor 5:16-21)

Chapter 7

General conclusion

The living God wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth. For there is only one God, and there is only one [unique and unsurpassable] Mediator between God and humanity, himself a human being, Christ Jesus, who offered himself as a ransom for all (1Tim 2:1-5)

We hope that this thesis-project of ours will help in profoundly enriching all peoples of the human race *in Jesus' name*. But not only that, we also hope that this research will help our fellow theologian Paul F. Knitter and his associates, to rest in peace and cool off when they realise that their worry of ‘... the issue of the uniqueness of Christ being “driven” by so many people, with such “heavy feet” moving in so many contrary directions ... ‘ (our chapter 2) could soon be over; and that maybe their *pluralist position* needs more self inspection and re-evaluation than presently thought. Maybe their “heavy” faith-disturbing position could *also* have been *driven* by much ambition, ignoring the many steps gained in trying to understand that mysterious “illusive” personality of Nazareth. For too long within my generation the name of Jesus has come to mean so many things, yet so little in enriching life, because it has lost much of its original *kerygmatic* enrichment. For too long many people, *in Jesus' name*, have been peeing on our heads, and in good faith, we thought it was raining! We hope that our humble contribution here will continue to vindicate Jesus as the universal Messiah, unmatched in the becoming history of the human race. In the final analysis Jesus as *the Christ* = *the awaited Messiah cannot* be understood theologically as *equal* to other saviours from other

religions. To oppose this, would be opposing the original amazing and honest story of Peter and Paul and their respective Christian communities.

This research in many respects was indeed heuristic. At the beginning of my research my promoter shared with me that, at times, a researcher starts with an obvious clear goal, but that the ending can be as surprising as the “nakedness” of our primordial parents in the Garden of Eden; far from what one initially intended. This seems to have happened with me. When I started this research I had very strong convictions concerning “my faith” and that of other religious communities. So my task was just a matter of *simply* proving “what is truth”, and *just showing that truth is on the side of “my faith”*. But a Copernican revolution seems to have taken place, and my faith is now challenged to the core. It is now clearer to me that *only God saves*, and that this true living God (as opposed to idols) does this in such a way that human thinking and calculations are totally incapable of finding it out, no matter how many honest scholars work at it (cf. 1Cor 1:17-31). It is now absolutely clear to me that authentic faith is a *unique gift* from God (cf. Rom 1:17. Eph 2:1-10), and that this faith belongs to all peoples of the human race; it is the world’s divine heritage (cf. Jn 3:16f. Rom 3:21-31) within which promises to Abraham play a crucial role; an important *unique* and *unsurpassable* foundation (cf. Gal 3:1-29). Some people like Peter and Paul might get into it ahead of time, earlier than others, but all are called as Paul revealed to Timothy (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-5), and Peter revealed the same Good News to the first Ecumenical Council in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15). By the grace of God, all religions and communities of *differing* faiths, participate *equally* in seeking Truth of what Life is all about: *What it means to be authentically free, authentically human, and above all, what it means to embrace an all-around meaningful God*. The foundation and grounding of this Truth is none other than the Ultimate Reality; the Incomprehensible Mystery, the Absolute grounding Mystery of all-that-is. This nameless One, with Many names and faces, is ontologically, and always, the silent horizon of all the deepest longings and the innermost recesses of the human heart, and human finitude in all its diversity. Indeed, this nameless One is no one else than the “Wholly Other” (of Karl Barth); that nameless One who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our unique “sister” and brother (cf. Eph 1:1-14. Mk 3:31-35). In this sense, in the final honest analysis, St

Augustine's prayer will always remain perennial to human anthropology: 'Oh God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are forever restless, until they find rest in Thee *through/in/by Christ our Lord, the only Saviour*'.

Different religious communities of humanity will create conditions of lasting peace if only all believers would be honest with the logic and coherence of their faiths. Three basic conditions should sustain and vindicate this logic and coherence in all religions: *Historical reliability, the quality of founding agent/s and the universal purpose of that "revelation"*. Once this is done as the crucial starting point in determining the weight of each religious "revelation", honest people of the human race will make the correct judgement, and serious confrontation between religions will be highly minimised, and co-existence highly maximised, in our pluralistic age of a global-village mentality and outlook. As Küng so rightly said, religions must pave the way for a better world for all by turning this religious confrontation into an opportunity of hope. Presently, confrontation and pending doom for the human race emanating from different faith convictions is a naked reality:

Confrontation between faiths cannot be shrugged off. It has to be faced, analysed and transcended. ... The real issue, then, is co-existence. How is the planet to be shared by peoples who take a different view of human origins and human destiny; and how can those differences be made fruitful, not destructive? Religions build up amongst their followers the sense of community that is necessary for human thriving, and which is not being adequately met in the modern world. But, on the other hand, the corollary is often a sense also of others who are outsiders, members of a different group. Add fundamentalism to this complex interaction of peoples and beliefs, and the results are explosive (Tablet 5 January 2002: 3).

Whether we like it or not, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are *non-negotiables* in determining the pace and the sustainability of this so much longed for peaceful co-existence. Researches, like ours, ought to help humanity to reach a broader and richer fruitful picture of what authentic freedom, being truly human, and embracing a meaningful God, are all about. Otherwise the future of the human race on this blue planet of ours will continue to hang in the balance, and it could indeed end up in a horrendous explosion.

7.1 Lamenting our traditional christian past

Where Christianity is a State religion, no one can afford to do anything else but to conform to Christian morality and civilisation as *the only* way of being human. But where the Spirit of the Risen Lord is at work, everyone with his/her life-style, culture and religion (no matter how strange) is respected to the full, yet given a chance to experience an *alternative* life-style of what it means authentically to be free, to be human, and above all, what it means *uniquely* to embrace an all-around meaningful God (cf. Phil 2:14-15). *Unique*, precisely because Christ came to fulfil the Primordial Plan of God (cf. Gen 3) by giving every human being life to the full, and to give it abundantly (cf. Mt 5:17-19). On the contrary, in a Christian State (or in a Constantinian Christianity), the core role of the Church is *policing*: bashing, torturing, maiming and even killing anyone who does not conform to national Christian norms.

Main targets here are the very “friends” of Jesus: prostitutes, fornicators, homosexuals, adulterers, masturbators, “the poor and the oppressed” if they do not obey, the untouchables, alcoholics, gluttons, the uneducated, the rabble, tramps, lunatics and “the sick” with their many faces, hobos, those regarded as “sinners” etc. As Kierkegaard rightly put it, “The Christianity preached in the State Church is an apostasy from the Christianity of the New Testament [of Peter and Paul]. It is an attempt to make a fool of God. It ceases to be a real Church of Christ. ... A State Church cannot be a true Church [because its personnel] are only government officials, bound to do what is pleasing to the government [or to the hierarchy]. The whole idea of ‘Christendom’, of making Christianity official and respectable and conventional, is criminal. It conceals from [all peoples of the human race] what Christianity really is”(Vidler 1961:208). On the other hand, in the Church of Christ led by the Spirit of the Risen Lord, each believer, who is now a new creation in Christ (cf. Rom 6), shares his/her faith with others, so that no one is in need in any way (cf. Acts 2:42-47). *Morality here is not imposed on anyone but self-imposed* (cf. Acts 5:1-6). The difference is enormous between those *already* saved in Christ and those still being called to respond *freely*. You can see how *official* Christianity

has deviated from the presence of the Risen Lord in our world of today. Official Christianity in any form is indeed criminal and unfaithful to the mandate given by the Risen Lord of inviting every nation, tribe and people under the sun to experience a unique time that has started in *the* Christ event = *the* awaited Messiah (cf. Lk 4:14-37. 6:17-49. 24:44-49). *Therefore anyone who is led by the Spirit of the Risen Lord cannot afford to be a member of such a Church* no matter how beautiful and impressive the buildings, the liturgy and the pomp, the daily Masses, vibrant preaching (at times foaming at the mouth; or making people to shed a tear here and there), and long moving prayers, or rich symbolic rituals (cf. Is. 1:10-20. Amos 5:21-24. Mt 6:1-6).

It is within this context that the pluralist *liberal* position of playing down the divinity of Christ can be understood today, yet we totally oppose its horrendous theological conclusions. Our total rejection of the pluralist position is in its premise, which in summary goes like this: “Christ is still dead; in a way he never rose from the dead. If resurrection is attributed to him at all, it can only be understood symbolically as the archetypal ontological longing of every human being. Therefore, *historically, only the Father*, the Creator of all-that-is, counts. Jesus’ importance should not be played over and above other saviours from other religions. Jesus’ divinity was constructed by his *simple* and *uneducated* early followers”. Our position, on the contrary, is clear: According to revelation, Jesus rose from the dead *physically* (cf. 1 Cor 15. see Gospels). Authentic revelation is absolutely clear and *consistent* in that Jesus is the *cornerstone* of human salvation (cf. Acts 4:10-12). God the Creator of all-that-is has planned things in such a way that *only* in him *as the Messiah* is humanity destined to experience God *uniquely* (cf. Acts 17:23-34). Of all the names in the world given to all peoples of the human race (great and small), this is the only one by which human life in all its totality and wholeness is *uniquely* and *unsurpassably* fulfilled and blessed in order to fulfill God’s Promises to Abraham (cf. Acts 4:12; 7. Jn 3:16f.).

