

**Equipping the Christian church to defend,
practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of
worship in a pluralistic South Africa**

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**EQUIPPING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO DEFEND, PRACTICE AND PROPAGATE
A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF WORSHIP IN A PLURALISTIC SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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October 2019

DECLARATION

I declare that “Equipping the Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in a pluralistic South Africa” is my own work and that all sources I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

Signature: (Dr T Manikam)

Date

Approved by:

Supervisors: _____

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to the following mentors in the faith:

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SUMMARY

The current South African context boasts a maze of nationalities, ethnic groups, races and cultures. Within this context, the country has gravitated into a melting pot of philosophies, ideologies, spiritualities, belief systems and practices, that emanate from Western, Eastern, Middle-Eastern, and Southern influences. This blend has created a diversity of competing worldviews of worship based on a variety of theories, beliefs and practices. The South African Christian church is called to defend, practice and propagate the Biblical worldview of worship within such a setting. In order to fulfil its Biblical mandate, the church must first understand its own theories, beliefs and practices before it reaches out to those within the competing worldviews of worship. Next, the church must know its context and understand the worldviews of worship of non-believers that are present within the context. This research, therefore, focuses on the South African setting by examining the following different influencing worldviews: The West and North bringing in secular concepts through its modernist and postmodernist ideologies; the Eastern mindset with its pantheistic philosophies and mystic spiritualities; the Middle-Eastern influence with its Islamic socio-religious beliefs and religio-political agenda; and the Southern traditionalism with its animistic practices. The broad task examines these worldviews that influence the South African context. The primary concern of this research seeks to suggest how we might equip the South African Christian church to defend, practice, and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship within its setting.

In response to the fore-mentioned reality, this research proposes a theoretical framework within which the Biblical worldview of worship is tested for truth. Firstly, a philosophical approach, regarding certain metaphysical principles, is constructed as a filter for subjecting propositions within the Biblical worldview of worship. Once these tests are

passed and completed, a philosophical/theological grid is utilized to test truth statements within the afore-mentioned competing worldviews. This grid establishes a method with which to equip the Christian church in South Africa to philosophically defend a biblical worldview of worship. Our presupposition states that special revelation (Biblical) is to align with natural revelation (reality). Therefore, Biblical revelation is to be subjected to stringent tests for truth, where metaphysical principles apologetically deal with abstract concepts in relation to truth, being, knowing, identity, time, space, eternity, etc. The answers given for these abstract concepts relate to the worldview questions and give credence to the uniqueness of the Christian worldview of worship. Secondly, the competing worldviews of worship must be passed through a similar test to ascertain their veracity. For this, the philosophical/theological grid is used as a defence *against* these competing worldviews and *for* the Biblical worldview of worship.

The philosophical/ theological grid proposes a filter to establish the reasonableness and veracity of propositions within the competing worldviews of worship. Truth-testing of the any worldview requires certain filters through which they can be tested. Apologist, Ravi Zacharias' "1-2-3-4-5" test method of analysing claims for truth in any worldview, has been utilized, developed (with the addition of the test for reason) and applied.¹ A test for truth is imperative to establish whether worldviews of worship correspond with reality. There are certain theories for propositional truth that need to be combined and presented as a filter for all worldviews. The correspondence and coherence theories are two main theories that try to explain what truth is. The correspondence test for truth can be applied in the presence of empirical and non-empirical evidence in the worldviews of worship.

¹ See Zacharias (1994:122-131) for his presentation of the test method.

The coherence test of truth states that the various propositions must be coherent and internally consistent. The purpose, therefore, of the application of this theories, is to test whether the Biblical worldview and the other competing worldviews of worship hold together. Together with the fore-mentioned tests, the undeniability and unaffirmability tests for truth is to be utilized for the falsity and truthfulness of the worldviews of worship. Next, there are three tests that may be applied in determining the truth of the various worldviews of worship. They are: logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance. This threefold test achieves for us tests for truth, which grounds it in reason, science and existential realities. Finally, the four questions that are utilized for the worldview test forms a major part of the philosophical grid. The four questions include: origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?), and destiny (where are we going?), are outlined. All worldviews attempt to answer these fundamental questions.

This research demonstrates that the Biblical worldview meets the required philosophical standards, thus creating a Philosophical-theological grid (theoretical framework) with which to filter the competing worldviews of worship in the South African context (Chapters 2-3). The defence of the Biblical worldview against the competing worldviews of worship include: atheism/secularism (Chapter 4), Islam (Chapter 5), Hinduism/Buddhism (Chapter 6), and Animism (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 concludes the study by condensing the content into a curriculum for the South African church. The curriculum includes three modules which provides for the three aspects of our practical framework: i.e. defending the Biblical worldview of worship (apologetic), practicing the Biblical worldview of worship (pastoral), and propagating the Biblical worldview of worship (missional).

KEY TERMS

The key terms will include:

1. Metaphysical-philosophical approach
2. Scriptural-theological approach
3. Worldview of worship
4. Pluralistic
5. Biblical worldview
6. Atheistic/Secular worldview
7. Islamic worldview
8. Hindu/Buddhist pantheistic polytheism worldview
9. Animistic worldview
10. Defend
11. Practise
12. Propagate

ABBREVIATIONS

1 Cor	-	1 Corinthians
1 Pet	-	1 Peter
1 Sam	-	1 Samuel
1 Tim	-	1 Timothy
2 Cor	-	2 Corinthians
2 Pet	-	2 Peter
2 Sam	-	2 Samuel
2 Tim	-	2 Timothy
Chaps.	-	Chapters
Col	-	Colossians
Deut	-	Deuteronomy
Dn	-	Daniel
Eph	-	Ephesians
Ex	-	Exodus
Ezek	-	Ezekiel
Gal	-	Galatians
Gen	-	Genesis
Heb	-	Hebrews
Hos	-	Hosea
Isa	-	Isaiah
Jas	-	James
Jer	-	Jeremiah
Jn	-	John
Josh	-	Joshua
Lev	-	Leviticus
Matt	-	Matthew
Mic	-	Micah
Mk	-	Mark
Neh	-	Nehemiah
Num	-	Numbers
O.T.	-	Old Testament
Obad	-	Obadiah
Phil	-	Philippians
Prov	-	Proverbs
Psa	-	Psalms
Rev	-	Revelation
Rom	-	Romans
Zech	-	Zachariah
Zeph	-	Zephaniah

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background Rationale

The modern South African context has gravitated into a melting pot of philosophies, ideologies, spiritualities, belief systems and practices. This beautiful country also boasts a maze of nationalities, ethnic groups, races, and cultures. This blend has created and celebrates a diversity of theories, beliefs, and practices which include:

- i. Secularism which has filtered in from the West and North bringing in concepts to explain reality that have expulsed notions of transcendence operative in the world.
- ii. Eastern beliefs and practices with pantheistic and polytheistic philosophies mixed with mystic spiritualities, with or without personal deities, have also become an influence.
- iii. Islam, which has also entered from the middle-east with its socio-religious and religio-political agenda. In being the second largest religion, following on the heels of Christianity, Islam's growing fundamentalist movements have been a matter of grave concern among many western and African countries.
- iv. Animism inherent in African Traditional Religions - whose beliefs and practices are also entrenched and added from this country's native peoples (and other Africans from the continent), with an emphasis on the spirit world.

In view of these influences, the current South African setting may be broadly defined as secularistic, pluralistic, fundamentalistic, and animistic. South Africa boasts a context of tolerance of all beliefs and practices. Yet, the opposite is true for worldviews with monotheistic and exclusivist beliefs and practices - especially those espoused in

evangelical Christianity. Evangelical Christianity is frowned upon and often viewed with contempt. On the one hand, from both secular and religious persuasions, Biblical Christianity is frowned upon and perceived as an ancient religion with no or little bearing upon the modern South African citizen. On the other hand, the dangers that face the South African church in a pluralistic setting is threefold: i. the danger of corrupting Biblical worship, ii. the danger of syncretism, and iii. the danger of lack of knowledge for adequate evangelism among Christians. It is within this setting that the contemporary South African church is called to be equipped for the defence, practice, and propagation of its Biblical worldview of worship.

1.2. Understanding the Topic Title

The topic title, *Equipping the Christian church² to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in a pluralistic South Africa*, investigates the divergent strands that make up the new South African cultural complexion. It examines these strands from a worldview perspective to identify worship beliefs and practices, which contrast the Biblical worldview of worship.

The South African evangelical church is required to respond to pressure from all these worldviews and yet stay true to its message through precept, lifestyle, and proclamation. The broad task at hand is to examine and appropriately meet the influences that hold sway within the South African context. The primary concern of this research will be to suggest how we might equip the South African church to defend, practice, and propagate

² By "Christian church" we mean the Evangelical church. Evangelicalism is characterized by the following four main tenets: i. those who accept the Bible as fully authoritative for faith and practise, ii. those who have Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, iii. those who believe on a personal response by faith in Jesus Christ, and iv. those who actively propagate the Gospel for the salvation of unbelievers.

a Biblical worldview of worship within the South African setting. This is imperative considering the various worldview influences that we find ourselves exposed to, and the mood of pluralism that pervades the South African context. If a Biblical worldview of worship is not entrenched in the lives of believers for its defence, practice, and propagation, the church courts the danger of corruption of Biblical worship. It is partially for this very reason that many letters were addressed to specific churches and individuals in the New Testament as a corrective means to guide the people of God to right doctrine and expressions of worship. It is, therefore, imperative for modern Christian worship to be grounded in the Christian Scriptures for the formation of an authentic worldview of worship.

A simpler way to carry out this investigation will be to use the *presuppositional apologetic approach* – i.e. where “... we adopt the Word of God as our ultimate commitment, our ultimate standard, our ultimate criterion of truth and falsity, God’s Word then becomes our ‘presupposition.’ Since we use it to evaluate all other beliefs, we must regard it as more certain than any other beliefs” (Frame 2015:3). Even though we hold to these truth statements, our approach will initially take on another method, lest we be accused of *fideism* or *circular* argumentation and reasoning (see Frame 2015:249-264). Our methodology uses *apologetics as proof*, by presenting a rational basis for the Christian faith (Frame 2015:290). We will, therefore, initially employ a philosophical approach.

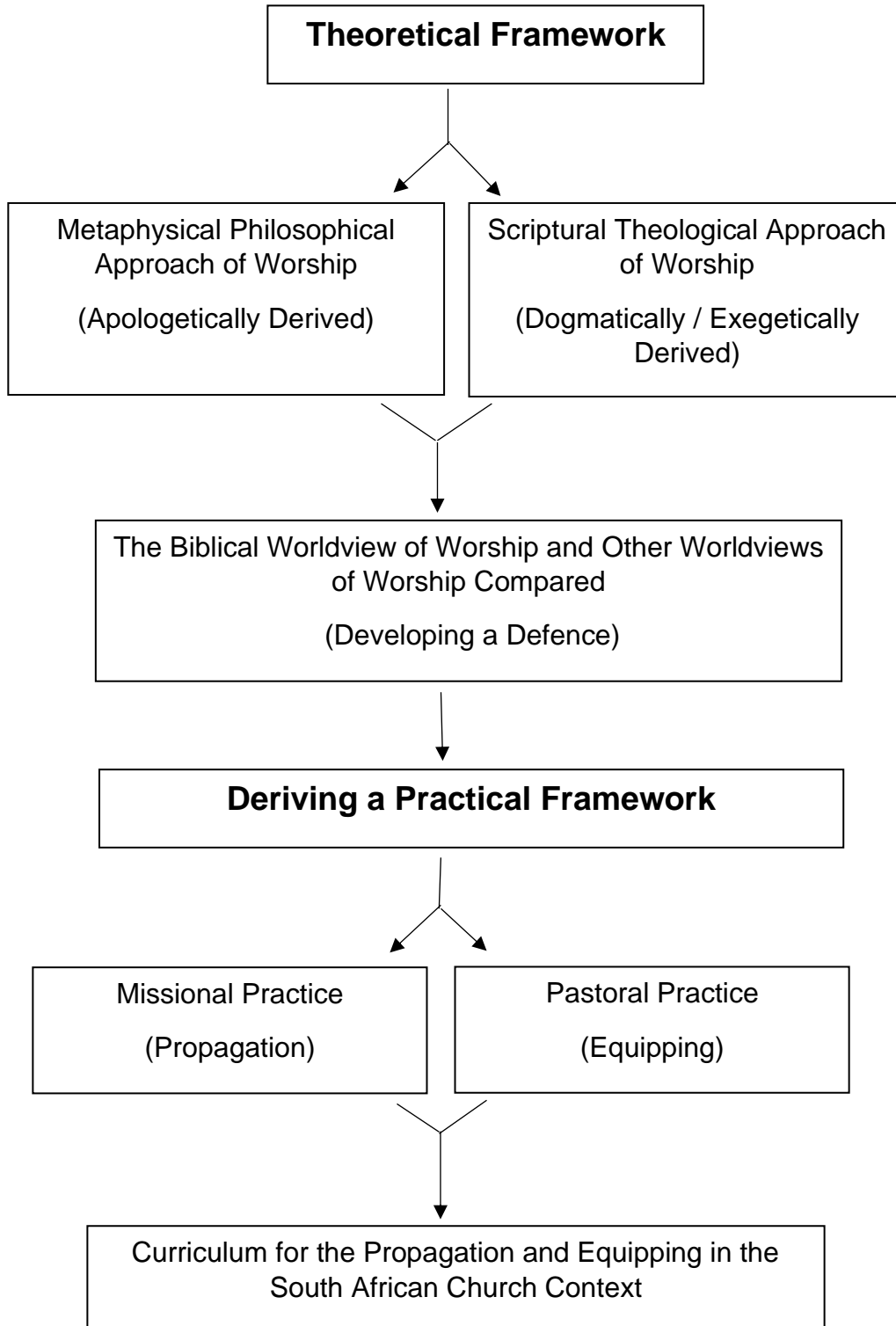
A philosophical approach, regarding certain metaphysical principles, will be constructed as a grid. These metaphysical principles will apologetically deal with abstract concepts in relation to truth, being, knowing, identity, time, space, eternity, etc. that relate to worldview questions and that give credence to the uniqueness of the Christian worldview of worship

in contrast with others. This grid will be utilized as a test for our scriptural theological approach. The scriptural basis that feeds our theoretical framework presupposes an objective and stable point of reference for this research. A theological approach may be derived exegetically from the Scriptures and expanded. A didactic practical application will thereafter be derived for the defence, practice, and propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship.

Thus, this research will have a Theoretical framework (illustrated in the diagram below) which includes a Metaphysical-Philosophical approach on the one hand, and a Scriptural-Theological approach on the other. These two approaches will be used to formulate a Christian and Biblical worldview of worship. This worldview, in turn, will be employed to create a Practical Framework (see *Figure 1* below) for the defence, practice, and propagation of a Biblical worldview of worship.

Figure 1

Equipping the Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in a pluralistic South Africa



1.3. The topic title: key words and definitions

From the topic title, *Equipping the Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in a pluralistic South Africa*, the key words and phrases used in this dissertation include the following: Biblical, worldviews, worship (which will be contrasted with religious spirituality), the South African context, and the defence, practice, and propagation of Biblical worship, equip and spirituality. These concepts are mentioned and developed throughout the research.

1.4. Research question

In the light of the above discussions surrounding the topic title, the task at hand seeks to answer the following research question:

How may we equip the South African Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship within a pluralistic culture?

The people of God need to understand the influence and impact of pluralistic philosophies and spiritualities in the South African context, so that we may be equipped to defend, practice, and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship. We will, therefore, attempt an understanding and practice of the *Biblical worldview of worship* and how it must be applied within the current South African context. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, therefore, is the primary document that will be used to motivate and develop our arguments.

The Christian Scriptures motivate an understanding of God as absolute – the One who is self-existent and who transcends all things within His created order. In Him, being the

Absolute One, God has communicated and revealed the truth of His Person, workings and purposes in the Scriptures. God's Word is truth; therefore, truth is absolute – and cannot be exceeded because it is revealed by God. God's Word, therefore, is foundational for developing a Biblical worldview of worship, and a yard-stick to gauge other worldviews of worship. This will mean, therefore, that God's Word is the foundation *for* truth in developing a theoretical foundation to measure alternative truth and worldview claims. The Biblical concept *of* truth – which establishes a point of reference for the application of truth principles within the practice of worship for the people of God and all humanity – will be tested philosophically. The church, therefore, has the Word of God and its stance of truth to establish a *Biblical worldview* of worship.

Our presupposition states that: If truth is 'that which agrees with reality' and the Scriptures are God's revelation, then reality observed, and the Scriptures must cohere. Therefore, various selected Biblical passages will be needed to test and prove the Biblical worldview of worship. This will also help us develop the theological underpinnings of a Biblical worldview of worship by understanding the concept "truth" and how Christ *defines* reality (both physically and metaphysically) and *fulfils* it. The apologetically tested truth-principles will provide the philosophical underpinnings of our theoretical framework. The invitation, thereafter, will be for the South African church to apply the Biblical worldview of worship in its defence, practice, and propagation.

1.5. Research aim

Our general aim is to present a curriculum to inform and equip the South African church with a Biblical worldview of worship and a practical theological response to pluralistic spiritualities. This will suggest the presentation of a reasonable faith for God's people as

they preach, teach and practice apologetically within the missional ministry of the local church. The curriculum will also present a practical framework of how the church can engage young minds from an early age who are conditioned by these alternative worldviews propagated through state education, media, arts, entertainment, relationships, etc.

The method used to achieve the afore-mentioned aim will be evidenced in the content which must be applied as a grid to contrast it with the western and northern, eastern, middle-eastern, and southern worldviews that have emerged in South Africa, largely through migration. The overall outline will be limited to researching the relationship of the concept of “truth” and the four major questions of every worldview, namely, origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?), and destiny (where are we going?). These theoretical worldview questions help in shaping the worship practices of people. The practical outworking of this study will contribute to the application of our Biblical worldview of worship in our defence, practice, and propagation.

1.6. The theoretical framework

The process of the theoretical framework will include, firstly, the formulation of a philosophical framework by which to gauge Biblical beliefs and practices. Secondly, the Biblical worldview will be researched against the philosophical framework to form a philosophical/theological grid to contrast with other worldviews. This will be done through an exegetical examination of selected Biblical texts to derive an apologetic-theological application. Thirdly, the researching of each of the major influences, including, secularism, pluralism, fundamentalism, and animism, under the four major worldview questions and the understanding and implementation of the concept of ‘truth.’ Finally,

principles for practicing a worldview of worship will form the practical framework for the South African church to defend, practice, and propagate.

In the development of the topic, we shall largely consider a systematic study of three Biblical texts as we examine them apologetically and theologically for a Biblical worldview of worship. These selected pericopes, phrases and word studies - which include the truth claims *of* Christ and *about* Christ will be examined and developed according to a standardized format, namely: Text, Translation, Exegesis, Theological Reflection, and Contemporary Application.

These texts will be considered apologetically and applied to further develop the philosophical grid with the important worldview questions, namely: truth, origins, meaning, morality and destiny within the Biblical worldview of worship. The underlying tenets and resultant beliefs and practices of the various worldviews within the South African Context (viz. Atheism/Secularism, Hinduism/Buddhism, Islam, and Animism), will also be researched under the headings: truth, origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.

The philosophical/theological grid will be applied as a practical framework to contrast the Biblical worldview of worship with the various worldviews. It will be utilized as a basis for the curriculum to inform the South African church didactically, and to be applied in its defence, practice, and propagation of this Biblical worldview of worship.

A few presuppositions must also be stated at the outset regarding our worldview. Many of our presuppositions are derived and influenced by our upbringing. Regarding our ethnicity, our background is Asian Indian, with our ancestry traced to the Indian continent.

However, we share with many Asian Indians of South African roots a common history for the past ca. 160 years. So, we consider ourselves to be “South African.” Our ancestors settled in the sugar farming belt of Kwa-Zulu Natal on the North Coast. The Gospel reached our grandparents through Indian missionaries that immigrated to South Africa. We are third-generation Christians in South Africa. Our exposure to the Hindu, Muslim and African Traditional Religions in our formative years and within a westernized schooling system have given us first-hand experience in understanding the beliefs and practices of this South African pluralistic culture. So, this study is not mere abstract theory. We can theoretically manoeuvre due to our theological background, and practically illustrate through various encounters and experiences with those with contrasting worldviews.

Our roots also emerge from within the South African Apartheid context. The separation of the four races: Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Blacks saw the forced removal of people from their homeland and resettled elsewhere. The ruling White government maintained the country along racial boundaries with most of the privileges (e.g. land, employment, financial prosperity, etc.) given to the White population. The rest of the South African peoples were rated second-class citizens with varying degrees of economic benefits or the lack thereof. As South Africa was becoming more industrialized, prime land was taken from its native peoples and distributed to White people and companies. The native people were forced to establish themselves in little rural communities with few advantages that a developing country could offer. Our ancestors were brought from India as indentured labourers to work in the sugar plantations. They were originally settled in prescribed areas, similar with the native Africans. This is the setting that I entered in the year 1972

and grew up in. Within this context, certain pluralistic beliefs and practices were present and contained, in accordance with racial divisions.

We, however, were privileged to witness the final demise of the apartheid regime in 1994, when the new democratic African National Congress (ANC) government took over the reins of the country. Previous boundaries around racial lines were outlawed and pluralism became more pronounced and defined in a now democratic society where all had to be equally included and respected – making up this “New South Africa”. Thus, our settlement in this country contributes to its diversity. Some parts of our beliefs and culture are distinct from other beliefs and cultures. However, with regards to some other aspects of culture, we find ourselves blended with the other cultures (e.g. food, clothing, language, music, etc.), forming a unique South African pluralistic culture of diversity, tolerance, and acceptance. It is in this setting that the Biblical worldview must be defended, practiced, and propagated.

Within this diversity is also a plurality of Christian beliefs and practices. Various denominational and non-denominational churches exist in South Africa. These broadly range from conservative to liberal theological positionings under the “Christian” banner. In the light of this we consider ourselves “conservative and evangelical” and present our unique model from this perspective. We hold that the Bible (Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God and it provides for us a divine point of reference for the worldview within which our faith and practice are realized. The claims of eternity, inspiration, and authority of the Scriptures, together with a historiographic study (i.e. its logical, conceptual, epistemological aspects; and bibliographical, internal, and external tests), make us take for granted the reliability of this Book as the trusted Word of God (Moreland

1987:134). It is through providence that the Scriptures have been communicated, written, survived, and handed to the 21st century church. So, the Christian Scriptures function as the objective point of reference for faith and practice to us. Our conclusion is that God has revealed Himself to the church to defend, practice, and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship.

1.7. Research objectives

With the theoretical framework in place and our presuppositions considered, we wish to research:

Firstly, the task of equipping the South African church in defending, practicing, and propagating a Biblical worldview of worship.

Secondly, we wish to show how current philosophies, spiritualities, and practices, whether they be secular or religious, shape modern South Africans' beliefs and practices of worship.

Finally, by comparing the philosophical, theological, and practical aspects of the Biblical worldview with opposing worldviews of worship, we want to propose an alternative to influence the South African church with - to defend, practice, and propagate it.

Regarding the specific and detailed aims, the objectives of the research can be stated as follows:

Firstly, to explore the philosophical-theological worldview of worship for the South African church.

Secondly, to view the influences of western/northern (atheism/secularism), middle-eastern (Islam), eastern (Hinduism and Buddhism), and southern (Animism) which shape the South African context.

Finally, to equip the South African church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship.

Regarding the general aim, the objective of the research can be stated as follows:

To present to the South African church a curriculum where:

Firstly, a theoretical and practical understanding of pluralistic worldviews of worship will be demonstrated (e.g. Atheism/Secularism, Islam, Hinduism/Buddhism, and Animism). This will be applied within the worldview questions of truth, origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.

Secondly, suggesting ways in which the South African church is to be trained effectively preparing for the defence, practice and propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship in the South African setting.

Finally, a practical understanding in fulfilling its mandate and mission in evangelism will be achieved through the defence, practice and propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship.

1.8. Research design

Our task will be to investigate the major beliefs and practices from the west/north, middle-east, east, and south that support pluralism in South Africa. The philosophical and spiritual nature of these worldviews and their influence on the modern South African minds and beliefs will be examined. These will be contrasted with the Biblical worldview of worship through the philosophical-theological grid.

We shall thereafter put forward a curriculum of studying content which will form the basis for equipping the South African church within a philosophical, theological, and practical worldview of worship. We will also investigate how this worldview uniquely can be defended against observed adverse reality. The curriculum will suggest ways in which the content can be communicated to the church and practically applied for the propagation and equipping with a Biblical worldview of worship.

The study will unfold in the following design:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introductory matters, that give an understanding of the topic title, are covered in this first chapter.

Chapter 2: A metaphysical-philosophical approach for a worldview of worship

A *philosophical approach* for measuring the truth claims of the Biblical worldview and the various worldviews of worship will be presented. The grid includes the worldview questions which seek to define reality in broad terms, namely, truth, origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.

This will be applied to the Biblical worldview to establish a *philosophical-theological grid* to be discussed in Chapter 3. Matters of theological importance that relate to these worldview questions must be considered, which include: theology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology. Our presupposition is thus stated - if God created reality (the state of things as they are), then the claims of special revelation (the Bible), which may be perceived as the ideal, must correspond with reality – even in a fallen human state.

The philosophical-theological grid will be practically applied to measure the truth claims of the various competing worldviews of worship that influence the South African setting, which we will discuss in the ensuing chapters. Thus, the major worldviews of worship will be broadly covered.

The worship beliefs and practices of a people is to be understood within a worldview. A worldview may simply be defined as the framework of beliefs about reality that shape an individual's daily decisions and actions (Colson & Pearcey 1999:ix). It is the grid or filter through which he interprets everything. Colson and Pearcey give a reminder that "... the world is divided not so much by geographic boundaries as by religious and cultural traditions, by peoples' most deeply held beliefs – by worldviews" (1999:xiii). The

worldview that individuals have aligned themselves to, will determine *who* or *what* they are worshipping. Aspects of worldview need to be researched that relate to worship. The question: “What constitutes a worldview?”, will be answered. An etiology of the various worldviews of worship must be constructed to ascertain origins and development, and to ultimately ascertain their mythical or historical explanations. Epistemological issues relating to truth claims that relate to worship must be researched and defined to apply to the Biblical and opposing worldviews.

The concept “Biblical worldview” must be used both broadly and narrowly. Broadly speaking, the term will include culture, experience, background, etc. This will presuppose “Biblical *worldviews*” which will differ from person to person due to the various influences on individuals that form and shape their worldviews. We will also apply the concept narrowly – focussing on the cognitive aspects of Biblical truth. This will mean that we will consider the cognitive, cultural, empirical, and other aspects that form and inform a person’s worldview.

Chapter 3: An exegetically derived scriptural-theological approach to the Biblical worldview of worship

The Biblical worldview identifies the Bible as the grid through which believers are to view existence, truth, sin, salvation, ethics and evil (Caner 2008e:498). This study proceeds from our conservative evangelical position with a high view of the Christian Scriptures which define clear parameters and discernible logic to the matter of truth. Biblical Christianity suggests that “worldview” entails,

... God’s gracious redemption that delivers the hearts of men and women from idolatry and false views of life engendered by satanic deception and the blindness of sin, and enables them through faith in Jesus Christ to come to a knowledge of God and the truth about his creation and all aspects of reality (Naugle 2002:260).

In examining the Biblical worldview, our intention is to demonstrate its authenticity and reliability, and to contrast it with dominant opposing worldviews from a global-regional approach, namely, western and northern, middle-eastern, eastern, and southern.³ In order for us to achieve this, we will employ certain Biblical texts. These texts will be referenced to provide a theological perspective to the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny. These questions have a bearing on worship.

The Biblical worldview suggests the presence of both true and false worship. True worship was encountered in Eden as man enjoyed perfect communion with his Creator. The origin of false worship will be traced back to Lucifer's downfall which later resulted in humanity's downfall through Satanic influence. This process of the downfall of true worship and its restoration in the Old Testament sacrificial system, its fulfilment in Christ's sacrifice, and culminating in eschatological worship must be Biblically researched.

All this suggests a purpose to worship that moves it beyond mere forms, rituals and traditions and grounds it in the Person of God. It identifies that the ability to approach God through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and the on-going Presence of God in the believer through the Holy Spirit, precedes expressions of worship. In other words, the outward expressions of the worship of God do not allow one access to God. Worship is evidenced in all other religious systems where a works-based salvation is believed and practiced for gaining the favour of some god or deity. Also, in the current postmodern setting, spirituality is encouraged with or without a personal deity. It is for this reason that Jesus had to inform the Samaritan woman at the well that a relationship with God

³ We need not consider the Latin American influence, as its Christian and Animistic understandings are from external and internal influences, as is the case in Africa (southern), which we will discuss in more detail.

necessitates both worship and the impetus to express worship within the confines of truth (John 4:24).

We hold to the belief that the Scriptures argue for a belief and practice of worship, which must never be reduced to mere ceremony and outward expressions only. Within the confines of this study, the impact of mere outward ceremony - both within the Biblical faith and other faiths, will be examined. Selected Biblical texts will be theologically examined and applied to answer the following questions:

1. Who must we worship? i.e. the *Person* that we need to respond to.
2. Why must we worship? i.e. the Biblical *Purpose* for worship.
3. How must we worship? i.e. the Biblical *Prescription* for worship.
4. Where must we worship? i.e. the *Place* of worship.
5. When must we worship? i.e. the *Period* for worship.

This Biblical understanding of worship will be used as a grid to measure current Christian beliefs and practices and the beliefs and practices of the opposing stated worldviews.

Scripture also commands a *defence* of the Biblical worldview within a variety of competing worldviews. Believers may find themselves in a setting – whether at home, school, college, or in the market-place – being questioned about certain beliefs and practices. Therefore, the believer is commanded to give an answer (*apologia*), to everyone who asks, for the hope that is in him (1 Pet. 3:15). The discipline of apologetics and its practical application by the believer is much needed in a setting like South Africa, where believers perpetually engage with people of opposing worldviews. Many are hostile to the Gospel. Within hostile settings, Peter's call is for correct answers accompanied with correct

character. The believer is called to provide a defence for their beliefs. Therefore, the research will demonstrate the importance of the apologetic ministry with particular reference to the quality of a life lived and the clarity of answers given – which are two imperatives for the believer’s worship from Peter (1 Pet. 3:15) (Zacharias 2007:305). There are many hostile voices to the Christian faith – from both secular thinkers and those of various religious affiliations. Here, our focus will primarily demonstrate the authenticity of the Biblical worldview, with the Scriptures as a valid point of reference. Issues of inerrancy, authority and other epistemological issues will briefly be summarized and presented in defence of exclusive Biblical worship within each of the following chapters that describe the major worldviews which stand in opposition to the Biblical worldview of worship in the South African setting.

Chapter 4: The Biblical worldview of worship and the Atheistic/Secular worldview compared

The moods present through western and northern influences will include: secularism, pluralism, fundamentalism, and postmodernism. We shall also briefly trace the three western epochs of premodernism, modernism and postmodernism to understand the process which led to the present moods. The discussion of the tenets of postmodernism will be limited to: the rejection of reason, social constructivism, cultural determinism, and the denial of the transcendent. These views will be researched against the proposed grid and applied using Biblical revelation, which argues for objective truth, and the exclusivity of the person and work of Jesus Christ as a means for salvation.

Chapter 5: The Biblical and Islamic worldviews of worship compared

Middle-eastern Islam with its major Sunni and Shia divisions will be researched. Islam's political and religious agenda will be discussed to reveal its intent to spread through the "sword." Its five pillars as paths to salvation will briefly be studied within the applied grid of truth, origins, meaning, morality and destiny to reveal its teachings for a more informed Christian-evangelistic thrust.

Islam is considered the second major religion in the world, just behind Christianity. This religion is experiencing exponential growth, not so much through proselytizing; but through a high birth rate of Muslim people. Due to Islamic fundamentalists, Islamic beliefs is being thrust into the global scene. The Islamic presence in South Africa, provides us with the imperative to examine this worldview of worship, and compare it with the Biblical worldview of worship. The Philosophical-Theological Grid (Chapter 3) will be employed to examine the Islamic worldview of worship and provide a defence against it in this chapter.

Chapter 6: The Biblical and Hindu/Buddhist worldviews of worship compared

Eastern Hinduism with its major branches, namely, philosophical and classical Hinduism will be examined. Our research will include: the Hindu position on absolute truth, salvation, time and history, eschatology, etc. which will be researched within the applied grid of truth, origins, meaning, morality, and destiny.

Also, the current Chinese diaspora brings with it Buddhism into the South African context. Buddhism is an offshoot of Hinduism due to Gautama Buddha's rejection of the authority of some principal beliefs in Hinduism. These will be examined. However, many beliefs

are shared by Hindus and Buddhists and therefore, Buddhism will be studied within its historical Hindu context (Caner 2008b:114). The historical accounts of the separation will be researched, and the divergent beliefs explored. The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path will be examined against the philosophical-theological grid.

Due to Buddhism's roots being founded in Hinduism and the many similarities between these two worldviews, we will apply the grid within the worldview questions to establish their viewpoints on truth, origins, meaning, morality and destiny together. This will be contrasted with the Biblical worldview of worship. However, whenever there are major beliefs that stand in opposition between these two worldviews of worship, these will be mentioned or discussed.

Chapter 7: The Biblical and Animistic worldviews of worship compared

The traditional religious practices of Africa are considered *animistic*, suggesting a notion that "... apparently inert objects are inhabited by spirits. They are "animated" (Sproul 1986:115). The religion is structured in such a way as to make peace with the spirits who may look after you by warding off evil spirits. Within the practices of daily life, the living is riddled with fear for death and for the spirits.

Southern African Traditional Religious influences will be studied to ascertain their beliefs and practices for comparison with the Biblical worldview of worship. The aspects of oral tradition, ancestral "worship", and other animistic beliefs and practices, together with community-oriented living will be discussed to reveal cultural beliefs and practices that impede the pursuit of truth. We will suggest within the curriculum for equipping, effective ways to communicate the truth of the Gospel within this setting.

Chapter 8: Equipping the Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in South Africa

The context in which the above study is applied is the current South African context. No constructive outcomes can be achieved for a current and future application of the defence, practice, and propagation of a Biblical worship if a historical and current study is not done of the influences that shaped and are shaping the South African minds, beliefs, and practices.

South Africa is endearingly known as a “rainbow nation” because it has opened its doors to many people of different nationalities, ethnic groups, languages, cultures, and religious beliefs. The phrase, coined by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, reveals this country’s celebration of the diversity present within it. In view of the rich religious diversity that is present within the South African context, pluralistic tendencies are a natural outworking of everyday life. When referring to religious pluralism, there are two basic ideas; yet very different meanings (Groothuis 2010:297):

First, religious pluralism can simply refer to a measure of religious diversity – as opposed to religious uniformity – in a particular culture at a particular time. This is the term’s *descriptive* meaning. The second understanding of religious pluralism is the term’s *prescriptive* meaning. Religious pluralism in this sense is the idea that all the major religions of the world provide equal access to God.

Within the scope of this dissertation, the *prescriptive* meaning of religious pluralism will be explored to demonstrate its philosophical and its religious beliefs and practical underpinnings. It will be demonstrated that all the major religious worldviews share a common belief in the exclusiveness of religious beliefs and practices – even when they deny this fact. The extent to which religious pluralism has penetrated the South African scene through secularism, pluralism, animism, fundamentalism, etc. will be researched to ascertain how the church may respond.

The believer is also entrusted with the task of *propagating* the Biblical worldview of worship. Clear instruction is given to His disciples by Jesus, just prior to His ascension, to engage in world evangelization (Acts 1:8). The Acts 1:8 model will be applied. The mission must include a local outlook moving to a global outlook. The reason for this is due to the Biblical understanding that all outside of Christ are lost and in death. They need salvation. Within the scope of this section, we shall research the ministry of the church in world evangelization and conclude with what the Biblical message consists of, for the propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship, within the South African setting (cf. 2 Cor. 5).

The missiological application of principles for the practice of the Biblical worldview of worship by the believer will also be viewed. This will emanate from the worldview questions of truth, origin, meaning, morality and destiny. We will seek to explain how the consideration of these important worldview questions can lead a person to Christ and ultimately to true worship.

We will also demonstrate the supernatural involvement and enabling that the believer is endowed with to experience and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship. So, the active participation of the Holy Spirit's transforming work in cooperation with the believer will be applied. The soteriological doctrines of propitiation, redemption, expiation, substitution, regeneration, justification, and imputation will be discussed to arrive at the believer's status.

Our task is to research some aspects of spiritual formation and the Biblical understanding of the nature of sanctification by examining its meaning and application within the life of

the believer for true belief and practice in worship. Next, the doctrine of glorification, which is evidenced as the ultimate end for the believer, will be researched to demonstrate a standard of perfection. With glorification as an eternal goal, spiritual formation leads to transformation that must be evidenced in the believer. The glorified state is evidenced in the Person of Christ for the believer. Whilst in this temporal existence, the believer is conformed into the image of Christ until its completion at the end. Complete perfection is only attained in the next life. In all these, we will examine some traditional evangelical interpretations, beliefs, and practices. We will thereafter suggest our understanding of these doctrines and their application within the believer's living for true belief and practice of worship.

Our conclusions will be condensed in this chapter in the formation of a curriculum. Chapters 3-7 will research a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship. Hence, the content will not be repeated in this section. However, we will present a summary of the apologetic utilized in presenting a foundation for the Philosophical-Theological grid. The curriculum will include the objectives, outcomes, structure/outline, and assessment. Within the theoretical framework of the curriculum, the broad outline will be structured as follows:

A. The Philosophical-Theological Worldviews of Worship Didactically Applied

We will define the major tenets of a Biblical worldview by presenting the concept "truth" and the exclusive nature of Biblical worship. In so doing, we will primarily apply Zacharias'

(2015:online sermon)⁴ well-constructed test⁵ of analysing claims for truth in any worldview:

1. Truth

– its exclusivity.

2. How to get to truth?

- Reason – statements must meet the standard of good reasoning. The laws of logic, the theory of knowledge, metaphysics and ontology, and the value theory are tests applied for testing reason.
- Correspondence - a statement must correspond to reality.
- Coherence - the worldview as a whole must cohere.
- Unaffirmability and Undeniability test. These are tests for falsehood and truthfulness respectively.

3. How to test truth?

- Logical consistency - where teachings cannot be self-contradictory.
- Empirical adequacy – teachings must match reality.
- Experiential relevance – teachings must speak directly into how we live our lives.

4. The questions needed for the test

- Origin - Where do the universe and humanity come from?
- Meaning – What is the meaning and purpose of life?
- Morality – How do we know what is right and wrong?
- Destiny – What happens to us after death?

5. The academic disciplines involved in the quest for truth within worldviews

- God (Theology).
- Reality (Metaphysics).

⁴ See also: Zacharias (1994:122-131).

⁵ We have modified Zacharias' model slightly by including the *tests for reason* (under point 2). We have, also, included other academic disciplines that are involved in the quest for truth (under point 5).

- Knowledge (Epistemology).
- Morality (Ethics).
- Humanity (Anthropology).
- Salvation (Soteriology).
- The Afterlife (Eschatology).

According to Zacharias, the three tests (viz. logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance) "... provide a high degree of confidence in that, as they are applied to a system of belief, truth or falsehood can be applied. The truth claims of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or atheism must *all* meet these tests" (1994:123-4). Zacharias (1994:125) also suggests that this model for determining the truth of any worldview is very effective.

We, however, will not be able to comprehensively cover all the major doctrines of the various worldviews within the scope of this dissertation but only as it may apply to worship. We will therefore limit the application of this test for truth to the basic questions of life: truth, origin, meaning, morality and destiny as we examine and contrast the beliefs within the various worldviews with the Biblical worldview. Our intention is to demonstrate the exclusivity of *truth* as a concept and extrapolate how the Biblical worldview agrees with this definition to inform the mind, heart and behaviour of people.

B. Comparison of the pluralistic and the Biblical worldviews of worship didactically applied

This study will introduce the church to apply the Philosophical-Theological grid. This will be used to filter other worldview claims that pertain to the worldview questions. The Philosophical-Theological grid will be used to measure truth claims within the competing worldviews of worship present in the South African context.

Both the theoretical and the practical dimensions will be highlighted before we propose principles for the defence, practice, and propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship. We will show that the Biblical worldview rejects pluralism in the *prescriptive* sense. We will also show how the Biblical worldview suggests an exclusivity in the tri-une God, with the prohibition of the worship of other gods. We will demonstrate that this Biblical faith, which Christians are called to defend, practice, and propagate whilst encountering religious pluralism in the *descriptive* sense, is vital for the health and the evangelistic thrust of the church in the current South African setting.

C. The practical framework didactically applied

Firstly, Scripture also commands a defence of the Biblical worldview within a variety of competing worldviews. Believers may find themselves in a setting being questioned about certain beliefs and practices. The believer will be equipped to give an answer (apologia), to everyone who asks, for the hope in him (1 Pet. 3:15).

Secondly, the principles for practice of the Biblical worldview of worship by the believer will also be viewed within the worldview questions of truth, origin, meaning, morality and destiny. These important worldview questions will be outlined and applied within the practice of true worship. We will demonstrate the supernatural enabling through the Holy Spirit that the believer is endued with to practice a Biblical worldview of worship. The soteriological aspect of the Biblical worldview will be discussed to arrive at the believer's status. We will also outline the importance of spiritual formation and the Biblical understanding of the nature of sanctification within the life of the believer for correct belief and practice in worship. Next, the doctrine of glorification will be researched and outlined to demonstrate that the outcome of spiritual formation is the transformation that must be

evidenced in the believer who is conformed into the image of Christ until its completion at the end of this current life. Complete perfection is only attained in the next life.

Lastly, the believer is entrusted with the propagating of the Biblical worldview of worship. Within the scope of this section, we shall research the ministry of the church in world evangelization and conclude with what the Biblical message consists of, for the propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship, within the South African setting (cf. 2 Cor. 5).

Derived from above, the research will use the following outline:

Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1.1. Background Rationale
- 1.2. Understanding the Topic Title
- 1.3. The topic title: key words and definitions
- 1.4. Research question
- 1.5. Research aim
- 1.6. The theoretical framework
- 1.7. Research objectives
- 1.8. Research design
- 1.9. Research methodology

Chapter 2: A metaphysical-philosophical approach for a worldview of worship

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Defining important philosophical terms
 - 2.2.1. Philosophy as a discipline
 - 2.2.2. Propositions as philosophical concepts
 - 2.2.3. Worldview as a philosophical concept
- 2.3. Truth as a philosophical concept in religious dialogue
 - 2.3.1. Definition of truth
 - 2.3.2. Reason and truth
 - 2.3.3. Religious beliefs and truth
- 2.4. The quest for truth-testing of a worldview
 - 2.4.1. Theories for propositional truth
 - 2.4.1.1. The correspondence and coherence theories
 - 2.4.1.2. The unaffirmability and undeniability theories
 - 2.4.2. The three tests for the truth of a worldview
 - 2.4.2.1. Logical consistency test
 - 2.4.2.2. Empirical adequacy test
 - 2.4.2.3. Experiential relevance test
 - 2.4.3. The questions needed for the worldview test

- 2.4.3.1. Origin
 - 2.4.3.1.1. The origin of the universe
 - 2.4.3.1.2. The origin of humanity
 - 2.4.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering
- 2.4.3.2. Meaning
- 2.4.3.3. Morality
- 2.4.3.4. Destiny
 - 2.4.3.4.1. Physical death
 - 2.4.3.4.2. Eternal life
- 2.5. Concluding remarks

Chapter 3: An exegetically derived scriptural-theological approach to the Biblical worldview of worship

- 3.1. Aspects of the scriptural-theological approach
 - 3.1.1. Texts
 - 3.1.1.1. Text 1: Exodus 3:1-10
 - 3.1.1.1.1. Historical context
 - 3.1.1.1.2. Textual context
 - 3.1.1.1.3. Historical/grammatical exegesis
 - 3.1.1.1.4. Theological interpretation
 - 3.1.1.1.5. Concluding remarks
 - 3.1.1.2. Text 2: Isaiah 6:1-8
 - 3.1.1.2.1. Historical context
 - 3.1.1.2.2. Textual context
 - 3.1.1.2.3. Historical/grammatical exegesis
 - 3.1.1.2.4. Theological interpretation
 - 3.1.1.3. Text 3: Revelation 4-5
 - 3.1.1.3.1. Historical context
 - 3.1.1.3.2. Textual context
 - 3.1.1.3.3. Historical/grammatical exegesis
 - 3.1.1.3.4. Theological interpretation
 - 3.2. Applying the diachronic and synchronic approaches to cultural influences in the Biblical worldview of worship
 - 3.3. Worldview foundation for theories: general and special revelations
 - 3.4. Theories, beliefs and practices
 - 3.5. Philosophical tests of truth foundations in the Biblical worldview of worship
 - 3.5.1. The importance of truth for a worldview of worship
 - 3.5.1.1. Defining truth and worship
 - 3.5.1.2. The nature of truth in worship
 - 3.5.1.2.1. Truth is revealed by God
 - 3.5.1.2.2. Objective truth exists and is knowable.
 - 3.5.1.2.3. Christian truth is absolute in nature.
 - 3.5.1.2.4. Truth is universal.
 - 3.5.1.2.5. The truth of God is eternally engaging and momentous, not trendy or superficial.
 - 3.5.1.2.6. Truth is exclusive, specific and antithetical.
 - 3.5.1.2.7. Truth, Christianly understood, is systematic and unified.
 - 3.5.1.2.8. Christian truth is an end, not a means to any other end.

- 3.5.2. Correspondence theory
- 3.5.3. Coherence theory
- 3.6. The logical, empirical and experiential testing of truth
 - 3.6.1. Logical consistency
 - 3.6.1.1. Logical consistency in faith and reason
 - 3.6.1.2. Logical consistency in cumulative data
 - 3.6.1.3. Logical consistency in theology and worldview
 - 3.6.2. Empirical adequacy
 - 3.6.3. Experiential relevance
- 3.7. The worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny
 - 3.7.1. Origin and worship
 - 3.7.1.1. Origin of the universe: Biblical theism
 - 3.7.1.2. The origin of man
 - 3.7.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering
 - 3.7.2. Meaning and worship
 - 3.7.2.1. The starting point for meaning
 - 3.7.2.2. Objective meaning
 - 3.7.2.3. Subjective meaning
 - 3.7.3. Morality and worship
 - 3.7.3.1. The starting point for morality: God
 - 3.7.3.2. Morality for the individual
 - 3.7.3.3. Morality for society
 - 3.7.4. Destiny
 - 3.7.4.1. Physical death
 - 3.7.4.2. Eternal life
- 3.8. Concluding remarks

Chapter 4: The Biblical worldview of worship and the Atheistic/Secular worldview compared

Atheism, secularism and the Biblical worldview of worship

- 4.1. Worldview formation
 - 4.1.1. Applying the synchronic approach to cultural influences
 - 4.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: humanism
 - 4.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices
- 4.2. Truth foundations
- 4.3. The worldview questions
 - 4.3.1. Origin
 - 4.3.1.1. Origin of the universe: secular beliefs
 - 4.3.1.2. The origin of man
 - 4.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering
 - 4.3.2. Meaning
 - 4.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning
 - 4.3.2.2. Objective and subjective meaning
 - 4.3.3. Morality
 - 4.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: man
 - 4.3.3.2. Morality for the individual
 - 4.3.3.3. Morality for society
 - 4.3.4. Destiny
 - 4.3.4.1. Physical death
 - 4.3.4.2. Eternal life

4.4. Concluding remarks

Chapter 5: The Biblical and Islamic worldviews of worship compared

Islam and the worldview questions

5.1. Worldview formation

5.1.1. Applying the synchronic approach to cultural influences in Islam

5.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: Quranic and Hadith

5.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices

5.2. Truth

5.3. The worldview questions

5.3.1. Origin

5.3.1.1. Origin of the universe: Quranic theism

5.3.1.2. The origin of man

5.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

5.3.2. Meaning

5.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning

5.3.2.2. Objective meaning

5.3.2.3. Subjective meaning

5.3.3. Morality

5.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: Allah, Muhammad and the revelations

5.3.3.2. Morality for the individual

5.3.3.3. Morality for society

5.3.4. Destiny

5.3.4.1. Physical death

5.3.4.2. Eternal life

5.4. Concluding remarks

Chapter 6: The Biblical and Hindu/Buddhist pantheistic polytheism worldviews of worship compared

Hinduism, Buddhism and the worldview questions

6.1. Worldview formation

6.1.1. Applying the synchronic approach to cultural influences

6.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: Eastern philosophical/religious thought & practice

6.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices

6.2. Truth

6.3. The worldview questions

6.3.1. Origin

6.3.1.1. Origin of the universe

6.3.1.2. The origin of man

6.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

6.3.2. Meaning

6.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning

6.3.2.2. Objective meaning

6.3.2.3. Subjective meaning

6.3.3. Morality

6.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: Brahman

6.3.3.2. Morality for the individual

6.3.3.3. Morality for society

- 6.3.4. Destiny
 - 6.3.4.1. Physical death
 - 6.3.4.2. Eternal life
- 6.4. Concluding remarks

Chapter 7: The Biblical and Animistic worldviews of worship compared

Animism and the worldview questions

- 7.1. Worldview formation
 - 7.1.1. Applying the synchronic approaches to cultural influences
 - 7.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: Oral-symbolic
 - 7.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices
- 7.2. Truth
- 7.3. The Worldview Questions
 - 7.3.1. Origin
 - 7.3.1.1. Origin of the universe: Theism
 - 7.3.1.2. The origin of man
 - 7.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering
 - 7.3.2. Meaning
 - 7.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning
 - 7.3.2.2. Objective and subjective meaning
 - 7.3.3. Morality
 - 7.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: God, Spirits and Elders
 - 7.3.3.2. Morality for the individual and society
 - 7.3.4. Destiny
 - 7.3.4.1. Physical death
 - 7.3.4.2. Eternal life
- 7.4. Concluding remarks

Chapter 8: Equipping the Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in South Africa

- 8.1. Introduction
 - 8.1.1. Objectives
 - 8.1.2. Outcomes
 - 8.1.3. Structure/outline
 - 8.1.4. Assessments
- 8.2. MODULE 1: Defending the Biblical worldview of worship (Apologetic)
 - 8.2.1. Truth-testing for reason
 - 8.2.2. Truth-testing of truth-claims
 - 8.2.3. Truth-testing of Worldviews
 - 8.2.4. Truth-testing in the worldview questions
 - 8.2.5. Disciplines involved
- 8.3. MODULE 2: Practicing the Biblical worldview of worship (Pastoral)
 - 8.3.1. Salvation, truth and worship
 - 8.3.2. Sanctification, truth and worship
 - 8.3.3. Spiritual formation, truth and worship
 - 8.3.4. Service, truth and worship
 - 8.3.5. Glorification, truth and worship
- 8.4. MODULE 3: Propagating the Biblical worldview of worship (Missional)
 - 8.4.1. The church's task of propagating the Biblical worldview of worship

- 8.4.2. The Acts 1:8 model applied
- 8.4.3. Entering the life of Christ (for worship)
- 8.4.4. Living the life of Christ (in present and future worship)
- 8.4.5. Message of exclusive worship for the South African setting

1.9. Research methodology

The following categories will be explored:

- i. A metaphysical philosophical approach (apologetically) to formulate a Christian and Biblical worldview of worship. Apologetically, our aim is to demonstrate the weaknesses of the non-Biblical worldviews and to answer those weaknesses through a comparative consideration of the Biblical worldview.
- ii. A scriptural theological approach (exegetically) to formulate a Biblical worldview of worship. Exegetically, our approach is generally using the Socio-Rhetorical method of exegesis where the sociological approach highlights the historical issues of the world of the text. The Rhetorical approach is concerned with the use of language within the text; it considers both the grammatical and rhetorical use of the text language. The hermeneutical aspect takes a canonical approach to the text. The “then-and-now” is bridged by a theological reflection on the text in order to derive a present-day application.
- iii. A curriculum (didactically) for the South African Evangelical church to defend, practice, and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship. Didactically, our approach will distinguish between theoretical and practical learning. In this way, teaching will be about communicating principles within our theoretical framework. Our practical approach will include a teaching by demonstration, learning by demonstration and demonstrative evaluation and correction of the method applied.

- For the Biblical text, we shall therefore apply scientific (exegetical) and analytical (descriptive) research method to objectively gain facts already available to provide for a critical evaluation, for us to arrive at our viewpoint.
- We shall also apply the literary-compile method, looking at the viewpoint of various authors to arrive at our own viewpoint.
- We shall use a historical research approach to assess the underlying motives and desires of the philosophies to be investigated using available conceptual research data.
- With regards to the ecclesiological application of the discussions, we shall apply the inductive form of reasoning to design the curriculum.
- We deem empirical quantitative research unnecessary for this project, as it is apologetic in nature.

Thus, our methodology includes various approaches: qualitative, inductive, descriptive, comparative, compile, exegetical, canonical, didactical and hermeneutical as outlined above.

Chapter 2

A metaphysical-philosophical approach for a worldview of worship

2.1. Introduction

From ancient times, people gazed wonderingly at the heavens and asked: What is this universe? How does it work as a whole? How can we know about it? Who are we? How do we fit into the whole scheme? (Courtois 1981:47-48). Courtois (*ibid.*) argues that essentially the three questions: *What is reality? (Cosmology)*, *How do we know? (Epistemology)*, and *Who am I? (Ontology)*, are inseparably one: What is reality?

Also, within this reality, the concepts “truth” and “worldview” are two inter-related and integrated subjects that must be married together. In other words, worldviews make truth claims about reality; and truth claims form and shape worldviews. These concepts are to be applied to the concept “worship”- which must be rationalistic (because it includes both belief and dogma) and show empirical evidence of truth (because it must be experienced). Therefore, it is imperative for the South African church to understand the reality that the Biblical worldview of worship espouses for true defence, practice, and propagation.

The broad task at hand is to present a *philosophical grid* for measuring the truth claims of the various worldviews. The grid includes the worldview questions which seek to define reality in broad terms, namely, Truth (How do we define truth? What is the nature of truth?); Origin (Where do we come from?); Meaning (Why are we here?); Morality (How do we live?); and Destiny (Where are we going?). This will be applied to the Biblical worldview to establish a *philosophical-theological grid* to be discussed in Chapter 3. Matters of theological importance that relate to these worldview questions must be considered. These include: God (Theology), reality (Metaphysics), knowledge

(Epistemology), morality (Ethics), humanity (Anthropology), salvation (Soteriology), and the afterlife (Eschatology). Our presupposition is thus stated - if God created reality (the state of things as they actually are), then the claims of special revelation (the Bible), which may be perceived as the ideal, must correspond with reality – even in a fallen human state.

The philosophical-theological grid will be practically applied to measure the truth claims of the various competing worldviews of worship that influence the South African setting, which we will discuss in succeeding chapters.

We begin by researching the concepts “truth” and “worldview” to apply to the Biblical worldview of worship in the next chapter.

2.3. Defining important philosophical terms

The following three terms must be briefly defined to ascertain their meaning and relevance within this thesis, namely, philosophy as a discipline, propositions as philosophical concepts, and worldview as a philosophical concept.

2.3.1. Philosophy as a discipline

The word philosophy is derived from two Greek words *philia* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom). Philosophy is literally the *love of wisdom*. The term came into widespread use in the Greek world of the fifth century BC. Philosophy, as a discipline, can be approached from various angles (e.g. philosophy of education, language, mind, science, politics, etc.). We have chosen to focus on the aspects of truth-claims regarding *universals* and *particulars* to be applied in metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics and aesthetics as they relate to

the understanding of a worldview of worship. These arguments will help understand the dualism that exists in reality and nature. It will also help to understand and analyse how religious worldviews approach these disciplines.

In the ancient world, observation and reasoning together were the first and most basic method of finding out truth about nature (Young 1954:29). It took many long centuries before man learned how to use it with accuracy. Young continues:

The history of methodology is the history of the development of logical theory, one of the most important branches of philosophy. Practically all the methods man developed rely in some fashion on observation and reasoning (Young 1954:29).

