

**A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOD-BELIEF AS A
SOURCE OF MEANING AND WELL-BEING**

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Proefskrif ingedien ter nakoming van die vereistes vir die graad

Philosophiae Doctor in Psigologie

aan die Noordwes-Universiteit

Promotor: Prof. C van Eeden

Medepromotor: Prof. HJM van Deventer

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ERKENNING

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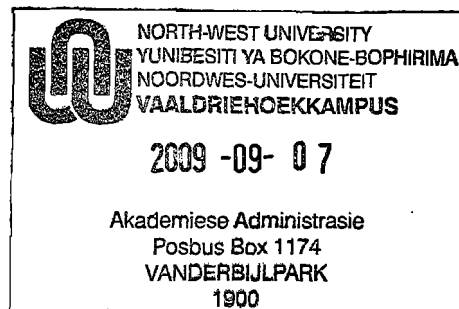


TABLE OF CONTENT

| | |
|---|------|
| Erkenning | i |
| Summary | iii |
| Opsomming | v |
| Voorwoord | vii |
| Toestemmingsbrief | viii |
| Section 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Section 2: Article 1 Psychology of religion from a South African perspective | 13 |
| Section 3: A psychological perspective on the source and function of God-belief and its relevance in (religious) educational context | 31 |
| Section 4: A psychological perspective on God-belief as source of well-being and meaning | 52 |
| Section 5: Conclusions and recommendations | 81 |
| Complete list of works consulted | 88 |
| Appendix A: Hervormde Theological Studies Orthographic Guidelines | 99 |

SUMMARY

A psychological perspective on God-belief as source of meaning and well-being

The aim of this study was to explore God-belief as a source of meaning and psychological well-being qualitatively and through the review of literature. The study is embedded in the growing field of Psychology of Religion.

In the first article, a literature overview regarding the field of Psychology of Religion, and specifically research done in the South African context, was reported. The key constructs *spirituality* and *religiousness* were investigated and defined. It was argued that traditional African religion and spirituality have unique characteristics and that Western, mostly Christian-based, research does not necessarily reflect the South African psycho-religious landscape. Articles published in the *South African Journal of Psychology* over the 10-year period 1997 to 2006 were analysed to ascertain the extent of South African research in this field. The necessity of continued research in this field in order to expand and enrich psychological discourse became clear.

The second article investigated the reasons for humans' religiousness, the influence of religion on people's perspective on life and the importance of understanding the impact of religion on human functioning. It was shown that *homo sapiens* evolved to be religious and that religiousness therefore is a fundamental aspect of humanness. Untestable ontological and cosmological assumptions (mostly religiously informed) permeate people's worldviews and more or less unconsciously influence their decisions, their openness to new perspectives and their judgement and prejudices. This fact is not necessarily generally understood or recognised. The importance of helping professionals understanding their own assumptions and acknowledging those of their clients was illustrated in the context of education.

The third article reported on the qualitative, interpretive case study in which the God-belief of a group of Christians from an African context was analysed and interpreted in terms of the participants' creation of meaning and their psychological well-being. Interviews were conducted with twelve participants, eight male and four female, ranging in age between twenty-five and sixty-five years, in sessions of between one hour and one and a half hours. The transcribed interviews, notes on personal reactions, insights, beliefs and discussions with knowledgeable individuals accumulated during the research process and noted in a research journal as well as literature were the sources of data for the thick description of the experiences of the participants. The description focused on participants' knowledge of God (God-

concept), experience of their relationship with God (God-image) and their understanding of life. The contribution of their God-belief to their sense of meaning and psychological well-being was the *leitmotiv* of the description.

The final conclusions were inter alia that the God-belief and mostly the God-image that participants hold, are a deep source of meaning, especially under unfavourable life circumstances and that aspects of participants' psychological well-being, e.g. a sense of self-worth, aspects of attachment and ability to cope with adversity, seem to stem from both the meaning that they create through their God-belief as well as the relationship they experience with their God. More South African research in the field of Psychology of Religion is called for, and professionals (e.g. therapists, clergy and educators) need to develop an understanding of and sensitivity to spirituality through their professional training.

OPSOMMING

'n Psigologiese perspektief op geloof in God as bron van betekenisgeving en psigologiese welsyn

Die doel van hierdie studie was om deur middel van kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes en 'n literatuurstudie die geloof in God as bron van betekenisbeleving en psigologiese welsyn, te ondersoek. Die studie is in die veld van die Psigologie van Religie.

Die eerste artikel behels 'n oorsig van literatuur in die Psigologie van Religie en meer spesifiek 'n fokus op navorsing wat in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks gerapporteer is. Die sleutelkonstrukte *spiritualiteit* en *geloof* is ondersoek en gedefinieer. Daar is aangevoer dat die tradisionele Afrika religie en spiritualiteit unieke eienskappe het wat nie noodwendig in die Westerse Christelik-georiënteerde navorsing weerspieël word nie. Artikels wat in die tienjaartydperk vanaf 1997 tot 2006 in die *South African Journal of Psychology* gepubliseer is, is ontleed om die stand van navorsing in die Psigologie van Religie te bepaal. Die noodsaaklikheid van verdere navorsing in hierdie veld ten einde die psigologiese diskoers te verryk, is uitgewys.

In die tweede artikel is die oorsake van menslike geloof, die invloed wat geloof op die mens se lewens- en wêreldbeskouing het en die belangrikheid om die invloed van geloof op mense se funksionering te verstaan, ondersoek. Daar is aangedui dat *homo sapiens* deur evolusie ontwikkel het om gelowig te wees en dat die neiging om te glo, 'n fundamentele aspek van menswees is. Mense se lewens- en wêreldbeskouing word fundamenteel beïnvloed deur ontologiese en kosmologiese aannames (meestal beïnvloed deur religieë). Hierdie ontoetsbare aannames bepaal tot 'n meerdere of mindere mate mense se besluite, hul openheid vir nuwe idees en hul oordele en vooroordele. Hierdie feit word nie noodwendig oor die algemeen begryp en erken nie. 'n Toepassing is gemaak op die terrein van opvoeding en daar is aangetoon dat mense in die hulpverleningsprofessies hul eie aannames met betrekking tot geestelikheid asook dié van hul kliënte moet ondersoek en erken.

In die derde artikel word 'n kwalitatiewe, interpretatiewe gevallestudie gerapporteer. 'n Aantal Christene uit 'n Afrika-konteks se geloof in God is ontleed en geïnterpreteer in die lig van die deelnemers se betekenisgeving en hul psigologiese welsyn. Onderhoude is met twaalf deelnemers, agt mans en vier vroue, tussen die ouderdomme vyf-en-twintig en vyf-en-estig jaar gevoer. Die onderhoude was elk tussen 'n uur en 'n uur en 'n half lank. Die getranskribeerde onderhoude,

aantekeninge in 'n navorsingsjoernaal oor persoonlike reaksies, insigte, oortuigings en besprekings met kundige individue asook literatuur is as databronne gebruik om 'n dig verweefde verslag van die ervarings van die deelnemers te konstrueer. Die fokus van die beskrywing was op die wyse waarop die deelnemers se kennis van God (God-konsep) en ervaring van God (Godsbeeld) hul interpretasie van die lewe beïnvloed. Die deurlopende tema was hoe mense se geloof in God hul betekenisgeving en psigologiese welsyn beïnvloed.

Die finale gevolgtrekkings was onder andere dat geloof in God, en veral die Godsbeeld van die deelnemers, 'n diep bron van betekenisgeving veral in moeilike lewensomstandighede is en dat daar aanduidings is dat aspekte van psigologiese welsyn, soos die gevoel van eiewaarde, aspekte van gehegtheid en vermoë om moeilike omstandighede te bowe te kom, voortvloei uit mense se geloof in en verhouding met God en hul betekenisgeving. Die behoefte aan meer Suid-Afrikaanse navorsing in die Psigologie van Religie is aangetoon en daar word aanbeveel dat mense in die hulpverleningsprofessies (bv. terapeute, predikante en opvoeders) deur middel van professionele opleiding begrip en sensitiwiteit vir spiritualiteit in hulleself en hul kliënte moet ontwikkel.

VOORWOORD

- Hierdie proefskrif is gedoen in die artikelformaat soos aangedui in a.14.4.2 van die jaarboek van die NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT.
- Die drie artikels waaruit hierdie proefskrif bestaan, word voorgelê aan die *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* vir publikasie. Al drie manuskripte sal binnekort ingestuur word.
- Die hele proefskrif word volgens die voorskrifte van die *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* (HTS) aangebied wat in Appendix A vervat is.
- Vir die doel van hierdie proefskrif word die bladsye aaneen genommer. Elke artikel is egter afsonderlik vanaf bladsy een genommer vir voorlegging aan die HTS.
- Aangeheg is die toestemmingsbrief, onderteken deur die promotor en medepromotor, ter magtiging van die voorlegging van hierdie artikels, om te voldoen aan die vereistes vir die toekenning van 'n PhD-graad in Psigologie.



Skool vir Gedragwetenskappe: Psigologie

Vaaldriehoekkampus

Toestemmingsbrief

Hiermee word toestemming verleen dat die onderstaande manuskripte:

1. *Psychology of religion from a South African perspective*
2. *A psychological perspective on the source and function of God-belief and its relevance in (religious) educational context*
3. *A psychological perspective on God-belief as source of well-being and meaning*

deur E. Karen van der Merwe voorgelê mag word met die doel om 'n PhD-graad in Psigologie te verwerf.

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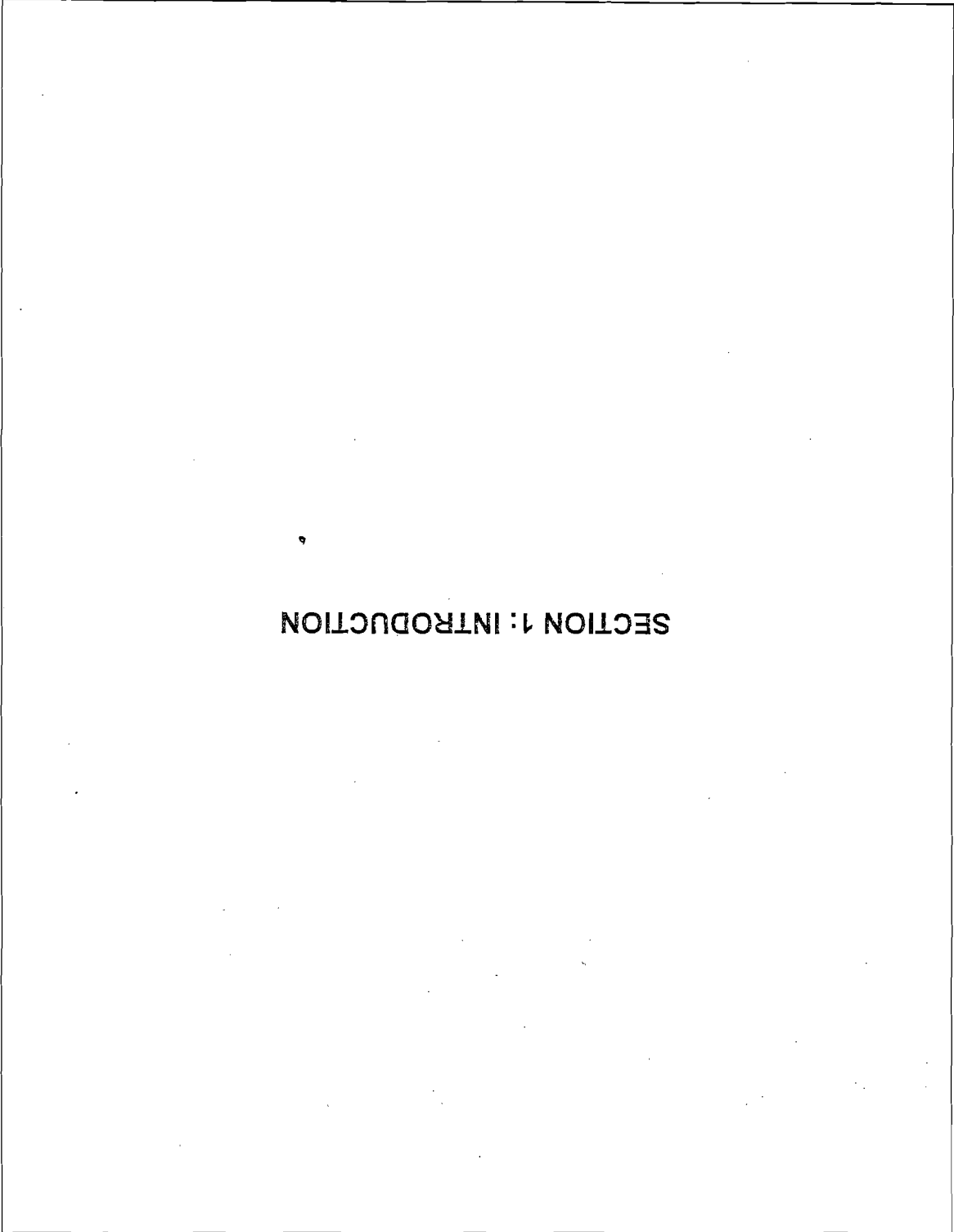
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOD-BELIEF AS SOURCE OF MEANING AND WELL-BEING

1. INTRODUCTION

Mind, body and soul are intimately intertwined. From a holistic vantage point, the spirituality of a person is an integral, undeniable aspect of personhood which is borne out by research indicating the link between religiosity and spirituality, and psychological and physical well-being (Holt, Lewellyn & Rathweg 2005; Pargament & Mahoney 2002) and the potential positive links between spirituality and religiosity and pro-social youth development are well documented (Dowling et al 2004; Furrow, King & White 2004; Kerestes, Youniss & Metz 2004). The increased interest in the field of Psychology of Religion over the last 25 years (Moore, Kloos & Rasmussen 2001; Hood et al 1996) has provided important perspectives on human behaviour (Moore et al 2001).

Religion is both cultural fact and personal experience (Corveleyn & Luyten 2005). Although there is a conceptual distinction between the social and personal character of religion, in reality, both forms of the concept are interrelated. Cultural factors condition personal religious experiences (Krüger 1998). What people believe and how they express those beliefs are socially negotiated; how they are psychologically affected by their beliefs is of a more personal nature. But, however intimate people's personal religious (spiritual) experiences, such experiences necessarily reflect socio-cultural and religious contexts (Hood et al 1996).

Central to any religious system are statements and teachings regarding God explicating His/Her character, power, wants, expectations, laws, etc. Such statements are the essence of the dogma of each religion. These have evolved over centuries and even millennia due to processes of conservation of age-old teachings and traditions (by organised religion) and exploration of the limits of knowledge (scientific progress on all fronts), thus through a process of negotiation where all aspects of knowing are integrated. Krüger (1998) describes religions as changing perspectives in flux due to the dynamics of integration and disintegration.

Each member of a particular religion (be it Christian, traditional African, or any other religion) is taught the essential elements that constitute the central religious truths. A person learns the religious dogmas as socially negotiated understandings and definitions. These teachings and beliefs underpin the socially accepted moral order, in which behaviours are prescribed and prohibited within a social hierarchy legitimated by the religious dogma. Religious teachings also permeate and form each individual's worldview.

In the latest census of 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2001), 79% of the South African population named Christianity as their preferred religion or religious tag but the importance and influence of traditional African religion cannot be overestimated. Traditional African beliefs, views, rituals and principles constitute a fundamental part of many South Africans' lives as is clearly illustrated by the influence and popularity of independent churches that combine aspects of traditional African religion with Christianity (e.g. the Zion Christian Church).

2. A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

As qualitative researcher I accept that I need to declare my position regarding the field and phenomenon of research. Belief in God has always been part of my life. Initially my belief was moulded by Christian dogma, which I began to question fundamentally due to exposure to different religions (Buddhism, Hinduism and so-called New Age ideas). The deconstruction of my understanding of God (the Sacred, Ground of Being) filled me with existential angst. I have experienced changes in my conception of God from theism to panentheism (a belief that everything is in God and God is in everything, but that God is more than the mere sum of all things) and in my image of God (from a caring Father out there to the Essence of being). At this stage, I believe the role of all religions to be indispensable; religions provide prescribed paths and guidance for us to fulfil our need to connect to the Divine, but also instil in us a sense that there is more to life than just immediate self-interest.

I can therefore not describe myself as a traditional Christian; perhaps Spong's term "believer in exile" (Spong 1998) is the best self-description at this stage. Although I do not subscribe to the traditional Christian dogma, I profoundly value the impact Christian teachings had on my life. I have unwavering respect for each individual's personal spiritual quest.

In the light of how my God-belief has been the foundation of meaning throughout my life and the discomfort, even anxiety, I experienced in the process of reconstruction of my God-image I began to wonder about the subjective experience of fellow Christians in the African context. How do they move away from traditional beliefs when they become Christians? Do they experience a sense of anxiety? What subjective value do they derive from Christian dogma and teachings?

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Psychology of Religion is a sufficiently developed discipline but developments in this field have largely been ignored in the South African psychological discourse. In addition, knowledge in this field has mainly been produced in Western Christian-

oriented societies, which do not necessarily reflect South African religious/spiritual experiences.

3.1 Research questions

The research was guided by the following three questions:

1. What is the state of Psychology of Religion in South Africa?
2. Why are people religious, and how does religion affect their thinking, emotions and behaviour?
3. What is the subjective texture of African Christians' God-belief and how does this belief influence their creation of meaning and psychological well-being?

3.2 Research aims

Each of the three aims was attended to in a separate article. The aims were to:

- research the state of Psychology of Religion in South Africa as reflected by the publication of articles in the South African Journal of Psychology in the 10-year period between 1997 and 2006;
- explore literature regarding the evolutionary reasons for the universality of human belief in God(s) and the relationship between God-belief and worldview with specific reference to traditional African religion and Christianity; and
- qualitatively explore the subjective value religion adds to the life of second- and third-generation African Christians.

4. RESEARCH PROCESS

4.1 Article 1

Psychology of Religion is not one of the 'mainstream' sub-disciplines that are included in the general Psychology curricula in undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. I therefore began my investigation by exploring the field of Psychology of Religion and more specifically the research that has been done in the South African context in this field. My investigation was guided by two questions:

- What is the field of Psychology of Religion? and
- What is the state of research in Psychology of Religion in South Africa

My findings were that Psychology of Religion is a sufficiently developed discipline but developments in this field have largely been ignored in the South African psychological discourse. Knowledge in this field is mainly produced in Western, Christian-oriented societies, which do not necessarily reflect South African religious/spiritual experiences and which do not necessarily take cognisance of

African indigenous knowledge. The importance of continued research in this field in order to expand and enrich psychological discourse was argued.

4.2 Article 2

Subsequently, I explored reasons for humans' religiousness and the influence of religious beliefs on humans' view of life. Guiding questions were:

- Why are humans religious?
- How does religion influence peoples' perspective on life?
- What are the essential elements of belief, with specific reference to African and Christian religions?
- What are some practical implications that flow from the literature study?

Three theories, including psycho-analytical and evolutionary answers regarding the origin of humans' penchant to be religious, were explored. Afterwards, the dominant influence of religious notions in peoples' worldviews was explored, highlighting the dominant role religious beliefs play in influencing people's cognitions, emotions and behaviour as well as providing meaning in their lives. Finally, the significance of educators' understanding of and respect for the pervasive role of religious notions (metaphysical assumptions) was pointed out.

4.3 Article 3

Articles 1 and 2 set the stage for the final empirical section of the project. I concentrated my focus on how belief in God provides the scaffolding to create meaning in life. My aim was to qualitatively explore the experiences of Christians from the African context in a post-apartheid South Africa.

4.3.1 Qualitative methodology

The third aim to develop an in-depth understanding of African Christians' God-belief as a source of meaning and well-being could only be achieved by employing qualitative methodology. To achieve the aim of this empirical part of the research, I decided to explore experiences of the participants by asking the following questions during the interviews:

- Where did you learn about God? (Religious background)
- How would you describe God? (God-concept)
- How do you experience God? (God-image)

- Tell me about your prayer life. (God-image, expectations and needs, creation of meaning)
- According to traditional African beliefs, bad things can be caused by malicious people and other forces. What is your belief in this regard? (Integration of African and Christian beliefs)
- How do you make sense of our Apartheid past where discrimination was legitimised by a specific reading of the Bible? (Creation of meaning in the face of suffering)

The aim of the study was to focus on the subjective experience of God-belief of African Christians, which is on the ideographic and emic rather than the nomothetic and etic levels (Nieuwenhuis 2007a; Ponterotto 2005). The heart of the study was a quest for in-depth understanding (*verstehen*) of the inner minds and feelings of Christians from an African context and the meanings and interpretations (Taylor & Bogdan 1998; Burrell & Morgan 1979) they attach to and derive from their belief in God. This could only be achieved within a qualitative, interpretive (constructivist, hermeneutic) research methodological paradigm (Nieuwenhuis 2007a; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006; Ponterotto 2005; Guba & Lincoln 1994) which involves an iterative (hermeneutical) process of feedback (Grbich 2007).