In today’s world we seek Truth in all its wholeness concerning authentic freedom, authentic humanity and a universal meaningful God. And as we seek this Truth of what life is all about, we are slowly but surely coming to the realization that *no human being should be harmed* in pursuing all the way this noble and emerging goal in the world of

today. This is the noble goal that Hans Küng rightly calls “World Ethic”. The world is sick and tired of wars waged *in God’s name*; we are sick and tired of pain and suffering inflicted in the name of *any* God. People are sick and tired of *Jihads, Just War theories* and *Just Revolutions*. The logic and coherence of all revelation about Jesus of Nazareth is that he was *totally* faithful to the *alternate* way of human becoming, even to death on the cross. *And no religion to date, neither great nor small, in the totality of all the history of human becoming, matches this theological event in human affairs.* Jesus’ unsurpassable and unique vision for new humanity rising out from the ashes of our fallen human nature will always remain unsurpassable in enriching humanity to the full. This amazing universal wisdom of Jesus about the secrecy of a positive and successful existential living can be summarised as follows:

‘You have heard how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say to you today, pray for those who persecute you and wish you badly. In your daily lives, live in such a way that you can teach such peoples what authentic freedom and authentic humanity are all about, but above all, share with them that the true living God wishes them well and no harm; and I mean no harm! ... You have heard how it was said: You will love your neighbour and hate your enemy¹⁹⁷. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray constantly for those who hate you and wish you badly; so that you may be children of the Father/Mother of us all who is in heaven. For God causes the sun to rise on the bad as well as on the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers and sisters, friends and your extended family, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the Gentiles [philanthropists and “atheists”] do as much? You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father [and Mother] sets none to his [hers]’ (cf. Mt 5:38-48).

It is within this unique religious experience that those “simple” and “uneducated” early Jews who were waiting for the Messiah (cf. Jn 1:41), the Messiah that was prophesied to have a better and unique Plan for this world (cf. Is 11:1-9), concluded that Jesus of Nazareth was *the Awaited One* (cf. 1Jn 1:1-4). The Petrine church experienced and saw in Jesus that awaited Messiah, where Jews are vindicated in the world as the *only* true

¹⁹⁷ ‘Precisely because your *greatest enemy is yourself*. Unless each human being becomes like me and carry his/her cross everyday, the *tangible* powerful presence of the living God in this world will continue to be a slippery reality regardless of how many prayers and holy Masses and *Nagmale* you offer on daily basis’, said Jesus.

chosen people of God through whom the Messiah was primordially destined to come. The Pauline church, on the other hand, experienced and saw in Jesus the primordial and ontological archetypal Son of God; the unique role model of salvation where the Gentiles (historically) are also *irreversibly* destined to be authentically glorified. Unfortunately the Constantinian church later on and up to our own generation, due to self-interests, self-indulgences and pride a-la-Lucifer, coupled with empty worries of this world and the lure of riches (cf. Mk 4:13-20), systematically and seriously betrayed this Good News for humanity. This inauthentic Christianity unfortunately ran aground, and through a long and ugly history of self-destruction, eventually and tragically fragmented itself into Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic churches which are still *hating* each other *in Jesus' name*. *Each community is still vowing that truth is on its side concerning "who Jesus really is", and that it knows better what universal human salvation is all about.* What a tragic evolution for Constantinian Christianity since the fourth century! But we are confident that the days of this type of Christianity are numbered, and that we will make sure that it dies a natural death. Enough is enough for continuing to use Jesus' name in vain, *frightening children of the world (especially the youth), and continuing to call women and men to heroic foolishness in Jesus' name in convents and monasteries or in missionary activity.*

7.1.1 Should the classical missionary activity continue today?

The heart of the gospel is the coming of God's Kingdom through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. That is the good news that must be proclaimed to adherents of other religions. If it is not done, they will be robbed of the fullness of joy and new life in Christ (Meiring 1996:242)

To many Christians this quotation might appear correct in summarizing what the Church is all about in its missionary calling, which is said to be an integral part of Church existence. But to many people of the human race today missionary activity is annoying, disgusting, and in many respects anti-human. These attitudes of anti-Christianity emanate from three basic streams of inauthentic Christianity namely, Byzantine, papal and colonial evangelism. The Byzantine or the Imperial church was the first to betray the universal *healing* message of the Gospel by turning Jesus' Church into a persecuting

Church; indeed into the first step towards full-blown ecclesiastical timocracy. The papal evangelism later on did not improve in any way, but deteriorated even further into the inquisitorial church, with the bishop of Rome (the so-called pope) sealing it to the extent of even declaring himself *Christ on earth*. Colonial evangelism, involving both Protestant and Roman catholic churches, still degenerated further. Instead of repenting by learning from past mistakes, they continued to *universalize* the destruction of the other-me (neighbour) in Jesus' name beyond belief. And today we are still licking historical and spiritual wounds inflicted in Jesus' name by this inauthentic Christianity. Because of all these heresies and apostasy, the Gospel Message today is perceived and construed as a pure waste of time and energy for humanity; Christianity is now perceived as a disguised enemy of human authenticity. When we add the sins of Supersessionism and Hagarism to these serious betrayals of the Gospel, then the concealment of the *unique* nature of the incarnational mystery become complete, and the disfiguring of the healing face of Jesus, in large measure, today is the reality of the Christian faith. As a result, chances of humanity experiencing the healing power of Jesus' presence in the world are today made almost impossible.

The betrayal of the Good News always starts with inauthentic preaching. Inauthentic missionaries, be they of the imperial church or of the papal church or of the colonial church, have the evil knack of '... tying up heavy burdens and laying them on people's shoulders, but will never lift a finger to move them themselves. ... They have the knack of travelling over sea and land in order to make a single convert, and as soon as that person is "caught", they make him/her twice as fit for hell as they are' (cf. Mt 23:4 & 15). Our estimation today is that 90% (to be generous) of those calling themselves Christians in the world, are *baptised pagans or anonymous pagans*. Colonial evangelism is still with us today and has produced so many baptized pagans or godless Christians; and it continues to do this every Sunday, all the year round. This unfortunate evangelism assisted greatly in reducing millions of human beings in the world to lap-dog status in Jesus' name. In *deifying mighty colonialists on their thrones* (thus opposing the Marian prayer of Lk 1:52f), colonial missionary activity, *to date*, has declared any missionary person *persona non grata* in the process of making this world a better place for all

peoples of the human race to co-exist. *In general, inauthentic missionary activity has forced the uniqueness of Jesus “to be driven with heavy feet” with many theologians and honest Christians moving in all directions but apparently making no meaningful progress.* Therefore any missionary activity in any country or culture will indeed need a “serious” miracle to be accepted. If it is allowed at all, it will mainly be to use the available resources offered by missionaries, or using the church for something else, and as soon as that is achieved, missionary personnel will be told to pack up and go. Some missionaries (both local and foreign) might be killed or persecuted when “someone who did not know Joseph” takes over. With their myopic official and timocratic national consciences, Byzantine, papal, and colonial Christianity reduced, twisted and turned for the millionth time the healing power of the Gospel of the Risen Lord to the extent where today it has come *to mean everything, anything and nothing.* The Gospel, that perennial Spiritual Medicine of the world, today has degenerated to the level of relativism and dogmatism in churches; with some churches lying in between, neither cold nor hot (cf. Rev 3:16). They just go with the flow: “Let us eat, and drink, for tomorrow we shall be dead anyway [and what the hell?]” (cf. 1Cor 15:33). The result is that now we have a Winkensteinian Christianity a-la-carte: ‘A religion with a God who is a very *nice* Chap. A God without wrath who brings human beings without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross’ (cf. Vidler 1961: 213). In 1956 theologian Thomas Merton dropped a bombshell concerning signs of a godless faith. He said this during the time when the Church thought it had got it all together:

The great tragic of our age, is the fact that (if one dares to say it) there are so many godless Christians. Christians, that is, whose religion is a matter of pure conformity and expediency. Their “faith” is little more than a permanent evasion of reality; a compromise with their life, in order to avoid admitting the uncomfortable truth that they no longer have any real need for God or any real vital love for God. They conform to the outward conduct of others just like themselves, and they call this the Church. And these “believers” cling together offering one another an apparent justification for their lives that are essentially the same as their materialistic neighbors whose horizons are purely those of the world and its transient values (Rohr 2001:side one)

In his talk entitled, *Authentic Religion: Membership or Transformation*, Fr Rohr correctly defines authentic Christian living as an existential commitment rather than mere passion

of reciting dogmatic formulations or confessions; these have to be made alive and meaningful in the present moment of our human existence for all peoples of the human race to see and *hopefully*, by the grace of God, to respond when they experience concretely “next door” how the CILL is lived to the full. Today what counts for many Christians is expediency, and a passion to belong to *any* church or group as long as I am allowed to be with people who will support my “faith” and my view of life. In such Christian communities what is important about Jesus is not the content of what is said about him but, *who* says it: “Are you with us or not? Are you against our denominational dogma or not? If not get out of our church and leave us alone. *Anathema sit!*” Such Christians would sooner have your head on a platter rather than embrace everyone in Christ. On the other hand, authentic faith in Christ rejects parrot-like existence; this is why Pietism emphasised authentic, existential commitment and *rejected dry, inauthentic and unbecoming orthodoxy* of the time when theological speculation of Scholasticism on Christ became an end in itself. *Authentic faith* opposes “... dry orthodoxy where Christian faith is reduced to right belief (dogma), thus making assent to theological doctrines the centre of Christian life” (Maimela 1990:3). The Second Vatican Council carried forward this attack on “unhealing” speculative theology. This Council’s main teaching “... on revelation was concerned with overcoming neo-scholastic intellectualism, for which revelation chiefly meant a store of mysterious supernatural teachings, which automatically reduces faith very much to an acceptance of these supernatural insights. As a corrective, the Council desired to express again the character of revelation as a true dialogue which touches [the human person in his/her] totality; addressing [him/her] as a partner and giving [him/her his/her] true nature for the first time” (Hillman 1989:82).