Rationalism in the Greek scene was evidenced in philosophers like Plato (427-347 BC). For Plato, the philosopher is described as one who "... grasped the essence of reality of things in contrast to the one who understood only the shadows or appearances" (Young 1954:21). Reality, for Plato, consists in *Forms* and *Ideas* (Erickson 2013:222). Erickson explains further how this impacts our perception of reality:

All existent empirical particulars take their reality from them. Thus, all white things are white because they participate in the Form or Idea of whiteness. The Form of whiteness is not itself white, but is the formula for whiteness, as it were. Similarly, all occurrences of salt are salt only because they participate in the Idea of saltiness or are instances of NaCl, the formula for salt. The only reason we are able to know anything is that we recognize Ideas or Forms (some would say universals) in the particulars. Without knowledge of the Ideas we would be unable to abstract from what is experienced and formulate any understanding. In Plato's view, the soul knows the Forms because it was in contact with them before entering this world of sense experience and particulars. Augustine, since he did not accept the pre-existence of the soul, took a different approach. God impresses the Forms on the mind of the individual, thus making it possible to recognize these qualities in particulars and giving the mind criteria for abstracting and for evaluating. Whereas Plato believed that we recognize the Forms because of a onetime experience in the past, Augustine believed that God is constantly impressing these concepts on the mind (2013:222-3).

Aristotle (384-322 BC), on the other hand, conceived of philosophy as the universal science from which the disciplines of mathematics, physics, logic, ethics, politics, etc. stemmed and grew (*ibid.*). He discovered most of the laws of deduction and set them forth much as they are studied today in a course in deductive or formal logic (Young 1954:30).

Aristotle believed that philosophy studies the universals concerning our existence, of which the various branches furnish information or knowledge concerning specific areas (Young 1954:30). The dualism of *universals* and *particulars* were also explained in terms of eternal and temporal (Hiebert 2008:143). For example, the dualism of Creator and creation explained the former as ultimate reality, dominant, and eternal; and the latter as contingent, subordinate, and temporal (*ibid.*). Therefore, creation is intrinsically tied to the Creator. Later, philosophy ceased to be applied to the various sciences and its area of interest was restricted to the task of interrelating the various disciplines, and of endeavouring to account for the nature of existence as a whole (Young 1954:21). Hiebert explains how modern man has utilized and applied this dualism:

The introduction of Greek dualism radically altered this view of reality. It separated reality into two largely unrelated realms: supernatural and natural. On the one hand, there is the spiritual realm in which God and other spirit beings live and act. This is the world of religion. On the other hand, there is the natural realm – the material world of science (2008:143).

Therefore, all worldviews make a distinction between these two realms – whether they believe in them or not.

For the purposes of this study, we will lean more on the Aristotelian premise of universals and particulars that leans more epistemologically; rather than the Platonic premises –

which concern themselves with ontological issues. However, this will not mean that certain aspects of ontological arguments will not be covered.

The parts or particulars of religious worldviews (limited to the worldview questions), must be identified, investigated and explained to ascertain their correspondence with reality. The Biblical worldview of worship must also go through the test to ascertain its veracity. This will form the philosophical-theological grid to test the alternate worldviews of worship as well.

2.3.2. Propositions as philosophical concepts

Any language that states a truth claim – whether expressed in a sentence, an utterance or a belief, is called a proposition (Groothuis 2000:87). It is what a declarative statement affirms or asserts by the mind and is a judgement. Groothuis explains: “Questions, imperatives, exclamations and entreaties are not expressed in declarative or descriptive sentences, and so do not express propositions. Sentences about facts do express propositions” (2000:87).

All propositions may be analysed into three parts: subject, predicate and copula (i.e. a word used to *link* the subject with the predicate) (Carnell 1948:30). For example, the proposition “God created the heavens and the earth” has God as the subject and the predicate is “the heavens and the earth.” The predicate is not interchangeable with the subject. The fact in the proposition is that God did the action of creating and not the other way around.

These propositional facts, therefore, also have truth conditions, i.e. the conditions under which a given proposition is true (McGlone 2012:211). For example, the proposition: “Jesus lived in the first century” is true, precisely if indeed he did live in the first century. Propositions contain truth values that will deem it a true or false proposition. There is no middle ground. Propositions are important for this research to define, understand, explain in the comparison of the Biblical worldview of worship with other worldviews, for determining their veracity. We will proceed next to explain the concept “worldview” within which truth statements are made.

2.2.3. Worldview as a philosophical concept

The word “worldview” is derived from the German word *Weltanschauung*. It is a term coined in the late eighteenth century (Naugle 2002:57). Most scholars agree that the word may simply be described as a framework of beliefs by which a person views the world around him (Caner 2008f:498). *Worldview* is the interpretation of reality and a basic view of life (Naugle 2002:260). It has a direct bearing on the beliefs and practices of an individual and subscribes to a *theory of the meaning of life* (Hand 2012:529). People will reject any worldview that conflicts with what they know, or which negates their experience, or which denies the value of what they hold dear (Hand 2012:530). Worldviews are never passive; but confrontational among people who try to make sense of reality.

In discussing the *characteristics* of worldviews, Hiebert (2008:28) sees worldviews as functioning in primarily two ways. Firstly, as *models of reality* – in that they describe and explain the nature of things. Secondly, as *models for action* – they provide the mental blueprints that guide behaviour. He continues: “Models influence human actions, but the two are not the same. Our behaviour is determined not only by our norms and ideals but

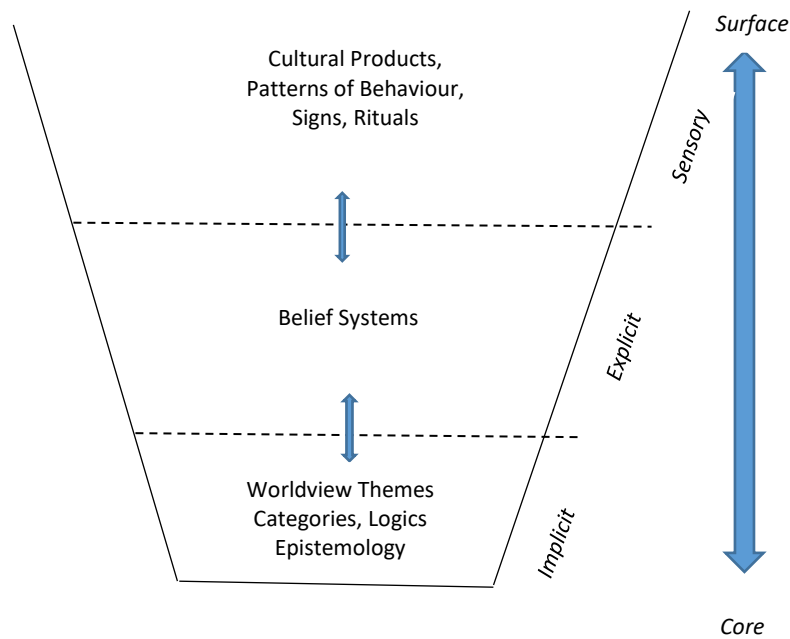
also by the conflicting forces and changing circumstances that pressure our everyday lives” (2008:28-29). The presence of many alternative worldviews describes the modern South African context which make it a pluralistic society. Hence, there is the reality of various beliefs and worship practices.

Other underlying characteristics may also be presented within worldviews. There is, for instance, also the more visible “culture” - which is that aspect which stems from and feeds a worldview. It is the social environment to which people are exposed and nurtured. Culture comprises of several levels. Phillips and Brown (1991:35) explain how culture is visibly and practically evidenced:

Our culture takes a visible form in everything from the institutions of society (government, schools, churches, etc.) to eating and sleeping patterns (midnight meals, siestas, etc.). Economic, social, and religious institutions reflect what the group considers important. This is also seen in what the group chooses to commemorate through rituals: weddings, funerals, graduations, and other rites of passage. When and how these rituals are carried out (including religious worship) become a matter of cultural agreement.

However, underlying those visible expressions are theories and beliefs from which the practices arise. Hiebert (2008:33) illustrates in the following figure the various levels of culture in theory, beliefs and practices:

Figure 2



Hiebert explains the components of a worldview as follows:

... On the surface are the visible elements such as cultural products and patterns of behaviour, including speech. Below these are myths and rituals – enacted cultural dramas – that give expression to the conscious beliefs, feelings, and values of the culture. They are charters for defining and establishing deep cultural themes and social norms that the people see as indispensable to the preservation of their culture and society. Below myths and rituals are systems of beliefs that encode our cultural knowledge. Finally, below these systems of beliefs are the unseen structures underlying the entire explicit culture – the worldview (2008:33).

Therefore, to propagate the Biblical worldview of worship, thoughtful consideration is to be given to cultural-worldview characteristics. A mere rational dialogue or presentation will not yield the desired results, until underlying cultural beliefs and practices are understood and dealt with to prevent syncretism in the South African context. The opposite is also true, in that, cultural expressions can only be understood against the backdrop of the given theories that underpin the worldview practices.

As stated, the theories are foundational to worldviews, leading to *beliefs* by the individuals of the various worldviews, and culminating, finally, in *cultural behaviour and practices* – which form and inform their worldview of worship. Outward behavioural modifications will not be encountered without the change of beliefs. Beliefs cannot be altered without understanding the theories that underpin the various religious worldviews. Zacharias (2003:31-35), reiterates this premise in his argument that present philosophy comes to people at three levels:

1. At an argumentative level, which is foundational – this he calls “*the theoretical substructure of logic*” (2003:31). This theoretical level is where the laws of logic are applied to reality. These laws are foundational and indispensable to the communication of truth.
2. At a senses level, through the arts e.g. a play, novel, visual media, music, etc. This level is existential and deeply effective – but claims that it need not surrender to the laws of logic. It finds its refuge in the imagination and feeling and therefore, people are driven inward, rather than establishing a point of reference in objective truth claims.
3. At a casual conversations level, which Zacharias calls “*kitchen-table conclusions*” (2003:33). This level deals with everyday issues from a child to a philosopher’s questions.

Zacharias explains the necessity of all three levels of philosophy for arguing truth statements:

... when an argument is taken to the first level, it immediately finds a common point of reference. When it leaps only to the third level, it builds without a foundation. Church leaders incorporate the components from the three levels in their sermons: the argument (or proclamation), the illustration (or story), and the application (or so what). The scriptures provide the truth; the arts, literature, or current events provide the illustrations; and the application should go right to daily living. This approach essentially underscores the three levels of philosophy and helps connect ideas with concrete reality (2003:35).

Therefore, the theories, beliefs and practices of the people to which the church is ministering, is to be understood, for the effective propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship. For example, to minister to those of the Islamic worldview, it must be understood that the word “Islam” in theory means “surrender” or “submission”; and certainly not “peace” as Muslims claim. This will mean in the application that Islam must be perceived from a worldview perspective, for it:

... cannot be defined as a religion in the Western sense of the word; neither can it be termed a faith. Muslim scholars state that Islam is an *all-encompassing system* – a socio-political, socioreligious system, as well as socioeconomic, socioeducational, legislative, judiciary, and military system governing every aspect of the lives of its adherents, their relationships among themselves, and with those who are non-Muslims (Soloman 2007:61-62).

Hiebert (2008:31), focussing on historical and community structures that inform a worldview, argues that the fundamental structures of understanding human beings and their worldview context is found in the *synchronic* and *diachronic* structures. For a worldview to be understood, these two approaches cannot be separated. The *synchronic* approach looks at the structure of reality through an epoch in time by examining the parts and how these relate to each other considering the whole (Hiebert 2008:71-72). With the diachronic approach, time is the central variable. It focuses on the story of each individual, community, and nation, and attempts to locate the development of the structures that inform the worldview.

The strength with the synchronic approach is that it sees the underlying structure of human beings – that which is common to all, and how it operates to make life possible (Hiebert 2008:71-72). The problem, however, is that it does not consider that humans are in time and are constantly changing. These are viewed as transcendent prescriptives that view humans in general terms and overlook the uniqueness of each individual (*ibid.*).

There is a twofold strength for the *diachronic* approach, in that there is a recognition that human beings are real people with all their particularities and idiosyncrasies, and the stories that give meaning to their lives is to be heard (Hiebert 2008:72). However, the weakness is that the insights are less easily articulated (*ibid.*). Both the synchronic and the diachronic analyses are complementary and are necessary to understand the theories, beliefs and practices of worldviews of worship for an informed interaction with them by those within the Biblical worldview of worship.

Other characteristics will include the following inferences that are built into the concept 'worldview' (Naugle 2002:260-290):

- i. Issues of objectivity* – where the worldview must argue for an objective point of reference from which it develops the concept of truth.
- ii. Issues of subjectivity* - where the worldview must reasonably answer for the existence of the subjective experience of human beings, the concept of consciousness which is decisive for shaping a vision of life and fulfilling the function of purpose and meaning.
- iii. Issues of evil, sin and spiritual warfare* – where the worldview needs to consider the catastrophic effects of evil and the effects on the human heart and mind, and the fabrication of idolatrous belief systems to appease the spirit.

iv. *Issues of salvation* – where the worldview is to provide a way out from the human condition.

We would also add a fifth inference:

v. *Issues of the afterlife* – where religious worldviews would suggest a future eschatological end to this existence and the entrance into some form of the afterlife.

These characteristics provide meaning, substance and give direction for practices for the followers of the various worldviews. From these, the four worldview questions are derived. Every worldview, therefore, has the task of providing answers for the following four worldview questions: origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?) and destiny (where are we going?). These questions cannot be divorced from the worship theories, beliefs and practices of the various worldviews.

Sire (2009:22-23) lists seven worldview questions, which may be listed as follows:

1. What is prime reality – the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

These questions will be covered in varying degrees within the four worldview questions that we will utilize when examining the various worldviews. Before applying these

worldview concepts, the philosophical concept of truth needs first to be analysed if any truth statements are to be tested within the various worldviews.

2.3. Truth as a philosophical concept in religious dialogue

Religious worldviews make truth statements. Therefore, the analysis of truth as a philosophical concept in religious dialogue is imperative. This will be done under the headings, namely, a definition of truth, reason and truth, and religious beliefs and truth.

2.3.1. Definition of truth

Worldviews seek to make truth statements for followers to ground beliefs and practice. The word truth denotes something that "... conforms to actuality, is faithful to a standard, or involves sincerity or integrity. The ground for truth is reality itself" (Clark 2001b:1219). In other words, as much as theory is important, truth cannot be merely confined to a theoretical concept. The theory is to be defined, evidenced and experienced in the sphere of reality.

The disciplines of Philosophy and Christian Theology are concerned with truth and can serve as an organizing principle for knowledge (Erickson 2013:19). Philosophy, both etymologically and historically, is *the love and pursuit of wisdom* (Carnell 1948:187). The early philosophers held that the most important questions concerning reality and life in general are those concerning "social order and the origin, nature, and development of the material world" (Obitts 2001:919). Their methods included the critical scrutiny of confessedly human theories about the natural order. Obitts recounts:

Alleged revelation from the gods offered by the religious leaders was explicitly repudiated. Not all philosophers since the first ones in ancient Greece have been antisupernaturalists. But they have all been concerned primarily with the most

basic questions common to every human being, and they have adopted a method that tries to be critical of every assertion and the assumptions behind it. Focusing on the most fundamental and general issues facing humankind, philosophers traditionally have attempted to synthesize all knowledge into a coherent, consistent system (2001:919).

The pursuing of truth within this universe continues with modern man. He may pursue truth for various reasons. This preoccupation must ultimately be for religious reasons – whether it is acknowledged or not.

2.3.2. Reason and truth

Wisdom is gained through the application of facts accumulated through knowledge and understanding of reality - both physically and metaphysically. These would include gaining good reasoning, for an application within the Biblical worldview of worship, through the following four philosophical types (Obitts 2001:919):

Firstly, *logic*, which is the normative discipline of correct reasoning. Logic seeks to ascertain the principles of the thought patterns one ought to follow if reality is to be reflected adequately. Therefore, it is a methodology that accommodates the character of reality itself (Machan 2016:53). The laws of logic are to be applied to the Biblical worldview of worship to ascertain its reasonableness and whether its truth claims can be defended. The laws of logic will include: 1. The law of noncontradiction, which states that contradictory statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. 2. The law of the excluded middle states that for any proposition, either that proposition, or its negation is true. 3. The principle of identity states that a statement in which the subject and predicate are the same is true, e.g. the proposition “God is God.”

Secondly, the *theory of knowledge (epistemology)*, deals with the nature, criteria, and sources of knowledge. The substance of the Biblical worldview claims is derived from the Bible which include empirical (senses), rational (mind) and revelation (faith) knowledge. They suggest a conservative and evangelical understanding of knowledge. A Biblical worldview assumes one basic presupposition: that the living and personal God is intelligibly known in his revelation (Phillips and Brown 1991:81). God has spoken and revealed to humanity truth. The Biblical worldview is not human speculation on metaphysical theories; but must be accepted as revelation (*ibid.*).

Thirdly, *metaphysics and ontology*, have traditionally been treated as synonyms (Obitts 2001:920). However, Immanuel Kant theoretically separated reality from the appearance of reality (*ibid.*). This led to the dispelling of the illusion about what can be known of reality, assuming the human inability to transcend the realm of appearance (*ibid.*). This Kantian distinction between appearance and reality has been rejected by many philosophers. They argue for a reality that must be grasped as one coherent system. Within this type of one coherent system, the issues of origins, meaning and purpose are to be dealt with in the Biblical worldview of worship to ascertain its reasonableness and truthfulness. The Biblical worldview of worship sees God as the Creator of ultimate reality and the Revealer of that which appears to be true. In other words, God has defined His created reality through His revelation. God gives meaning and purpose to His creative will and acts. Revelation is key to understanding the reality.

Finally, the *value theory*, which includes *ethics* and *aesthetics*. Ethics involves the grounds upon which human actions are judged as right and wrong, and persons and events as good or evil. Within the Biblical worldview of worship, the subject of morality

and ethics must be reasonable to be accepted as truth – because it corresponds to reality. *Aesthetics* involves the relatedness of beauty to the observer. The subject of aesthetics attempts to determine whether beauty is relative to the observer; or whether standards should be imposed upon creation, appreciation, and criticism of art works (Orbitts 2001:920). The Biblical worldview of worship presents for the believer an objective point of reference in revelation. In both ethics and aesthetics, creation is given value from God. Both can be enjoyed in a relationship with God (Ps 19).

A proper notion of reasonable truth needs to distinguish between *ontological* (deals with the issues of essence) and *epistemological* (deals with the issues of the nature of knowledge) matters. The ontological aspect also considers what features of language and reality make a statement true; whilst, the epistemological aspect proceeds by objectively evaluating specific statements with the purpose of determining their truth or falsity (Provenzola 2008:481). Provenzola explains further:

What it *means* to say of any statement that it is true is to consider the ontological question. But when I think about the question of *whether* any specific statement *is* true or false, I am thinking about an epistemological matter. Much of the confusion surrounding different theories of truth comes from mistakenly thinking that if we answer the epistemological question (whether we *know* that a specific statement is true or false), we have therefore answered the ontological question (*that* a specific statement is true). The false assumption behind this is that because epistemological questions are difficult to answer, the matter of what truth is must be equally difficult to determine. But such a mistaken approach to truth can be easily corrected (2008:481).

The need to consider what features of reality make a statement true (ontological matter) and the evaluation of the specific statements to determine their truth or falsity (epistemological matter) need to logically flow as follows:

So, once we determine what sort of thing truth is, it is anticipated that we can demonstrate with reasonable sufficiency *whether* any specific statement is true. And while a *theory* of truth does not supply us with the specific conditions or

procedures for verification (the epistemological concern), it does suggest that one will probably have some idea of how to go about verifying or determining the truthfulness of a statement (Provenzola 2008:481).

Therefore, *worldview* considerations are important for investigating the truth of the Biblical and pluralistic claims within the scope of this thesis. These considerations will not only cover propositional statements (epistemological matters); but also, worldview considerations that form and shape realities which encourage beliefs and practices of worship (ontological matters). For now, we will continue with epistemological matters on how to arrive at truth.

2.3.3. Religious beliefs and truth

The study of religious beliefs and practices as an academic discipline is extremely important for determining the truth claims of worldviews of worship, and how they are formed, shaped and practised. All religious worldviews make truth claims – which, become exclusivistic. All include practices that are attached to beliefs. For example, the Muslim will practice the Five Pillars of Islam for approval by Allah. Even religious worldviews, like Hinduism, may seem tolerant, yet, they will exclude the so-called exclusivists. Therefore, the BGB Indian government will enforce anti-conversion laws as is currently the case. This results in the persecution of Christians and Muslims. Every religion's beliefs and practices are linked to exclusivistic truth claims that may be attached to that religious worldview.

It is imperative for religious beliefs and truth claims to be analysed to understand the philosophy of a religion. The question is: "How?" Before we deal with the "How?" question, a definition of the phrase *philosophy of religion* is necessary to ground the academic

discipline into religious beliefs and truth claims that are espoused. As a definition, the *philosophy of religion*, "... is an academic discipline that applies philosophical analysis and synthesis to the intellectual dimensions of specific forms of religious living" (Clark 2001a:921). As a branch of philosophy, it seeks clear critical, and comprehensive understandings of religious belief (Clark 2001a:921-2). Within the philosophy of religions, there is a focus on the meaning of key words, the status of theological claims, or the structure of arguments for religious beliefs (Clark 2001a:921). Clark argues for the following areas where philosophy of religion sets out goals to understand religious worldviews (2001a:921-2):

- i. It seeks conceptual clarity by seeking out unstated or implied presuppositions or unpack the exact nature of relationships between statements.
- ii. It stresses a critical approach to its subjects to ascertain the truthfulness of claims.
- iii. It attempts to construct various comprehensive viewpoints.
- iv. It investigates religious language by investigating whether limited human language can capture the reality of God.
- v. It explores principles and procedures for warranting religious beliefs or belief systems.

This philosophical discipline in approaching religious worldviews is by no means easy; but, laborious – especially for those who study comparative religions. The scope of this present study does not allow for a rigorous and systematic comparison of all doctrines. However, we are cognisant of the need for a comparative study, due to the various worldview influences in our South African context. The application of this discipline will be measured against the philosophical-theological formulated grid in Chapter 3. It will

also be confined to the worldview questions. This is important to act as a test of these worldviews. However, the method of the testing of the various worldviews of worship must be expanded. This is where Zacharias' suggested test of a worldview will be applied.

2.4. The quest for truth-testing of a worldview

As we have stated in chapter 1, Zacharias' well-summarized "1-2-3-4-5" test method of analysing claims for truth in any worldview, will be utilized and applied in the later chapters. A research into the philosophical underpinnings of the various arguments for the test of truth must be formulated and applied as a philosophical grid for the Biblical worldview of worship. This will then be applied to formulate a philosophical-theological grid to serve as a grid through which we may analyse the various worldviews of worship. However, these truth-tests cannot be treated as separate entities on their own. They will be applied to test the validity of truth statements, by utilizing the worldview questions, within the worldviews of worship.

A test for truth is imperative to establish whether worldviews of worship correspond with reality. In establishing the nature of truth, our argument proposes that truth by mere definition is exclusive, specific and antithetical (Groothuis 2000:75-79). In other words, what is true excludes all that opposes it. For example, the first command in the Ten Commandments states, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3). This command argues for One God (YHWH) and excludes all others as imposters. Groothuis also argues, "The inexorable logic of antithesis is also behind Jesus' fearful utterance, 'Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it' (Mt 7:17)" (2000:75).

We will need to demonstrate whether the propositions within the Biblical worldview *correspond* and *cohere* with this philosophical perspective. Whilst we may appeal to focus on these two theories, there are other theories of truth that is worth mentioning now; but will not specifically be addressed in our model.

The first of these is the *pragmatic theory* of truth (cf. Provenzola 2008:481; Moreland & Craig 2017:131-132; Carnell 1948:50-56). This theory denies that we have truth even though statements about the world will reflect reality accurately. According to proponents of this view, this is due to the subjective influence of a person's desires and expectations. Therefore, "a person's statement is true if it serves some social function or accomplishes some practical utility – that is, if it is workable or useful to one's ends" (Provenzola 2008:481). This will imply that truth is relative to an individual's context and time (*ibid.*). We will have to disregard this view due to the subjective nature of its theoretical framework and the objective demands of an understanding of truth that is placed on the individual. To state this plainly, we cannot accept that a four-sided object is a circle because an individual deems it so. The individual's understanding of a four-sided object and a circle does not correspond to reality. Therefore, we will be arguing against the pragmatic theory, which is to be considered as an alternate to the correspondence theory - for which we will be arguing. Secondly, there is the *semantic theory* of truth. This theory functions with the correspondence theory to ascertain whether truth statements are without circularity and to satisfy certain minimal conditions that must be met by an adequate theory of truth (Wolenski 2019:online source). To a large extent, the unaffirmability test (which will be discussed later), coupled with the correspondence test, will achieve similar results. The difference is that, whilst the unaffirmability test examines truth claims within propositions; the semantic theory examines the language itself. The

technical examination of language is beyond this research. Therefore, we will not be utilizing the semantic theory test.

The tests for correspondence and coherence will now be examined to establish their philosophical importance in the testing process of the Biblical worldview of worship.

2.4.1. Theories for propositional truth

Four theories are suggested for determining and evaluating truth propositions, namely, the correspondence, coherence, unaffirmability and undeniability theories. These will now be discussed for application to the various worldviews of worship.

2.4.1.1. The correspondence and coherence theories

There are two main theories that try to explain what truth is. This is achieved by identifying the criteria or conditions that a statement must satisfy for it to be true. These are the *correspondence* theory of truth and the *coherence* theory of truth that are to be employed to establish the authenticity of any worldview of worship.

The *correspondence* theory of truth can be traced back to the Greek Philosopher, Plato (Provenzola 2008:479). This theory analyses whether propositions are true and if they correctly describe things as they are (Erickson 2013:38). This theory states that a statement must correspond to reality and is a test for truth. For example, the claims of the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the tomb is true if Jesus *did* rise after the confirmation of His death. There must also be facts in the world that prove that He really did arise and was seen alive. The statement is false if the state of affairs demonstrate a different reality in the world, e.g. the body of Jesus is still in the grave. According to this test, simple

empirical facts in statements will work well. However, the difficulty arises when the test is applied to non-empirical statements such as “The monotheistic God of Biblical Christianity exists” (Provenzola 2008:479). Therefore, the truth of God’s existence is an ontological matter where this truth does not depend on our ability to verify or demonstrate that they are true (Provenzola 2008:479). Provenzola explains: “... we seem to recognize that there is a close connection between the ontological status of statements and our attempts to justify our rational right to hold those beliefs by verifying that they do in fact agree with reality” (2008:479). He explains further:

Because God is a nonempirical reality, our evidence for thinking there is correspondence between statements about God and the world must be of a nonempirical nature as well. It may be helpful to see that this is not exclusive to religious claims. In fact, we regularly think there is correspondence between the world and many of the nonempirical claims we hold. Most would agree that it is difficult for people to reject the rational principle found in the law of noncontradiction – the nonempirical claim that no statement can be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense. For example, the statement, “It is true that this circle cannot at the same time and in the same sense be a square” seems rationally unobjectionable. It makes so much rational sense to us that we cannot reject it and think that we are rational and right in doing so. In fact, we would have to rely on the law of noncontradiction in any attempt to reject it ... It would be premature to reject the correspondence theory of truth simply because not every claim is open to verification of correspondence on some empirical level (2008:479-480).

It, then, becomes easy to demonstrate that the correspondence test for truth can be used in the presence of empirical evidence. Larkin views the correspondence test as “... the most suitable framework for the Biblical understanding of truth” (1988:235). Larkin, quoting Anthony Thiselton, argues for the following concepts that truth must involve to cover the full range of meaning: “(1) faithfulness; (2) the gospel of Christ; (3) what is real, or correspondence; (4) that which exposes; (5) and valid witness” (1988:236).

However, the correspondence theory is rejected by some who would rather favour the following view of the coherence theory. This is so due to ontological matters being

confused with epistemological matters. This must merely be stated here as it is outside the scope of the purpose of our research. Our understanding supports the correspondence view of investigating truth – in the face of both empirical and non-empirical data. This considers both ontological and epistemological matters which will be applied when researching the various worldviews of worship. And so, within the Christian Biblical worldview, a judgement is true when it corresponds to the mind of God since God is the Author of all facts and their meaning (Carnell 1948:56).

The *coherence* test of truth is "... a philosophy of life in which the major postulates are horizontally self-consistent and vertically fit the facts" (Carnell 1948:364). It states that propositions are true if they agree with other propositions (horizontally), or do not contradict any other statements within a set of statements that also cohere with each other (vertically). This theory states that the various propositions must be coherent and internally consistent. Provenzola states that: "A statement's truth is a matter of its coherence and logical consistency within a system, as well as a matter of its own self-consistency" (2008:480). In the final analysis, coherence will mean that something is coherent with what is already accepted or believed, i.e., a particular system of presuppositions on which a worldview has been erected (Young 1954:57). The purpose, therefore, of the application of this theory, is to see how the Biblical and other worldviews hold together. The parts within a whole need to cohere. Therefore, the theory must include:

- (1) Consistency. One must start with things which are consistent with themselves.
- (2) Inclusiveness. All the facts must be considered. One must avoid the danger of tending to overlook data which might conceivably upset the line of reasoning.
- (3) Organization. The facts must be arranged in some fashion; analysis and synthesis of the data are very necessary.
- (4) Hypothesis. The formulation of a tentative explanation of the problem as represented by the data is next in order.
- (5) Verification. The next step is the testing of the tentative hypothesis adopted. If it

proves to be in keeping with the facts, after careful testing, then it may be accepted as probably true (Young 1954:55).

Also, Carnell argues that there is no associated relation between the strength of a rationally construed proposition and the moral or subjective assurance which flows from it (Carnell 1948:117). He states: “*Moral assurance grows out of a conviction that a proposition is coherent*, not that it may be geometrically demonstrated. By ‘moral assurance’ we mean that apprehended strength of evidence which causes us to be convinced of the truth of a given meaning-pattern, and to act upon its strength” (1948:119) (*italics added for emphasis*). In other words, the test of coherence can find a fictional work completely coherent; but still not cohere with reality. Stated further, “... we can imagine a worldview that may fail to contradict itself logically (because its core ideas cohere), but which contradicts another system of thought that also coheres within itself. Thus, both worldviews cannot be true. Moreover, a worldview may be consistent in itself but fail to correspond with external reality” (Groothuis 2000:97-98). Therefore, all worldviews of worship cannot be true. In fact, it is more likely to propose that all are false due to the incoherences in the core worldview beliefs on worship; than to say that all are true.

Groothuis summarizes, “The correspondence theory of truth declares that correspondence is the *definition* and *nature* of truth and that coherence is one necessary (but not sufficient) *test* of truth” (2000:98). Therefore, other tests that go beyond Zacharias’ suggested model are necessary to make adequate and sufficient judgments. Geisler (1976:141) suggests the *undeniability test* and *unaffirmability test* for truth as the complementary tests to correspondence and coherence tests.

2.4.1.2. The unaffirmability and undeniability theories

The *unaffirmability theory* is the test for the falsity of a worldview (Zacharias 1994:124).

As stated earlier, a fictional work can cohere within itself – but still not cohere with reality.

This is a test for truth via self-destruction, whether in the act, process, or basis for making the statement (Geisler 1976:143). Geisler argues that there are four forms to this argument:

- i. Not everything sayable or stateable is meaningful, for nonsense is sayable or stateable and meaningless, e.g. the talk of square triangles.
- ii. Some sayable things are unaffirmable, e.g. one cannot affirm his own nonexistence, for what is affirmed is denied in the very process or act of affirmation.
- iii. There is the *direct unaffirmability* of something, where a statement itself provides the information to defeat itself, e.g. the phrase “I cannot speak a word of English” has just destroyed itself, because, in fact, seven words of English have been spoken.
- iv. There is also the *indirect unaffirmability* of something, where the very act of thinking or expressing something is self-defeating, e.g. ‘I concluded that I know everything intuitively’. Geisler explains:

The statement itself does not provide the data for its own self-destruction. The very *act* of thinking this conclusion does not self-destruct. So, it is not directly self-stultifying in the same sense as the other examples. However, there is another sense in which the statement ... is unaffirmably self-defeating; it is *indirectly* self-defeating, for the very process of “coming to” that conclusion was a deductive or inferential one, and that very *process* is at odds with the statement that all knowledge is possessed intuitively without deduction or inference. Hence, although the *act* of expressing the statement is not inconsistent, the *process* by which the statement was derived contradicts the thought expressed in the statement (1976:142).

The *undeniability test* is the test for truth (Zacharias 1994:124). Geisler suggests two forms of this test:

- i. *Definitional undeniability* which claims that there must be a definitional necessity in conceiving something e.g. the claim that if there is a God, He must be a necessary Being. Geisler explains: "This would not necessarily imply that there is known to be a God, but that if one exists, then he could not have come into being or cease to be but must necessarily always be. In brief, there is a definitional necessity in conceiving of God" (1976:143). So, whatever is definitionally undeniable is true.

- ii. *Existential undeniability* claims at least that my existence is undeniable. In other words, I must exist to make the denial. Therefore, whatever is existentially undeniable is true.

Out of these arguments, Geisler (1976:144-5) summarizes: "All we can say at present is that if one view is undeniable, then conversely the other opposing views must be at least untrue, if not affirmable. And if any view can be found to be unaffirmable, then it is, *ipso facto*, untrue."

This takes us to the next level in the formulation of the truth of a worldview of worship:

How do we test truth?

2.4.2. The three tests for the truth of a worldview

There are three tests that may be applied in determining the truth of the various worldviews of worship. They are: logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance.

2.4.2.1. Logical consistency test

The argument for the testing of a worldview by examining its *logical consistency*, flows from the previous theories on how to get to truth. Whilst the coherence theory of a worldview focuses on examining propositions in a positive manner; logical consistency tests a worldview for falsehood. Carnell rightly suggests that (logical) consistency is the surest test for the absence of truth (1948:57). This test states that teachings cannot be self-contradictory. It also requires us to hold an objective and consistent understanding about the use of logic and rationality as a general way to grasp, value, and act in the world (Vidal 2012:319). If this consistency is violated, the result is an invalid or self-contradictory worldview, which is unacceptable. When a contradiction is found in a worldview, deeply rooted assumptions must be questioned. For example, the naturalist might question the theist: “Where can we find something that is non-physical, eternal, and must be applied to all of life?” in the hope of discrediting the metaphysical argument for God’s existence. The theist may answer with “the laws of logic”. For the theist, there is a logically consistent argument for the existence of a metaphysical reality – and hence a metaphysical God. Yet, for the naturalist, the claim of the total denial of a metaphysical reality in favour of ‘all that can only be empirically evidenced is only true’, is inconsistent and illogical.

Groothuis, quoting D. Elton Trueblood, rightly argues that revelation must be tested by *reason* for the simple reason that there are false claims to revelation (2000:124). For example, one may claim that every worldview at the core teaches the same basic truths, and therefore, are all true. However, upon close inspection, they find a point of reference using different sacred texts, pragmatic reasoning or philosophical presuppositions. The various worldviews supply different explanations on the worldview questions. We can know that many alleged revelations are false, because they contain absolute contradictory claims (Groothuis 2000:124). If this logic is applied between the various religious worldviews, it must be applied within each worldview to ascertain the logical consistency of that worldview.

Negatively stated, if logical consistency is absent, logical fallacy results. Caner defines a fallacy as "... an element of an argument that is inconsistent in its logic, and thus renders the proponent's conclusion unacceptable and unsound" (2008e:326). These fall into three major categories of logical fallacies (Caner 2008e:327):

1. *Formal Fallacies* result from faulty arguments based on intellectual errors (e.g. Christians believe in God, Muslims believe in God, therefore, Muslims and Christians worship the same God). The generalization in the example is so broad that the logic is unclear. Hinduism, for example, is guilty of this. It has spread its arms so wide in incorporating all beliefs into its system that it commits intellectual suicide due to the contradictory elements in its belief system.
2. *Inductive Fallacies* seeks a proper conclusion but has insufficient data to support that conclusion. For example, when polls use unrepresentative samples to justify

a conclusion. Substantial samples must be collected to justify any national polling conclusions. Those in the Islamic worldview are guilty of this when arguing for a Quranic apologetic against Biblical truth. Appeal will constantly be made to minority and liberal “scholars” to argue against Biblical truth.

3. *Informal Fallacies* are designed to change the subject. These occur most often when an individual, who does not have the evidence in his favour, attempts to divert attention from the issue at hand, and in so doing, attempts to win the argument on terms other than the facts at hand.

How will we employ the logical consistency test? The logical consistency test must be applied when investigating falsehood in beliefs and practices within, and among, the various worldviews of worship. The goal is to establish logical consistency in truth claims that are stated. The Biblical worldview must first be tested for logical consistency when applying the four worldview questions. This will help us establish a philosophical-theological grid to ascertain the truth claims of the various worldviews. Logical consistency must also be applied within the experiential realm. When this is done by examining the empirical data and its relevance are we able to establish consistency with existential reality.

2.4.2.2. Empirical adequacy test

The *Empirical adequacy* test ascertains whether teachings match with real-life practices within the given worldview. This is particularly true of the Biblical worldview of worship. Empirical knowledge is acquired by means of the senses, mainly by observation and

experimentation. A theory is empirically adequate if all that it says about observable aspects of the world are true.

There are limitations to the test of empirical adequacy. For example, we do not expect to conduct a physical experiment, or to measure or observe God, who is a supernatural Being. This is a logical contradiction and an impossible task because only physical reality can be tested empirically. However, worldviews (especially the Biblical worldview) can be tested through an examination of available empirical data through archaeological accounts that a worldview may use to support its beliefs and practices. These may be used to validate certain claims of truth.

2.4.2.3. Experiential relevance test

The *Experiential relevance* test ascertains whether the worldviews speak directly into how lives are lived. A statement of truth must be liveable or else it is not adequate. For example, Christianity makes a distinction between good and evil. The fact that some things are objectively good, or evil reflects our experience with the reality of the world. With that stated, it will be observed that many people within the various worldviews find difficulty in applying principles to life; so, the result is inconsistencies between deed and doctrine (Groothuis 2000:265). The expectation within worldviews is that doctrine must be practically applied in deed by their followers. Yet, this does not take away from the objectivity of truth claims that can be experientially tested and found relevant. In fact, the very suggestion of inconsistencies between deed and doctrine reflect an appeal to an objective point of reference that experientially demonstrates the inconsistencies.

This threefold test rescues truth from being merely propositional and academic, and grounds it in everyday living. The various worldview claims must demonstrate whether their doctrines agree with reality and are liveable within the practices of worship.

Consideration, therefore, is to be given next to these tests of logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance which must be applied to the worldview questions of worship.

2.4.3. The questions needed for the worldview test

This is a major part of the philosophical grid. There are four questions that need to be answered, and upon which one's worldview stands. These are the questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny need to be outlined. It will be evidenced that each of these questions flow into the next. The answers to these questions will influence the beliefs and practices of worship within the worldview. Once the philosophical grid has been formed, it is to be applied to the Biblical worldview to form a Philosophical-Theological grid. Thus, this grid is to be applied to the various worldviews. The tests of logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevancy must also be applied. For now, we proceed with the first worldview question, namely of Origin.

2.4.3.1. Origin

The question of how all things began must be considered. The theories of Origin have a direct bearing on the other worldview questions. Therefore, worldviews of worship must take seriously the Origin question. The following aspects of Origin will now be considered:

1. The origin of the universe, 2. The origin of humanity, and, 3. The origin of evil and suffering.

2.4.3.1.1. The origin of the universe

This worldview question seeks to answer: where do the universe in general, and humanity in particular come from? Who or what is its origin? Does the universe have a Creator? The answer to these questions will greatly influence the worldviews in general, and the worldview of worship in particular.

If a Creator is the origin of the universe, then who is this Creator? Apart from Biblical revelation, a case has traditionally been made for the existence of God as a necessary Being, by appealing to the traditional Cosmological (or Ontological) Argument. The existence of creation presupposes a Creator: God. The Teleological Argument posits that the existence of a fine-tuned universe presupposes a Designer: God. The Moral Argument posits that the presence of moral laws presupposes a moral Law-giver: God. These arguments are, however, limited in that they will not necessarily prove the existence of the Judeo-Christian God. Therefore, for those within the Biblical worldview, Biblical evidence must be used to identify who this God is. This God has revealed himself generally and specifically. The arguments mentioned above are general revelations of God. The Bible contains specific revelations of God.

The *Cosmological Argument* is divided into three forms: the Thomist Argument, the Leibnizian Argument and the Kalam Argument. The *Thomist Argument* is named after Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). This argument views the existence of finite, contingent beings, that are dependent for their existence on something or someone else. Therefore, finite beings, must owe our current existence, either to an infinite regress of other dependent beings, or to a necessary and infinite Being – one who could not cease to exist if he does in fact have existence (Moreland 1987:16). Moreland explains:

An infinite regress of finite beings does not cause the existence of anything. Adding another dependent being to a chain of dependent beings does not ground the existence of the chain.... The current existence of all finite beings is caused or grounded by the existence of a necessary Being, and this being is God (1987:16).

That necessary Being is God – who by mere definition is not dependent on anything external to Himself but is self-sustaining. All finite beings are contingent and are dependent on Him. Therefore, worship must be a fitting response to Him.

Moreland (1987:16-17) lists three features that are central to this argument: firstly, the meaning of what a dependent being is, must be defined. This must be done by appealing to “the essence/existence” distinction. Essence explains the *whatness* or nature, and existence explains the *thatness* (that it is) (Moreland 1987:16). So, existence suggests being, and being must be given to his essence. God, therefore, is not an impersonal force; but a Being with essence. Worship, therefore, is a response to a *Being*, suggesting relationship; and, a response to *essence*, which presuppose attributes or qualities. Secondly, the nature of the infinite regress used in the argument is important. The regress of beings does not go back through time but is current or simultaneous (Moreland 1987:16). The response of worship, therefore, acknowledges humanity’s finitude. Thirdly, the nature of God as a necessary Being is crucial. God is necessary in a metaphysical sense. If God exists, He exists necessarily; He could not *not* have existed (Moreland 1987:16-17). A response in worship recognizes the eternity of God.

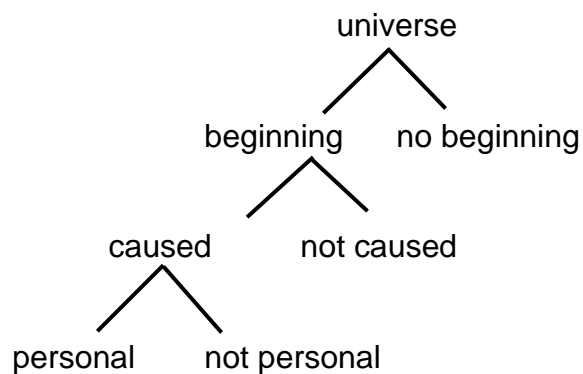
The *Leibnizian Argument* employs the principle of sufficient reason. It receives its name from the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). It asks the questions: “Why is there something rather than nothing? Why does anything at all exist?” (Moreland 1987:17). Moreland further explains:

It uses the principle of sufficient reason (for anything that exists, there must be some reason some purpose or rational context, why it exists rather than not exists) to argue for the existence of an intrinsically intelligible or self-explanatory being – God – whose existence is logically necessary (1987:17).

Finally, the *Kalam Argument*, from an Arabic word *kalam*, which refers to Arabic philosophy or theology. One of the current proponents of this argument is philosopher, William Lane Craig. Moreland explains the kalam argument and the dilemma it presents:

First, the argument states that the universe either had a beginning or it did not. If it had a beginning, then this beginning was either caused or uncaused. If the beginning was caused, the cause was either personal or not personal. The burden of the argument is to establish one horn of each dilemma, and in so doing, to argue for the existence of a personal Creator. Thus, the argument attempts to show that there had to be a beginning to the universe which was caused by a personal Being (1987:18-19).

Moreland (1987:18) illustrates the kalam argument in the following diagram:



Geisler (1976:238) suggests that the theist's claim that everything has a cause need *not* to surrender to the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason; but, to return to the Thomistic principle of existential causality. The Thomistic principle claims that "... every finite, contingent, and changing thing has a cause" (1976:238). Within the theistic framework, God is that uncaused First-cause of everything else that exists.

To summarize, the origin of the universe by a Creator can easily be argued for through the cosmological, teleological and moral arguments. This necessary Being must be

eternal and self-sustaining. All finite beings owe their existence to this Being. The purpose for their being must also originate with the Creator.

2.4.3.1.2. The origin of humanity

The *Teleological Argument* sees evidence in the design and purpose of the universe; that the existence of an ultimate Designer cannot be refuted. Teleology is the study of ends or final causes, especially those related to evidence for design or purpose in nature, or natural phenomena (Rendle-Short 1991:28). This argument focuses on the phenomena of order and purpose in the universe. In creation, we evidence an incredibly complex, functional working structure at every level, from atoms to galaxies (Beck 2008:238). Beck continues:

Beyond that, these complex structures are themselves arranged into larger systems and ultimately comprise our earth, which is an ecosystem. Beyond that is a functioning universe that is exactly that: a unified whole or cosmos. From this evidence the argument concludes that such a level of design requires intelligent input and thus a creative intelligence at a cosmic level, and could not have occurred by chance or by itself (2008:238-9).

The design and the make-up of the human being points to the Designer. This argument suggests that there is a definite analogy between the order and regularity of the cosmos and the product of human intelligence (Hoover 2001:489). Rendle-Short (1991:29) argues that it is possible to move from the natural things we observe to a great designer or First Cause behind it all. Voltaire was so sure of this fact that he argued that if a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker, but the universe does not prove the existence of a great Architect, then he allowed others to refer to him as a fool (Hoover 2001:490). Hoover (2001:490) explains some of the fine tuning that is evidenced in the world which point to a Creator:

Life itself is a cosmic function – that is, a very complex arrangement of things both terrestrial and extraterrestrial must obtain before life can subsist. The earth must

be just the right size, its rotation must be just right, its distance from the sun must be within certain limits, its tilt must be correct to cause the seasons, its land-water ratio must be a delicate balance. Our biological structure is very fragile. A little too much heat or cold and we die. We need light, but not too much ultraviolet. We need heat, but not too much infrared. We live just beneath an airtight screen shielding us from millions of missiles every day. We live just ten miles above a rock screen that shields us from the terrible heat under our feet. Who created all these screens and shields that make our earthly existence possible?

The design argument cannot prove the Creator – but an intelligent designer or architect. Hoover argues that even though we may not be able to prove that the designer is the creator, "... this universe of ours is so vast and wonderful we can safely conclude that its designer would be worthy of our worship and devotion" (2001:490). The earth is just rightly designed to sustain human life. The explanation of man's origin in a teleological cosmos through chance happening in the sense of "fortuitous intersection of independent causal chains in life's emergence and evolution", is believed by many with an atheistic and agnostic bias (Wicken 1984:497). For Wicken,

Chance may be blind, but it is never free; it is always conditioned by the higher-order framework of thermodynamic law. Once one recognizes the deep connection between chance and the necessity of ordered pathways of entropy production, and the consistency within this framework of upholding the irreducibility of life's sentient dimension to materialist categories, one sees life as fitting quite smoothly with nature's dynamics and also with our own commonsense appreciations of its content. The thermodynamic cosmos is casually open, both to statistical chance and to goal-orientated self-activity, in the workings-out of its particular expressions. Nature's content is evoked in stages, coevolving with causal principles that progress in discrimination from chance to goal-directed behaviour to conscious decision within ethical frameworks. Each new level of discrimination flows from nature's blind teleology, serving the thermodynamic mandate for stable patterns of entropy production (1984:497-8).

Wicken seems to propose a theistic evolutionary theory and reconciles it with some religious belief by smuggling in Hindu philosophy - i.e. "the changing mist of a universal breath" (1984:487), which he also terms a "mythical system" to illustrate within his worldview a "higher-order framework of thermodynamic law" (1984:498).

A variety of views as to humanity's origin exists today. These will include, namely, naturalistic evolution, fiat creationism, deistic evolution, theistic evolution, and progressive creationism (Erickson 2013:442-8). *Naturalistic Evolution* excludes divine involvement at the beginning or during any process of origin. The belief is that a "... combination of atoms, motion, time, and chance has fashioned what we currently have. No attempt is made to account for these givens – they simply are there, the basis of everything else" (Erickson 2013:443). However, even though some of the evidence may seem to assume this view, it is incompatible with much of the evidence, as demonstrated with the cosmological, teleological and moral arguments.

Fiat Creationism argues that God, by a direct act, brought into being virtually instantly everything that exists. Two features of this view include:

One is the brevity of time involved, and hence the relative recency of what occurred at creation. While there were various stages of creation, one occurring after another, no substantial amount of time elapsed from the beginning to the end of the process. Perhaps a calendar week or so was involved. Another tenet of this view is the idea of direct divine working. God produced the world and everything in it ... Specifically, God made the first human in his entirety by a unique, direct creative act; the human did not come from any previously existing organism (Erickson 2013:444).

Scientists that lean towards naturalistic explanations see a problem with this view. According to their data, a considerable amount of time and development is needed. This will include transitional forms between species, even some forms that appear to be ancestors of the human species.

Fiat Creationists reject any compromise with atheistic evolutionary processes. They reject the principle of uniformitarianism (i.e. that the present is key to the past) and all the dating methods that point to the antiquity of the earth in favour of universal cataclysm in the

Noahic flood narrative (Pun 2001:418). They also reject all the data that point to microevolutionary processes in nature by providing alternate scientific explanations.

From a Biblical-philosophical standpoint, the universe exists as a created entity *ex nihilo*⁶ by an eternal Being who caused it and fine-tunes all the physical and metaphysical operating mechanisms. The first and second laws of thermodynamics correspond with this reality. La Bar (2001:871) explains:

The first one states that neither energy nor matter can be created or destroyed, but that both are eternally existent in some form. The second may be stated as follows: in a closed system, disorder is always increasing. There are, of course, those who doubt the existence of a God who supernaturally created the universe. If there is no God, the first law of thermodynamics demands that the universe has always existed. But, by the second law, if the universe has always existed it would have become completely disordered, or run down, by now. Obviously, this is not the case. Therefore, naturalism leads to a dilemma. Either the laws of thermodynamics are not correct, or the universe is not a closed system.

The proposed big bang theory cannot solve the dilemma, because the next question would be “Who/what created the big bang?” The answer can only rest on an Eternal, Personal and Good Being who gave everything its existence.

The Biblical-philosophical view also holds that man is a creation of God as per the Genesis account. Accordingly, man is the product of special creation as opposed to derived creation, in that, he, and woman, are creations of God (Gen 2:7).

Deistic Evolution sees God as the originator and programmer of the process of evolution. He produced the first matter and created the first laws for the evolutionary process and thereafter left creation alone to work itself out through the natural processes. Deistic

⁶ Except that man and animals (beasts) were created from pre-existing material (dust).

Evolution is identical to Naturalistic Evolution, except for its explanation of God being the originator of matter. It brings together the theistic and naturalistic explanations of the origin of the universe. Those that hold to this view have a problem in explaining the Biblical basis of God's image in humanity. According to the Biblical understanding, the difference between humans and beasts is that humans are created in the image of God and beasts are not. It would therefore mean that somewhere in the evolutionary processes, the image of God was instilled in man. However, a problem arises, for this view denies God's involvement in creation. This is an untenable option to the Biblical worldview, for it denies the historicity of the first Adam. By denying the historicity of the first Adam, it will invite skepticism for the meaning of the cross of Christ (the second Adam in Romans 5:12-21) as a historical event (Pun 2001:418). It, therefore, endangers the whole structure of the Christian message.

Theistic Evolution is similar to Deistic Evolution. However, it separates from Deistic Evolutionary claims in its explanation of God's involvement in the evolutionary process. Within this view, God supernaturally intervened to modify the natural process in the origin of man. God utilized an existing primate and infused a human soul in it. Thus, while God specifically created Adam's spiritual nature, his physical nature was a product of the process of evolution.

Progressive Creationism is explained by Erickson (2013:446):

Progressive creationism sees the creative work of God as a combination of a series of *de novo* creative acts and an immanent or processive operation. God at several points, rather widely separated in time, created *de novo* (i.e., afresh). On those occasions he did not make use of previously existing life, simply modifying it. While he might have brought into being something quite similar to an already existing creation, there were a number of changes, and the product of his work was a completely new creature.

Here, also, the evolutionary component is inserted between special acts of creation. However, with man, God created a new being without the use of any lower creature. This view agrees in certain aspects with naturalistic evolution, deistic evolution, and theistic evolution in seeing development within the creation, but insists that there several *de novo* acts of creation within this overall process.

To summarize, various theories for the origin of humanity are proposed by the various worldviews. Considering the fine tuning and design that are witnessed within this universe should lead one to establishing that there is indeed a Designer. The complex human body and other aspects of our form e.g. intellectual, emotional, volitional, etc. lead to the design argument which must presuppose a personal Designer.

The *Moral Argument* may have first been used by Kant to prove a Creator in arguing for the origin of man (Hoover 2001:490). Beck lists the following general forms of the moral argument (2008:239):

1. There are objective moral obligations.
2. These obligations cannot be explained by natural causes.
3. These obligations cannot be explained by social factors.
4. These obligations can only be explained by a personal source.

Therefore, he argues, moral obligations must have a personal source with the authority to establish it. This source is God. Therefore, humanity are products of God.

2.4.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

The question of evil and suffering must also be dealt with by all the various worldviews. These terms relate to each other but are not identical – for suffering may not be evil, but good (Berdyaeu 1968:477). There are both the metaphysical and physical sides to this

complex issue that must be dealt with. The origin of evil and the response of humanity to it is unavoidable by all the various worldviews. It is well observed that this is a world of good and evil. The question at hand is: “How can a universe without mind or value produce mind and value?” (Tsanoff 1968:465). Evil can only be described negatively – i.e. the absence or suppression of good. It is a concept that is dependent on the positive component – like light/darkness and life/death. In fact, evil had to originate at a finite point in time and space when there was an absence or suppression of an eternal good. This is termed a privation. Therefore, evil may be defined as “... a lack, privation, or corruption of a good thing” (Geisler 2011:19). This will mean that evil does not exist in itself. It only exists in a substance or a thing (Geisler 2011:19). This can only make sense within a theistic worldview.

Within a theistic explanation of origins, the presence of evil in the world had to have a beginning. This impacts the various worldviews in that, a coherent explanation must be given to make sense of the issues involving the origin of the universe. This will also impact a coherent understanding of ethical and moral beliefs and choices among the various worldviews. This will impact the way lives are lived so that purpose and meaning may be attached to our existence.

2.4.3.2. Meaning

This worldview question seeks to answer the meaning and purpose of life. This philosophical question is important and is generally understood from a secular perspective to mean “... some positive feature of an individual’s life that is distinct from (though perhaps related to) other positive features (wellbeing, happiness, etc.) that a life might or might not have” (Megill & Linford 2016:31).

This question is a logical progression from one's definition of truth and explanation of origins. If this world is a product of God, then meaning must come from His created purposes which explains the beginning to end and beyond reality. This will mean that meaningfulness and meaninglessness is to find a point of reference for such discussions (Frame 2015:78). This can only be demonstrated from a transcendental position - God. Man, therefore, needs immortality to be happy and live with purpose (Carnell 1948:26).

However, if this world is a product of chance, then there is no objective meaning that one can claim, except talk about meanings that we need to create for ourselves. There is no ultimate meaning to life, except pessimism – which yields anxiety and despair in the soul (Carnell 1948:25). Megill & Linford argue that God-based approaches to the meaning of life are problematic – even if God exists (2016:32). However, it becomes evident that these authors confuse ultimate *meaning* - which is linked to *purpose*, to subjective *meanings* for each individual. To adopt subjective meanings without any ultimate meaning, introduces a breeding ground for unethical living (Carnell 1948:333).

We would, therefore, suggest the existence of two levels of meaning: subjective and objective meaning. The subjective level is dependent on one's personal feelings in the presence of a given fact-situation. At this level, meaning is simply an expression of how one personally reacts to any fact, person or thing (Carnell 1948:213). For those within certain theistic beliefs, meaning in history is located within God's cosmic metanarrative (Hiebert 2008:302). However, it is suggested that personal attitudes, feelings and prejudices help blind one's appreciation of objective reality and meaning (Carnell 1948:213). Carnell sounds a warning: "... a proper logical starting point can give one a

clue to the real meaning of all existence, while a faulty logical starting point can throw one off the track at every point” (1948:215).