4.3.2 Ontological assumptions

The assumptions that multiple, equally valid realities exist because reality is constructed in the mind of the individual ungoverned by natural, objective laws (Ponterotto 2005; Creswell 1994, Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and that individuals' subjective experiences are real for them and therefore should be taken seriously (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly 2007) underpinned the current research. Individuals attempt to make sense of their lived experiences in unique ways given their socio-historic and religious contexts. Therefore *how* the reality of belief in God is constructed and sustained in the individual mind is linked to the *what* of the patterns of the context (African culture and religion, Christian dogma, socio-political context) (Holstein & Gubrium 2005). The patterns of social life are however not objectively there but are socially constructed (Nieuwenhuis 2007a). The understanding (constructions of meaning) of who God is, and the meaning of religious experiences are therefore understood as influenced by the African and Christian culture, religion, historic-political timeframe and day-to-day social living. The interplay between the individual's meanings (*hows*) and the context (*what*) was consequently of vital importance during data analysis and interpretation as people were viewed holistically (Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

4.3.3 Epistemological assumptions

I subscribe to a relativist epistemology (subjectivist epistemology) as I assume knowledge is context-bound and created through collaboration between people and therefore also between the researcher and co-researchers or participants (Hoshmand 2005). Consequently, my view is that "... (t)he social world does not 'exist' independently of human knowledge" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:60), implying a dynamic interaction between the researcher and the participants (Creswell 1994). The active involvement of the participants was essential as it is their point of view that I aimed to capture (Ponterotto 2005). The analysis of data and product of the process (knowledge) is partial and subjective as the research process and outcome are results of the interaction between the participants and researcher in a particular situation and time frame and the outcome represents but one possible interpretation of reality, a social construction of a social construction (Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

4.3.4 Axiology

The research process is value-laden and biased (Creswell 1994) as the values, experiences and knowledge of the researcher cannot be divorced from the research process. Therefore these elements needed to be acknowledged and described (in comprehensive field notes) and "bracketed", but could not be eliminated (Ponterotto 2005).

4.3.5 Research instrument

Given that the task was to enter the context and to discern the emic views, the only possible research instrument was the person of the researcher. My position as researcher was one of learner but my knowledge, values, experiences of God-belief, religion, culture and the South African context could not be eliminated or divorced from the research process which is value-laden and biased (Creswell 1994). Therefore my experience, own spirituality and intuition were fundamental elements used in the research process to inform and guide my inquiry (Nieuwenhuis 2007a), enhancing my sensitivity for and understanding of the participants' points of view and lived experiences (Ponterotto 2005). Throughout the research process I kept careful notes of my reflections on and personal reactions to the research in the belief that what is consciously acknowledged can be "bracketed" (Ponterotto 2005).

4.3.6 Design type

The focal point of study was a group of Christians, individuals who share the same cultural and religious context thus "a few instances of some phenomenon" (Babbie, 2007:298). This group of individuals can be seen as "a bounded system" (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004; Creswell 1994; Marshall & Rosman 1989), thus a case

study design was used which is ideally suited to an in-depth study to answer how and why questions (Babbie 2007; Nieuwenhuis 2007b).

4.3.7 Sampling and ethical considerations

The aim of my research provided the main criteria for sampling; I needed to interview African people who were Christians. Participants had to be fluent in English as I am unable to converse fluently in an African language. Furthermore I was sensitive to the power imbalance inherent to the research situation and did not want to interview individuals who might have been overly intimidated by the process. I thus decided to focus on more educated individuals and my strategy was one of purposive sampling (Maree & Pieterse 2007). Initially I extended invitations to groups of people to participate. Three groups were approached: a group of teachers who were upgrading their qualifications, a psychology honours group, and a group of members of a Roman Catholic Church in a township. During the verbal presentation of my research to these groups of possible participants I accentuated the following major ideas:

Firstly, I took great care to introduce myself as searching believer and that I wanted to learn from fellow believers. My aim was to ensure that prospective participants would understand that my position was not one of power (the knower) but one of a searcher (the one not knowing). This was very important as I am a white Afrikaans-speaking woman and all the participants were Africans. Given the contaminated power (social and religious) relations of the past, I took time to explain my belief that all views and understandings are legitimate and valuable for the individual who holds them and therefore legitimate and worthy of respect.

Secondly, I explained the key ideas I wanted to research. I explained that I understand the definitions, descriptions and actions of God taught by the church and understood by individuals as their God-concept. However our personal experience of God, who He is for each individual and how He acts in individuals' lives, would then be people's image of God (God-image). With this explanation I wanted to deconstruct the notion of one correct concept and image of God. I wanted to make sure that prospective participants would feel comfortable in the knowledge that their God-concepts and -images were as valid as anybody else's. I also wanted to alert them to the topics that would be discussed in the interview.

Thirdly, I explained that the outcome of my research would be documented and be available in the public domain. I accentuated that the privacy of participants would at all times be guarded and that they would not be identified in the final document.

I concluded my invitation by handing out forms to be filled in by individuals who were willing to participate. Surprisingly few (only fourteen out of a possible 180) people responded to the invitation. I began to appreciate how intimate and personal belief is and understood that I needed to be extremely sensitive and accepting during the interviews. I have subsequently learned that open communication about one's deepest beliefs and feelings is not a common occurrence in the African culture. Such communication is normally limited to one's peers. Sharing is restricted by barriers of gender and age (Interview Father Juma). I contacted the volunteers by phone and set up appointments. At the outset of each interview, the parameters of our discussion were negotiated afresh. I reiterated that I acknowledge the validity of each individual's experience and that I do not believe there is one right belief. Each participant provided his/her signed consent before the interview was conducted. I was very encouraged and gratified as the participants expressed their enjoyment of the interview and stated that having had the opportunity to talk about their beliefs clarified their beliefs and enhanced self-insight.

4.3.8 Data collection

Interviews were conducted to gauge the understanding and meanings of participants. My attitude to and intention with the interviews are reflected in Spradley's words as quoted by Kvale (1996:125):

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand.

I however acknowledge the romanticism of the position. Even though I took great care to communicate my belief that all people's views and religious beliefs are equally valid and that I wanted to learn from and be guided by each individual into his/her world of meanings, I was acutely aware of the complex interplay of my and the interviewees' gender, age, professional background, ethnicity and our pains to overcome these by our "efforts to produce a particular order, drawing upon cultural knowledge to structure the situation, and to minimize embarrassment and frustration, feelings of asymmetrical relations of status and power etc" (Alvesson 2002:114). These elements were recorded in a journal and integrated during data analysis.

Individual interviews were conducted, digitally captured, transcribed and reflected upon in the light of the research questions. The number of interviews was determined by the point where accumulated findings indicated that nothing new was emerging and that data saturation had been reached (Grbich 2007). Twelve

participants, eight male and four female, ranging in age between twenty five and sixty five years were individually interviewed in sessions of between one hour and one and a half hours. In total fourteen hours of audio material was transcribed for detailed analysis.

4.3.9 Data analysis and interpretation

The principle of the hermeneutic circle, the part – whole relationship was always in the foreground during the interpretation of data (Gadamer 1982; Burrell & Morgan 1979). The individual constructions (the parts) were seen as expressions of a particular socio-religious environment (the whole). Holstein & Gubrium's (2005) warning that a balance should be maintained between the *whats* and *hows* was a guiding principle. I chose meaning and well-being within the frame of psychology (not theology) as the scope for the interpretation of participants religious experiences (Gadamer 1982).

The process of analysis started with a concerted effort of immersion (Terre Blanche, Durheim & Kelly 2007; Taylor & Bogdan 1998) in the data by reading the transcriptions while listening to the digital recordings of interviews, noting impressions, intuitions and ideas. The texts were then analysed by the identification of units of meaning and the identification of significant quotes that capture the essence of these meanings. The next step was to corroborate whether meanings were shared by participants where after coding took place. This was followed by the search for and identification of themes (categories) and patterns (Babbie 2007; Kelly 2007b; Alvesson 2002; Day 1996). All decisions were informed by the psycho-socio-religious context of the participants and the focus was through the lens of meaning (See Figure 1). A reflective team (Jones, 2004) a specialist in positive psychology, a theologian and an African priest who is a registered psychological counsellor were involved in the data analysis. The process is diagrammatically depicted in the following flowchart.

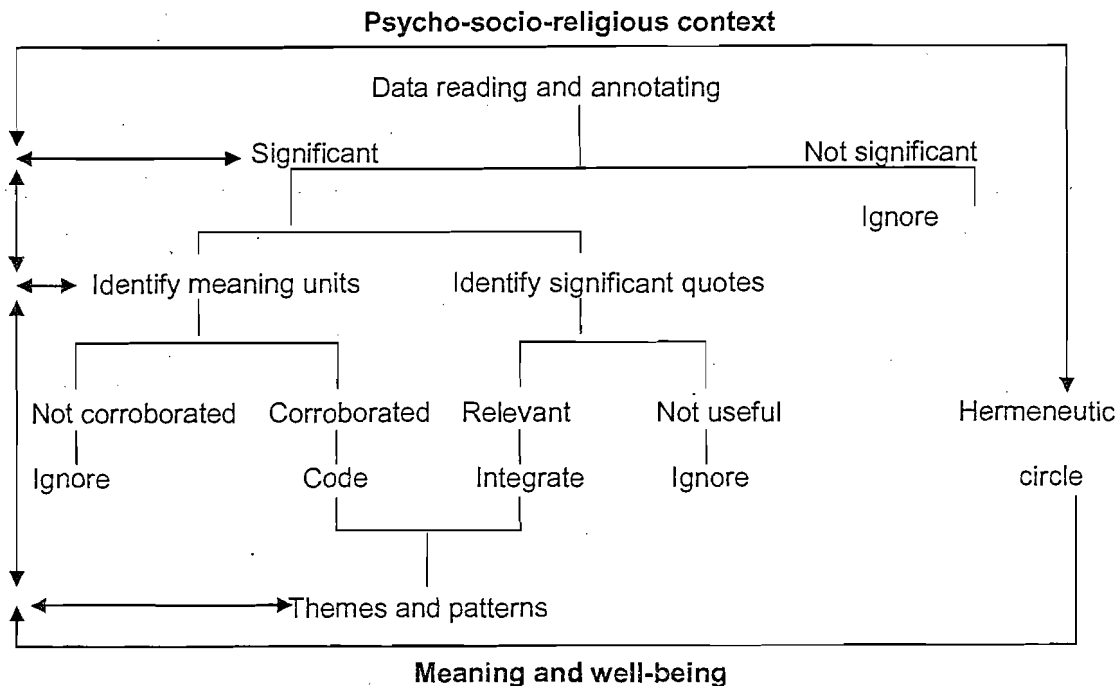


Figure1. Data analysis matrix

4.3.10 Quality

Criteria for the truth and correctness of qualitative research interpretations are not generally agreed upon (Kelly 2007c). Schwandt (1994) suggests the use of criteria like thoroughness, coherence, comprehensiveness and whether the interpretations are useful and worthy of adoption.

4.3.10.1 Thoroughness

In order to make a defensible claim regarding the truth of the co-created interpretation (knowledge), meticulous care was taken to at all times keep close to the data, to look for opponent explanations while in continuous awareness of the impact of my own experiences, thoughts and being in every aspect of the study (Kelly 2007c). Extensive field notes were kept to keep track of the research and personal processes, these data were integrated in the final data analysis and interpretation (Babbie & Mouton 2001). The participation of a reflective team ensured investigator triangulation (Kelly 2007c; Babbie & Mouton 2001). By being as thorough as possible (Schwandt 1994), credibility and trustworthiness was enhanced. Babbie & Mouton (2001) argue that a demonstration of credibility is sufficient to establish dependability.

4.3.10.2 Coherence and comprehensiveness

I have striven for coherence (Schwandt 1994) between all aspects of research; the research question, research philosophy and every subsequent research activity and to describe the research process accurately, to motivate my choice of methods and data analysis and to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the context in which the research was conducted. These procedures were followed in order to create interpretations useful and worthy of adoption (transferability) (Kelly 2007a; Schwandt 1994).

4.3.4 Summary of Article 3

This article reports the qualitative exploration of the well-being and meaning that second and third generation Christians from an African context experience as a consequence of their integration of religion in their life and being. A comprehensive, detailed account of the participants' understanding of God (God-concept), experience of their relationship with God (God-image) and understanding of life as coloured by their belief systems is provided. Implications for pastoral counselling and psycho-therapy are indicated.

Section 2: Article 1

**PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN
PERSPECTIVE**

Will be submitted to:

Hervormde Theological Studies

PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Psychology of Religion is a sufficiently developed discipline but developments in this field have largely been ignored in the South African psychological discourse. Knowledge in this field is mainly produced in Western, Christian-oriented societies, which do not necessarily reflect South African religious/spiritual experiences and which do not necessarily take cognisance of African indigenous knowledge. In this article, the field of Psychology of Religion will be outlined and the two key constructs spirituality and religiousness described. Articles published in the South African Journal of Psychology over the 10-year period 1997 to 2006 were analysed to ascertain the extent of South African research in this field. The importance of continued research in this field in order to expand and enrich psychological discourse will be argued.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religiousness is a fundamental aspect of the human condition. Armstrong (1999:3) states, "... there is a case for arguing that *homo sapiens* is also *homo religious*. Men and women started to worship gods as soon as they became recognisably human; they created religions at the same time they created works of art". Since time immemorial, every culture had its religious traditions, which underpinned its worldview, frame of values and ways of living.

In modern society, however, firmly held beliefs are being severely challenged. Due to scientific advances that disconfirm dearly held religious beliefs (Dawkins 2006), globalisation and advanced information and travelling technology, a sizable portion of the developed world now inhabit "a polyglot blend of East-West beliefs" (Chopra 2006:104). Individual believers and faith communities respond differently to these challenges. Reactions range from rigid fundamentalism to a more inclusive view in which different religions are understood and accepted as various paths that eventually converge in spiritual growth, development or enlightenment.

Religion furthermore is a powerful motivating force, of which the 9/11 tragedy in recent times and the Crusades in pre-modern times are examples. Throughout the ages, religious motivation has brought out the best and the worst in people. This force can enhance human development but can also inflict suffering. Religiousness may contribute to physical, psychological and spiritual health but could also restrict and impede such health (Koenig 1995).

The permeating influence of religion and its effect on the lives of individuals and groups constitutes the core of the field of Psychology of Religion. The psychological study of religion can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century (Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005; Hill et al. 2000). Hill et al. (2000:51) contend, "The state of the discipline today can be characterized as sufficiently developed but still overlooked, if not bypassed, by the whole of psychology". That this scenario is indeed mirrored in the South African context will be argued in this article.

In what follows reference will be made to the evolutionary and cultural foundations of religion. Subsequently, a brief descriptive summary of the field of Psychology of Religion will be provided with emphasis on the two key constructs in the field, namely *religiosity* and *spirituality*. The uniqueness of South Africa's religious-cultural context will be highlighted and the paucity of publications relevant to this field will be indicated together with a discussion of the main findings of pertinent articles that appeared in the *South African Journal of Psychology* between January 1997 and December 2006. Finally, the need for local research to probe the indigenous knowledge systems will be highlighted.

2. HUMAN BEINGS ARE ESSENTIALLY RELIGIOUS

Humans have always created gods and the fact that the idea of God/gods constantly changes (even from one generation to the next) ensures the God-idea of its functional, pragmatic value. As a result of this flexibility of the God-idea, the notion of God is one of the greatest human ideas of all times (Armstrong 1999). The God-idea has therefore influenced how humans understand themselves and their world and how they have lived their lives throughout human history.

Answers as to why people are religious vary. Rudolf Otto cited by Armstrong (1999) believed humans' sense of awe in the face of the mystery of life is basic to religion. Genetics play a substantial role in religious beliefs and this is of evolutionary significance (Piedmont 1999). Spong (2001) also highlighted the evolutionary value of religion. He argued that the first self-aware creatures learned to cope with the angst of their self-consciousness through communal life, the preservation of food, finding security in caves, the use of fire and, most importantly, the theistic concept of God. However, the final answer regarding the evolutionary function of religion has not been pinpointed conclusively (Kirkpatrick 2005). Questions regarding the role, function, purpose and value of religion, the various God-ideas of individuals and groups and the characteristics of people's God/gods, fall in the sphere of the Psychology of Religion.

3. THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

Reber and Reber (2001:622) define Psychology of Religion as "A subdiscipline within psychology concerned with the origins of religions, their role in human existence, the nature of religious attitudes and experiences etc.". Being religious is part of being human. Armstrong (1999:3) states, "Like any other activity, religion can be abused but it seems to have been something that we have always done. It was not tacked on to a primordially secular nature by manipulative kings and priests but was natural to humanity."

Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott (1999) highlight three characteristics of traditional perspectives on religious (spiritual) phenomena: a focus on individual aspects of religiousness; broad and balanced descriptions of spirituality and religiousness; and recognition of positive and negative forms of religion/spirituality. Traditionally, psychologists focused on the personal aspects (behaviours, cognitions and affects) of religiousness and sociologists on the communal aspects (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005).

From a psychological perspective, the scientific study of religion has gained prominence over the last 25 years (Moore, Kloos & Rasmussen, 2001; Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 1996). The integrity of the discipline rests on scientifically sound, balanced and non-biased research (neither strongly pro- nor anti-religion) (Baumeister 2002). Some of the results of the research hint at a link between religion, spirituality and psychological and physical well-being (Holt, Llewellyn, & Rathweg 2005; Pargament & Mahoney 2002; Moss 2002; Pargament 2002). The protective effects of spirituality and religion in depression, suicide and substance abuse have been demonstrated (Powell 2002) and the potential positive links between spirituality and religiosity and pro-social youth development are well documented (Dowling et al. 2004; Furrow, King & White 2004; Kerestes, Youniss & Metz 2004). Recently, spiritual problems have been included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-IV TR). It cannot be denied that spirituality often manifested through religion, is an integral, essential aspect of personhood and that spiritual aspects therefore warrant the same scientific attention as the biological, psychological, and social aspects.

4. KEY CONSTRUCTS IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION: SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUSNESS

In any scientific study, it is crucial to clarify concepts in order to eliminate confusion. Two key constructs in the Psychology of Religion are *spirituality* and *religion*. Traditionally, these terms were used interchangeably but since the latter half of the 20th century a schism had developed between the constructs *religion* and *spirituality* (see Rizzuto 2005; Hill et al. 2000; Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott 1999 for comprehensive overviews). Rizzuto (2005) ascribed this split to, amongst others, a fragmented post-modern society at the tail end of a "so called Christianity civilization" (Rizzuto 2005:35, 36) in which the power and legitimacy of meta-narratives (all encompassing grounding explanations) of the traditional monotheistic religions have been eroded in the light of many other competing religious meta-narratives (Oriental, occult, astrology, holistic healing). The new legitimate status of these religions has presented the post-modern person with alternatives and has confused even traditionally staunch believers. The modern world has become devoid of meaning, and rigidly dogmatic answers to existential questions are not enough for many post-modern people. Spirituality has emerged as an alternative to religiousness, and thus a narrower understanding of the constructs *religion* and *spirituality* is eminent today. These two constructs are even frequently posed as opposites. Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott (1999) identified three polarisations that are particularly salient: organised religion versus personalised spirituality; substantive religion versus functional spirituality; mundane harmful religion versus lofty helpful spirituality.

- *Organised religion versus personal spirituality*. Religion is currently increasingly associated with formalised, institutionalised practices and prescriptions while spirituality describes personal transcendence, meaningfulness and relatedness (Crossman 2003; Hill et al. 2000; Zinnbauer et al. 1999).
- *Substantive religion versus functional spirituality*. Recently, the conceptualisation of *religion* has been transformed from a verb to a noun (Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005) and has become a static entity linked to institutions and dogmas, while *spirituality* is seen as individual practices (dynamic) to achieve meaningful goals such as wholeness, interconnections with others and truth (Zinnbauer et al. 1999).
- *Harmful religiousness versus helpful spirituality*. According to Zinnbauer et al. (1999), *religiousness* and *spirituality* have acquired specific, limiting connotations in popular and scientific writings. *Religiousness* is disparaged as "mundane faith" and *spirituality* as "describing the higher side of life, the highest human potential" (Zinnbauer et al. 1999: 902).