The quotation from Meiring above talks about Good News for the world, but where is this Good News? Because around us we “behold terror and hatred” *in Jesus’ name*. Peoples of the human race are waiting and are looking for peace and *healing*, but behold we see terror (from missionary activity). Today when we look at the world, we behold those wounded and killed by missionaries’ colonial spiritual swords. And when we go into cities around the world, we see those tortured with hunger and degradation beyond belief; while missionaries in great number in Jesus’ name are roaming the world at their

wits' end, announcing peace when there is no peace; announcing joy where it is nowhere to be found, and announcing new life in Christ when the opposite is true (cf. Jer 14:17-19). "Good News"? Go away! And as secular prophet Bertrand Russell once put it, 'around us, behold Bad News brought by the Church'¹⁹⁸. In the quotation above, the author goes on to say that if missionary activity does not take place, "people of other faiths will be robbed of the fullness of joy and new life in Christ". But today Christian communities show neither *joy* nor *new life* in Christ. If you do not believe us, go to Sunday services. Note everything said and done there, and evaluate it according to Küng's World Ethic namely, the CILL. You are going to be shocked to realise (maybe for the first time)¹⁹⁹ how much humanity *is still* being denied the chance of experiencing *abundantly* the power of God in Jesus' unique and amazing story. Some churches, realizing that they are cornered, are now telling us that this *new life* in Christ is "mystical"; that only the "eye of faith" sees it. I am sure that every time they hear this, Peter and Paul "turn in their graves", because for them new life in Christ is not a matter of big talk and oratory (cf. 1Cor 2), but a tangible powerful compassionate love *in the here and now* (even as you are reading this thesis). Life in Christ has nothing to do with funereal spirituality; where the main preoccupation is preparing people to go to the next world while seriously neglecting the transformation of this world in Jesus' name (Jn 3:16f; 13-17).

For us, until the internal forum gets its house in order as cautioned by theologian Zizioulas, all peoples of goodwill in this world, those *genuinely* seeking Truth, must resist any Christian missionary activity with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their strength. Unless this is done, *the unique name of Jesus in this millennium and*

¹⁹⁸ Bertrand Russell in his famous book, *Why I Am Not A Christian*.

¹⁹⁹ The well known Prof of Church History, Prof. Philip Denis OP, of the University of Natal (in his faith witness) gives us a wake-up call, and challenges us all who claim to be followers of Christ, especially missionaries from Europe. As a Belgian who grew up and was educated in Europe, he shared in a meeting how it was a great shock to him one day to realise that he could not see much wrong with colonialism, precisely because he was benefiting from the system. As he put it, 'I grew up taking everything for granted as God's will; as Christ's will'. Eventually he made up his mind and joined the Dominican Order as a lay Brother and later came to be based in South Africa as a way of distancing himself from that European centre. He is now married to the periphery of that centre, to the degree of having adopted a few children (orphans) from traditionally disadvantaged classes among whom we find those who are HIV positive. It is people like this who call us to wake up from our faith dogmatic slumbers, and force us to remember the dangerous memory of Jesus concerning authentic compassionate love.

beyond will continue to justify crimes, and to frighten children. It will continue to inspire men and women with well-intending-vocations to heroic foolishness and theological stupidity. By resisting at all costs this type of unbecoming missionary activity, *the human race will not be robbed of anything given in Christ*, but, in fact, will protect that little bit of dignity which, by God's grace, is still left in them and in their cultures. By deviating far away from Peter's and Paul's understanding of "who Christ really is", other models of the Church disqualified themselves from the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the serious challenge today is that we should not be too worried about other faith communities by calling them *anonymous Christians* or whatever; but that we should always remember that charity starts at home (cf. Mt 7:1-5). In fact, we should be more worried about the fact that, maybe like the official Judaism (cf. Rom 9-11), God has *abandoned* this present inauthentic Church, this inauthentic Christianity namely, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic communities *in their officiality*. Maybe we should be more worried about the fact that Christians today, *in their officiality*, are proper *anonymous pagans* (baptised pagans). For us, this inauthentic Christianity (in its three traditions) is back to square one with *official* Judaism, *abandoned by God but not rejected*. Only authentic repentance a-la-Kubler-Ross and a-la-John the Baptist will again unleash fruits of the Holy Spirit in abundance, as at Pentecost, and at other times, during baptism, in the churches led by Peter and Paul (cf. Acts 10:44-48. Gal 5:22-26. 1Cor 13:4-7). Those fruits of the Holy Spirit, as the eternal gift to *all* peoples of the human race as promised to Abraham, the model of faith in God (cf. Rom 4:18-25), will once more be a tangible reality in the churches. After all, according to Paul and Peter, only *authentic* faith in Christ guarantees salvation (cf. Rom 5:1-11).

It must be clear that being a staunch/born Orthodox, Protestant or Catholic has little to do with knowing the living God in Christ. Otherwise how do you interpret salvation of Mr Cornelius, *the pagan*, and his family? (cf. Acts 10:1-48). The church or the denomination one belongs to or the ritual baptism one undergoes does not guarantee salvation even if one's name is written in the baptismal register. Neither is eternal salvation guaranteed by the Holy Magisterium ("the referral center of salvation for the Roman catholics"), or the Holy Scripture ("the referral center of salvation for the Protestants") or the Holy

Patristics (“the referral center of salvation for the Orthodox”); less so if Christ, as *one body*, is tragically fragmented into factions (cf. 1Cor 1:10-16), where *it is impossible to eat from the same eucharistic table* as brothers and sisters in the Risen Lord, who has abolished all hatreds and divisions by his death on the cross and by his glorious resurrection (cf. Eph 1:1-23. 2:11-22). Salvation is a pure gift from God to every human being who responds positively to the calling of Christ (cf. Rom 1:17). *The Spirit of the risen Lord blows where it wills*. Even if you can combine these three traditions of Christianity together and say: “There is no salvation outside the Holy Scripture, the Holy Patristics/Church Fathers and the Holy Magisterium”, salvation won’t be found there precisely because these three are human centered realities despite their theological self-justifications. For us they are historically corrupt and highly selective in order to justify one’s dogmatic interests. For us *Only God Saves*, and anyone who fulfills Mat 5. 1Cor 13. Gal 5 is already the child of heaven and the *unique* citizen of this world. And only three historical persons are crucial in bringing about this salvation by God’s Will namely, Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael. *In other words, only Judaism, Islam and the Petrine and Pauline Christianity are reliable to determine this salvation*. All other religions of the world, including Christendom (with its many faces) *are totally unreliable*. We emphasize again and again that Christendom here includes present established churches of Orthodox, Protestant and Roman catholic communities. And unless these communities repent genuinely a-la-Kubler-Ross and then a-la-John the Baptist, that divine Spark of the Holy Spirit which was mysteriously promised to Abraham, *will continue its absence* in their churches, in their liturgies, and in their prayers. *They will continue to shout in vain*, “The Holy Sprit is with us” or “we invoked the Holy Spirit and we were/are moved” etc. Confusing the dynamics of the Sprit of God given through/in/by the awaited Messiah with the Sprit of God before the coming of the Messiah or *Christos*, is at the heart of Constantinian Christianity in all its forms. What then is the way forward; how can the understanding of Peter and Paul concerning the *historical* authentic universal salvation of the world in Christ Jesus be recaptured?

7.2 Serious challenges to the internal forum

We have shown that Jesus' uniqueness and unsurpassability does not so much lie with the external forum, but squarely with those who call themselves Christians. The ball is in the court of those shouting on every street corner: "Jesus is the answer!" On the contrary, our experience is that, within the churches, there is too much inauthenticity and spiritual corruption. Among theologians, people who are supposed to lead the way, there is also so much inauthenticity and dishonesty. What seems to be a priority is commercial gain in publishing books and articles; or the prestige that one gains either in one's denominational church, or from among colleagues in a relevant University faculty. What I like most about Moslem brothers and sisters is that they are united in interpreting the core Message of Allah towards how this world ought to be saved, and they do not want to be patted on the shoulder for this. They stand for the logic and coherence of their revealed faith with their mind, their will and their heart; and they are not apologetic at all about their zeal "for Allah". Authentic followers of Jesus must also be "bold" in proclaiming "who Jesus really is" (cf. Gal. 1:6-10. 1Pet 3:15f). If one is not prepared to be *bold* because Jesus is now said to be a mere human person, extraordinary world figure, yes, but not really unique above other religious figures in the history of the human race, why can't one just cease to be a christian, and then go elsewhere, instead of systematically continuing to contradict the convincing and overwhelming testimony that is at the heart of the logic and coherence of early Christian witness about "who Christ really is"? (cf. 1Cor 15.1-28). The following theological positions on salvation in Christ can only be reconciled if the Petrine and the Pauline kerygmatic preaching is taken seriously.