Moreland (1987:115-132) discusses four basic views of the meaning that one can find in life under the following headings: Nihilism and Naturalism, Temporal Purpose and Optimistic Humanism, Immanent Purpose and Transcendentalism, and Cosmic Purpose and Christian Theism. The following briefly discusses these views (*ibid.*):

i. Nihilism and naturalism

This pessimistic view understands human existence to be totally meaningless and that nothing is of real value (Moreland 1987:115). The major proponents will include philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche and Camus. Within this view, there is no God, gods or any supernatural beings, so there is no worship of a Greater Being. Human beings are, therefore, “... the chance product of random mutations, natural selection, and the struggle for survival”, who just happen to be here (Moreland 1987:115). Therefore, no objective values exist, but mere subjective expressions of individual’s likes and dislikes (White 2001a:842). Also, no objective morals exist. Morals are simply based on personal interests and choices. This view signifies the total rejection of tradition, morality, authority, and the social order that enshrined them (White 2001a:842). Zacharias (1994:58) illustrates the nihilistic worldview in the following quote from a taxi driver, José Martinez:

We’re here to die, just live and die. I live driving a cab. I do some fishing, take my girl out, pay taxes, do a little reading, then get ready to drop dead. You’ve got to be strong about it. Life is a big fake. Nobody gives a damn. You’re rich or you’re poor. You’re here, you’re gone. You’re like the wind. After you’re gone, other people will come. It’s too late to make it better. Everyone’s fed up, can’t believe in nothing no more. People have no pride. People have no fear. People aren’t scared. People only care about one thing and that’s money. We’re gonna destroy ourselves, nothing we can do about it. The only cure for the world’s illness is

nuclear war – wipe everything out and start over. We've become like a cornered animal, fighting for survival. Life is nothing.

ii. Temporal purpose and optimistic humanism

This view holds much in common with nihilism, where "... there is no purpose toward which the cosmos or human history is moving, humans are modified monkeys which have resulted from a blind process of chance mutations, and real, irreducible moral values do not exist" (Moreland 1987:120). The parting of ways from nihilism lies in the optimism in life's meaning that this view propagates. "Nihilism is essentially a life-denying enterprise whereas optimistic humanism is a life-affirming enterprise" (Moreland 1987:120). Yet, they do not see meaning that stems from objective values or an objective point of reference. Life for them is subjectively satisfying as we create our own values. Even morality is practiced because it satisfies self. So, for these people, a higher standard living, even if it means the willingness to die for it, will constitute meaning (Zacharias 1994:56). Zacharias illustrates this view and its consequences with the following examples:

After his second Wimbledon victory, Boris Becker surprised the world by admitting his great struggle with suicide. Jack Higgins, the renowned author of *The Eagle Has Landed*, has said that the one thing he knows now at this high point of his career that he had wished he had known as a small boy is this: "When you get to the top, there's nothing there" (1994:56).

iii. Immanent purpose and transcendentalism

According to Moreland, this view holds that:

... there is no reason why something rather than nothing exists, that there is no purpose for human history, that there is no life after death, and that humans are the result of a blind process of evolution. But while there may be no reason to believe that there is any objective meaning or purpose outside human life which gives it meaning, this does not mean that life is not objectively meaningful. Life has objective meaning because objective values can be found within life (1987:122).

Within this view, objective values exist as part of this universe. A sort of “ethical naturalism” exists to justify objective values (Moreland 1987:122). However, meaning does not depend on God; but rests on humanistic values realized *within* human life which may also be culturally accepted values (Geisler & Wilson 2008:84-5). A form of pragmatism is borrowed to explain human value and meaning.

iv. Cosmic purpose and Christian theism

Within this view, the cosmos exists to glorify God and to promote the good of God’s creatures – especially man (Moreland 1987:128). Human beings are creations of God and have been endued with value in that they bear His image. To be created in the image of God will mean that humanity “... is personal because God is personal. That is, we know ourselves to be (we are self-conscious), and we make decisions uncoerced (we possess self-determination). We are capable of acting on our own. We do not merely react to our environment but can act according to our own character, our own nature” (Sire 2009:33). This Biblical teaching suggests a purpose for humanity that is to be located within God.

Christian Theism provides a comprehensive response to the meaning of life in comparison with other views. Zacharias argues that the “what” and “why” of life are inextricably bound together in everyone’s assumption (1994:66). He explains:

If I am a creation of God, then life must be deemed sacred. But if I am a product of pure chance, the body may be profaned, for life itself is disposable. These two facets, therefore – the “what” and “why” – have intermeshed from the time of the ancient gnostics to our modern-day hedonists. The two components are inseparable when dealing with the subject before us: what gives life meaning (1994:66).

For Zacharias (1994:65-117), meaning is woven together in the knowledge of God through the following processes of life: pursuit of wonder (in childhood), the knowledge of truth (in adolescence), fulfilment of love (in the adult years), and longing for eternal security (in old age). This, he claims, is satisfied solely by the Biblical worldview.

To summarize, objective meaning is first to be established where the meaning of life is discussed. This discussion does not ask whether people find life subjectively satisfying and of personal significance. Moreland (1987:106-108) suggests different “scopes” in discussing the meaning of life. He explains, that for example, one can ask:

- i. Why does the universe exist? Why is there something rather than nothing?
- ii. Why do human beings in general exist?
- iii. Why do I exist?

One’s answer to one of these questions can affect his answer to the others. It would be possible to hold that the universe is without a universal meaning, but that objective values exist as a brute fact and the meaning of my life consists in my relationship to those values (Moreland 1987:107). The opposite could also be true, where one could hold that the cosmos as a whole has meaning; for example, that it is evolving into God, but that humans are of no significance to that meaning (Moreland 1987:107). The study of the answers to these issues covered by the various worldviews of worship is imperative.

Another point involves the notions of value and purpose. The following questions are to be addressed by the various worldviews of worship (Moreland 1987:107):

- i. Do values exist objectively and if so, what is the nature of those values? How does one know what values are the right ones? These concepts, which are linked with the meaning of life, extends into the next section: Morality.
- ii. Is there any point to life (i.e., is there any end or goal which is objectively and intrinsically valuable and toward which life should move? This will be discussed under Destiny.

From the discussion of *Meaning*, the following will be considered to develop the philosophical grid for Chapter 3:

1. Starting Point for Meaning
2. Objective Meaning
3. Subjective Meaning

2.4.3.3. Morality

The word “morals” or “morality” comes from the Greek word *mores*; whilst the word “ethic” or “ethics” stem from the word “ethos”. The ethic of a culture may deal with its foundational philosophy (i.e. absolute values and standards for goodness) to establish codes by which we determine right from wrong (Hyland 2008:199). *Morals* will examine habits, customs, and other forms of behaviour to establish the norms and values evidenced within a given culture (Sproul 2013:n.p.). Van Niekerk argues for the necessity for morality: “Morality is necessary because life without orientation is chaotic and even meaningless. The necessity for morality is essentially related to the reality of life” (1998:13). Therefore, *Morality* must imply a *Moral Law*, and *Moral Law* must imply a *Moral Law Giver* – who must be the *Originator* of the universe with Personality.

A definition of *Moral Law* is needed. Hayes makes the following observations regarding this phrase:

The term *law* is defined as a rule or action or conduct. Legislators govern actions by deeming some actions permissible and other actions impermissible. Broadly speaking, laws do not necessarily indicate whether an action is good or bad. They simply permit or prohibit certain actions. For example, laws concerning which side of the road one drives on are neither good nor bad. However, in order to ensure safe travel, a side of the road had to be chosen. The word *moral* deals with judging actions as either right or wrong. It makes the distinction between good and bad conduct. Therefore, putting the two together, *the moral law is a rule given to man in order to determine which actions are good and which are bad* (2008a:354) (*italics added for emphasis*).

The question of morality suggests a rational ordering of life for humanity. It seeks to answer the question, “how do we know what is right and wrong?” This question extends from the question of meaning discussed above. The question, “Where does morality come from?” has been a debate among philosophers for millennia. Here again, the various worldviews will have to account for morality which appeals to either the subjective or objective points of references.

The nature of morality must also be discussed. The worldviews of worship need to answer whether moral principles are objective and therefore universally valid for all people for all times; or, whether they are subjective and relative (Loftin 2012:9). In other words, the question “What makes right acts right and wrong acts wrong?” needs to be considered. Linville rightly observes that this question is typically answered by appeal to whatever is taken to be the first principle of morality (2012:138-9). Within the theistic framework, morality is objectively grounded in the person of God. However, antitheists sit with a problem, for as Canadian atheist Kai Nielsen acknowledges, “Pure practical reason, even with good knowledge of the facts, will not take to morality” (Zacharias & Vitale 2014:143).

Meta-ethics, the branch of philosophy which analyses the meaning of moral terms such as: right, wrong, good, bad, ought, worth, etc., is important when dealing with this issue of morality (Moreland 1987:108). When indicative statements are analysed, it will have ontological implications – which means that cognitively it can either be true or false. Indicative statements also have ontological implications because they assert something that can be checked against reality through the process of empirical verification – i.e. verification by the senses. The moral statements make truth claims because they are indicative statements which convey descriptive factual information (Moreland 1987:110). Therefore, private subjectivism and cultural relativism cannot be adequate understandings of moral meaning (Moreland 1987:111). Hejzlar explains that private subjectivism moves the terms from ethics and morality to subjective preference for ‘values’:

The prevailing ethos in the contemporary west is one that differentiates between objective, universally accessible facts and subjective values, which are a matter of personal preference and therefore must not be presented in the public as binding for everyone. The language of “values” has been introduced by Max Weber to replace the traditional language of “right” and “wrong” (2011:51-52).

It shows that when morality is not rested on an objective authority, then man has to reconstruct the playing fields by redefining terms and bringing in new arguments to build and support a preferred worldview.

Morality must have a purpose as well. This is closely tied to the question of the meaning of life. The adopting of a moral point of view leads to the subscribing to “... normative judgments about actions, things (persons, the environment), and motives” (Moreland 1987:113). Moreland (*ibid.*) explains that the individual is willing to universalize his judgments. He seeks to form his moral views in a free, unbiased, enlightened way. He

seeks to promote the good. It is here that worldviews of worship embrace the dictates of morality and seek to live considering the moral point of view – which governs his life and priorities.

The motivation for adopting a certain moral point of view for an individual within society may be influenced by parents, society, laws, and other external motivations. However, some rational justification is necessary for a person's adoption of a particular moral point of view. Another motivation for adopting a certain moral point of view may be influenced by the worldview of worship that the individual is aligned with. Here also, a rational defence is needed that must ground the choice in truth. For example, in order to motivate, justify, and adopt their moral point of view, some may appeal to a "culturally determined morality." The cows of Indian culture that are not to be eaten is a classic example. Western cultures do eat livestock, and therefore cows are eaten. Therefore, some will appeal to this "cultural morality" to argue against objective morality. However, the issue here is not the eating or not eating of beef that determines a cultural practice. In India cows are not eaten, because they are considered sacred. The Indian religion believes in *reincarnation*, and therefore, cows are believed to possess the souls of deceased loved ones. Other cultures do not believe that. So, both easterners and westerners hold to the same moral belief that it is wrong to eat a deceased loved one. What is disagreed upon is exactly where a deceased loved one resides after death (Hayes 2008b:356-7). Therefore, an appeal to cultural practices in this case is not rationally justifiable. Cultural norms are greatly influenced by religious worldview themes and beliefs (*refer to Hiebert's illustrated model - Figure 2*). Hence, when examining morals in worldviews of worship, religious beliefs and their influence upon cultural norms and practices must be considered for a rational justification. Also, explanations of the cohesiveness of each life within itself

and at harmony with others in community finds its impetus in the worldview of worship (Zacharias 1994:151). Therefore, morality must be grounded upon a common and objective point of reference to give to the individual and the community a foundation. The issue of religious beliefs that inform practices must be considered in the influence through all external motivations that seek to provide motivation, justification and adoption of moral views.

To draw a conclusion to this section on morality, we shall illustrate using Lewis' analogy of a fleet of ships on a voyage to explain morality:

The voyage will be a success only, in the first place, if the ships do not collide and get in one another's way; and, secondly, if each ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order. As a matter of fact, you cannot have either of these things without the other (Lewis 1980:71).

A third observation is that the ship's crew must understand *why* they are there as they proceed to their destination, so that the ship is kept on course. From this, Lewis argues that morality is concerned with three things.

Firstly, with fair play and harmony between individuals. Secondly, with what might be called tidying up or harmonising the things inside each individual. Thirdly, with the general purpose of human life as a whole: what man was made for: what course the whole fleet ought to be on... (1980:72).

From the above discussion and analogy, we will apply these derived truths on morality into the following three components to understand the Biblical worldview of worship:

1. The Starting Point for Morality.
2. Morality for the Individual.
3. Morality for Society.

This will be applied in the formulation of the philosophical-theological grid for the next chapter.

2.4.3.4. Destiny

Religious worldviews offer some form of future hope to their followers. The doctrines that enshrine a future hope are often well-developed in these religious worldviews "... in relation either to human individuals (comprising death, resurrection, judgment, and the afterlife) or to the world" (Bruce & Scott Jr. 2001:386). Worldviews may offer a cyclical concept to time, or a purely linear concept. These doctrines are to be studied considering the understanding of the nature of humanity as both spiritual and physical beings.

2.4.3.4.1. Physical death

Death is the cessation of biological life according to medical standards. The principle of death and decay is a part of the whole of creation (Erickson 2013:558). The incongruity between man's desire for life and the reality of physical death is the most frustrating problem for him (Carnell 1948:23). Carnell explains: "Although he sees the handwriting on the wall, man yet refuses to think that death is his final destiny, that he will perish as the fish and the fowl, and that his place will be remembered no more. Mankind wills to live forever; the urge is written deep in his nature" (1948:24). Therefore, the universality of death is at once recognized which religious worldviews must provide an answer for. The answer to this question must stem from the question of *Origin* within the worldview. Also, questions such as: What happens to a person at death? What is the ultimate reality? What is the nature of humanity? must each be understood to answer the question of death.

In surveying the various worldviews of worship, Rathel (2008:164-5), provides the following summary of ultimate reality: 1. *Extinction* within the naturalistic worldview, 2. *Release* from reincarnations within Eastern religions, 3. *Denial* of reality within certain

worldviews e.g. Christian Science, and 4. *Resurrection* from the dead among the monotheistic religions (Judaism, orthodox Christianity, and Islam).

2.4.3.4.2. Eternal life

In view of the reality of death, humanity also longs for eternal life – i.e. the ideal (Carnell 1948:24). Within theism, man's immortal soul survives his physical death. The reality of death cannot be denied. Berdyaev argues:

... the conception of immortality has been defended on the ground of naturalistic metaphysics and the idea of the soul as a substance. It left completely untouched the problem of death, so fundamental for the religious and especially for the Christian consciousness. Death is a problem not only for metaphysics but also for ontological ethics ... Death is the most profound and significant fact of life ... The fact of death alone gives true depth to the question as to the meaning of life. Life in this world has meaning just because there is death; if there were no death in our world, life would be meaningless. The meaning is bound up with the end. If there were no end, i.e., if life in our world continued forever, there would be no meaning in it. Meaning lies beyond the confines of this limited world, and the discovery of meaning presupposes an end here ... Death – the supreme horror and evil – proves to be the only way out of the “bad time” into eternity; immortal and eternal life prove to be only attainable through death (1968:561-2).

Man's created purpose, also, is closely linked to eschatological teachings of a worldview. The brief time-space existence is lived considering eternity. Each worldview must account for this question: “What happens to us after death?” If life has entered by chance, without any objective meaning and without any objective morality, it then ends at death for the naturalist. However, if life originated from God, meaning, morality and destiny is defined in Him. Yet, even the various religious worldviews give contradictory descriptions of the afterlife. This question becomes an important question for the various worldviews to answer, for it extends worship to the afterlife.

2.5. Concluding remarks

The goal of chapter 2 was to present a description of reality from a philosophical perspective in order to create an initial grid by which to filter the Biblical worldview of worship to measure its truth claims in Chapter 3.

Within this chapter, we have discovered that the concepts “truth” and “worldview” are two inter-related and integrated subjects that cannot be separated from each other. Worldviews make truth claims about reality; and truth claims form and shape worldviews. These underlying premises are to be applied within the worldviews of worship in succeeding chapters (Chapters 3-7). In other words, truth statements in the competing worldviews of worship, need to be ratified. If proven false; it influences the entire worldview by deeming it false. However, for the immediate purpose, it will, firstly be applied to the Biblical worldview of worship in Chapter 3. Should the Biblical worldview meet the philosophical standards, our goal is to create a Philosophical-theological grid in Chapter 3, by which to filter the competing worldviews of worship in the South African context (Chapters 4-7). This will mean that propositional claims are to be tested.

We have stated that any language that states a truth claim – whether expressed in a sentence, an utterance or a belief, is called a proposition. We have discovered that worldviews seek to make truth statements for followers to ground beliefs and practice.

The testing of these propositions is carried out through:

1. The laws of logic (law of non-contradiction, law of the excluded middle, and the principle of identity).
2. Theory of knowledge (epistemology – which deals with the nature, criteria, and sources of knowledge).

3. Metaphysics and ontology (the study of the nature of reality, and the appearances [or general features] of reality), and,
4. The value theory (which involves ethics and aesthetics).

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate whether these propositions are grounded in reason. This exercise will not be applied as a section on its own; but will be used as a background to test for reason, as we progress through the truth-tests, within the research of Chapter 3. All these are to be applied in the Biblical worldview of worship when examining propositions to test for reason.

Truth-testing of the Biblical worldview of worship requires certain filters through which it can be tested. Zacharias' "1-2-3-4-5" test method of analysing claims for truth in any worldview, has been utilized, developed (with the addition of the test for reason) and applied in the next chapter. A test for truth is imperative to establish whether worldviews of worship correspond with reality. There are certain theories for propositional truth that need to be combined and presented as a filter for the Biblical worldview of worship. Three theories are suggested for determining and evaluating truth propositions, namely, i.) the correspondence theory, ii.) the coherence theory, and the unaffirmability and undeniability theory.

The correspondence and coherence theories are two main theories that try to explain what truth is. The correspondence test for truth can be applied in the presence of empirical and non-empirical evidence in the Biblical worldview of worship (Chapter 3). The coherence test of truth states that the various propositions must be coherent and internally consistent. Coherence will mean that something is coherent with what is already

accepted or believed, i.e., a particular system of presuppositions on which the Biblical worldview of worship has been erected. The purpose, therefore, of the application of this theory, is to see how the Biblical and other worldviews of worship hold together. This test will be applied in Chapter 3 to examine whether the parts within the whole – in relation to the worldview questions in the Biblical worldview of worship, cohere.

Together with the fore-mentioned tests, the undeniability and unaffirmability test for truth as a complementary test is to be utilized. The unaffirmability theory is the test for the falsity within the Biblical worldview of worship; whilst the undeniability test is the test for truth. This will mean that, whilst Biblical truth-claims may correspond and cohere; they may still be deemed false as a worldview. This test will enable these outcomes of testing when applied in Chapter 3. This takes us to the next level in the formulation of the truth of a worldview of worship: the three tests for the truth of a worldview.

There are three tests that may be applied in determining the truth of the various worldviews of worship. They are: logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance. Firstly, the logical consistency test examines the logical consistency in a worldview to get to truth. Whilst the coherence theory of a worldview focuses on examining propositions in a positive manner; logical consistency tests a worldview for falsehood. It has been observed that, if logical consistency is absent, logical fallacy results. Secondly, the empirical adequacy test ascertains whether teachings match with real-life practices within the Biblical worldview of worship. This knowledge is acquired by means of the senses and speaks about observable aspects of the world that are true. Due to the fact that we are engaged in a metaphysical reality, there are limitations to the test of empirical adequacy – which cannot be tested in a laboratory. However, the Biblical

worldview of worship is able to be tested through an examination of available empirical data, e.g. texts that are revealed, archaeological accounts, etc. These may be used to validate certain claims of truth. Thirdly, the experiential relevance test ascertains whether the worldviews speak directly into how lives are lived. A statement of truth in the Biblical worldview of worship must be liveable or else it is not adequate. The threefold test has achieved for us tests for truth which rescues research from being merely propositional and academic (which is an important initial step), and grounds it in an everyday existential reality. When applied in Chapter 3, the various claims in the Biblical worldview of worship must demonstrate whether their doctrines are logically consistent. Next, empirical data must demonstrate the adequacy of truth-claims. Finally, all this must prove to be liveable within the practices of worship. These tests are to be applied within the worldview questions in the Biblical worldview of worship (Chapter 3).

The four questions needed for the worldview test forms a major part of the philosophical grid. The four questions include: origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?), and destiny (where are we going?), need to be outlined. We have discovered that all worldviews attempt to answer these fundamental questions. The Biblical worldview of worship, which is centred in revelation, needs to also provide answers to these questions which will influence the beliefs and practices of worship. Researching the answers to these questions will form a major part of Chapter 3 to ascertain what these theories, beliefs and practices are. The goal is to establish whether the Biblical worldview – which is approached at Scripturally and theologically, meets the criteria for truth when filtered through the metaphysical-philosophical grid of Chapter 2.

The question of origin seeks to answer how all things began. Theories of origin have a direct bearing on the other worldview questions. Therefore, the Biblical worldview of worship must take seriously the origin question. The question could have been broken down surrounding many themes; but, we have chosen just three for the purposes of this research:

1. The origin of the universe
2. The origin of humanity
3. The origin of evil and suffering

Answers to these important worldview sub-questions are to be researched and outlined within the Biblical worldview of worship (Chapter 3). Answers outlined, must also be filtered through the truth and reason tests to establish their veracity.

Secondly, we have looked at the issue of meaning which the Biblical worldview of worship must answer. This question is a logical progression from one's definition of truth and explanation of origins. If this world is a product of God, then meaning must come from His creation purposes which explains the beginning to end and beyond reality. However, if this world is a product of chance, then there is no objective meaning that one can claim, except talk about meanings that we need to create for ourselves. For those appealing to the latter claims, there is no ultimate meaning to life – except what each individual chooses to make of life. Therefore, certain sub-points are included in our investigation of the worldviews of worship. This is to, firstly, applied within the Biblical worldview of worship (Chapter 3). The sub-points include:

1. Starting Point for Meaning
2. Objective Meaning
3. Subjective Meaning

Answers to these important worldview sub-questions are to be filtered through the truth and reason tests to establish their veracity.

Within the third worldview question, we have looked at morality which looks at *what is*; whilst the discipline of ethics looks at *what ought to be*. Put differently, the ethic of a worldview deals with its foundational philosophy (i.e. absolute values and standards for goodness) to establish codes by which we determine right from wrong. Morals, on the other hand, examines habits, customs, and other forms of behaviour to establish the norms and values evidenced within a given worldview. This distinction is of great value when researching diverse worldviews. It informs the researcher, not only the practices of a worldview; but, also, its point of reference. Therefore, the following three components will be used to apply within the Biblical worldview of worship to answer the question of morality:

1. The Starting Point for Morality.
2. Morality for the Individual.
3. Morality for Society.

The application of these points in the testing of the Biblical worldview of worship is deemed necessary and important. Answers to these important worldview sub-questions are to be researched and outlined (Chapter 3). Answers outlined, must also be filtered through the truth and reason tests to establish their veracity.

The final worldview question of destiny looks at descriptions of future hope that worldviews offer to their followers. The following subjects are deemed important within this section:

1. Physical Death

2. Eternal Life

Answers to these important worldview sub-questions are to be researched and outlined within the Biblical worldview of worship (Chapter 3). Answers outlined, must also be filtered through the truth and reason tests to establish their veracity.

This will be applied in the formulation of the philosophical-theological grid for the next chapter. Our research takes us next to the Biblical worldview of worship in order to ascertain its veracity as a worldview when its truth-claims surrounding the worldview questions are put to the test.

Chapter 3

An exegetically derived scriptural-theological approach to the Biblical worldview of worship

The use of the theological approach to a Biblical worldview of worship attempts an interpretation of the Bible from the understanding that it is a source of divine revelation. It is also witness to God's creative and salvific activity, and a significant partner in the task of theological reflection – in the thinking about God and about the world and humanity in light of God (Gorman 2009:146).

Firstly, aspects of the Scriptural-Theological Approach will be considered within the metaphysical-philosophical grid established from the previous chapter to derive a Philosophical-Theological grid for the Biblical worldview of worship. The Biblical understanding of worship will also be examined. Selected Old and New Testament passages will be examined to ascertain what the Bible says about worship regarding origin, meaning, morality and destiny. The method of examining these passages will consist of exegesis, interpretation and application.

Secondly, our goal is to test the Biblical worldview of worship, to ascertain whether its truth statements meet the proposed philosophical test standards.

Thirdly, we shall consider the Biblical worldview meet the required test standards of logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance.

Fourthly, the worldview questions: origins, meaning, morality, and destiny will be explored with the Biblical worldview of worship. The test standards of logical consistency, empirical

adequacy and experiential relevance will be applied within, and among the worldview questions.

The relevance of the Theological Approach and its relationship with the Biblical worldview of worship will now be discussed.

3.1. Aspects of the scriptural-theological approach

The purpose of the theological approach is to know God and His agenda, and to overcome the modern gap between exegesis and theology (Gorman 2009:146). The theological approach makes the Biblical text relevant for the modern-day reader (Pereira 2015:303). This will mean that the modern reader reads the Bible *as Scripture* with theological theories that are for all God's people.

Theological theories are efforts at making sense of the reality that is the object of the church's teachings (Van Den Toren 2016:57). It will therefore involve the reader to engage with a worldview that is derived from the Biblical text. It comes to the reader through propositional concepts, behavioural concepts, and heart-orientation concepts as theological theories (Schultz & Swezey 2013:233-9). However, we would suggest that prior to establishing propositional concepts, an exegetical analysis of Biblical texts is foundational. Exegetical analyses help with a scientific unearthing of theological propositions. The propositional concepts derived, will include doctrinal statements with Biblical foundations that are to impact the behaviour of those within the Biblical worldview of worship. However, before behaviour is impacted; the heart is to be impacted. The heart is the religious, intellectual, affective, and volitional centre of the person (Schultz &

Swezey 2013:237). Therefore, a theological approach will enable the reader to think, believe and act *with* a theologically underpinned worldview.

A theological approach also understands God to be the God of history. People operate within a historical framework wherein culture features greatly. The diachronic and synchronic approaches to historical cultural structures will be applied to research the doctrinal model of reality underpinning the worldview. This doctrinal model of reality consists of theoretical knowledge, which must translate to a model for action within the Biblical worldview that motivates worship. However, before we proceed, exegetical analyses of selected texts are mandatory for any theological output.

3.1.1. Texts

There are various Biblical texts that we can utilize. However, we will limit these to two texts from the Old Testament (Exodus 3 & Isaiah 6) and one from the New Testament (Revelation 4-5). From the entire canon of Scripture, these texts have been selected, for they demonstrate at face value a canonical correspondence and coherence in utilizing a similar structure. They, firstly, contain a “merkabah-motif” – with *merkabah* meaning “chariot.” This term is derived from Ezekiel’s description of God’s throne-chariot (Scholem 1954:42). The term may also be applied to other Scripture passages that present a throne-room scene (viz. Ex 3; Isa 6; & Rev 4-5). Secondly, these passages display a similar corresponding structure and cohering messages - as will be evidenced in our exegetical work.

With regards to our hermeneutical framework, a canonical/theological/apologetic hermeneutical approach will be utilized for the purpose of this study.

To summarize, then, we will approach the texts, employing the historical/grammatical method of exegesis. Our hermeneutical focus, firstly, is applied theologically. Narratives make possible the discussion of theological questions (*Goldingay, cited in Pereira 2015:305*). This is so because they "... tell about the acts and pronouncements of God, mainly in relation to Israel, and sometimes in relation to the surrounding nations" (*Pereira 2015:306*). Secondly, narratives make possible an apologetic hermeneutic. Whilst, this may not be the sole intended purpose by the author; it may be inferred and can be derived from theological summations as a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship.

Therefore, a canonical/theological/apologetic hermeneutic will be employed to ultimately test if the worldview questions of: origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?) and destiny (where are we going?), could be derived from these Biblical texts. We will also examine how these questions are linked to worship within the Biblical worldview. This, then, will also give Biblical support to utilize these philosophical questions later in this chapter for an in-depth examination of the Biblical worldview of worship with regards to these four questions.

We proceed next to the chosen texts and will begin with Exodus 3:1-10.

3.1.1.1. Text 1: Exodus 3:1-10

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

⁴ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
And Moses said, "Here I am."

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

3.1.1.1.1. Historical context

The term “Exodus” is a Greek compound word which is derived from the Septuagint. The Greek words *ex* “out” and *odos* “way” combined, means, “exit, departure” (Kaiser Jr. 2008:335). The Hebrew word for the book, which is derived from the first words of the Hebrew text is *Shemoth* “And these are the names of”, which demonstrate a continuity from the previous book, Genesis (Kaiser Jr. 2008:335, 349). Three hundred ‘silent years’ have passed between the end of the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 to Moses in the book of Exodus (c. 1800-1400 BC) (Kaiser Jr. 2008:349). Exodus 3 locates Moses in the wilderness, having fled from Egypt some forty years earlier. He is engaged in pastoral work, looking after his father-in-law’s sheep.

3.1.1.1.2. Textual context

Exodus 3:1-10 is located within a broader context within the Judeo/Christian Scriptures. It forms part of the Book of Exodus, whose authorship is generally ascribed to Moses, for the following internal evidence within the book:

He is told to record on a scroll the episode of Israel’s victory over Amalek (17:14). He is instructed to write down the Ten Commandments (34:4, 27-29). He “wrote down everything the LORD had said” (24:4), which included at least the book of the covenant (20:22-23:33) (Kaiser Jr. 2008:336).

The Book of Exodus is found within a corpus known as the *Pentateuch*, referring to the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In summarizing the entire book of Exodus, Durham suggests that within it, "... God gives Israel his special name, his special deliverance, his special guidance, his special covenant, his special worship, his special mercy and his special description of himself" (1987:xix).

The chosen text, Exodus 3:1-10, describes God's call to Moses to lead His people out of Egyptian bondage. The text may be broken down into the following headings:

- The Theophany and the Burning Bush (vv.1-3),
- The Holiness of God and the Sinfulness of Moses (vv. 4-6)
- Salvation for the Israelites and Moses' Commission (vv. 7-10)

This structure will be used for our exegetical work in our exploration of the text.

3.1.1.1.3. Historical/grammatical exegesis

The narrative in the previous two chapters describe the plight of the Israelites who had settled in Egypt during Joseph's rule. By now, about three hundred years later, the family of Jacob that moved to Egypt had grown to such a large population that the Egyptian ruler saw them as a threat to his native people. He, therefore, enslaved the Israelites and tried various means to suppress their growth as a people.

At Pharaoh's command, baby boys were exterminated. Moses, however, was protected by his mother and sister, who placed him in a basket and into the river. The basket with the baby found its way to Pharaoh's daughter who was providentially bathing in the river. She had compassion on the child and took him in. Moses, therefore, was brought up

within Pharaoh's household and lived there for the first forty years of his life. After murdering an Egyptian, he had to flee from Egypt to Midian. There, he settled down as a shepherd in the home of Jethro – who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. It is at this point, that Moses has an encounter with YHWH.

i. The theophany and the burning bush (vv.1-3)

The text, of **verse 1**, reads: “Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.” At this point, Moses has been with Jethro for forty years – and so was about 80 years old. While tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses arrived at *Horeb* – known as *the mountain of God*. Horeb was named such, in retrospect – because God had appeared there and revealed himself to Moses (Kaiser Jr. 2006:364). Childs sees in this supernatural intervention in this earthly realm a reflection of a mixture of ordinary elements of human experience with the extraordinary (1974:72).

Moses' encounter suggests certain realities, that is to be accounted for, in the Biblical worldview of worship. Firstly, the existence of Yahweh – who as to His self-designation in the name *YHWH* (translated, “I AM”) will later be revealed to Moses within this encounter (Ex 3:14). Yahweh is the uncaused, first-cause. He owes His existence to no-one and nothing. On the other hand, creation belongs to Yahweh for He is Creator (cf. book of Genesis). Creation owes its *origin* to Yahweh. The Judeo/Christian worldview does not hold to deistic beliefs; for, Yahweh is not removed from His creation. He is able to enter at any time using theophanic appearances. This is so, because creation itself exists in Him (cf. Acts 17:28). Therefore, Yahweh is a God who is involved in His creation and this presence attests to God's providence – i.e. God's gracious outworking of His

purpose which issues in his dealings with humankind (Parker 2001:965). Therefore, *meaning* and purpose for humanity is bound up in God's creative and providential purposes.

Secondly, Moses' encounter brings to the fore the doctrine of revelation and the communication of truth. If humanity is to know their Creator, He will have to in special revelation, reveal Himself. This suggests that while general revelation may be good in that it reveals God through His creation; special revelation brings about a correlation between them – but with an emphasis on redemptive revelation (Henry 2001:1022).

Moses spent the first forty years of his life in Egypt. Within the next forty, just prior to this wilderness encounter, nothing is mentioned of Moses' beliefs and faith. Within this theophany, God reveals Himself and His purposes to Moses. Moses was to be included in the purposes of God to bring salvation to the Israelites. His life was going to take a different turn that would define his entire existence – right from the time he was spared from the murderous Pharaoh, his time in Midian, and into his future journey with Yahweh as leader of the Israelites. The *meaning* for Moses' life is contained in Yahweh's providential eternal purposes and plan.

Within the context of this passage, we will not examine the process of Yahweh's self-revelation to Moses who wrote it down for all succeeding generations.

Verse 2-3 reads: "There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So, Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.'" The

focus of verse 2-3 is on the appearance of God to Moses. This theophanic fiery appearance is one of the recurring symbols of God's advent in the Old Testament (Durham 1987:31). Kaiser Jr. (2008:365) suggests, "(t)he fire, then, symbolises God's powerful, consuming, and preserving presence (cf. 19:18; 24:17; Jdg 13:20; 2Ch 7:1-3; Eze 1:4-28; Da 7:9-10; Heb 12:29)." It is this preserving presence that would not allow Moses to be consumed, even though it also represented omnipotence (cf. vv.4-6).

The reason the sight drew Moses' attention, is that, even though he saw a bush on fire, it was not being consumed. This unusual sight greeted Moses as he tended the sheep. Something miraculous was taking place that caught his attention. Kaiser Jr. rightly argues, "Miracles are not circus 'side shows' intended to entertain; rather, they accredit the word of God given to his special messengers" (2006:264). The Biblical worldview of worship testifies to supernatural occurrences in the material world. The premise is: If God exists and He is involved in His creation; then, the miraculous, or "outside" interventions from God is possible. This will place Yahweh beyond the physical and material world. As His name suggests; Yahweh is the infinite and eternal God. Creation is finite and time-bound. Yahweh, therefore, can step into the finite universe and temporal situations to reveal his purposes.

The word "angel" mentioned here should not be understood as is generally understood post-canonisation of the Scriptures (Durham 1987:30-31). Durham explains, "As is often in the OT (Gen 18; Judg 6), there is in this passage a fluid interchange between symbol, representative, and God himself. In the composite form of the present text, Moses sees the symbol ("a blaze of fire") and hears Yahweh (vv 4-6, 7-10, 12). Only we are told that Yahweh's messenger appears to him ... there is no inconsistency: the addition of Elohim

(v 4) to the messenger, the fire, and Yahweh of v 2 simply provided four designations of the same and single reality” (1987:30-31). Childs concurs, “... there is a characteristic oscillation between the angel of Yahweh being an intermediary and his being a manifestation of Yahweh himself” (1974:65). Kaiser adds the pre-incarnate Christ in the interpretation:

... Is this messenger always the same celestial being, or is he none other than the *Logos* himself, as the early church favoured? A study of other texts where “angel/messenger of Yahweh” appears leads to the conclusion that Yahweh and his messenger share many of the same characteristics and ascriptions of worth and worship. Some may wish to safeguard the distance between Yahweh and his messenger. But that is unnecessary if this messenger is a preincarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity (2008:363).

A leaning toward a pre-incarnate Christ interpretation, is not difficult to conclude. For, within the next passage, that we will be discussing (Isaiah 6), even New Testament writers took the liberty to interpret the Old Testament throne-room vision as such (cf. Jn 12:41). The triune nature of God, which is fully developed within the New Testament, could be taken as an allusion in the Old Testament in theophanic passages like these.

Theophanic passages reveal, also, a response from man to the revelation of God.

ii. The holiness of God and the sinfulness of Moses (vv. 4-6)

Verses 4-6 reads, “When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ And Moses said, ‘Here I am.’ ‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’ Then he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’ At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.”

The awesome presence of God reveals His infinite holiness and Moses' sinfulness. The presence of God was not just contained in the fiery bush; but within its immediate vicinity. Moses' curiosity led him closer to "approach" or "come closer" to the presence of God. The verb used here is frequently used in the Old Testament as a technical term to describe an approach to the Presence of God in worship, or to seek an oracle (Durham 1987:31). Up to this point, Moses did not know that he was experiencing a theophany. To protect Moses, God called to him to keep his distance and remove his sandals. The reason for this is because Moses has ventured into territory that was dangerous for him. Kaiser Jr argues, "To teach Moses this lesson, God sets up admittedly arbitrary boundaries – 'Do not come any closer' – and commands that he should also remove his sandals (v.5)." A boundary of distance was, firstly, required between a holy God and a sinful man. Secondly, the 'putting off' of his sandals suggests a holistic preparation that is needed for one who aspires to enter God's presence (Kaiser Jr. 2008:365). This would mean that holiness usually takes its definition from the presence of God (Atkinson et.al. 1995:443). Atkinson et. al. explains the root word *qdš* "holy" to imply separation, where,

(P)laces and objects become holy when they are deliberately distinguished from ordinary and set aside for symbolic use in the worship of God. The otherness of God and the numinous feelings of reverence and awe inspired by the thought of his presence are an important part of our concept of the holiness of God" (1995:443).

Moses' encounter with God, therefore, reveals God's holiness and Moses' sinfulness. This demonstrates that ethical and moral boundaries exist objectively. God establishes moral absolutes – which is defined by His holy presence. Man is unable to approach the holy God due to his fallen nature. This places a distance between God and man. Only God is able to reconcile sinful man with Himself. The "putting off" of his sandals establishes for Moses that ability to remain in God's holy Presence. This holy God is revealed as "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God

of Jacob.” Moses had to know *which* God he has encountered. His early forty years in Egypt probably exposed him to Egyptian polytheism. However, God revealed Himself as the covenant-keeping God – the One who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – who were Moses’ ancestors. This self-designation was information that Moses needed for that which was to follow in his call. Centuries of “silence” had passed. God was going to intervene to honour His covenant. Moses’ response to this self-disclosure, was one of reverential fear, which suggests his acknowledgement of Yahweh; for, Yahweh is the God of his father (singular) and forefathers. Durham (1987:31) suggests that this, for Moses, was an immediate linking of the speaking deity with the faith of Moses’ family in Egypt (and) ... the speaking deity with the faith of Moses’ people, the sons of Israel.” Moses, from that point on, would not be mistaken who God is. Yahweh is the self-revealing God.

iii. Salvation for the Israelites and Moses’ commission (vv. 7-10)

This section reads,

The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt (vv. 7-10).

Yahweh states that He has observed the oppression and heard the cries of His people in Egypt. Durham (1987:32) observes, “Yahweh knows the extent of Israel’s need, and the moment for his action on the matter has arrived.” Yahweh is not restricted to the heavenlies; but is able to “come down” to His people to “rescue” them. The verb “rescue”, which means, “to tear away from, to snatch forth”, demonstrates with overtones of a

violent rescue mission by Yahweh (Durham 1987:32). Moses was going to be the human agent that Yahweh would use to rescue His people from slavery. However, there was also a *destination* towards the promised land that was promised to Abraham (Gen 12). The destination is outlined for Moses – which was an entrance into “... a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (v. 8). Kaiser Jr. explains, “(T)wo facts describe the land: it is a good and a spacious land (cf. Dt 8:7-9) – good because it is a “land flowing with milk and honey,” and spacious because six nations (or in some parallel lists, ten ...) are living there; but Israel will possess it all” (2008:365). This message of salvation for the people of God meant that Yahweh would take them out of bondage and move them into freedom.

3.1.1.1.4. Theological interpretation

God’s sovereign hand is in control over history as is demonstrated in the events surrounding Joseph’s painful experience to him becoming second in charge of the land of Egypt. It shows that Yahweh is not in any way limited by the presence of evil and suffering in His creation. In the midst of Joseph’s misery through being rejected by so many people throughout his life, God used those very circumstances to raise him to a prominent place. Yahweh is seen as sovereign – even over human decisions. No evil decision surprises Him. He is able to manoeuvre human sinful deeds in such a way that good can ultimately result – like He did for Joseph (cf. Gen 45:5). Four centuries later, from the time of Joseph, the scene in Egypt has reversed. The Israelites who are a great nation, are forced into slavery by a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph and his deeds. Yahweh was to teach Pharaoh through the plagues that He alone is the sovereign God. Even here, through the distress of His people, Yahweh is at work to redeem His people

and take them to a place that He would give to them so that they may worship Him. Redemption precedes the worship of Yahweh.

Exodus 1 picks up the story with an entire nation in anguish and misery (3:7; cf. 3:17). Yahweh hears their “crying out because of the slave drivers,” and He is “concerned about their suffering” (Ex 3:7). Even though the four centuries between the time of Joseph and the time of Moses may be perceived as “silent years” or Yahweh’s inactivity, He is at work in forming a nation for Himself. Therefore, His people are to trust in His timing – for it is perfect. He is the eternal God who created time and space. However, He is personally involved in His creation and is not in any way limited by His creation. Similar to Joseph, Moses’ life is spared, demonstrating Yahweh’s hand in taking Moses for the first forty years of his life to the palace of Pharaoh. Thereafter, Moses flees to the desert and settles down in the household of Jethro, his father-in-law. Yahweh was going to reveal Himself to Moses for the first time in the desert.

In Moses’ encounter with Yahweh, He is revealed as a holy God. Sinful man cannot stand in His presence. For Moses it required a “taking off” of his sandals – when attempting to approach Yahweh in the burning bush theophany. Yahweh graciously allows Moses to stand in His presence. However, the removal of the sandals was a temporary “atonement” that Moses needed for fellowship with Yahweh. This was Yahweh’s revelation; and not Moses’ suggestion. Being God, Yahweh determines the way sinful man is to approach Him. Approaching Yahweh requires revelation; mere ceremony and rituals in themselves will not grant man access to a holy God. Therefore, religion is a feeble attempt to gain access into the presence of a holy God. Atonement, revealed by Yahweh, is needed.

Yahweh is also a gracious and compassionate God. He responds to the misery of His people in slavery. His righteous nature demands that evil kingdoms be punished; whilst His people experience salvation. Salvation is motivated by and is the work of Yahweh (Ex 3:7-10). Even though he may use human agents as conduits through which His revelation and power will be made known; salvation still belongs to Yahweh (Ex 3:8, 10). However, punishment is meted out in stages to offer even the Egyptian ruler a chance for heart change. This is because Yahweh is not motivated by hatred for His creation; but love. However, at the same time, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart by Yahweh, was to facilitate the wondrous signs from Him (cf. Ex 3:10-11, 19-20) (Pereira 2010:106).

Yahweh also has a destination in mind for His people. It is "a land flowing with milk and honey..." (Ex 3:8). For Yahweh, salvation is not only a removal *from* a setting of distress; but, also, a settling *into* a place of abundant blessing.

3.1.1.1.5. Concluding remarks

In our application of the theological approach – which is to know God and His agenda, the task was to determine the relevance of the Biblical text for the modern-day reader. We have discovered that Theological theories are efforts at making sense of the reality that is the object of the church's teachings. Therefore, the church is to involve the reader to engage with a worldview that is derived from the Biblical text. Within this section, our goal was to research these Theological theories for application within the Biblical worldview of worship. Therefore, an exegetical analysis of Exodus 3:1-10 has proven foundational. This has given to us to derive a Biblical mandate for the church to think, believe and act with a theologically underpinned worldview. Revelation, hence is God's *truth*.

Within this section, we have discovered that Yahweh is the God of history. Situations, both good and evil, are within His sovereign control. Therefore, the church can be assured that God is always in control. Also, our situations cannot dictate the degree of our God's involvement and cannot in any way limit His power. Being God, He is sovereign over all His creation. This understanding of Yahweh reminds humanity that creation find its *origin* in Him. This is to be acknowledged by humanity and the right response is reverential worship. Within this relationship, humanity's created purpose is defined and offers ultimate *meaning* to life. He is a God who is also deeply involved in His creation working salvation for the righteous and judgement for the unrighteous. His holy and righteous nature demands that sinners be judged. However, atonement from Yahweh, creates an opening for His people to fellowship with Him. Therefore, humanity's *morality* must accompany Yahweh's ethical standards and His provision of salvation. Finally, salvation is a liberation from bondage and a journey to our glorious *destiny*.

We proceed next to a second Old Testament text to carry out a similar test. We have observed that the philosophical worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny can be theologically derived from the Biblical text. Whilst the first text was utilized from the Pentateuch; for the second, we will proceed to a major prophet – Isaiah to examine its content.

3.1.1.2. Text 2: Isaiah 6:1-8

Text: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."
⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

⁹ He said, “Go and tell this people: “‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “For how long, Lord?” And he answered: “Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, ¹² until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. ¹³ And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.

3.1.1.2.1. Historical context

The book of Isaiah owes its name to the prophet, Isaiah, the son of Amoz. The book’s internal evidence suggests that Isaiah ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah, under four kings - Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1).

According to Oswalt, the book seems to cover three historical settings (1986:4). Oswalt explains:

The first of these is during Isaiah’s lifetime, from 739 to 701 B.C. This time span is covered in chs. 1-39. The second and third periods are long after Isaiah’s death. They are the periods of exile (605-539 B.C.), chs. 40-55, and of the return (the total period is 539-400 B.C., but probably here restricted to 539-500 B.C.), chs. 56-66 (1986:4).

Various commentators suggest different dates and multiple authors for the book of Isaiah. However, for the purpose of this study, with our focus being on the undisputed chapter 6 which owes its authorship to the prophet himself, we will not engage in any such arguments.

3.1.1.2.2. Textual context

Early Hebrew tradition divided the Scriptures into three parts: Law, Prophets, and Writings (Horton 2006:244). The book of Isaiah is placed within the prophetic literature and is considered one of the major prophetic books. As discussed above, chapter 6 forms part of the first 39 chapters that have a bearing in a particular historical context. Our concern is theological, and therefore, make reference to Seitz' discussion, who structures the beginning chapters as follows:

Twelve chapters (chaps. 1-12) precede the nations oracles section (chaps. 13-27) in which Israel and the house of David are put to the test, especially during the events of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (chaps. 7-8). Ahaz, representative of the royal line, fails to trust in Isaiah's counsel and as a consequence Assyria is brought within Israel's borders, saving Judah from a Syro-Ephraimite assault but at the cost of the fall of the Northern Kingdom and, ultimately, with serious repercussions for Judah and Jerusalem itself (1993:15).

The chosen text, Isaiah 6:1-13, describes God's call to Isaiah to be the prophetic messenger who carries God's word to His people. The text may be divided under the following broad headings:

- A Vision of God (v.1),
- The Holiness of God and the Sinfulness of Isaiah (vv. 2-7)
- Judgement for the Israelites and Isaiah's Commission (vv. 8-13)

This structure will be used for our exegetical analysis in our exploration of the text.

3.1.1.2.3. Historical/grammatical exegesis

Isaiah 6 is placed within a broader context of chapters 1-39, which deals primarily with the events and circumstances of Isaiah's day (Lee 2013:109). Imminent divine judgement marks the content of this section due to the rampant corruption and social injustices that pervaded Israelite lifestyle.

The chapter begins a new scene. This narrative is a first-person monologue written by Isaiah (Watts 1985:70). Watts believes that the “chapter has drawn upon several types of theophanic narratives to create a unique literary piece which has inner consistency and contextual integrity” (1985:73).

i. A vision of God (v. 1)

Verse 1 reads, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.”

Isaiah’s vision is historically placed in the year that king Uzziah died, which has been variously placed between 747 and 735 BC, with the most likely date being around 734 BC (Grogan 2008:437). Contrary to Grogan’s (2008:506) argument that the temple here refers to the earthly one, we would argue for this being a heavenly scene. The reasons will follow in our exegetical study.

Isaiah sees “the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne” (v.1). The throne-room description portrays the exalted God as sovereign over his people. “Lord” is not *YHWH*; but “*Adonai*.” Therefore, John, in his Gospel, quoting from Isaiah 6 is quick to conclude: “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him” (Jn 12:41). The pre-incarnate Christ’s absolute sovereignty as the eternal king is stressed (Oswalt 1986:177). Christ, therefore, is the absolute ruler of the earth. The triune nature of God is alluded to in this passage. God is, therefore, evidenced as the sovereign *originator* of all things. All contingent beings are viewed in relation to this sovereign God. The king of Israel is one such person.

Contrasted is the earthly king, Uzziah - who is mortal. His fallen, proud nature and susceptibility to leprosy, which led to his death in seclusion, is probably alluded to in this passage (2 Chron 26:16-21). However, the King over all kings is eternally sovereign and will not in any way abdicate His throne. God's sovereignty is one of His communicable attributes (Klooster 2001:1131). Klooster explains,

... "sovereignty" expresses an inherent characteristic of God, and a distinction is sometimes made between "sovereign will" and "sovereign power." God's sovereign will and power are not arbitrary, despotic, or deterministic; his sovereignty is characterized by his justice and holiness as well as by his other attributes (*ibid.*).

God's sovereignty extends to the temple. The train of His robe filled the temple (v.1). It is a reminder that no other god (or being) is to be worshipped. The temple belongs to God and is God's "palace" (Oswalt 1986:175-176). Oswalt (*ibid.*) explains the origin and meaning of the Hebrew word *hēkāl* (temple),

... contributes to the concept of God's kingship. It is a loanword whose ultimate origin is in the Sumerian language of the third millennium B.C.: E. GAL. (lit. "big house"), a term used for the house of the god who was considered to be the king of the city-gate. This origin shaped the meaning of the word as it was borrowed into successive Semitic languages. Its essential meaning was "palace", but whether the palace of the human king or the divine king depended strictly upon the context ... So here the temple is God's palace. He is king, not Uzziah or Jotham or Ahaz.

Isaiah's vision testifies that there is no other God who is King and is to be worshipped. The throne belongs to Him. The temple belongs to Him. These twin pictures have theological significance. They symbolize God's sovereign rule and, hence, the worship that is rightfully due to Him because of His greatness.

ii. The holiness of God and the sinfulness of Isaiah (vv. 2-7)

Verses 2-7 read, "Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is

full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’”

All activity by the angelic beings centres around and, thereafter, emanates from the throne of God. These attendants are “*seraphim*.” Various created heavenly beings exist e.g. angels, archangels, principalities, powers, cherubim, seraphim, etc. (Grogan 2008:506).

Oswalt identifies who are the seraphim:

... they are called seraphim (Heb. *śerāpîm*), a term elsewhere applied to serpents (Num. 21:6; Isa. 14:29; 30:6), some scholars believe that they were serpentine or dragonlike in appearance. However, the chief meaning of the term may be “fiery” (so Num. 21:6), so that the name of the snake is merely derivative (referring to their bite), and the use of the term for the ministering beings would indicate they were “fiery ones” (1986:178-179).

Fire is also linked to God’s holiness, so it is appropriate that the fiery ones are calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Oswalt 1986:179). This threefold proclamation of God’s holiness is of importance in Isaiah symbolizing the superlative - i.e. God is the holiest of all (Grogan 2008:507; Oswalt 1986:181). Oswalt argues that there is nothing in the text that suggests that this *Trisagion* is a reference to the Trinity as men like Calvin perceived (1986:181).

God’s holiness receives the right response from the angelic beings and Isaiah. The seraphim cover their faces and feet with their wings. Isaiah, on the other hand, sees his own and humanity’s unclean lips after catching a glimpse of God. He cries out, Woe is

me! I am ruined! In chapter 5, Isaiah proclaims six “Woe!” messages to those in the Israelite community (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21 & 22). The seventh “Woe!” is reserved for himself after he catches a glimpse of God’s holiness. Oswalt gives a reminder, “Isaiah recognizes with sickening force that his character is not, any more than is his people’s, in keeping with God’s character. Their lips do not belong to God, else they would continually pour forth praise like the seraphim” (1986:183).

God’s holy nature becomes the ethical standard for angelic beings and humanity. Sin and evil are measured against such a backdrop. Therefore, *morality* emanates from God’s nature. Wherever God’s holiness is revealed there is judgement for sin – for the two cannot exist side-by-side (Oswalt 1986:181). Therefore, Isaiah receives a cleansing with a live coal from the altar. The Biblical worldview understands that cleansing comes with atonement for sin - which is an act of God according to His standard. In the Old Testament, sin is dealt with by the offering of a sacrifice (Lev 1:4; cf. Lev 16). “Throughout the Old Testament, sin is serious; it will be punished unless atonement is sought in the way God provided” (Morris 2001:114).

In this vision, Isaiah receives cleaning through the atoning live coal from the altar. Verse 7 reads, “With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’” This atonement extends to Isaiah’s unclean and guilty lips to enable him to stand in God’s presence. Oswalt explains, “As the text stands now, sin and iniquity are dealt with because they exist and because those in whom they reside cannot have fellowship with God, a condition contrary to God’s desire (Hos. 11:8-11; 2 Pet. 3:9)” (1986:185). In order for true worship to take place, man is to receive

cleansing just to stand in God's holy presence. God graciously provides the way for sinful humanity to do just that.

After Isaiah catches a glimpse of God's holiness, he is commissioned with a message of judgement for God's people.

iii. Judgement for Israel and Isaiah's commission (vv. 8-13)

Verses 8-13 reads, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'" Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.' Then I said, 'For how long, Lord?' And he answered: 'Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.'"

In this pericope, Isaiah answers God's call, and agrees to be the spokesman to take a message to His people. Grogan writes that Isaiah "is not coerced into service; rather, his will makes its ready response as a grateful reaction to God's forgiving grace" (2008:508). However, this calling was not going to be an easy one. Therefore, Isaiah's question in verse 11, "For how long, Lord?", suggests a questioning on the duration and the consequences of his prophetic ministry (Grogan 2008:510).

The twin messages of salvation and judgement from God is often carried by the prophets to the people of God. However, within this context, a message of looming judgement follows from the mouth of Isaiah. The theological significance of these themes suggests a *destination* that the people of God may find themselves headed toward. A sense of contempt towards His people for their sinfulness is communicated to Isaiah by God (vv. 9-10). God stands against sin because He is holy. Sinful people must be judged. Yet, God is a gracious God. Even though the message may be negative in nature by pointing to a judgement; it subtly suggests salvation for the remnant that respond to God's holy character in obedient living (v.13). The passage may infer that the road to salvation as a destination will be determined by the acceptance of the provision made by God through the atonement. The opposite will be true for those who are headed towards destruction caused by the judgements of God.

3.1.1.2.4. Theological interpretation

The pre-incarnate Christ's sovereignty is revealed in Him sitting on the throne. The book of Isaiah is rich in prophetic material that alludes to the pre-incarnate Christ (e.g. Isa 7:14; 9:6; 52:13-53:12; etc.). Although a complete understanding of the trinity is not given, Isa 6 suggests a developing revelation of God's nature in the second Person. As Adonai "Lord" (not YHWH) on "a" throne, Christ is portrayed as the sovereign originator of all things. This links Christ with the YHWH of the Old Testament – for He is YHWH's agent in creation (cf. Col 1:16). Therefore, even John could record Jesus' statement: "Before Abraham was born, I am!" suggesting His oneness in essence with YHWH – which caused the Jews to want to stone Him for blasphemy (Jn 8:58-59). The fact of the incarnation implies that Christ is the eternal God (cf. Jn 1:1, 14). Isaiah's description of a throne sees, also, the pre-incarnate Christ as sovereign. He is high and exalted – as

opposed to the earthly king Uzziah, who is dead. All angelic activity (in flight mode) also centres above the throne of the pre-existent Christ.

The pre-incarnate Christ's sovereign rule extends to the temple. The train of His robe filled the temple (v.1). All contingent beings, therefore, find their *origin* in Christ and are viewed in relation to Him. For created beings to worship in the temple, they must find their theories, beliefs and practices in Christ. Worship belongs to Him and is to be directed to Him – which Isaiah is learning and recording. This is the purpose of all contingent beings: worship! *Meaning* for them will be derived from fulfilling their purpose of worship in response to revelation.

The response of heavenly beings to Christ is the declaration of YHWH Almighty's holiness in worship. Also, YHWH's glory is not limited to the heavenlies; but covers the earth also (Isa 6:3). For Isaiah, to see the pre-incarnate Christ is to see YHWH Almighty (Isa 6:1, 5). The holiness of the pre-incarnate Christ is celebrated. Contingent beings – whether they be angelic beings or human beings – are to find a point of reference for purity in Christ. Ethical discussions and *morality* emanate from His pure nature as a standard, for He is holiest of all. Christ's holiness receives the right response from the angelic beings and Isaiah. The seraphim cover their faces and feet with their wings. Isaiah, on the other hand, sees his own uncleanness and humanity's unclean lips after measuring himself and culture against this holiest standard. He cries out, Woe is me! I am ruined!