Zinnbauer et al. (1999) caution that these polarisations limit and obscure the connectedness of the constructs and the richness of meaning locked into the constructs. The discourse should rather be steered towards the concept of *the sacred* which is the basic assumption of both constructs (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). On the one hand, it needs to be acknowledged that the aim of all major religions is to guide large groups of people nearer to God, the transcendent or the sacred, thus including 'spiritual' functions (Dreyer 2003; Rassool 2000). Through religious practices and rituals (within a social environment), believers are guided to experience the complex, inexplicable transcendent 'reality', a reality no words or images can adequately explain (Armstrong, 1999). However, if religion is reduced to a static entity, the dynamic uplifting and transforming influence of religion in many people's lives, is disregarded.

On the other hand, viewing spirituality as an essentially individual, personal phenomenon disregards the socio-cultural context in which it is expressed (Zapf 2005). If spirituality is restricted to functional individualistic definitions, distinctions between what are spiritual and other philosophical reflections, existential questions and peak experiences are concealed. Then the substantive core of spirituality (which is the sacred) is obscured and not adequately emphasised (Zinnbauer et al. 1999). Hill et al. (2000) also warn that losing the sacred in discussions about religiousness and spirituality would obscure the difference between what is truly spiritual and what is merely highly elaborated lifestyles and ideologies (e.g. vegetarianism or pacifism, among others). "The Sacred is a person, an object, a principle, or a concept that transcends the self. Though the Sacred may be found within the self, it has perceived value independent of the self" (Hill et al. 2000:64). Thus, if pacifism was based only on a stand against violence, it would be a mere ideology, but if it integrated a sense of the sanctity of life it would become a pacifistic spirituality. The Sacred as the core element of religion and spirituality, serves to "orient, motivate and shape central aspects of the human psyche" (Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005:30).

It is important that constructs are defined clearly in the development of a scientific field (Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005; Piedmont 1999; Zinnbauer et al. 1999). Hill et al. (2000:66) proposed the following criteria for definitions of religion and spirituality:

Criteria for spirituality:

- A. The feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviours that arise from a search for the sacred. The term search refers to attempts to identify, articulate, maintain, or transform. The

term sacred refers to a divine being, divine objects, Ultimate reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual.

Criteria for religion:

- A. The feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviours that arise from a search for the sacred. The term search refers to attempts to identify, articulate, maintain, or transform. The term sacred refers to a divine being, divine objects, Ultimate reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual.

AND/OR

- B. A search for non-sacred goals (such as identity, belongingness, meaning, health, or wellness) in a context that has as its primary goal the facilitation of (A).

AND:

- C. The means and methods (e.g. rituals or prescribed behaviours) of the search that receive validation and support from within an identifiable group of people

Hill et al. (2000:66).

The construct *spirituality* thus includes all types of spirituality – religious, non-religious and secular spirituality. Their common denominator is self-transcendence, a search for and reaching out to the sacred (Shaw 2005; Peterson & Seligman 2004; Crossman 2003). All human beings are spiritual and all have the fundamental capacity for self-transcendence (Piedmont 1999). This capacity includes a sense of connectedness, universality and prayer fulfilment. Schneiders' (2001:684) definition of spirituality as "the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives", resonates with the above-mentioned criteria.

5. THE RELIGIOUS COLOUR OF CULTURE

Religion is both cultural fact and personal experience (Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott 1999). Rizzuto succinctly expressed this fact:

Furthermore, cultural anthropology has demonstrated that the characteristics of human

society and the subjective experiences of its members depend on the intertwining of belief systems embedded in language, mythology, religion and the structural organisation of institutions. Those beliefs are collectively shared. Although each individual may introduce some personal variations in the manner of believing, he or she cannot escape the boundaries established by the cultural structure. We are born, develop, live and transform ourselves in the context of that shared matrix of belief.

(Rizzuto, 2005:37)

The unique South African matrix of belief is the result of a specific history: Over the past 350 years, zealous missionaries from various Christian denominations have confronted African belief systems, resulting in 79% of the South African population describing themselves as Christian (Statistics South Africa, 2001). However, the South African Christian landscape is varied. Included amongst others are Reformed, Roman Catholic, charismatic and indigenous African Christian denominations of whom some syncretise African beliefs and Christianity. In addition to Christians, there are believers of the Jewish, Moslem, Hindu and traditional African faiths and an assortment of other religious persuasions. It nevertheless seems safe to conclude that the dominant religions, beliefs and myths are those of Christian and traditional African orientations.

As previously stated, most of the research in the field of Psychology of Religion has been done in post-modern Western Christian contexts (Hill 2005; Hill & Hood 1999). However, the vast majority of South Africans have essentially different spiritual experiences due the pervasive influence of African spirituality.

6. AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

African spirituality is characterised by a unique holistic and anthropocentric ontology (Viljoen 2003), which leads to a specific understanding of a person's relationship with God, others and the world. Kalilombe (1999:212) describes African religion as "... essentially a way of living in the visible sphere in relation with the invisible world". The Supreme Deity and other spiritual realities, such as ancestors, sorcerers, healers and malignant spirits, are subsumed under the notion of the invisible world. One of the most significant African beliefs regarding God (Creator) is his distance. He is

above the drama of everyday life. Day-to-day living is believed to be influenced and deeply affected by the spirits inhabiting the invisible world. Religion thus pervades all aspects of life (Viljoen 2003; Kalu 2000; Zahan 2000).

The fact that culture and religion are in flux is irrefutable (Armstrong 1999). Deep structural movements in society are frequently entwined with corresponding shifts in religious beliefs, of which the religion-dominated debates regarding the legalisation of same-gender marriages in 2007 are an example. Since 1994, structural changes in the South African society have impacted on the whole population. Both westernised and African people are in transition with acculturation leading to the traditional being influenced and even, in a section of the population, being left behind in favour of a more modern Western-oriented or even post-modern way of life (Viljoen 2003; Thwala, Pillay & Sargent 2000). The adoption of a more Western inclined lifestyle does however not necessarily imply the total denouncement of African spirituality (beliefs and rituals). The importance of African religious principles, rituals and beliefs is evident in the blossoming of indigenous (independent) churches, which respect and incorporate African spirituality and cosmology.

The constant changes and developments due to globalisation and technological developments impact on all societies across the world, however South African's experiences are distinctive. Not only do we have an idiosyncratic merging of cultures and religions, but also a political history in which much oppression occurred in the name of Christianity. What effects these historical events had on the spiritual lives of people is still to be ascertained.

7. PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Most of the research in the field of Psychology of Religion has been done in the unique cultural and religious context of the United States of America. The limitation of this research is acknowledged by Benson (2004:48) who reasons, "Given emerging data suggesting that religious and spiritual vitality and salience may be most prominent in the developing world ... we can greatly enrich theory and practice by learning from non-industrialized developing contexts".

If the rich variety of religions in South Africa is recognised, it becomes clear that South African psychology is in a unique position to contribute to this field. Research reported in the *South African Journal of Psychology* during the ten-year period January 1997 to December 2006 was scrutinised in an attempt to gauge contributions in this field. Only three articles (Temane & Wissing 2006; Francis, Kerr & Lewis 2005; Strümpher 1997) could be regarded as directly situated within the field of Psychology of Religion. Temane and Wissing (2006) indicated the mediating role

of spirituality regarding context and psychological well-being. Strümpfer (1997) explored the relationship between internal religious motivation and external religious orientation and work-related variables and Francis et al. (2005) reported on the validation of the Francis Scale of Attitude Toward Christianity within the field of Psychology of Religion. As this research was done on a sample of white English-speaking secondary school learners they indicate the needs for further examination of the scale across ethnic and language groups.

Articles that included elements of religious beliefs in discussions or used religiousness as construct were also analysed. Salient research themes identified were:

7.1 Psychological well-being

Strümpfer (2005) reviewed the contributions of pre-eminent psychologists to the foundations of psychofortology and pointed out the positive role of religion and spirituality in human well-being and positive functioning. Pienaar, Beukes and Esterhuyse (2006) as well as Edwards and Besseling (2001) reported research that was conducted within the broad framework of positive psychology and found that religious involvement was associated with higher levels of a sense of coherence in their samples.

There is a significant relationship between religion and mental and physical health (Holt et al. 2005; Pargament and Mahoney 2002; Powell 2002). However, Pargament (2002) indicated that, depending on the situation and the type of belief, religion can be helpful or harmful. None of the South African articles mentioned explored the substance of beliefs (fear-based or love-based), how people view God (is their God-image one of a violent God of retribution or of a loving presence) or what their expectations of God are (a distant Being or One who is intimately involved in daily life) and how these beliefs affect people's lives and well-being.

Suggestions for further research point to the need for more sophisticated designs and methods, quantitative and qualitative, to come to a holistic understanding (Strümpfer 1997). This highlights the need to work within what Emmons and Paloutzian (2003:395) described as a multi-level interdisciplinary paradigm which "recognizes the value of data at multiple levels of analysis while making nonreductive assumptions concerning the value of spiritual and religious phenomena".

7.2 Meaningfulness

People's understanding of the world and the way in which adverse events are understood, interpreted and eventually coped with are entwined with their religious beliefs (Opperman & Novello 2006; Mokhosi & Grieve 2004).

7.3 Values

The role of religion in peoples' value frameworks and moral decision-making was indicated by Mojapelo-Batka and Schoeman (2003) and Renner, Peltzer and Phaswana (2003). Although the role of religion was not the direct focus in the research of Mojapelo-Batka and Schoeman (2003) and that by Renner et al. (2003), their findings attested to the important influence of religion regarding the development of values and moral behaviour. This agrees with findings showing that those values which a society considers as important are related to the dominant religion in that society (Roccas 2005; Schwarts & Huismans 1995). Values express what people believe to be good and bad and are guidelines according to which people evaluate the world and their life experiences and how they act and behave (Roccas 2005). Given the complex South African religious amalgamation, questions arise regarding the relative salience of conflicting Western and African values such as individuality vs. groupness, competition vs. co-operation, survival of the fittest vs. survival of the tribe (Viljoen 2002:536) and the influence of these on interpersonal, inter-group and inter-racial relationships and the democratic process.

7.4 Practical application

Findings by Opperman and Novello (2006), Mokhosi and Grieve (2004), Van Dyk (2001) and Viljoen, Beukes and Louw (1999) accentuate the importance of psychological and educational practitioners' understanding of and respect for various religious beliefs and resulting world views.

Viljoen et al. (1999) found limitations regarding practicing psychologists' ability to help non-Western patients effectively on account of difficulties with language and communication, differences in worldview and perceptions of pathology, ignorance regarding patients' religious beliefs, habits, customs and traditional healing. The necessity to cultivate such understanding and sensitivity is supported by findings of Opperman and Novello (2006) and Mokhosi and Grieve (2004) who emphasise peoples' reliance on religion to make meaning of traumatic life events. Van Dyk (2001) also underlines the important role of African cosmology in understanding the perceived causes of ill fate and illness and suggests that educators and caregivers need to understand and respect African cosmology. According to Hall and Livingston,

It is not compulsory that the practitioners should endorse clients' belief systems or other aspects of their spirituality, but practitioners should acknowledge said systems as a critical point in the client's frame of reference. In the interest of social justice they are thus challenged to develop creative treatment strategies less confined to Western bias.

(Hall and Livingson, 2006:136)

7.5 Measurement

The only reported research regarding measuring instruments was that of the Francis Scale of Attitude towards Christianity, which was found to be valid and reliable for use in a small minority of white English-speaking South African adolescents (Francis et al. 2005). In the latter half of the 20th century, the dominating paradigm in Psychology of Religion was a "measurement paradigm" (Hill 2005:43), which produced a variety of reasonably effective instruments in this field (Hill 2005; Hill & Hood 1999). None of the considerable variety of available scales has been validated for use in the broader South African population. Limitations of the available instruments are in the first instance that they are underpinned by an empiricist epistemology, which assumes that knowledge can represent reality (Durrheim 1997). In the second instance, these instruments were developed as a result of research that was characterised by North American, Protestant, white middle-class male overrepresentation and the instruments were therefore considered not culturally sensitive in the broader North American society (Hill 2005; Benson 2004). The need for adapting and validating or for constructing scales for South African use is thus indicated. In the light of the limiting epistemology and culturally different populations, however, a careful qualitative exploration of pertinent dimensions regarding peoples' religious beliefs and spiritual experiences in the South African context is essential to build a balanced corpus of scientific knowledge in which qualitative information complement quantitative data (Stark n.d.).

7.6 Broader discourse

Seedat (2006) indicated the need for interdisciplinary discourse and Lazarus (2006), Moll (2002) and Seedat (1997) accentuated the responsibility of Psychology to expand indigenous knowledge systems.

Research in the field of Psychology of Religion could contribute significantly to the expansion of the psychological discourse on two levels. Firstly, indigenous

knowledge systems could be expanded by systematically developing an understanding of the unique African psychological experiences that differ fundamentally from Euro-American experiences (Lazarus 2006; Moll 2002; Seedat 1997) regarding "... epistemology, concepts, language and techniques of psychology and the psychological ethos ..." (Seedat 1997:261). Secondly, Psychology of Religion could also contribute to inter-disciplinary discourse by employing its specific scientific research perspectives, concepts and constructs in the research of spirituality and the divine, which was traditionally the domain of theology (Seedat 2006). In the light of the fact that peoples' belief systems and identities, and therefore behaviour, are often founded on faith and religion, the importance of dialogue between religion and secular sciences including Psychology becomes evident.

8. CONCLUSION

From the above exposition it is evident that research in the field of Psychology of Religion should be given prominence and be put on the research agenda of Psychology, Sociology and Theology – to name but a few. There is a dire need for practitioners to be more knowledgeable and sensitive to religious diversity and resulting different worldviews, but there is also a need for well-grounded local knowledge creation and theory building. By focusing on research in the Psychology of Religion, South African researchers would not only contribute to the expansion of indigenous knowledge systems, but would also add to the greater discourse in this field, which is currently dominated by Western Christian perspectives. South Africa has a distinctive religious panorama characterised by a "polyglot" blend of African, Christian, Muslim and other beliefs. By exploring the content of peoples' most intimate religious understandings and experiences and how these influence their daily living and psychological well-being, a contribution could be made to a psychology that is based "... on a continual theoretical movement of global, universal explanatory principles out of and into Africa" (Moll 2002:14).

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Section 3: Article 2

**A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SOURCE AND FUNCTION OF
GOD-BELIEF AND ITS RELEVANCE IN (RELIGIOUS) EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT**

Will be submitted to:

Hervormde Theological Studies

**A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SOURCE AND FUNCTION OF
GOD-BELIEF AND ITS RELEVANCE IN (RELIGIOUS) EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT**

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A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SOURCE AND FUNCTION OF GOD-BELIEF AND ITS RELEVANCE IN (RELIGIOUS) EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Abstract

Our purpose in this article is to explore psychological answers to the following three questions: Why are humans religious? How does religion influence peoples' perspective on life? And why is it important to understand the impact of religion in peoples' lives? Theories, including psycho-analytical and evolutionary answers regarding the origin of humans' penchant to be religious, are discussed.

Subsequently, the spotlight will be on the dominant influence of religious notions in peoples' worldviews, providing meaning and powerfully influencing their cognitions, emotions and behaviour. Finally, the significance of educators' understanding and respect for the pervasive role of religious notions (metaphysical assumptions) will pointed out.

1. INTRODUCTION

The warp and woof of the South African nation are the worldviews and related religions that dominate how the world is understood and how meaning is created both by the individual and various likeminded groups of people, making the fabric of society extraordinarily complex. Worldviews are culturally and religiously coloured and therefore some notions of God(s) or Absolute Reality are included in the amalgam of assumptions contained in a worldview. These assumptions are seldom consciously questioned or analysed by laypeople and they therefore unconsciously influence laypeople's behaviour, decisions, understanding of causality and the world in general. These assumptions also powerfully impact on each individual's world of meanings and such individual's psychological well-being. Unfortunately holding different sets of assumptions can significantly contaminate the flow of communication between individuals and groups.

Questions arise as to why people are religious, which functions religion fulfil and what the resulting influence of religion is on the texture of the national fabric. Psychology has begun to research the phenomenon that ideas of God(s) are universally present amongst humans. Attempts to explain religion (God-belief) are in no way aimed at invalidating some or all religions. Kirkpatrick (2005:6) succinctly states "... it is simply wrong to assume that a scientific understanding of why and how people come to believe in χ has any bearing on the question of whether or not χ is true". How people's beliefs influence them on individual and collective levels is a question to be answered in the South African context.

In this article, the focus is on religiousness as objective fact of human life, but also on religiousness as cultural and personal realities. In order to gain a multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon, a scientific, inter-personal and intra-personal perspective of religiousness will be explored. The construct worldview as nodal point, where the objective fact of religiousness manifests concretely in interpersonal and intrapersonal functioning, is highlighted. People express their religiousness in terms of various religions that centre on ideas about the Ultimate Reality or God. Specifically, worldviews and religions that are dominant in the South African contexts are discussed, emphasising how individuals and groups create meaning within these frameworks. The focus is on Christian and traditional African worldviews because the statistics of the latest census (i.e. that of 2001) show that 79% of the South African population named Christianity as their preferred religion, or religious tag (Statistics South Africa 2001), and the South African population is predominantly African.

2. EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY AND THEORIES OF RELIGION

Scientific (read: empirically testable) explanatory theories of religion accentuate important ways in which religion and evolutionary development are interwoven. Evolutionary psychology focuses on the psychological adaptations and the by-products of these adaptations (Buss 2004). This field of enquiry concerns itself with the commonalities between people and not with individual differences, thus regarding religion, the focus is on the fact that people are religious and not on the differences between religions. Evolutionary psychology is embedded in general evolutionary theory as guiding paradigm and draws on evolutionary biology, anthropology, cognitive science, ethology and other empirical sciences (Dennet 2006; Haidt 2006; Kirkpatrick 2005; Buss 2004; Atran 2002; Newberg, D'Aquili & Rause 2001; Mallon & Stich 2000)

The main features of universal Darwinism are variation, selection and retention (heredity). There are three products of evolution: adaptations, by-products of adaptations and noise (or random effects) (Atran 2002; Buss 2004; Kirkpatrick 2006; Tooby & Cosmides 1990). *Adaptations* are "evolved solutions to specific problems that contribute either directly or indirectly to successful reproduction" (Buss 2004:16) while *by-products* are characteristics that do not solve adaptive problems and do not have functional design, yet are coupled with adaptations that do solve problems of survival. *Noise* is random effects resulting from forces like mutations (Buss 2004; Tooby & Cosmides 1990). Religiousness is seen as a by-product of multiple domain-specific cognitive adaptations, which evolved to solve problems of survival and reproduction (Dennett 2006; Kirkpatrick 2005; Atran 2002; Boyer 2001, 1994; Barrett 2000).

3. THEORIES OF RELIGION

Various psychological theories attempt to answer the question why people are religious. Generally these theories fall into three loose groups: wish-fulfilment theories, intellectualist theories and social functionalist theories (Dennet 2006; Guthrie 1993).

3.1 Wish-fulfilment theories

Freud, the father of psycho-analysis, was outspoken about his conviction that belief is mere wish-fulfilment (Freud, 1961). Although Darwin's theory of natural selection considerably influenced Freud's initial thinking (e.g. his life-preserving instincts and sexual instincts correspond to Darwin's theory of natural and sexual selection), he moved away from this Darwinian anchoring later in his life (Guthrie 1993). The essence of wish-fulfilment theories is the premise that religiousness is linked to feelings of fear and insecurity and that the function of religion is to soothe and to provide a frame of safety for believers. One could argue that the ability to allay fear provides individuals an evolutionary advantage to explore and conquer, overpower and replicate.

Wish-fulfilment theories highlight the fact that religions provide comfort to believers, while fear and anxiety are alleviated by the belief in a powerful Being, frequently metaphorically referred to as a Father, Who is lovingly involved in the personal details of everyday life. As their God cannot be seen or experienced directly, believers acquire a concept of God according to the understandings of their religion and culture (the dominant social construction of God). However, according to Freud and Rizutto, believers shape their personal image of God through a process of identification with both parents (objects) during infancy from which parental imagos are formed. These imagos form the base of God representations (Goodwin 1998; Rizutto, 1979; Wulff 1997). Freud viewed belief in a personal God as nothing other than a representation of an exalted father, in which is embedded an infantile wish for parental protection (Goodwin 1998; Guthrie 1993; Rizutto, 1979).