7.2.1 Reconciling classical theological positions on universal salvation

Basically there are three schools that cause theological pandemonium concerning our salvation. In the first school we find *exclusivist* Christians who claim that the true living God loves everyone, except that some chosen-few in Christ are loved more than other peoples of the human race; and that if these "pagans" at heart do not stop worshipping the Devil, theirs is the kingdom of eternal hell-fire. These chosen-few, of course, always include the preacher (and usually with his/her own people or friends). The temptation in

this school is to emphasise the divinity of Christ at the expense of his humanity, and “playing God” is not an unusual occurrence in this school. In the second school we find *inclusivist* Christians who claim that this same God loves everyone, except those of the human race who are not *yet* baptised; nevertheless they are still loved and accepted by God in Christ, though *anonymously*, i.e. *without being consciously aware of it*, provided they follow their conscience in Thomas More fashion, and live uprightly in their daily lives. Christians here are *cleverly* declared Big Brothers and Big Sisters over communities of other faiths; Christians are here presented as the *know-it-all* about God’s immanent nature. The temptation in this school is to “play a hide-and-seek theological game” about whether Jesus Christ is exclusively “special” concerning human salvation, or not. As a result of this hesitancy, the universal significance of Jesus in this school hangs in the balance; it is presented in the language that is neither cold nor hot; neither there nor here. In the third school we find *pluralist* Christians who are so altruistic in accommodating everyone in God’s Eternal Plan of salvation *at all cost*. This school claims that the true living God loves everyone *equally*, precisely because God is a loving, compassionate Creator; He/She is Father and Mother of all peoples of the human race. Every person, great and small, is made in the image and likeness of this God. In this sense, Jesus Christ should be understood within space and time rather than within eternal exclusive categories of salvation. The true living God, in His/Her mysterious ways, will surely save all people of goodwill. All those who *sincerely* “thirst for and do the Good” in this life by *honestly* fulfilling their daily religious obligations will be saved *anyway*. Therefore Jesus Christ should be counted among “other saviours” of humanity, among whom *he is an equal player in the economy of salvation*. This school is readily prepared to emphasise the humanity of Christ at the expense of his divinity. In its extreme theological conviction, this school does not hesitate to regard the doctrine of the Trinity as a futile exercise of trying to square up a circle; an annoying useless exercise born of theological intellectual mischief, having very little to do with the enrichment of all peoples of the human race. For this school, only God the Father as a Creator counts for our salvation. While the first two schools give enough headaches, this one is the most challenging concerning “who Christ really is”. You can be sure that St Peter and St Paul

are turning for the hundredth times *in their graves* about this theological position that is so unsettling and so painfully disturbing.

7.2.2 Pauline theology: perennial referral locus classicus

Paul cannot be bypassed in anyway in “reading the mind of *the* Christ”; he will always remain our perennial referral locus classicus how to understand the dynamics of human salvation, precisely because Jesus himself decided so (cf. Acts 9:6). Being everything to everyone in Christ is the central theme of Paul. Paul as a new creature in Christ was “possessed” by that new recreating Spark of Life = The Holy Spirit. When one is with people of other religions, faithfully following their ways without the fault of their own, one must be a pluralist (cf. Acts 17:16-34). When one is with people who heard the Word but still refuse to assent, one must hope for them and pray for them that one day God will open their hearts to the mystery hidden in Christ Jesus. Therefore one must be an inclusivist (cf. Rom 9-11). When one is dealing with authentic Christians; those who ought to be “the salt and light of this world” (Mt 5:13-16), those who say they have come to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and Saviour of all peoples of the human race, one must be an exclusivist (cf. Gal 1:6-10).

Simply put, we must continue to proclaim the risen Lord whose Spirit is reconciling all-that-is to the glory of God the Father until the appointed time (cf. 1Cor 15:1-28), in order to restore the lost ontological harmony (cf. Genesis 3). In this sense, the Salvific Plan in Christ is multifaceted, as well as being *pluralistic*, *inclusivist* and *exclusivist*. *Pluralist* because in the Abrahamic *First Covenant* God the Creator has blessed everyone; God is the Father and Parent of all peoples of the human race. *Exclusivist* because in the *First Fulfillment* of those promises, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the same God has offered a *conscious voluntary individual response* in order to enable everyone to reach that goal of salvation; and a *free unforced individual response in faith* is a must here. *Inclusivist* because the vision offered by *the* Christ (*the* Messiah) is unsurpassable in reaching this glorified ontological maturity of every human person as captured in the CILL; and the CILL is at the heart of our ontological selves as human beings made in the image and likeness of God. In this sense, those who are not yet aware of this offer of God

in Christ = the awaited Messiah, can be called “‘Christians’ still to be” (*anonymous christians*); they are therefore perceived by *explicit* authentic Christians to be unawares = implicitly “Christians” in anticipation. As some scholars have said, maybe these three positions are artificially contrasted. Since in every heretic there is always an element of truth, our position is that we should first concentrate on those positive elements in order to build a common universal foundation concerning all peoples of the human race in their honest search for the Holy. Therefore, within the internal forum, this artificiality is overcome when the wholeness of human salvation in its totality is looked at and understood within the unique Call of Abraham and those unique Promises to him by the Creator God. Any Christian theology on salvation that passes over Abraham as the father of our faith, will eventually fail to see how Jesus is said to be unique and unsurpassable in the becoming history of the human race.

7.3 Serious challenges to the external forum

Judaism: Judaism can never be replaced in any form because Jews played a crucial role in producing the Messiah whom Christians claim to be the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. The Pauline church was clear on this point: “They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children [and no one else], the glory was theirs and the covenants; to them were given the Law and the worship of God and the promises. To them belong the fathers and out of them, so far as physical descent is concerned, came Christ who is above all, God, blessed forever. Amen!” (Rom 9:1-5).

It is a terrible mistake that the sin of *Supersessionism* ever happened in the first place. On the other hand, Jews should be aware that the dynamics of the CILL will always haunt them; their “chosenness” today cannot go unchallenged. On the other hand, we are aware that the Holocaust was the fruits of Christianity-gone-mad; it was the culmination of a long traveled road by inauthentic Constantinian Christianity since the fourth century. Our fervent prayer is that, unless the dangerous memory of Peter and Paul is recaptured, inauthenticity *in Jesus’ name* will thrive and continue to wreck havoc among all peoples of the human race, especially Jewish communities, causing more holocausts *in Jesus’*

name. Today we must always remember that Mary was a Jew; Jesus' disciples were Jews; and that Jesus himself was a Jew through and through; and that *authentic* Jews are his brothers and sisters "in the flesh". But we are confident that, as Christian authenticity gathers speed, Judaism will come to realise (maybe for the first time and after a long time), by the grace of God, "who Jesus really is": That he is truly that awaited Messiah for the universal salvation of the world testified by all prophets in the First Covenant. In this regard we implore Jewish communities around the world to seriously consider Paul as instrument par excellence in the dynamics of human salvation; they should no longer regard him as an enemy of Judaism.

Islam: We regard Islam as Judaism-in-emergence. When Judaism was weak and reduced to nothingness by inauthentic Christianity, Yahweh raised up Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) to stamp out idolatry in the Byzantine Christianity and to remind humanity about the Promises made to Abraham through Ishmael and Isaac. Today we are witnesses to the fact that classical Judaism, through the sin of Supersessionism, has been "swallowed up" in great bulk and rendered ineffective by Christendom; thus making this once powerful religion in the world practically meek and insignificant in influencing the world for the better. Therefore, Islam is there by the will of Yahweh (Allah) to control inauthentic Christianity, and it will continue to be there as long as inauthentic Christianity persists in any form. But Moslems must be careful that in their divine calling, they guard themselves against inauthenticity of human becoming where the dynamics of the CILL are ignored in the extreme, against Allah's decree. God has *not yet* abandoned Islam, but arbitrariness and gross violation of the CILL will surely change matters. But if their mission is constantly evaluated in the light of the CILL, their mission will end up positively. It is our conviction that, when Islam learns more about the Pauline church including the apostle himself, it will find for itself the real story of "who Jesus of Nazareth really is"; and Moslems the world over will fall in love with that Jesus of Nazareth.

Other religions of the world: We understand religions of humanity as having a triple basic theological consciousness: polytheistic (all other religions), monotheistic (Judaism and Islam), and uniquely monotheistic (Christianity). These other religions of the world,

great and small, with polytheistic consciousness²⁰⁰ are also within God's Plan of Salvation as well. Their role must be understood within the divine purpose of the calling of Abram and his family out of *Ur* (somewhere in today's Iraq) where they had been polytheistic (worshipping the sun God). If the Gospel Message = unique monotheism is lived to the full, believers in these religions will, by the grace of God, also fall in love with Jesus' vision of Life; precisely because, as we have shown, Jesus is the unsurpassable key master of the CILL.