Only God is able to provide adequate cleansing for unclean individuals and their cultures. Therefore, Isaiah receives a cleansing with a live coal from the altar. The Biblical worldview understands that cleansing comes with atonement for sin - which is an act of

God according to His standard. Sin is a serious issue which has brought the consequence of alienation from a holy God. Sin has to be dealt with before fellowship with a holy God is possible. Sinful people will be punished unless atonement is sought in the way God has provided from within His temple. This excludes all other temple worship and atoning sacrifices that do not correspond to God's revelation. Isaiah receives a cleansing of his lips which, thereafter, offers an opening to proclaim God's Word.

However, in order to proclaim God's Word with pure lips, Isaiah needed to respond to Christ's commission. This is the first time that the pre-incarnate Christ (Adonai "Lord") speaks: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isa 6:8). Isaiah responds positively to this commission – which is a message of judgement to God's people.

The twin messages of salvation and judgement from God suggests a hidden theological message of a *destination* that people may find themselves headed toward. Even though the message of judgement may be negative; it subtly suggests salvation for the remnant that respond to God's holy character in obedient living (v.13). The passage may infer that the road to salvation as a destination will be determined by the acceptance of the provision made by God through the atonement. The opposite will be true for those who are headed towards destruction caused by the judgements of God.

To summarize then, Isaiah's vision of God sets a new standard for what a set apart people must look like. Firstly, there is to be an understanding of God's sovereign rule over His creation. Our origin is located in Him. Secondly, there is a need for humanity to engage in meaningful worship of this God. Meaning for God's people is closely tied to our worship of Him as we recognize our utter dependence on Him as His creation. Thirdly, sin is to be

defined and measured against the backdrop of God's holy absolute holy nature. This provides for us an ethical standard by which morality is determined. At the same time, humanity's recognition of our utter depravity must be acknowledged. The antidote for an unethical and immoral life is God's provision through atonement. Finally, destiny is determined based on the acceptance of God's atoning provision. Messages of salvation for the remnant and judgement for the sinners, is highlighted in this text. Salvation and judgement rests in God's sovereign, holy, just and gracious nature.

The final passage that we will analyse is from the last book of the New Testament. The book of Revelation provides many "looking up" scenes. However, we have selected chapters 4-5 to conduct an exegetical analysis.

3.1.1.3. Text 3: Revelation 4-5

^{4:1} After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

^{5:1} Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

3.1.1.3.1. Historical context

Scholars place the possible dating of Revelation during the reign of any one of the following rulers: Claudius, Nero, Domitian and Trajan (Du Rand 1994:228). Two principal dates for the composition of the book of Revelation are suggested: (1) the Neronian persecution (ca. A.D. 64), and (2) the Domitian persecution (ca. A.D. 95 or 96). One of these is probably the correct period since the book implies, as its general setting, a persecution of the church by the Roman government (Isbell 1966:108).

The religion of John's day under Roman rule was interwoven with everyday political and social life. There were symbols of this reality evidenced all over (e.g. symbols of the old

fertility cults and emperor veneration seen daily on coins, against public buildings, in the courts, the theatres and at the games) (Du Rand 1994:237). In the light of these physical realities, a great spiritual tension resulted for John's audience, who through their association with the Lamb became the citizens of heaven.

The seven churches that the Apocalypse was primarily addressed to (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-3:22) received messages of *condemnation* and *commendation* from Christ. These messages reminded the Asian churches of their strengths and weaknesses in different areas of their Christian living and practice. The pointing out of their weaknesses was intended for their benefit – i.e. they needed to work on their weaknesses. The weaknesses in the churches in Asia Minor show the blending in of the people of God with their society. The picture of the churches of Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea is one of widespread lethargy, to the extent that they are on the verge of losing their identity as the church of Christ (Beale 1999:16). They became part of this world, instead of living as citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:17-21) of which God is King (cf. Rev. 4). Morris points out the similarities between Philadelphia and Smyrna who received no condemnation:

Both receive no blame, only praise. Both suffered from those who called themselves Jews but were not, both were persecuted it would seem by the Romans, both are assured that the opposition is satanic, and both are promised a crown (1984:78).

These messages to the seven churches also are relevant to the global church in general (which spans over the entire church age), because it offers “historical and eschatological insights about the past, present and future, as well as theological perspectives of warning and encouragement about the execution and unfolding of God's judgment and salvation” (Du Rand 1994:193). So, it will be correct to say that the messages were written *to* the

churches in Asia; but were written also *for* the entire church age - thus making it a relevant document for all the people of God that await the book's promised consummatory blessings.

3.1.1.3.2. Textual context

The Book of Revelation, uniquely, has at least four classifications when considering its genre. It is, firstly, classified as a Christian Apocalypse, written within the tradition of Jewish apocalyptic writings. This will mean that the generic term "apocalypse" is derived from the first sentence of the Apocalypse of John "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1). An apocalypse symbolically narrates God's message through a messenger in a crisis situation (Manikam 2011:18). It reminds God's people to persevere towards the promised greater utopian reality to be attained when God redeems them from their situation and He judges evil. Revelation, therefore, is apocalyptic in function.

Secondly, the book of Revelation is prophetic in content. Through his direct prophetic call (Rev. 10:8-11; cf. Jer. 1:10; Ezek. 2:8-3:3), the typical opening words of Hebrew prophecy (Rev. 1:1; cf. Isa 1:1 LXX; Amos 1:1; 3:7) and the claim that he was "in the Spirit" (Rev. 1:10; 4:2), places John's role in the long line of Old Testament prophets who communicated God's message to His people (Bauckham 1993b:4). But, he is a 'Christian' prophet or a prophet of Christ, for he creatively re-reads and restates the Old Testament disclosure in the light of the Christ event (Smalley 2005:8). As a prophet, John mediates the revelation of Jesus Christ to his community – who are the people of God located in Asia (Rev. 1:4, 10; 2:1-3:22). That revelation for the community consists of "what is taking place now, and what is about to happen later on" (Rev. 1:19). John believes in past prophecies that will be fulfilled at a future date. The basic prophetic form is characterized

by messages of commendation and condemnation, followed by a conditional threat of judgment (Aune 1997:lxxvi).

Thirdly, Revelation is written in the format of a letter. Prophetic letters are occasionally found in the Old Testament and early Jewish literature (Aune 1997:lxxiv). Revelation follows in its Old Testament tradition and is written in the form of a letter which was a pre-Christian form of instruction also used in Greek literature (Beasley-Murray 1981:12). The earliest Christian leaders also adopted this mode of instruction which was intended to be read during worship services.

Finally, the book is a narrative whose story is related by John. Narratives generally follow a predictable format: “they always have a beginning, a middle, and an end” (Gorman 2009:95).

Chapters 4-5 are strategically placed in the book of Revelation. As a narrative, John announces the subject of the book in Chapter 1. It is a revelation of things to *soon* take place. The absence of specific dates for the unfolding of the events of Revelation creates for the reader a sense of immanent expectancy. Therefore, the reader is to be found in a continued state of preparedness for the eschatological events so as not to be surprised when the events consummate - ushering the reign of the True King.

In Chapters 2-3, John names seven churches that the Apocalypse was primarily addressed to (Rev. 1:11; 2:1-3:22). A brief examination into the social, political, economic

and religious details surrounding the churches will establish the situation of the first-century readers and the real challenges faced by the people of God in the “world below.” This historical analysis, combined with a textual examination of the messages regarding the condition of the churches, will provide for us a background of the structural context and the purpose of chapters 2-3, in the light of Revelation’s twenty-two chapters. It will evidence how the situation of the various churches influences their condition as revealed from Christ’s eternal perspective and thereby solidifying the relevance of the visions that follow (chap. 4ff.).

Rev. 6-11 witnesses to the opening of the two series of seven (i.e. seven seals and seven trumpets) that were linked with the scroll of Rev. 5. Bauckham (1993a:14) argues that these two series of events develop sequentially out of the vision of the Lamb and the scroll in chapter 5: the Lamb opens each of the seven seals of the scroll, and the seventh seal-opening entails the following sequence of trumpet-blasts. Yet, it seems more that the literary structure of the seven-fold judgments is sequential – but in terms of their descriptions of the judgment acts, seem to progress and intensify. [The link is evidenced in the “interlocking technique” (Du Rand 1994:297) employed by John – which is evidenced in the opening up of the seven trumpets within the seventh seal and the seven bowls within the seventh trumpet]. Both series at their climactic conclusions (8:5; 11:19) are theologically linked back to the vision of the divine throne in chapter 4 (4:5) - and are not literal predictions of events (Bauckham 1993b:41).

Finally, Revelation 12-22 can be sub-divided as follows: 12-14 (God’s unfolding plan from the Garden of Eden to the Parousia and the Judgment), 15-16 (Judgment continued),

17:1-19:10 (The Self-destruction of the Satanic System), 19:11-20:15 (Evil's Ultimate End) and 21-22 (Utopia in the New Jerusalem). This section is vital for the people of God, for it explains the great cosmic battle by introducing the character of the Dragon (Rev. 12) into the narrative and his influence through the Beast (Rev. 13; 17-18), the False Prophet (13:11-18; 16:13) and the Prostitute (Rev. 17-18) over the nations. Yet, this section also depicts their ultimate demise and God's Sovereign Rule over all creation (Rev. 19:11-20:15). It is vital for God's people to realize that separation *from* this evil system and separation *to* God will ultimately lead them to the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22).

The chosen text, Revelation 4-5, describes the visions that John received concerning God's sovereignty over history and the role that Christ's sacrifice played in bringing out God's plan of salvation. It may be broken down into the following headings:

- The Open Door and the Throne of God (4:1-6a)
- The Holiness and Worthiness of God (4:6b-11)
- Salvation for the People of God and Judgement for the Wicked (5:1-14)

This structure will be used for our exegetical work in our exploration of the text.

3.1.1.3.3. Historical/grammatical exegesis

Revelation 4-11 depict the divine and cosmic story (Du Rand 1997:61). Following the focus on the seven churches on earth, John points the reader to an "upward" heavenly scene (4:1-11). Within John's narrative, the Sovereign King is cast as the only God who is both the Creator and Sustainer of his creation (4:11). The Apocalypse reminds the reader of God's cosmic plan to sustain his creation. The pericope focuses on God's majesty and sovereign splendour.

i. The open door and the throne of God (4:1-6a)

The text reads, “After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also, in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.”

Revelation 4:1 moves the narrative from the messages to the seven churches to the unseen reality of heaven. John is invited through an open door to view this reality that is veiled to the human eye. It is only upon invitation that he is able to see what lies behind that door, exposing a reality that he will thereafter describe. The open door in heaven communicates a message of hope for the beleaguered believers (8:1ff.; 11:19; 12:10; 15:5; 19:11) (Osborne 2002:224). It also communicates to believers that access into the presence of God is made possible.

As John enters through the door, he sees “a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.” The throne is occupied. John saw “someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby” (4:2b-3). As in Isaiah 6, God takes centre stage for the *thronos* “throne” *ekeito* “was located” in the midst of heaven (Osborne 2002:225). This could also present a contrasting picture to the throne of Caesar (Osborne 2002:225-226).

In this socio-political dimension alluded to in this image, secular powers are doomed and God, who is on his throne, will triumph over his enemies (Osborne 2002:32).

The throne of God is mentioned seventeen times in chapters 4-5. This high frequency,

... emphasizes that, although God's realm is separated from the earthly, he is nevertheless in control over earth's affairs. Regardless of how rampant evil seems to run and to cause God's people to suffer, they can know that his hand superintends everything for their good and his glory. This is demonstrated by the fact that all the judgments in chs. 6-16 issue from God's throne (e.g., 6:1-8, 16; 8:3-6; 16:17) (Beale 1999:320).

John describes God as having "the appearance of jasper and ruby" (4:3). Jasper was an opaque jewel, often reddish in colour but at times green, brown, blue, yellow, or white (Osborne 2002:226). Beale (1999:321) explains its significance:

The placement of "jasper" at the beginning of the list in 4:3 underscores the association of divine glory, since it is the only stone in ch. 21 that is explicitly linked to glory ... This stone intensify the light around the throne by reflecting the unapproachable brightness, and hence glory, surrounding God himself

Osborne (2002:226) explains the second stone as a fiery red stone and very popular in the ancient world and quickly moves to the rainbow – which he describes as a halo-shaped light that encircled the throne. This description favours an interpretation of glory that surrounds God's throne (*ibid.*).

In verses 4-6, a description is given of the twenty-four elders who surrounded the throne. These elders are wearing "white garments" which are always worn by saints (cf. 3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:14). Therefore, many commentators see them to represent the Old Testament's twelve patriarchs and the New Testament's twelve apostles, thus a representation of the entire people of God around the throne (Osborne 2002:228). However, others have interpreted these to be angelic figures with a ruling function

(Osborne 2002:229). This interpretation is more probable – since, angelic beings in other theophanies are pictured closest to God. The primary role of these elders in Revelation is that of worship (5:14; 11:16; 19:4) and praise (4:11; 5:9-10; 11:17-18; 14:3; 19:4) (Osborne 2002:229).

Also, the seven spirits of God is in front of the throne. The Spirit of God has already been introduced in Rev 1:4. The symbolism is patterned after Zechariah 4:2-3, 10 – which associates the lamps with the Spirit of Yahweh (Zech 4:6) (Beale 1999:326-327). In Rev 5, the Lion/Lamb (Jesus Christ) will also make His way to the centre of the throne, thus completing a trinitarian, Christian view of God on His throne.

The theological message from these verses discussed, reveals God's sovereignty, majesty, and glory. Words seem to fail John to provide a description of God. All he can use is costly jewel terminology to describe the brilliance and majesty of God. God's existence may be perceived as absent to the naked eye. However, when the curtain into the spiritual realm is drawn, the sight reveals an awesome God. He is the God Almighty from whom all things proceed. All activity is centred around the throne (e.g. 4:4 "Surrounding the throne..."; 4:5 "From the throne..."; 4:5 "In front of the throne..." ; 4:6 "Also in front of the throne..."; 4:6 "In the center, around the throne..."; 4:10 "... before the throne..." ; 5:1 "... on the throne..."; 5:6 "... at the center of the throne..." ; 5:7 "... on the throne..."; 5:11 "... encircled the throne..."; 5:13 "... on the throne...").

The biblical worldview of worship also presents a trinitarian view of God. In Revelation, the Trinity is made up, symbolically, of "the one who was, who is and who is to come" (Father), "the Lion/Lamb" (Son), and "the seven spirits" (Holy Spirit). This trinitarian God

is sovereign for the throne belongs to Him. There is also a picture given of an anti-trinity: “dragon” (Satan), “beast” (anti-Christ), and “false prophet” (deceiving prophet). These are contenders to the throne – but will be overcome and destroyed as the book progresses.

ii. The holiness and worthiness of God (4:6b-11)

The text reads, “In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.” 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Another group of angelic beings are mentioned in this section (4:6b-8). They are also positioned at the centre of the throne – alluding to their close proximity to God (cf. Isa 6:2). Within the descriptions given, Ezekiel 1:5-21; 10:12-22 and Isaiah 6 are combined to describe these beings. Not only are these beings similar in description; but, also, in function (Isa 6). They are described as saying unceasingly “day and night”: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8). This is in many ways a similar heavenly throne-room scene as in Isaiah 6. Osborne (2002:235) explains their function:

In Revelation these “four living beings” lead worship (4:6-9; 5:8-9, 11; 19:4), stand sentinel at the throne (5:6; 7:11; 14:3), and take the lead in the outpouring of divine judgment (6:1, 3, 5-7; 15:7). Since they are the nearest to the throne (4:6) and take the lead in worship (4:8; 5:14), it is likely that they are the leaders of the heavenly court.

The *trishagion* is also articulated here, bringing to the fore God’s exceeding great holiness (Osborne 2002:237). God’s holiness, as in Isaiah 6, points to his separateness from the created order. The full magnitude of God’s holiness is incomprehensible to humanity because we have no point of reference to anything comparable (Bickel & Jantz 2017:94). The word “holy” is used more than six hundred times in the Bible, always conveying the idea of separation (*ibid.*). Bickel & Jantz (*ibid.*) continue:

In our vernacular, we might say something is “a cut above the rest” because it is so much better – and in that respect, God’s holiness makes him “separate” in the sense of being far superior to other things (all of which are greatly inferior). He is not just a cut above other gods or humanity that come in a distant second place; God is separate from anyone and anything else because there is no second place. God has no rivals.

In God being completely separated from His creation, will suggest that God is the eternal, uncaused first-cause. Osborne (2002:237) suggests that God’s holiness leads naturally into his omnipotence, made clear by the phrase that follows “Lord God Almighty,” and eternity “who was and is and is to come.” God is the “wholly other.” Creation *originates* in Him. As in Isaiah 6, God’s holy nature becomes the ethical standard for angelic beings and humanity. The anti-trinity who are the architects of sin and evil are precisely that as they contradict God’s holy nature. God, however, is completely and eternally separated from anything that is antithetical to His holy nature (Bickel & Jantz 2017:94). Therefore, ethical standards and *morality* finds their point of reference within the nature of God. God’s holiness demands that sin be judged.

As we have evidenced, God is worshipped for His inherent purity. Also, He is worshipped for His omnipotence displayed through His creative acts and the acts that sustain his creation (4:11). All creation depends on God for our origin and ongoing ability to be sustained. Therefore, for humanity, who have been created in the image of God, *meaning* is also realized in God's created purposes. Therefore, the answers to the questions of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny⁷ is to be found in God. The natural response of humanity when we discover these truths is to worship this sovereign God.

iii. Salvation for the people of God and judgement for the wicked (5:1-14)

The text reads, "Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its

⁷ The question of Destiny in the book of Revelation will be discussed in our exegetical analysis chapter 5.

seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

John introduces in the hand of God a double-sided scroll. Osborne (2002:248) informs that scrolls,

... were often ten meters long and normally were written on only one side, usually the side where the fibres ran horizontally (with the writing) rather than vertically ... Scrolls with writing on both sides have been called “opisthographs” ... Such documents, especially those sealed, were usually private contracts kept from the public ... The purpose of the seals here is to keep the contents secret until the time of fulfilment, a common apocalyptic theme (Dan. 8:26; 12:9).

The time had come to reveal the contents of the scroll; but, no one was found “worthy” to open the seals to reveal the content of the scroll. The concern here is not on power, but worthiness (Morris 1984:94). Morris (*ibid.*) explains: “The book records the judgments of God and these are moral. Knox translates, ‘Who claims the right to open the book...?’ But this is not the thought. The angel is not concerned with legal rights, but with goodness.”

The secrets contained in the scroll belong to God, and no created being can pry into them (Morris 1984:95). Not even the *mighty* angel who makes the announcement can open the seals (Rev 5:2). John's response is one of brokenness, described in the word "weep" – which denotes "a noisy grief, a wailing" or "weeping greatly" (Rev 5:4) (Morris 1984:95; Osborne 2002:252). The language entails a deep-seated grief, even a mourning for what is lost (Osborne 2002:252).

The narrative suddenly takes a turn from the burden of hopelessness that John feels. This depressing mood is broken by a sudden announcement to John in Rev 5:5, which reads, "Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'" John is commanded to stop his weeping. Osborne (2002:252) says, "There is no need for sorrow in light of the power of God soon to be demonstrated (cf. Luke 7:13; 8:52)." John is introduced to the second person of the trinity, who is described as, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David." Two messianic titles are combined in introducing the Messiah (Gen 49:9-10; Isa 11:10) to move John from a position of hopelessness, to a powerful hope. The lion-metaphor is linked to a twofold qualifier. First, He is "of the tribe of Judah" – where Judah in Gen 49:9-10 is "compared to a young lion growing in his strength, capturing his prey, and then returning to rest in his lair" (Osborne 2002:253). Second, He is "root of David" (cf. Isa 11:10). Osborne explains, "In Jewish apocalyptic this was seen as a reference to the conquering messiah who would destroy the enemies of Israel (e.g. 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 12:32; Sir. 47:22)" (2002:254). Osborne concludes, "As the royal Messiah, Jesus wages a messianic war against evil, and the major weapon that defeats the enemies of God is the cross. This cosmic victory enables him 'to open' the scroll" (2002:254).

Through Christ, power has taken on new meaning. It is not harsh and controlling power, as is evidenced under the Roman domination. It is wrought through an injured lamb “lamb looking as if it was slain” (Rev 5:6). Beale (1999:351) explains the possible background to this verse,

There are two different proposals for the background of the “slain Lamb.” Some prefer to see it as a reference to the OT Passover lamb, while others favor Isa. 53:7: “he was led as a sheep to the slaughter” (cf. Isa. 53:8ff.). However, neither should be excluded, since both have in common with the metaphorical picture in Rev. 5:6 the central function and significance of the sacrifice of a lamb, which accomplishes redemption and victory for God’s people.

Rev 5:5-6 to introduce the main character within the story who is the Only One worthy to break the seals of the scroll that is located in the hand of God who is on the throne. The Lamb is God’s agent who represents God in the execution of salvation for his elect people and judgment for his enemies (Du Rand 1997:61). The message for God’s people to stand victorious over evil’s grip is firstly enacted in the Lamb’s conquest and his subsequent enthronement with the Father in heaven, as is announced and celebrated in this chapter. John emphasizes that Christ’s lordship over the world is rooted in his violent death (5:3-14) (Schüssler Fiorenza 1973:576). The Lamb’s victorious conquest and enthronement becomes the believer’s participatory consummation at the end of the Book (chaps. 21-22). From these theological themes, is extracted the answer to worldview question on *destiny*. Destiny takes on a two-fold destination: firstly, salvation for the believers; secondly, judgement for the unbelievers. Whilst, the description of eternal salvation unfolds in Revelation 5; the message of ensuing judgements is sealed in the scroll. The seals of the scroll will be opened – which will begin the series of judgements on earth and culminates in the final judgement with eternal consequences (Rev 19-20).

Rev. 5:7 describes Christ's receiving of the scroll from the Father "He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne." This is reminiscent of Daniel 7:13, which is "... the only OT text in which a divine, Messiah-like figure is portrayed as approaching God's heavenly throne to receive authority" (Beale 1999:356). The Person of Christ Jesus and work of Christ, through His death and resurrection, suggests that He is only worthy One to open the scroll. This scroll contained important information regarding the unfolding of history in judgement for the wicked and salvation for the righteous. This is evidenced in the succeeding chapters, which describe the opening of each of the seven seals. These flow into the seven trumpets as the seventh seal is opened. Thereafter, the sounding of the seventh trumpet opens into the seven bowls of God's wrath. Whilst these scenes reveal God's progressive and intensifying judgements on the earth; it is also punctuated with "looking up" scenes that remind the righteous that God is still in control.

There is an awaiting in anticipation for the scroll to be opened. However, even before this happens, the rest of Revelation 5 describe, how in a concentric circular pattern, worship takes place. This is in response to the worthiness of Christ in His Person and Work. Worship begins from the immediate vicinity of the throne and makes its way outwards. Firstly, in Rev. 5:8-10, the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb with each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. Whilst on earth "... the saints are despised and accounted as of no importance. In heaven their prayers are precious, being brought into the very presence of God Himself, while the bowls in which they are offered are golden" (Morris 1984:98). Their worship includes the singing of a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and

language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (9-10). The worship of the Lamb is evidence of His divinity (Morris 1986:98). The song includes the theme of Christ’s redemptive work for the saints, who are made up of people “... from every tribe and language and people and nation.” With regards to the work of the Lamb on behalf of the saints, Osborne (2002:261) writes,

The saints are corporately a “kingdom” and individually “priests.” As priests they serve him in worship and witness. This makes more explicit the mission theme that is implicit in 1:6. The saints belong *to God* ... and thus serve him by participating in the universal mission to the nations (5:6, 9). As royalty, they reign with God in his kingdom (see 2:26, 27; 3:21).

The second group of worshippers in the next concentric circle are described as “... many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders” (Rev 5:11). Beale (1999:364) suggests that there is general consensus that the description “thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand” is taken from Dan. 7:10. These numerous created beings join in the worship of the Lamb – which points to His divinity. Verse 12 records that they were loudly saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” This sevenfold acclamation can be divided into a pattern of four “celebrating the attributes of Christ (power, wealth, wisdom, strength) and three celebrating the worship due him as a result (honor, glory, praise)” (Osborne 2002:262). Quoting Aune, Osborne explains, “... each of the seven ‘is a metaphorical application to Christ of qualities that belong properly to God.’ It thus continues the emphasis on the unity of the Father and the Son” (2002:263). The final group in the outer circle includes “... every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them” (Rev 5:13a). They were saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power,

for ever and ever!” (Rev 5:13b-14). Here, all creation breaks out in worship as equal worship pours to the Father and the Son. Here, a fourfold list is mentioned. Morris explains a difference between the two acclamations: “In the former the whole seven are grouped under a single article in the Greek, whereas here each of the four has its own article to give separate emphasis” (1986:101). That emphasis lies on the Persons and not on redemption as was highlighted by the previous group. In other words, both the Father and the Son are grouped together with the same worship going out to them – thereby, showing the divinity of the Father and the Son. However, the “separate emphasis” demonstrates that each member, in their own right deserves to be worshipped.

In response to all of the preceding worship, the four living creatures join in agreement with the word, “Amen.” The elders also respond with worshipping that takes the posture of prostrating themselves. Worship is the rightful response by God’s creation in response to Him being the originator of all things, the One who provides meaning, morality and spells out in detail a destination for humanity based on our response to Him.

3.1.1.3.4. Theological interpretation

One of the important doctrines when confronted with Biblical Theology is the doctrine of the Trinity: i.e. the understanding that the Bible presents a monotheistic belief system, but the One God revealed in three persons, Father (God for us), Son (God with us) and Holy Spirit (God in us). This theological point it is engrained in the Apocalypse of John. Not only does Revelation give the reader an understanding of God as Trinity (Eternal God on the throne in chaps 1, 4-5; Lion and the Lamb [imagery merged into one]; and the seven spirits before the throne in chaps 4-5); it also develops an understanding of Satan

as trinity – but forming an anti-image (cf. the dragon in chap. 12, the beast in chapter 13 [two beasts merging into one], and the false prophet in chapter 16:13-14).

From the outset in the Apocalypse of John, God is depicted using trinitarian terminology (Rev. 1:4b-5a). In the throne-room scene of Revelation 4-5, it is recorded that before the throne, seven lamps were blazing, which is then interpreted by John as the “seven spirits of God” (4:5). This is a symbol for the divine Spirit, which John has chosen on the basis of his exegesis of Zechariah 4:1-14 (especially verse 6) (cf. Exodus 40:25) (Bauckham 1993b:110). The Son is described using the Lamb and the Lion metaphor. As a Lamb, He is the atoning sacrifice for humanity. As the Lion, He is the conquering King. Bauckham recognizes that the form presented in these opening verses is of considerable theological significance, in that it:

“... places Jesus Christ with God on the divine side of the distinction between the divine Giver of blessings and the creaturely recipients of blessings. It shows how naturally early Christians implicitly included Jesus in the divine, because he was the source of the salvation that comes from God to humans, even if they had no way of conceptualizing in ontological terms this relation of Jesus to God” (1993b:23-4).

The Book of Revelation has the most developed trinitarian theology in the New Testament (with the possible exception of the Gospel of John) (Bauckham 1993b:164). The trinitarian nature of God portrays the God of the Bible in need of nothing. In other words, God did not create humanity out of need or loneliness. The Persons of the trinity are eternally in perfect fellowship. Creation and all contingent beings find their *origin* in God and are merely a display of God’s creativity, greatness and glory (Rev 4:11). God, therefore, is dependent on nothing outside His nature. God’s independence of all contingent things and beings is also portrayed in His sovereignty – which is an important focus evidenced throughout the book of Revelation.

All activity by the heavenly beings takes place around the throne (Chaps. 4-5). Their response to God in worship also defines the purpose for their existence. *Meaning* for humanity, therefore, is located in their created purpose of worship. God is worshipped by all heavenly and earthly beings – who celebrate His purity (chap. 4), salvation and judgement (chap. 5). God’s holiness creates a standard for all created beings. The satanic anti-trinity and all their demonic and human followers are evil, for they are measured against God’s holiness. Ethics and *morality*, therefore, find its point of reference in the God’s holy nature. This is for contingent beings an objective point of reference and a yard stick for what ethics “ought” to be and what moral choices to make in response to God’s holiness. God’s holiness, also, demands that evil be judged. However, God provides salvation through redemption which is offered to all humanity (Rev 5:9). The righteous demands of God for humanity to approach Him, which has been progressively revealed throughout the Old Testament, sees now, in Christ, an ultimate fulfilment. No other sacrifice is needed for humanity to approach God – but that of Christ Jesus. The redeemed are made “to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10). This *destiny* for humanity is God’s work and is achieved in God’s way and, therefore, will never lack God’s abundant blessing for His people. The rightful response of all heavenly and earthly beings that recognize God’s salvation is worship (Rev 5:9-14). The chapters that follow describe God’s progressive judgements on the earth which will culminate in the new heavens and the new earth at the end of the book.

To conclude this section, we have sought to find Biblical support for the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny that is suggested by Zacharias as important questions that all worldviews must answer. We have sought to firstly examine the Biblical worldview of worship to observe its answers to each of these questions. Also, it is important that the answers provided must correspond with reality and at the same

time cohere with each other. The three texts, Exodus 3, Isaiah 6, and Revelation 4-5 have demonstrated remarkable results in providing adequate answers for each of the question that correspond with reality and cohere with each other. The coherence is not only observed in the worldviews cohering with each other; but, also the three different texts (two from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament) cohering with each other. Not only do these “theophanic” texts supply a similar structure; but, they also agree in content. The amazing observation is that these texts were written independently by three authors within a time-frame of about 1500 years. Other texts could have been chosen (e.g. in the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Acts, etc.), which would have also offered more support to the fore-mentioned observations. However, due to the purpose of this section and study in general, we have limited the texts to just three.

Our exegesis has been conducted of the three texts with on-going interpretation and application as we progressed through the texts, verse-by-verse. The hermeneutical approach to this study employed a canonical-theological-apologetic method. As an outcome, this method has led us to observe that the philosophical worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny can also be applied to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures which informs the Christian worldview. This study has demonstrated that these questions are supported and can be adequately dealt with within Biblical revelation in general; also, specifically within the Biblical worldview of worship.

3.2. Applying the diachronic and synchronic approaches to cultural influences in the Biblical worldview of worship

The Christian Scriptures are considered revelatory literature that is binding upon God’s people from its inception and throughout time. It is the truth of God, accommodated to the

human mind, so that the mind can assimilate it (Ramm 1970:99). The Biblical injunction embodies the command by our Lord to proclaim the Good News to all nations (Matt 9:37-38; 28:19; Acts 1:8). Chester and Timmis (2007:103) describe the heart and plan of God, in the gospel and for the world, in the following words:

Karl Barth was one of the first theologians to speak of the *mission Dei*. The term 'mission', he pointed out, was originally used of the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Spirit by the Father and the Son. To this was added a further sending: the sending of the church by the Trinity. The Triune God is a missionary God. The church, then, has a mission because God has a mission. The role of the church is to participate in the mission of God....

The message is for all kinds of people, first for Jews (Acts 2:5-11) and then for the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; Rom 1:16). How does the Gospel cross cultures? Or, is Jewish culture created by God and is meant to be imposed on others? Kraft cites 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 as an answer to this issue, where Paul articulates his (and God's) approach to cultural diversity:

Paul says, "While working with Jews, I live like a Jew" but "when working with Gentiles, I live like a Gentile." His approach, then, is to "become all things to all men, that I may save some of them by whatever means are possible" ... in Acts 15:2 and following, we find him arguing fiercely against the majority position of the early church for the right of Gentiles to follow Jesus *within* their own socio-cultural contexts. God Himself had shown first Peter (Acts 10), then Paul and Barnabas, that this was the right way, by giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles who had not converted to Jewish culture (Acts 13-14) (2009:400).

Biblical truth was also written in a social context, whose analogies are drawn from that environment. The modern exegete must understand that environment so that the meaning of the analogy can be known (Ramm 1970:99). Our understanding of the spiritual world is analogical, where theological statements are hybrids formed of some element in this world and indicate at the same time something about God or the spiritual order (Ramm 1970:100). The Scriptural approach then is to link both worlds, where, the church needs to adapt ourselves and the presentation of God's message to the culture of

the receiving people (Kraft 2009:400). Converts need not become like us to be acceptable to God. Chester and Timmis (2007:152) argue that theology is expressed in cultural ways.

This is where the diachronic (across time) and synchronic (final form as is) approaches to historical and cultural structures are to be considered. The understanding of the Christian worldview within its cultural context, and the particular cultures that are being ministered to, are to be given priority. The culture, understood both synchronically and diachronically, is to be engaged to present a contextualized message. This is done by considering the cultural structure of any given worldview which is to be understood, firstly, through an epoch in time by examining the parts and how these relate to each other considering the whole. Secondly, attention is to be given to the story of each individual, community, and nation with an attempt to understand the development of the structures that inform the final form of the given worldview. A contextualized message will mean the expression of Christian truth in the thought patterns of the receptors. This will include indigenous words and concepts that may be used to deal with topics of Christian life and practice (Kraft 2009:404). This cultural dynamic will enable an understanding of the worldview of those that are to be effectively reached. It will also prevent the risk of syncretism where Christian assumptions are mixed with cultural assumptions to form an unbiblical Christianity. The danger lies in the confusion of gospel truth with cultural prejudices. Chester and Timmis (2007:152) suggest that *mission* is the opportunity to rethink which elements of what we believe do belong to the gospel and which in fact belong to culture.

Christianity is not merely a personal experience that must be applied to a person's life. Every private decision contributes to the cultural climate in which we live (Colson &

Pearcey 1999:19). Right from the beginning, this has been our God-ordained purpose.

Colson and Pearcey explain:

Until the sixth day, God has done the work of creation directly. But now he creates the first human beings and orders them to carry on where he leaves off: They are to reflect his image and to have dominion (Gen 1:26). From then on, the development of the creation will be primarily social and cultural ... Sometimes called the “cultural commission” or “cultural mandate,” God’s command is the culmination of his work in creation ... By being fruitful they must fill it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more ... The same command is still binding on us today (1999:20).

Phillips and Brown explain the reach of culture:

Our culture takes a visible form in everything from the institutions of society (government, schools, churches, etc.) to eating and sleeping patterns (midnight meals, siestas, etc.). Economic, social, and religious institutions reflect what the group considers important. This is also seen in what the group chooses to commemorate through rituals: weddings, funerals, graduations, and other rites of passage. When and how these rituals are carried out (including religious worship) become a matter of cultural agreement (1991:35).

Whilst *culture* will suggest the way a group of people may appear to an anthropologist; *worldview* suggests how the universe looks to the group (Phillips & Brown 1991:35). The Biblical worldview claims the Bible as the determining factor in the construction of its worldview of worship rather than culture. This is so because of the claims that the Biblical worldview makes concerning revelation. Also, the visible aspects of culture are to some extent a reflection of an underlying ideology or worldview, which gives the reason for the customs (Phillips & Brown 1991:35).

3.3. Worldview foundation for theories: general and special revelations

The Biblical worldview of worship provides for the people of God symbolic conceptions of the general order of existence for beliefs and practices (Schilbrack 2005:429). Within the Biblical worldview of worship, theological doctrines form models for reality and action. They are clearly and systematically outlined as models of reality for the people of God.

Whilst the term “doctrine” is to be used for central teachings of the Christian worldview of worship that guide the Christian community in its proclamation, discipleship and spirituality; the concept of “theological theories” explains the reality presupposed in these teachings (Van Den Toren 2016:60).

Van Den Toren discusses the function of doctrinal teachings and theological theories and the various ways they influence the people of God. With regards to doctrinal teachings, they, firstly, are important for regulating and shaping the religious experience. Whilst, some draw boundaries around what beliefs and practices are acceptable or not in the Christian community; others have a broader regulative role in that they give guidance to the Christian life of discipleship (Van Den Toren 2016:63). Secondly, doctrines function to provide an interpretation of the Biblical canon or Biblical narrative by considering genres (Van Den Toren 2016:64). Finally, they also make truth claims based in the reality of God’s self-revelation (*ibid.*). These models of reality should be practically realized in the Christian worldview. However, the stages of theory, belief and practice are to be consecutively applied in the Biblical worldview of worship. Doctrinal theories, beliefs and practices in the Christian worldview and the worldview of those to whom the Gospel is directed, should be engaged.

3.4. Theories, beliefs and practices

What is the role of theories, beliefs and practices in the Biblical worldview of worship? How may they be applied? Van Den Toren (2016:66) suggests three roles:

They function, firstly, to create Christian *identity* amongst the various Christian traditions (Van Den Toren 2016:66). God’s purposes are not only to redeem a people for Himself,

but to also reconcile them with one another (Chester and Timmis 2007:85). Therefore, Christians are called, *not* to live in isolation from each other, for they are part of the community of God's people. Most believers belong to a Christian community with denominational affiliations. Denominations are associations of Protestant congregations that have a common heritage in doctrinal, experiential and organizational emphases (Tinder 2001:335). They may also include common ethnicity, language, social class, and geographical origin (*ibid.*). All these combines to allow for the experience of church which is always rooted in Christian community. The community, therefore, centres their practices around beliefs of the Biblical worldview of worship that are extracted from the interpretation of certain texts of Scripture.

Secondly, Van Den Toren (2016:66) argues that people are often more aware of the limitations of the theological theories they *do not* agree with than of those they embrace. Those who adhere to a particular theological theory will often be aware that it should not be developed where it distorts an understanding of God or of the Christian life. This will translate into building beliefs and practices against that which we need to stay clear from. It will definitely prevent heresy. However, what is needed is a thorough knowledge of doctrines that are believed and practiced. In other words, the people of God are called to both *practice* (the positive) and *defend* (against the negative) the Biblical worldview of worship.

Thirdly, theological theories are based on foundational metaphors that present pictures for the practices of spirituality of the people of God (Van Den Toren 2016:66). For example, the ordinance of baptism stands, not only as an initiation rite into the Christian community; but, also, as a foundational metaphor of the identification of the believer with

Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Through these foundational metaphors, beliefs and practices are given purpose and meaning for the Christian community. Therefore, these practices must not be subjected to mere ritual or ceremony which leads to legalism. The theories spell out the meaning of Christian beliefs and practices.

3.5. Philosophical tests of truth foundations in the Biblical worldview of worship

As already evidenced, doctrinal theories, beliefs and practices are important for the Biblical worldview of worship. Doctrinal theories relating to the Biblical worldview of worship is to be tested for truth. What do the Scriptures teach in relation to “truth” and “worship”? We will seek to answer this question in this section to develop the importance of the concepts: “truth” and “worship”, and how they relate to the Biblical worldview of worship.

3.5.1. The importance of truth for a worldview of worship

In the previous Chapter, we have outlined the philosophic definition and understanding of truth. We have ascertained that truth is *that which corresponds to things as they actually are*. This understanding of truth seeks to observe reality (both physical and metaphysical) to find evidence that can be defined into truth propositions. The opposite is also true; where truth propositions within worldviews of worship may be checked against reality to validate its truth claims. Yet, with strict philosophical reasoning only, not much can be meaningfully stated as to the *origin* of truth. However, this is not a problem in the Biblical worldview of worship, for truth originates with God. This is important, for truth cannot rest within the individual. This will lead to a pragmatic theory of truth where human desires and expectations become the measure for truth (Provenzola 2008:481). It is with this knowledge that truth is to find an objective point of reference in the uncreated, first-cause

– GOD - for it to be discussed. We now proceed to seek a definition for “truth and worship” within the Biblical worldview.

3.5.1.1. Defining truth and worship

When the Hebrew word for “truth”, *’emet*, is applied to deeds, words, reports or judgements in the Bible, it is translated as “reliable” because it corresponds to the facts (Dt 13:14; 22:20; 1 Kings 10:6; 22:16; Prov 12:19; Zech 8:16) (Ladd 1993:300). *’Emet* finds its most distinctive use in the Old Testament in describing the character of God’s acts in dealing with His people (Ladd 1993:301). The word *hesed* (“covenant mercy) is often coupled with *’emet*, which designates God’s loyalty in fulfilling His promises and His covenant” (Ladd 1993:301). This combination brings out the moral and personal nature of truth in the Old Testament (Wilkins 2010:431). Therefore, the God of the Bible is One who can be trusted.

The Hebrew word *’emet* and the Greek word *alētheia* are closely related in their meaning. The *alētheia* in John’s gospel is the Old Testament’s *’emet* (Ladd 1993:302). Wilkins states: “In the New Testament, the use of “truth” or “true” retains the close link between word, action, and being by communicating the sense of being reliable or genuine” (2010:431). Truth is also contrasted with falsehood in the New Testament (e.g. Mk 12:14; Jn 8:44-45; Rom 1:25).

Whilst Biblical truth may be perceived as statements that are accurate and factual; it must be translated to a person’s actions, motives and character (Wilkins 2010:432). In other words, truth must not be merely propositional and therefore only cognitively known. It

must be applied to form character. God's words are truthful because God is truthful. Similarly, believers in the Biblical worldview are truthful; therefore, our words are truthful.

In John 4, the Samaritan woman at the well was challenged by Jesus concerning the worship that is acceptable to the Father. For the woman, worship was limited to cultural theories and geographical locations. The Greek word used is *proskuneo*, which literally means "to kiss toward" and conveys the idea of showing reverence or doing obeisance to God (Wiersbe 2000:20). The meaning of the word points to a Person and not to forms and traditions that may be employed as means for worship. For the Samaritan woman, Jesus defined worship as that which must be practiced within the confines of *spirit* and *truth*. He was establishing theoretical and practical boundaries around worship whilst peeling away at her immoral choices. The woman was hiding behind outward religious practices which is symbolized in the stagnant water that she was drinking from (Jn 4:13). Jesus offered to her living water that will quench her thirst once and for all (Jn 4:14). Her religion allowed her lifestyle choices without boundaries to govern those choices. Jesus went to the core of her issues by suggesting that the man that she was shacking up with will never deliver truth that satisfies. Jesus suggested that only He could do that. Once a person appropriates that truth, it will result in true and spiritual worship. It is this worship that goes beyond legalism and established the Presence of God in the life of the worshipper. From that Presence, moral choices are made that impacts the worshipper with a lifestyle of truth, and hence, true worship. It is this recognition: that even though Biblical worship has a subjective experience (in spirit), it needs the constraints of truth that must be applied to everyday life. In other words, Biblical worship must be guarded by truth in its subjective experience. In so doing, "... Jesus made it clear that there is both

true worship and false worship, both ignorant worship and intelligent worship...” (Wiersbe 2000:21). True moral choices lead to true worship.

When objective truth in worship is primary, the result will be a Biblical practice of worship that focuses on God and considers our moral responsibility for truth. Truth that is inherent in Biblical worship will include the engagement of the whole person – internally and externally. Therefore, in seeking a definition of true and spiritual worship that considers the object of our worship (i.e. God), and the subjects (i.e. the people of God), we refer to William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-44), who wrote:

Both for perplexity and for dulled conscience the remedy is the same; sincere and spiritual worship. For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose - and all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin. Yes – worship in spirit and truth is the way to the solution of perplexity and to the liberation from sin (*cited in Wiersbe 2000:21*).

The definition seeks to show how the whole person must be engaged in worship. It shows that before worship becomes an outward expression, it must be an inward reality. The nature of truth in worship needs to now be further explored to ascertain what it will mean to worship in truth.

3.5.1.2. The nature of truth in worship

Following from the above considerations, we borrow from Groothuis (2000:65-81), who offers the following characteristics of the Biblical view of truth which must be applied to worship within the Biblical worldview.

3.5.1.2.1. Truth is revealed by God

It is *not* constructed or invented by man; but comes from the disclosure of a personal God who makes Himself known through creation, the incarnation, and the Scriptures. Thus, the Biblical worldview is grounded in truth, for God is truth because...

(H)e is the Author of all facts and all meaning. There is no reality apart from the eternal nature of God Himself and the universe which He has created to display His glory. All meaning, then, flows from the mind of God, for that mind was the blueprint according to which the contingent universe was formed ... Since the mind of God perfectly knows reality, truth is a property of that judgment which coincides with the mind of God ... Truth for the Christian, then, is defined as *correspondence with the mind of God* (Carnell 1948:46-7).

Man's recognition and acceptance of God's revelation as truth must lead him to a positive response, which results in the worship of this God of truth. Thereafter, the task of the people of God in evangelism is to proclaim the message of the Gospel and try to convince people it is true, under the leading and power of the Spirit (Johnson 2013:29). The human understanding is that, if a worldview is false, it must be rejected. If it is true, it must be accepted, lived and propagated. This is an aspect of what it means to be created in the image of God. The people of God must bear the responsibility of *being* the embodiment of truth, as well as bearing the responsibility of *proclaiming* truth.

3.5.1.2.2. Objective truth exists and is knowable

Zacharias (1997:224) claims as a fact that truth can exist only if there is an objective standard by which to measure it. That objective, unchanging absolute is God. This comes as a presupposition of objective truth. That presupposition extends to the Biblical content within which those claims are located, through which God has revealed Himself to us. Truth finds its ultimate point of reference in the person of God and is, therefore, an objective point of reference for the people of God. The Biblical claim is thus: that objective truth comes from God and is knowable because it is revealed by God.

The Biblical worldview of worship, therefore, is personal. Truth issues from a personal God who has revealed it both, propositionally, and is also embodied in the person and work of Christ - the divine *Logos*. God's people have this objective truth which must be subjectively appropriated for worship to be encountered, taught and spread.

3.5.1.2.3. Christian truth is absolute in nature

Absolute truth is defined as that which is *ultimately* true. It is truth that is identical with God's knowing and is not finally relative to, or limited by, finite perspectives (Clark 2001b:1220). In the Biblical worldview of worship, absolute truth forms a stable point of reference, because it is unchanging and timeless (Ps 119:89; Lk 21:33; Jn 14:6). As a general rule, all change is measured against an absolute. This is important for the Biblical worldview of worship, for it will mean that worship is guarded and guided by ultimate truth. Zacharias (1994:151) concurs that if worship is not guarded by truth, the mind of the worshipper descends into depths of superstition, deception and emotionalism. Worship alone cannot justify itself; it needs the constraints of truth, and that truth is in the person and character of God – ultimately revealed in Christ Jesus.

3.5.1.2.4. Truth is universal

For truth to be universal, it will mean that it is "... to apply everywhere, to engage everything and to exclude nothing" (Groothuis 2000:72). The truth of the Christian Scriptures is not restricted by cultural conditioning through its contextual emergence. The truth principles that emerged from within the cultural framework in its original setting must be applied to all cultural settings. This must be done without tainting the cultural norms that do not contradict the truth principle. Within this description, truth is universal. Therefore, the propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship is vital, for salvation is

found only in Christ, and is offered to all (Jn 3:16; Acts 4:12; Rev 7:9-10). The Biblical worldview of worship extends to all who will believe and call on the Name of the Lord (Rom 10:13).

3.5.1.2.5. The truth of God is eternally engaging and momentous, not trendy or superficial

Groothuis (2000:74) refers to Steven Carter, who,

... laments that for many people (and the state), religion is little more than a hobby, something with which to amuse oneself, a kind of curiosity for when the mood strikes but not something to take all that seriously, especially in matters of legality.

God's truth is grounded in God – who is eternal, and therefore truth is eternal. It is one of God's inherent and eternal qualities. In a world saturated with lies and deception, God's truth transforms the individual (Ps 119:11). Humanity has a choice to accept or reject God's truth. Acceptance leads to transformation and glorification; whilst the rejection of God's truth results in the eternal separation from God in the second death (Rev 21:8).

The absolute seriousness in the pursuit of truth must be emphasized in considering the eternal nature of truth and the eschatological revelation of people's choices. The Biblical worldview of worship is thus well-grounded. Yet, the practice, defence and propagation of this reality must be embodied by the South African church. The church has the responsibility of presenting this eternally and engaging truth as exclusive in nature, specific in claims, and antithetical to other worldviews of worship.

3.5.1.2.6. Truth is exclusive, specific and antithetical

Truth, by definition, will always be exclusive (Zacharias 1994:126). What is true excludes all that opposes it, therefore, Biblical truth is also antithetical or opposed to false "truth-

claims.” This also means that Biblical truth is also specific - in that it is clearly defined and fixed.

When Jesus claimed to be “the truth” (Jn 14:6), He made a rational statement that agrees with reality by excluding all other claimants to truth. One can argue that He was false in the claim He was making; but one cannot deny His logic as philosophically determined by the meaning and nature of truth. This is where the law of noncontradiction applies. It argues, “... the same question, at the same time, meaning the same thing cannot elicit two absolutely opposite answers” (Zacharias 1994:128). Groothuis (2000:77) gives a reminder that the law of contradiction combined with the specificity of Christian truth and the high stakes involved in choosing whether to believe in Christ means that truth for the Christian is confrontational. The Christian has a responsibility to confront false worship beliefs and practices within and outside of the church. The practice, defence and propagation of the exclusive truth-claims of the Biblical worldview of worship is essential for the South African church.

The Biblical worldview of worship also presents exclusive truth within a systematic and unified framework.

3.5.1.2.7. Truth, Christianly understood, is systematic and unified

Groothuis explains why Christian truth is systematic and unified:

Truth is one, as God is one. All truths cohere with one another as expressions of God’s harmonious objective reality – of his being, his knowledge and his creation. Something cannot be true in religion and false in science (or vice versa), or true in philosophy but false in theology (or vice versa). There is only one world, God’s world; it is a uni-verse, not a multi-verse (2000:79).

In a world of diversity where conflicting opinions and personal truth is celebrated, it is reassuring to have a faith that is grounded, systematized and unified in propositional truth as demonstrated in the Bible. This truth is also embodied in the Person of Christ, who is the divine Logos (Jn 1:1, 14). Paul says: “For by him (Christ) all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*” (Col 1:16-17) (*italics added for emphasis*). All things related to truth, therefore, centres *in* and *around* Christ. Acceptance of Christ will mean the acceptance of truth. The church that belongs to Jesus Christ will naturally be centred in truth.

The church has traditionally employed either the *confessional method* as a method to present its systematized truth; or the *verificational method* (Demarest 2001:1163). Demarest suggests that the problem with the confessional method is that few reasons are given why one confessional position (among denominations) should be accepted as normative (*ibid.*). He prefers the latter method for, he says, it,

... respects confessional views as hypotheses to be tested by the criteria of logical consistency, coherence with revelation, and existential viability. Theologians must show that the body of truth as formulated from revelation data fits the facts with fewest problems and satisfies human needs to a greater degree than the alternatives (*ibid.*).

To systematize the teachings of the Biblical worldview of worship, various disciplines of theology are utilized: exegetical theology, Biblical theology, historical theology, etc. for the purposes of constructing a coherent representation of Christian truth. Also, the discipline of practical theology applies the results of systematic theology to preaching, teaching, counselling, and the formation of the spiritual life of the believer (Demarest 2001:1164). Therefore, Christian theology (and the Biblical worldview of worship) is

unique in its utilization of the many disciplines of theology to verify truth claims which need to correspond and cohere as a system. The neat systematization and the unification of the doctrines into a whole are considered sufficient to bring the seeker's journey for truth to an end.

3.5.1.2.8. Christian truth is an end, not a means to any other end

The journey of many seekers of truth come to an end when Christian truth is discovered. Jesus left no room for any other notion of truth - except for that which *He* embodies. In Jn 18:37, He said, "Everyone on the side of truth listen to me." Zacharias (1997:222) argues here that,

... Jesus was not merely establishing the existence of truth His pristine embodiment of it. He was identical to the truth. This meant that everything He said and did, and the life He lived in the flesh, represented that which was in keeping with ultimate reality.

To find Jesus will mean the end of humanity's pursuit for ultimate truth. He fulfils every longing. Piper says,

The enjoyment of God above all else is the deepest way that God's glory is reflected back to him. The enjoyment of God terminates on God alone and is not performed as a means to anything else. It is the deepest reverberation in the heart of man of the value of God's glory (2007:77).

This suggests a journey for truth that culminates in the Person of Jesus Christ which provides a sense of fulfilment for the worshipper, and the glorifying of God because of that reality.

The Christian worldview corresponds and coheres with the philosophic requirements in its definition of truth. Carnell suggests the Biblical worldview of worship finds strength philosophically because: "Christianity's coherence is its power to explain history as well

as its ability to maintain logical self-consistency” (1948:119). The Biblical worldview of worship’s definition and understanding of truth, when measured against the philosophical grid, agrees with reality. However, it goes a step beyond the discipline of philosophy and explains where the point of reference for truth is grounded – i.e. in the Person of the eternal and self-existent God, who in Christ, is the very embodiment of truth. This truth is also embodied in the believer through the presence of the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16-17; 16:13-15).

The Biblical worldview of worship describes through the doctrine of revelation how truth has been communicated by this Personal God. It demonstrates how truth is not to be merely a propositional and theoretical concept; but how it is embodied in the Person and teachings of Christ for human application. The concept ‘truth’ is given a standard which is derived from the very nature of God for humanity to apply. It also reveals how the application of truth must lead to fellowship with the persons of the Trinity (Hejzlar 2011:66).

3.5.2. Correspondence theory

The correspondence theory is often traced back to Aristotle who stated: “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true” (*cited by David 2016:2*). The correspondence theory is taken as the default view by most philosophers in the discussion of the nature of truth (David 2016:9). So, the correspondence theory and the nature of truth are closely related. Glanzberg (2016:12) argues that a correspondence theory is often taken to embody a form of realism, which holds that: 1. The world exists objectively with universals,

independently of the ways we think about it or describe it; and, 2. Our thoughts and claims are about that world. What Biblical evidence is there to support this notion?

In the Scriptures, we have discovered that ultimate truth is inherently realized in God. Within logic, this will mean that the “truth condition” i.e. the condition under which a given proposition is true, is God, for truth is always tied back to God. Hence, God gives meaning to propositions contained in revelation, for they reveal His character and nature.

In revealing Himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:14), God was establishing an ultimate and objective point of reference in Himself for all existence. He is the Absolute One (Carson 2001:586). In man’s pursuit for ultimate answers, this will include answers to the worldview questions (i.e. origin, meaning, morality and destiny). The worldview questions are to correspond with the reality presented in the Biblical worldview of worship.

Firstly, the truth claims on *origin*, i.e. creation stemming from God’s creative acts, will mean that truth claims must correspond with the available data. Secondly, the longing for ultimate, eternal and temporal *meaning* is to correspond with the Biblical truth claims in the plans and purposes of God for humanity. Thirdly, humanity’s alignment to objective *morality* is to correspond to the nature of God. The concepts of truth and light are closely related in the Biblical worldview of worship. John 3:21 states “He who does the truth comes to the light.” Ladd (1993:304) explains, “This is a thoroughly Hebraic phrase, which in the Old Testament meant to act in a trustworthy manner in terms of the bonds of family relationship and friendship (Gen 24:49; 47:29; Neh 9:33).” Finally, the eternal hope towards His intended *destiny* is to correspond to God’s nature, creative purposes and plan for humanity. These worldview questions will comprehensively be discussed later.

The truth statements that the Biblical worldview of worship claims as revelation for each of these worldview questions, are to correspond to the very nature, plans and purposes of God. This is so, because truth lies within the nature of God and truth statements are to correspond with God's nature which is generally and specifically revealed.

Not only is truth to correspond to God's nature and revelation; it is to also cohere. What does this mean and how may it be applied in the Biblical worldview of worship? Support for this thesis within the Biblical worldview of worship requires a brief survey of the theory.

3.5.3. Coherence theory

A coherence theory of truth states that the truth of any true proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions (Young 2016:1).

The Biblical understanding is that God has revealed truth. Within the confines of that revealed truth, God is to be worshipped. From the diverse facts surrounding the Scriptures, (e.g. the fact that it covers centuries of history, its various literary types and authors, its diverse themes, etc.), reveals divine providence. Divine providence is shown to be true from the canonical principle. The *canonical principle* forces modern exegetes of the Scriptures to approach the text to gain a theological understanding of particular texts considering the whole of Biblical revelation (Gorman 2009:151). More especially, the principle of coherence sheds light on a theological application of the text (Gorman 2009:152). Gorman explains:

Scripture is one divinely given book that essentially tells one coherent story of the creator-God's salvation of the world, culminating in Jesus Christ. It is not a collection of mutually competing or contradicting accounts of God and of humanity's experience of God (2009:152).

As with the correspondence theory, the coherence theory is to be applied to the worldview questions. The claim that the Scriptures tell one coherent story is to be evidenced in the answers that these individual questions seek. It is also to be evidenced in the cumulative answers that may be proposed for all the questions, which are stated as propositions.