Rizzuto (1979) based her theory of God representations on psychoanalytic and object-relations theory. In her view, God representations have various components: real life parents, wished-for parents and the feared parent of the individual's own imagining. She concludes that the formation of a God image is "... an object-related representational process marked by the emotional configuration of the individual prevailing at the moment he forms the representation – at any developmental stage" (Rizzuto 1979:44). God as transitional (and intentional) object undergoes transformations during the course of life and may retain its meaning, may be abandoned altogether or may be periodically revived during times of crisis. Therefore Rizutto accentuates the dynamic nature of God representations. As

humans change during their cycle of development, so changes occur in their conceptions and images of God. An example of the development of a God representation which allows the retention and growth of faith would be a representation that flows from initial experiences in the parent-child relationship that progresses from the infantile experience of 'I am held, fed and nurtured'; to the young child's experience of 'I feel you; you are with me, you are wonderful, the almighty you love me'; into the middle childhood belief 'you are my God and protector'; the adolescent 'you are the maker of all things'; and the young adulthood understanding of 'you are, let me be me'; and finally the late adulthood's trusting 'whatever, whoever you are, I trust you'. Mostly people are able to transform their God representations according to their needs and keep their faith throughout life. Conversely, a God representation which leads to unbelief would be a representation that progresses from the infantile experience of 'I am not held, I am hungry, I feel uncared for'; to the young child's experience of 'I cannot feel you are there for me, I despair, I thought you were omnipotent, you do not love me'; into the middle childhood belief 'you are destructive, I don't need you, I have other protection'; the adolescent 'I don't need you I have found myself'; the young adulthood experience of 'life is all right; life makes sense'; and the late adulthood's peace in the notion 'I was, that is enough for me' (Rizzuto 1979:206,207).

In this view, belief in God is a way of fulfilling the wish for the protection of a loving, omnipotent, omniscient parent (father), which flows from and builds on the child's need for protection by a powerful other. Both the Christian conception of God as almighty Father and traditional African religions' understanding of the involvement of ancestors as mediators to God provide in this need.

A related theory clearly rooted in an evolutionary framework is that of Kirkpatrick (2005, 1999) who explains religious phenomena in terms of the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980). Attachment initially develops between the primary attachment figure (mostly the mother) and child. On account of infant patterns of attachment and maternal behaviour, internal working models of attachment are patterned in the individual. Such internal working models tend to remain stable and influence adult relationships in which the other is perceived as responsive and available (e.g. in romantic and love relationships) (Kirkpatrick, 2005). Humans however are imperfect attachment figures but "... the idea of God is the idea of an absolutely adequate attachment figure ... God is thought of as a protective and caring parent who is always reliable and always available..." (Kaufman as quoted by Kirkpatrick 2005:53). Christian and other theistic religions are premised on a personal relationship between the believer and the attachment figure (God, Jesus). Traditional beliefs in caring, guiding and chastising ancestors also involve such a relationship. This attachment system is a dynamic part of life but is acutely activated

in situations of fear, illness, and separation or threat of separation of the attachment figure (Kirkpatrick 1999, 2005) and motivates the believer to seek proximity in the religiously prescribed way – prayer, offerings, fasting, slaughtering a goat or other rituals.

Evolutionary psychology understands the mind as a mental organ with domain-specific stores of information that shape and restrict preferences, sexual behaviour, emotional reactions, interpersonal relationships and beliefs – including religious beliefs (Mallon & Stich 2000). How and why the mind evolved to be religious and to create religions, is the focus of intellectualist theories.

3.2 Intellectualist theories

Intellectualist theories link religiousness to a need to understand and control the world. Religions are thus systems that provide parameters within which people interpret and try to influence the world, and attempt to explain the inexplicable. Religious beliefs are seen as particular ways of interpreting the world, different from but related to secular, everyday thoughts and actions (Kirkpatrick 2005; Boyer 2001). According to Kirkpatrick (2005), eons of natural selection has produced the human brain that ensured the survival and reproduction of humans. The brain and psychological mechanisms co-evolved in the process of forging solutions to adaptive problems. Anthropologists and cognitive scientists convincingly argue that religion is a natural phenomenon that results from the evolution of various cognitive systems. It is thus a by-product of evolved cognitive adaptations (Atran 2002; Barrett 2000; Dennett 2006; Kirkpatrick 2005).

In an evolutionary framework, the link between religiousness, language and cognitive strategies is explained by focusing on the kinds of information-processing problems the human mind evolved to solve in order to survive and reproduce (Boyer 2001; Buss 2004). Language (adaptation) developed to facilitate communication and the sharing of information between individuals (Buss 2004) and leads to the ability to formulate more and more complex questions and answers about the world (Kirkpatrick 2005), life and finally about the ultimate questions regarding the origin and purpose of life. A cognitive strategy that simultaneously evolved is the ability to understand others' minds (folk psychology/intuitive psychology). This ability helps us to see others as actors with their own wishes, needs, and agendas and therefore provides us with the ability to guess and predict others' thoughts and actions. Two related strategies (or cognitive tools) that evolved to fulfil humans' need for organisation and significance and for that reason were linked to religiousness as manifested in folk psychology and language will be discussed:

The first cognitive tool (universal perceptual strategy) is what Justin Barrett (Boyer 2001) calls a hyperactive agent detection device (HADD), which results in

animism (attributing life to inanimate objects). It makes evolutionary sense to be hyper vigilant and to treat most things as agents with their own desires and aims (Dennett 2006). Prehistorically, *homo sapiens* was constantly confronted with either predators or prey. The value of the HADD lay in the advantage to over-detect agency (seeing an agent where there was none). These advantages outweighed those of under-detection (not detecting a predator or pray). Consequently, the HADD is a cognitive tool, an adaptation that enhanced *homo sapiens*'s ability to hunt and detect adversity and thus contributed to successful survival and reproduction. A by-product of this adaptation is the attribution of life to gods (stones, trees, sculptures and more abstract concept and ideas of God).

The second cognitive tool is taking the intentional stance (Dennett 2006) and the resulting propensity to anthropomorphise. As conscious beings, humans live intentionally, i.e. they assume an intentional stance when they hold objects and agents in their consciousness through their thoughts, intentions, plans and desires (Crane 2001). Taking the intentional stance inevitably leads to anthropomorphism (attributing human characteristics to non-human phenomena) (Boyer 2001; Guthrie 1993). Gods and spirits are represented as agents with minds (but not necessarily with human features). They have thoughts, memories and intentions (Boyer 2001). Dennett (2006:114) states "At the root of human belief in Gods lies the instinct on a hair trigger: the disposition to attribute *agency* – beliefs and desires and other mental states – to anything complicated that moves". Whenever people make God the object of thought, an intentional object is created. The intentional object is treated as an agent with beliefs and desires (Dennett 2006), thus anthropomorphism occurs. Religious beliefs and interpretations, however, are shown to minimally and systematically violate expectations about folk physics (a person who is invisible), folk biology (a being who lives forever) and folk psychology (a being who knows exactly what you think) (Dennett 2006; Barrett 2000) and therefore religious beliefs are described by Boyer (2001) as counterintuitive. The human mind thus evolved various complex and interlinking cognitive strategies, including language to naturally and effortlessly create ideas about God that are shared but not necessarily fundamentally questioned. These ideas do however also evolve over time which ensures the God-idea of its functional, pragmatic value. As a result of this flexibility of the God-idea, the notion of God is seen as one of the greatest human ideas of all times (Armstrong 1999).

3.3 Social functionalist view

The role of religiousness as psychological mechanisms to regulate interpersonal relationship and intra-group cooperation in order to ensure the successful reproduction of genes (Kirkpatrick 2006) is the essence of the social functionalist view.

During the evolution of *homo sapiens*, individuals who formed groups and who learned to cooperate amongst themselves were able to ward off danger. Those who stuck together were the ones who successfully reproduced. These adaptations had as by-product religion as social phenomenon, of which the purpose is to improve cooperation within human groups (Dennet 2006). A verbal promise of cooperation is not necessarily reliable, therefore a promise is not automatically worth much, but if a person demonstrates commitment through acts, such a promise is viewed as more reliable. Religion as a form of communication by means of shared acts and rituals contributes to the attribution of trustworthiness of the believers amongst themselves. The enhanced trust serves to facilitate cooperation. Religiously prescribed behaviours, badges and bans are costly means of communicating commitment to the beliefs, ideals and values in a particular religious community and strengthening coalitions (Sossis 2006). Sacrificing time and money (in other words spending time and money in aid of the congregation) not indulging in certain activities (i.e. wild parties) wearing certain clothes (a specific uniform linked to the congregation) reliably communicate a level of commitment to the in-group (Kirkpatrick 2006; Sossis 2006) and therefore trustworthiness (Atran 2002). Participation in rituals that involve all the senses (singing, rhythmic movement, consuming specific food and drink, e.g. bread and wine) emotionally validates and cements the commitment to a shared belief in one or more supernatural agents who have full access to all information (Atran 2006). These potentially punitive agents are not deceived by overt behaviours and punish those who do not honour their commitments (Bering & Johnson 2005). Altruism amongst kin is an evolutionary given as it secures successful transmission and survival of genes. Religious communities function as networks of fictive kin that provide major benefits to believers, for example resources (money, time, talents) that are shared to the mutual benefit of all in the congregation (Atran 2006; Nesse 1999).

Boyer (2001) points out that religious beliefs are like commonsense beliefs and utilise the same cognitive equipment; it therefore does not require much effort to have religious beliefs. The activation of an impressive array of communication, mental and social systems makes the very existence of religious concepts possible and very natural. As Boyer (2001:313) explains:

When people pray this activates the mental system that handles *intuitions about verbal communication*. When they promise God that they will behave in the future, their *social exchange system* gives them the intuition that you do not get a benefit (protection) without paying a particular cost (submission, in this case). When they assume that God perceived what people did, this is because their *intuitive psychology* is activated. When they see immoral behavior as

an offence to God, this requires intuitions from their *moral emotional system*. [Italics added]

The abovementioned theories of religion share the common assumptions that psychological needs are at the heart of religion and that there are no distinctive religious motives but rather simply religious means for satisfying irreligious human needs. Finding psychological grounds for religion does not imply that religious beliefs are false (Argyle 2000). Factor analytical studies have shown that at the core of religion is a spirituality distinctive irreducible motivation (Pargament 1997). The construct *spirituality* includes self-transcendence, a search for and reaching out to the sacred (Crossman 2003; Peterson & Seligman 2004; Shaw 2005). All human beings are spiritual and have the fundamental capacity for self-transcendence (Piedmont 1999). This capacity includes a sense of meaning and connectedness, mostly to the family and the in-group/tribe and their understanding of Ultimate Reality, but has the potential to evolve to higher levels of inclusivity and universality (Wilber 2006; Degenaar 1965). The focus will now shift to the place and function of religion as expression of spirituality in the lives of people.

4 RELIGION: EVOLUTIONARY RESULT OR FRAME FOR CREATION OF MEANING?

Grounded in a positivist epistemology of empirical facts, the explanation of human evolution and the evolutionary function of religiousness are scientifically sound theories (Buss 2004). The penchant to be religious thus seems to be hardwired into humans as by-product of evolutionary adaptations. There is no doubt that consciousness and interpretation and experience of reality is a task of the brain (a biological/neurological function), however, the cultural environment patterns the way in which the brain functions (Lipton 2005). Principles and questions that guide the scientific inquiry do not provide answers to metaphysical questions of meaning which belong to another order (Gould 2001) and are reflected in culturally agreed upon renditions of reality. Positivistic science asks questions such as how and why humans developed to be religious, but cannot provide answers to questions such as the reason for the existence of the universe and what the purpose of being human is, thus, what the meaning of creation is. All people across the spectrum of pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras search for answers to the question of meaning. How and what is believed varies according to the cultural and religious traditions of the group.

5. WORLDVIEWS: FRAMES FOR MEANINGS

People want to understand themselves and the world in which they live. This quest for understanding and meaning (Frankl 1978) is ultimately a spiritual endeavour as it

entails searching for meaning beyond the self, thus transcending the self. All people inhabit a personal world within which they create their individual understandings, explanations, and definitions of life and the universe, which together form their worldview. A worldview is time-, place- and culture-specific (Müller 2007) and consists of ideas gleaned from ordinary people, experts, social institutions and abstractions from personal experience (Harris 2006; Koltko-Rivera 2004). Religious dogma and teachings provide ultimate answers that are integrated into people's worldviews, which contain a personal (albeit religiously informed) ontology, anthropology and cosmology.

Cosmological assumptions are ideas about the origin and nature of the universe (McLeod & Hanks 1985) and are informed by various religious creation myths. Ontological assumptions are notions about the nature of existence and include beliefs regarding God (Packer & Goicocchea 2000). Epistemological assumptions pertain to the nature of knowledge (inter alia revealed and scientific knowledge) of what truth is and how it can be known (Kazdin 2000; Packer & Goicocchea 2000). These fundamental assumptions form the basis of a person's understanding of the world and life in general and are seldom questioned or examined as they are mostly unconsciously held.

5.1 Worldview and religion

Religious beliefs emanate from notions about Absolute Reality or God(s) embedded in most peoples' worldviews. People mainly represent God(s) as beings with human characteristics (interested in humans, loving, caring, disappointed). These beings are also thought to have some superhuman characteristics (omnipotent, all knowing, able to function outside natural laws to do miracles). Boyer (2001) describes these extraordinary features as counterintuitive, which creates an ambiguity – are these beings like humans or not? He concludes that in most groups and contexts this ontological uncertainty is neither explored nor resolved. With regard to epistemology, religious knowledge is mostly shrouded in metaphorical language and grounded in religious texts, rituals, songs and narratives and can neither be confirmed nor disconfirmed empirically (Atran 2002). Religious ideas, assumptions and beliefs are all part of a person's worldview and forms what Pyysiäinen (2003:119) calls a metarepresentational attitude. "Worldviews include assumptions that may be unproven, and even unprovable, but these assumptions are superordinate, in that they provide the epistemic and ontological foundations for other beliefs within a belief system" (Koltko-Rivera, 2004:3).

There certainly is a sizable group of people who might not believe in any God, but they too have unprovable notions of Ultimate Reality, which powerfully colour the assumptions and beliefs contained in their worldviews. These beliefs about Ultimate

Reality are therefore extremely powerful, even though they are mostly not consciously investigated by most people (Nxumalo 2004). They frame other beliefs, such as beliefs regarding how people could and should relate to God(s) and what they might expect from such beings, their own collective and personal purpose on earth and the way they should relate to those with similar and dissimilar beliefs and ethics. These beliefs provide the scaffolding for a person's uniquely created understanding of the meaning of life. Beliefs are "principles of action" (Harris 2006:52), they not only represent people's understandings of the world but strongly guide their behaviour, and can indeed be so commanding that people are willing to die or kill for them. Beliefs organise cognition, behaviour and emotions (Harris 2006; Koltko-Rivera 2004) and they relieve the insecurity of having to make sense of the unpredictability and often chaos of daily life.

5.2 Multiplicity of worldviews

As humanity evolved different worldviews evolved in what Wilber (2006, 2007) calls a process of envelopment where preceding levels are included in higher levels of understanding, ethics, consciousness, and ability to care. Each individual's development through different developmental stages along various developmental lines (e.g. cognitive, emotional, moral, interpersonal, psychosexual and spiritual) is mirrored in the collective development of societies as reflected in their worldviews or frames of meaning. Stages of development are well documented (Erikson, Kohlberg, Piaget) and follow a sequence. Initially, children's point of reference is themselves and their own bodily needs and sensations (egocentric), but in time they develop to include others in an expansion of their identity from 'I' to include others like themselves into the 'we' (ethnocentric). Eventually, some individuals evolve to include all other sentient beings ('all of us') in an expansion of care from the self, to the family and tribe, and also to the whole of humanity despite race, colour and creed (worldcentric) (Wilber 2007:45-47). The egocentric (thinking, love, morality, etc) is expanded into the ethnocentric and worldcentric, thus each successive stage contains the previous stage of development in individuals and groups.

Similarly, less and more developed worldviews ranging from pre-secular animism through secular-dualism to post-secular holism are evident in our society (Du Toit 2006). People with a pre-secular animistic worldview are held hostage by dread due to the belief that the world is animated by a fearsome unintelligible force. Secular-dualism, also known as modernism, is linked to rationalism. This is a period of scientific advancement in which everything (humans, nature and God) became the object of investigation and analysis and resulted in the development of a schism between the church and science. Post-modernism is characterised by tolerance and

the acknowledgement of various views and acceptance of both the physical and metaphysical (Du Toit 2006; Wilber 2006, 2007).

Although these worldviews are successive (in that they represent development) they to this day exist side by side in our society. Modernity (however widespread) is not conceptualised and/or actualised in the same way in all communities, since societies are vastly different regarding their history, their way of living and basic cosmological understandings (Bastian 2001). A number of scholars therefore use the notion of multiple modernities, highlighting the fact that there are various discourses available about the truth (Moore & Sanders 2001). A variety of worldviews (grand narratives) are evident in the 21st century. They are dynamic and influence each other.

The rational western worldview of modernity, which is associated with an epistemology of reason and has been shaped by a broad spectrum of philosophies, i.e. Christian and non-Christian, is prevalent in South Africa. Notwithstanding the emphasis on pure reason, many of our cultures are still seeped in religion mostly Christian and traditional African religions.

5.3 Christian worldview

Religious principles, prescriptions, assumptions and stories rooted in a pre-modern worldview are accepted without question by many Christians. A worldview dominated by such concepts, rules and roles could be described as mythic (Wilber 2006). An example of a Christian worldview is a Calvinistic worldview that is founded "... on the (objective) [sic] revelation of God" (Buys 2000:21). Meaning is framed within the belief of God as the creator of all that is and that humans are fallen sinners in need of redemption in order to enjoy a restored relationship with God. A theistic concept of a personal God who is intensely involved in the life of the individual is the dominant God concept. This Calvinistic worldview presupposes a Christian foundation for all human cultural endeavours and therefore values of love, caring and sharing are proclaimed. This view implies that "... human thought ... is dependent on underlying presuppositions and ultimately a basic a-priory religious stand" (Buys 2000:21). It would however be a gross generalisation to assume that all Christians subscribe to this mythic worldview. Scientific developments in exegesis, hermeneutics and historical methods (Craffert 2008) have filtered down to many Christians changing their worldview from mythic to modern or even post-modern. Even within a religious paradigm, such as the Calvinistic worldview explained above, individuals' conceptions of God will share some basic elements but will also be diverse. Religious plurality and diversity thus seems to be a dynamic characteristic of worldviews in Christian religious context. Could this be equally true in the worldviews in the African religious context?

5.4 The African worldview

A cosmology widely found in Africa describes the world of realities as two interrelating spheres, the visible and the invisible spheres created and sustained by the Supreme Deity. African religions hold a deistic concept of God, an Omnipresent Reality, who is seldom mentioned explicitly and who is above sacrifices and rituals (Kalilombe 1994, 1999). Contrary to the so-called revealed religions where theologians, specialists and laymen study and interpret holy texts, in the African oral tradition, ideas and assumptions of African religions are passed on through icons, metaphors, metonymies, dreams, visions, religious rituals, song, dance and symbols (Kalilombe 1999; Zahan 2001). In the African cosmology it is believed that powerful natural and supernatural forces (spiritual beings) govern life. This leads to a view of mystical causality where forces beyond human control are the cause of events in day-to-day life. The spiritual beings guide, protect and chastise the living (Kalu 2000; Kasambala 2005; Mbiti 1991; Zahan 2001). However there are also evil spirits that can be kept at bay by benevolent spirits (Kasambala 2005; Nürnberger 2007). This worldview can be categorised as magical (Wilber 2006, 2007).