7.4 The final word

The glorification of the intellect in classical Greek was prepared by the living God in the same way that the same God prepared Israel to teach the world what acceptable monotheism is all about. The understanding of human salvation as *a united tripled dynamic movement* (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) of the Divine Finger in history, situates all religions of the world and paves the way for mature self-understanding of all religions, and would facilitate a fruitful interreligious dialogue today. The *unique monotheism* brought by Jesus will then have a different impact to all peoples in the becoming history of the human race. It is within this amazing consciousness that Paul makes sense when he says that when anyone embraces Christ freely, that person becomes a new creature in order to become an *alternate* life-style in this world that needs so much renewal. This new, unique consciousness *always* breaks all walls of hatred and prejudice in any society (cf. Eph 2:11-22), precisely because in this new life in Christ there is no more Jew, Moslem, Gentile, male, female, the educated and the uneducated, rich and poor, black and white etc. (cf. Gal 3:28-29). In Christ all peoples of the human race are already blessed. Of course without understanding well the dynamics of the CILL, it will be very difficult to appreciate what the Petrine and the Pauline Church was all about.

We hope that our theological contribution here is clear and fair to all religious communities of the world. If credit has to be given where it is due, then at the heart of the

²⁰⁰ By this we mean religions like African religions, former Greek and Roman traditional religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism etc. Only Judaism and Islam are monotheistic religions in the proper theological sense, and Christianity is a *unique* monotheistic religion because of its doctrine of the Trinity.

logic and coherence of *authentic* Christian revelation we have the following. *To date*, it can be affirmed without doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is the unsurpassable cornerstone of what it means to be authentically free, and what it means to be authentically human; and above all, it can be affirmed without doubt, that Jesus is the unique cornerstone showing humanity what it means to embrace an all-round meaningful God. Jesus' functional activity (life, ministry and death) points to him as much more than a mere human being like you and me²⁰¹; it points at him as the eschatological presence of God *already* operative in human affairs in a very unparalleled manner in the history of the human race (cf. Heb 8:1-13). By the resurrection, God confirmed him as the only *unsurpassable* Mediator. Therefore functional christology (soteriology) and ontological christology (glorified Christ) must always be held in a good balanced dialectical tension lest the mystery of God in Christ be robbed of its medicinal and healing power in the world of today; the world that is crying out to the living God (Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba) for authentic salvation and for tangible unique healing. Indeed this is the same old longed-for salvation promised by this God of Abraham who wants everyone to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the Truth (cf. 1Tim 2:1-5).

It is within this historical reality that Jesus is understood as everything to all people; a friend, brother and "sister" of all peoples of the human race, both great and small. His farewell speech to his disciples is so amazing:

If you love every human being under the sun as you love yourself, you will be my real friends indeed. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved and lived with you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his/her life for his/her friends. You are my friends, only if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his/her master's business. But when the Spirit of Truth

²⁰¹ This is why the Scripture is consistent and unmistakable in stating: 'He was like us in everything *save sin*'. "Save sin," meaning that Jesus pleased God all the way without faltering like the rest of humankind. All of us, on the other hand, as human beings have sinned (Rom 3:9-20); meaning that, as human beings, we are ontologically "not put right with God" *naturally* till we accept to be corrected in Christ, one way or another (cf. Rom 3:21-26).

comes, whom the Father will send in my name, you will be taught everything and you will be reminded of everything I said to you. But I repeat: Love one another just as I have loved you. It is by your love for one another, when you love all peoples of the human race, that everyone will recognise you as my disciples. This is why when you celebrate the eschatological meal of the New Jerusalem [The Eucharist], "Do this in memory of me" (cf. Jn 13:31-35 & 14:24-31. 1Cor 11:17-34).

This dangerous memory of Jesus is the most radicalized new way of human becoming. Anyone touched by the authentic Spirit of the Risen Lord cannot help not to fall in love with all peoples of the human race (cf. Mt 5). We have seen how systematically Christian communities who "came in through the back door" failed to live up to this standard of the New Way of how this world can be saved. Yet, once this Spirit of the Risen Lord touches you, it never leaves without an indelible mark, no matter how little the touch. Pelikan summarises well the portrayals, attributes and impact of Jesus' unique vision of Life in the last two millenniums as visualized by different cultures, communities and individuals, and as rising from the deep recesses of the human heart:

The Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The Rabbi. The Turning Point of History. The Light of the Gentiles. The King of Kings. The Cosmic Christ. The Son of Man. The True Image. Christ Crucified. The Monk Who Rules the World. The Bridegroom of the Soul. The Divine and Human Model. The Universal Man. The Mirror of the Eternal. The Prince of Peace. The Teacher of Common Sense. The Poet of the Spirit. The Liberator. The Man Who Belongs to the World (Pelikan 1985:vii-ix).

Within the African context we could add: *Proto-Ancestor. Unsurpassable Mediator and Sustainer of all Cultures. The Healer par excellence. Unique Sangoma and Guru, etc.*

Therefore, all *genuine* discussions on the Christian Faith start and end with Jesus the man from Nazareth; Jesus who later became to be proclaimed *Jesus the Messiah* = the Saviour (*Christos*). Jesus who belongs to all ages, the alpha and the omega (cf. Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), indeed "Jesus yesterday, today and tomorrow" as far as the *grounding* of the future of the human race is concerned (cf. Heb 13:8). Meiring captures well the centrality and foundationality of Jesus of Nazareth as unsurpassable in the *becoming history* of the human race as far as the *logic* and *coherence* of Christianity is concerned:

The deeds and doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth form the heart of Christianity. For all Christians he is the Messiah, the son of God who became human and, through his death on a cross, reconciled God and humankind (cf. Phil 2:5-11). His death and resurrection from the dead are therefore the focal point of all Christian confessions [and all authentic human longing and becoming] (Meiring 1996:128).

In this sense, this fundamental Christian belief or creed, though old, always remains new in every age and context (cf. Schillebeeckx 1980-1:125). Every authentic Christian, therefore, ought to interpret and understand the Christian Creed and “who Jesus really is” in such a way that, authentic anthropology in its honest searching for authentic freedom, authentic humanity, and above all a meaningful all-around God, cannot afford *to bypass in anyway* Jesus’ vision of Life (The Gospel); otherwise hell will always break loose (cf. Mk 3:28. Rom 1- 2: Gal 5:16-21).

We have done our best to face, to analyse and to transcend faith confrontations that are still maiming precious Human Life in God’s name, especially within Abrahamic religions. We have shown why Jesus’ story can be said to be unique in every way. For us Jesus of Nazareth is the universal Saviour of the world. Whoever is going to ignore Jesus’ vision of Life in its core (the CILL), will be committing ontological spiritual suicide (cf. Mk 3:28). Nothing will change this until Jesus himself returns everything as was mandated by God the Creator, so that God should be all in all (cf. 1Cor 15:28). The Son has to do this because in the final analysis there is one Lord of human history (cf. Acts 17:24-27); there is one unsurpassable baptism for authentic salvation, and one faith in this one God, who is the Father and Mother of us all. It is our fervent prayer that one day all peoples of the human race will come to realise that the God of Jesus of Nazareth is, above all, the most unconditionally loving God who is the eschatological future and foundation of all our deep ontological hopes and longings (cf. Rev 21:1-8). Only in this living God do all of us ‘live, move, and exist’ (cf. Acts 17:28). It is our unwavering hope, therefore, that one day all humanity will put its differences and self-interests aside and repent accordingly by responding positively to that “wake up call” of Christ by loving that One God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, but above all by loving each other as we love ourselves. When this happens, a new heart and new spirit will be a reality in our midst, by the grace of God, and we will then be able to embrace each other

as brothers and sisters created in the image of that God; and then in unison we will then be able to pray together for the coming of God's Kingdom concerning authentic humanity; we will then take the unique meaning of the "Our Father Prayer" (cf. Lk 11:1-4) to deeper existential consciousness of that "new heaven and new earth" (cf. Rev 21:1) through the following prayers:

Lord of all history, give us the serenity to accept our fallen human nature as you have willed it; courage to change it according to Christ's vision where possible; and the wisdom to know the difference.

God and Parent of all peoples of the human race, we, who were gloriously made in your image, pray for lasting peace, first among ourselves as Christians, and then among your other children, both great and small. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is fighting, let us sow peace; and where there is dishonesty in proclaiming your Word, let us preach authenticity. Make us the instruments of your faith in this wavering world; instruments of your hope in this suspicious and untrusting world; and, above all, make us the instruments of your unconditional love in this world of God-of-gaps, of oppression, and of untold suffering and injustice; indeed a world constructed by greed and hardness of heart. God almighty, make us to overcome evil with good in Jesus' name.

Give us grace to be forever apostles of the CILL as we stand as petitioners of our own existence before you, the Only Eternal Compassionate Merciful Judge.

God the Creator of all-that-is, our hearts will forever remain restless, till in you, the Only Great One with Many Names/Faces, they find their Eternal Home. You are the Ineffable

Mystery of our being: Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba. Only in you do all peoples of the human race move, exist and reach their authentic maturity; through Christ your unique and unsurpassable Mediator in the history of human becoming. Amen!