Young explains the differences between the correspondence and coherence theories:

The two theories ... give conflicting accounts of truth conditions. According to the coherence theory, the truth conditions of propositions consists in other propositions. The correspondence theory, in contrast, states that the truth conditions of propositions are not (in general) propositions, but rather objective features of the world ... Although the coherence and correspondence theories are fundamentally opposed in this way, they both present (in contrast to deflationary theories of truth) a substantive conception of truth (2016:1).

The coherence and correspondence theories, therefore, both hold that truth is a property of propositions that can be analysed in terms of the sorts of truth-conditions propositions have, and the relations propositions stand in to these conditions (Young 2016:1). Within the Biblical worldview of worship, the truth-conditions centres upon divine revelation. However, the propositions that are contained in revelation within the Biblical worldview of worship are now to be tested for truth through the three tests that were highlighted in Chapter 2, namely, logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance.

3.6. The logical, empirical and experiential testing of truth

The Biblical worldview of worship regards truth as that which works according to the eternal norms of God (Sproul 1986:94). Within this worldview, believers are given the freedom to test truth statements that are taught in the Christian faith (Acts 5:29; 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21). The tests of logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance are to be applied to aspects of the Biblical worldview of worship to test their truthfulness. These aspects will have a direct bearing on the worldview questions that must later be explored.

3.6.1. Logical consistency

In the discussion on logical consistency, the first aspect that is to be discussed is Biblical revelation from which answers for the worldview questions are derived. The Biblical worldview of worship affirms the proposition that Scripture, in its entirety is God's self-revelation. If the claim that this worldview comes from the rational mind of God, the expectation is a logically consistent faith. The Logical Consistency test seeks to test the Biblical worldview of worship for falsehood and/or self-contradictions in its teachings.

3.6.1.1. Logical consistency in faith and reason

One of those apparent self-contradictions, is the issue of faith and reason. For many, the Christian worldview may be perceived as people living in two worlds: i.e. the world of *faith* on Sunday and the world of *reason* for the rest of the week. The atheist, Richard Dawkins said that faith is the blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence (*cited in Johnson 2013:34*). This is certainly not true of the Christian faith, for in it, faith and reason cannot be separated. Johnson demonstrates this truth:

The fact is that Christianity welcomes an examination of the evidence. Indeed, it relies on it! As we examine the definition of faith found in the Bible, we will see that faith in God is directly tied to thinking properly about the evidence he has provided for us.

According to the author of the book of Hebrews, "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1) ... Faith in this passage, and in the rest of the Bible, primarily deals with the future. It is to trust that God is good and that he will do what he has promised he will do. We do not see what we are hoping for because it hasn't happened yet. However, this is not to say that we do not have any evidence on which to base our trust. Quite the contrary: Biblical faith is always based on evidence. Those people in the Bible who have faith trust that God will do what they hope for *because they have seen evidence that he is trustworthy!* For example, what gave David the faith to face Goliath? The fact that he had already experienced God's protection and victory in facing a lion and a bear! David had good evidence of God's power; therefore, he was able to have faith (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

This is God's pattern throughout history. He doesn't ask his followers to believe without any evidence or in spite of the evidence. Rather, God gives people evidence and then asks them to trust him in light of it. Faith is to be based on evidence; it is not something that is to develop without evidence (2013:34-35).

Lewis (1980:138) also demonstrates from the Biblical worldview of worship, that the battle is not between faith and reason. The use of the term faith incorporates *belief* – i.e. accepting or regarding the Christian doctrines to be true. Lewis (*ibid.*) explains that, contrary to popular Christian belief, faith is not a virtue, for there is nothing moral or immoral about believing or not believing a set of statements. Lewis (1980:139), thereafter, points out that what he did not realize then was his assumption that *the human mind was completely ruled by reason* only. Lewis illustrates why this is not so:

For example, my reason is perfectly convinced by good evidence that anaesthetics do not smother me and that properly trained surgeons do not start operating until I am unconscious. But that does not alter the fact that when they lay me down on the table and clap their horrible mask over my face, a mere childish panic begins inside me. I start thinking I am going to choke, and I am afraid they will start cutting me up before I am properly under. In other words, I lose my faith in anaesthetics. It is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other (*ibid.*).

Similarly, when new moods revolt against the Christian faith, man wants it *not* to be true, for it allows him freedom to follow his emotions and imaginations to form beliefs. Therefore, Lewis suggests, that man must not be controlled by changing moods; but must “train the habit of Faith” (1980:141). This can only be done through right beliefs that are grounded in reason.

With regards to the questions on origin, meaning, morality and destiny, the Biblical worldview of worship provides ample and consistent evidence that support its claims. Therefore, it is easy for the believer to place his faith in the God of the Bible.

3.6.1.2. Logical consistency in cumulative data

The Biblical worldview of worship is also true because it is based on a cumulative case of data (Johnson 2013:37). It has a large amount of evidence, both internally and

externally from a broad range of sources, to verify the logical consistency of its truth claims. The internal doctrines of the Scriptures coalesce their various emphases on a particular doctrine into a coherent whole (Erickson 2013:56). Similarly, diverse doctrines of Scripture also coalesce their various emphases into a coherent whole that is logically consistent.

The Biblical worldview of worship also utilizes philosophical, historical, geographical, archaeological and prophetic evidences that can be tested from outside itself. Zacharias (1997:201-2) argues: “When sixty-six books covering a two-thousand-year span and written by approximately thirty-seven authors coalesce with such singularity, purpose, and empirical verifiability, the argument can hardly be considered circular.”

3.6.1.3. Logical consistency in theology and worldview

The Bible presents a consistent theology and worldview even though it was written over a period of about two millennia.

Erickson (2013:65) gives a reminder that Christian Theology “... will consist of theological statements that can be classified based on their derivation. It is important to attribute to each type of statement an appropriate degree of authority.” These will include direct statements, direct implications, probable implications, inductive conclusions, conclusions from general revelation, and outright speculations that are in Scripture (Erickson 2013:65-66). All legitimate material must be employed to build a credible Biblical theology and worldview that is logically consistent.

Thereafter, Erickson (2013:53-59) lists the processes that are utilized to demonstrate the logical consistency of Christian theology and worldview. The material is to be unified, analysed, historically examined, consult other cultural perspectives, identification of the essence of each doctrine, and use of extrabiblical sources for illumination of the doctrines. Once these have been set out and the essence of any particular doctrine is determined, the next task is to give it contemporary expression by providing answers for contemporary questions. Thereafter, the task is to develop a central interpretative motif by giving a perspective from which the data and theology are viewed. Finally, to range the topics based on their relative importance (Erickson 2013:60-65).

Many theologians have sought to present a logically consistent and systematized theology and worldview for the church using some or all of Erickson's steps. Many have masterfully succeeded in achieving this. Our concern is to merely state the disciplines and processes that were utilized to create a logically consistent theology and worldview for the people of God that will be true of the doctrinal content of the Scriptures. We aim to borrow from their work and limit the discussions to the worldview questions.

3.6.2. Empirical adequacy

As stated in the previous chapter, the empirical adequacy test ascertains whether teachings match with real-life practices with the given worldview. The Law of Verification states that "No statement is meaningful unless it can be verified empirically" (Sproul 1986:103). To verify something is to show that it is true. What empirical evidence can we employ to verify the Biblical worldview of worship?

We begin, firstly, by establishing our limitations in the study of this section. The transcendence of God forms limits to empirical research and testing within the Biblical worldview of worship. It gathers its information from the religious faith and practices of the people (Brouwer 2010:2). However, Brouwer argues:

Theological concepts do not converge with the referent of the word 'God'. Nevertheless, through our theological concepts, we are able to make contact with an external reality ... When we perceive God to be compassionate, we understand compassion to be a quality of God. Such perception implies the precedence of God in human faith. Ontology precedes epistemology, with existence having a logical priority over knowledge. Faith is really an experience of God as the Other and as the Word that created all things. In addition, faith lays claim to who God is – that is to say, a reality independent of human experience. Of course, faith is subjective, and has an affective dimension, which is a habit of the heart. Theological concepts and reflections on faith are propositions about God's performative presence (2010:2).

Even though faith has a subjective component, as recognized by Brouwer; we have amply demonstrated earlier its alignment to objective facts and reasonable explanations which are satisfied through the processes of revelation. Our understanding is that the theological approach suggests for a social construction and formulation of a worldview of worship that corresponds to reality. So, subjective experiential knowledge cannot be an end in itself. Experience is to be verified against God's being and revelation as a point of reference or else experience becomes the measure of truth. On the other hand, ontological statements are to be tested against observable facts. Therefore, the theological approach is fundamental to making sense of empirical data within the Biblical worldview of worship.

There are certain analytical statements that are tautologies (i.e. they provide no new knowledge) and are true by definition e.g. "a husband is a married man", "a triangle has three sides" (Sproul 1986:104). To add new knowledge, one must synthesize (e.g. the triangle is *small* which is not found in the word *triangle*). Synthetic statements are not true

by definition, for they are to be verified another way (Sproul 1986:104-106). Therefore, the *Law of Verification* is limited in itself.

In John 20:25, we read the account of Thomas who would only believe if he sees in Christ's hands the nail marks and feel His side for the spear mark. In v.29 Jesus responded to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This is not blind faith. It is the acknowledgement that because of the empirical evidence that Jesus demonstrated in the past, Thomas could believe in Him in the present and future. Sproul says:

When God tells us about the future we trust that what He is saying is true. We cannot see it. We have no empirical data available to us from the future. But we believe God's Word about the future because in the past He has proven Himself, both rationally and empirically to be utterly trustworthy. Our faith in the future is established by the evidence of the past ... To trust God in matters of things unseen is not a matter of blind faith. It is not credulity. It is a reasonable faith (1986:110-111).

3.6.3. Experiential relevance

The Experiential Relevance test ascertains whether the Biblical worldview of worship speaks directly into how lives are lived. The truth of the Christian faith will eventually have ultimate bearing on our experience (Erickson 2013:15). Johnson lists the following ways in which the Christian faith can be experienced as evidence for its truthfulness:

... the Christian worldview offers the best explanation for the universal human experiences of longing ..., guilt, and the feeling that an unseen power is directing our lives in some way. Christianity also better accounts for more uniquely individual experiences such as mystical encounters with the presence of God, answers to prayer, miraculous healing, encounters with spirits, and direct providential guidance (2013:189-190).

For a long time, this was not experienced in Christianity. Historically, this gave rise to Experiential Theology, which had arisen within Christianity in reaction to a sterile intellectualism and/or a rote traditionalism (Johnston 2001:429). Here, much focus is on

the Spirit's work, thus applying a balanced Trinitarian doctrine in the life of the church.

Johnston points out the influence of a Biblically-correct theology of experience:

A Biblically based theology of experience will stress the Spirit's ongoing role in creation and redemption (cf. Acts 14:15-18; Rom 8; Gal 4:6-7). It will also recognize that a focus on the Spirit will open naturally and authentically into an emphasis on Christ the Word (1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:2). Finally, an experiential theology will always be a corporate church theology (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12) (2001:429).

The Scriptures are meant to speak directly into the lives of believers to reveal God's purposes. Zacharias rightly observes the reach that Scripture needs to practically have in the lives of believers:

The "Book of the Law" mirrors the soul as it was intended to be. It reveals the sacredness of our words to each other – engendering trust. It holds us to the sanctity of our marital vows – enriching the splendor of love. It preserves the essential dignity of every human being – elevating the beauty of relationships. It bequeaths to us the sacredness of time – enjoining the sanctity of both work and rest. It commands us to respect the property of others – breaking the stranglehold of fear. It guards our essential purpose – energizing us by the coalescence of worship ... This is the Word of God that calls us to reason together with God so that the evil within us may stir us more than the evil around us. It is only in that sequence that the soul of an individual and the soul of a nation can be recovered (1997:153-4).

To summarize the three tests for truth, the Biblical worldview of worship can apply these tests and meet the philosophical standards for testing its truth. We have shown how the Biblical worldview of worship is able to meet the standards of logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance. These three tests are now to be applied in our discussion around the worldview questions.

3.7. The worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny

The worldview questions will now be applied to the Biblical worldview of worship. We shall consider these questions under the following headings: Origin and Worship, Meaning and Worship, Morality and Worship, and Destiny and Worship. This will complete the

philosophical-theological approaches which are to be applied as a grid to compare with the opposing worldviews of worship that influence the South African setting.

3.7.1. Origin and worship

The Biblical worldview of worship suggests that the universe had a beginning. God is the cause of all created things and therefore He is to be recognized for His creative acts. The natural response of His creation to Him should be worship, for all creation, animate, inanimate, material and spiritual, exist for the purposes of declaring God's glory.

We shall now consider issues regarding the origin of the universe, the origin of humanity, and the origin of evil and suffering to ascertain a Biblical understanding for the worldview comparison grid.

3.7.1.1. Origin of the universe: Biblical theism

The answer to the question of the origin of the universe within the Biblical worldview sees God as the Originator and Creator of the universe. Following from the cosmological and the teleological arguments discussed in the previous chapter, the Scriptures agree with their observable facts. The Christian Scriptures correspond and cohere with the *Thomist Argument* (within the cosmological argument), which views the existence of finite, contingent beings that are dependent for their existence on something or someone else.

The Christian philosopher, Norman Geisler (1976:238-239), makes for an impressive argument, by suggesting the following logic that can be applied to prove the existence of the God of the Bible:

1. Some things undeniably exist (I cannot deny my own existence while at the same time affirming it through the question "Do I exist?").

2. My nonexistence is possible.
3. Whatever has the possibility not to exist is currently caused to exist by another.
4. There cannot be an infinite regress of current causes of existence.
5. Therefore, a first uncaused cause of my current existence exists.
6. This uncaused cause must be infinite, unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-perfect.
7. This infinitely perfect Being is appropriately called God.
8. Therefore, God exists.
9. This God who exists is identical to the God described in the Christian Scriptures.
10. Therefore, the God described in the Bible exists.

However, human attempts to reason to God by these proofs of God (as with Geisler), are inevitably limited to the realm of the created existence (Saucy 2001:500). He argues:

While providing strong evidence for the probable existence of God, they do not yet attain to the knowledge of the transcendent God of Scripture (1 Cor 1:21). As a person is truly known only through self-disclosure, God, who alone knows himself, must disclose himself by his Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-11). In so doing he makes himself the object of human knowledge (2001:500).

Geisler's logic can be applied up until point 8 of the list above. He, thereafter, makes a leap from philosophical logic to theological revelation to explain points 9 and 10, where it is presupposed that the revealed Biblical data has been employed to reach his conclusion. This is the data that is now to be researched. However, before we examine the Biblical evidence, the natural/supernatural distinction shall be discussed.

This Biblical worldview establishes the truth of the possibility of the supernatural. Historical Christianity is inseparable from claims of the miraculous (Geisler 1976:264). Geisler (1976:264-5)⁸ suggests the following logic that may be applied to evidence a natural/supernatural universe:

- (1) Undeniability is the only adequate test for the truth of a worldview....
- (2) Theism is the only worldview that meets the test of undeniability....
- (3) Therefore, theism is true.

⁸ See Geisler for an excellent and full treatment for each of these tests. These tests have already been briefly discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The scope of this research will not allow for a lengthy treatment for each of these tests, except to apply his conclusions.

- (4) In a theistic universe miracles are possible....
- (5) Historical events are knowable in a theistic universe....
- (6) Systematic consistency is the test for the truth of claims within a worldview....
- (7) The claim that Christ's coming was a miracle is the most systematically consistent position....
- (8) Therefore, it is true that Christ's coming was a miracle.
- (9) The claim that Christ is God is the most systematically consistent view....
- (10) Therefore, Christ is God.
- (11) Christ verified that the Bible is the Word of God....

From Geisler's logic, we can observe that supernatural activities that come through special revelation (the Scriptures and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ) underpin Biblical theism. The natural order is influenced by the supernatural Creator. The theistic argument through naturalistic evidences, and Biblical theism through supernatural evidences overlap to create a philosophical-theological grid for the Biblical worldview. Where do we evidence this overlap in the Scriptures?

In Romans 1:18-20, Paul uses a general appeal to *naturalistic theism*⁹ in arguing for God's existence to Gentile idolaters. He, firstly, defines wicked people as those who "suppress the truth" by living in wickedness. Paul sees the truth as clearly evidenced in creation since the "creation of the world." What truth is this that is being suppressed? It is the knowledge of an omnipotent and divine God, who has made Himself known. This process works backwards from creation to conclude, through the method of induction, what God the Creator is like (Jeyachandran 2007:232). The suppression of truth would mean the suppression of this God, who, according to Paul, is clearly evidenced in His creation through general revelation. David, in Psalm 19:1-6, makes a similar observation:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice

⁹ This must be differentiated from *naturalism* with the *antitheistic* theories that completely deny the existence of God.

goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens, God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth (NIV).

David suggests a voice-less noise that is testifying to God's glory. Paul, also, is so convinced of this fact, he argues that "people are without excuse." Paul's logic, in agreement with many other ancient traditions of a creation story among the various worldviews, presents two arguments (Beck 2008:237): (1) the things of our world have causes, and (2) there is a creating, initiating God – i.e. an Ultimate Cause itself that is uniquely uncaused. In recent times, Christian apologists J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig have similarly argued the following (Beck 2008:237):

1. There cannot be an actual infinite – that is, a universe existing infinitely in time.
2. Therefore, the universe had a beginning.
3. Whatever begins to exist must have a cause to exist.

Therefore, there must be an uncaused cause of the universe.

So, the Biblical understanding in the naturalistic form of theism is that God is the eternal God. He is the uncaused first-cause. Not only does the Bible account for a general revelation of God; but also, a special revelation.

Erickson argues for the importance of the doctrine of God as the crucial point for theology in the following words: "One's view of God might even be thought of as supplying the whole *framework* within which one's theology is constructed, life is lived, and ministry is conducted" (2013:234).

The Biblical worldview presupposes the eternal existence of God in the opening lines: "In the beginning God..." (Gen. 1:1). This opening passage also reveals God as Creator and Sovereign over heaven and earth. It does not function as a proof for the existence of God;

but, to describe who God is and how He is to be known (Saucy 2001:500). The Biblical worldview also sees the presence of an atheism that is grounded in the suppression of clear evidence for moral reasons; rather than for rational reasons (Ps 14). It is like glaring at the many evidences for the existence of God but turning away from them. The person who denies God for personal freedom from His moral boundaries is to be considered a fool (Ps 14:1).

The Biblical theistic worldview also reveals specific express statements that identifies the attributes of God's Greatness and Goodness. His unique attributes of Greatness will mean that God is personal, spiritual, life, infinite, constant, etc. His attributes of Goodness may be evidenced primarily in His moral attributes of purity and His relationship with His creation e.g. holiness, righteousness, justice, genuineness, veracity, faithfulness, benevolence, grace, mercy, persistence, etc. (Erickson 2013:254-271). Man, when confronted with God's qualities of Greatness and Goodness, should respond in worship. These truths reveal a Creator who is not an "abstract neutral metaphysical concept" (Saucy 2001:501). For example, He is a personal God, who is capable of knowledge, relationship, loving, and who has will. Another example suggests God, as a spirit being, and will denote life and power (Jn 4:24) (Saucy 2001:501-502). He is the Giver of Life because He is the possessor of an infinite life in Himself (Ps 36:9; Jn 5:26) (Saucy 2001:502). In looking at a final example of His attributes, God's holiness will suggest His incomparableness and transcendence – i.e. that He be separated from His creation (Ps 99:2-3; Isa 40:25; 57:15). God is revealed as the One who exists before creation (Ps 90:2) and is distinguished from His creation (Rom 1:25).¹⁰

¹⁰ All the listed attributes of God cannot be discussed within the scope of this thesis. The preceding three examples were employed to demonstrate aspects of God as the Creator and Originator of creation.

The Thomistic theory demonstrates, also, how dependent beings owe their existence to a necessary Being, God. God is the One who could not cease to exist, because by mere definition, he must be eternal and immutable. All finite beings are dependent on God, the Creator. Therefore, worship is a fitting response to Him. Worship is ascribing to God supreme worth in response to His worthiness (Rev 5:9). The theme of worship is central in Scripture. In Biblical theology, it is evidenced in many doctrines such as: creation, sin, redemption, future hope, etc. It has to do with the fundamental question of how we are able to approach God and please him in all that we do. Most of the Scriptural books point God's people to true and proper worship.

The Scriptures are the propositional form of theistic revelation. God's revelation is also evidenced in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the divine Logos (Jn 1:1, 14). The theological use of the term *logos* is not found either in Hellenistic philosophy, nor in Jewish thought (Ladd 1993:277). The term suggests, firstly, the pre-existence of Jesus Christ and suggests Him to be the agent of creation (Jn 8:58; 17:5; Phil 2:6; Col 1:15ff.; Heb 1). Whilst Genesis 1:1 starts with "God"; John 1:1 introduces the "Word". "He is not the ultimate source of creation, but the agent through whom God, the ultimate source, created the world" (Ladd 1993:278). Paul sees Jesus as the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15-17), and the One through whom all things and through whom we exist (1 Cor 8:6). Secondly, the term asserts the deity of Jesus Christ. John says that the Logos was with God and the Logos was God (Jn 1:1). Thirdly, it reveals the humanity of Jesus Christ. John says: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (Jn 1:14). Finally, the term denotes that God's invisible qualities e.g. life (Jn 1:4), light (1:4-5), grace (1:14), truth (1:14), glory (1:14), and God Himself (1:18) are revealed (Ladd 1993:278). All these are embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ.

In the creation account, we see reference being made to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God (Gen 1:2). The Spirit was as much a participant in creation as the other two persons of the God-head. The Hebrew word for Spirit is often translated as “wind” or “breath” in the Old Testament. The same word is found in Ps 33:6 “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath [Spirit] of his mouth” (cf. Job 26:13; Ps 104:30). The Spirit’s hovering above the waters is a grand picture of God preparing to breathe life into the world through His Spirit. Even of man, it is written, God “... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7).

Thus, the Creator and Originator - God, is revealed as Trinity. The Biblical worldview involves the worship of the trinitarian God. Chafer rightly states: “The nature of God must present mysteries to the finite mind, and the triune mode of existence is perhaps the supreme mystery” (1947:273). Chafer explains:

It is obvious that, with reference to revelation and in passages too numerous to be adduced, there is clear reference made to distinctions in the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are constantly named as separate Persons with specific operations said to be wrought by each. All this appears in narrative, in doctrine, and in worship which is prescribed for the creature in his relation to the Creator. All the divine attributes as well as the properties of personality are ascribed to each Person of the Godhead with so much certainty and frequency, that the fact of a triune mode of existence cannot be doubted by an unprejudiced mind. On the other hand, disclosures equally plain and numerous are made which present God as essentially One (1947:273).

The diversity of Persons joined in unity in the Trinity give the basis for understanding the diversity in the world and how they are brought together in unity. In discussing the quantitative nature of the Cosmos, Young (1954:83) rejects *monism* and *pluralism* for *synthesis*. Pantheism falls into the monism camp – which sees reality as one single being. Pluralism must also be rejected which believes in a diverse range of things in the world. A synthesis is needed to explain the two – where the “... many things in the universe

quantitatively speaking ... are held together by being related to a One which is also indispensable" (Young 1954:83). Christians see all things held together in God the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe – which is indicative of His personal nature.

Carnell explains:

In the Bible we find such a coherent body of evidence. It assures us that God is triune, three Persons in one divine essence. Being personal, God can be an object of fellowship.... In Christianity, God not only thinks about Himself: He thinks about us. As Bavinck expresses it, it is the Father *of Whom*, the Son *through Whom*, and the Spirit *in Whom* all things have their being. All religions need a personal God; Christianity provides Him (1948:181).

Personality, which comprises of intellect (thought), emotion (feeling), and will (volition) cannot exist on its own (Jeyachandran 2007:237). Jeyachandran explains:

These qualities have very often been referred to as if they are stand-alone qualities, but are they? Are they not meaningless in a world where there are no relationships? What use is my intellect if there is nothing to think about? How would I experience emotion if there were nothing to feel? What is the meaning of will if there were no possibility of decision making? Thus, we are forced to conclude that these are *relational* qualities and have no meaning in isolation. In other words, in God, qualities of personality can be actualized only if there is an actual, eternal relationship in him prior to, outside of, and without reference to creation. Only in that way would God be a personal being without being dependent on his creation (2007:237-8).

For many of opposing worldviews, the doctrine of the Trinity may seem incoherent and cannot correspond to reality. However, these worldviews must also account for God's personality within their theological or naturalistic structures and drastically fall short. For Pantheism and other New Age systems, everything is divine, and God is all. This binds God to his creation as a slave, thus resulting in fatalism (Jeyachandran 2007:238-9). For Islam, a unipersonal God could result in an equally fatalistic view of life where humans are no more than mere pawns in the hands of an arbitrary deity (*ibid.*). Only the Biblical worldview describes a triune, personal God, and explains the diversity and unity that must be answered for in this world. Jeyachandran explains:

It is only in a trinitarian understanding of God that his transcendence over creation can coexist with his immanence in creation. The real otherness that exists between the distinct persons of the Godhead explains how God can really be other than and therefore transcendent over his creation. Simultaneously, the perichoretic oneness of the triune God makes his immanence in creation a reality. (The Greek word *perichoreis* means “dancing around” and is used by early church theologians to describe the mutual indwelling of the Trinity). The weaknesses of alternative views of God are obvious: either God is hopelessly part of his creation (because creation is an extension of his being), or he is unapproachably remote. Ironically, in both these cases, the idea of God is functionally impersonal – one who cannot be related to. We can confidently assert that trinitarian theology provides the springboard to a comprehensive ontology (the study of being) by bringing together the possibility of transcendence and immanence (2007:240).

Worship within the Biblical worldview involves personal people engaging with a personal and trinitarian God. It does not surrender to mere form or ritual. There is an engagement between the One worshipped and the worshipper.

Part of that Biblical worship is the aspect of the wonder of God as the complex nature of God is beheld. There is a need for humanity to respond in worship because of the wonder of God. Zacharias explains what wonder is:

Wonder is that possession of the mind that enchants the emotions while never surrendering reason ... It sees in the ordinary the extraordinary, and it finds in the extraordinary the reaffirmations for what it already knows. Wonder clasps the soul (the spiritual) and is felt in the body (the material). Wonder interprets life through the eyes of eternity while enjoying the moment, but never lets the momentary vision exhaust the eternal. Wonder makes life’s enchantment real and knows when and where enchantment must lie. Wonder knows how to read the shadows because it knows the nature of light... (2003:20).

Zacharias illustrates how wonder is attained in the Christian worldview: “God is like the light. Wonder is like the shadow. If you chase the shadow, you will never catch up to it. It might even disappear. If you walk toward the light, the shadow will always pursue you” (2003:165). The wonder of God is therefore attained within the Biblical worldview through the pursuing after God. Within His nature, there will always be a sense of mystery. Therefore, the pursuing after God through Christian disciplines will result in worship.

However, worship is not only a science in that there is discipline in it, but worship is also an art in that there is beauty to it (Zacharias 2003:165). It is that beauty that fuels the necessary ingredient of the wonder of the person and plan of God. Therefore, worship for the individual is a personal experience before it goes public. It is an individual thing before it is a part of a community. It is a disciplined thing before it is natural (*ibid.*).

The Biblical concept of God as the Creator and the Originator cannot be divorced from His other qualities – but is evidenced in a coherent whole. Lewis summarizes these qualities in the following paragraph:

God is an invisible, personal, and living Spirit, distinguished from all other spirits by several kinds of attributes: *metaphysically* God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging; *intellectually* God is omniscient, faithful, and wise; *ethically* God is just, merciful, and loving; *emotionally* God detests evil, is long-suffering, and is compassionate; *existentially* God is free, authentic, and omnipotent; *relationally* God is transcendent in being, immanent universally in providential activity, and immanent with his people in redemptive activity (2001:492) (*italics added for emphasis*).

God, as personality, must be worshipped according to His revelation of Himself. God reveals Himself to Moses as YHWH – the self-existent One (Ex 3:15). The Israelites had to understand the exclusive claims of YHWH within a covenantal relationship. Many deities would vie for their allegiance as they interacted with the nations around them; but, they had to stay true to YHWH. This is the responsibility of the worshipper. This leads us to man and his created purpose. We need to also establish what prevents man from surrendering to God in his created purpose.

3.7.1.2. The origin of man

The Teleological argument argues for an ultimate Designer through the evidence of design and purpose in the universe. Deists also hold to these facts. However, the

difference between deism and theism lies in the fact of God's personal intervention within His creation. The Biblical evidence looks to the Creator being the designer of all things for His purposes. The world, therefore, cannot be thought of as just mechanistically "wound up" like a clock and left on its own, as deists would believe. The Scriptures teach that the living and loving God remains active in it. This will mean that the universe is designed and guided for the achievement of intended ends by the Creator God (Holmes 1983:64).

According to the Biblical worldview, man is a creation of God. Gen 1:26-27 records, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, and let them rule ... So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'" According to the Biblical worldview, human nature is a design of the Creator. "Then" puts a time to the creation of man – i.e. when the cosmic order was completed, and the earth was conducive to sustain human life (McDonald 2001:730). Three views dominate the discussion of man being created in the image of God: i.e. the substantive view (physical), relational view (experience of relationship between humans and God), and functional view (what humans do) (Erickson 2013:460). After discussing the failure of these views to fully explain what the image of God is in humanity, Erickson (2013:469-470) concludes with the following six observations:

1. The image of God is universal within humans (Gen 9:6; James 3:9-10).
2. The image of God has been lost because of sin or specifically the fall.
3. There is no indication that the image is present at varying degrees in different people.

4. The image is not correlated with any variable. It cannot be gained through human activity.
5. The image should be thought of as primarily substantive or structural – i.e. embedded in the nature of people.
6. The image refers to the elements in the human makeup that enable the fulfilment of human destiny.

Another important aspect of being created in the image of God will include man's ability to relate. Man is created and formed in a duality of relationships - being in relationship to God and with nature. Man was formed from the dust of the earth and was endowed with soul-life by the breath of God (McDonald 2001:730). This duality explains man's material and spiritual natures; yet must be taken together as a "conditional unity" (Erickson 2013:493).

Regarding the priority of man's relationship with his Creator, Luke 20:20-26 records:

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So, the spies questioned him: 'Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 'Show me a denarius. *Whose image and inscription are on it?*' 'Caesar's.' they replied. He said to them, 'Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

Many have seen in this passage a command from Jesus to pay taxes to the government and tithes to the church. However, Jesus is going beyond the mere paying of taxes which in any case would have required a simple "Yes" or "No" answer. Jesus asks for a coin and His question to those that confronted him is: "*Whose image and inscription are on it?*" This is not merely incidental. They rightly answer that Caesar's image is on the coin.

Jesus' next statement is remarkable. He informs them that if Caesar's image is on that coin and he wants it as taxes, then give it to him. But, give to God what belongs to God, requires the question, "Where is God's image and inscription on?" The answer must be: "On humanity!" Hence, the image of God in man must bring about the relational sense of belonging to God which flowers into worship through relational means. In other words, worship can never be truly encountered except through this understanding that we belong to God.

In the Biblical worldview, Jesus is presented as the One who bears the image of God and makes the invisible God visible (Col 1:15). Hebrews 1:3 describes Jesus as "... the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." He is also the goal of creation (Col 1:16 "... all things were created by him and for him"). He is the *prototokos* "firstborn" which indicates sovereignty of rank (Lincoln 2000:597). "Christ was both sovereign and first within creation and the divine agent of creation" (Lincoln 2000:598). In our fallen state, Christ is presented as the perfect image of God. Believers are said to be conformed to the image (*eikonos*) of Christ (Rom 8:29). Those under the new covenant are being transformed into his image (*eikona*) with ever increasing glory (2 Cor 3:18). The restoration of the image in humanity is to reveal the divine glory (*doxa*) of God. Whilst the mirrored *image* of Christ in the believer may be tied to the salvation event in the believer; the *glory* is a progressive transformative work in the believer until its eschatological fulfilment. Sin and death had removed that image of God from humanity. The Biblical worldview presents Christ as the restorer of that image so that we show forth the divine glory of God. This functional aspect of the image of God in humanity reveals that the *enabling* of the believer to worship finds its origins with God. It also covers *empirical aspects* of fruit that must be birthed (through the

Spirit of God) so that worship, through a progressive transformation, takes place in a believer's life.

The next issue of evil and suffering is to be dealt with within the Biblical worldview to reveal how the image was shattered through sin, which greatly affected man's ability to worship God.

3.7.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

Original sin, like someone peering into a shattered mirror, distorted the image of God within man. Theologically, this is termed *The Fall*. This introduced the presence of evil, suffering and death which are indisputable realities in this world. The origin of evil and suffering must be dealt with by the various worldviews. There are both the metaphysical and physical sides to this complex issue. However, within the scope of this discussion, more space will be given to the discussion of the metaphysical aspects as they relate to origins. This issue is important for the worldviews of worship to explain, for, from the perspective of the Biblical worldview, an explanation is given on the corruption of worship.

The Scriptures teach us that the Originator and Creator of the universe, God, created all things and made a moral pronouncement of goodness on his creative acts (Gen 1). The Scriptures also testifies to God's goodness and that in Him there is no evil (James 1:13; 1 Jn 1:5; 1 Cor 14:33). If evil did not originate with God, then what is its essence and where did it come from?

Evil, in itself, has no substance. Therefore, evil is regarded as a *privation* – or a corruption of a good thing (Geisler 2011:19). For example, a wound on an arm cannot exist apart

from an arm. Evil needs something with substance to manifest. It cannot exist on its own. Some see the incompatibility of an all-good God and evil simultaneously in existence (known as the LPE or Logical Problem of Evil) (Martin 2007:211). The basic argument for the presence of evil appeals to *free will*. The understanding is that God gave Lucifer (and humanity) free will (e.g. Dt 30:11-19). Martin, referencing Alvin Plantinga, explains how God and evil can both exist without incompatibility:

If God creates human beings with true, morally significant free will (where humans can freely decide to act in ways that really do advance goodness in the world, or really do cause evil in the world against self, others, or world), and if God wants a world in which there are significant amounts of (angel- or human-originated) moral *goodness*, it's possible that God cannot get that kind of world without significant amounts of moral *badness* as well. After all, if people are left free by God, then the morally significant states of the world will in large part be up to the decisions of humans (and angels), not up to God (2008:212).

Considering the free will argument, Geisler (2011:29) proposes the following argument for the origin of evil:

1. God created only good things.
2. One good thing God created was free will.
3. Free will makes evil possible, since
 - a. It is the power to do otherwise.
 - b. To do otherwise than good is evil.
4. Hence a perfect free creature can do evil.

However, this argument must be probed further. Evil could not co-exist eternally with good as the Manichaeans believed. Augustine's *Confessions* record his walking away from this theory (Geisler 2011:17). If evil is a privation and is metaphysically defined as "nothing", then, it must have "existed" only as a theoretical *possibility* as the anti-nature of God. Therefore, we can account for God's immutable attribute as a God of Justice. In other

words, He did not become a God of Justice after the Fall. Justice is eternally inherent in God's nature. This had to be in relation to His infinite goodness and the *possibility* of the opposite.

The fallen creature, Lucifer, or the Serpent appeals to Adam and Eve's free will and seduces them into disobeying God's command. This brought tragedy spiritually, physically, and socially to humanity. Death resulted – both spiritually and physically. Through the physical expressions of evil, a clear argument may be made for the *fact* of evil in our existence, a *feeling* of evil in our existence, and evil is given a *face* in our existence (Zacharias 1997:179-182). As a *fact* of our existence, evil can only be defined "... in relation to the purpose for which we were created and based on the character of the Creator" (Zacharias 1997:179). As a *feeling*, it brings a sense of agony when we hear of the rape of women, the abuse of children, the abuse of political power for personal gain, etc. Evil also has a *face*. It is never a vaporous idea; but is personal, and the evil person perpetrating acts of evil must be held responsible (Zacharias 1997:182). Zacharias explains the consequences when culture adheres to a false philosophy of evil:

With a philosophy of life that has removed objective moral standards and lost any purpose for existence, there is no fact. With a philosophy of life that has severed emotion from value, there is no feeling. With a philosophy of life that does not want anyone to take responsibility for anything but passes the blame onto someone or something else, there is no face. Wickedness that is fact-less, feeling-less, and face-less will ever remain a mystery (1997:182).

The Biblical worldview's unique answer to the problem of sin (evil) and death is the cross of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:18). Evil and suffering is met on a physical and metaphysical level. The cross of Jesus speaks, firstly, into the physical aspect of pain and suffering leading to physical death. Christ's sufferings and death demonstrates the destructiveness of evil, which is the cause of suffering. In Jesus' example, the ability to withstand suffering

even though it is undeserved (Zacharias 2007:201). The picture of Christ on the cross, spoken prophetically through the prophet Isaiah, demonstrates how evil dehumanizes us (Isa 52:14 "... his *appearance was so disfigured* beyond that of any man and *his form marred beyond human likeness...*" (*italics added for emphasis*)). The picture of Christ on the cross demonstrates the full impact of evil against the goodness of God. It reminds humanity that evil displaces God's goodness in corrupt humanity and makes us less than what we were originally created to be.

Christ's death also covers the metaphysical aspect which is confirmed through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. James Steward, commenting on Psalm 68:18, considers God's work of victory against evil through the cross and resurrection of Christ:

It is a glorious phrase of the New Testament, that 'he led captivity captive.' The very triumphs of His foes, it means, he used for their defeat. He compelled their dark achievements to subserve his end, not theirs. They nailed him to the tree, not knowing that by that very act they were bringing the world to his feet. They gave him a cross, not guessing that he would make it a throne. They flung him outside the gates to die, not knowing that in that very moment they were lifting up all the gates of the universe, to let the King of Glory come in. They thought to root out his doctrines, not understanding that they were implanting imperishably in the hearts of men the very name they intended to destroy. They thought they had defeated God with His back to the wall, pinned and helpless and defeated: they did not know that it was God Himself who had tracked them down. He did not conquer in spite of the dark mystery of evil. He conquered through it (cited in Zacharias 1994:174).

Zacharias (1994:171) gives a reminder of the seriousness of this message:

The cross stands as a mystery because it is foreign to everything we exalt - self over principle, power over meekness, the quick fix over the long haul, cover-up over confession, escapism over confrontation, conforming over sacrifice, feeling over commitment, legality over justice, the body over the spirit, anger over forgiveness, man over God.

Through the cross, God initiated reconciliation for humanity (2 Cor 5:19). Among the many absolutes evidenced in reality, the following four: evil, justice, love and forgiveness, uniquely converge at the cross of Jesus (Zacharias 2007:202). Zacharias explains: "Evil,

in the heart of man, shown in the crucifixion; love, in the heart of God who gave his Son; forgiveness, because of the grace of Christ; and justice, because of the law of God revealed.... God has done something about evil” (2007:202).

Worship can only truly be encountered and experienced when man recognizes God’s revelation of evil, sin and death, the provision that He has made to deal with these issues through the cross, and the reconciliatory work that He has been completed for entrance into His presence. The cross is the first stage of God’s dealing with evil in this universe. The eschatological end of evil is also described within the Biblical worldview of worship.

The Book of Revelation portrays the kingship of God from the standpoint of God’s transcendency over this world of which God is both Creator and Judge – the Lord over history. History is the spatial framework within which the Sovereignty of God is told (Manikam 2004:155). God’s sovereignty demands that He be in control of the happenings on earth and in the heavens. At no point is history out of the controlling power of God. Despite all the evil and destruction that this book presents, God’s will for creation still prevails – which is ultimate good. The inevitable reign of God with good over evil will prevail. God’s providence is witnessed in His allowance for evil to run its course resulting in evil’s ultimate destruction (Rev. 17-20). The eschatological worship that results is in view of God’s salvation made possible through the Lamb (Jesus Christ), and the progressive judgement of evil leading to its ultimate end. It is in light of that eschatological worship within the Biblical worldview, that current worship finds a created purpose and design. Only in that created purpose and design will we evidence meaning – to which we now progress.

3.7.2. Meaning and worship

The Biblical worldview of worship suggests an ultimate meaning for humanity who have been created by God according to His purposes. The purpose of man is centred in worship. Man is to bring glory to God in all aspects of his being and living. What is the starting point of meaning? What is the role of objective and subjective meaning for humanity? These are the questions that will now be answered.

3.7.2.1. The starting point for meaning

Meaning and purpose must be grounded in truth. As we have already discovered, truth must be derived objectively, which is contained *in* God and proceeds *from* God. The Biblical worldview claims are that truth is found in the Scriptures and the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Meaning, therefore, also finds an objective point of reference in the Person of God. Creation finds a derived purpose for existence from the Creator and Designer.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the view of “Cosmic Purpose and Christian Theism” holds that the cosmos exists to glorify God and to promote the good of God’s creatures – especially man (Moreland 1987:128). According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Answer 1), man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever (*cited in* Frame 2015:xxvii). This brings out the aspect of *meaning* being grounded in worship for human beings as creations of God. We have been endued with value in that we bear His image. The Biblical worldview of worship provides a comprehensive response to the meaning of life in comparison with other views.

3.7.2.2. Objective meaning

Humanity's meaning, firstly, is evidenced from our *essence* – i.e. bearing the image and likeness of the Creator (Gen 1:27). Secondly, meaning is attached to our human created *function* i.e. to rule (Gen 1:26). A sense of hierarchical value is placed upon humanity which the rest of creation do not enjoy. Psalm 8:3-8 deals with the value placed upon humanity:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

The essence and function combined unites man in true worship of the Creator for His creative purpose. Thirdly, humanity's meaning is found in the relational experience of *love*. When asked which of the many commandments was the most important, Jesus responded in Mark 12:30 by quoting from the Old Testament: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is: Love your neighbour as yourself. Man has been created as a relational being. The three essentials within the Biblical worldview of worship; faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13) are to be foundational in relational ties. However, love crowns all virtues. To love God is to know Him; to know him is to worship Him. A truly Biblical view of the self (i.e. personal meaning) compels man to worship (Phillips & Brown 1991:197). Therefore, meaning needs a point of reference outside of the individual, for it can only be applied in relation to something or someone. The Bible suggests loving God and others as the supreme, meaningful, and subjective expression. Finally, the eternal security of the individual is one of the factors that are necessary for bringing meaning to life (Zacharias 1994:113).

The Fall (Gen 3) corrupts God's good purposes for humanity. In Adam and Eve, humanity is cast out from the immediate presence of God. Worship is now hindered. The struggle to regain the lost essence and function leads humanity down many religious paths to find himself. He, therefore, creates many gods to end his journey. Yet, the emptiness remains.

Nowhere is the question of meaning discussed at length than as in the Book of Ecclesiastes within the Biblical worldview of worship. The Teacher looks at many themes and find them all meaningless: e.g. toil (1:14; 2:11, 17; 4:4, 7-8); wisdom (2:15); righteousness (8:14); wealth (2:26;5:10; 6:2); prestige (4:16); pleasure (2:1-2); youth and vigour (11:10); life (6:12; 7:15; 9:9); and future after death (11:8). The Teacher concluded with these words:

Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body. *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:9-14) (Italics added for emphasis).*

For the teacher, without any point of reference in God, all else will stay meaningless by themselves. Only from a transcendent and relational perspective (fear God), the maintaining of that relationship through the Scriptures, and the anticipation of a future judgement can meaning be applied to the list of the teacher.

3.7.2.3. Subjective meaning

The Biblical worldview of worship espouses that life must be directed by the concepts and precepts that are revealed by God's character and purpose (Zacharias 1994:56). Trying

to find meaning in and through the attainments of life – whether they be through material prosperity, human success or some form of hedonism, may provide subjective and temporary meaning. However, in the long run they fade away if there is no objective meaning that is ascribed to. These subjective, temporal pursuits for meaning only drives people to construct altars of worship to the created order, rather than God. The suppression of the spiritual for the physical make life meaningless – except for momentary pleasures. This philosophy is well captured through the pen of Aldous Huxley (1937) who demonstrates how the suppression of Biblical morality leads to subjectively constructed meaning:

For myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claimed that in some way they embodied the meaning (a Christian meaning, they insisted) of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever (*cited in Kennedy & Newcombe 2008:28-29*).

It has been well established that many humanists who deny the God of the Bible do so not for the absence of evidence; but because of the suppression of it. This is normally linked to our sexuality, as demonstrated by Paul in Romans 1:18-27 and illustrated by Huxley. When subjective meaning finds a foundation for determining an ultimate meaning of life; morality is severed as well.

3.7.3. Morality and worship

Apart from the Biblical claim that there is an absolute moral law written on the hearts of all men (Rom 2:15), God has given His Moral Law in propositional form to His people. We will proceed to discuss Morality and the Moral Law with God as the starting point for

morality in the Biblical worldview of worship. Also, special consideration will be given on its impact on the individual and society.

3.7.3.1. The starting point for morality: God

As stated in the previous chapter, the discipline of *morality* will examine habits, customs, and other forms of behaviour that is evidenced within a given culture. Biblical support for objective ethics and morality has already been covered under *The Origin of Evil and Suffering*. Carnell argues that the Biblical worldview has moral certainty plus a rationally conceived system of thought (Carnell 1948:120).

In Genesis God repeatedly pronounces creation “good” and “very good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 30), affirming the *value* of the material world (Olson 2013:44). The Scriptures teach that “goodness” is in the nature of God and therefore He can be trusted and loved – which are expressions of worship. As a moral Being or moral purity, we are referring to God’s absolute freedom from anything wicked or evil – which includes, His attributes of holiness, righteousness and justice (Erickson 2013:256).

God’s *holiness* will describe His uniqueness, in that He is totally separate from all of creation (e.g. Ex 15:11; 1 Sam 2:2; Isa 6:1-4; 57:150). Erickson describes the meaning of the Hebrew word *qadosh* “holy” as meaning:

... ‘marked off’ or ‘withdrawn from common, ordinary use.’ The verb from which it is derived suggests to ‘cut off’ or ‘separate.’ Whereas in the religions of the peoples around Israel the adjective ‘holy’ was freely applied to objects, actions, and personnel involved in the worship, in Israel’s covenant worship it was very freely used of the Deity himself (2013:256).

It is not solely the product of His will; but describes His immutable character as well. God is the source and standard of what is right and is free from evil. Therefore, God is “...

morally spotless in character and action, upright, pure, and untainted with evil desires, motives, thoughts, words, or acts (Lewis 2001:496). He, therefore, wills that which will correspond to His nature for His creation. God's holiness will also allude to His absolute purity and goodness (Erickson 2013:256). Considering His holiness, the heavenly beings celebrate this quality by worshipping Him (e.g. Isa 6:2-3; Rev 4:8-11). Man, when confronted with God's holiness, also responds with worship (e.g. Ex 3:5; Ps 99:3).

God's *righteousness* may be defined as God's holiness being applied to relationships (Erickson 2013:258). Erickson explains that the righteousness of God means that the Law of God, being a true expression of His nature, is as perfect as He is (Ps 19:7-9), and that His actions are in accord with the Law He Himself has established (Gen 18:25; Jer 9:24) (2013:258). So, God will not relate to His people outside of His nature. As Creator, God requires that His creation conform to His Law – because He Himself conforms to that Law. God's *justice*, therefore, can be defined as His "... official righteousness, his requirement that other moral agents adhere to the standards as well" (Erickson 2013:259). God must respond to those who suppress His truth. God has responded – in the Gospel. Lewis explains:

God's wrath is revealed as sinners suppress his truth and hold it down in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18-32), both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 2:1-3:20). In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last (Rom 1:17; 3:21). Believers are justified freely by God's grace that came by Jesus Christ, who provided the sacrifice of atonement (Rom 3:25). Hence, like Abraham, those who are fully persuaded that God can do what he has promised (Rom 4:21) find their faith credited to them for righteousness (Rom 4:3, 24). God in his justice graciously provides for the just status of believers in Christ. Righteousness in God is not unrelated to mercy, grace, and love (2001:496).

Before the Fall, God had established a moral law for Adam and Eve (representing humanity): "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for

when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Gen 2:16-17). This surrenders to the idea that man as a moral creature is obligated to live by an absolute moral law (Geisler & Watkins 1989:37). Post-fall, when measured against God’s Moral Law at that stage of its revelation, evil is introduced. God, thereafter, appropriately applies the consequences to deal with evil (Gen 3:14-19). Hejzlar argues for the Biblical worldview of worship accounting better for what he calls “the phenomenon of morality”, for he says, it “... offers a more plausible account of human personhood as well as a more realistic understanding of human inclination toward evil than at least some of its alternatives” (2011:48).

The Biblical worldview of worship believes that all laws are governed by God - whether they be natural laws e.g. gravity, motion, or heredity; or moral and societal laws regarding family, education, and state (cf. Ps 147:16-19) (Colson and Pearcey 1999:23). Colson and Pearcey explain:

... in culture and society, God rules indirectly, entrusting human beings with the task of making tools, doing justice, producing art and music, educating children, and building houses. And though a stone cannot defy God’s law of gravity, human beings *can* rebel against God’s created order – and they often do so. Yet, that should not blind us to the fact that there is a single objective, universal order covering both nature and human nature (1999:23).

3.7.3.2. Morality for the individual

Paul, in Romans 12:1-2 recognizes God’s mercy and how His creation must respond with worship. He writes:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Worship, for the individual and Christian community requires a bringing of an offering to God. This offering is described as a living sacrifice – which is the *soma* (body). The Christian's attitude towards the body morally, culminates in worship.

Although the body is an integral part of one's being, the body of flesh is mortal and corruptible (Rom 6:12; 8:11; 2 Cor 4:11). It is a body of death (Rom 7:24). It is an instrument of the flesh (Rom 6:6) and therefore it must be kept in subjection in the physical realm – which must sub-serve the spiritual realm (1 Cor 9). Self-control of the body is attained by recognizing the moral responsibility of the believer. It is one part of the fruit that is birthed by the indwelling Spirit of God in the believer (Gal 5:16, 23).

The sacredness of the body must be realized for consecration to God (Rom 12:1). “So, intimate is the relationship between the body and the spirit that sins of the body touch the very springs of personality. Therefore, bodily enjoyments are not an end in themselves but are to be made subservient to spiritual ends” (Ladd 1993:508-9).

The ultimate end of this temporal insistence for morality and worship in the bodies of believers is for the fact that we are headed for redemption in the day of consummated salvation and worship (Rom 8:23; Phil 3:21; Rev 7:15-17).

Colson and Pearcey give an appropriate reminder:

If we want to transform our pagan culture as the monks did in the Middle Ages, we must start with ourselves, understanding what a Christian worldview means for our own moral and lifestyle choices. This is more important today than ever because individual moral choices determine the health of the entire society (1999:36).

3.7.3.3. Morality for society

The Bible is the definitive reality of life's purpose, from God's mind to ours (Zacharias 1997:153). In Josiah regaining the lost Word of God, which was ironically lost in the Temple (2 Chron 34:14-15), Josiah pointed out that maintaining the nation's moral strength required the priority of worship. Zacharias explains:

In this he has once again left an example that political leadership would be wise to follow. Moral convictions rooted in God's nature and in the worship of God are intrinsically related. To be moral for morality's sake becomes a form of self-worship. When the moral law of God is the blueprint for life then the worship that follows shows reverence to the God in whose being that law is revealed. That is the worship that builds strength against evil and triumphs over the fragile will. Nothing involves a greater discipline of the mind than the coherence that worship brings. Who or what a person worships provides the rationale for his or her behaviour (1997:155).

Within the New Testament, the Book of Ephesians, gives a coherent message of God's plan to bring about unity in a world of diversity. This firstly, includes a worship purpose: "... in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (1:12; cf. 1:14; 2:7; 3:21). Secondly, it will include a moral objective that believers are called to live and maintain from a theological perspective. A moral accountable structure consisting of theological virtues also permeates so that the goal of unity is reached. These are evidenced as follows: *cosmic unity* emanates from Christ as a point of reference (1:10); the individual *created to do good works* and good works created for the individual under God's hand (2:10); for *freedom* and *confidence* for racial harmony and unity (3:12); *humility, gentleness, patience* and *love* for unity in the body (4:1-2); *light* and *truth* for *righteous* and *holy* communal unity (4:24-25); *submission* for unity in society (5:21).

The believer has the responsibility to practice, defend and propagate this moral worldview of worship. The key introductory verse is 1:8b-10:

With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – *to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ (italics added for emphasis)*.

Paul introduces Christ as both the agent and the sphere in which all things find unity. If Sin and Death brought disintegration and disharmony in all creation; Christ, through the cross, breaks down every dividing wall and harmonizes all things into One whole in Himself. The triune nature of God teaches us how things and persons can find uniqueness in differences; but can complement each other utilizing ideal theologically revealed moral principles. Paul shows us how the union takes place in Ephesians. Paul outlines:

1. Cosmic Unity (Eph 1:10);
2. Unity of the Individual (Eph. 1-2);
3. Ethnic unity between the Jew & Gentile (Eph. 3:1-13);
4. Church unity in exercising the spiritual gifts and moral accountability by using the analogy of a Body (Eph. 4-5:20);
5. Unity in Society (Eph. 5:21-6:9):
 - 5.1. Within Marriage;
 - 5.2. Within Parent-Children relationship;
 - 5.3. With the Work setting [Slave/Master (which, within its Biblical cultural context, was part of the family structure; but no longer practiced as such within the modern world. Instead, we can now refer to the, Employee/Employer relationship)].

Thereafter, Paul brings together various parts of the Christian's armour together to wage war against cosmic spiritual forces that fight against unity so that the disintegration: in

individual lives, through racial problems, through community breakdown both morally and spiritually, through breakdown of societal structures. Paul commands (Eph 6:10-20, NIV):

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

The word "struggle" reminds us of the cause that we are engaged in – i.e. good vs evil.

The struggle is not against human beings "flesh and blood"; but, against spiritual forces: rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and spiritual forces. Paul reminds us in 2 Cor. 10:3-5,

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Paul thereafter, suggests actions that are required for the spiritual battle. Believers are called to be *anchored*, by stand firm and putting on: the belt of truth buckled around the waist, the breastplate of righteousness in place, and to have their feet fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Next, believers are called to *advance*, by taking up: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word

of God. Finally, believers are called to be *alert*, through prayer in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

As Paul has demonstrated, disintegration is a tool that originates from the Enemy of our souls. God has made available, in Christ, a unity in diversity that must be morally applied to achieve theological goals. The spiritual battle manifests in the physical through various philosophical positions that work against revelation.

Zacharias looks at three moods present in current society that add to the disintegration of current society:

1. Secularization which means “this worldly”, which asserts that public life is to be conducted without reference to religion or to any notion of transcendence” (1997:23).

2. Pluralization, which is “... defined as the existence and availability of a number of world-views, each vying for the allegiance of individuals, with no single world-view dominant” (1997:71).

3. Privatization, which is the “... separation of our private lives and public personas; in effect, privatization mandates that issues of ultimate meaning be relegated to our private spheres” (1997:105).

Zacharias traces the effect of these moods on society:

Secularization left society without shame and with no point of reference for decency, and pluralization left society without reason and with no point of reference for rationality. Privatization – born from the union of the other two – has left people without meaning and with no point of reference for life’s coherence (1997:108).

In the name of non-offensiveness, religion is privatized and relegated to the home, while in the name of freedom all kinds of indecencies and abandonments are made public, thereby influencing worship. How ironic that sexuality and nudity, which are meant to be private, are now fare for public consumption while spiritual convictions, which are meant to strengthen public polity are now for private expression only (Zacharias 1997:108). Society is seduced to taking the means that God has blessed us with in worship and has made them the ends. Our sexuality, for example, is presented to God as a *means* to worship when practiced within a Biblical, heterosexual, monogamous marriage-for-life relationship. Any practice outside that boundary becomes self-worship and idolatry.

3.7.4. Destiny

The framework of eschatology within the Biblical worldview of worship in general stems from Jewish concepts. Issues such as life after death, the Parousia of the Messiah, the final judgment and the utopian Jerusalem form its eschatology. However, a distinct Christian revelation is what is viewed in the Biblical worldview of worship that the Scriptures record.

3.7.4.1. Physical death

Death becomes a theological problem because immortality is found in God alone (1 Tim 6:16) (Davids 2001:325). With regards to the nature of death, it has been described as the cessation of physical life for from dust have we appeared and to dust we must return (Gen 3:19; Eccl 3:20). Since life is found in God alone (Rom 4:17), death must be a cutting off from Him, who is the Source. However, the Biblical perspective is that God is sovereignly in control over life and death (Ps 36:9; 139:16; Job 14:5)

This cessation of physical life began in Adam (Rom 5:15, 17-18; 1 Cor 15:22), and continues in every human being since then (Rom 3:23; 5:12). Davids explains: “Death, then, is a power dominating the present life of the individual, not just something that happens at the end of life. It is in separation from God, a spiritual death, that people live all their life” (2001:325). Yet, death is described as a shadow, with its sting removed through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It has become a slave for humanity, for it allows the soul to exit the body for the believer to return to God.