The belief that these forces are invisible and that they can neither be understood nor controlled, leads to elaborate rituals to protect and strengthen community members. Diviners may acquire some insight into the workings of such forces, and witches and sorcerers may secretly manipulate these forces to achieve their evil aims. In African cosmology, witchcraft makes logical sense because it provides explanations for the ultimate questions of life and gives reasons for things happening as they do (Moore & Sanders 2001). A disease may be caused by a displeased ancestor, or it might be a sign of the work of a witch, or it may be the result of some unseen virus. It is the task of the diviner to read the signs in order to understand the hidden reality that lies behind the appearances. Witchcraft also makes philosophical sense in its provision of possible answers to the big 'why' questions, thus the meaning of events and experiences. These questions cannot be answered scientifically, because even though a disease may be the result of viral infection, it is still not clear exactly why the virus infected that specific person. The questions as to the ultimate cause of things are at once ontological and cosmological and call for teleological answers which are on a different level than scientific answers (Moore & Sanders 2001).

Diversity characterises all human contexts; African spirituality therefore will also be diverse in terms of accent and details but fundamentally there is a strong unifying sharing of common myths. Western patterns of belief, doing and being however impact on traditional African belief systems and may lead to adjustments and changes.

5.5 The meeting of worldviews

The worldview of an individual apparently does not change easily if at all at a fundamental level, because the individuals' thoughts are very much controlled by the culturally constructed worldviews (Wilber 2007). To some degree, individuals can transcend certain elements of their own culture. They then associate with others who share their views, thus creating a new evolved culture (Wilber 2007). Modernism brought about by colonialism and post-colonialism has progressively eroded the traditional worldview in a large portion of the more progressive African groups and individuals. A new worldview, which accentuates individual ambition and self-interest, has set people free to pursue their own success and not only that of the community (Kalilombe 1999). Although traditional values and identities may change on the conscious level, the subconscious depths of the African worldview still exert a powerful influence. In times of crises, uncertainty and uncontrollable events, many modern Africans revert to traditional beliefs and practices (Ashforth 2001; Mbiti 1999; Nxumalo 2004). As previously stated, worldviews constitute a meta-representational attitude (Pyysiäinen 2003) and provide a superordinate framework of beliefs, assumptions and personal meanings that are powerful principles of action. In any given situation these assumptions (mostly not consciously) influence decisions and actions that affect individuals, their families and broader society on political, business, and policy levels.

The insights gained from a literature review like that presented above on the psychological understanding of the source and function of people's God-belief, can be applied in various psycho-social-spiritual domains of human activity. For the purpose of this article, we chose the context of education because wide-ranging cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development occurs during the twelve years of formal education. In this period, children can (should) learn to expand their thinking and caring to be more inclusive, tolerant and accepting.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Humans evolved to represent reality abstractly in thought and language and to search for order and comprehensibility of their often chaotic and uncontrollable existence. From the earliest times, religious beliefs organised the disorganised and unpredictable. Modern rationalism has contributed to alternative scientific models of understanding (such as evolution theory) making the magical-mythic pre-modern concepts obsolete and pointing to the fact that science and religion both work with provisional models that continually could (should) evolve (Degenaar 1965). Scientific contributions have expanded our ontological, cosmological and epistemological horizons, effectively unmasking pre-modern concepts of *inter alia* creationism as context-bound social constructions. Religions cannot stagnate in egocentric and

group-centric cultural narratives but can and do evolve to integrate higher levels of inclusivity regarding other religions, scientific understanding and morality (Wilber 2006), thereby remaining powerful systems through which psycho-spiritual needs for transcendence may be fulfilled.

Children learn and assimilate dominant societal ontological, cosmological and epistemological assumptions, some of which might significantly restrict their ability to function in a post-modern democratic society. Such limiting assumptions are:

- Ontological assumptions regarding the nature of existence (e.g. the universe is an unchangeable closed system).
- Cosmological assumptions regarding *inter alia* the 'inherent' structure of nature (e.g. the superiority of males and certain ethnic groups, humans are superior to animals and nature).
- Religious beliefs regarding the absoluteness and finality of own religion (and therefore the non-validity and worthlessness of other religions).
- Axiological structures premised on superiority and exclusion (e.g. we are more advanced than they are, our cultural emphasis on doing as opposed to being is better than theirs).

The new frontiers that science is opening on a complex and differentiated understanding of the nature of existence and the nature of the universe, necessitate the expansion of philosophical assumptions. If parents and religious communities accentuate magical-mythical explanatory models, emphasise differences and own superiority, their children's ability to integrate (new and perhaps in many people's view blasphemous) scientific knowledge will be restricted, perpetuating exclusiveness and narrow-mindedness. Children need to be given the opportunity, according to their level of development, to challenge internalised assumptions (and those of their respective in-groups) and should be guided to broaden and deepen their understanding and own awareness. This task would rest mostly on the shoulders of professional educators as one cannot reasonably expect the average parent to have the insight to steer the process.

For this purpose, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Grades 10-12 is based on nine principles of which three are of importance for this discussion:

- "Social transformation", which means the eradication of the "legacy of apartheid in all areas of human activity and in education in particular" (Department of Education 2003:2).

- “Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice” aims at sensitivity for “issues of diversity, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors” (Department of Education 2003:4).
- “Valuing indigenous knowledge systems” accentuates the importance of acknowledging “the wide diversity of knowledge systems through which people make sense of and attach meaning to the world in which they live” (Department of Education 2003:4).

The NCS describes the kind of learner envisaged as “one who will be imbued with the values and act in the interest of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity and social justice as promoted in the Constitution” (Department of Education 2003:5). These educational principles and ideals are issues related to a person’s worldview and fundamentally overlap with philosophical assumptions.

Schools (correctly) include religion education in their curricula, as the fact that humans’ religiousness is concretised in various religions is an important cultural reality. Knowledge of religion(s) is however not enough to enrich a child (or any other person) spiritually. Religion provides important maps for spiritual roads and each individual needs to travel the spiritual road “which is at heart a journey of intimacy” (Ministry of Education 2001:43). However, between the thin layers of objective knowledge and intimate spiritual experiences (nurtured in faith communities) is the inter-subjective world of everyday life amongst different people, where knowledge and inner experience and understanding are wedded in ethical living, openness, acceptance, equality and respect. A person’s worldview dictates in this layer in which most of conscious living takes place and, if knowledge does not deepen into insight and spiritual experience stays superficial, children’s worldviews will not expand to enable them to live up to the envisioned ideal as stated above.

Although schools cannot be responsible for the religious development of the child they “may be available for religious observance so long as it is out of school hours, association is free and voluntary rather than mandatory ...” (Ministry of Education 2001:44). They could thus create open and inviting environments in which spiritual growth is valued and fostered but at the same time it could build on the acceptance of and respect for diverse forms of spiritual/religious experience. Furthermore, each professional educator (and not only those responsible for religion education) influences and contributes to the forming of the child’s worldview. Educators subtly communicate their philosophical assumptions in the way they present their subject matter, their actions and values. Teachers therefore need to reflectively examine their philosophical assumptions and develop awareness of their own biases and assumptions. The knowledge, skills and attitude of willingness to

engage such exploration needs to be inculcated in teacher training and in-service training.

Finally, the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of each religious system is epistemologically on the same level although revealed to individuals in different ways. Acceptance of this leaves the essence of religions untouched, their teachings regarding connectedness with Absolute Reality, God, Ground of Being and moral-ethical living in a post-modern context valid and their practices essential for the spiritual development of young people.

This could contribute toward an educational ethos in which the youth learn to bridge differences – to understand, respect and forge relationships across religious and ethnic and other socio-cultural dimensions (Larson et al 2004). According to Asmal (2003), schools are the institutions in which to create an overall environment, a social, intellectual and emotional space that engenders values of respect, tolerance and acceptance across socio-cultural boundaries.

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Section 4: Article 3

**A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOD-BELIEF AS SOURCE OF
WELL-BEING AND MEANING**

Will be submitted to:

Hervormde Theological Studies

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOD-BELIEF AS SOURCE OF WELL-BEING AND MEANING

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A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON GOD-BELIEF AS SOURCE OF WELL-BEING AND MEANING

“Religion is not primarily a set of beliefs, a collection of prayers, or a series of rituals. Religion is first and foremost a way of seeing. It can't change the facts about the world we live in, but it can change the way we see those facts, and that in itself can often make a difference”

Kushner quoted by Pargament (1997:193)

Abstract

This article reports on a qualitative exploration of the well-being and meaning that second- and third-generation Christians from an African context experience because of their integration of religion in their life and being. A textured integrated tapestry is created of the participants' understanding of God (God-concept), experience of their relationship with God (God-image) and understanding of life as coloured by their belief systems. The contribution of their God-belief to their sense of meaning and psychological well-being frames the tapestry

1. INTRODUCTION

There was a time when religion was the absolute source of all knowledge and meaning (Pargament 1997). The unquestioning acceptance of views of the universe proclaimed by religions was the cast for peoples' worldviews; it provided a frame for understanding reality, creating meaning, and directing behaviour.

The penchant to create higher-order meaning and the need for religion seems to be hardwired into humans as a by-product of evolutionary adaptations (Baumeister & Vohs 2002). Psychoanalysts explain the belief in God in terms of the projection of unmet needs on an idealised parental figure. According to Freud and Rizzuto, believers shape their personal image of God through a process of identification with both parents (objects) during infancy from which parental imagos are formed. These imagos are the ground of God representations (Goodwin 1998; Wulff 1997; Rizzuto 1979). Religion is seen as wish-fulfilment. Religions provide comfort to believers; fear and anxiety are alleviated by the belief in a powerful being (Goodwin 1998; Guthrie 1993; Rizzuto 1979), frequently metaphorically referred to as a Father, who is lovingly involved in the personal details of everyday life. God cannot be seen or experienced

directly, therefore believers acquire a concept of God similar to the understandings of their religion and culture (the dominant social construction of God).

Evolutionary and psychoanalytic theories provide possible answers concerning the reason for humans universally being religious. The question arises regarding the value belief in God adds to individuals' well-being. Do the expectations linked to acknowledging a higher Presence and the forth-flowing correctives on behaviour add or detract from people's well-being?

2. RELIGION AND WELL-BEING

Research in psychological well-being is ongoing – the focus is on the identification, clarification, description of character strengths and constructs essential to psychological well-being and synthesising the constructs into coherent theories of psychological well-being (Wissing & Temane 2008). The understanding of virtue, and character strengths flowing from virtuous choices and behaviour, is a core component of positive psychology and has led to the Values in Action (VIA) classification system of human strengths (rather than weaknesses). The identification of a common set of human qualities universally regarded as virtues was achieved by examining virtues and values honoured by most philosophical, religious and cultural traditions in the world (Van Eeden et al 2008). Eventually six virtue clusters – wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence – were selected, and these virtues are proposed to be manifested by twenty-four character strengths. Peterson and Seligman (2004) see these virtues and strengths as building blocks of psychological health and well-being and a life well lived. Virtue clusters and their defining character strengths are:

- Wisdom and knowledge-cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge: Curiosity, Love of learning, Open-mindedness, Creativity, Perspective.
- Courage – emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal: Valour or Bravery, Persistence, Integrity or Authenticity, Zest or Vitality.
- Humanity – interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others: Love, Kindness, Social Intelligence.
- Justice – civic strengths that underlie healthy community life: Citizenship, Fairness, Leadership.

- Temperance – strengths that protect against excess: Self-regulation, Prudence, Forgiveness and Mercy, Modesty and Humility, and
- Transcendence – strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning: Appreciation of beauty and excellence, Gratitude, Hope, Humour and Playfulness, Spirituality or Religiousness

(Van Eeden et al 2008:143)

Ryan and Deci (Wissing & Temane 2008; Compton 2005) suggested the division of the numerous conceptualisations of well-being into two categories, namely hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The hedonic approach describes the pleasant life and the good life in terms of pleasure, happiness and life satisfaction. The subjective well-being model (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith 1999) represents the hedonic perspective on well-being. The eudaimonic perspective focuses on the good life and the meaningful life in which fulfilling one's own potential, and living according to one's own values and virtues are the motivating drives (Wissing & Themane 2008; Compton 2005; Seligman 2002). The six-dimensional model of psychological well-being of Ryff (Ryff & Singer 1996) expresses the eudaimonic view of well-being. Seligman (2002) indicates that the good life is more than the pleasant life and that the meaningful life is more than the good life. He is of the opinion that the meaningful life is characterised by finding meaning in life's issues and challenges and in attachment to some entity larger and beyond oneself, e.g. committing to a good cause and/or to religion.

3. MEANING AND WELL-BEING

The fact that defining the term *meaning* is difficult (Park 2005) does not detract from the reality that all humans search for meaning (Pargament & Hahn 1986; Frankl 1978). "Meaning is a tool for adaptation, for controlling the world, self-regulation, and belongingness. Indeed it is the best all purpose tool on the planet" (Baumeister 1991:357-358). Baumeister & Vohs (2002:610,611) name four needs that underlie our need for meaning.

- The need for purpose lies in setting and striving towards both objectively attainable goals (promotion) and subjective goals in the form of fulfilment (happiness). Religion provides all-encompassing goals regarding good, righteous living (Park 2005).

- The need for value is the foundation for a sense of goodness. Values are needed as they provide security that behaviour is acceptable, thus buffering the self against feelings of guilt and anxiety. Religions are exceptionally powerful sources of values. Clear criteria for what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable are provided (Park 2005).
- The need for a sense of self-efficacy, which is linked to a belief that one has some control over life and can make a difference in life.
- Finally, the need for basic self-worth is pursued by every individual. Some individuals accentuate a sense of individual self-worth while others follow the path of collectivism by achieving self-worth through belonging to a specific group.

The needs as mentioned are fulfilled by multiple sources such as love, work and family, but religion provides the framework for meaning, as the quintessence of meaningfulness is connectedness (Leontiev 2006; Baumeister & Vohs 2002; Post 1996); connectedness with God, self and others. People who live in a relationship with a responsive God report higher levels of personal well-being as opposed to those who experience God as distant and punitive (Pargament & Mahoney 2002).

4. MEANING AND RELIGION

From time immemorial people have attempted to find order and reason in the world, shielding them against chaos and existential Angst. All religious traditions provide such safety and share the assumption of an intelligible and orderly world (Montell 2001; Pargament 1997). In this article, Baumeister's definition of religion is used, namely that religion provides "... a set of doctrines about natural and supernatural reality that enable people to understand their broader, ultimate context. Religion guarantees that whatever happens to the individual, no matter how good or bad makes sense. Thus, religious beliefs provide a framework for perceiving, understanding and evaluating daily events, experiencing them as part of a broader pattern" (Baumeister 1991:184).

Religion causes as much cognitive dissonance as it resolves uncertainty (Ozorak 2005) which leads Montell (2001:122) to argue that most people live comfortably with this dissonance because humans compartmentalise – belief in natural causality is preserved primarily for "physical warfare", and belief in supernatural forces are activated primarily for "spiritual warfare".

Many, if not most, religions and biblical ideas regarding the natural and supernatural world date from a pre-modern world and do not necessarily comfortably coexist with modern or post-modern notions (Wilber 2007). Scientific advances have pinpointed the causes of inter alia disease and weather patterns underscoring natural laws of causality as opposed to supernatural causality. All humans (to a degree) intuitively understand natural laws of causality, but religious people also believe in the counterintuitive notion that God can and does suspend natural laws (Dennet 2006; Montell 2001). The simultaneous holding of opposing, logically inconsistent notions causes cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), resulting in psychic tension and anxiety which motivate strategies to reduce dissonance and therefore also anxiety (Western 1999; Burris, Harmon-Jones & Trapley 1997). Such strategies include a change of belief (Western 1999), belief intensification by inter alia religious attributions (Ozorak 2005) and transcendence where conflicting notions are reconciled under a superordinate concept (Burris et al 1997). Believers who are willing to intellectually confront the discrepancies are motivated to change beliefs, e.g. Spong (2001), who suggests that the discrepancy between scientific data and Biblical cosmology has become untenable and that Christianity should fundamentally change in order to bring religious notions in line with modern scientific understanding. Few people intellectually confront the discrepancies but rather use religious attributions to bolster their belief. In an effort to reconcile e.g. financial misfortune with a loving, providing God people can make naturalistic attributions (the general economic situation) and religious attributions (God wants to teach me prudence).

The salience of either naturalistic or religious beliefs largely determines which attribution will be made, although in situations of high uncertainty or danger, religious attributions are more likely to be made (Hertog & Gow 2005; Park 2005; Gorsuch & Smith 1983). Attributions are made to help people maintain their sense of control and meaning (Pargament & Hahn 1986). In the previous example of financial misfortune, transcendence would be achieved by a belief such as "God is in absolute control and He has a bigger plan with my life". The parameters provided help people to cope with anxiety and create meaning. All religious coping efforts have the same end: the enhancement of significance (meaning) (Pargament 1997). Religious coping is more likely found in individuals who are more religiously committed and involved and who have fewer other non-religious alternatives and resources available.

Religious pathways vary in their importance and embeddedness in peoples' lives (Pargament 1997). The relationship between religiousness and a sense of

meaning is apparent, but the strength of the relation is modest and is linked to different ways of being religious:

- Extrinsic religiousness is utilitarian and self-serving as the focus is on what it offers, namely support for one's preferred life style. This type of religiousness is inversely related to sense of meaning in life and mental health (Park 2005; Argyle 2000; Pargament 1997).
- Intrinsic religiousness centres on God as the source of meaning and purpose. The motive to live according to God's will permeates the believer's whole life, provides a framework for meaning and is associated with high self-esteem and a positive image of God (Park 2005; Argyle 2000).
- Religion as quest is largely a cognitive path within which there is a persistent search for truth coupled with an acceptance that absolute truth may never be found. People with a quest orientation sincerely confront the difficulties of existential problems while simultaneously refusing to accept pat answers. There are mixed findings regarding the effects of a quest orientation (Pargament 1997). Uncertainty may lead to depression and anxiety but may also be rewarding as it provides an impetus for progression on a spiritual journey that may lead to the development of personal beliefs in response to the challenges of life (Miller & Kelley 2006).

Religion sets a more or less clear path for spiritual growth. According to Emmons (2006:65), "People are *spiritual* to the degree to which they are trying to know, find, experience, or relate to what they perceive as sacred." Thus, spirituality is the essence of all religions (Dreyer 2003; Rassool 2000). Irrespective of the dogmatic differences between religions, religious belief systems provide their adherents with integrated global meaning systems, which are incorporated in their worldviews (Ozorak 2005; Park 2005; Koltko-Rivera 2004; Pyysiäinen 2003).

5. AFRICAN WORLDVIEW

In African cosmology, God created and sustains two interrelating spheres of reality: the visible and the invisible spheres (Kalilombe 1999, 1994). God is distant and not involved in humans' everyday life. In this cosmology, a view of mystical causality prevails, it is believed that powerful natural and supernatural forces govern everyday events and that these spiritual beings guide, protect and chastise the living (Kasambala 2005; Zahan 2000; Mbiti 1991). According to this magical worldview

(Wilber 2007), the dominant emotion is fear as people have no control over or understanding of these forces and use elaborate rituals to protect themselves (Kasambala 2005). Traditional African religion posits that God departed from earth and humans; thus, a need for intermediaries developed. This role is fulfilled by the ancestors who are the superhuman spirits of those who have passed on (Kasambala 2005). A defining feature of African culture is the emphasis on relationships. This is the central value that gives meaning to life within an African community (Kasambala 2005). At the centre of African spirituality lies the core issue of relationship. Spirituality is communal and corporate and relies on cooperation, sharing and the redistribution of resources amongst kin (Kalilombe 1999).

6. CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

The Christian worldview is framed by the belief that God is the creator who is intimately involved in humans' lives. All humans are fallen sinners in need of redemption through Christ in order to enjoy a restored relationship with God (Nürnberg 2007). A worldview dominated by such concepts, rules and roles could be described as mythic (Wilber, 2007). Fear is also an underlying emotion as disobedience is punished ultimately by everlasting condemnation. It would be a gross generalisation to assume that all Christians subscribe to this mythic worldview. Scientific developments in exegesis, hermeneutics and historic analyses have filtered down to many Christians changing their worldview from mythic to modern or even post-modern (Craffert 2008, Spong 2001). At the risk of over-generalising one could classify both African and traditional Christian worldviews as pre-modern; the African worldview magical and Christian worldview however as mythical (Wilber 2007). Unquestioning acceptance of age-old teachings, principles and rituals is the common denominator. Through participation in religious rituals, beliefs are enhanced and group association established (Sossis 2006).