Prayers for me

What we have said here hopefully will be a wake-up call to Christians of goodwill; but we are also aware that some “Christians” will come out in full force from all corners, foaming at the mouth and, like Herodias of old, will demand to see my head on a platter. I am aware of the strong possibility of the latter, especially within my denomination, the Roman catholic community. Yet we should stay focussed; and I am confident that God will send many prophets²⁰² to walk with me humbly, justly and bravely in order to vindicate the revealed, unique universal nature of Jesus of Nazareth, that *historical* first born son of the *Virgin* Mary. Our immense hope, that we will eventually succeed, is fuelled by the fact that the Almighty Allah, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has already assured Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), as with former prophets, that in every situation, no matter how hopeless, this living God will continue to send prophets to vindicate his/her universal Plan of salvation. Therefore we take heart in this faithful and assuring promise of God and we are determined to firmly stay put in our theological convictions in this risky project of ours concerning the mysterious dynamics of human salvation. And we do not claim to have exhausted the mystery of God in this regard. Surely more surprises await us in the future, precisely because the Sprit of the living God “blows where it wills”.

²⁰² Especially from the *secular* world and from those labelled *heretics* and *sinners* by officiality.

In the meantime (even as you read this research), there is no doubt that the name of Jesus is considered by most people today as *meaning anything, everything and nothing*. Constantinian Christianity in its many forms has betrayed and corrupted the Gospel Message beyond belief. It has done extensive damage in the world. *But* we too must be on our guard lest we fall again into the same trap of using God's name in vain for all kinds of hidden selfish and greedy agendas against "our neighbor" (cf. Mt 5. 1Cor 13). We must therefore rely on the mercy of God in Christ who is *the only* awaited Messiah by God's eternal decree. We must always be aware that as creatures, we stand empty-handed as petitioners of our own existence before The Ultimate Reality: Om/Qamata//Yahweh/Allah//Abba. We must not lose sight that our deep spiritual nostalgia as human beings to be at home eternally with our God is already apocalyptically fired by the Good News, by the perennial truth that this true loving God *in Christ* wants everyone to "come back home" (cf. Lk 15:11-32). From time immemorial, even up to this day, this same immensely compassionate God had been wishing and longing for all peoples of the human race, great and small, to be saved (cf. 1Tim 2:1-7. Jn 3:16f).

As I said earlier, this work was truly heuristic; it took me where I never thought I would land. The main purpose of this work is not to condemn or judge anyone (God self will do that); the aim here is to recapture the healing face of Jesus. Like in the parable of the Sower why people become Christians, only God knows, and is none of my business. Following *theologia negativa*, maybe I can say that I don't really know when one is really a Christian or what really makes one a true Christian, but definitely I know *when one is not*. When no *healing* takes place in the presence of the preacher, despite long symbolic liturgies, daily Masses, and vibrant preaching, then I definitely know that (unlike Moses) someone in Jesus' name is occupying the holy space in vain. When humanity in all its diversity continues to be harmed by the very one shouting: "Jesus is the Answer! Thank God my redeemer lives!", then I know who hypocrite number one really is. For all these reasons, in the final analysis this theological contribution of ours should be judged by its ability to have recaptured the unique healing presence of Jesus' name in this world as the Petrine and Pauline church communities once did. We should answer those looking for our heads on the platter by asking them to judge our theological

conclusions here by their capability to offer *reliable* enriching *alternatives* in exposing inauthentic Christianity, and then affirming once more Jesus of Nazareth as being the God-“Man” (Messiah = Christos) in whom the splendour of the invisible God was pleased to dwell *uniquely* and *unsurpassably* in the becoming history of the human race. Taking seriously the parable of the Sower with all its telling insights about different responses to the Gospel Message, I would like to conclude with the following texts concerning the quality of authentic faith in the Christ:

The overriding sign of the presence of the Awaited Messiah will be unique Shalom in the world; and Messiah’s disciples will be known by this extraordinary gift from God the Father and our Mother:

It will happen in the final days [of the Messiah = Christos] that the mountain of Yahweh’s house will rise higher than the mountains and tower above the heights. ... Then all the nations will stream to it [and there in the house of the Lord] they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles and pruning hooks. Nation will not lift sword against nation, no longer will they learn how to make war.
(Is 2:1-5; 11:1-9)

To Timothy Paul seriously warned:

The Spirit has explicitly said that during the last times some will desert the faith and pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines ... But Timothy please never forget that God wants every human being under the sun to be saved, both great and small.
(cf. 1Tim 4:1; 2:1-5)

Taking seriously the deceitful heart of the human person, Jesus said:

Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruits. ... It is not anyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. When the day [of final Judgement] comes many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?' Then I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, all evil doers!
(Mt 7:15-16 & 21-23)

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Pace Magazine: Monthly Magazine on social affairs in South Africa

Southern Cross: South African Catholic weekly paper

Tablet: International Catholic weekly Magazine

The New Jerusalem Bible (Standard Edition) 1985.

Time: International weekly Magazine

Trefoil: The Southern African Catholic Quarterly

True Love: Monthly Magazine on social affairs in South Africa

Appendix I

The tragedy of September 11th 2001 in America will go down in history as one of the turning points of human history; whether for better or for worse we cannot tell, except in making bold predictions. Whatever the outcome, Islam has shown itself as the giant to be reckoned with. You may hate Moslems for all sorts of reasons; you may love them for all reasons, but you cannot ignore their powerful presence in this world. And Islam's grasp on the human psyche, especially in the Third World, is growing steadily; either as a platform to mock inauthentic Christianity (as is the case with Christians in formerly colonized countries), or as sheer disillusionment with Constantinian Christianity (as is the case with believers in the First World). The way God is fulfilling His/Her Holy Promises to Abraham, Sarah and Hagar are amazing: In the midst of chaos there comes life; with the American tragedy, behold the discovery of the beauty of Islam in order to enrich all peoples of the human race even the more! By this we mean that honest people will start to study Islam's logic and coherence in its own right, and maybe as never was the case before, they will help the West to be less prejudiced against Islam. Like Fr O'Sullivan, they will discover the beautiful face of Islam when they *honestly* scrutinize God's authentic revelation to Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.).

Owen O'Sullivan OFM Cap is one of the many prophets of this century who tries to inform the prejudicial conscience of the West by presenting "the other side" of Islam; its beautiful face:

At a time when Islam is at the forefront of public attention, it is useful to have basic information about it and how it relates to the other two great monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity. ... My reasons for choosing ... [to present the positive teaching of Islam in this book] ... is that in Europe and North America the Judeo-Christian tradition has a long history, but Islam is less well known. Muslims are a growing minority there and it seems desirable that a start be made on understanding some of the basic elements of Islam and how it relates to Judaism and Christianity. ... [after all] ... the three great monotheistic religions of humanity are Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and they appeared in history in that chronological order. ... [and for more enrichment] ... the reader is invited to go to the [reliable] sources – not just the written or oral sources but also the tradition as it is lived at present in the three communities of faith represented here. (O’Sullivan 2002: back cover & 9)

Following O’Sullivan²⁰³ closely, we briefly put here the basic essence of Islam, and you are going to be amazed at how similar it is with Judaism. You will then understand our wisdom when we call Islam Judaism-in-emergence. We put everything in alphabetical order after the summary of Islamic faith. This teaching is based both on the Qur’an and the *hadith*²⁰⁴.

Summary of the faith: *There is no God to worship except Allah (God), Muhammad is Messenger (Prophet) of Allah. The five Pillars of Islam are: The testimony of faith (2:177). Prayer (24:56). Giving zakat (support for the needy = 24:56). Fasting during the month of Ramadan (2:185). The pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) once in a lifetime for those who are able (3:97). ‘Worship none save Allah, and be good to parents and to relatives and orphans and the needy, and speak kindly to humankind, and establish worship and pay the poor-due.’ (2:83)*

Alcohol: *‘Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan’s handiwork. Leave it aside in order that you may succeed.’ (5:90)*

Allah, Al-Lah: *God, or The God, in Arabic.*

Commitment to God: *‘The (true) believers are those only who believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward do not doubt, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere.’ (49:15) ‘If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth you have acquired, and merchandize for which you fear that there will be no sale, and dwellings you desire, are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger in striving in His command to pass. Allah does not guide wrongdoing people.’ (9:24) ‘My worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the Worlds.’ (6:162)*

²⁰³ In his excellent and honest book called *One God: Three Faiths*

²⁰⁴ “These are reliably transmitted reports by the prophet Mohammed’s companions of what he said, did, or approved of, and are understood as explaining the divine message” (O’Sullivan 2002: 9).

Creation by God: *'Allah creates what He wills. If He decrees a thing, He says to it only: Be! And it is.'* (3:47) *'He (Allah) is the All-Wise Creator.'* (36:81) *'Our Lord is He who gave to everything its nature, then guided it alright.'* (20:50) *'We created man and We know what his soul whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.'* (50:16) *'I created ...humankind only that they might worship me.'* (51:56)

Death: *'No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed.'* (3:145)

Debts: *'Allah forbids usury.'* (2:275) *'If the debtor is in straitened circumstances, then (let there be) postponement to (the time of) ease; and that you remit the debt as almsgiving would be better for you if you did but know.'* (2:280) *'If you lend to Allah a godly loan, He will double it for you and will forgive you, for Allah is Responsive, Clement = 64:17'* (Note: A 'goodly loan' is one without interest or any thought of gain or loss.)