The Biblical worldview presents a linear understanding to life, as opposed to Hinduism’s circular understanding of reincarnation. Hebrews reminds that it is appointed unto man *once* to die, thereafter, comes the judgement (9:27). There is a finality that death brings to this current existence which will never be experienced again. Therefore, human existence must be treated as sacred and lived within the boundaries of the Biblical worldview of worship. Each stage of human life comes with challenges; but must be lived with faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13) as ingredients to live a life of worship.

Those living within the Biblical worldview of worship also die physically, but, their death is considered a “gain” (2 Col 5:6; Phil 1:20-21). The dead are still considered to be in Christ, for death cannot separate believers from God’s love (Rom 8:38-39).

Paul, in 1 Thessalonians, highlights the believer’s hope at the Parousia. Upon Christ’s return, the dead in Christ will rise first (4:16). Thereafter, those believers still on the earth will be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (1 Cor 15:51-52), and will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17). At this point,

... the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:52-57).

As observed, this culminates in worship as thanksgiving is poured out to God for His sovereign rule over death in Christ. The believer participates in this reality and an appropriate response is one of worship to God.

3.7.4.2. Eternal life

The concept "eternal life" is a gift that extends from God to humanity (Rom 6:23). It is made possible through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ – who claimed to be the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). The word "eternal" will signify both a *quality* and *quantity* or duration of life.

Within Christianity and the Christian Cults, there are various suggestions to forms of the afterlife. The different varieties will be merely mentioned here for it is not within the scope of our study. We, however, hold to the Intermediate State belief. Rathel (2008:165-167) provides the following list:

1. The Intermediate State – which refers to the nature of personal existence between death and a future bodily resurrection. There are three forms of beliefs:

Some deny the existence of an intermediate state on the basis of the inconceivability of a disembodied state. These Christians affirm the resurrection occurs immediately upon death. Other Christians interpret the New Testament language of "sleep" literally and hold that believers experience a state of unconsciousness until the resurrection. The most common Christian understanding of the intermediate state affirms that after

death believers experience conscious disembodied existence with Christ until the resurrection. The adherents of the majority view also hold that unbelievers experience conscious punishment until the resurrection (2008:166).

We would place ourselves in the majority view of the immediate state which holds to the conscious disembodied existence of both, believers and nonbelievers, in separate locations.

2. Purgatory – The belief by the Roman Catholic church and the Eastern Orthodox church that there exists a place called purgatory, in which individual believers lacking sufficient holiness to enter heaven immediately upon death experience a purging of their sins by a period of passive suffering (cf. 2 Maccabees 12:39-45).

3. Annihilationism – This is derived from the Latin *nihil*, meaning “nothingness.” It teaches that unbelievers will experience a post-mortem cessation of existence – thus, a state of nothingness (e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, sets a hope to those within the Biblical worldview of worship, of eternity. The eschatology of the Biblical worldview of worship grounds hope in the Persona and Work of Jesus Christ.

Whilst the synoptics present Jesus’ teachings on eternal life in the age to come; John presents its eschatological character and its present experience (Ladd 1993:292-293). John, the Apostle, records his purpose for writing the Gospel of John as, so that the readers may know the way to eternal life through faith in Jesus the Messiah (Jn 20:31).

Salvation, for Christians, finds its ultimate point of reference in Christ's victory over sin and death. Its processes continue in the present and culminates in the eschatological hope. Within this current existence, it is made possible by God who is Lord over eternity and time. For, God's eternal salvific work is made possible through the cross event and that provides the believer with assurance and a guarantee of salvation – even in our present existence (Manikam 2011: 371). The person and the work of Christ offers, for the believer in the present existence, assurance of coherence and consolation as He reveals to us, in the most verifiable terms of truth and experience, the nature of man, the nature of reality, the nature of history, the nature of our destiny, and the nature of suffering (Zacharias 1994:179). The believers' lives are already defined by God as He unfolds His cosmic, salvific plan in and through the believer, and He establishes a hope that is centred in the Person and Work of Christ.

Humanity comes into this world spiritually dead due to sin. However, by regeneration through the Holy Spirit's presence, the believer is made alive - i.e. spiritually resurrected. This will mean that spiritual life is given so that man can have fellowship with God and can function for God in newness of life (Rom. 6:5, 13; Eph. 2:5-10; John 5:21-23). The emphasis here is on a new kind and *quality* of life. According to John 10:10, the purpose of Jesus' mission was to bring people a present experience of the future life. We find this also in the Book of Revelation *where* its eschatology is in some real sense both present and future. The Synoptic *Gospels* present the basic structure of Jesus' teachings of the expectation of the eschatological act of God to bring history to its end and establish the Kingdom of God in the Age to Come (Ladd 1993:252). The dualism is a temporal-eschatological dualism of the two ages, with its constant contrast between the present and the future. Typical of *Johannine* dualism, as recorded in the Gospel of John,

Revelation presents a dualism that, not so much explains the tension between the present and future; but, it highlights a vertical tension between the world above and below, heaven and earth, the sphere of God and the world (Manikam 2011:17).

In Christ's Kingdom, hope for the believer goes beyond this current existence and the grave (cf. Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:24-27; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; 23:43; Jn. 14:2-3; cf. Rev. 7:9-17; 14:1-5; 19:6-9; 21-22). The attaining of eternal life is found in the Father drawing sinners to Himself (Jn. 6:44; cf. Rev. 5:9-10), and the 'belief in' (6:47) and the acceptance of Jesus as the bread of life (6:48-51). In other words, salvation includes God's choice of the believer and the believer's choice of God. This salvation involves: eternal life (Jn. 3:16; cf. Rev. 5:9-10), a deliverance from mortality (Luke 20:36; cf. Rev. 20:6b; 21:6b), and a perfected fellowship with God (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-12; Luke 14:16-24; cf. Rev. 21:3) which is likened to a wedding feast and a banquet. Jesus' mission was to invite sinners to the Great Banquet of the Kingdom (cf. Rev. 19:9).

The New Testament looks forward to a future era which will be liberated from the bondage of death and decay. In 1 Cor. 15:24, Paul writes, "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after *he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power*" (*italics added for emphasis*). All this is finally realized in the picture of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation when God's dwelling will finally result with humanity (Rev 21-22). Man will respond to God in worship that will be uninhibited and unbroken.

3.8. Concluding remarks

Our aim in this chapter was to apply the outline from the philosophical approach of Chapter 2 to measure the truth claims of the Biblical worldview of worship. We have sought to use the theological approach to gain truth claims from the Biblical worldview of worship.

We have considered the Scriptural-Theological Approach within the metaphysical-philosophical grid to derive a Philosophical-Theological grid for the Biblical worldview of worship. Selected Old and New Testament passages were examined and showed that the Bible adequately covered truth claims in the worldview questions: origin, meaning, morality and destiny. We looked into aspects of the Scriptural-Theological Approach and argued that the purpose of the theological approach is to know God and His agenda. We have shown that this is important if we are to apply God's revelation within the modern setting; for God is the God of history: past, present and future. In the application of the diachronic and synchronic approaches to cultural influences in the Biblical worldview of worship, we have discovered that the Scriptural-Theological approach links worlds: i.e. the past Biblical world with the modern world. Therefore, the Christian Scriptures have provided relevant truths to speak into the current pluralistic South African setting. These truths will be vindicated as we filter them through the competing worldviews in Chapters 4-7.

We have, also, stated that the worldview foundation for theories within the Biblical worldview rests primarily on General and Special Revelation – from which, theological doctrines form models for reality and action. They are clearly and systematically outlined as models of reality for the people of God. From these, the theories, beliefs and practices

for those within the Biblical worldview of worship are derived. However, these theories, beliefs and practices had to be put through a philosophical test to establish their veracity. The theories, beliefs and practices of the Biblical worldview of worship will be systematically applied as a defence against the competing worldviews in Chapters 4-7. Hence, this will establish the exclusive nature of truth claims in the Biblical worldview of worship – which will require a response from unbelievers in its propagation (Chapter 8).

We have discovered that the concept of truth is of utmost importance in the Biblical worldview of worship. Truth is deemed to be centred in God and His revelation. In chapter 2, we have sought to research reality as it is philosophically derived. Here in chapter 3, we have sought to research revelation. Our premise stated is that, *if reality is created by God and revelation is God's revelation; then, the two must correspond and cohere. Furthermore, the tests of logical consistency, empirical adequacy, experiential relevance, unaffirmability, and undeniability must all demonstrate our premise.* In our examination of the nature of truth, we have discovered that revelation and reality correspond and cohere at all levels. We have gone a step ahead and demonstrated how truth finds its point of reference within the nature of God. Proceeding a step further, we have demonstrated how these tests for truth within the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny meet all tests for truth.

Within the worldview question of origin, we considered the salient issues regarding the origin of the universe, the origin of humanity, and the origin of evil and suffering to ascertain a Biblical understanding for the worldview comparison grid. We have concluded that from the existence of the God of the Bible, meaningful explanation that correspond with reality and cohere as a worldview are given for the origin of these. We have

demonstrated how He is revealed to be the Uncaused, First-cause – from whom all else are derived. Even the issue of evil and suffering become a moot point if God is left out of any discussion. When considering the question of meaning, we have discovered that the purpose of man is centred in God and the worship of Him. We have discovered that the starting point for meaning is found in the Creator and Designer who provides an objective point of reference for meaning within humanity. Subjective meanings are experienced in God's created purpose for the believer. Next, within the question of morality, we have discovered that both an absolute moral law written on the hearts of all men and revelation form the basis for God's Moral Law. Therefore, morality (what is) cannot be adequately discussed without ethics (what ought to be). What ought to be cannot find a point of reference in itself. It becomes a self-refuting discussion without God. Both ethics and morality find their point of reference in the nature of God as described in the Biblical worldview of worship. From this immutable point of reference, morality for the individual and society is to be derived. Finally, the question of destiny showed again that without God, this discussion becomes futile. We have demonstrated that physical death is considered against the nature of God which is life. Therefore, eternal life is explained as the substance that is discovered in the nature of the God of the Judeo-Christian worldview.

Hence, these worldview questions with their claims have been included in the Philosophical-theological grid. Now that this has been achieved; we will proceed to apply the grid in Chapters 4-7 as a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship in a pluralistic South African society.

To evaluate our work in this chapter, then, we have shown how the *definition* and the *arrival* at truth within the Biblical worldview of worship agrees with the Philosophical approach in Chapter 2. With regards to our conceptualization of ‘truth’ in the Biblical worldview of worship, we have established that the most common definition that philosophers use is: “*that which conforms to reality.*” Within the Biblical worldview, it is expected that all truth statements agree with the nature of God, for He is ultimate reality. All other reality emanates from Him for His created purposes. Therefore, reality is to agree with the Creator who instilled certain inherent and derived laws, theories and values within His creation – in order for us to arrive at truth. The discovery of these checks, for good reasoning and for arriving at truth by humanity, can be stated as follows:

1. The laws of logic (i.e. law of non-contradiction, law of the excluded middle, and the principle of identity),
2. The theory of knowledge (nature, criteria, and sources of knowledge),
3. Metaphysics and ontology (the study of the nature of reality, and the appearance [or general features] of reality), and,
4. The value theory (involving ethics and aesthetics).

When revelation, with its descriptions concerning the nature of truth, is checked against the presented reality inherent through these checks for reason, it will demonstrate a remarkable correspondence when filtered through the Philosophical standards explained earlier (Chapter 2). It, also, presents a coherent worldview when justifying truth claims.

The aspects concerning the nature of truth are stated as follows:

1. Truth is revealed by God.
2. Objective truth exists and is knowable.
3. Christian truth is absolute in nature.

4. Truth is universal.
5. The truth of God is eternally engaging and momentous, not trendy or superficial.
6. Truth is exclusive, specific and antithetical.
7. Truth, Christianly understood, is systematic and unified.
8. Christian truth is an end, not a means to any other end.

Each of the above have been filtered through the tests for reason and can be checked against reality as true statements within the Biblical worldview of worship. However, they must also be applied to the competing worldviews (Chapters 4-7) to ascertain their understanding of truth as a concept and their truth claims.

With regards to how to get to truth for examining truth statements within revelation, we have applied and developed Zacharias' proposed theory for propositional truth through the following tests for arriving at truth within the Biblical worldview of worship:

1. Correspondence theory (a judgement is true when it corresponds to the mind of the Creator since He is the Author of all facts and their respective meaning). All statements, regarding the worldview questions within the Biblical worldview of worship, needed to be compared with the nature of God as revealed within the Bible. We have demonstrated that the reason statements were true or false is because they correspond to the nature of God. God remains that point of reference for all truth statements.
2. Coherence theory (the parts of the whole need to cohere. Therefore, the following tests must be included within the theory: i.) begin with consistent parts, ii.) include all facts, iii.) organize all facts, iv.) formulate a tentative hypothesis with the data, and, v.) verify the tentative hypothesis). The

coherence test needed to be applied to the worldview questions to establish truth claims. Within each of the worldview question, we have demonstrated that Scripture consistently provided coherent explanations for each of them and all of them together.

3. Unaffirmability and undeniability tests interrogate for the falsity and truthfulness, respectively, of a worldview. This is so because fictional coherent statements can be made; but, may not correspond or cohere with reality. The Biblical worldview of worship, here again, demonstrates remarkable information. As evidenced, humanity will have to go out of their way to falsify revelation. This will also be clearly evidenced in succeeding chapters when we present a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship.

Next, comes the checking of truth statements within the worldview questions:

1. Logical consistency tests the Biblical worldview as a whole for falsity. Again, the consistent doctrinal statements, relating to the worldview questions individually and together, demonstrate consistent answers that lead back to the very nature of God.
2. Empirical adequacy, as a test, has sought to ascertain whether the answers provided in the Biblical worldview of worship, with regards to the worldview questions, match real-life practices. We have demonstrated how lives around the world have been changed through the Gospel message. It explains our origin and destiny. It also explains how life is to be lived in light of a holy God. All of these, origin, morality and destiny, give meaning for the believer in Christ.

3. Experiential relevancy speaks directly into how Christians need to live their lives stemming from the information we have attained from the worldview questions.

These tests were demonstrated to be of vital importance for examining the Biblical worldview of worship under the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny, thus forming the philosophical-theological grid. We have discovered how each worldview question (and all viewed together) correspond with reality and how, also, revelation coheres within the worldview. Each of the tests for truth: logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance validate the Biblical worldview of worship when applied. It is important to, also, apply these tests for truth within the competing worldviews of worship that are influencing the South African setting (Chapters 4-7).

The task, in the chapters that follow, will be to filter the competing worldviews in the South African context through the same Philosophical-Theological grid. The competing worldviews are listed as: atheism/secularism (West), Islam (Middle-east), Hinduism/Buddhism (East), and Animism (South). We will begin with the atheistic/secularistic worldview.

Chapter 4

The Biblical worldview of worship and the Atheistic/Secular worldview compared

Atheism, secularism and the Biblical worldview of worship

The atheistic/secular worldview has at least one tenet in common with pantheism. Whilst the Pantheist sees God in everything within the naturalistic order and ends up worshipping creation; the atheist/secularist sees no God but ends up, unknowingly, worshipping the natural order also. On this point the atheist/secularist is in denial. We begin by defining the terms *atheistic* and *secular*.

Gill (2001:1085) explains that the word “secular” is derived from the Latin root *saeculum* which refers to a generation or an age. It thereafter came to mean “belonging to this age, worldly” (*ibid.*). Generally speaking, secularism affirms realities that are limited to this world. To put it crudely, within this worldview, human beings are nothing but “pieces of meat” - with nothing special about us (Alexander 1993:15-16). It denies or excludes the transcendent and other-worldly realities, thus oriented against the supernatural in favour of the natural. Therefore, secularism is broadly defined as a nonreligious approach to individual and social life (Gill 2001:1085).

This secular and nonreligious approach rules God out of the universe within its worldview. In so doing, it is married to *atheism* (a negation of God) or the softer approach of *agnosticism* (a claim of ignorance), which become the underpinned foundations. The term “secularism” was invented in the nineteenth century by George Holyoake, the British sceptic (Kennedy & Newcombe 2008:37). This worldview constitutes a rival to Christianity

and other theistic worldviews. With the above definitions in mind, our research will constantly make reference to the atheistic/secular worldview.

As explained above, atheism/secularism involves an affirmation of this-worldly realities along with a denial or exclusion of transcendent, other-worldly realities, and its non-religious approach extends to individual and social life (Gill 2001:1085). However, for it to work in a democratic environment like South Africa, various other moods must be employed. Vitale (2017:207-208) lists these moods in what he calls secular “isms”: scientism, relativism, pantheism, pluralism, humanism and hedonism which are truth-claims that contribute to the atheistic/secular agenda. Some of these moods will be defined and addressed as we progress through this chapter. Noebel (2008:444-445) demonstrates the broad influence of a secular philosophy of life within society:

Theologically – atheistic (there is no God)

Philosophically – naturalistic, or “only nature exists”

Ethically – man-made, relativistic morality

Biologically – Darwinian evolutionism from non-living matter to living cells to humankind

Psychologically – denial of soul and spirit with mind and brain consisting of only matter

Sociologically – non-traditional families, including gay marriage

Legally – positive, evolutionary law

Politically – liberal/progressive advocacy of world government

Economically – socialistic or highly regulated capitalism

Historically – evolutionistic as the human race progresses from non-living matter to living pond scum to homo sapiens

This philosophy of life is spreading within the South African context. For example, South Africa is considered to have one the most liberal and secular constitutions. However, it is ironic that this land is filled by far with religious people of various religious faiths. Yet, it also reveals the impact that secular ideology has on our people. This is similar to the proverbial fitting of a square peg into a round hole. On the one hand, people are required to obey public laws that are motivated by secular thinking; yet, on the other hand, they

are allowed the privileges of religion in their private spheres. However, for most people, religious beliefs control public life. Yet, within this land, religious people are required to adopt a secular worldview – and merge it with their religious beliefs leading also to pluralism i.e. the tolerance and celebration of various worldviews. How can South African believers defend the Biblical worldview of worship against the secular influences?

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the atheistic/secular worldview and respond to its major tenets in relation to the worldview questions, using the philosophical-theological grid (cf. Chapter 3).

4.1. Worldview formation

In discussing the tenets that form the atheistic/secular worldview, we will examine its cultural influences, models of reality and action, and theories, beliefs and practices. These will be researched and examined against the Philosophical-Theological Grid as a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship. We begin by examining its cultural influence.

4.1.1. Applying the synchronic approach to cultural influences

The changing trends in the western world over the past two millennia is broadly categorized into the following three eras: Pre-modern (beginning – 1500s), Modern (1500s – 1900s) and Postmodern (1900s - present)¹¹. Explained diachronically, South Africa, for most of its history, fitted well within the *premodern* and a *third-world country*

¹¹ Various historians will offer different opinions as to the duration of each of these eras. We have, therefore, utilized a broad categorizing in the dating of these eras. Our concern is not with the actual dating; but the moods that developed during the separate eras that affected the worldviews of worship.

category.¹² The influences from western countries in South Africa through its colonial past is well documented.

These western influences introduced modernism into the South African context and witnessed the development of western ideas and practices. A great part of those influences included the technological advancements that resulted in industrialization. Many from the rural communities flocked to industrialized cities and towns to seek employment. Within this content, various aspects of town and city life have exposed South Africans to western philosophies, beliefs and practices. Schools and universities with western-bent curricula were implemented for certain racial groups. The White South African government attempted to ensure that society was organized on racial lines (Hofmeyr et. al. (eds.) 1991:409). These ideas and advancements began to slowly creep into the various segments of society. The biggest influences in modern thinking arrived through the educational system, media, and technological advancements that have contributed to exposing South Africans to the western world (Hofmeyr et. al. (eds.) 1991:414). As time progressed, postmodern thought started to infiltrate African thinking – especially in academia. This is where we now find ourselves at as a country.

Explained synchronically, postmodern thought is now one of the dominant western influences that is spreading to much of the world and is a reality within the South African context. Secularism, which stems as a by-product of modern and postmodern change, is one of the most powerful conditioning influences in cultural formation today (Zacharias 1997:22). Postmodernism refers to,

¹² However, it must be stated that history reveals various African thinkers contributing to earliest Christian thought and academia e.g. Augustine of Hippo, Clement, Origen, Athanasius, etc.

... an intellectual mood and an array of cultural expressions that call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set. Postmodernity, in turn, refers to an emerging epoch, the era in which we are living, the time when the postmodern outlook increasingly shapes our society (Grenz 1996:12).

Postmodernism mixed with secular beliefs and practices now dominate areas like “media, education, law, museums, sexual expression, and, sadly, the minds of the next generation, according to recent statistics” (Hodge & Patterson 2016:11). Postmodern, secular thought and practices have now a far-reaching influence – where the various cultures that make up this South African blend have been affected.

The various cultures and cultural practices present within South African society are numerous. Culture may be defined by an integrated system which will include (Adeney 1995:16):

- i. Beliefs (about God, or reality, or ultimate meaning),
- ii. Values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative),
- iii. Customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.),
- iv. Institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (governments, law, courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.).

These bind a society together and give it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity (*ibid.*).

For many decades under the Apartheid rule, South African culture was separated along racial lines (Hofmeyr et. al. (eds.) 1991:409). Within the various race groups, there existed various sub-cultures which still exist today. For example, we would be classified as Asian

Indian within the South African context. Our “mother-tongue” is Tamil; as opposed to Telegu, Hindi or Gujarati. Our foods are spicy South Indian; as opposed to the bland North Indian foods. Our religious beliefs are Christian; as opposed to Islam or Hinduism. Our dress is more western; as opposed to eastern wear, middle-eastern wear, etc. Similar types of differences also exist within the other race groups. Also, within current-day South Africa, there exists many immigrants from all over the world with differing cultural backgrounds. According to the current South African ethos, all cultures are to be respected and celebrated. The current South African ethos has bred a blend between the western atheistic/secular worldview and the various religious worldviews of worship (Jenkins 2014:37). Within every religious grouping, there exists a liberal arm that has been influenced by secular western thinking. The Biblical worldview of worship is not immune to this influence.

The task of the church is two-fold, as we engage with the current culture: firstly, to defend the Biblical worldview against atheistic/secular influences. Secondly, the task is for the church to prevent corruption within its ranks from those who lean towards certain aspects of atheistic/secular thinking and practices. What authoritative model of reality and action does the atheistic/secular worldview suggest for constructing their worldview?

4.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: humanism

The atheistic/secular worldview views man as the supreme authority to dictate what reality should be. Thus, secular humanism was birthed. The different forms of secularism are embodied in humanistic beliefs like atheism and the new atheism, agnosticism, existentialism, extra-terrestrial humanism, naturalism, materialism, relativism, hedonism, postmodernism, etc. (Hodge & Patterson 2016:13-14). Many that ascribe an

atheistic/secular explanation and understanding of reality live with contradiction. For example, a person might hold to a materialistic view of the universe and a relativistic understanding of morality. Another example includes the famous, Professor Richard Dawkins, who is a new atheist but also believes in aliens/extra-terrestrial life as a possible explanation for the origin of life on earth (Hodge & Patterson 2016:14). Also, Bill Nye professes to be an agnostic (he can't know for certain if God exists), but then proceeds to argue from an atheistic perspective (no God exists) (*ibid.*).

It becomes clear to see how atheistic and secular thinkers have borrowed from postmodern moods to explain their thinking and practices, even while subscribing to modernistic thinking processes in their individual scientific fields. There appears at times to be no logical consistency in their worldview due to no apparent objective truths regarding descriptions of reality. Subjective beliefs and practices, stemming from secular humanism, become the order of the day that must fit into, on the one hand, the survival of the fittest; yet, on the other hand, an agreed social construct ordered by governments using the educational and judicial systems available to propagate their theories and practices. Life becomes unliveable when secular thinking is applied to a society without an objective point of reference in God. Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, etc. are examples of constructing societies with man as its epicentre. The person with the most military power, therefore, determines what society should think and practice.

Many secular thinkers, without even realizing it, smuggle in Biblical values into their worldview. If, according to secular thinking, people are merely evolved animals and there is no God who determines what reality is,

... then why wear clothes? Why get married? Why get an education? Squirrels don't set up universities to discuss philosophical methodology.

Why celebrate the popular Christian holidays called weekends, which is based on the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day? Why have holidays anyway? A holiday is a holy day, yet there exists nothing holy in a secular worldview. Why heal sick people (medicine) when survival of the fittest should take its course as it has in the past without our interference? Why have laws? God may set laws, but if we were our own authority, then law is meaningless. Why waste time on science? In fact, how can the secularist know the laws of nature won't change tomorrow? (From a Christian perspective, God has promised to uphold nature as it is in the future.) From a secular viewpoint, they can't know the future will be uniform. If they argue that it has always been like that, then it begs the very question at hand! Thus it is a fallacious circular argument (Hodge & Patterson 2016:27).

As stated in chapter 3, within the Biblical worldview of worship, theological doctrines form the foundation for theories. As objective points of reference, they are clearly and systematically outlined as models of reality for the people of God. Only within the Biblical worldview of worship can true worship be encountered as the people of God respond to God's reality and act upon His revelation. We proceed to examine further the theories, beliefs and practices within the atheistic/secular worldview to ascertain its claims.

4.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices

With the birth of modernity into history, people held to the conviction that truth "...is knowable and therefore predictable, and therefore potentially controllable" (Pieterse 1996:52). This was set in the Renaissance – the period which elevated humankind to the centre of reality (Grenz 1996:2). This worldview assumed that reality is ordered, and human reason is capable of discerning this order as it is manifested in the laws of nature (Grenz 1996:40). Within this sphere, modernists believed that in trying to explain the particulars of life through scientific means, one could extrapolate and provide answers to universal truths. The two great revolutions, that atheists claim have liberated man from God, is attributed to the Copernican astronomy claims and the Darwinian biological claims (Kennedy & Newcombe 2008:13). As Kennedy & Newcombe (2008:13-14) point out, the

Copernican contribution that the Earth was not the centre of the universe was credited to a Christian believer. It was Ptolemy who had taught that the Earth was the centre of the solar system and that all the planets, the sun, and the stars revolved around it. This Ptolemaic influence was embraced and accepted as fact by the Catholic church (to their great embarrassment later). Copernicus, a Christian believer, came to realize that the Earth moved around the sun, as did the rest of the planets, and the stars didn't revolve around the Earth either. He did prove false the Ptolemaic view but not the scriptural view. This was no liberation from God as secular modernists claimed.

In tracing modernism, it will be observed, on the one hand, the positive influences that can be celebrated. Yet, on the other hand, much is to be condemned. Pieterse describes the negative effects of modernity in the following sentiments:

... modernity entered history as [a] progressive force, determined to liberate humanity from the shackles of ignorance. Yet, looking back at the last three centuries of its 'reign' it is inescapable to question its 'liberatory' dimensions against a track record of environmental destruction, colonialism, imperialism, the rise of Nazism, numerous world and regional wars, the widening gap between the rich and poor, the entrenchment of patriarchy, etc. (1996:52).

Within the west, this gave rise to the autonomy of humanity in that it left man as a law unto himself in equipping him to apprehend universally valid truth after being liberated from dominant texts and traditions (Westphal 2003:32). However, the vast majority of African cultures were separated from the Enlightenment and modern movements. It was the western colonial impact that introduced modernity into the African context which remained a foreign import (Esilaba & Starcher 2009:70). Esilaba & Starcher explain how a premodern, modern and postmodern outlook on life can exist in one household today within a typical African family:

... most Africans never lost their awareness of the spiritual realm and never truly embraced the idea of a closed system of natural causes. Many well-educated

Africans today, even professed Christians, consult witch doctors for help in discovering who stole their livestock or who should marry their daughter. Hence, as the winds of post-modernism blow across the African continent, modernism does not wither as in the West because it never wholly took root in the first place. Rather, traditional, modern and postmodern thought patterns coexist. Living under the same roof we find a 70-year-old grandmother who built her life on traditional African values, her 48-year-old daughter who embraced the modernist values propagated at her university and her 17-year-old granddaughter who views life through postmodern eyes (2009:70-1).

Compounded to this outlook on life is the postmodern worldview, which celebrates diversity (Strobel 2007:233). The basic idea is that due to the fact of the presence of diversity in the world, there is "... no access to ultimate unity, no way to bring the diverse things of our experience into a coherent whole. We have particulars but no universals; relatives but no absolutes" (Sproul 1986:114). These plurality of beliefs and experiences led to the mood of pluralism. Sproul explains the consequence of this mood,

... modern man is saying that he is cut off from God, cut off from the transcendent point of unity. All we have left is plurality ... To speak of a plurality is simply to say there are diverse ideas or peoples or backgrounds. However, as soon as we add that suffix *ism* to the word *plural*, we are saying something different. We are now saying that plurality is all that there is. There is plurality but no unity; there is nothing that brings ultimate coherence (*ibid.*).

This leads to the proverbial "Humpty-Dumpty" scenario where all the king's horses and all the king's men could not put Humpty-Dumpty back together again due to the fall and broken pieces. Society becomes broken when there is no meta-narrative to keep its members together. This leads us to the next postmodern claim.

Postmodernism also denies exclusive truth claims which leads to religious relativism (i.e. one religion can be true for one person or culture but not for another); moral relativism (i.e. no universal right and wrong), and historical relativism (i.e. we can't know for certain what happened in the past; there are only subjective interpretations) (Strobel 2007:233-4). Here there are no absolute norms and values and all truth is subjective and relative.

Each person is free to decide what is good or bad, and right and wrong. Great emphasis is placed on feelings and experience which results in all worldviews being given equal status. This area may be explained as the intellectual aspect of dealing with reality. Can these moods coexist within the South African context to form a harmonious society?

The coexisting of the various worldviews by the different generations can be evidenced in the various race groups in this country – and not solely within the African cultures. With the natural depletion of the older generation and the existence of the new, the postmodern worldview seems to be gaining momentum. The educating of the current generation within a western framework is shaping it with postmodern thought. To an extent, postmodernism allows for a secular society in matters of the mind; and pluralism and relativism for matters of faith and spirituality. It preaches a diversity with no uniting thread to ascertain truth.

Postmodernism also came as a reaction against modernism with its rational inferences concerning truth. Nietzsche (1844-1900), in his declaration that *God is dead*, took away the objective advance of truth and meaning and introduced “pessimistic existentialism” (Sproul 1986:47). Sproul (1986:47) explains:

Nietzsche took the philosophy of secularism to its logical conclusion. He understood that if this time is the only time, and this world is the only world, then there is no God. If there is no God, then life is meaningless. If all of human existence is shut up in the here and now, then all human values are arbitrary. If there is no exit to the eternal, then values and truth and ethics are a matter of pure decision. Right and wrong are simply what we have the courage to decide they are for ourselves.

Due to the denial of the transcendent, religious definitions of truth, morality, ethics and worship is relegated to the individual’s personal and subjective observation, definition and application. The outworking of this worldview results in certain prevailing moods where

secondary aspects of a person's existence is relegated to the public sphere, and the primary relegated to the private spheres of life.

Another secular mood that results when there is no point of reference is the mood of *Privatization*. Zacharias defines it as "... the socially required and legally enforced separation of our private lives and our public personas" (1997:105). This mood mandates that issues of ultimate meaning be relegated to our private spheres. So, a person's character, it is believed, does not affect his/her public life. According to this view, an individual's beliefs are his individual truth and must be kept as such. The idea of propagating one's belief in order to get others to disavow theirs and follow the one being propagated is not tolerated in the postmodern world. The result is, in the name of non-offensiveness, religion is privatized and relegated to the home, while in the name of freedom, all kinds of indecencies are made public (Zacharias 1997:108). How is the church to respond to these influences?

The Biblical command is to propagate the absolute and exclusive claims of Christ. The 21st century setting is hostile to this message because it attacks the philosophies and beliefs of others of different worldviews. The problem is that the church can sometimes be seduced into believing that a person's belief is a private matter. This may result in syncretism, which is the blending of elements from various faiths into a new form of spirituality (Strobel 2007:229). The naïve perspective that all worldviews teach people to be good, and therefore all teach the same truths, is unfounded and can gain no common ground with the Bible's exclusivistic claims.¹³ The Biblical worldview of worship uniquely

¹³ Yet, we must also agree that there are morals that are taught by other worldviews that agree with Christian morals and ethics. But, we cannot say that because they have *some things* in common; that they have *everything* in common.

centres its message around the cross and resurrection of Christ to make people good – which is the characteristic of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17). This forms the basis for sin and evil being dealt with and overcome by God for the believer. It must be understood that redemption always precedes morality; and that the truth about morality can only be realized once an individual recognizes the need for redemption (Zacharias 2007:83-4). The doctrine of redemption is unique within the Judeo-Christian worldview of worship. It also uniquely brings together all the pieces of life within the individual and life lived in community.

To conclude this section on the moods observed in society, we agree with Zacharias on the outworking of these moods and the way they affect society. He observes:

Secularization left society without shame and with no point of reference for decency, and pluralization left society without reason and with no point of reference for rationality. Privatization – born from the union of the other two – has left people without meaning and no point of reference for life's coherence (1997:108).

These moods demonstrate how the secular/atheistic agenda is found wanting when God is displaced. The displacing of God as the starting point can be traced back to René Descartes, the seventeenth century French philosopher (Strobel 2007:232). His famous quip “I think, therefore, I am” reveals his starting point of knowledge. Even though Descartes was a committed Roman Catholic, he displaced God as the starting point for knowledge, replacing Him with the individual knower who can find certainty on his own (*ibid.*). Postmodernism, on the other hand, becomes a reaction to Descartes' quest for certainty and to the creation of systems like rationalism, romanticism, Marxism, Nazism, or scientism because of the tendency to oppress people who disagree with those in power (*ibid.*). The word “postmodern” may be defined as “... a historical period, a philosophical theory, and a kind of artistic work” (Gallagher 1997:156). Stott (2007) presents an

informative, detailed background to modernism and the enlightenment and explains the cultural shift from modernism to the arrival of postmodernism and notes that the term 'post'- doesn't simply mean 'after', but hints at the postmodern 'protest against' the Enlightenment years.

One may question the relevance of postmodernism for Africa in general and South Africa in particular, because of its historical roots within western countries. In arriving at an answer to that question, the historical attestation to the arrival and influence of western industrialization and colonial thinking is deeply embedded into African society. Katongole notices a renewed interest from the West in African culture which is evidenced from a tourist fascination of African wildlife and tribal customs, to an academic interest – which he notes, "... makes African Studies one of the favourite and competitive courses within the curriculum of a number of universities, particularly in the United States" (2000:239). The postmodern agenda may seem absent in rural areas; but is very much prevalent in the towns and cities of South Africa within the learning halls, media, government-run human rights agendas, entertainment, advertising, etc. Modern technological advancement through cable television, cell phones and the world-wide-web (www), have now even connected those in rural settlements with secular influences.

When the South African context is investigated, the findings reveal some dominant postmodern moods, trends and philosophies present. With the birth of postmodernism within the intellectual space comes the demise of the objective world of the enlightenment period. According to Grenz (1996:39), postmodernism may have been birthed in St. Louis in 1972 and its fixture on the intellectual landscape could be traced to French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard. Grenz (1996:39) records the event that set-in motion how this

new intellectual mood became set in place through Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. The book described in an accessible manner the revolution in outlook that lay beneath the cultural phenomenon occurring throughout the Western world and the theoretical and philosophical basis of the postmodern view (*ibid.*).

This began a new way of viewing reality as modernism with its outlook was rejected. This new mood rejects the possibility of constructing a single correct worldview and are content simply to speak of many views and, by extension, many worlds (Grenz 1996:39).

The postmodern picture sees not the complete eradicating of modernity's influence; but, a reworking of certain tenets. One of the postmodern tenets is that man is an extension of culture (Crouse 2013:3). In other words, people are shaped by their surroundings. South Africa has certainly been affected by modernity and postmodernity through its colonial past and democratic present. Kenzo (2002:323-4) argues that it is legitimate to think about Africa in terms of postmodernism, because of the historical antecedents for postmodernism in African culture, literature and philosophy and because the current postcolonial situation calls for it. It is difficult to separate post-colonialism from postmodernism due to the socio-cultural and political meaning of the former (Kenzo 2002:324).

The modernist assumption of an objective reality grounded in a universal and external truth, order, authority and a commitment to a meta-narrative is what defined the previous generations (Towns 2008:399-400). Postmodernism is built on suspicion towards meta-narratives and emphasizes mini-narratives (Strobel 2007:233). Postmodern thought is characterized by fragmentation, indeterminacy and intense distrust of all universal or

totalizing discourses (Gallagher 1997:156). For postmodernists, each person has his/her own narrative. No one has the right to say that another's viewpoint is wrong. Their approach to certainty and objectivity is measured by the fact that humanity is finite and limited.

In dealing with meta-narratives, some western liberation theologians have mistakenly read theology as something made up by separatist groupings. For example, some argue that theology is a product of White-dominant institutions and are now positing a "Black" theology built on inspirations from God, ancestors, elders, and the struggles of other people of colour. In trying to separate themselves from past hurts that were caused by negative theological interpretations created by White supremacists, some are found trying to steer away from a unifying meta-narrative. Their perception of Christian Theology becomes eclipsed by their biases and pain and they end up losing touch with history and revelation. In trying to create a Black theology in postmodern configurations, they have to reconfigure history to suit their biases. Christian Theology arose out of Judaism and a middle-eastern and Asian context and not out of White domination.

Postmodernism also introduces us to the mood of relativism - which can be broadly defined as the denial of absolutes and therefore is frequently defined negatively. Postmodernism is identified with relativism because of its "... mistrust of claims to objectivity, denial of universal conceptions of rationality, and rejection of the role of truth and reason as courts of appeal" (Krausz n.d.:2). Baghramian outlines four aspects that Relativism denies:

Defined negatively, relativism amounts to the denial of a cluster of interconnected philosophical positions that are traditionally contrasted with it; in this sense negative relativism is 'anti-anti-relativism' for it provides legitimacy for relativism by denying:

- (a) the thesis of universalism or the position that there could and should be universal agreement on matters of truth, goodness, beauty, meaningfulness, etc.;
- (b) the thesis of objectivism or the position that cognitive, ethical and aesthetic values such as truth, goodness and beauty are mind-dependent, 'capable of being presented from a point of view that is independent of the point of view of any human being in particular and of human kind in general'...;
- (c) the thesis of absolutism or the view that truth, goodness, beauty, etc. are timeless, unchanging and immutable;
- (d) monism or the view that, in any given area or on any given topic, there can be no more than one correct opinion, judgement, or norm. Relativism is compatible with local but not universal monism, for a relativist may accept that in any given culture or society there can be no more than one correct view on any topic but deny that one single correct norm or belief can apply cross-culturally (2004:2).

Relativism has come to occupy a prominent place within the academic and intellectual ethos of our time which has arisen out of an acknowledgement of the existence of deep differences in attitudes and beliefs within this 21st century global village (Baghramian 2004:1). The irony of relativism is that it "... reduces every element of absoluteness to relativity while making a completely illogical exception in favour of this reduction itself" (Schuon 1973:1).

4.2. Truth foundations

One's view of truth is part and parcel of an overall worldview and shapes the tenets of that worldview (Holmes 1983:127). This is also true for the atheistic/secular worldview. Aspects of truth and worship will be discussed, together with the application of the correspondence and coherence theories to follow.

We will proceed to examine the understanding of truth within the atheistic/secularistic worldview by specifically engaging with their definition of truth and their understanding of the nature of truth.

The atheistic/secularistic worldview are divided when they approach and attempt a definition of truth. This is so due to the fact that there are many atheists/secularists who would place themselves in a postmodern relativist camp; whilst others would consider themselves modernist and hence believe in the objectivity of truth outside oneself. The Biblical worldview and its definition of truth aligns itself with the latter – where truth is objective and defined by that which agrees with reality. However, the Biblical worldview parts ways with the modernist atheist/secularist through the claim that truth is revealed by God. Attempts at science for the Christian believer is to discover and confirm the particulars of God’s world based on revealed universal truth claims. The opposite is true for the atheist/secularist who attempts to make universal truth claims from studying the particulars in the universe, with a denial of God as the holder of truth. We proceed to examine the nature of truth within the atheistic/secularistic worldview.

For the atheist/secularist, matters concerning reality and, hence, truth statements concerning that reality, is understood only by the careful use of the scientific method (Phillips & Brown 1991:45). This perspective borders on *scientism*, which is “the belief that all truth is scientific truth and that the sciences give us our best shot at knowing how things really are” (*ibid.*). We proceed by examining matters of the nature of truth with its constant appeal to scientism within the atheistic/secular worldview. We begin with the explanation of the origin of truth within the atheistic/secular worldview.

With regards to the foundation of truth claims, the atheistic/secular worldview opposes the description of absolute truth - which is located in God within the theistic framework. Many secular humanists who embrace naturalistic philosophy have subscribed to the *Humanist Manifesto* that emerged in 1933 by Roy Wood Sellars with its final edition in

2003 (Noebel 2008:443). Noebel argues that secular humanism is not only a religion; it is also a comprehensive religious worldview (2008:444). He explains that worldviews discuss “theological, philosophical, ethical, biological, psychological, sociological, legal, economic, political, and historical nature” (*ibid.*). Secular humanism addresses each of these subjects, and thus represents a comprehensive worldview. Noebel concludes,

... if secular humanism were merely secular – that is, if human life were nothing more than complex bundles of atoms moving about in a meaningless universe or multiverse – there would be no need to propound an ethic, a psychology, an economics, a legal format, or a world government. However, this is not the case. Secular humanists have addressed each of the ten areas of their worldview, often in great detail and with great passion (2008:444).

When God is removed by secular humanists, truth must be grounded somewhere. Most human secularists will ground truth in science or on rational thought. This brings worship down to the level of creation – where our scientific explanations and rational reasoning give meaning to ultimate questions. Man starts to ground his faith and worship in himself and the creation around him. The lack of logical consistency in its denial of religious worship in this worldview becomes obvious.

With regards to the objectivity of truth, according to Caner (2008:47), the atheistic/secular world systems are mostly developed in understanding truth in socio-political terms within the Western and European World. This move grounds notions of truth within creation and stands the risk of removing objectivity in relation to ultimate truth matters. This is to be evidenced in the following systems: atheism, agnosticism, secularism, and existentialism. This produces a naturalistic philosophy which is limited to secular explanations. However, trying to explain objective truth without a point of reference cannot be contained within an atheistic/secular philosophy. Unknowingly, secular humanists create a religious camp.

What do we mean by this? The following criteria for truth claims fall short when God is removed from the discussion (Young 1954:47-51):

1. the appeal to human *instinct* (i.e. an inborn pattern of activity and response common to a given biological group),
2. *feeling* (the appeal to the emotional side of human nature),
3. *sense experience* (the sense becomes the final standard of appeal in matters of truth and error), and,
4. *intuition* (the knowing of an object in a manner not determined by any previous act of reasoning).

This is due to the subjective nature of these claims, and the fact that these experiences differ from person to person without an ultimate, objective point of reference as a standard by which to measure truth claims. When God is removed as the objective point of reference, anarchy results. Man is left to his whims and fancies. The one with the most military power wins as history has demonstrated through the Hitlers and Stalins of this world. Yet, in a democratic society, secular humanists live comfortably within the Judeo-Christian notions of truth; but vehemently argue against it. The only reason that they are able to argue against it is due to the fact that the Biblical worldview of worship allows people to follow their subjective truth claims. However, due to their denial of truth that is centred in God, it allows exclusive truth to shine; for truth shines brightest when surrounded by lies. We will proceed to examine the worldview questions and the truth claims that the atheistic/secularistic worldview adopts as an explanation apart from God and the Biblical worldviews defence against such claims.

As for the understanding within the Biblical worldview of worship that truth is from God and therefore is absolute; for many atheists/secularists, truth is ascertained through human reason and scientific means. When it comes to the absoluteness of truth, those that appeal to a secular worldview are divided into postmodern relativists and modernist absolutists. The relativists see no foundation or overarching source for truth. Truth is relative to one's culture, a historical epoch, an evolutionary stage, etc. (Passantino & Passantino n.d.:n.n.). Together with proponents of the Biblical worldview, the modernist absolutists also reject postmodernist relativism and their fluidity when they approach matters of truth. However, their paths diverge when it comes to the grounding of absolute truth. For the secularist, solutions to truth concepts are found in human endeavour coupled with scientific naturalism, producing the benefits of technology in context of reason and human-based ethics (Passantino & Passantino n.d.:n.n.). However, these cannot find a point of reference in science due to the fact that science cannot measure truths that are ultimate. Naturalism projects the view that ultimate reality is material (Phillips & Brown 1991:44). However, ultimate truth has to be metaphysically sought. The Biblical worldview of worship finds its point of reference in the Person of God in whom truth is grounded and revealed. Further, the atheistic/secularistic worldview provides no point of reference for the four absolutes of love, justice, evil and forgiveness – which as Zacharias points out, finds its point of reference in the cross of Christ (2006:231). Therefore, the worship of this God is warranted from His creation by drawing from revealed truth and practically applying it to all levels of life. The secularist finds his reference point in the material created order – which is changing. With their denial of God as the absolute, atheists/secularists end up creating absolute “gods” in theories like the

multiverse or the panspermia theories.¹⁴ This leads to the worship of creation – for it is self-creating; rather than the Creator.

As pointed out in Chapter 3, the Biblical worldview of worship understands universal truth as truth that is to be applied everywhere, to engage everything and to exclude nothing. Within the atheistic/secularistic worldview, this becomes an impossible task. For one, universal truth cannot be applied within a secular postmodern relativist philosophy. For the secular modernist absolutist, truth is sought to be universally adopted with an appeal to scientific naturalism. However, science cannot engage with matters of the heart like love, happiness and faith; nor with issues that are linked with purpose and meaning, nor with matters of good, evil and justice for the individual and the community. So, science can only provide answers for materially measured substances and not metaphysical or non-physical entities. It therefore cannot satisfy producing truth as a universal concept. What about the nature of truth as eternally engaging?

With the denial of an eternal God and the focus on the material world that is constrained by time, the atheist/secularist sees no need for concepts of eternal truth. The human being is just here by chance and will be extinguished at death. There is no afterlife for truth to exist.

With regards to the exclusivity of truth, it will always remain thus by mere definition. Even relativists make exclusive truth claims – i.e. that relative truth is the only truth – thereby frustrating their own arguments. Whatever claims the atheistic/secular worldview makes is with an understanding that scientism is the only factual method to ascertain truth. By

¹⁴ These terms will be explained and discussed later when dealing with the question of origins (4.3.).

inference, all other truth claims that contradict scientific claims and interpretations must be denied.

As observed in Chapter 3, the Biblical worldview of worship finds its point of reference in the special revelation of God through the Scriptures and the Person of Jesus Christ¹⁵. Therein is truth systematically unified. The atheist/secularist has no such claim to a systematic and unified cause for truth. All claims come as a reaction against Christian dogma when a point of reference is in God. Modern science, to which atheists/secularists look, was in fact made possible through theists. They desired to study the world God made. However, atheists/secularists deny the existence of God, and have to present much of their truth claims against science that favours a theistic approach. In so doing, many scientists move away from their discipline of science and end up philosophizing concerning metaphysical truths. For example, Zacharias (*in Zacharias & Vitale 2017:56-57*) explains the treatment on topics like liberty, equality, and justice by atheists:

Sam Harris writes on it in *The Moral Landscape*, as does Stephen Hawking in *The Grand Design*. But, alas, there is no designer and there is no objective moral lawgiver. We make laws and claim credit. We design beauty and claim credit. But is the backdrop of these categories free from such necessary connections?

As stated by Zacharias, these metaphysical truths cannot be scientifically deduced. Therefore, the atheist/secularist is left to his/her own whims and fancies with an underpinning worldview truth claim – that there is no God.

In recent years, atheists/secularists have attempted to systematize and unify their truth claims through the progressive Humanist Manifesto (Manifesto I in 1933, Manifesto II in 1973, and Manifesto III in 2003). These are attempts at providing for atheists/secularists

¹⁵ 3.2.1.2.7.

“a progressive philosophy of life, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfilment that aspire to the greater good of humanity” (*online* 2003:n.p.). Much of the content of the Humanist Manifesto is an attempt to live life apart from a belief in God; yet with presupposed moral truth claims that are borrowed from the Judeo-Christian worldview.

Whilst for the Biblical worldview of worship, the journey in search of truth ends in Jesus Christ; for the atheist/secularist, the journey never stops. There is always a search for more truth that must prove the cause and order of the universe apart from God. Even if information is not available scientifically, their hope is that truths will be discovered in future that will show that there is no God. So, the journey of many sceptics in the pursuit of truth is both religious and evangelistic. The use of science is to prove that there is no God. Zacharias & Vitale (2017:87) argue that it is too simple to assume that science can explain everything there is to be explained. They argue, “Even that claim itself, ‘Truth can only be known scientifically,’ cannot be scientifically proven” (*ibid.*). The atheist/secularist is engaging in a losing battle; for far from the advancement of science undermining God, God is the only one that makes science possible (*ibid.*).

As is evidenced above, on many grounds of truth discovery, the proponents of the atheistic/secularistic worldview stand on shaky ground philosophically; whilst the Biblical worldview of worship meets these criteria comprehensively (as demonstrated in Chapter 3 also). An application of the correspondence and coherence theories within the worldview questions to determine whether the truth claims of the atheistic/secularistic worldview corresponds and coheres with revealed reality and scientific reality. Also, we

will test the truth statements with regards to the worldview questions by applying the arguments for logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance.

We will proceed by looking at the truth claims of the atheistic/secularistic worldview that are given in answer to the worldview questions.

4.3. The worldview questions

Atheism/secularism may be considered, firstly, as a reaction against theism and the supernatural. The second proposition follows the first: atheists and secularists are committed to naturalism and the material world. Thirdly, atheists and secularists seek to account for the worldview questions by appealing to the statement “There is no God” and therefore, reality has to be explained through natural means. The worldview questions will be examined to ascertain the atheistic answer and filtered through the philosophical/theological grid of the Biblical worldview of worship.

However, just prior to our delving into the worldview questions, it is important to note that atheists/secularists, who appeal to the sciences, argue that their beliefs have nothing to do with faith nor worship. In response to these denials, Atheist turned Christian, Alister McGrath, argues the “... belief that there is no God is just a matter of faith as the belief that there is a God. If ‘faith’ is defined as ‘belief lying beyond proof,’ both Christianity and atheism are faiths” (2004:180). It is with this conviction that we apply beliefs and practices of “worship” to the atheistic/secular worldview. Atheists/secularists will deny that theirs’ is a faith and find issues with applying worship to their atheism. However, as Keller (2017:n.n.) rightly states:

Everyone has to live for something, and if that something is not God, then we are driven by that thing we live for – by overwork to achieve it, by inordinate fear if it is

threatened, deep anger if it is being blocked, and inconsolable despair if it is lost. So, the novelist David Foster Wallace, not long before his suicide, spoke these words to the 2005 graduating class at Kenyon College:

Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship...is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough...Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you...Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is ... they're unconscious. They are default settings.

This again proves that man is deeply religious and finds ways to worship something or someone.

Recent atheism witnessed the rise of what Aikman (2008:1-2) termed, *The Four Horsemen* in Sam Harris (Neuroscientist), Richard Dawkins (Ethologist and Evolutionary Biologist), Daniel Dennett (Philosopher), and Christopher Hitchens (Journalist). Compared to atheists of previous generations, these four men have religiously, passionately and militantly propagated atheistic beliefs in opposition - especially to the Christian worldview. According to Aikman (2008:2-3), the term *The Four Horsemen* given to them adopts a Biblically-derived imagery of the Apocalypse which appears in the sixth chapter of the New Testament book of Revelation and have traditionally been regarded as corresponding to Pestilence, Famine, War, and Death.). These four atheist writers have already been called the Four Horsemen in a review that appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a Washington D.C.-based weekly newspaper for American college and university faculty (*ibid.*). These four atheists, and many like them, have ridden out bent on calling people to appeal to a materialistic view of the world. They have an agenda

to explain the worldview questions through a philosophy of life devoid of God (*ibid.*). Our research will now examine, both historical and current, atheistic explanations on the questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny, and the Christian defence against these beliefs. We begin with the question of origin.

4.3.1. Origin and worship

Young rightly views the problem of origins as one of the most perplexing modern issue (1954:85). Biblical revelation as contained in the Genesis account held sway for many millennia. The Biblical version views everything as created by the eternal and infinite God. However, with an appeal to the sciences, modern man has formed explanations apart from a necessary Creator Being. The *Big Bang* theory as originator, and its continuation through an evolutionary process became the dominant theories propagated by the sciences. However, atheism/secularism have perplexing problems. They have to explain the following (*Robert Morey quoted in Zacharias & Vitale 2017:5*):

1. How everything ultimately came from nothing.
2. How order came from chaos.
3. How harmony came from discord.
4. How life came from nonlife.
5. How reason came from irrationality.
6. How personality came from non-personality.
7. How morality came from amorality.

We look now to matters on the origin of the universe and the atheistic/secular truth claims being made in relation to some of the questions highlighted above.

4.3.1.1. Origin of the universe: secular beliefs

We, firstly, will focus on the question of origin as witnessed in the theory of the Big Bang. Many scientists in the past held to the belief that the universe eternally existed. Carl Sagan's famous line "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be..." rings with a similar idea (*quoted in* Wallace Smith, 2012). However, recent scientists have debunked the idea of an eternal universe. Even atheistic physicist, Stephen Hawking, confirms this conclusion:

All the evidence seems to indicate, that the universe has not existed forever, but that it had a beginning, about 15 billion years ago. This is probably the most remarkable discovery of modern cosmology. Yet it is now taken for granted ... [T]he universe has not existed forever. Rather, the universe, and time itself, had a beginning in the Big Bang (*quoted in* Zacharias & Vitale 2017:69).

Philosopher, Ravi Zacharias (2008:31), demonstrates this shift when he mentions that the Big Bang cosmology and Einstein's theory of general relativity together imply that there is a beginning to the universe. Zacharias (2008:31) argues that all the data indicates a universe that is exploding outward from a point of infinite density. This singularity must not be mistaken for a point for it is the whole of three-dimensional space compressed to zero size (*ibid.*). Space, therefore, has a boundary at which it ceases to exist. Zacharias (2008:32) argues that at the point of the universe's origin, there is *something* rather than *nothing* – a mystery that leaves science totally silent.

Zacharias rightly shows the limitations of science when it comes to the question of the *origin* of the universe. Due to the fact that we live in a cause and effect universe, the immediate logical question should be, "Who/what created the Big Bang?" If there was a Big Bang, the Biblical answer provides logical support that is consistent with reality that God did it. However, for atheistic scientists, this is an unsatisfactory answer devoid of empirical scientific reasoning. Yet, when we begin to probe the explanations that

scientists provide, we begin to see them moving away from empirical scientific facts to making faith statements. For example, some atheistic scientists will opt for a multiverse theory, which supposedly explains the fine-tuning of the universe. However, this does not answer the question scientifically (or with empirical data); it only pushes the argument back in time without explaining what/who caused the multiverses to emerge in the first place. Theoretical physicist, John Polkinghorne, refers to the multiverse theory as unscientific and calls it a metaphysical guess (*quoted in Zacharias & Vitale 2017:84*). There is no logical consistency here in the application of the claims that scientists make for empirical data – which they claim leads to scientific reasoning.

Others, like Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA believed in a *Panspermia theory*, which suggests that life on Earth did not originate on our planet; but was transported here from somewhere else in the universe (*Zacharias 2008:34*). It is clear to see how these scientists move away from science to making faith-statements. These arguments are devoid of empirical data to prove atheistic scientist's claims. All they do, is deny the reality of the Biblical God and replace Him with another "cause." This, in itself, demonstrates that a Creator is a logical necessity.

Atheistic scientists are called to also answer the question: *where did time, space and matter come from?* These three had to exist simultaneously. This is what is called a continuum. For, if there was *matter* and no *space*; *where* would matter be placed? If there were *matter* and *space*, but no *time*; *when* would it come into existence? The Bible answers this question in the opening lines in Genesis 1:1¹⁶ "In the beginning" (TIME),

¹⁶ Morris, Henry M. The Eternal Future of Time, Space, and Matter. <https://www.icr.org/article/482>

Accessed 2017/08/13

“God created the heavens” (SPACE), “and the earth” (MATTER). The Biblical worldview of worship argues that all came into existence simultaneously by God. God is beyond time, for He is eternal. God is beyond space, for He is omnipresent. God is beyond matter, for He is Spirit. It is a logically consistent argument that Creator had to exist outside of His creation and not be limited by it. God, in the Christian worldview, is the uncaused first-cause. The God of the Bible fits perfectly into this reasoning. As we have seen, scientific explanations can only deal with matter (empirical data). It is when they step into the arena of metaphysics that they go against empirical data and start applying faith statements to scientific theories. The irony is that they are blinded to their mistake.