The Christianity that was brought to Africa during colonisation had been influenced by rationality that became dominant since the era of enlightenment. The African and western Christian worldviews thus differ in that the western Christian worldview holds the view of an open universe and the traditional (intuitive) African worldview that of a bounded universe. Fundamental differences between the worldviews are identifiable: the western Christian worldview is characterised by an extended concept of time, including a vast history and open future, alternative knowledge systems are acknowledged and the social world is extended to include increasingly wider spheres (Hammond-Tooke 1998). The western worldview can be

described as rational. It is associated with an epistemology of reason and has been shaped by a broad spectrum of philosophies – Christian and non-Christian. In the African worldview, time is conceived as two-dimensional: it has a long history, a present and virtually no future, the tempo of living is slow and the here-and-now is important (Viljoen 2003). Furthermore, social horizons are limited and all a person's physical and social needs are met from within the intimate circle of kin (Hammond-Tooke 1998). Although care and being responsible for the collective well-being of society are primary values in both worldviews, the African worldview is associated with collectivism while the western Christian worldview is linked to individualism. These worldviews provide different sets of boundaries for an understanding of who humans are, how they could and should live and what forces impact their lives.

At the core of religion is the belief regarding ultimate reality, God. All religions teach notions of God and people form their own internal representation of God. Thus, a distinction is made between a God-concept and God-image (Meier & Meier 2004; Lawrence 1997; Rizzuto 1979). A God-concept is one's cognitive knowledge of God while a God-image is the experiential, emotional knowledge of God (Rizzuto 1979). The theologically taught God-concept is intimately linked but not identical to someone's God-image, which is dominant in the believer-God relationship.

African religions hold what, from a Western perspective, can be described as a deistic concept of God, a God who created everything but who is distant and uninvolved in human life (Kalilombe 1999). Humans cannot directly communicate with God and are therefore dependent on special or chosen humans and spirit intermediaries. The Christian understanding of God is that of the Creator Father, Son as Redeemer and Mediator and Holy Spirit who dwells in the redeemed sinner (Holy Trinity), thus a theistic concept of a personal God who is intensely involved in the life of the individual.

African Christians need to make a conceptual shift regarding their understanding of God from what could be described as a deistic to a theistic view. The empirical data discussed below shows that the participants make the shift apparently seamlessly and that it results in personal empowerment and changed self-perception.

7. AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study, which was planned by the three authors but executed by the first author, was a quest for in-depth understanding (*verstehen*) of the meanings and

interpretations (Burrell & Morgan 1979) Christians coming from a traditional African context attach to and derive from their belief in God. To achieve this aim, we decided to explore experiences of the participants by asking the following questions during the interviews:

- Where did you learn about God? (religious background)
- How would you describe God? (God-concept)
- How do you experience God? (God-image)
- Tell me about your prayer life. (God-image, expectations and needs, creation of meaning)
- According to traditional African beliefs, bad things can be caused by malicious people and other forces. What is your belief in this regard? (Integration of African and Christian beliefs)
- How do you make sense of our Apartheid past where discrimination was legitimised by a specific reading of the Bible? (Creation of meaning in the face of suffering)

The aim could only be achieved within a qualitative, interpretive (hermeneutic) methodological paradigm (Nieuwenhuis 2007a; Guba & Lincoln 1994). The understanding (constructions of meaning) of who God is, and the meaning of religious experiences are understood as influenced by the African and Christian culture, religion, historic-political timeframe and day-to-day social living. The interplay between the individual's creation of meaning and the context was therefore of vital importance during data analysis and interpretation. Following the relativist epistemological assumption that knowledge is context-bound, the analysis of data and outcome of the process (findings) are partial and subjective and but one possible interpretation of reality (Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

7.1 Research instrument

Given that the task was to enter the context and to discern the emic views, the only possible research instrument was the person of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln 1994), namely the first author who was a devout Christian, but due to various influences and experiences now describes herself as a "believer in exile" (Spong 1999:22). Her position as researcher was one of learner but her knowledge, values, experiences of God-belief, religion, culture and the South African context could not

be eliminated or divorced from the research process which is value laden and biased (Creswell 1994). Therefore her humanness and intuition were fundamental elements used in the research process to inform and guide the inquiry (Nieuwenhuis 2007a).

7.2 Design type

The focal point of the study was a group of Christians from a traditional African context, individuals who share the same cultural and religious context; thus a case-study design, which is ideally suited to an in-depth study to answer how and why questions was used (Babbie 2007; Nieuwenhuis 2007b).

7.3 Sampling

The aim of the research provided the main criteria for sampling; the first author needed to interview African people who were Christians. Participants had to be conversant in English as the first author is unable to converse fluently in an African language. Furthermore, during the planning process we were sensitive to the power imbalance inherent to the research situation and did not want to interview individuals who might have been intimidated by the process. It was thus decided to focus on more educated individuals, and purposive sampling was used (Maree & Pietersen 2007). Participation was voluntary and all participants were fully informed of the aim, process and outcome of the investigation, before giving their written consent. Confidentiality is respected by using pseudonyms in the discussion of data.

7.4 Data collection

Over a period of five months, individual interviews were conducted, digitally captured, transcribed and reflected upon in the light of the research questions. The number of interviews was determined by data saturation (Grbich 2007). Twelve participants, eight male and four female, in the age group twenty-five to sixty-five years were interviewed in sessions of between one hour and one and a half hours. In total, fourteen hours of audio material were transcribed for detailed analysis.

7.5 Data analysis and interpretation

The principle of the hermeneutic circle, the part-whole relationship was always in the foreground during the interpretation of data (Gadamer 1982; Burrell & Morgan 1979). The individual constructions (the parts) were seen as expressions of a particular socio-religious environment (the whole). We chose well-being and meaning within the

framework of the positive psychology as the scope for the interpretation of participants' religious experiences (Gadamer 1982).

The process of analysis started with a rigorous effort of immersion in the data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly 2007) noting impressions, intuitions and ideas. The texts were then analysed by the identification of units of meaning and significant quotes that capture the essence of these meanings. The next step was that of coding and the search for and identification of themes (categories) and patterns that synthesised meaning units that were corroborated in all or most of the interview protocols (Babbie 2007; Alvesson 2002) (Figure 1). A reflective team (Jones 2004), including a specialist in positive psychology, a theologian and an African priest who is a registered psychological counsellor were involved in the data analysis.

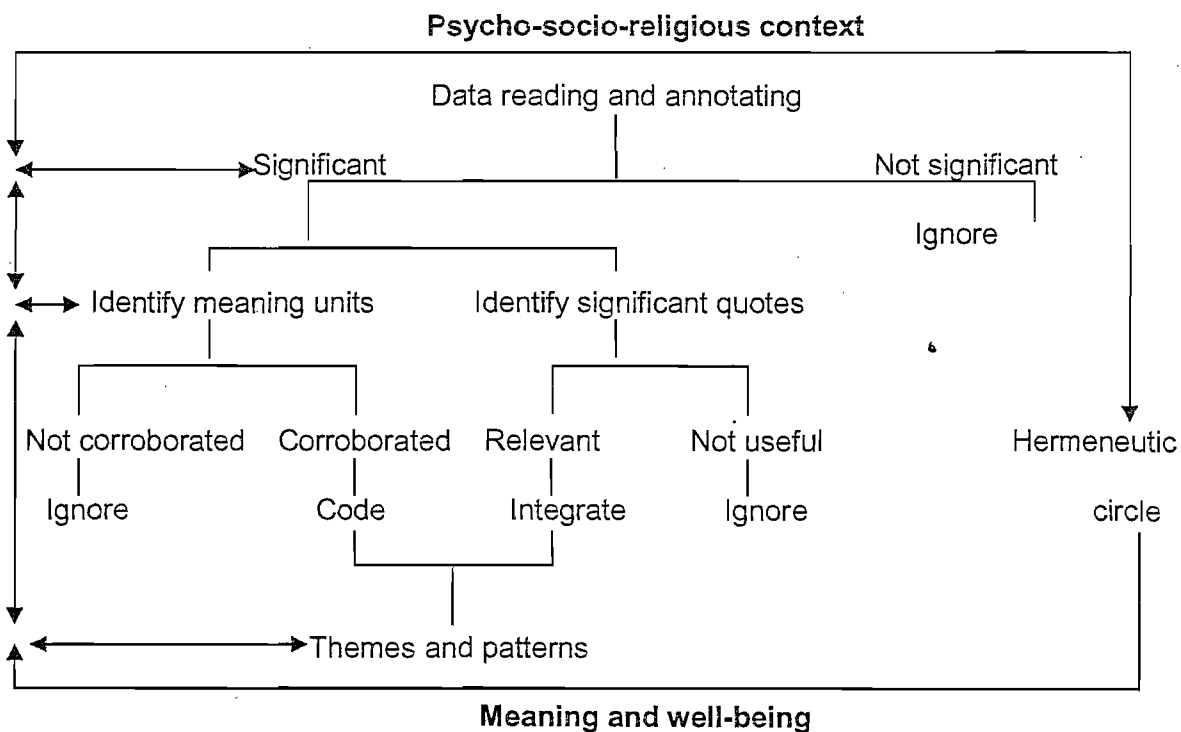


Figure1. Data analysis matrix

7.6 Quality

In order to make a defensible claim regarding the truth of the co-created interpretation (knowledge), meticulous care was taken to at all times keep close to the data, to look for alternative explanations while in continuous awareness of the impact of the first author's own experiences, thoughts and being in every aspect of the study. The participation of a reflective team ensured investigator triangulation

(Kelly 2007c). By being as thorough as possible, credibility and trustworthiness were enhanced (Schwandt 1994). Babbie & Mouton (2001) argue that a demonstration of credibility is sufficient to establish dependability. Coherence between all aspects of research was maintained in order to create useful interpretations worthy of adoption (transferability) (Kelly 2007a; Schwandt 1994).

8. SETTING – SOCIO-POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS COMPLEXITIES

South Africa is 14 years into a democratic dispensation. Religious injustices of the past, notably the arrogance with which Western missionaries came to Africa to 'civilise' Africans while disrespecting the latter's religion, have left a mark on the African psyche as the data will show. Though social integration is slow, clear progress has been made in terms of understanding and acceptance between different race groups. The role of religion in this regard will become clear in the discussion of the empirical data.

Participants are urban second- and third-generation Christians who overtly identify with Christianity but who also acknowledge their African traditions. Participants thus share a rootedness in the African and Christian worldviews, and related conceptions of God that will be described.

9. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participants remember vividly their first uncertain and frequently confused steps on their spiritual journey towards the destination of meaning. All participants were committed Christians but their spiritual upbringing also included African traditional religion bearing witness to the powerful influence of socialisation on religious awakening (Argyle 2000; Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis 1993). Traditional religious practices were the domain of the fathers (however half of the participants' fathers were not involved in their lives), while mothers and grandparents taught Christian religious practices. Despite the fact that no or very little verbal teaching and explanation played any role in the early home environment of participants, rituals such as prayer before meals and at bedtime and forced church attendance coupled with traditional rituals during transition periods entrenched beliefs and fostered a powerful awareness of the spiritual realm through emotional rather than intellectual pathways (Exline & Rose 2005). Home religious teaching was based on behavioural and emotional modelling (e.g. rituals and singing) rather than instruction of cognitive knowledge, which was the field of the church. Bible stories facilitated a cognitive

grasp of God and inspired participants from a very early age. Thus, the map for each participant's spiritual journey was designed through a process of socialisation in which a comfortable syncretism of African and Christian beliefs was transmitted in a process of envelopment (Wilber 2007), where different systems of beliefs are integrated without one necessarily replacing the other. As the magical (African) and mythical (Christian) worldviews share the same fundamental level, the incorporation seemingly presented no problems to the participants. African cosmological assumptions are evident but are more or less altered by a Christian cosmology. People's cosmology is the space within which they understand events and create meaning.

Four themes regarding the *integration of these two belief systems* emerged:

Most participants still *subscribe to the traditional belief* in the existence and power of witchcraft, which they associate with evil forces beyond human control but which can be kept at bay by benevolent spirits (Kasambala 2005). The awareness of the potential threat of the reality of evil is still a source of fear and anxiety and demands cognitive attention. Participants' fears and anxiety are managed by seeking shelter with and protection from God who is omnipotent.

...There are witchdoctors and God is for good things and witchdoctors are pursuing the devil's business. So the two are still there, even today, I still believe that there are bad spirits out there that people could use to make difficulties for people, although I believe my Christianity is over those beliefs ... (Andile)

A second theme involving the stories of a smaller group of participants is *personal empowerment by belief*. This group of participants cautiously extracted themselves from the position of subjection to spiritual forces by claiming more personal power through belief. This strategy is very demanding, requiring courage to constantly hold a conscious and vigilant belief; not yet trustingly abdicating to God but bravely confronting internal and external opposition to change (Peterson & Park 2004). If one believes in witchcraft, you may be affected, but if you believe in God, you are protected. By implication, not the almighty God but your belief is the deciding factor.

You can believe that they are there but you must believe that they won't affect me, because I've got to believe they won't affect me. Sometimes it's ... in your head if you don't believe in them, it won't happen! But, if you say yes, they are there but not towards me then they retreat, they go past. (Abel)

The third group of participants accentuated the *positive role of their ancestors* but did not externalise evil as the previous groups did. Their focus was on the guidance of

their ancestors (whose function in their understanding is similar to the Western idea of 'guardian angels') in daily choices as well as in personal and spiritual growth (Kasambala 2005; Mbiti 1991). They believe and actively experience their ancestors as involved, wise counsellors who have their well-being at heart.

It is advisable to go and get help from a healer and get yourself read, and find out if your ancestors are happy or not, do the rituals you need to do so that you can also be okay. Because I believe it is better to better yourself and to get better understanding of your ancestors than hurt others because that means you are being judgmental and you're being evil Because evil is not just Satan. It is your thoughts; it's you wanting bad for another person. And that can end up as translating into action in another person's life. (Sonti)

The fourth theme was of participants *knowing and respecting traditional beliefs but distancing themselves from them*. Interestingly the two participants who were adamant that there is no need for communication with and veneration of ancestors, and that there is no threat from witchdoctors, were both older than 60 years. Both have a long history of choosing Christian beliefs at important crossroads, probably permanently altering their spiritual paths.

I respect the things of the African culture because we were growing up with those things but really, we were not yet saved. But, Christians who are saved will tell you, the only truth and the path is God, is Jesus Christ. (Joseph)

Traditional beliefs and customs are validated when biblical (especially Old Testament) practices and rituals are interpreted as being the same as African traditional ones. So for instance, as Nehemiah (Neh 2:5) was called to attend to the affairs of his forefathers, Africans are called to attend to their ancestors. Traditional belief in the mediatory role of ancestors is echoed in the function of Jesus and of Mary (among Catholics). Our impression is that the absolute authority that participants attribute to scripture provides an external (external to the African culture) reason to value their African heritage and to claim respect from others. This is significant in the light of a long history of western and Christian imperialism where everything African was shunned. A sense of pride in the collective African heritage is evident.

Whatever you [Africans] do relates to something in the scripture, in other words when we started learning about the scripture already Africans had beliefs and those beliefs were like, they almost go hand in hand with what we read in the scripture. (Abel)

From our Western perspective, the shift from what can be described as a deistic to a theistic God-concept was notable. The transfer to theism brings two main additions to the participants' religious understanding and experience: God as a personal involved God and Christ as mediator either replacing ancestors as mediators, or as the most powerful mediator. Participants accept that they worship the same Supreme Being as is worshiped in the African religion but in a different way. This understanding eliminates the possibility of anxiety that may occur when changes in religious understanding occur. The traditional teachings are viewed as less sophisticated than those of Christianity. The shift from ancestors to Christ as intermediary is easy and beneficial, as no costly rituals are needed; belief in Christ is sufficient. Through Christ (the most powerful ancestor) the way to God is smoothed and made more personal.

Then I began to understand that our traditions and our beliefs they were that natural attempt to be in contact with God. Though it was limited somehow. But now through my exposure through the Bible I found that the knowledge that I got compliment and even surpasses the knowledge that I had before about God because now it is more closer and more personal. And more direct. (Petrus)

A changed *self-definition* amongst the participants was even more pronounced than the affirmation of African culture. The Biblical teaching that humans are created in the image of God is a critical issue regarding positive self-perception.

From our culture we don't believe that men are created in the image of God. Because nobody knows how God look like. But the Bible tells us that man is created in the image of God. Now it is more closer to God. We are not the creators, but we are something relating to God. (Petrus)

Christian religion facilitates a sense of personal, individual (in addition to collective) significance. Participants experience themselves as being special and equal to every other human being, which links with the belief of being called to make a *unique contribution* to the lives of fellow travellers. The significance of group solidarity as expressed by the ubuntu metaphor (Botha 2007) is a cherished African value that provides a sense of significance. The very personal integration of the notion of being God's child and being loved unconditionally provides another strong bridge to meaning, confirming the principle that people's perceptions of God are integrally connected with their self-perceptions, their value as human beings and their valuing of others (Tisdale, Doehring & Lorraine-Poirier 2003)

Okay I do stuff, there's nothing wrong with me and I know because He lets me know in His own way ... it's a feeling that I have that He accepts me just as I am. He has created me as an individual, as unique. (Victoria)

Self-confidence and a new *sense of purpose* emerge when people identify with the notion of being created in the image of God. Participants view themselves as *never alone and always protected*, freeing mental energy to focus on real obstacles in addition to providing courage to make decisions at intersections based on faith. Faith frees from fear of death, of living (Bateson et al 1993), and fear of unpredictable spiritual forces. Participants are filled with *gratitude* for their being, life and circumstances irrespective of hardships. Thus, none of the participants see themselves as victims. They are *empowered* to make a difference, to affect change, even if only through prayer.

So, I experienced a lot from my childhood, but God was always with me ... I went through a lot but through the lot I am still surviving. He protected me ... Before I had my first child, I separated with my husband. He liked to womanise ... I always prayed ... I always said, "Please God if you want this marriage to work out you are the one who will make it work out." I used to ask God to change my husband to change his ways, everything that he did. And you know what, slowly slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly, he was changing, he was changing, until he was fully changed. (Kate)

Salient characteristics of participants' *God-concept* are that *God is the creator*, the origin of all things. Linked to this God-concept is the image of *God being like a parent*. Frequently, the God-image is anthropomorphised, in a sense concretised into a caring, providing powerful human father who is approachable and involved in every intimate detail of daily life resonating with the psychoanalytic view of God as idealised parental figure (Wulff 1997; Rizzuto 1979). He can be trusted to provide but in return expects to be pleased and obeyed, like a father in a patriarchal system that provides but demands respect, veneration and undivided loyalty. This image puts the onus on the believer, dictating that believers should petition God to get access to the available abundance. God may or may not grant requests. Whether or not such a request is granted, religious attributions are made (Ozorak 2005). Experiences are perceived as evidence of God's involvement. Gratitude follows when petitions are granted and if not; acceptance that what was not granted would ultimately not have been beneficial or that the time is not right for God to provide. Any cognitive dissonance is overcome by investing in a superordinate concept (Burriss et al 1997). Like a good parent, He knows best and will act in the best interest of his child.

He says, I have time for everybody but not at the same time, not at the time of the need, I will come to you when it's your time. Yes, it's all about believing! If I have enough belief in Him, if I trust in Him, at the end of the day I will get what I need. Yes, He takes time to do things because it is not only me, He is not only my father He is

fathering everybody. He is a parent to everybody; He needs to go around helping everybody. (Thumi)

God is the *giver* of everything and the almighty protector but he needs to be reminded to perform these functions and, very importantly, one needs to believe, implying that, if you do not believe, you are on your own. Though participants agree that God punishes those who transgress, none of them interpret their misfortunes and suffering as punishment. At the junction where choices are made regarding the meaning of events optimistic, growth engendering cognitions prevail. The *God-image is a dominant beacon* which guides the creation of meaning. If God is good and caring and I believe in Him, everything can be understood and explained. No event or experience seems to shatter this image of God.

... I used to pray for my kids before they go to school, that God protect them to and back from school. But one morning I never said bye to my children, I even forget to pray. You know what happened that day? One of my daughters was raped. And I could not handle it that the child was raped. I was so bitter, I was angry, you know I said, "O God how can you do this to me?" But as times goes on it gets better. I saw that God wanted to show me something, because my child was from school and she was grabbed by this guy, he put her in this car. There were three guys but only one guy raped her. So you can imagine how God protected her. Because ... they cannot grab you, three of them and only one do it ... She had to go for HIV tests, at the age of fourteen and she was still protected. Sometimes I think God wanted to show me how big He is. It happened, they never killed her, they took her back to the place that they grabbed her. (Kate)

This God-image makes *attributions of concern and protection* very easy. In retrospect, participants had no difficulty enumerating the obvious evidence of God's love, care and protection, e.g. having survived in atrocious conditions, not having been attacked in a heated political situation, etc. These experiences are interpreted as a clear indication of God's hand in their lives. Difficulties and suffering fade in a process of selective remembering. Even when disaster prevails and God's expected deliverance is not forthcoming, the God-image is not questioned; rather the self is doubted.