Divorce: *'Divorce must be pronounced twice.'* (2:229)

Family: *'Beautified for mankind is love of the joys (that come) from women and offspring.'* (3:14)

Forgiveness by God: *'Forgive us, our Lord! You, only you, are the Mighty, the Wise.'* (60:5) *'Allah does not change the condition of a people until they (first) change what is in their hearts. Allah sends whom He will astray, and guides to Himself all who turn (to Him).'* (13:11,27) *'Seek forgiveness of Allah. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.'* (4:106) *'Allah the Almighty has said: o son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it is.'* (An-Nawawi, no.42)

Forgiveness of others: *'Whoever is patient and forgives, that truly is the steadfast heart of things.'* (42:43) *'Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a bosom friend.'* (41:34) *'The merciful are shown mercy by the All-Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth, and God will show mercy to you.'* (Al-Tirmizi, no.1924)

Future: *'Do not say of anything: "I shall do that tomorrow", except if Allah will.'* (18:23-24) *'At evening do not expect morning, and at morning do not expect evening.'* (An-Nawawi, no.40) *'Whatever God wills to happen happens, and whatever He wills not to happen does not happen.'* (Ibrahim, page 49)

Good Works: *'The orphan oppress not, the beggar drive not away, of the bounty of your Lord be your discourse.'* (93:9-11) *'Wealth and children are an ornament of life of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in your Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope.'* (18:46) *'Those who give alms, both men and women, and lend*

to Allah a goodly loan, it will be doubled unto them and theirs will be a rich reward.’ (57:18) ‘Compete with one another in good works.’ (5:48) ‘Each person’s every joint must perform a charity every day the sun comes up; to act justly between two people is a charity; to help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it is a charity; every step you take to prayers is a charity; and removing a harmful thing from the road is a charity.’ (An-Nawawi, no.26)

Greed: *‘In the love of wealth he (man) is violent.’ (100:8) ‘You do not honour the orphan, and do not urge the feeding of the poor, and you devour heritages with devouring greed, and love wealth with abounding love.’ (89:17-20) ‘On the day when it (gold and silver) will (all) be heated in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded with it (it will be said to them): “Here is that which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste what you used to hoard”. (9:35) ‘Whoever is saved from his own greed, such are the successful.’ (64:16) ‘Let him who has abundance spend of his abundance.’ (65:7)*

Hadith: *Reliably transmitted report(s) by the prophet Muhammad’s [faithful] companions of what he said, did, or approved of, and understood as explaining the divine message. The hadith is found in various collections such as Al-Tirmizi, An-Nawawi, Ibn Majah, Mosnad Ahmad, Saheen Al-Bukhari and Saheeh Muslim.*

Heaven: *‘He will forgive you your sins and bring you unto ...Gardens of Eden.’ (61:12) ‘In Paradise there are things which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and the human mind has not thought of.’ (Saheeh Muslim, no.2825)*

Hell: *‘It is not for the Prophet, and those who believe, to pray for the forgiveness of idolaters even though they may be near relatives after it has become clear that they are people of Hell-fire.’ (9:113) ‘But for those who disbelieve Our revelations, their place will be on the left hand. Fire will be an awning over them.’ (90:19-20) ‘Lo! Hell lurks in ambush, a home for the rebellious. They will abide therein for ages. Therein they taste neither coolness nor (any) drink, save boiling water and a paralyzing cold: reward proportioned (to their evil deeds). For lo! they looked not for a reckoning. They called our revelations false with strong denial. Everything have We recorded in a Book. So taste (of that which you have earned). No increase do We give you save of torment.’ (78:21-30)*

Human unity: *‘Mankind is one community.’ (10:19)*

***Jesus:** *‘They (the Christians) say: “The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son,” Assuredly you utter a disastrous thing, whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, that you ascribe unto the Beneficent a son, when it is not right for (the Majesty of) the Beneficent that He should choose a son.’ (19:88-92) ‘O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter anything concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and his word which he conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and do not say ‘Three’ – Cease! (it is) better for*

you! Allah is only one God. Far is it removed from his transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as defender.’ (4:171) ‘The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) has passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman.’ (5:75) ‘Jesus son of Mary said: “Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming what was (revealed) before me in the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger who comes after me, whose name is the Praised One”. (61:6)

Judgement by God: *‘Allah is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.’ (12:92) ‘Good deeds annul evil deeds.’ (11:114) ‘On the Day of Resurrection ... every soul will be paid in full what it has earned; and they will not be wronged.’ (3:161) ‘Those who point at such of the believers as give the alms willingly ... and deride them, Allah (Himself) derides them. Theirs will be a painful doom.’ (9:79) ‘Allah promises ... the disbelievers fire of hell for their abode ... Allah curses them, and theirs is lasting torment.’ (9:68) ‘Ask forgiveness for them, (Muhammad) or ask not forgiveness for them; though you ask not forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His messenger, and Allah does not guide wrong-doing people.’ (9:79-80) ‘Do not despair of the mercy of Allah, Who forgives all sins.’ (39:53) ‘God does not judge you according to your appearance and your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and looks into your deeds.’ (Saheeh Muslim, no. 2564)*

Justice towards others: *‘Fill the measure when you measure, and weigh with a right balance; that is just, and better in the end.’ (17:35) ‘Give your relative his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and do not squander (your wealth) in wantonness.’ (17:26) ‘Do not let hatred of any people seduce you so that you do not deal justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to Allah. Allah is informed of what you do.’ (5:8) ‘Make peace between them (fighting parties) justly, and act equitably. Allah loves the equitable.’ (49:9) ‘We prescribed for them therein: The life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whosoever forgoes it, it shall be expiation for him.’ (5:45) ‘As for those who are unjust, they are firewood for hell.’ (72:15) ‘Pay the worker his wage before his sweat dries.’ (Ibn Majah, no.2443)*

Islam: *Al-Islam, in Arabic, means surrender, referring to the believers’ surrender to God.*

Love of neighbour: *‘A man walking along a path felt very thirsty. Reaching a well, he descended into it, drank his fill, and came up. Then he saw a dog with its tongue hanging out, trying to lick up mud to quench its thirst. The man said, “This dog is feeling the same thirst that I felt.” So he went down into the well again, filled his shoe with water, and gave the dog to drink. So, God thanked him and forgave his sins. The Prophet was asked, “Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals?” He said, “There is a reward for kindness to every living animal or human.”’ (Saheeh Muslim, no.2244)*

Marriage: *'Men are in charge of women, because Allah made one of them to excel the other ... Good women are the obedient ... As from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them.'* (4:34) *'Marry of the women who seem good to you, two or three or four.'* (4:3) *'You will not be able to deal equally between wives, however much you may wish.'* (4:129) *'And if you fear a breach between the two (husband and wife), appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they desire amendment, Allah will make them of one mind.'* (4:35) *'The most perfect of the believers in faith are the best of them in morals. And the best among them are those who are best to their wives.'* (Mosnad Ahmad, no.7354)

Muhammad: *Born in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula, he lived from 570 to 632 of the Common Era. About 616 he claimed to be a prophet to whom God was revealing the Qur'an. Persecuted in Mecca, he fled to Medina in 622. His flight, the Hegira, marks the beginning of the Islamic era. By the time of his death Islam had spread throughout Arabia.*

Muslim: *In Arabic, one who surrenders (to God). A follower of the Islamic religion.*

Parents: *'Your Lord has decreed ... (that you show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with you, do not speak badly to them or repulse them, but speak to them a gracious word ... My Lord, have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little.'* (17:23) *'(Show) kindness to parents, and to near relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour who is kin (to you) and the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveler and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess.'* (4:36) *'Be careful of your duty ... towards the wombs (that bore you).'* (4:1) *'A man came to the Prophet Muhammad and said, "Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man said, "Then who?" The Prophet said, "Then your mother." The man further asked, "Then who?" The Prophet said, "Then your mother." The man asked again, "Then who?" The Prophet said: "Then your father."' (Saheeh Muslim, no.2548)*

Perseverance: *'Those who persevere and do good works ... theirs will be forgiveness and a great reward.'* (11:11) *'You who believe! Endure, outdo all others in endurance.'* (3:200) *'You who believe! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer, Allah is with the steadfast.'* (2:153)

Personal responsibility: *'Whoever goes right, it is for his soul and whoever strays, strays only to its hurt. And (Muhammad) ... you are not a warder over them.'* (39:41) *'Everyone starts his day and is a vendor of his soul, either freeing it or bringing about its ruin.'* (An-Nawawi, no.23)

Praise and thanksgiving to God: *'Glory be to Him in Whose hand is the dominion over all things!'* (36:83) *'Blessed be He to Whom belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and with Whom is knowledge of the Hour, and to Whom you will be returned.'* (43:85) *'Blessed be the name of your Lord, Mighty and Glorious!'* (55:78) *'If you give thanks, I will give you more.'* (14:7) *'Hymn the praise of*

your Lord before the rising and before the setting of the sun; and in the night-time hymn His praise, and after the prostrations.’ (50:39-40) ‘Praise be to Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.’ (35:1) ‘Praise the name of the Lord, the Most High, Who creates, then disposes; Who measures, then guides.’ (87:1-3)