Similar to theistic claims on origin that rests on faith, the atheistic/secular system is also grounded in faith (Kennedy & Newcombe 2008:9). This is so because atheism is based on certain assumptions. Kennedy & Newcombe (2008:10) argue:

If you believe the world essentially created itself, that’s a far different starting point than believing in a self-sufficient Supreme Being who always was, is, and ever will be. In essence, the question is, is God self-sufficient and always existing, or is the universe self-sufficient and always existing? Where you start from virtually always determines where you’ll end up.

Other atheists/secularists see the philosophical blunders of their contemporaries and try to re-define arguments. For example, physicist Lawrence Krauss, tries to redefine “nothing” as actually containing some substance that is scientifically proven – which includes certain laws. In an interview with Ira Flatrow on National Public Radio [US], Krauss, states:

Empty space is a boiling, bubbling brew of virtual particles that pop in and out of existence in a time scale so short that you can’t even measure them. Now, that sounds of course like counting angels on the head of a pin; if you can’t measure them, then it doesn’t sound like its science, but in fact you can’t measure them directly. But we can measure their effects indirectly (2012).

He, thereafter, goes on to explain how these particles that are popping in and out of existence (which no-one can measure due to their momentary existence and, therefore, present time-constraints) actually affect the properties of atoms and nuclei and actually are responsible for most of the mass inside the human body. He thereafter adds, “You take space, get rid of all the particles, all the radiation, and it actually carries energy, and that notion that in fact empty space – once you allow gravity into the game, what seems impossible is possible” (2012). These statements do not correspond to reality. Neither do they cohere within the atheistic/secularistic worldview; for, Strauss is redefining known reality to a reality that will suit his ends. To demonstrate this incoherence and lack of correspondence to known reality, Krauss’ argument can be summarized as follows: In the mysterious beginning (TIME) there was nothing – which actually was something (MATTER) – i.e. energy. Mysteriously add gravity to it, then SPACE is formed. Some questions pop out (pun intended): When did time come about? Where did that energy come from? Who mysteriously added gravity to the mix? Krauss, without even noticing it, is positing a Someone who is adding to this mix. The theistic argument is strengthened. He becomes illogical and creates empirical data that border on “counting angels that dance on the head of a pin” (as he also acknowledges) to prove his point. The problem is that, as a physicist in his field, he sits as an authority over those that have not received his training. Yet, the unschooled are able to see clearly, even when physicists move away from science and become philosophers.

Evolution, on the other hand, does not describe origins, but processes of development that are contained in the world. Evolution is a theory which can be summarized into the following statement: “The theory that higher forms of life have originated from lower forms” (Young 1954:247). The theory of evolution has traditionally been separated into two:

macro-evolution and micro-evolution – where it is believed that because there are observable changes in organisms on a micro level; therefore, it must have happened at the macro-level as well. Our discussions focus more on the macro-evolutionary perspective, because it is at this level that evolutionary scientists propose changes in species that supposedly took place over millions of years. Our goal in this section is to briefly examine the evolutionary theory and discover whether it is a satisfactory answer to the question of origins.

Rendle-Short (1991:33) notes that the popularization of evolutionary thinking is owed to Charles Darwin. His book *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) “... acted as a sort of seed-crystal to precipitate the super-saturated solution of evolutionary belief ascent in so many minds” (*ibid.*). The theory of evolution has been propagated within much of the world’s education systems. In South Africa, this theory has taken root even at primary school level. Prior to the publishing of Charles Darwin’s book *Origin of Species* in 1859, the stage was already set for the acceptance of the theory of evolution (DeWitt 2008:214). DeWitt explains Darwin’s theory:

Darwin proposed that new species could arise through a process of *natural selection*. When the reproductive capacity of an organism is higher than can be sustained by the environment, those individuals best suited to the prevailing conditions will survive to reproduce. Those that are less fit will tend to die off and leave fewer offspring. The process of natural selection is analogous to that of artificial selection, whereby a breeder selects the desired traits. However, natural selection is a passive process, with no guided input beyond the environment conditions. Natural selection is a conservative process and only capable of elimination. New traits are supposed to come about in the hereditary instructions found in an organism’s DNA (2008:215).

Darwin’s theory also includes the aspect of *common ancestry* where he suggested that all living things are the descendants of the same common ancestor (DeWitt 2008:215).

Modern atheism appeals to fossil records to argue for the theory of macroevolution.

However, these supposed findings have been refuted, for example, as Moreland (1987:221) points out that features of the fossil record lend support to creationism and argue against Neo-Darwinism. Firstly, neo-Darwinian predicts that the fossil record should show millions of transition forms, for which there is no evidence. All we can evidence is different species. Secondly, this has led evolutionists to argue for a punctuated equilibrium – i.e. the view that “organisms evolve abruptly without several, gradual transitional forms, and that this sudden change is followed by a long period of stasis or lack of change” (Moreland 1987:222). Moreland argues, however, that punctuated equilibrium is an “ad hoc addition to save macroevolution or a replacement of evolutionary theory preceding it and not a refinement of evolutionary theory” (1987:222). Moreland, quoting scientist Michael Denton, concludes by demonstrating the untenability of Darwinian evolution:

The overriding supremacy of the myth (of Darwinian evolution) has created a widespread illusion that the theory of evolution was all but proved one hundred years ago and that all subsequent biological research – paleontological, zoological and in the newer branches of genetics and molecular biology – has provided ever-increasing evidence for Darwinian ideas. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that the evidence was so patchy one hundred years ago that even Darwin himself had increasing doubts as to the validity of his views, and the only aspect of his theory which received any support over the past century is where it applies to micro-evolutionary phenomena. His general theory, that all life on earth had originated and evolved by a gradual successive accumulation of fortuitous mutations, is still, as it was in Darwin’s time, a highly speculative hypothesis entirely without direct factual support and very far from that self-evident axiom some of its more aggressive advocates would have us believe (1987:222-223).

Blanchard also reveals how scientists, at a point, step away from science to make philosophical statements, in his treatise against the atheist Richard Dawkins’ book *The God Delusion*. Blanchard (2000:698) argues that Dawkins endorses Charles Darwin’s idea of evolution by natural selection over millions of years. This is claimed to occur with the fittest specimens of species surviving and gradually leading to more complex forms of life. It is also claimed that the ‘tree of life’, within evolutionary theory, covers all living

things that have ever existed on our planet, from the first life form to humankind; "... as Dawkins puts it, 'We are all descended from what might have been something like bacteria'" (Blanchard 2000:698). Quoting Dawkins, Blanchard (2000:698) writes, "He is so sure of this that he adds, 'It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that).'"

These kinds of statements are frequently made by atheists/secularists. However, they fail to explain how life began. Before evolution can begin, there has to be things capable of evolving; before natural selection gets under way there has to be something to select (Blanchard 2000:698). Dawkins admits that natural selection 'needs some luck to get started' and that the emergence of self-replicating life forms out of nothing is 'exceedingly improbable' (Blanchard 2000:698). He thereafter overlooks the problem by suggesting that given time, anything is possible. This goes against biology – which thrives on empirical data. Dawkins fails to realize that he is a man of faith in his guesswork.

As can be clearly evidenced, the argument *for* the God of the Bible requires lesser faith to believe than the atheist's version of origin. The very nature of reality reminds us that the universe had to have a beginning in an uncaused, first-cause. The God of the Bible fits logically and perfectly into that description. Next, reality teaches us that everything in creation looks perfectly designed (although in a fallen state), which points to a Grand Designer. This also fits perfectly, with regards to empirical data, into the Biblical revelation of the God of the Bible. However, the God of the Bible is also revealed as Sustainer of His creation – i.e. He is personally involved in His creation, which at times is evidenced in supernatural interventions and occurrences. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead

is one historical and verifiable example. This is also why, within the Christian worldview, prayer is meaningful and relevant. The Christian prays because God still is involved in His creation. Therefore, there is design and purpose in God's creation. The Apostle Peter warned of a time when scoffers would come, who will ignore that it was by God's Word that the heavens and earth came into existence (2 Peter 3:3–5). There are many in the secular sphere who argue against the necessity of a Creator. They instead claim that the universe formed by naturalistic processes over billions of years. This goes beyond science and the experience of reality.

We, therefore, conclude this section with the following three assumptions presented by Zacharias & Vitale (2014:36) that are used as a starting point for Christian theism and the question of the origin of the universe and its preservation:

1. Nothing physical in this universe explains its own existence.
2. Wherever one sees intelligibility, one assumes intelligence.
3. God has intervened in history and in moral reasoning.

The Biblical worldview of worship also describes man as a moral creature and a creation of God.

4.3.1.2. The origin of man

The secular worldview that leans toward atheism denies the cosmological and teleological arguments - which posits an originator and ultimate designer through the evidence of design and purpose in the universe. Contrary to the Biblical worldview, which views man as a creation of God; the atheistic worldview suggests that man evolved from lower life forms within the cosmos. Humans are viewed purely as matter in motion with no immortal soul. Due to the materialistic underpinnings of their worldview, the mind is claimed not to exist apart from the brain. While not all atheists are strict materialists who

equate the soul and body, most believe the soul depends on the body – the soul dies when the body dies (Geisler & Wilson 2008:84). The soul (and mind) may be believed as more than the body, in the same way a thought is more than words or symbols (Geisler & Wilson 2008:84). Just as the shadow of a tree ceases to exist when the tree does, so the soul ceases to exist when the body dies.

This will also mean that, while the Christian worldview argues for man being created in the image of God; the secular worldview argues that God is a creation of man (Geisler & Wilson 2008:84). Rendle-Short (1991:33) asks the reader to suppose a world without God. It becomes obvious, therefore, that man cannot be made in God's image. Man, thus is only one of the millions of animals within an evolutionary framework. He, like all animals, originated by chance mutation and natural selection by 'the Preservation of Favoured Races in the struggle for Life' (to quote the subtitle of Darwin's *Origin*) (Rendle-Short 1991:33). Natural selection, therefore, requires the progressive elimination of weaker, less intelligent creatures, both animals and sub-human (*ibid.*). If life is to be lived out according to the philosophy of the survival of the fittest; then we have to agree that *might makes right*. In fact, this is just what happened after Darwin's book was popularized. History can testify to the likes of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, etc. and the many lives that were slaughtered during their individual reign whilst embracing Darwinian philosophy.

Racism, which has always been around, lacked biological justification until Darwin's book *The Descent of Man* appeared in 1871 (Rendle-Short 1991:33). Rendle-Short quotes Darwin:

The great break in the organic chain between man and his nearest allies, which cannot be bridged over by any extinct or living species [i.e. some missing link], has often been advanced as a grave objection to the belief that man is descended from some lower form; but this objection will not appear of much weight to those who ...

believe in the general principle of evolution ... At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes [man-like apes] ... will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope even that of the Caucasian [white man], and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of, as now *between the negro or Australian and the gorilla* (1991:33-34).

Darwin shows the line of the evolutionary order to be (highest to lowest): Whites, gorilla, Negro or Aboriginal and baboon (*ibid.*). These are the same views that Hitler embraced, thus exterminating millions of Jews, the mentally retarded, the elderly, and others he regarded as inferior, in order to create a superior race. Without God, man decides whose life is valuable and whose is not. The Bible reminds us that man is a creation of God who has created him in His image to responsibly rule over all creation (Gen 2; Ps 8). Human life is valuable because each life bears the image of God.

In the end, naturalists are strict *determinists*, meaning that they believe that humanity is part of the natural processes of the universe – thus denying any sense of free will (Sire 2009:73). However, they will also argue that humanity is *free* to fashion our own destiny – which is a clear contradiction (*ibid.*).

The next issue of evil and suffering is to be dealt with within the atheistic worldview.

4.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

Some secularists, with an atheistic view of life, acknowledge the reality of evil and suffering in the world. However, they reject the Biblical perspective of original sin (The Fall). Yet, without the Judeo-Christian worldview, the secularist is forced to define evil and suffering and every attempt falls short, for he has to ultimately borrow from the Judeo-

Christian worldview for a definition. However, their atheism has no basis for any notion of evil or good as is witnessed in Richard Dawkins' writings. He takes atheism to its natural conclusion as he contends (1995:133):

In a universe of blind forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, and other people are going to get lucky; and you won't find any rhyme or reason to it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is at the bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good. Nothing but blind pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is, and we dance to its music.

As is observed by Dawkins' statement, an unguided world governed by mere chance, provides no objective foundation or absolute definition of "good" or "evil". Everything must be explained by DNA. And so, when a man rapes a woman, or a person murders another person, or those who propagated South Africa's apartheid system, do not do anything evil. All they are doing is dancing to their DNA. So, they have no control over their actions. Their actions cannot necessarily be called evil. In the atheistic worldview, they are just products of a universe of blind forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, and other people are going to get lucky; and you won't find any rhyme or reason to it, nor any justice. They why have a police force or a justice system? Why lock our doors at night? If atheism is allowed its day, life becomes unliveable. As has been evidenced in European and Eastern history, the philosophy of those who embrace a secular worldview end up with *might makes right*.

4.3.2. Meaning

The secular view of meaning embraces nihilism and naturalism. This offers a pessimistic understanding of human existence to be totally meaningless and where nothing is of real value (Moreland 1987:115). The major proponents will include philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche and Camus. Within this view, there is no God, gods or any supernatural beings,

so there is no worship of a Greater Being. Human beings are, therefore, "... the chance product of random mutations, natural selection, and the struggle for survival", who just happen to be here (Moreland 1987:115). Life becomes meaningless apart from whatever meaning we want to give to it. Albert Camus (1913-60), in arguing for the silence of God, rendered human life meaningless by death. The only option, he believed, is to "... rebel against the ultimate negation of death by throwing ourselves into life and making deliberate choices that challenge this futility. There is no god, no meaning – but we can create our own meaning and throw ourselves into the world that they mediate" (McGrath 2004:154).

This view holds much in common with nihilism, where "... there is no purpose toward which the cosmos or human history is moving, humans are modified monkeys which have resulted from a blind process of chance mutations, and real, irreducible moral values do not exist" (Moreland 1987:120). The parting of ways from nihilism lies in the optimism in life's meaning that this view propagates. "Nihilism is essentially a life-denying enterprise whereas optimistic humanism is a life-affirming enterprise" (Moreland 1987:120). Yet, they do not see meaning that stems from objective values or an objective point of reference. Life for them is subjectively satisfying as we create our own values. Morality is practiced because it satisfies self.

4.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning

For many secularists, science (within its various sub-disciplines) has become the "saviour" that provides meaning to all aspects of life. So, science and scientific discoveries and their use for interpreting life has become that dominant objective point of reference to create meaning as one journeys through life. In the end, secularists start building altars

in worship of science. Science, as is the case in universities today, start to define matters of origin, meaning, morality and destiny. Entire societies are now forced to reject ages of religious beliefs that underpin them and are forced to rebuild themselves using secular theories. This secular, western dominant mood is now reaching all over as we find ourselves living in a globalized world. Zacharias (1994:68), referencing Michael Polanyi's book, entitled *Meaning*, stated that:

... science is a normative form of knowledge and that society gives meaning to science, rather than the reverse that science gives meaning (and/or "truth") to society. He cautioned that if science mis-applies its role it is in danger of destroying life, not contributing to it. Religion, poetry, and art are the disciplines, Polanyi stated, that infuse meaning into existence – not science.

There is also an uprising of many Christian scientists to counter this secular move. It must be stated that science is meant for the laboratories and has much value to discover this world. However, when science starts using its empirical tests to infer matters of ultimate concern, it has overstepped its discipline of science to the discipline of philosophy. This is where Christian scientists catch out secular scientists. In this matter, Christian scientists are not afraid to, in faith, connect the questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny to a theistic worldview. Philosophically, they make more sense than the answers that secularists propose – which in the end, when applied, makes life meaningless and unliveable.

4.3.2.2. Objective and subjective meaning

Within the atheistic/secular worldview, secular scientists have pointed out that because man is a product of chance, no ultimate meaning can be drawn from our current state. This has led to different moods that embrace secular meaning in order for society to find "meanings" – with no ultimate meaning. The first is the mood of pluralization – which is the tolerance of various worldviews in a given context. The South African context,

historically, has tolerated the freedom of religious expressions. Newbigin (1989:1) explains the primary context of a pluralistic society is as follows:

Pluralism is conceived to be a proper characteristic of the secular society, a society in which there is no officially approved pattern of belief or conduct. It is therefore also conceived to be a free society, a society not controlled by accepted dogma but characterized rather by the critical spirit which is ready to subject all dogmas to critical (and even sceptical) examination.

Pluralism may be defined as "... the existence and availability of a number of world-views, each vying for the allegiance of individuals, with no single world-view dominant" (Zacharias 1997:71). The basic idea of pluralism stresses the diversity in this world with no unity to bring ultimate coherence (Sproul 1986:114). It teaches that there is "... no access to ultimate unity, no way to bring the diverse things of our experience into a coherent whole. We have particulars but no universals; relatives but no absolutes" (*ibid.*). Meaning for the individual and society, therefore, is relative to the individual or culture. This is also evidenced in the South African setting.

Within the diversity of people groups in the South African context, there are also diverse religious worldviews tolerated; thus, establishing it as a pluralistic society. Freedom of religion is chartered and protected by the constitution of the land. The country's apartheid past, even though dominated by the Christian worldview, tolerated others of different religious persuasions, and people were free to practice their brand of spirituality within the confines of the apartheid laws. These pluralistic practices continue today within post-apartheid South Africa. However, pluralism today suggests more than just diverse opinions in the pantheon of beliefs; it allows for contradictory views of God, creation, salvation, sin, heaven, meaning, etc. (Sproul 1986:120). These views are not only viewed as equally tolerable, but equally valid – thereby destroying the real understanding of 'truth.' The crisis in pluralism is that there is no ultimate point of reference for meaning.

Globalization and pluralism cannot be separated from each other. However, globalization can present a positive impact on world missions. With the trend of globalization, the nations who once were closed behind their country's borders, have now been exposed to the Gospel worshipping community. This positive movement and influx of people has brought the nations to South Africa so that the Gospel can reach them. Since the Christian faith is a global faith, it has in many ways influenced the move toward a globalized world. People leave their countries for various reasons. For example, many people arrive from African countries to flee civil wars, poverty, unrest, looking for economic prosperity, etc., and arrive as refugees to South Africa. The challenge for the South African church is to reach these people and disciple them in the faith. In a globalized world, each church in its cultural setting should be encouraged to develop their approach to missions so that the nations will come to faith. These will take the Gospel back to their homelands when they return.

However, there are many negative factors that the church needs to consider and address. The modern church has to deal with the issue of religious pluralism and fundamentalism. With the influx of various religious beliefs, spiritualities, and different ideologies, the modern church has to understand the uniqueness of its message and its exclusive nature when proclaiming (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12). It needs to understand that contemporary globalization divides as much as it unites people. So, discretion must be used when interacting with various people. The church is called to understand its message, and also gain understanding of secular and religious ideas and the cultures of the peoples that it ministers to. This is important for the church's future mission when proclaiming the Gospel.

The inter-connection of worldwide society is clearly evidenced through the historical process of its widening, deepening, speeding-up and growing impact (Baylis & Smith (eds.) 2001:19). This has also bred a society grafted into a relativistic understanding of meaning. Relativism can be broadly defined as the denial of absolutes and therefore is frequently defined negatively. Baghramian outlines four aspects that Relativism denies:

Defined negatively, relativism amounts to the denial of a cluster of interconnected philosophical positions that are traditionally contrasted with it; in this sense negative relativism is 'anti-anti-relativism' for it provides legitimacy for relativism by denying:

- (a) the thesis of universalism or the position that there could and should be universal agreement on matters of truth, goodness, beauty, meaningfulness, etc.;
- (b) the thesis of objectivism or the position that cognitive, ethical and aesthetic values such as truth, goodness and beauty are mind-dependent, 'capable of being presented from a point of view that is independent of the point of view of any human being in particular and of human kind in general'...;
- (c) the thesis of absolutism or the view that truth, goodness, beauty, etc. are timeless, unchanging and immutable;
- (d) monism or the view that, in any given area or on any given topic, there can be no more than one correct opinion, judgement, or norm. Relativism is compatible with local but not universal monism, for a relativist may accept that in any given culture or society there can be no more than one correct view on any topic but deny that one single correct norm or belief can apply cross-culturally" (2004:2).

Relativism has come to occupy a prominent place within the academic and intellectual ethos of our time which has risen out of an acknowledgement of the existence of deep differences in attitudes and beliefs within this 21st century global village (Baghramian 2004:1). The irony of relativism is that it "... reduces every element of absoluteness to relativity while making a completely illogical exception in favour of this reduction itself (Schuon 1973:1). Again, meaning becomes relative to the individual's whim and fancy.

Therefore, the mood of relativism in a secular society is to naturally be embraced – which is also applied to the issue of the meaning of life. This is so, because man becomes the measure of all things. So, the individual is to discover meanings and purposes on his/her

own. Sproul suggests that secular man lives without any fixed standards, for he “lives his life with no ultimate, fixed, and absolute reference point that can define his life or the meaning of his existence. If everything is relative, you are relative, and there is no substance to the meaning of your life” (1986:119). For the secularist, meaning is found in tangible things that are temporal. Therefore, there is no ultimate meaning that combines all the little attractions of life that provide meaning for an individual. This approach to life is demonstrated in the words of a taxi driver by the name, José Martinez, quoted in Zacharias (1994:58):

We’re here to die, just live and die. I like driving a cab. I do some fishing, take my girl out, pay taxes, do a little reading, then get ready to drop dead. You’ve got to be string about it. Life is a big fake. Nobody gives a damn. You’re rich or you’re poor. You’re here, you’re gone. You’re like the wind. After you’re gone, other people will come. It’s too late to make it better. Everyone’s fed up, can’t believe in nothing no more. People have no pride. People aren’t scared. People only care about one thing and that’s money. We’re gonna destroy ourselves, nothing we can do about it. The only cure for the world’s illness is nuclear war – wipe everything out and start over. We’ve become like a cornered animal, fighting for survival. Life is nothing.

Zacharias (1994:60) rightly states, “When one attempts to live without God, the answers to morality, hope, and meaning send one back into his or her own world to fashion an individualized answer.” In a world without God, Nietzsche argued (referred to in Zacharias 2008:26-27),

... we stray through an infinite nothing, with no up or down left. Lanterns must be lit in the morning hours and sacred games invented to take the place of religious ceremony. Finally, he said, a universal madness would break out when the truth of what mankind has done in killing God dawned on us.

Zacharias (*ibid.*), thereafter, adds that Nietzsche himself spent the last thirteen years of his life in the darkness of insanity, while his godly mother watched over him by his bedside.

This reveals that when man eradicates God, he sets himself in the place of God, inventing secular “religious ceremonies” which will lead to madness. Nietzsche, considered the father of modern atheism, saw this. When man lives without objective meaning; subjectiveness takes over. Life will be lived without any greater, ultimate purpose. Feelings start to dictate purpose. Important relationships, like marriage, family and community, become passing phases in the individual’s life. The end result is broken individuals, families and societies. This is exactly the current issue in the West. The West uses powerful forces to fight against Christianity. These forces are packaged as modern philosophies (secularism); political theories (democracy and capitalism); and spiritualities (relativism) (Campolo 1983:34-47; Zacharias & Vitale 2017:162). Western thought is all out to defend and promote individualism and humanism.

The individualism that is being espoused leads the diverse people to pick and choose what is true and meaningful for them. It tends to place autonomous man above God, his Creator. This clearly goes against the grain in the understanding of African communal living. Western individualism breeds the selfish focus of looking after personal interest. Africa’s past communal living saw to the interests of the community at large. This is fast changing as South Africans are moving out of the homesteads, villages and rural communities into the towns and cities to make a living. South Africa is a country in transition, caught in-between two worlds: viz. the traditional village life with its concept of human rights centred in the community; and the Western influences of privatization – the claim that life lived privately has no bearing upon the public spheres. These post-modern moods are slowly becoming engrained into the “progressive” thinking and living of South Africans as they find themselves in a state of transition between both worlds.

The current South African challenge is to create unity out of the diversity that exists. But, how can unity exist when the current mood dictates individualism? There needs to be a common good that is espoused for the community which the individual is to pursue. The current mood dictates following after truth wherever it leads the individual to. It dictates truths without a unifying Truth. These influences are un-liveable. It fragments society with its endless differences in personal tastes, choices, whims and fancies; never converging into any greater meaning for South African society. This creates a world that is uncertain and often fragmented.

Like never before, is this evidenced in the arena of sexual ethics where our sexuality has lost ultimate meaning. Rape, sexual abuse, prostitution, abortion on demand, HIV/AIDS, pornographic addictions and child sex-trafficking have become the order of the day in South Africa and abroad. When sex becomes a thing of an individual's subjective orientation, taste and practice; it creates a demand for all kinds of abuses and atrocities as is currently experienced and grotesquely misreported.

Experts claim that the causes are due to social problems and can only be rectified through more education. Whilst this may be true to a certain degree; the problem is not entirely social but moral. The Christian worldview espouses a transformation in the heart of the individual in order for a transformed society to be experienced (e.g. Luke 6:45, "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of"). Unity that is meaningful can never be enforced through government legislation; but needs to first take place in the hearts of humanity. Whilst society espouses self-actualization as the goal of humanity (see Maslow's structure in his hierarchy of needs);

Christ commands a cross of self-denial and finding one's true self when this is lived out in every sphere of life (cf. Matt. 16:24). It is in God that meaning – both objective and subjective - finds proper grounding for life to be lived. It is out of this, also, that meaningful morality is to be espoused. This leads us to the discussion on our next worldview question – morality within the atheistic/secular and the Christian response to it.

4.3.3. Morality

McGrath (2004:173) comments on John Lennon's song *Imagine* released in 1971 in the United States which resonated with many in the wake of the Vietnam war and the rise of the peace movement, and explains the sentiments of that period:

What would a post-theist world look like? Many imagined one, and liked what they saw. Elimination of belief in God would lead to a more peaceful and stable world ... That, at least, was the judgement of John Lennon (1940-80), whose song 'Imagine' invited its audiences to envisage an ideal world, devoid of conflict precisely because it was devoid of religion: 'Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try / No hell below us, above us only sky' ... Beliefs were firmly identified as the enemy of peace. Once religion had been eradicated, there would be only a 'brotherhood of man' with nothing left 'to kill or die for'.

For many atheists, the idea of God is declared to be "... outdated, enslaving, and a downright self-contradiction" (McGrath 2004:175). This is due to the fact that much killing has gone on, and still does, in the name of religion. Many atheists love to latch onto these examples in order to disprove religious morality. McGrath argues that it is impossible not to respect atheism at these points (*ibid.*). However, the Christian response to this is that whenever people use the Bible to propagate some evil like murder, racism, segregation, etc., they do it in disobedience to the commands of the Scriptures.

The atheist, therefore, in response to the Biblical worldview, presents four options that God could have exercised in creation (if He exists) (Zacharias 1994:46):

First, to create no world at all; second, to create a world in which there are no such categories as good and evil – an amoral world; third, to create a world in which one could only choose good – a kind of robotic world; fourth, to create the world as we know it, with the possibility of good and evil.

The atheist's battle is with the world that God chose (i.e. the fourth option). However, Leibniz (1646-1716) argued that God would not create a world unless it was the best possible world (Steinberg 2007:123). This became known as the *Leibnizian Argument*. Due to God's good nature, He had to create a world that would be the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz' argument goes as follows (Steinberg 2007:123-124):

- (1) For any possible world, there is a better possible world, and so there is no best possible world (assumption).
- (2) As omnipotent, God is able to create any possible world He chooses to create.
- (3) As omniscient, God knows how to create any possible world.
- (4) As omniscient, God is able to identify the level of perfection of every possible world.
- (5) As omnibenevolent (impeccable, all-perfect), God would only choose to create the best possible world that He could create.
- (6) God, if He chose to create a possible world, would only create the best possible world (2, 3, 4, 5).
- (7) God does not choose to create any world, and so no world would be created (1, 6).

Steinberg (2007:125), quoting Kant, argues, if God were to choose to do less than His best (e.g. create a world that was not the best possible), He would thereby show Himself to be morally surpassable. Since it is not possible that God be morally deficient, God must do the best that He can (*ibid.*). Thus, God would, on pain of contradiction, choose to create the best possible world He could create. And so, this is the best possible world that God has indeed created. This response is unsatisfactory and seem circular for atheists. How do they approach the question of morality?

Since there is no God within the atheistic/secularistic worldview, morality has to be defined by humanity. However, as will be observed, this is a difficult issue that proponents will have to agree on and come to a consensus. We will proceed to discuss Morality and

the Moral Law with man as the starting point for morality in the secular/atheistic worldview. Consideration will also be given to its impact on the individual and on society.

4.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: man

If man becomes the yard-stick by which to create and measure morality, according to the atheistic worldview, how can a value system be achieved? Young (1954:163) suggests that values have to be empirically derived, and falls into the following three major philosophical systems that is present in our context, namely:

1. Naturalism (the worldview which rejects any theistic or supernatural explanation of reality),
2. Idealism (the theory that reality is entirely of the nature of mind or spirit), and,
3. Realism (the view that reality is extra-mental in whole or in part).

Within naturalism (a worldview without God), natural evil (contra moral evil) had to be defined, for it belongs to the natural order apart from human activity (Young 1954:164). The father of the “God is dead” philosophy, Friedrich Nietzsche, came to the conclusion that with the absence of God, human values are arbitrary. This is the notion that values are based on random choice or personal whim devoid of an objective reality. This leads to man becoming the measure of all things as Greek philosopher, Protagoras, stated. How does this work out for the individual?

4.3.3.2. Morality for the individual

Nietzsche made a distinction between “herd morality” and “master morality” (Sproul 1986:47). Sproul explains,

Herd morality is the morality practiced by the masses. It is based on the conventions of a society. People obey these societal rules and taboos like

unthinking cattle. They go along with the herd, never asking penetrating questions about the rules of the game.... For Nietzsche the true existential man, the *authentic* man, creates his own morality. He refuses to follow the herd. He is his own master, a 'Superman' (1986:47-48).

Zacharias (1994:36) comments that almost a century prior to Nietzsche, the theist, Kant, emerged as the "godfather of goodness procurable apart from God" with two theses:

First, he asserted that the rules of morality were rational and hence compelling for all rational beings. These rules, he argued, were as indisputable as the syllogisms of logic or the certainty of mathematics. His foundational premise was clearly and without equivocation that human beings – Eastern or Western, urban or suburban, religious or irreligious – could arrive by unaided reason at a normative dictum for right and wrong.

Second, Kant believed that this dictum was not merely a theoretical "ought" that was unreachable. Rather, he believed that mankind had within itself the capacity to perform that "ought" in its most noble demands upon the will. Therefore, by our reason we can know what is right, and by our will we can do what is right.

Zacharias (*ibid.*) points out that Kant gives two qualifiers that also must be taken into consideration: i.e. firstly, God is not necessary as a revealer of right and wrong. Secondly, the individual's moral choices were not to be determined by the "happiness test" – i.e. morals must not be chosen just because it makes the individual happy. This is exactly where the secular, democratic world is at. In its denial of God, "the new world of democratic utopia inscribed the pursuit of individual happiness as a fundamental right for all individuals at the cost of the collective good" (*ibid.*).

According to the Christian view, individual morality is unliveable within the atheistic framework. Holmes gives a reminder: "Once the existence and supernatural activity of God are laid aside, doctrine and worship and sacrament no longer have significance" (1983:28). For the Christian, doctrine (what we believe), worship (the way we glorify, love and experience God) and sacrament (religious rites) are inextricably bound to morality (the living out of what we believe in worship to God) (Butin 2010:2). Atheist, Nietzsche,

considered Christianity a system that paralysed the potential of the human being, calling it “a message as the nadir, or lowest point, of human progress because it elevated such concepts as morality, repentance, and humility” (Zacharias 1994:20). For Nietzsche, Christianity stood in his way to rebuild a society where the Superman could emerge. History has proven, through the adoption of this philosophy by men like Hitler and his Nazism, how catastrophic this can become when man becomes the measure of all things.

Zacharias (1994:23) argues:

Atheism ... provides the logical basis for an autonomous, domineering will, expelling morality. Darwin himself predicted this slippery slope of violence if evolutionary theory were translated into a philosophy of life. Nietzsche talked of the enshrouding darkness that had fallen over mankind – he saw its ramifications. The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevski repeatedly wrote of the hell that is let loose when man comes adrift from his Creator’s moorings and himself becomes god – he understood the consequences. Now, as proof positive, we witness our culture as a whole in a mindless drift toward lawlessness – we live with the inexorable result of autonomies in collision.

Modern man now has to respect the will of each individual – whether he be considered a law-abiding citizen or a lawless individual. Man has now the right to practice his own morality within the boundaries of the geographical laws. Many times, symptoms are being dealt with, which result from man’s autonomous choices. However, the root issue – which is autonomy itself that operates without a transcendent point of reference, is overlooked. This leads to corrupt individuals and ultimately societies without values.

4.3.3.3. Morality for society

The secularizing of human values stems from contemporary humanism (Holmes 1983:27). Here again, values have no transcendent basis; but are man-centred. Therefore, the goal is never holiness that comes from God; but, rather, humanly pursued goals and aims. Holmes suggests that a worldview that denies God, “still prize the happiness life offers, along with emotional peace, human love, creative work, and

aesthetic satisfaction” (1983:28). However, atheism cannot offer such virtues; it must be borrowed! These virtues go against the atheistic and evolutionary philosophy – i.e. the survival of the fittest.

Baylis & Smith (eds) list the following general propositions that define the broad tradition of liberalism within political thought, and explain how society has gotten to where it is:

First, all citizens are juridically equal and possess certain basic rights to education, access to a free press, and religious toleration. Second, the legislative assembly of the state possesses only the authority invested in it by the people, whose basic rights it is not permitted to abuse. Third, a key dimension of the liberty of the individual is the right to own property including productive forces. Fourth, Liberalism contends that the most effective system of economic exchange is one that is largely market driven and not one that is subordinate to bureaucratic regulation and control either domestically or internationally. Liberal values such as individualism, tolerance, freedom, and constitutionalism, can be contrasted with conservatism, which places a higher value on order and authority and is willing to sacrifice the liberty of the individual for the stability of the community (2001:186).

And so, liberalism, places a higher value on the individual, thereby creating a disastrous and broken community.

Liberal individuals, who remove God as the supreme Lawgiver, elect to make decisions solely on the basis of personal feelings, inclinations and intuitions (Carnell 1948:324).

Therefore, the secularist feels no pressure to answer how they determine anything to be right and wrong except by subjective choice. Zacharias (1997:59) points out:

When debating on any moral issue, secular thinkers delight in introducing some aberrant situation for which only two evil options are possible and forcing the absolutist to choose between them. By forcing those extreme solutions, they extrapolate the false deduction that there must, therefore, be no general rules for life.

Therefore, there is a denial of moral absolutes, i.e. “objective moral values which are real and true for all men regardless of whether any person or culture believes them to be true”

(Moreland 1987:240). The rejection of moral absolutes welcomes some form of moral relativism (*ibid.*). In the end, this makes community life unliveable.

4.3.4. Destiny

The topic of destiny forces us to consider the issues of physical death and eternal life within an atheistic worldview. We start with physical death.

4.3.4.1. Physical death

Death is universal, therefore, even the atheist/secular worldview has to answer the question of death. For naturalists, physical death is annihilation. Physical life ceases, for, they believe that nature, the physical universe, alone exists. Ultimate reality is merely physical, so human nature has no duality – i.e. physical and spiritual. Naturalism explains the totality of human existence, including emotional and mental states, as physical properties, and chemical reactions in the brain. Death, therefore, results in the dissolution of the human body into organic compounds. Zacharias (1994:50) explains the hopelessness in the atheistic camp when considering death:

How can thinking men and women ever be given ultimate hope when life itself is death-bound? Any hope imparted is only realized by robbing reality in order to pay appearances. The Nietzschean assurance that the dying person will reach out and shake your hand when you assure him that extinction is imminent is, at best, a good-news/bad-news joke. The bad news is that he is dying; the good news is that when he dies he will not want anything anymore. So the bad news is not really bad, after all; in fact, it is the consummate liberation.

This idea that everything physical (i.e. matter and energy) only exists is termed *physicalism* (Moreland 1987:80). God, souls, and nonphysical abstract entities do not exist (*ibid.*). Contrasted, is the Biblical understanding of a dualism – where a body and soul/spirit exist. Moreland (1987:80-82) lists several factors that indicate that physicalism is not an adequate worldview:

First, if theism is true, then physicalism as a worldview is false. God is not a physical being. Second, a number of people have argued that numbers exist and that they are abstract, non-physical entities (e.g., sets, substances, or properties) ... Scientific laws and theories seem to assert their existence (*i.e. numbers*) ... Some have argued that values, in addition to God and numbers, exist and are not physical ... Fourth, if physicalism is true, it is hard to see what one should make of the existence and nature of theories, meanings, concepts, propositions, the laws of logic, and truth itself ... Finally, universals seem to exist and they are not material. A universal is an entity that can be in more than one place at the same time. Some universals are properties (redness, hardness, triangularity); others are relations (larger than, to the left of). Whatever else one may use to characterize the nature of matter, it is clear that a clump of matter is a particular (*italics added*).

The above examples cause much difficulty for physicalists or materialists to get around. However, the Christians can easily embrace these by holding that God is the creator and sustainer of these nonphysical entities. Following these examples, the atheist cannot with confidence deny any nonmaterial existence. As the non-material mind and mental part is linked to the human brain; the human non-material soul/spirit is linked to the human body. The next unavoidable issue in the discussion of destiny for the atheist/secular worldview, is the issue of eternal life.

4.3.4.2. Eternal life

For the atheist/secularist, there is no concept of the after-life. This physical life is all there is. Therefore, there is no ultimate hope and there is no ultimate justice. For the atheist, there is nothing to us except molecules. When this life ends, we continue to be molecules. Whether you're a person like Mother Theresa, who worked in the streets of Calcutta with the poorest of poor; or like Hugh Hefner, who places sexual pleasure above all else; or whether you're a mass murderer like Stalin or Hitler, we all are extinguished – with no ultimate justice.

Atheists prefer no justice, rather than the thought of eternal torment in hell – which, as one atheist (B.C. Johnson) said “is morally absurd” (*quoted in* Strobel 2000:170). A truth’s efficacy cannot be discounted based on personal likes/dislikes. J.P. Moreland, interviewed by Strobel (2000:172), argues, that the basis of our evaluation should be “whether hell is morally *just* or morally *right* state of affairs, not whether they like or dislike the concept” (*italics added for emphasis*). He also argues that hell is not a torture chamber, as Christian turned atheist Charles Templeton argues. Strobel (2000:173-174) records:

God doesn’t torture people in hell, so he’s flat wrong about that ... Templeton also makes it sound like God is a spoiled child who says to people, ‘Look, if you’re not willing to obey my arbitrary rules, then I’m going to sentence you for it. You need to know that *my* rules are *my* rules, and if I don’t get my way, then I’m going to make you pay.’ Well, of course, if God is just a child with arbitrary rules, then it would be capricious for him to sentence people. But that’s not at all what is going on here.

God is the most generous, loving, wonderful, attractive being in the cosmos. He has made us with free will and he has made us for a purpose: to relate lovingly to him and to others. We are not accidents, we’re not modified monkeys, we’re not random mistakes. And if we fail over and over again to live for the purpose for which we were made – a purpose, by the way, which would allow us to flourish more than living any other way – then God will have absolutely no choice but to give us what we’ve asked for all along in our lives, which is separation from him. And that is hell ... Templeton has given us a spiteful being who has imposed these unfair, arbitrary rules and who ultimately stomps his foot and says, ‘If I don’t get my way, I’m going to torture you forever.’

Moreland concludes that nothing could be further from the truth. He argues that hell is a relational concept. “In the Bible, hell is separation or banishment from the most beautiful being in the world – God himself. It is the exclusion from anything that matters, from all value, not only from God but also from those who have come to know and love him” (Strobel 2000:174).

The Biblical worldview stands in direct contrast with regards to the fundamental belief about the reality of an afterlife, and with regards to its caricature of the Christian afterlife.

The hope in the after-life gives a reminder that each person is answerable to God, the Creator. Ultimate justice will be meted out to all; to the obedient and to the lawbreaker – where all will finally feel a sense of justice for everything done while in the body.

4.4. Concluding remarks

Chapters 2-3 aimed at creating a philosophical/theological grid into which the various worldviews are to be filtered to compare their truth claims with the Biblical worldview of worship. Having established the grid, we set out in chapter 4 to explore the Atheistic/Secular worldview and filter it through the grid. When put through the test in providing answers for the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny, we have witnessed the suppression of Biblical truth in favour of human arguments.

We began by researching the formation of the Atheistic/Secular worldview by applying the synchronic approach in order to examine cultural influences leading to the present. We observed how the influence of western moods in South Africa, through modernism and postmodernism, introduced secular forms of reasoning which now dominate many spheres of society. A brief tracing of historical trends in the western world, as it has influenced the South African setting, proved beneficial for verifying Atheistic/Secular theories.

We, thereafter, engaged with the theories, beliefs and practices, and the truth foundations that are appealed to in the atheistic/secular worldview. Here, we have demonstrated that when God is displaced from our daily existence, beliefs are devoid of reason and life becomes irrelevant. We have also witnessed, that when God is argued away as the ultimate point of reference for truth; humanism results. Here, man starts to dictate what

is true based on human reason and a materialistic understanding of the universe. As has been observed in chapter 3, truth statements true, only if they correspond to the mind of the Creator. We have discovered that when the Creator is argued away, together with the overarching mood of humanism, scientism replaces revelation (from the God of the Bible) and has become the defining discipline for all spheres of existence. The laboratory becomes the key to unravelling life's mysteries. However, the laboratory cannot provide answers for non-material substances e.g. laws of logic, love, mind, beliefs, etc. It has been observed that scientists move away from their field of science into philosophy when making metaphysical truth claims from their experiments. This is already a logical inconsistency in their underlying framework that does not correspond nor cohere with their worldview even within its most basic presupposition – i.e. the sole use of empirical data within the laboratory context. In our evaluation, we have discovered that empiricism as a method is important; but is not the only means by which knowledge is attained. Revelation and rational methods must also be employed in our quest for knowledge.

Also, the era of postmodernism witnessed a moving away from strict modernist claims about the universe to having science and spirituality combined. We have observed that postmodernists still embrace aspects of modernistic thinking with an inclusion of spirituality and the importance of the individual's narrative. Here, again, revelation is discarded, in favour of an individual's story – stressing individualism. When humanism has been coupled with postmodern claims, there is no point of reference for truth; with the result that relativism becomes the dominant mood by which society is engaged. In a world where the laws of logic ~~is~~are to be applied to derive truth, life becomes illogical, if the truth statements of both Mother Theresa and Hitler are considered true and equally valid. How do we define the “good” of Mother Theresa in preserving life and the “evil” of

Hitler in destroying life without an objective point of reference by which to measure such claims? Yet, ultimate truth and values are considered a prison in many democratic societies – and South Africa is no exception. Relativism is embraced to accept all people, irrespective of race, sex, culture, sexual orientation, worship beliefs and practices, etc. All people are encouraged to just be themselves – with only the country’s secular constitution and human feelings employed as a point of reference. In our evaluation, we have discovered that while these will satisfy the individual and provide temporal grounding for meaning and morality; this philosophy of life is unliveable in community and society. Subjective living with a lack of an ultimate objective point of reference, to create correspondence and coherence, creates rapidly changing societies – which will mean that a culture emanates from the individuals in that society and the individual is to adapt to a changing culture – within which he/she is the measure to create just that. This takes on circular reasoning and is empirically inadequate for life to be coherently managed. This is due to the fact of the diversity of theories, beliefs and practices that people are conditioned by.

In our application, it is observed that only God, as Creator will explain *origins* as it relates to the universe, man, and evil and suffering. The atheistic/secular worldview appeals to the sciences to explain the question of “Where do we come from?” We have evidenced that science can only explain the mechanism; but can provide *no* answers for origin. Even the theory of evolution, if true, may only explain processes; but not origin. Evolution, in itself is demonstrated to be inconsistent with reality. It is a philosophy; rather than science as both Christian and atheist scientists believe. Whilst we concede that there is evidence of micro-evolutionary changes within species; we cannot transport that theory to a macro level. This is unobservable. An appeal to archaeology, again, demonstrates findings that

are linked to species; not proof of macro-evolution. Even if macro-evolution was true; it still does not explain origin. Materialistic explanations, therefore, become logically inconsistent and empirically inadequate based on the evidence.

We have also evidenced how secular scientists, when trying to explain origin, move away from science into philosophy and from physics to the metaphysics. In an amusing way, this is logically inconsistent with their most basic theory – i.e. an appeal to a material universe solely. Whilst, intellectuals will appeal to a materialistic and deterministic universe, they begin to postulate metaphysical theories like, ethics, consciousness, reason, free will, etc. This, in itself, proves to those within the Biblical worldview of worship, that we cannot operate solely within a materialistic framework. When metaphysical realities are discussed, it is to be derived from revelation, for only the Creator can answer certain questions. The Biblical worldview gives a comprehensive understanding as it relates to revelation on the origin question – with special reference to the origin of the universe, the origin of man, and the origin of evil and suffering. We have demonstrated that the explanations given for these correspond and cohere with reality and within themselves. They also meet every test for logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance. For our application in pastoral ministry and the church's missional task in chapter 8, the question of origin cannot be discussed without God as the point of reference. Scientists within the Christian worldview recognize the many limitations around scientism and argue for revelation, rational and empirical data for determining the truth surrounding origin.

Next, we have also witnessed that the question of *meaning* “Why are we here?” – which in itself, suggests ultimate meaning, cannot really be explained in the atheistic/secular

worldview. This worldview would rather speak of “meanings” – which suggest subjective meaning for each person. Humanism becomes the overarching mood and stands over theism and revelation within this worldview. We have witnessed how meaning for the individual and community become logically inconsistent and experientially unsustainable when each person tries to define meaning apart from God. The Biblical worldview teaches that it is in the creative purpose of God that ultimate meaning can only be derived – for the Creator determines the purpose of His creation. The Biblical worldview remains logically consistent, in that when an appeal is made to God as the originator; meaning and purpose has to be derived from the Creator. This fact is consistent with human creations. For example, the light bulb, invented by Edison, had a design and purpose. This was determined by the creator – Edison himself. If the light bulb had a mind, it would owe its meaning to Edison. This is true of God’s creation as well. Our evaluation of the atheistic/secular worldview around the worldview question of meaning has demonstrated that subjective meaning is only possible in light of an objective point of reference: God. Again, humanism and scientism cannot extrapolate meaning within this worldview. Any attempt will only suggest that God is removed and replaced with subjective meanings or no meaning at all. Life, then, becomes unliveable when God is removed. Here, also, revelation, rational and empirical data is needed to determine meaning for the individual and community. For our application in pastoral ministry and the church’s missional task in chapter 8, the question of meaning cannot be discussed without God as the point of reference. Scientists within the Christian worldview recognize the many limitations around scientism and argue for revelation, rational and empirical data for determining the truth surrounding meaning.

With regards to the question of *morality* “How do we live?”, the atheist/secular worldview has to explain it through human means when God is removed from our world. Some within the atheistic/secular worldview argue for a morality that is determined through the rational mind which can create the “ought” for any given society based on human goodness. History has proved this theory wrong – especially as evidenced through people like Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, etc. Without the God, described in the Biblical worldview, to reveal aspects of morality, we have observed that “might makes right!” The Biblical worldview teaches that the rational mind and the human will alone cannot explain morality. This is so because the heart is desperately wicked. What is needed is a heart change – which only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can deliver. The Biblical worldview, not only answers the “ought” question of morality; it also answers the “is” question. In other words, the Scriptures present the ideals and the choices that man must make to reach the ideal. Our evaluation of the atheistic/secular worldview around the worldview question of morality has demonstrated that it is only possible with an objective point of reference: God. Again, human rational thinking alone cannot extrapolate morality within this worldview. Here also, any attempt at this will only suggest that God is removed and replaced with subjective morality or a denial of objective moral standards. Life becomes unliveable without ethics and morality centred in the Person of God. Here, also, revelation, rational and empirical data is needed to determine morality for the individual and community. For our application in pastoral ministry and the church’s missional task in chapter 8, the question of morality cannot be discussed without God as the objective point of reference. Philosophers and theologians within the Christian worldview recognize the many limitations around mere rational thinking and argue for revelation, rational and empirical data for determining the truth surrounding morality.

Finally, the question of *destiny* “Where are we going?” has proved a futile question for the atheistic/secular worldview. For, if we are but only material bodies; then bodies are merely buried/cremated at death and all is over for us. The Biblical worldview reveals that man is not mere body. Man is comprised of an immaterial spirit/soul. Even though the body dies and returns to the ground from where it came from; the spirit/soul leaves the body to one of two destinations: eternally dwelling with God (heaven) or hell (eternally separated from God). Our evaluation of the atheistic/secular worldview around the question of destiny has demonstrated that even though this question is important, atheists and secularists disregard the possibility of an afterlife completely due to their convictions that rest in a material world only. They discount the doctrine of the resurrection and documented near-death and out-of-the-body experiences as mere illusion. Here, also, revelation, rational and empirical data is needed to determine truth statements regarding destiny. For our application in pastoral ministry and the church’s missional task in chapter 8, the question of destiny cannot be discussed without God as the point of reference.

The explanation provided by the Biblical worldview of worship with regards to the worldview questions correspond and cohere with each other. In other words, the fact that God created all things – especially man, allows man to live with purpose and meaning. This meaning is tied with living a life that pleases a good God – which presents man within moral choices. All this comes together as he heads towards his destiny – for which the road has been opened into God’s presence. The atheistic/secular worldview descriptions may cohere with each other at certain levels, for the rationalistic mind seeks that. However, they certainly do not correspond to reality as was demonstrated; but, actually makes life chaotic, meaningless, unliveable and deterministic.

Therefore, to apply these findings, the many claims of the atheistic/secular worldview are to be rejected in the practice and propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship by South African believers. Every opportunity, on the part of Christian believers to reach out to secularists, must be used to propagate the truth as revealed within the Biblical worldview of worship. Even though this mission field may seem difficult, the equipping of the church is necessary to enable them to defend, practice and propagate the Biblical worldview of worship to secularists in South Africa.

We turn our attention next to the influence of the Islamic Worldview of Worship from the middle-east to contrast it with the Biblical Worldview of Worship.

Chapter 5

The Biblical and Islamic worldviews of worship compared

Islam¹⁷ and the worldview questions

Islam is considered the second major religion in the world, just behind Christianity. The Judeo-Christian worldview and the Islamic worldview have for centuries been antagonistic to each other. In recent years, we have witnessed radical Islamists rising up, especially after 9/11 in which airplanes were piloted into the World Trade Centre in New York, USA. This provides a basis for Islamic fundamentalism – where radical groups are persecuting even other Muslims, calling for an allegiance to the literal interpretation of their texts. Islamic beliefs are thrust into the global scene, where great debates continue to take place. The Islamic presence on the continent of Africa and more especially, South Africa, provides us with the imperative to examine this worldview of worship, and compare it with the Biblical worldview of worship. The Philosophical-Theological Grid (Chapter 3) will be employed to examine the Islamic worldview of worship and provide a defence against it in this chapter. What do Muslims believe with regards to this worldview of worship? We begin by examining their predominant presupposition.

Muslim tradition claims that Islam came into existence with the creation of humanity by the Creator God, Allah (Hexham 2011:401). Islamic history, therefore, is central for the Muslim, and supersedes other historical claims. This is termed a “centrist view of history”, where centrism critically refers to “... a privileging of a certain historical experience or framework of reference such as “the West” or “Islam,” which results in representing a

¹⁷ Quaranic quotations are from: *The Holy Qur'an. 1946. Translation and Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali. Published by Islamic Propagation Centre International.*

particular history as falsely universal” (Riecken 2015:6). Centrist views of cultures and civilizations rely on specific understandings of difference and map the historical differences between multiple histories in specific ways (*ibid.*). A blind acceptance of one source of history (Islamic) and the denial of various other corroborating sources (Jewish, Greek, Roman, Christian, etc.), is a plain denial of earlier historical records in favour of Islamic history. In this worldview, faith precedes evidence. And the faith described is in Allah – the Arabic work for God – the Supreme Creator.

Muslims, which refers to the people that follow the Islamic worldview, believe that Islam (i.e. the religion) is exclusive in its truth claims. Islam, therefore, is a religious faith that permeates every part of a believer’s life, entering into virtually all of the experiences from which he derives a sense of meaning (Fry & King 1980:1). People of Islamic faith are to follow the teachings of the Qur’an, the Holy Book of Islam, to know revealed truth. The mosque is the meeting place for all Muslims. Maurer explains the concept “mosque” in the following words:

The word mosque (*masjid*) is derived from the root word “*sajad/sajud*” meaning “to prostrate”, which is normally viewed as worship. Worship in Islam is upholding and implementing the revealed law of Allah. The other Arabic word in this context is used usually for the central mosque in town: “*jami*”, meaning the “gathering mosque” or the “Friday mosque” (2008:86).

The formation of the Islamic worldview of worship will now be explored and compared to the philosophical-theological grid of the Christian worldview.

5.1. Worldview formation

In discussing the formation of the Islamic worldview, we will examine its cultural influences, worldview foundation for theories, and thereafter, certain theories, beliefs and practices

5.1.1. Applying the synchronic approach to cultural influences in Islam

A vast period of Islamic history precedes the arrival of Muslims on South African shores. Islam is linked to its founder, a Saudi tradesman, by the name of Muhammed, who rose to wealth and prominence in the 6th century C.E. Muhammed was born in Saudi Arabia. His father Abdullah died before he was born; and his mother, Amina, died when he was only six years old. For the next two years he was cared for by his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, who died as well. Before he was ten years old, Muhammed experienced all these tragedies. Thereafter, his tradesman uncle, Abu Talib, took custody of him.

Our concern at this stage is the Islamic history on South African soil. Islam arrived in South Africa in two major migratory waves launched by the Malays and the Indians who happen to hail from two distinct ethnic groups (Mandivenga 2000:347). Islam came to these people from Arabia, the home of Islam, and they, in turn, brought Islam to South Africa from their respective homelands in the Indian subcontinent and the Malay peninsula (*ibid.*). With regards to Islam's peoples and their period of settlement in South Africa, Mandivenga (2000:347) explains that the Cape Muslims (or the Cape Malays or Cape Coloureds), form the largest group of practicing Muslims in South Africa. The second largest group of Muslims are the Indians who arrived from the subcontinent in two distinct waves of their own (*ibid.*). Finally, there is also a tiny minority of black and white Muslims.

Special mention must be made of a political exile and influential religious leader, Shaikh Yusuf, who was the brother of the King of Goa. He was born in 1626 and went to Java where he propagated Islam. In an effort to promote local independence, he engaged himself in a political struggle with the Dutch European colonizers. The Dutch sent him to

Cape Town where he arrived in 1694 accompanied by about 50 persons, including his two wives, several servants, friends and imams who could lead Islamic prayers in the mosques. He died in 1699 after only five years in the new community. Nevertheless, many South African Muslims consider him to be the founder of Islam in this country (Mandivenga 2000:347). He remained the spiritual guidepost for the South African Muslims and his tomb remains the first place of Muslim 'pilgrimage' in South Africa even to this very day.

The Indian Muslims from the subcontinent arrived in Cape Town two centuries after the arrival of the Cape Muslims during the mid-nineteenth century. They came in two different waves. First, they came as indentured laborers to work in sugar plantations in Natal. They were brought by the British who exercised control over coastal Natal and held sway over much of Southern Asia. Indians provided the cheapest and most reliable labour. The Indians were bound to their employers as if they had been slaves. However, their period of employment had a limitation of three to four years, after which most of them became free residents of the territory.

Current-day Islam in South Africa is a minority religion (under 2% of the population). Yet there is a continuous influx of Muslims from northern African countries and immigrants from countries like Pakistan into South Africa. The influence of Islam is great where most food items in this country is Halaal certified.

5.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: Quranic and Hadith

Sources of authority that govern and administer Muslims and their community within Islam, include the Qur'an and Hadith. Other authorities may include: Sunnah, Shari'a, schools of law, the ulama, and mosques and Qur'anic schools (Braswell 1996:81). These

sources ensure that community life is regulated through rules that shape their religious experience. Being a works-based theological system, Muslims are heavily reliant on obedience to the rules, embodied in their five pillars of faith, in order to merit Allah's favour.