My father got ill, had to be operated, he had heart problems, seriously ill. I prayed ... nothing but praying in my heart. I could see that the life of my father was deteriorating drastically. I wanted to know whether really that God is God near me, could hear me. I questioned the presence of God ... my father recover and (did) not die. As of now I am unemployed, I still believe that one day I will get employment but ... sometimes [I think] it's about time [timing] or I don't know whether I am tested, so I think that it is taking too long that I really get what I'm looking for, does God look at me and see

God-belief as source of well-being and meaning

maybe how do I suffer. So, truly speaking, I normally doubt myself, I normally doubt when I am in very serious difficulties, because I need help urgently. (Andile)

The consensus amongst participants is that *God helps those who help themselves*. Fortunately, God helps believers to help themselves. By changing his children from within, God gives them courage to proceed.

What I believe is God only helps those who help themselves. If you sit back and relax and not doing anything He won't do anything for you. He only helps those who really need His help, who are doing something about it, then He helps you, He comes to your aid but not at the time you that want. (Thumi)

God works in and through people and therefore they must do what they can to help themselves and others. He alters the way people interact with others in an internal process in which the conscience plays an important chastising role motivating a correction of behaviour. Key routes to transformation are prayer and church attendance. Prayer is crucial to all participants. Each participant was formally taught how to pray according to the Lord's Prayer, and uses the elements of this prayer in his/her own private prayers. It is striking how these aspects shape and strengthen people's God- and self-images. Notable is the daily, ritualistic reinforcement of the notion of God as personal, loving Father involved in the everyday life of his children. The special position of each believer as loved child is affirmed by the invitation by Christ to pray in such an intimate manner. Apart from being a reminder of who God is and what prayer is, prayer also provides an opportunity for self-reflection. When those who pray the Lord's Prayer ask for forgiveness, meta-cognitive self-assessment and self-regulation is initiated, inviting behavioural change.

As you know, I am a teacher and I teach 36 kids and at times, you tend to get very harsh on those kids. After that, I say, "O God I am sorry." You know I do not like to hurt people; I don't like to make things that I know I should not make. (Kate)

Through prayer believers *learn* and develop new perspectives. While talking to a loving Father who teaches endurance and humility, a person can transform a victim mentality by developing a new perspective on life and by positive reframing (Exline & Rose 2005; Pargament & Mahoney 2002).

I got to the point where it is okay for me to go through hardship because at first I did not understand it, I felt like a victim. I felt like, why me, why do I have to suffer so much and in His own way He explained to me that this is the way for you to learn. (Victoria)

Participants accentuate the importance of praying mindfully and in belief. If you pray without believing your prayer will not be heard. In this sense, the onus is on the one

who prays; the strength of your belief is the deciding factor and not the love or power of the Giver.

If today I question the way, I prayed then I pray tomorrow, the time the answers come, I won't say which one has been heard, but I am happy about the results, the response from God. (Andile)

Praying is not just a cognitive activity but provides *emotional release*. Communal prayer, singing and other religious rituals are emotionally rewarding and important triggers for religious experiences (Argyle, 2000). Private prayer also provides a frequent opportunity of emotional catharsis.

Our Father who art in heaven, nothing is greater than that kind of praying. You can go further, you know when you start saying "Our Father, who art in heaven", then it comes, there comes those words as to how can you really pray, you now pray and pray and pray and pray until you find yourself crying and when things cool down, you go back to that prayer again. To pray ... is something that comes, it comes, it comes, whether you like it or not, it comes as long as you have invited Jesus to be with you when you are praying, really, because now you are giving your whole heart to this kind of thing and then it becomes something that takes you up, the Holy Spirit. (Joseph)

Religion changes people's attitude to life (Argyle 2000). Cognitions, emotions and behaviours are fundamentally altered, generally to the benefit of the believer and society. Love as ultimate spiritual-religious beacon is taught, experienced and lived. How then does the believer translate religious-spiritual attitudes into day-to-day living? A decisive test of the depth and staying power of new attitudes might be the believer's reactions to injustice and suffering of which the epitome may possibly have been the Apartheid system. It was a system that was ostensibly grounded on solid biblical principles but which devalued humans, a system where people were treated atrociously while some people (whites) associated with the system were brave enough to preach the gospel (that was abused to their detriment) to the disenfranchised. The participants took a spiritual perspective on their Apartheid experiences; God is good, humans are good but they do sin, Apartheid was a sinful aberration and not the will of God. Woven into this view is a humility that arises from an acknowledgement and repentance of own limitations and sins. This is a platform that set the participants free from harmful internalisations of being inferior human beings, which was the subtext of Apartheid. The most travelled roads to the destination of meaning of Apartheid are biblical teachings, personal experience, forgiveness and prayer paving the way to well-being.

God-belief as source of well-being and meaning

I had this vision of Apartheid but I never put God anywhere in there. For the first time I wanted to put God in it, I wanted to understand, where was God in this whole thing. God created the world and everything and He put man there. In Genesis, He says I put you to take charge and control of everything. But then, like other people are in authority and sometimes they put their interest before God's interest. Other people do that and other people may suffer, but it's not how God wants it. I spent a lot of my life with my grandparents because my father was not caring, so it's not because we wanted it to be like that, it's because of the selfishness of my father that he wanted to do whatever he wanted to do, forgetting about ugly children, but it's not how God wanted it. So if it's like that, then God will find another way of helping those who are trapped in a situation, but He is not the one who put it there. (Peter)

After 1994, South African's began to take note of their fellow travellers. Mandela's wisdom, forgiveness and quest for reconciliation served as an authoritative example. The more open society altered stereotypes of wealthy, unburdened whites, God's pets. All people are subjected to the same rules, all responsible for their life choices and bear the consequences of their behaviours.

When I was at high school I was very bitter. I always taught God is white. Why are only whites rich, why are we suffering, why are our parents living like this? ... As we grow up we read ... That time we used to like memorise the Bible ... [Now you] read the Bible and you sit down and try to analyse and understand. The year after 1994, after those changes I learned so much. It is not bad, we are all the same. God is doing the same to others. It is only how you live your life, how you control your life that makes you what you are. It is not about God and the colour. (Kate)

The obstacle of injustice is bridged in the space of unconditional love where the child communicates with the Father who is ultimately in control.

Such things [Apartheid] bring confusion into my life, a huge confusion and I would try to understand that He created each and every one of us ... He has created those things that were happening and I always question Him, not questioning His abilities, I question Him like asking questions. You created us in this way and yet such things happened in your presence, were you trying to bring life to us through those experiences so that we could become the strong people that we are? ... But ... He shows me that no, these things happened ... not because you deserve to be in pain, but you go through everything that happens as a lesson. You always understand Him in order to identify Him in this whole thing, because lately we went through such dangers in our life and it was very difficult and we would think where was He? But He was there waiting for us to learn. (Victoria)

10. CONCLUSION

In this article, the unique role of religion in providing meaning in the life of participants and contributing to their well-being is described. All participants were brought up in extended families who transmitted both African and Christian religions and had powerful attachment figures arguably providing the foundation for the creation of a benevolent God-image of an exalted parental figure (Rizzuto 1979), making available a psychologically safe room for growth and development. In a movement away from passive subjugation to unpredictable forces to submission to a loving omnipotent parental figure, horizons of new spiritual heights are expanded from where new life possibilities of freedom but also personal responsibility are reached.

However, the safety is not uncontaminated by fear which is only managed but not overcome as both African and Christian religions are fear-based (Wilber 2007). It is striking that a true sense of security eludes all (but one) of the participants. Their personal understanding of both the African and Christian religious principles does not facilitate a sense of absolute security and trust in the goodness of God as an independent given unrelated to the strength of their belief or quality of their service. Total freedom arguably is the result of total surrender to God, which seems to indicate a different spiritual truth – freedom in surrender. This appears paradoxical because true surrender goes against the very human need to have freedom of choice, be self-reliant and in control, this stays an ongoing struggle in theistic religions (Exline & Rose, 2005). The meta-narrative of total surrender to God however is freedom.

Although all participants had experiences that could have triggered feelings of anger towards God (only two acknowledged to ever having had such feelings), their positive theistic God-image probably absorbed and blotted out the anger and disappointment consequently restoring the feeling of closeness and connectedness to God.

Participants, who can all be described as intrinsically religious, create meaning in the light of the tenets of African and Christian religion they accept and individually forge into an integrated worldview or system of meaning. The power of this system to frame understanding and make sense of experiences is explicated, highlighting the crucial role of feeling individually significant and safe. A theistic concept and image of God as a sovereign and benevolent parent provides the participants with a sense of purpose, enhanced self-esteem, hope and motivation (Geyer & Baumeister 2005; Argyle 2000). Extraordinary suffering and other belief-disconfirming experiences only

serve to intensify participants' beliefs through processes of religious attributions and reconciliation of contradicting beliefs and experiences into superordinate concepts (Burriss et al 1997), providing the participants with strength to pursue their life goals and to live according to their values of love and service. Through their God-belief, participants attain a sense of self-efficacy as they obtain some control over their lives banishing feelings of being at the mercy of unpredictable forces and interpretive control because they create understanding regarding the reason for life's occurrences (Baumgardner & Crothers 2009). The repetitive exercise of benefit-finding and benefit-reminding through prayer, church attendance and sharing amongst each other enhances their human strength, optimism and hope contributing to their well-being (Tennen & Affleck 2002).

Religious assurances of each individual's uniqueness and importance bolster their self-worth, and their belief that humans are co-creators and helpers of God feeds a sense of self-efficacy in the assurance that with God's help humans can overcome all obstacles. In accepting life as a journey with God, participants meet challenges with confidence and responsibility. Their focus is on building and contributing to society as opposed to angry entitlement. The God-belief of participants contributed to them expressing the key dimensions of psychological well-being, notably the following:

- virtues of humanity expressed in love and social intelligence;
- temperance expressed in forgiveness and mercy; and
- transcendence expressed in their gratitude, the meaning they create through their religiousness and spirituality (Van Eeden et al 2008).

Even though religious devotion brings freedom at the cost of bondage to the belief system itself (Batson et al 1993), the participants did not experience this "limited" freedom as a burden. They cope with adversity in the light of their orienting system to forge a valuable meaningful life.

Finally, the insights gained in this study of the role that religion plays in the creation of meaning and the contribution of religion to the psychological well-being of Christians from an African context, could be translated into psychological practice. The practice fields of pastoral counselling and trauma counselling can base therapeutic interventions and/or guidance on the fact that religious beliefs and practices can provide a basis for a transcendent sense of personal growth, efficacy, mastery and purpose in life. Experiences of adversity can be worked through by

means of religious coping methods and the optimism and hope that religious affiliation seems to instil in peoples' views. The findings of this study suggest that religious beliefs and experiences may provide an important source of personal strength that promotes psycho-social well-being, mental and physical health and positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, forgiveness, hope and optimism – all building blocks of psychological well-being. Religion offers a unique and special source of meaning concerning human existence and purpose that may be a powerful enabling strength when confronting life-threatening experiences or illness (Baumgardner & Crothers 2009).

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SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research was to qualitatively explore the impact of peoples' God-belief on their creation and experience of meaning and their psychological well-being. Research over the last 25 years in the field of Psychology of Religion has provided important perspectives on religiousness as component of human behaviour (Moore, Kloos & Rasmussen 2001). The positive influence of spirituality and religiosity on the promotion of mental and physical health is well documented (Dowling et al. 2004; Furrow, King, & White 2004; Kerestes, Youniss & Metz 2004).

It is important to acknowledge the fact that religions are shared social constructions, and are therefore understood and expressed in unique ways in different socio-cultural contexts (Hood et al 1996). Although there is a conceptual distinction between the social and personal characters of religion, in reality both forms of the concept are interrelated. Cultural factors condition personal religious experiences (Krüger 1998).

Religious teachings and individual life experiences, including an own search for the divine, are the sources of a person's knowledge and experiences of God. Each individual creates an intimate, internal image of God which, according to Rizzuto (1979), includes a person's God-concept (an intellectual, socially constructed definition of God) and God-image (a personal experiential image of God). God-image and the formation thereof has been a topic of interest for psychologists from the start of Psychology as a science. Freud, Erikson and Jung were some of the very influential early psychologists who theorised in this regard (Goodwin 1998). All these theories link a person's God-image with his/her general psychological functioning. Within the newer Positive Psychology paradigm, this link is demonstrated to be very important because the way an individual perceives God impacts on his/her creation of meaning and psychological well-being. In this regard, Pargament and Mahoney (2002:649) remark, "... the helpfulness or harmfulness of an individual's search for the divine depends on the kind of God the person discovers and the kind of relationship he or she forms with that God." God-concept and God-image are central to a person's religiosity and spirituality. These constructs colour a person's religious-spiritual functioning which influences psychological (Pargament and Mahoney 2002) and emotional well-being (Emmons 2005).

As a result of the complexity of the South African religious and cultural landscape and in the light of rapid urbanisation, globalisation and resulting enculturation, the need for research in the field has become obvious. Areas that could benefit from such research are:

- Psychotherapy: Spiritually oriented psychotherapy is a new field of enquiry (Sperry & Shafranske 2005), and there is a paucity of South African research in this field.
- Gender discourses: Use of language has profound psychological effects (Ozorak 2005; Burr 1995). Language creates reality. An analysis and description of the way in which God is described (traditionally in masculine terms) and how these descriptions are embedded in cultural and gender perceptions and descriptions, which lead to gender stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, may open avenues for alternative discourses.
- Theology: Contributions may be made to develop a theology that is more aware of the psychological impact of its dogma and teachings and which could lead to greater sensitivity, temperance and understanding in teaching and pastoral counselling. This could enable both sexes to understand themselves as God-like (cf. Psalm 8). It could also empower both male and female Christians as well as Christians from African, Western and Eastern contexts to work together to overcome social-economic and socio-political challenges (Taringa 2004).
- Politics: After 9/11, the relationship between religion (God-concept and God-image) and politics has become an important field of interest for psychologists in the USA (Ozorak, 2005). In the South African context, research in the field of Psychology of Religion could provide rich data to be used for cross-cultural co-operation, understanding and tolerance.

In the first article in this series, a literature overview regarding the field of Psychology of Religion and specifically research published in the *South African Journal of Psychology* was reported. Conclusions and recommendations emanating from this review were:

- Various studies in the field of Psychology of Religion in the South African context have focused on the role of religion and spirituality in mental health, meaningful living and psychological well-being.
- The influence of religion in people's value frameworks and moral decision-making has been explored in South African studies.
- The importance of helping professionals' understanding and respecting their clients' (patients', learners') religions and resulting worldviews has been emphasised by various South African researchers.
- It is imperative to expand the psychological discourse by systematically expanding the understanding of the unique African psychological and spiritual experience.

The second article investigated the reasons for humans' religiousness, the influence of religion on people's perspective on life, and the importance of understanding the impact of religion on human functioning. The fact that all humans are religious and that their religious beliefs fundamentally influence their daily functioning was applied to the field of education. Conclusions and recommendations from this investigation were:

- Ontological and cosmological assumptions that are linked to magical-mythic pre-modern views of reality may significantly limit educators' and learners' openness to new scientific developments and ability to learn and master such developments.
- Fundamental conservative religious beliefs could become the breeding ground for attitudes of superiority and exclusion. Through religion education, the education system attempts to encourage tolerance; however, more is needed. Schools should be open, inviting environments where collaboration with religious institutions is possible in order to enhance the spiritual development of the youth. Values are anchors and signposts in turbulent and changing environments; religions guide their adherents in the acquisition of values. Various traditional African religious and Christian values, especially those linked to the belief in the supremacy of males, are questionable in a more egalitarian democratic society. However, values of care, respect and service that are the core traditional African and Biblical values are consonant and form the foundation of intrinsic goals such as personal growth, intimacy and contribution to society.
- In our relatively young democracy, human rights, e.g. peoples' rights to safety, shelter, education, clean water, medical help, etc are emphasised. This prominence is understandable in the light of human rights violations under the previous dispensation. Rights suggest that people are entitled to certain services, circumstances and provisions but all rights are counter-balanced by responsibilities. A culture of demand is enticing in that it may have the lure of easy acquisition that goes with externalising responsibility and effectively disempowering the individual. Meaning and well-being cannot be demanded or given but are the result of individual life choices. An emphasis on and nurturing of a sense of responsibility in individuals lead to connectedness with others. As core religious values underscore personal responsibility and motivate active participation in living life fully, a revisiting of and realignment to such values may be empowering. Gratitude and kindness towards others lead to enhanced happiness.
- People understand, choose and give meaning in accordance to their worldviews (philosophy of life). These worldviews include fundamental assumptions

regarding inter alia reality, values and what can be known. Assumptions are per definition not proven facts but beliefs that form the foundation upon which knowledge and other beliefs are premised. These fundamental beliefs are socially constructed and dominated by religious narratives, myths and teachings, as religions concern themselves with ultimate issues that cannot be established above any doubt and which are just accepted and believed. Even those tenets (myths) of religions that can and are shown by science to be indefensible are not easily shaken or discarded by believers in general. Helping professions therefore need to be aware of the importance of religious beliefs in peoples' lives, whether the people they help and serve are manifestly religious or not.

- Prospective teachers need to be confronted with their own ontological, cosmological and resulting axiological and epistemological beliefs during their education and training. Teachers (like all other helping professionals) need to be aware of and reflect on their beliefs so that the unconscious potentially limiting influence of their unexamined assumptions can be minimised.
- Helping professionals are empowered (or limited) to the degree that they understand their own and others' fundamental assumptions about life. Religious beliefs, though not necessarily in the foreground during the helping interaction, are always part of the Gestalt.

The exploration of the effect of God-belief on the creation of meaning and psychological well-being of Christians from an African context was the focus of the third article. Conclusions and recommendations from this exploration were:

- People's God-concept and God-image profoundly influence their way of being-in-the-world (*Dasein*): their understanding of their own possibilities, sense of security, their functioning in fear and guilt or freedom, forgiveness and hope. This ultimately has an effect on how they create meaning about life and their experiences thereof and also on their psychological well-being.
- The certainty of God's goodness is not easily shattered by experiences. Such a sure foundation makes life's chaos bearable and explainable. This is a very valuable frame within which pastoral counselling or psychotherapy may be conducted. However, major shifts may occur when believers can no longer overcome cognitive dissonance leading to disorientation and a feeling of disconnectedness from God, the self and others. The challenge to the pastor or therapist is to acknowledge the spiritual crisis and to be open enough to facilitate spiritual and psychological growth even if it should entail enabling a change of God-concept and eventually of God-image.

- A concept of God as a wrathful protector of his exclusive nation or handpicked children is the breeding ground for dangerous fanaticism. Such notions divide people and may lead to inter-group and inter-personal prejudice and even violence.
- Families and communities that do not seriously nurture religious-spiritual development run the risk of their children (and adults) falling prey to various well-being limiting elements such as inter alia superstitions, superficial ritualistic protective behaviours, and feelings of meaninglessness. An expression of a misguided search for significance is consumerism, which is associated with extrinsic values and goals. Religion and spirituality provide a life-enriching alternative: an accentuation of personal improvement and connectedness founded in the security of being a unique individual (significantly bolstering self-worth), loved, guided and strengthened by God (being made competent) and being called to contribute to improving the world. Acknowledging and integrating religion and spirituality into the therapeutic context open possibilities to finding personal meaning rooted in universal values of goodness, love and service.
- All religions teach their followers about an Ultimate Reality and each individual's place in the bigger picture. In religious groups, people bolster their sense of identity while their affiliation needs are met. In healthy religious communities, pro-social attitudes, values and behaviours are nurtured.

1. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- More research in the field of Psychology of Religion in the South African context is needed. This study explored some psychological implications of God-belief in the context of only two of the major religions in South Africa – specifically the integration of African and Christian beliefs. How other belief systems impact on their adherents' psychological well-being still needs to be explored. From my experience, I recommend that such study be undertaken by a researcher who has an intimate understanding of the religion to be investigated. Such researcher will be able to gauge the nuances, allusions and references of fellow believers on account of his/her own emersion in the religion being studied.
- The training programmes for workers in the helping professions need to include opportunities for prospective helpers to reflect on their own spiritual-religious well-being. A helper who functions “unconsciously” and burdened by unexamined assumptions will not be sensitive to and respectful of the beliefs of clients, patients or learners. Course material needs to be developed to achieve this aim.