Qur’an: *In Arabic, literally, a reading; the book believed by Muslims to have been dictated by God to the prophet Muhammad when he was in a trance in various places, principally at Mekkah (Mecca), and at Al-Madinah, (Medina).*

Ramadan: *The ninth month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is enjoined on Muslims.*

Relations with disbelievers: *‘Would you (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers? It is not for any soul to believe save by permission of Allah.’ (10:99-100) ‘Give a respite to the disbelievers. Deal gently with them for a while.’ (86:17) ‘Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves.’ (48:29) ‘As for those who disbelieve, garments of fire will be cut out for them; boiling fluid will be poured down on their heads. Their skins, too, will be melted. For them are hooked rods of iron. Whenever, in their anguish, they would go forth from there they are driven back in and (it is said to them): “Taste the doom of burning”.’ (22:19-22) ‘Most of mankind refuse anything except disbelief.’ (17:89)*

Relations with other believers: *‘Say (to Jews and Christians): We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we surrender.’ (29:46) ‘We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow, and gave him the Gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. But monasticism they invented – We did not ordain it for them – only seeking Allah’s pleasure, and they observed it not with right observance ...Many of them are evil-livers.’ (57:27) ‘Take not the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends to one another. He among you who takes them for friends is of them.’ (5:51) ‘Repel not those who call upon their Lord at morn and evening, seeking His Face. You are not accountable for them in anything, nor are they accountable to you for anything.’ (6:52) ‘He it is who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions.’ (9:33) ‘Those who believe, and those who are Jews, and ...Christians – whoever believes in Allah and the Last day and does right – there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.’ (5:69)*

Religious freedom: *‘Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion.’ (109:6) ‘Whosoever seeks as religion other than the Surrender (to Allah), it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the Hereafter = 3:85.’ (Note: “The Surrender”, in Arabic, is Al-Islam.) ‘Obey Allah and obey His messenger; but if you turn away, then the duty of Our messenger is only to convey (the message) plainly.’ (64:12) ‘When you go forth in the land, it is no sin for you to curtail worship if you fear that those who disbelieve may attack you.’ (4:101)*

Reverence for God: *'You who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord, and do good, that happily you may prosper.'* (22:77) *'Lord of the heavens and the earth and all this is in between them! Therefore, worship Him and be steadfast in His service.'* (19:65) *'Hymn the praise of your Lord, and be of those who prostrate themselves (before Him).'* (15:98) *'He who turns away from remembrance of Me, his will be a narrow life, and I shall bring him blind to the assembly on the Day of Resurrection.'* (20:124) *'The dwellers of the Fire (people in hell) ...took their religion for a sport and a pastime.'* (7:50-51)

Sexuality: *'Allah forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness.'* (16:90) *'Tell believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them ...Tell the believing women ...to draw their veils over their bosoms ...Marry such of you as are solitary ...And let those who cannot find a match keep chaste till Allah give them independence by His grace.'* (from 24:30-33) *'Do not consummate the marriage until (the term) prescribed is run.'* (2:235) *'There is no sin for you in what you do by mutual agreement after the duty (has been done).'* (4:24) *'The adulterer and the adulteress scourge each one of them a hundred stripes. And let not pity for the two withhold you from obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of believers witness their punishment.'* (24:2) *'And those who accuse honourable women but do not bring four witnesses, scourge them eighty stripes, and never (afterwards) accept their testimony.'* (24:4)

Slavery: *'Such of your slaves as ask a writing (of emancipation), write it for them if you are aware of good in them, and bestow on them of the wealth of Allah which He has bestowed on you. Do not force your slave-girls to whoredom ...And if one forces them, then (to them), after their compulsion, Allah will be Forgiving, Merciful.'* (24:33)

Spirit: *The holy; in the Qur'an, this refers to the angel Gabriel²⁰⁵.*

Stealing: *'Whoever is forced by hunger, not by will, to sin: (for him) Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.'* (5:3) *'As for the thief, both male and female, cut off their hands.'* (5:38)

Sunnah: *What the prophet Muhammad said, did, or approved of.*

Surah: *A chapter of the Qur'an.*

²⁰⁵ The closest correct understanding would be "the *unique* powerful presence of God" personified by Gabriel the archangel. The Islamic understanding of "Spirit of God", is theologically not much different from the Jewish understanding (e.g. cf. Proverbs 8-9 etc., in the Torah). And with critical examination, you find that the same Spirit is at work in Muhammad as *unique* Prophet of the poor, orphans, widows and the suffering and the most abandoned in general. The situations in Lk 4:18-19 and in Lk 1:26-55 have very much divine affinities with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the core teaching of Islam. It is as if God's total Redemptive Plan without Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them) reinforcing each other, one way or another, would not make sense (cf. Gal 4:21-31). Of course today we should interpret texts like these with much sensitivity, humility and much wisdom gathered over the years of understanding God's Plan of saving all peoples of the human race (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-5. Eph 1:1-14). *In this sense, any "Christian" who rejects Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his authentic Message, does so out of sheer ignorance of "who Jesus really is"* (cf. Acts 17:28-31).

Teaching on God: *‘There is no true God but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger (prophet) of God.’ ‘Your God is One God; there is no God save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful.’ (2:163) ‘Unto Allah belong the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is in them, and He is able to do all things.’ (5:120) ‘Serve Allah, you have no other God save Him.’ (11:61) ‘Not a leaf falls but He knows it.’ (6:59) ‘All power belongs to Allah. Unto Him good works ascend and the pious deed He exalts.’ (35:10)*

Trust in God: *‘I take refuge in You, my Lord.’ (23:98) ‘In Allah let believers put their trust.’ (5:11) ‘In Him do I put trust, and in Him let all the trusting put their trust.’ (12:67) ‘Truly in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.’ (13:28) ‘In You we put our trust, and to You we turn repentant, and unto You is the journeying.’ (60:4) ‘Praise to Allah who put grief away from us. Our Lord is Forgiving, Bountiful.’ (35:34)*

Unity among believers: *‘The believers are nothing else but brothers. Therefore make peace between your brothers and observe your duty to Allah so that happily you may obtain mercy.’ (49:10) ‘None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.’ (An-Nawawi, no.13)*

War and peace: *‘Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not begin hostilities. Allah does not love aggressors.’ (2:190)*

Women: *‘Male ... female ... you proceed from one another.’ (3:195) ‘Women have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them.’ (2:228) ‘As for those of your women, who are guilty of lewdness, call to witness four of you against them. And if they testify (to the truth of the allegation) then confine them to the houses until death take them, or (until) Allah appoint for them a way (through new legislation).’ (4:15)*

Work: *‘No laden one shall bear another’s load. Man has only that for which he makes effort.’ (53:38-39)*

Zakat: *A tax at a fixed rate in proportion to the worth of property collected from the well-to-do and distributed among [materially] poor Muslims.*

“Qibla²⁰⁶: The point toward which Muslims turn to pray, especially the Ka’ba, or House of God, at Mecca”

²⁰⁶ BeliefnetMuslimWisdom@partner.beliefnet.com: 1. “As God has made the Qibla manifest, abandon your [futile, undirected] search. Hark, turn away from all futile search, now that the House has come to view. If you forget this Qibla for one moment, you will be overcome by the Qibla of desires” (Rumi, ‘Mathnawi,’ 6:2626-28)

Appendix II

Fr Christopher Clohessy²⁰⁷ also summarises well the amazing theological and spiritual richness of Islam.

Islam is constructed upon five pillars of practice and six creedal articles.

Five Pillars of Practice:

1. ***The testimony of faith:*** *I bear witness that there is no god but God and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God. These words lie at the heart of Islam, because they clearly define the strict monotheism upon which the whole Islamic system rests.*
2. ***The daily prayer:*** *Five times daily, either in the mosque or wherever one finds oneself.*
3. ***The fasting:*** *It is during the month Ramadan. The Muslim fasts for almost exactly the same reason as a Jew or Christian.*
4. ***The almsgiving:*** *It is not unlike the tithing or dedicated giving of some Christian communities: Muslims give annually a certain percentage of their material possessions.*
5. ***The hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca:*** *It is done at least once in the lifetime of every Muslim.*

Six Creedal Articles:

Together with these practical pillars are the six doctrinal or creedal articles that every Muslim must believe: these will be immediately recognisable because of their proximity to Christianity and Judaism.

Every Muslim must believe:

1. *In God (with the strict monotheism of Islam).*
2. *In God's angels.*
3. *In God's scriptures (not just the Qur'an: also the Torah, Psalms and Gospel, even if their adherents have corrupted them, all of them revealed by God).*
4. *In God's prophet-messengers (the nabi, an inspired prophet without a particular mission/message, and the rasul, who brings revelation from God: some of the latter are Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad.)*

²⁰⁷ Fr Clohessy is presently doing his doctorate in Islamic studies at the Pontifical Institute of Islamic Studies in Rome (cf. Trefoil 2004 [267]: 64)

5. *In the Last Things (resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell).*
6. *[Muhammad as the last prophet historically; hence Muhammad is a qualitative prophet par excellence]*

(Trefoil 2004 (267): 51 & 64)