- Documents emanating from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) may be a rich and valuable source of data for research on the role of God-belief in trauma counselling, reconciliation and forgiveness.

2. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study explored the experiences of a group of Christians from an African context, and the findings will not necessarily reflect the experiences of Christians from a Western context or the experiences of adherents to other religions, though many aspects of the findings (e.g. the managing of cognitive dissonance) may be transferrable.

3. IN CONCLUSION

During the process of this study, I have been confronted with cognitively and spiritually challenging information, insights and experiences, all of which were enriching and growth engendering.

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Hervormde Theological Studies¹ Orthographic Guidelines*

The orthographic information and literature references used in all articles and reviews of books or theses must conform to the requirements as set out below. Contributors are reminded that all submissions will be adjudicated by the editor and other experts both with regard to content and compliance with formal requirements.

A AGREEMENT WITH AUTHORS

Sole right of publication: Submission of an article for publication in *HTS Teologiese Studies* implies that HTS will have the sole right in respect of the publication thereof, both in the print and electronic media.

B ADJUDICATION

All submissions will be adjudicated by at least two adjudicators. The adjudication is confidential and the names of adjudicators will not be revealed.

C FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

- **Language:** Manuscripts may be submitted in Afrikaans, Dutch, German or English.
- **The manuscript** must be presented in A4, single sided print format, using MS Word, Arial font, 12 pt with 1,25 spacing. Manuscripts must be edited (i.e. language as well as final editing) and proof thereof may be required.
- **Three copies of the article** are required. The author's initials and surname, department and personal e-mail address only need to appear on **one** of the three title pages. Please also furnish a private postal address, telephone and fax number.
- The remaining **two title pages** should contain details pertaining to the title, university, as well as an English abstract.
- Apart from the translation of the title, **the English abstract** must contain a brief exposition (of no longer than 150 words) of the contents of the article.
- **Following the adjudication process**, authors need to amend manuscripts in terms of editorial comment received, where after **one electronic** and **one hard copy** are to be forwarded to the Editor.

* This style sheet has been drawn up with reference to Kilian, J 1989. *Form and style in theological texts: A guide for the use of the Harvard reference system*. 2nd rev ed. Pretoria: University of South Africa. *Form and style* is a publication of The Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa. The Institute is hereby acknowledged.

1 TYPING OF MANUSCRIPT AND ADMINISTRATION

One copy is to be forwarded on **computer disc** or electronically as an e-mail attachment. The file should be saved as a Word document (i.e. as doc. and not as .rtf). The **hard copy** must also comply with the abovementioned requirements.

Length of document: Twenty (20) printed A4 pages (± 8 000 words) should be regarded as the general guideline.

2 HEADINGS

The upper case is used only for first level headings. Number all headings in accordance with the decimal numbering system. All headings are printed in bold. Avoid numbering of paragraphs without headings. Please note the format for numbering:

1 FIRST LEVEL HEADING

1.1 Second level heading

1.1.1 Third level heading

1.1.1.1 Fourth level heading

For further levels, please use (a) and (i).

Please ensure that all numbered paragraphs have headings.

- ❖ Articles should preferably be subdivided into subparagraphs with appropriate headings.
- ❖ Abbreviations (with the exception of those used for Bible books) and acronyms are not acceptable in the normal text. The use of acronyms which are commonly used, such as Unisa, will be accepted.
- ❖ Italics may only be used as a means of emphasising a word or to indicate a word or an idiom quoted from a language other than the one in which the article is written.
- ❖ **Graphics, illustrations, diagrams and tables** may be produced in any computer programme, but must be saved in either **tif** or **bmp** format.
- ❖ All graphics must be in **electronic format** and must form part of the same document as the text.
- ❖ The font must be compatible with the font type used in the *HTS*, namely Arial.

2.1 Items in a list

Items need not be numbered, but may be indicated by means of a dash (-), an asterisk (*) or "bullets"

3 SPELLING

Follow the spelling of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Please pay particular attention to the use of "gender inclusive" language, also insofar as persons, institutions and items are concerned. Plural forms or the passive voice should be considered for the sake of achieving gender inclusivity.

4 TRANSLITERATION

Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and other special characters must either be entered directly on the keyboard, or must be entered manually and very clearly into the text.

5 ITALICS

Italicise words from ancient and foreign languages. In addition, titles of books, collected works, journals and newspapers are to be italicised. Titles of Bible books, Bible translations, apocrypha and pseudepigrapha must not be italicised.

Foreign words (such as *ad hoc*, *et al*, *sic*) which are so often used in English or Afrikaans that they have almost become accepted "English" or "Afrikaans" terms, should not be italicised. Italics, rather than bold print or underlining, should be used to indicate emphasis. Where applicable, indicate by means of marginal notes where underlining implies italics.

6 ABBREVIATIONS

Recognised abbreviations may only be used in brackets, notes and in the list of references.

6.1 Abbreviations of Bible books (omit punctuation)

6.1.1 Afrikaans (as recommended by the S A Academy of Science and Art)

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| Gen | Eks | Lev | Num | Deut | Jos | Rig |
| Rut | 1 Sam | 2 Sam | 1 Kon | 2 Kon | 1 Kron | 2 Kron |
| Esra | Neh | Est | Job | Ps | Spr | Pred |
| Hoogl | Jes | Jer | Klaagl | Eseg | Dan | Hos |
| Joël | Am | Ob | Jona | Miga | Nah | Hab |
| Sef | Hag | Sag | Mal | | | |
| Matt | Mark | Luk | Joh | Hand | Rom | 1 Kor |
| 2 Kor | Gal | Ef | Fil | Kol | 1 Tess | 2 Tess |
| 1 Tim | 2 Tim | Tit | Filem | Heb | Jak | 1 Pet |
| 2 Pet | 1 Joh | 2 Joh | 3 Joh | Jud | Op | |

6.1.2 English (as recommended by the NTWSA)

| | | | | | | |
|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Gn | Ex | Lv | Nm | Dt | Jos | Jdg |
| Rt | 1 Sm | 2 Sm | 1 Ki | 2 Ki | 1 Chr | 2 Chr |
| Ezr | Neh | Es | Job | Ps | Pr | Ec |
| Can | Is | Jr | Lm | Ezk | Dn | Hs |
| Jl | Am | Ob | Jnh | Mi | Nah | Hab |
| Zph | Hg | Zch | Ml | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Mt | Mk | Lk | Jn | Ac | Rm | 1 Cor |
| 2 Cor | Gl | Eph | Phlp | Col | 1 Th | 2 Th |
| 1 Tm | 2 Tm | Tt | Phlm | Heb | Ja | 1 Pt |
| 2 Pt | 1 Jn | 2 Jn | 3 Jn | Jude | Rv | |

6.2 Ortographic style for passages from the Bible (abbreviations compulsory between brackets, optional in text)

Mt 12:39

Mt 12:39-44

Mt 12:39, 46, 50; 13:10-15

Mt 12, 13, 14

Avoid using “f” or “ff” (Afrikaans: “v” and “vv” or “ev”). Provide the full range of Bible verses or page numbers.

6.3 Other abbreviations

The use of abbreviations for journals and the like is compulsory in the list of references. For a list of abbreviations of classics, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi literature, et cetera, see Kilian, J 1989. *Form and style in theological texts: A guide for the use of the Harvard reference system*. 2nd rev ed. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Standard abbreviations for theological journals and reference works are available in Schwertner, S M 1992. *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*. Berlin: De Gruyter. In the event of abbreviations not being found in Schwertner, titles are to be given in full.

The New Afrikaans Bible translation should be abbreviated (in Afrikaans as well as in English) as NAB.

7 QUOTATIONS

Quotations must be an accurate version of the text being cited. Should there be any doubt with regard to the correctness of the original text being referred to, “sic” may be inserted in square brackets immediately after the word or words which, in the opinion of the author, is/are incorrect. Quotations are placed in double inverted commas, while quotations within a quotation are placed in single inverted commas.

Quotations of more than five typed lines must be indented by 1.5cm on the left and right margins. Such quotations should not be placed in inverted

commas. Particulars of the author, year of publication and page numbers appear, without using a full stop, in brackets at the right margin of the quotation, not at the end of the last line of the indented quotation, but in the second line thereafter (thus leaving one blank line after the quotation).

Words, sentences or phrases omitted from quotations must be indicated by means of three full stops, without any space between the word and the full stop. Four full stops must be used if the words are omitted at the end of a sentence. Use a capital letter in square brackets after four full stops if an omission is followed by the central portion of the next sentence, for instance: "Theology deals with a 'draft for preaching', [V]iewed in this light, theology can never be a theory for praxis"

8 REFERENCES

The Harvard reference system is used in *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*. This system is also known as the author-date reference system, since only the author(s) and date of publication are provided in the text in brackets. The page number(s) must be added if the reference pertains to a specific page (or pages): (Scholl 1976:55).

The full bibliographical particulars of the works consulted must be provided in a list under the heading **Works consulted** (note the use of lower-case letters and bold print) at the end of the article. As the list is the key to both the references in the text and to the tracing of sources in the library, the author's surname and initials are listed first, followed by the date. (Please note the use of lower-case letters in the case of the surname; which in the past had been presented in the upper case; see examples below). The list should be arranged alphabetically. In the event of more than one work by a particular author having been consulted, such references should be chronologically arranged. The name of the same author should not be repeated in the list of references, but should be indicated by means of two dashes —.

Although book and journal references are not to be separated in the reference list, they are, for practical reasons, dealt with separately in the discussion here below:

8.1 Books

Information pertaining to books is presented in the following order:

Author, INITIALS date. *Title*. Publication. Place of publication.
Publisher (Series).

Please note: punctuation, use of upper- and lower-case, italicisation and spacing are to be implemented as follows:

Barr, J 1969. *Biblical words for time*. 3rd ed. (SBT 333). London: SCM.
Via, D O 1970. *Die Gleichnisse Jesu: Ihre literarische und existentielle Dimension*. (BevTh 57.) München: Kaiser.

Examples:

The following examples of references in the text are indicated with a **T**, followed by examples of references in the reference list, indicated with a **R**.

8.1.1 One author

T (Krenz 1965:55)

R Krenz, L 1965. *The historico-critical method*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

8.1.2 Same author with various works

T (Matera 1987:233)

T (Matera 1988:3)

R Matera, F J 1987. The plot of Matthew's gospel. *CBQ* 49, 233-253.

R — 1988. The prologue as the interpretative key to Mark's gospel. *JSNT* 34, 3-20.

8.1.3 One author with more than one work in the same year

T (Schmithals 1980a:76)

T (Schmithals 1980b:126)

R Schmithals, W 1980a. *Die theologische Anthropologie des Paulus*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer. (Kohlhammer Taschenbücher 1021).

R — 1980b. *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag. (SBK NT 3.1.)

8.1.4 Two authors (note the use of the ampersand "&" in lieu of the conjunction "and" as well as the space between initials)

T (Welbourn & Argot 1966:123)

R Welbourn, F B & Argot, B A 1966. *A place to feel at home*. London: Oxford University Press.

8.1.5 Two authors with the same surname

T (Aland & Aland 1982:17)

T The Alands (1982:17) distinguish ...

R Aland, K & Aland, B 1982. *Der Text des Neuen Testaments*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblgesellschaft.

8.1.6 Three authors (note the punctuation within brackets with regard to the indication of the series and further note that no space is left between "5" and "auf"; but cf "2nd ed.")

T First reference (Adam, Kaiser & Kümmel 1975:180)

T Subsequent references (Adam et al 1975:183)

R Adam, G, Kaiser, O & Kummel, W G 1975. *Einführung in die exegetischen Methoden*. 5.Aufl. München: Kaiser. (Studium Theologie 1.)

8.1.7 Four or more authors (note that "et al" is not italicised)

- T First and subsequent references (Pelikan et al 1964:96)
- T Pelikan and others (1964:96) express themselves ...
- R Pelikan, J et al 1964. *Religion and the university*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

8.1.8 Editorial work

- T (Betterson 1967:85)
- R Betterson, H (ed) 1943. *Documents of the Christian church*. London: Oxford University Press.

In the case of a compiled work, it is practice not to refer to the compiled work as such, but rather to a particular contribution in the collection (see 8.1.9).

Abbreviations for editor or compiler are to be given in the language of the book: (ed), (eds), (éd) (Hrsg), (reds), (comp), (comps), (samest), (samests).

8.1.9 Contributions to edited works (note page numbers which are indicated *before* the mention of the place of publication)

- T (Baumgärtel 1963:135)
- R Baumgärtel, F 1963. The hermeneutical problem of the Old Testament, in Westermann, C (ed), *Essays on Old Testament hermeneutics*, 135-159. Richmond: John Knox.

8.1.10 More than one contribution from the same edited work

- T (Cooper 1983:14)
- T (Cross 1983:119)
- T (Halpern 1983:44)
- R Cooper, A M 1983. The life and times of King David according to the book of Psalms, in Friedman 1983:117-131.
- R Cross, F M 1983. The epic traditions of early Israel: Epic narrative and the reconstruction of early Israelite institutions, in Friedman 1983:13-39.
- R Friedman, R E (ed) 1983. *The poet and the historian: Essays in lit-rary and historical Biblical criticism*. Chico: Scholars Press.
- R Halpern, B 1983. Doctrine by misadventure: Between the Israelite source and biblical historian, in Friedman 1983:41-73.

8.1.11 Compiled work of a well-known author

- T (Knox 1848:76)
- R Knox, J 1848. *The works of John Knox*, ed by J Lang. Edinburgh: Clark.

8.1.12 Corporate body as author

- T First reference (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika 1945 = Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika 1945)
- T Subsequent reference (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika 1945)

- R Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. Algemene Kerkvergadering 1945. Notule van die Algemene Kerkvergadering 1945. Argief van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, Pretoria.
- T First reference (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1977 = NGK 1977)
- T Subsequent reference (NGK 1977)
- R Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. General Synod 1977. *Ras, volk en nasie en volkereverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif*. Cape Town: NG Kerk Publishers.

8.1.13 Title as author

Should there be no indication on the title page of a person or a body accepting accountability for the book, then the title of the book is used in the place of the author:

- T First reference (*What Bible can you trust?* 1974:18)
- T Subsequent reference (*What Bible* 1974:19)
- R *What Bible can you trust?* 1974. Nashville: Broadman.

8.1.14 Contributions to dictionary or encyclopaedia (note "s v" = "sub voce" = "under the word")

- * Author known
- T (Hesse 1973)
- R Hesse, F 1973. s v *ThWNT*.
- * Author unknown
- T (*Bibel-Lexikon* 1956)
- R *Bibel-Lexikon* 1956. S v Cäsarea.
- * The place of publication and publisher are not mentioned in the case of dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

8.1.15 Mini-dissertations, dissertations and theses (note that italics are not used)

- T (Pienaar 1989:6)
- R Pienaar, P J H S 1989. Sinners in the time of Jesus and Paul. Unpublished BD mini-dissertation, University of Pretoria.
- T (Van Staden 1988:92)
- R (Van Staden, P J 1988. The structure of the First Epistle of John. Unpublished DD thesis, University of Pretoria.

8.1.16 Works consisting of more than one volume

- * Each volume with the same title
- T (Tillich 1951:217)
- R Tillich, P 1951. *Systematic theology*, vol 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- * Each volume with a different title
- T (Charlesworth 1983:321)
- R Charlesworth, J H (ed) 1983. *The old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Vol 1, *Apocalyptic literature and testaments*. New York: Doubleday.

8.1.17 Festschriften

- T** (Coats 1981:33)
R Coats, G W 1981. The curse in God's blessing: Gn 12, 1-4a in the structure and theology of the Yahwist, in Jeremiah J & Peritt, L (Hrsg), *Die Botschaft und the Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag*. Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag.

8.1.18 Titles

Titles are to be stated exactly as they appear on the title page, except for upper-case letters and punctuation. Use the upper case only for proper names and adjectives derived from nouns which pertain to proper names, for instance Christian with reference to Christ, or Calvinist with reference to Calvin.

The subtitle starts with the upper case and is separated from the title by means of a colon.

8.1.19 Place and name of publisher

Only the first place of publication must be cited. Avoid words accompanying the name of the publisher which are not required for identification, such as "co", "Ltd", "press" and "Verlag". The place of publication should be given in the language of the book.

However, "press" and "Verlag" should be retained after an adjective, for instance: Neukirchener Verlag, Scholars Press.

Always state university publishers in full, for instance: University of Chicago Press, University of Toronto Press.

8.1.20 Edition

The edition of the book should be indicated, except in the case of the first edition. A distinction needs to be made between "reprinting" and "new impression", on the one hand, which may be ignored, and, "edition" which, on the other hand, must be mentioned. The edition should be abbreviated and given in the language of the book. Numerals should be used if possible: 2nd ed; 2^o éd; Facsim ed; 2.Aufl; Hers uitg; Rev ed; 5de dr.

8.2 Journals

- ❖ In the case of articles appearing in journals and newspapers, as well as contributions in collections, the relevant page numbers need to be stated.
- ❖ The titles of publications and journals are stated in italics and are not given in inverted commas.

Information pertaining to a journal is given as follows:

Author, INITIALS date. Title of article. *Title of journal* volume number, pages (full).

The title of the journal is abbreviated in accordance with Schwertner, S M 1992. *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*. 2.überarbeitete und erweiterte Aufl. Berlin: De Gruyter.

R Geyser, P A 1985. Die relasionele waarheidsbegrip en die Christelike lewe: Die sinodale rapport van GKN, *HTS* 41, 119-129.
If the abbreviation does not appear in the source cited, the name of the journal should be given in full

R Thompson, Y 1986. A missing hexateuchal narrative concerning child sacrifice. *Dor le Dor. Our Biblical Heritage* 15, 28-42.

The volume number should be provided in Arabic numeral, without the preceding abbreviation "v", "vol" or "jrg". Full page numbers must be given. If the date or place of publication is missing, the abbreviation "s a" is used instead of referring to the date of publication and "s l" instead of referring to the place of publication. The date is placed in square brackets if the date of publication is known to the user but is not explicitly mentioned in the book or journal. In the case of *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* which has been dated explicitly from Volume 40 as 1984, it is possible to backdate earlier volumes, for instance:

T (Pont [1978]:92)

R Pont, A D [1978]. Die herderlijke brief van die sinode van 1837. *HTS* 34/4, 91-105.

The number of the journal must be mentioned in the event of each number of a particular journal commencing on page one. The number is separated from the volume by means of brackets (e g *HTS* 34(4), 94-105). Note that the pages of *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* have been numbered consecutively per volume since Volume 41. For this reason the numbers of volumes have not been indicated since Volume 41.

8.3 Church publications and popular magazines (note the use of the preposition "and" where page numbers are mentioned as well as the abbreviations bl, p)

T (*Die Hervormer* 1985:4)

R (*Die Kerkbode* 1985:16)

R *Die Hervormer* March 1985. Gesonder grondslag vir tussenkerklike gesprek, p 1 and 4.

R *Die Kerkbode* 27 Feb 1985. Verklaring oor 99-jaar huurpag verwelkom, p 1.

R Van Rensburg, F 1985. *Die Kerkblad* 10 April 1985, p 16 and 17.

8.4 Newspapers

T (*Die Transvaler*, p 1)

R *Die Transvaler* 16 April 1985. Susterkerk verskil oor afskaf, p 1.

9. FOOTNOTES AND ENDNOTES

The use of footnotes should be avoided as far as possible. However, when the use of a footnote proves to be essential, the number of such footnote should be indicated in the text itself, with the complete text cited,

being provided at the bottom of the relevant page. When using the Harvard reference system, the use of endnotes must be avoided. **The information which would have been provided in a footnote should, as far as possible, be integrated into the text itself.** If this proves to be impossible, such information should be indicated by means of an asterisk or a number at the bottom of the relevant page, but such practice should be restricted to a minimum.

Bibliographical detail is to be included in the bibliography and should not be given as footnotes. The bibliography should only list works actually referred to in the article and should be presented in alphabetical order, for example:

Collins, A Y 1996. The origin of the designation of Jesus as "Son of Man", in *Cosmology and exchatology in Jewish and Christian apocalypticism*, 139-158. Leiden: Brill. (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 50.)

Footnotes may not be used solely for bibliographical purposes.

Reference to sources which have to be acknowledged within a footnote, should be treated in the way prescribed for the main text.

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