The Qur'an is considered as the primary revelatory literature for Muslims. They believe that it came directly from Allah to their prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an is the primary historical document that Muslims hold to. A second historical document is the *Hadith*, or traditions and sayings of Muhammad. These traditions and sayings were collected after his death. Beverley explains the process of the *Hadith's* collection: "Muslim scholars had to sort through the hundreds of thousands of traditions about Muhammad in order to decide which reports were accurate. The most famous collection of what Muslims regard as authentic *hadith* was done by Al-Bukhari (d. 870)" (2009:231-232).

5.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices

For Muslims, *Islam* is the culmination of Judaism, Christianity and all other world religions (Qureshi 2016:33). This, to the Muslim, makes it the ultimate religion. This is apparently so, because they claim that people did not faithfully follow the previous prophets that Allah sent to them. Therefore, it was necessary for Allah to give humanity the final and perfected religion - Islam (Surah 5:3) (*ibid.*).

Islam began in the 7th century A.D. and spread throughout the Middle East. The geographical spread of Islam extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indus and from the steppelands of Eurasia to the jungles of Central Africa (Fry & King 1980:24). Muhammad succeeded to unite previously warring Arabic tribes to gain control of land which they

believed was rightfully theirs (Caner 2008e:278). Caner (*ibid.*) records that Muhammad gave these warring tribes a common enemy: The Jews, the Christians, the Zoroastrians, and all others were allegedly squatters on their rightful land. Fry & King (1980:25) record that Arab institutions, customs, and culture have given a unique character to all the Middle East. Islam as a religion, remains the dominant force that has spread that character. Islam, therefore, is a religion with cultural features which its followers cannot escape (Maurer 2008:86).

Another aspect that is worth mentioning is how *politics* is married to religion in Islam. Even prior to Islam's entrance into the world, the Middle Eastern peoples were working towards cultural, economic and political unity (as evidenced in the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Empires (Fry & King 1980:25). Politics and religion in Islam found unity through the Arab conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries (*ibid.*). This unity continues into modern day Islamic countries – where this unity cannot be divorced but is central to beliefs and practices within the Islamic worldview of worship.

Life and religion in Islam are closely intertwined. In most democratic societies, the freedom to choose one's religion is a personal matter and is protected by law. Not so in Islam! Religion is woven into politics and politics into religion. This truth may be illustrated within the issue of religious freedom. Muslims will normally refer to the phrase in Surah 2:256 when dialoguing on issues of religious freedom, which states that there is "no compulsion in religion." Soloman (2007:71-72) argues that this phrase seems to give the impression of complete freedom of choice for individuals within an Islamic state or community. The phrase "no compulsion" in religion is a negative form of freedom, meaning at its best that it tolerates but does not grant the right of freedom for an individual

to choose his or her own religion (*ibid.*). Almost anywhere in the Islamic world, a Muslim's conversion from Islam bears a heavy penalty. Many are isolated and suffer official persecution, imprisonment, and even death. Consequently, depending on the "no compulsion" reference is in reality a moot point. This is because Sura 2:256, along with other similar verses Muhammad stated earlier in his preaching that proclaim flexibility, has been abrogated (i.e. cancelled out) and replaced by later revelations, according to Islamic jurisprudence and revered authoritative Qur'anic expositors (*ibid.*).

Even though Islam is considered one of the Abrahamic religions, our stance is that it has reconfigured much of the Old Testament and New Testament to form its own doctrines. The primary doctrine of the Person of YHWH/Allah is worth mention. We agree with Caner & Caner (2002:104-105) who argue that Geisler & Saleeb's appeal to philosophy, logic, and etymology to present a case for the same God that Christians and Muslims worship is mistaken. Caner & Caner (*ibid.*) question whether Muhammad believed Islam as fulfilling and redacting Judaism and Christianity or was he aiming at a complete revision of religion altogether? Were Christians and Jews viewed as unintended worshipers of Allah, the one true God, or were they pagans and *akafir* (infidels)? Caner & Caner (*ibid.*) explain Muhammad's redaction of Biblical material to suit an Islamic agenda:

Although he made copious revisions of Old Testament stories and the nature of Jesus, he clearly viewed followers of Moses and of Christ as children of Satan, not separated brethren.

The process of redefining an established set of terms to fit one's own ideas is called "redaction." Therefore, while the Muslim man says that he is a son of Abraham, he pours new meaning into the essential nature of Abraham. In Surah 3:66, the Qur'an states emphatically, "Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian, but he was an upright man, a Muslim; and he was not one of the polytheists." The story of Abraham has been redacted to fit an agenda.

This is also true of YHWH of the Judeo/Christian worldview and Allah of Islam. Even though the term in Islam may mean God, the descriptions of God revealed within these

worldviews are contradictory in many aspects. Muslims certainly don't hold to the belief that the Allah of Islam is the YHWH of the Judeo-Christian worldview (e.g. Caner & Caner 2002:102-119; Braswell, Jr 1996:43-48; Maurer 2008:111-114; Qureshi 2016:49-68; cf. Moosa 2007:90ff.). We proceed to the meaning of the term "Islam".

The term "Islam" means *submission* to the will of Allah; whilst, the person who submits is called a "Muslim," or submitted one (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:293). Geisler & Saleeb (*ibid.*) explain that this submission involves both beliefs (*iman*) and practices (*deen*). Muslims believe in one God, the prophets (including his last prophet Muhammad), angels, the Qur'an as the Word of God, and the final day of judgment with a final destination in heaven and hell that follows.

The goal of every Muslim is to earn the favour of Allah through two important facts: right believing, *aqeeda*, and right living, *sharia*. Right believing is rooted in the core *Six Articles of Faith* (Qureshi 2016:33):

1. Belief in Allah as an absolute unity, a monad.
2. Belief in the prophets.
3. Belief in divinely inspired books.
4. Belief in angels and the unseen.
5. Belief in the day of judgement.
6. Belief in Allah's predestining sovereignty.

Right living is rooted in *sharia*, which is Islamic Law. Qureshi (2016:34) explains that *sharia*, is understood as 'the way to water.' This concept is meaningful for middle-eastern

desert people. As a result, for Muslims, following sharia is the way to life itself. The following *Five Pillars of Islam* cater for correct living within Islam:

1. The Shahada: the confession that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger (Khalima).
2. Praying the five daily prayers (Salat).
3. Fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm).
4. Giving alms (Zakat).
5. Going on a pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

Qureshi (2016:34) explains the embodiment of right believing and right living where both *aqeeda* and sharia are ultimately grounded in the life and teachings of Muhammad. Muslims are expected to follow him as he is the embodiment of Islam and its perfect exemplar. His actions and his sayings in life are recorded in a vast body of literature, collectively called the *hadith* - which after the Qur'an, forms the second rung of sharia. To conclude, these theories, beliefs, and practices function to create identity for the people, boundaries around Islamic practices, and foundational metaphors that illumine the spirituality of Muslims. The strict adherence to these for the Muslim is for salvation ends.

5.2. Truth

Muslims believe their Holy Scriptures, the Qur'an, is the final revelation of Allah. Our discussion here is limited to the doctrines taught in the Qur'an and not on issues surrounding its compilation. What is the Islamic understanding surrounding truth as a concept?

The Arabic word for “truth” is *Haqq*. Allah, in the Qur’an is referred to as *Al-Haqq*, which gives an understanding of him being Absolute Truth. Stemming from this understanding, the following concepts regarding the nature of Allah are taught in the Qur’an (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:131-134): Allah’s absolute Oneness (Unity), Allah as absolute ruler (Sovereignty), Allah as absolute justice (Equity), Allah’s absolute mercy, Allah’s absolute will (Volitionality), and Allah as absolutely unknowable (Inscrutability). Muslims hold to the belief of the exclusive nature of truth. Ultimately, truth finds its expression in the religion of Islam. Within the Islamic worldview, truth has been revealed. The Qur’an states that the Torah is actually inspired scripture, as is the gospel (Surah 5:68), but that the Qur’an has now come as the final scripture to guide mankind (Qureshi 2016:108). What do Muslims believe was the process that Allah used to give his revelation?

Regarding the process through which Allah’s revelation entered the world, Hexham explains:

Following the creation, God revealed his will to mankind through the first man, Adam, and a long line of prophets that included Abraham and Jesus. The last and final prophet was Muhammad, to whom God revealed his will for mankind in the holy Qur’an, and who now serves as a model and inspiration for all men (*ibid.*).

Therefore, the Islamic claim is that truth finds its point of reference in the Qur’an – which means “to recite” or “to read”. The Qur’an is regarded as the actual words of Allah and the final revelation to humankind. From an early age, Muslim children are taught that the Qur’an is perfect and preserved and that the Bible has been corrupted (Caner & Caner 2003:35). However, when probed for evidence of corruption, Muslims cannot provide any, and centre their accusations around Qur’anic texts – which involves circular reasoning. The evidence on the Biblical side on the authenticity and reliability of the text is

overwhelming as history and archaeology posits. An examination of the Qur'an as an Islamic point of reference is important and to which we now turn our attention.

Allah is transcendent and remote and does not reveal himself on an intimate level, but he communicates his truth with humanity (Caner & Caner 2002:83). The Qur'an serves as the "primary proof of Islam's veracity" (Qureshi 2016:112). Qureshi (2016:111) explains what this means to the average Muslim:

Muslims believe that the Quran primarily serves as a guidance for mankind, of course, but since they do not usually exegete it themselves it is fair to classify this as an indirect purpose for the average Muslim. Rather, it is the mystical value of the Quran that serves as its primary purpose. This is illustrated by devout Muslims' average encounter with the Quran: its recitation in Arabic, even if the Muslim does not speak Arabic. In this case, it is not guidance but blessings that Muslims seek.

This is not surprising seeing that Islam's religion is legalistic in its application of truth. This is similar to the Judaism that Jesus encountered in His interaction with the Jewish religious leaders (e.g. the parable of the Good Samaritan). Islam's essence takes the message back to that which Jesus reclaimed it from. Therefore, its truth claims at many levels are denied within the Christian worldview.

Some of the Islamic claims argue for the Quran being a reproduction of the original in heaven (Surah 85:21-22), was given to the prophet, Muhammad, through the agency of the archangel, Gabriel, over a period of 23 years (Krüger et. al. 1996:229). The Qur'an is viewed as the origin, source and norm of all that is Islamic, all Islamic faith, action and life. It is given the highest, absolute, authority (Küng 2007:62). Muslims also assert that the eloquence and the beauty of the style of the Qur'an itself alone is a sufficient proof of Muhammad's prophetic office and Divine commission (Pfander 1910:253). Muslim's argue for the divine status of the Qur'an in Muhammad's inability to neither read nor write,

and hence could not himself compose such a book. Prophets were granted some special sign as proof that they had been sent from God. In Moses' time the magicians had great influence, hence the miracles which he wrought in Egypt were similar to their tricks in appearance, though really performed and very much more surprising (Pfander 1910:253). In Jesus' time, healing was the sign of his prophetic status. In Muhammad's time, it is claimed, eloquence was highly prized among the Arabs, hence the book he was given excelled all others in its eloquence and its poetry (*ibid.*). As proof of its uniqueness, Muslims quote the Qur'an and present a challenge to others to produce a verse like one contained in it (Surahs ii. 21 and xvii. 91). This is not a difficult task to prove them wrong – especially in modern times when volumes of good literature abound.

This form of reasoning exposes Muhammad and the Qur'an's claims as circular - i.e. without any external proofs to verify Muhammad's prophetic calling and without any proofs outside the Quran to verify that it is indeed the Word of God. Miracles were not a sign of Muhammad's ministry – except the Qur'an itself. In fact, it was not until a hundred and fifty to two hundred years after his life that his followers invented miracles and ascribed them to Muhammad (*Lee Strobel's interview with Norman Geisler, Strobel 2000:136*). Therefore, his claims to prophethood does not meet the Bible's criteria for a prophet of God.

Other issues also surface in its compilation – for if the Qur'an is indeed a copy of the eternal heavenly tablets, it presents, firstly, a philosophical and theological problem of something existing eternally with Allah, if Allah is one (monad). It secondly, is in direct contradiction with historical records, which tell us that Muhammad's third successor, the Caliph Uthman, had to recall all Qur'anic manuscripts, destroyed them by fire, and issued

official, standardized copies (Qureshi 2016:119). This was due to the variant recitations of the Qur'an that were causing division among Muslims during the approximately twenty years after Mohammad's death (*ibid.*). Qureshi adds, "When this happened, devout companions of Muhammad strongly resisted the recall of their texts, and the records of their dissent remain with us today" (2016:119). A third issue is textual. The issue of abrogation surfaces where, if the Qur'an is a copy of the heavenly one, why would certain recitations during the prophet's lifetime cancel previous ones. Qureshi (2016:110) explains that Muhammad would tell his followers that certain portions of the Qur'an he had relayed before were no longer to be recited as part of the Quran. Historical records show that this was met with resistance, as people asked him how the Word of God could be cancelled (*ibid.*). The response is recorded in Surah 2.106 of the Quran, which asserts that Allah can substitute verses in his divine scripture because he has power over all things. However, not all abrogated verses were left out of the text of the Qur'an. Therefore, scholars argue that there are various degrees of abrogation. Qureshi (2016:110) explains:

... they teach that Allah intended certain verses to be recited but not practiced, and other verses to be practiced but not recited. For these reasons, Muslim (sic) scholars turn to the records of Muhammad's life, the hadith, for clarification. In addition, as we have already seen, most Islamic practices actually come from hadith and not from the Quran. This is why Muslims do not believe the Quran is sufficient for Islamic practice, but it requires authoritative hadith.

This also creates a contradiction regarding the claims of Qur'anic authority and its practical application because of glaring textual issues.

Another issue is linked to the Qur'anic text, where Muslims claim that the Bible has been corrupted (as stated earlier). This claim comes after the Qur'an's teaching that it is a confirmation of the Torah and the gospel. Yet, there are many major differences in these

two texts. For example, in the Qur'an, Mary the mother of Jesus was mistaken for Miriam the sister of Moses (Surah 19:27-28 and 66:12). It is an error from the mind of Muhammad confusing Mary with Miriam in this oral-based culture at the time of this dictation. Also, according to the Qur'an, Jesus was not crucified. Yet, the New Testament makes it clear He was. Next, the Qur'an teaches that the Word of God cannot be changed (Surah 6:115), then the Muslim scholars proceed to argue that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments (e.g., books of Moses, writings [Psalms], and the Gospels) have been changed, yet Muhammad, disagreeing with the later scholars, affirmed them as true! (Hodge & Patterson 2015:149)

Due to these discrepancies, Muslims claim that the Bible must be corrupted and appeal to vague Qur'anic texts to prove their point (Qureshi 2016:117). However, apart from minor copyist errors, there is no historical evidence of any Biblical corruption (Yates 2008:109). Even Muhammad tells doubtful Muslims to approach the people of the Book who hold the truth (Surah 10:94). In other words, Muhammad believed that uncorrupted copies of the Bible were still around in the seventh century A.D. The Bible of the seventh century was the Bible of the first century and remains the same Bible of the twenty-first century. Therefore, by the logic of Surah 10:94, Muslims should accept Biblical authenticity and the authenticity of today's Bible (Caner & Caner 2002:232). As is evidenced, there is lack of logical consistency in Islamic claims concerning the Qur'an when internally engaged with.

The transmission of the Qur'an is linked to Muhammad. Islamic tradition tells us that from his childhood Muhammad was a spiritual person who frequently took time off from his daily tasks to meditate and pray. On one occasion, when he was forty years old, during

the lunar month of Ramadan, he was meditating in a cave near Mecca when the angel Gabriel supposedly appeared to him (Hexham 2011:402). Hexham (2011:402-403) points out that Muslims are divided in the accounts of what happened next:

According to the majority, or Sunni, tradition, Muhammad feared that the angel was a messenger of Satan and had to be compelled to follow the angel's instructions. According to the minority, or Shia, tradition, Muhammad recognized Gabriel and willingly followed his instructions. In any event, the command came for Muhammad to begin reciting what became the first revealed Sura, or chapter, of the Qur'an, which literally means "recitation."

These traditions lack external verification. This makes it a matter of faith rather than history that is evidenced-based, even though Muslims see no need for external verification (Hexham 2011:402).

Krüger et.al. (1996:229) explain the function of the Qur'an as the source of truth in the Islamic faith where the Qur'an is seen to be the Word of God revealed in clear Arabic speech. According to Muslims, the form (the Arabic language) and the meaning of the Quran cannot be separated. It is claimed to be a spiritual, as well as a linguistic revelation in which every word is connected with every other word in its rhythm and rhyme. By destroying the form, one inevitably destroys a vital part of the Qur'an (*ibid.*). The original Arabic is also claimed to be so superbly eloquent, poetic, subtle and inspired that it cannot (and many claim, should not) be translated without losing at least half the meaning (*ibid.*). However, due to the spread of Islam to the rest of the world, translations became necessary for Muslim believers.

Muslims also hold to the sayings of Muhammad, which they believe, do not appear in the Qur'an, but is recorded in the *Hadith* (meaning, "statements"). However, the Qur'an is the primary document through which Allah's laws are adhered to (Beverley 2009:220). The

difference with the Biblical worldview here, lies in the fact that “Scripture interprets Scripture”; whilst for the Islamic worldview, the Qur’an’s meaning is established by consulting the traditions and the biography of Muhammad (Nehls 2015:5). In other words, the “tablet in heaven” passed through the angel Gabriel, through Muhammad to Muslims, is insufficient for faith and practice. Other lesser “unrevealed” writings are needed for a complete revelation. The inconsistency in Islamic revelatory claims is clearly evidenced.

Yet, from these combined writings, the Muslim is tasked to practice his faith. This faith may broadly fall into a category known as the *Five Pillars of Islam* and constitute the core beliefs and practices of Muslims. These include (Beverley 2009:223-224):

1. *Shahadah*, which is the confession of faith: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”
2. *Salat*, which is the discipline of prayer. Prayer is structured at five specific times every day, with Muslims facing their holy city, Mecca.
3. *Zakat*, is the 2,5% of their total wealth that Muslims give to address the imbalances between the rich and poor.
4. *Sawm*, involves fasting during the month of Ramadan. This practice sees Muslims abstaining from smoking, eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse during the daylight hours of the month.
5. *Hajj*, is the final pillar. Able-bodied Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

Küng, owing to his liberal ecumenical slant, sees no problem in God progressively communicating separately to the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He believes all of them to be the Word of God. Küng (2007:75) argues that

historically the Christian mission to Islam proved completely fruitless, as did (and does) the Muslim mission to Christians. He (*ibid.*) says that the more Christians and Muslims got to know one another and did not simply attempt to 'convert' one another, the more doubts arose among Christians as to whether their own negative attitude to the Qur'an was correct. It would seem that Küng is out of touch with the evangelistic thrust within both worldviews in recent Christian and Islamic history. We cannot agree that the Islamic revelations must be embraced by the Biblical worldview of worship as a continuation of the Abrahamic faith. In fact, the Islamic faith is the denial of major and core Biblical doctrines that cannot be set aside (e.g. the Deity of Christ, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, etc.). Also, the Islamic faith, as we shall witness in the worldview questions, is an apologetic against the Biblical worldview of worship. For this reason, and for reasons based on our prior research, we do categorically state our position that we believe that the Islamic Scriptures are false "revelations." There are sections that are borrowed from Biblical revelation; but reconfigured to suit Islamic theology. These bring about much contradiction. Therefore, as a worldview of worship, Islam cannot be accepted as added revelation to 'corrupted' Biblical truth (as is claimed), and therefore cannot add value to the Biblical worldview of worship.

We proceed to the worldview questions to establish Islam's answers to the worldview questions (Chapter 3).

5.3. The worldview questions

The worldview questions on origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?), and destiny (where are we going?) are to be applied to the Islamic worldview of worship in order to ascertain its theories, beliefs and practices

that form the worldview. We begin with the question on Origin (Where do we come from?) and how it influences Islamic worship. We will focus on aspects of common ground beliefs and, also beliefs that diverge between the Biblical and Islamic worldviews of worship.

5.3.1. Origin

Similar to the Biblical worldview, the Islamic worldview of worship suggests that the universe had a beginning. Allah is considered the ultimate cause of all created things and, therefore, He is to be recognized for His creative acts. The natural response of the creation to Allah should be *submission* (i.e. the meaning of the term *Islam*). Worship in Islam, therefore, is closely linked to the concept of *submission*, and manifests in devotion to outward acts performed by Muslims in response to Allah. All this is *for* salvific purposes. However, for the Muslim, sin is not a part of their nature at birth; as it is in the Biblical understanding of original sin. No one is lost (Surah 30:30); but all are born weak (Surah 4:28) and forgetful (Surah 20:115) (Caner 2015:178). Therefore, there is no doctrine of redemption as is in the Biblical worldview (*ibid.*). However, “humans are in need of guidance, wisdom that ultimately comes from the Qur’an ... The equation for that salvation is threefold: repentance + faith + works = possible salvation (Qur’an 25:70)” (Caner 2015:178-179). Caner (2015:179) continues, “Salvation seems attainable at first glance. However, there is more to Islamic salvation than just the scale of justice between good and evil. Allah must first want you, for ‘Allah leads astray those who He pleases’ (Qur’an 14:4).”

This is where the Biblical and Islamic worldviews differ. In the Biblical worldview, God is patient and desires that none should perish; but come to repentance (2 Pt 3:9). He, therefore, sent Jesus Christ into the world, not to condemn the world; but to save those

who would believe in him (Jn 3:16-17). In the Person and Work of Christ, love, justice, evil and forgiveness – the four absolutes – converge at the cross (Zacharias 2006:231). Therefore, for the Christian, worship stems from salvation, which is an inward passive condition that is to be actively expressed. However, for the Muslim, salvation is the goal of worship. Therefore, outward legalistic confessions and acts are employed to ensure worship. With this presupposition, we shall now consider issues regarding the origin of the universe, the origin of humanity, and the origin of evil and suffering to ascertain Islamic answers to these questions and compare them to the Biblical worldview of worship.

5.3.1.1. Origin of the universe: Quranic theism

The cosmological and the teleological arguments employed by Christians (Chapter 3) for the existence of God, is also presupposed in the Qur'an. This, therefore, corresponds and coheres with the *Thomist Argument* (within the cosmological argument), which views the existence of finite, contingent beings that are dependent for their existence on something or someone else. It also corresponds and coheres with the fine-tuning of the universe as explained in the teleological argument.

Those revelatory traditions with common Abrahamic roots (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam), share many general beliefs concerning the origin of the universe. It must be emphasized that they all share a common theistic creation belief. Judaism and Christianity have more in common for they share the same Old Testament/Tanakh text. Islam, however, largely rests on the Qur'an for its teachings.

Similar to the Biblical account in Genesis 1:1, the Islamic worldview of worship presupposes the existence of Allah (God) without offering proofs for his existence. It views

Allah as the Originator and Creator of the universe. Surah 2:29 confirms that creation stems from the ultimate Creator, Allah:

It is He Who hath created for you All things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, For He gave order and perfection To the seven firmaments; And of all things He hath perfect knowledge.

The fact of one Supreme Creator, who is infinite, eternally powerful, and omniscient is borrowed from the Judeo-Christian worldview (Beverley 2009:217). According to (Soltanian 2010:106), "... many Muslim and theological and philosophical works on the topic of Tawhid (i.e., the unicity, uniqueness and unlimitedness of God) make the distinction between proofs for the attributes (ṣifāt) of God and proofs for His existence (wujūd)." Within these works one or more arguments are presented for the existence of God before proceeding to reason for His omnipotence (Qādir), omniscience (ʿĀlim) and other attributes (*ibid.*). Theistic arguments, among Muslim philosophers, were divided into two distinct groups: proving the *Divine Essence* (i.e. the existence of a being with necessary existence); and the other for proving the *Divine Attributes* (i.e., the uniqueness, omnipotence, omniscience and so forth of the Divine Essence).

With regard to Allah's divine attribute as creator, Surah 40:68 states: "It is He who grants life and deals death, and when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, "Be" – and it is." Küng rightly observes in this verse the interest in the Quran to describe the *progress* and *continuation* of creation; rather than the Biblical focus on the *beginning* of creation (2007:82). In fact, Islam has to, either, rely on extra-Qur'anic data; or by internal inferences, build a complete theology of creation. Another example of this is evidenced in Surah 43:3-5, which highlights the creation order and the presence of the creator behind it all:

Verily in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe. And in the creation of yourselves, and the fact that animals are scattered (through the earth), are signs for those of assured faith. And in the alternation of night and day, and that fact that Allah sends down sustenance from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death, and in the change of the winds, are signs for those who are wise.

In short, as a worldview, Islam lacks a Genesis 1-2 account of creation.

With regards to the essence of Allah, Islam has a singular view of Allah (doctrine of Tawhid); whilst, the Biblical worldview teaches a trinitarian view (even though the word “trinity” does not occur). Islam’s theological stance is that Allah is a singular monad. There is a logical inconsistency in this monadic description. The Islamic claim is that Allah is creator, self-sufficient, and is independent of his creation. However, certain attributes of Allah are contingent upon his creation. For example, if Allah is love, who was he loving before his creation? In contrast, within the Biblical worldview, love existed perfectly within the God-head: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Even though Muslims deny the doctrine of the Trinity; it is a more plausible description of God than Tawhid. Therefore, the God of the Bible cannot be equated with the God of the Qur’an. Caner (2008d:280), agrees with this conclusion:

In full review, the Allah of the Qur’an and the God of the Bible have little in common, and certainly are not the same God. Islam explicitly denies the Fatherhood of God, the divinity of the Son, the person of the Holy Spirit. Muhammad was not ignorant concerning the Trinity; he specifically denied the Trinity, and in so doing, denied the God of the Bible ... Islam, like all other world religions, is not partially right. It is completely wrong (2008d:280).

Within the doctrine of the Trinity, is described also, a Being of both simplicity and complexity. If God was easily defined by the human mind, He will not be God – for He is infinite in all His attributes. The doctrine of the Trinity offers one example of the complexity

of the Being of God, which is to lead to a state of wonder by man, and result with a response of worship.

There are many fundamental teachings of the Biblical worldview of worship that are contrary to Islamic beliefs. The superficial similarities do not give credence to anyone to liken Christian concepts of God to Islamic concepts. However, these superficial similarities can be excellent starting points to conversing with Muslims in the church's evangelistic and apologetic thrust.

We proceed to examine Islam's beliefs on the origin of man.

5.3.1.2. The origin of man

The Qur'an teaches that Adam was the first created human being. He is believed to have been created in heaven, and thereafter cast down to earth because of "the fall" (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:38). Surah 15:26-27 states, "We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape; and the Jinn race, we had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind."

The purpose of the creation of man is to serve Allah. Surah 51:56 states, "I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me." This agrees with the Biblical understanding of angels and humanity who are created to serve God's purposes. However, within Islam, the relational aspect between God and His creation is missing. A relationship of submission to Allah is encouraged; rather than a love relationship. This is due to the fact that Allah is the transcendent One and his transcendence far outweighs

his immanence (Sire 2009:249). This makes Allah to be mostly removed from His creation.

Within the Biblical account of Eden, we evidence a relational God who walks and converses with Adam and Eve – which seems to have been a regular occurrence. Submission, in the Christian worldview – is submission to God’s provision of Jesus Christ as the substitutionary Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. There is also a submission Christ’s Lordship as Ruler over the Kingdom of God. The difference between the two worldviews lie in the fact of a relationship established by forced submission (Islam) or submitting to a love relationship (Christianity). This can be illustrated by the story of Ali, as told by Caner (2015:187-188):

Consider Ali, a young Saudi man who surrendered his life to Christ just a few years ago. Ali had not openly espoused his newfound faith, but the Saudi High Court, nonetheless, sentenced the young Christian to death for treason against Allah (Qur’an 5:33). Ali was to be beheaded. Within a few days of the verdict, Ali was escorted from his prison cell to the site of execution. Awaiting Ali were his wife and three-year-old daughter, forced to watch the execution of their husband and father. The soldiers tied Ali’s hands together and stretched Ali’s neck out across a wooden block. His wife wept uncontrollably. The last words Ali spoke before the execution were these: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Then he was gone, a martyr for Jesus.

Similar stories are recorded in many Muslim countries where, Muslims will completely cut off family members, for the cause of Allah.¹⁸ This is not only unique to Muslim countries. Even in one of our suburbs in Johannesburg, where a missionary is working; Christian converts from Islam are targeted and persecuted within their communities.¹⁹ This concept of submission extends further – even in family relationships.

¹⁸ See sites such as <https://www.opendoors.org.za> that present a World Watch update on persecution.

¹⁹ Due to the sensitive nature around this missionary’s work, details are withheld.

A similar concept of the relationship between Allah and his creation is also projected upon his creation in the man/woman relationship. With regards to the male/female distinction, Islam teaches that men are superior to women. Surah 2:228 states, “Women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable, but men have a degree over them.” According to Hadith 3.826, Muhammad said that women are genetically and legally inferior (Caner & Caner 2002:133-134). This Islamic belief contradicts the Biblical understanding of the male-female distinction. The Christian Scriptures teach that man and woman equally bear the image of God (Gen. 1:27) – which demonstrates equality of essence. The distinction lies in function – where man is tasked to lead the marriage and home. We evidence this pattern modelled within the triune nature of God, where the members of the Trinity are co-equal in essence. However, there exists an economic or relational subordination (not ontological subordination) to each other in their function (i.e. what each member of the Trinity does). With regards to the *essence* of the Trinity, we find in progressive revelation, the Son proceeding from the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son (Jn 15:26; Matt 10:20; Jn 16:7; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11)²⁰. For example, the Son is subordinate to the Father; and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and Son. However, their *function* does not determine their essence. This is so – even within God’s creation of humanity, where the Bible portrays man and woman equal in essence; yet different in function.

The Fall of humanity sets this further in place when judgment is passed as a consequence to Adam and Eve and every succeeding human being. The Biblical teaching of *The Fall*

²⁰ For the purposes of this thesis, we will not get into the *filioque* debate; but merely state the Scriptures that support the traditional Orthodox Christian doctrine that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

explains to the reader the origin of sin, evil, suffering and death. What is Islam's teaching on the origin of sin, evil, suffering and death?

5.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

In Islam, Satan (or *Shatan*) is believed to be created before man. However, his rebellion seems to be instantaneous with the creation of man (Surah 38:71-77) (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:37). His name means "... stoned or accursed, sometimes *marid* or rebellious" (Stanton, quoted in Geisler & Saleeb 1993:37). Satan's fall seems to be pride, due to his disobedience to prostrate himself to man under Allah's command (Surah 38:71-77). The Biblical account presents Satan's fall linked to pride with him wanting to usurp the throne of God and become god (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28). This led to his downfall.

Geisler & Saleeb point out the inconsistency in the Qur'an regarding Satan being an angelic being; yet, the teaching that angels cannot disobey God (*ibid.*). They quote from Muslim commentators who try to get around these contradictions by suggesting various explanations which read into the Qur'anic "revelation" what is not there (*ibid.*). In the Biblical worldview of worship, Satan is created as an archangel. His rebellion against God took on the form of wanting to be God (Isa 14; Ezek 28). Pride had set in his heart. He comes to Adam and Eve in Eden with the same proposition – i.e. to be their own God and determine for themselves moral boundaries (Gen 3:5). This has become known as *The Fall* – or Original Sin.

The Quran does not teach the concept of original sin as is taught within the Judeo-Christian worldview. Muslims believe that Adam rebelled against God's law in the garden of Eden. However, there is no doctrine of imputed, nor inherited sin in Islam. In other

words, even though human beings are frail and weak, prone to temptation; they are not predisposed toward sin (Beverley 2009:225). The question still remains for Muslims: where does the inclination for sinning come from? Their answer lies outside of the individual; and not within. There are some similarities in the Biblical and Qur'anic worldview accounts e.g. the garden of Eden, the tree, and disobedience in partaking from the tree. However, there are many differences between the Biblical and Qur'anic interpretations as pointed out by Geisler & Saleeb (1993:42) that whilst within Christian theology man's disobedience is viewed as a fundamental turning point in his relationship to God, Muslims believe that this was only a single mistake on Adam and Eve's part that was completely forgiven after their repentance. This, they believe, had no further effect on the nature of man and the rest of the creation. Neither does the fact that man was expelled from Paradise to earth due to disobedience play a significant role in the Islamic anthropology or soteriology.

With regards to Biblical soteriology, God's presence in Jesus Christ introduces the world to a God who is not removed from human struggles. In Islam, God is transcendent, and will not "dirty his hands" in human sinfulness. He will pardon whom he wills without any notion of redemption that is external to the sinner. What is required is for the Muslim's good deeds to outweigh his bad deeds. In contrast, the Christian message presents a suffering God who loves and is faithful to His creation. This is ultimately evidenced in the cross of Jesus Christ. Carson (2006:159) argues that in Christian thought faith depends on the reliability and faithfulness of the God of the Bible. Faith that depends on a God who is a cruel tyrant will be bitterly disappointed in the end. Here, followers of such a god

are called to provide a theodicy²¹ on behalf of their god. For faith to be praiseworthy, it will have to rest in a faithful and just God. This faithful and just God is evidenced in the Biblical worldview of worship; the Islamic faith lacks severely.

To summarize, the Islamic worldview presents Allah as the Creator/Designer of the universe. Evil and suffering entered the world through human disobedience. However, human beings are born perfect and have no fallen nature; but later learn to sin. This is due to the fact that they are "... intrinsically weak, frail, imperfect, and constantly forgetful of God" (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:49). The contradiction of a "perfect" human being who is "weak, frail, imperfect, and forgetful of God" is glaring! Humanity's responsibility is to work themselves out of the mess that they find themselves in through good works, submitting to the sovereign will of Allah. However, as Geisler (2006:399) points out, Islam's fatalistic strain in its theology – where Allah's absolute control is described. This will mean that even good works are not a guarantee for eternity. There is no surety for the Muslim. Therefore, Islamic theology includes the fatalistic destiny of man according to Allah's predetermination – where he creates some people for paradise and others for hell. Geisler (*ibid.*) quotes a Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, who reflects on this fatalistic theology:

'Tis all a chequer-board of night and days
where destiny with men for pieces plays;
Hither and thither moves and mates and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

On the other hand, the Biblical worldview teaches that God created the universe. Sin, evil and suffering entered the world through Satan and Adam's choices to rebel against God.

²¹ The term "theodicy" is a compound word from two Greek words: *Theos* (God) and *dikē* (justice) which aims to provide an account of why God actually permits evil in the world (Moreland & Craig 2017:541).

Sin is *imputed* through Adam, *inherited* from our parents, and *individual* – because of a personal will and choice to sin. Sin, evil, suffering and death corrupted God’s good creation. If God is Creator; He alone can rectify what went wrong with His creation. Therefore, He intervened through His Son, Jesus Christ, to reconcile all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-21). All this will culminate in a future new heavens and new earth which is a guarantee for believers in Christ (Rev. 21).

How is meaning discovered in the Islamic worldview and what is the Biblical response to their theories? These questions will now be answered.

5.3.2. Meaning

The Islamic worldview of worship suggests an ultimate meaning for humanity who have been created by Allah according to his purposes. The purpose of man is centred not so much in worship; but in submission to the will of Allah. What is the starting point of meaning in Islam? What is the role of objective and subjective meaning for humanity? These are the questions that will now be discussed.

5.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning

As stated in Chapter 3, it is important for meaning and purpose to be grounded in truth. Contrasted with the Christian concept of meaning, Geisler and Saleeb (1993:47) present orthodox Islam’s concept of purpose and meaning for humanity as, “... not to know God and become more conformed to his character; but to understand his will and become more obedient to his commands.” This is the view of one orthodox Islamic scholar, Ibn Taymiac (*ibid.*). However, in Islam this is not looked on as a weakness since the emphasis

of the Qur'an is not on revealing who God is but on what he wills as man's highest calling (*ibid.*).

We proceed to examine objective meaning in Islam.

5.3.2.2. Objective meaning

Within Islam, humanity's meaning is evidenced from our created function where man is primarily created to worship Allah (Surah 51:56-58), and secondarily tasked to look after the earth (Surah 2:30). As we have already observed within the previous chapters, truth must be derived objectively, which is centred *in* God and proceeds *from* God. The Islamic worldview claim is that truth is found in Sharia Law, which is based on Muhammad's protocols in the Qur'an and Hadith (Caner & Caner 2003:101). Meaning, therefore, primarily finds an "objective" point of reference in the "revelations" that Allah gave through Muhammad in the Qur'an, and secondarily, Muhammad's sayings (ahadith) and example (sunnahs) which form the cultural rules of Islam (Caner & Caner 2002:95). Caner & Caner (2002:96) explain the link between the Qur'an and the Hadith/Sunnah for daily life – and ultimately – for derived purpose:

According to the South African Council of Muslim Theologians, the Hadith/Sunnah is the sensible explanation of an otherwise sporadically ambiguous Qur'an. They explain, "The Holy Qur'an without the Hadith or Sunnah of the Prophet remains unintelligible in certain instances and in view of that, the Holy Qur'an has, in several verses, ordered Muslims to follow the Prophet in all his deeds and sayings. Therefore, if one believes in the Holy Qur'an, there is no other alternative but to uphold the Hadith of the Prophet."

The insufficiency of the Qur'an for deriving the "revealed" plans and purposes of Allah – and hence meaning, is here evidenced. The commitment to Allah's Qur'an and the confession that Muhammad is his final messenger, places Muhammad on par with the

Qur'an. Therefore, the Qur'an and Muhammad's example in living become extremely important for Muslims to emulate. This will also influence the Muslim directing his/her life to find meaning.

The ultimate destiny of the believer also gives Muslims purpose and meaning. Geisler & Saleeb (*ibid.*) explain that an important principle that this life and this world are not the end but a preparation, a testing ground for the hereafter. It is in this context that it becomes significant and purposeful for man to act good and live ethically.

5.3.2.3. Subjective meaning

Muslims attempt to live out the revealed objective reality in their daily choices. Total submission to the sovereign will of Allah is the goal. Whilst the Biblical worldview of worship espouses that life must be directed by the concepts and precepts that are revealed by God's character and purpose (cf. Chapter 3); the Islamic worldview offers the Qur'an as a guide and this life as a preparation for the eternal life hereafter (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:106). This comes out of the belief that man's fundamental problem "... is not usually viewed as rebellion against God, but as weakness and forgetfulness that are inherent in human nature" (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:122).

There is no doctrine of redemption in Islam as in the Christian worldview of worship. Salvation is futuristic when Allah pardons the believer in the life hereafter. Choices are to be daily made to submit to the laws of Allah by living in obedience in order to earn his favour. With this in mind, we proceed next to examine the question of morality within the Islamic worldview.

5.3.3. Morality

Similar to the Biblical worldview, Islam believes that God has given His Moral Law in propositional form to His people. The Qur'an, the Hadith and traditions of Muhammad addresses the proper conduct of Muslims (Braswell 1996:101).

We will proceed to discuss Morality and the Moral Law with God as the starting point for morality in the Islamic worldview of worship. Consideration will also be given on its impact on the individual and society.

5.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: Allah, Muhammad and the revelations

According to Muslims, Allah is the perfect, wise, merciful and just Guide who holds all humans accountable for their deeds, both good and bad (Beverley 2009:217). The discipline of *morality* examines habits, customs, and other forms of behaviour that is evidenced within Islamic Shari'a Law. The Arabic word *Shari'a* denotes "... the way one should follow, or the 'way to a place rich in water'" (Maurer 2008:53). Maurer (*ibid.*) explains the development of Shari'a:

Muhammad died without making arrangements for the future leadership of the Muslim community, nor did he give an all-embracing body of rules for the solution of legal questions to his followers. With the expansion of the Islamic empire and the growing time distance from Muhammad, new questions of legal practice arose. Judicial issues in the Qur'an were insufficient to produce a legal code. To solve this problem, Muslims have adopted over the course of time the view that all of Muhammad's life style and behaviour (Sunna) were determined by Allah's inspiration. Therefore, only those traditions (hadith) which could be traced back to Muhammad himself were accepted as binding. This is why the traditions stand, for many Muslims, on an almost equal footing with the Qur'an as Allah's revelation. If Muhammad really is the role model of the Islamic community, it is only logical that his sayings and his behaviour are binding for all Muslims. The Sunna, as defined at that time, became, in addition to the Qur'an, the second authoritative source of Islamic law.

During the modern era, due to the Western influence, secularist movements “pushed for laws deviating from the opinions of the Islamic legal scholars who remained the sole authority for guidance in matters of ritual, worship, and spirituality, but they lost authority to the state in other areas” (*ibid*). Four basic authorities were applied to resolve any legal question. Maurer (2008:54-55) lists and explains these authorities:

1. **Qur’an**: This first source is considered to be the most important base of Islamic law.
2. **Sunna**: The customs and sayings of the Prophet, as available in the collection of *hadith*.
3. **Qiyas**: Newly arising cases are solved via conclusion by analogy, using the rules of logical deduction and following known cases.
4. **Ijma**: If there are still cases that cannot be solved by the Qur’an, the *hadith* or via conclusion by analogy, the consensus of the Islamic community is authoritative. In practice, this consensus is limited to the agreement of Muslim theologians.

The incompleteness of the Islamic revelation is noted from its developmental process according to the needs presented. The Christian Scriptures also had a process of ca. 1500 years regarding its final canonization. However, the difference lies in the Islamic claim to only *one* individual, Muhammad, who was tasked with the alleged revelations. What do these revelations reveal about the initial state of creation?

In contrast to a unified description of creation in the Bible; the Qur’an provides scattered and fragmented pieces of information regarding creation. Geisler & Saleeb write: “Because of the scarcity of details concerning the process of creation, later Muslim commentators added many legends to the story of creation to fill in the gaps in the

Qur'anic passages. Some modern Muslim scholars use these gaps to account for some sort of theistic evolutionary process" (1993:34). And so, as with the Biblical account, there is no moral pronouncement by Allah in deeming creation "good." The closest the Qur'an comes to such an idea is in 2:29, "It is He Who hath created for you All things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, *For He gave order and perfection To the seven firmaments*; And of all things He hath perfect knowledge." (*italics added for emphasis*).

As with the Biblical understanding of God, the Qur'anic claim of Allah's *holiness* also describes His uniqueness, in that He is totally separate from all of creation (e.g. Surahs 59:23; 62:1). However, he is never intimate or personal, but wholly separate from all creation (Caner 2008d.:280).

As stated within the Christian understanding, God's *righteousness* may be defined as God's holiness being applied to relationships (Chapter 3). However, Allah is transcendent and not a relational god. Whilst, the Christian Gospel message teaches a "gift-righteousness"; Islam teaches a "works-righteousness" (Greear 2010:93). An individual is to obey before being accepted by Allah. Most times, the message of the terrors of hell is used to motivate Muslims to obedience. So, Islam's idea of Allah's righteousness conjures up a feeling of fear for him that must propel the believer to obedience.

Allah's *justice* – and more especially as Judge, looks to him as "god of the scales" (Caner & Caner 2002:118). However, Allah forgives only when the Muslim repents. All consequences for sin and the debt of guilt fall on the Muslim before Allah, hoping for an

exchange of his sentence. Allah is viewed as a “Liberal Giver” (Al Wahab) but with the character of a fierce warrior who decides to be merciful in response to victory (*ibid.*).

In comparison to the God of the Bible – whose very nature is love; Allah’s role as Judge and the use of this role is to subject people to obedience. Thereafter, the subjects have the ability to sense his love. Allah is like a parent only using punishment as a motivation to demonstrate “love.” Therefore, Allah has no love for the infidel, nor is it the task for the Muslim to “evangelize” the unbelieving world (*ibid.*). Caner & Caner (*ibid.*) explain:

Allah is to be worshipped, period. Any who will not do so must be defeated, silenced, or expelled. The theme is conquest, not conversion, of the unbelieving world. Allah has called the Muslim to make the name of Allah alone to be worshipped.

As is evidenced, the relationship that God seeks with man in the Biblical worldview of worship is missing in Islam. Relationship for the Muslim is not with the person, God; but with his laws.

The Islamic worldview of worship, similar to the Biblical worldview of worship, believes that all laws are governed by God - whether they be natural laws e.g. gravity, motion, or heredity; or moral and societal laws regarding family, education, and state. However, as evidenced, the difference lies in the goal between these two worldviews. For the former, Allah wants submission. For the latter, God enters into a love relationship with the believer. Within the Biblical worldview of worship, God requires that His kingdom and rule be established in the hearts of men. Judgement for the unbeliever is reserved for the unbeliever who has rejected God’s love and fellowship. It takes on the form of eternal separation.

5.3.3.2. Morality for the individual

In Islam, the individual is distant from Allah due to a number of substances which are considered *najis* (filthy) (Greear 2010:69). Therefore, they attempt to bridge the gap to Allah through *wudu* – which is the ritual purification from filth (e.g. pus, blood, dogs, pigs, sweat, sexual fluids, flatulence, menstrual cycles and dung) (*ibid.*). For some, this ends in soul-cleansing – which demonstrates the need among Muslims to stand clean before God. Greear (*ibid.*) explains that just as Pentecostalism has brought a sense of “feeling” God in mainstream Christianity; Sufism has done the same to Islam. Greear (2010:70) explains:

It is interesting to note here that Islamic theologians have given a deeper, spiritual meaning to the *wudu*. The Sufis talk about a “soul purification” that correlates to outward washing. They describe forgiveness as “soul cleansing” and the final state of the believer in Paradise as “souls shining from the final washings of *wudu*.” *Sufi* literally means “purity.” One reason Sufism is popular among Muslims worldwide is because it offers a way to stand clean before God!

Therefore, for Muslims, inner cleansing comes from the acts of repentance; whilst the elaborate outwards cleansing processes and performances are for outward cleansing. The simple and complex practices do not correlate in Islamic practice. Greear rightly remarks that Muslims have a built-in desire to *feel* pure before Allah, which orthodox Islam does not, and cannot, satisfy (*ibid.*). Maurer (2008:77) also concurs with this mystical bent, arguing that, “*Sufism* has developed over the course of centuries as a reaction to “dry” orthodox Islam.” However, for the Muslim, there is never a sense of feeling right with Allah. For the Christian, morality stems from being accepted by God through the finished work of Christ at the cross. Therefore, good works are important for the Christian to serve God and His church. For the Muslim, Islamic morality is important for purposes of salvation. This morality is also to be lived out in society.

5.3.3.3. Morality for society

Islamic morality is well outlined for the smooth functioning of society according to Shari'a. Muslims are required to cultivate social virtues and avoid social vices. Braswell, Jr. (1996:120) explains that Islam does not condone "frivolous pleasures, lying, slander, arrogance, boasting, scheming, obscenity, insult, spite, envy, and inconstancy. It encourages kindness, generosity, feeding the poor, visiting the sick, escorting the deceased to the grave, honoring the aged, and peaceful relations." The difference in Islam and the Biblical worldview of worship is that these vices and virtues are respectively denied and practiced in the former for salvation purposes – i.e. to earn Allah's favour by keeping his laws. For the Christian, good works are encouraged because of salvation; for the saved are prepared for good works and good works are prepared for the saved – which is all God's working (Eph 2:10).

A Muslim is also called to be the first to give greetings and should restrain anger. The sense of solidarity among Muslims is prized above all else, for they value spiritual kinship more than individual freedom (Caner & Caner 2002:122). Caner & Caner (*ibid.*) explain that Islamic Law in many Muslim countries is based on the five pillars of Islam. These are the five fundamentals that serve as foundational truths in the cause of Allah, unifying believers under the umbrella of essential beliefs. These pillars are considered non-negotiable and may not to be questioned but believed to the utmost. To criticize the five pillars is, in fact, paramount to treason, perceived as heresy and blasphemy, punishable in many Muslim countries by imprisonment or worse (*ibid.*).

It is also important to notice the impact *Tawhid* (absolute oneness of Allah) on society, where the old saying, "What you worship is who you become" rings true. The goal of

Islamic society is uniformity and conformity. Being a works-based salvation religion, much emphasis is placed on external behaviour. Therefore, elaborate laws had to be constructed to create a uniform society. However, even though Muhammad borrowed much from the Bible, much of his personal weaknesses are highlighted in the Islamic writings that are used by Muslims to create society (for example the issue of monogamy vs. polygamy). Geisler and Saleeb (1993:171) argue for monogamy in society against the Qur'an's polygamous teachings for the following reasons:

First, monogamy should be recognized by *precedent*, since God gave the first man only one wife (Eve). Second, it is implied by *proportion*, since the amount of males and females God brings into the world are about equal. Finally, monogamy is implied by *parity*. If men can marry several wives, why can't a wife have several husbands? It only seems fair.

The same can be said for many other factors that constitute Islamic society (e.g. treatment of women, treatment of female slaves, concept of heaven, etc. all have a sensual bent). This stands in direct contrast to the perfect life of Jesus who did not just offer rules when forced to. He reveals the nature of God and the nature of God's creation by upholding God's purposes and design through His teachings and lifestyle. He thereby offers a common practice of living which culminates in worship as we walk in obedience to God's revelation. All this is in preparation for eternity.

What is Islam's teachings of eternity and the eternal state of the Muslim? We now turn our attention to this final worldview question on destiny to research Islam's teachings.

5.3.4. Destiny

Muslims believe that God is both the Source and the End of the universe (Fry & King 1980:70). Time, therefore, has a beginning and an end. The Quran teaches of a last day and final judgment (Sura 3:185b). This life is viewed as preparation for either a life of

eternal reward of heaven or damnation in hell (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:107). Finally, there is an assigning of one's rewards.

We proceed to examine what Islam's teachings are on physical death and eternal life?

5.3.4.1. Physical death

The fact of human mortality is taught in Islam (cf. Sura 3:185). According to Surah 56:83 in the process of death, the soul of a dying person comes up to the throat. At the time of death, the angels are there to enable the separation of the soul from the body (cf. 6:93). Geisler & Saleeb note that, "Exactly what happens after this stage the Qur'an does not say. It is at this point that we notice a heavy reliance on the hadith material in order to explain the events that follow death" (1993:108). After death comes the judgment and resurrection (cf. Sura 23:15-16). This is in keeping with the Biblical worldview that there is a separation of the body and the soul at death; although there is an added description of that process in the Qur'an.

Physical death is viewed as the cessation of physical life. Islamic practice encourages burial of the mortal body as soon after death as possible. The living around the deceased are encouraged to make "dua" or supplication to Allah to forgive the sins of the person. This life is viewed as a preparation for eternal life – the subject we will next explore.

5.3.4.2. Eternal life

The Qur'an teaches the resurrection of all humankind (Geisler & Saleeb 1993:115). Some Muslim theologians believe that at the end, everything will die, including the angels (*ibid.*). This happens to exalt Allah's unity (*tawhid*). After an unknown period of time, God will

resurrect all the dead, "... starting with Israfil who will blow the trumpet call of resurrection" (*ibid.*). Israfil is known as the angel of Death. Under Allah's command, he gives the trumpet calls. Commentator, Muhammad Khouj, writes, "... with the first blow, every living creature, whether on earth or in the sky, that Allah wants to die will die. With the second blow, Allah will resurrect everyone who died from the beginning of creation until the last moment of life" (cited in Geisler & Saleeb 1993:115).

The Muslim belief is that Allah will recreate every person's body in its original shape. There will be a reunion of the body and the soul to be gathered before the throne of God. The righteous will be spared from Allah's wrath; but the unrighteous will be humiliated (cf. 37:18-21; 21:103; 74:9-10; 75:35-39; 78:40). For unbelievers, the angels enforce punishment *en route* to hell as a precursor of the suffering of the penalty of hell (Sura 8:50; cf. 79:1-2). Muslims, however, grant a status to the Christian and Jew, where it is said that two-thirds of the inhabitants of Paradise are Muslims and the other one-third is made up of the followers of the previous prophets (Nehls n.d.:49).

The following concepts form the beliefs of the afterlife in the Qur'an and Islamic traditions (Caner 2015:181):

- Gardens of Bliss (Quran 56:12)
- Couches encrusted with gold and precious stones (56:15)
- A feast with the best of food and drink (56:18-20)
- Sexual companions to meet every need (56:35). Many graphic traditions focus on the sensual and sexual delights of paradise (Braswell 1996:55). According to one tradition, narrated by Anas, he heard Allah's apostle say that there will be a prevalence of open illegal sexual intercourse – where women will increase in

number and men will decrease in number so much so that fifty women will be looked after by one man (Braswell 1996:54).

- No more grief; peace and security (43:68-73; 50:31-35).

As is observed, man's delight is the goal of heaven. Islam's elevation of men against women is highlighted which reveals the weak concepts of Muhammad; rather than that of Allah's will. Heaven is no better than this hedonistic world. The glory of God, as is portrayed in the Biblical worldview of worship, is absent from this scene. When man becomes the means by which salvation is achieved; then man constructs what he should inherit. This is a faulty perspective of eschatology. The Biblical worldview of worship, in contrast, expose a God who has created a people for Himself from every, nation, tribe, people and language whom He has bought with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rev 7:9-10). The goal is for humanity to eschatologically spend eternity with God; where God makes His dwelling with His people (Rev 21:33-4).

5.4. Conclusion

Chapters 2-3 aimed at creating a philosophical/theological grid into which the various worldviews are to be filtered to compare their truth claims with the Biblical worldview of worship. Having established the grid, we set out in chapter 5 to explore the Islamic worldview of worship and filter it through the grid. When put through the test in providing answers for the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny, we have witnessed the suppression of Biblical truth in favour of Islamic claims to truth.

We began by researching the formation of the Islamic worldview by applying the synchronic approach in order to examine cultural influences leading to the present. We

have noted that there exists a vast period of Islamic history precedes the arrival of Muslims on South African shores. Islam is linked to its founder, a Saudi tradesman, by the name of Muhammed, who rose to wealth and prominence in the 6th century C.E. Islam arrived in South Africa in two major migratory waves launched by the Malays and the Indians who happen to hail from two distinct ethnic groups. There also exists a small minority of black and white Muslims. We have also witnessed that current-day Islam in South Africa is a minority religion (under 2% of the population). Yet there is a continuous influx of Muslims from northern African countries and immigrants from countries like Pakistan into South Africa which makes it a mission field for the propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship.

Islam is observed to be a works-based theological system. Therefore, Muslims are heavily reliant on obedience to the rules, embodied in their five pillars of faith, in order to merit Allah's favour. We have sought to understand the most used sources of authority that govern and administer Muslims and their community within Islam: the Qur'an and Hadith. These sources are used to ensure that community life is regulated through rules that shape their religious experience. The Qur'an is considered as the primary revelatory literature for Muslims. The second historical document is the Hadith, or traditions and sayings of Muhammad. The theories, beliefs and practices stem primarily from these documents.

We have discovered that life and religion in Islam is closely intertwined. In most democratic societies, the freedom to choose one's religion is a personal matter and is protected by law. Not so in Islam! Religion is woven into politics and politics into religion. Even though Islam is considered one of the Abrahamic religions, our stance is that it has

reconfigured much of the Old Testament and New Testament to form its own doctrines. Our evaluation of Islamic theories, beliefs and practices has led us to believe that Muhammad redacted the Judeo-Christian Scriptures to suit an Islamic agenda.

The Islamic claim is that truth finds its point of reference in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is regarded as the actual words of Allah and the final revelation to humankind. Muslims are taught that the Qur'an is perfect and preserved and that the Bible has been corrupted. However, Muslims cannot provide any evidence for these claims. Their accusations are centred around certain Qur'anic texts – which involves circular reasoning. The evidence on the Biblical side on the authenticity and reliability of the text is overwhelming as history and archaeology posits.

Islam's religion is legalistic in its application of truth. It is this that Jesus sought to rescue Judaism from. Islam takes the message back to that which Jesus reclaimed it from. Therefore, its truth claims at many levels are denied within the Christian worldview. Islamic claims argue for the Quran to be a reproduction of the original in heaven. A logical problem surfaces here. How can something, external to Allah, exist eternally with Allah. Then Allah is not God. Or, Allah is God and the Qur'an is a god also. The doctrine of the trinity settles this issue (cf. Jn 1:1-14).

Muslims also hold to the sayings of Muhammad: Hadith. However, the Qur'an is the primary document through which Allah's laws are adhered to. As we have observed, the difference with the Biblical worldview, lies in the fact that "Scripture interprets Scripture"; whilst for the Islamic worldview, the Qur'an's meaning is established by consulting the traditions and the biography of Muhammad. In other words, the "tablet in heaven" passed

through the angel Gabriel, through Muhammad to Muslims, is insufficient for faith and practice. Other lesser “unrevealed” writings are needed for a complete revelation. The inconsistency in Islamic revelatory claims is clearly evidenced. Therefore, in our evaluation, for those within the Biblical worldview of worship, the Qur’an is to be disregarded as divinely inspired revelation that is sufficient for belief and practice. This is due to the logical inconsistencies and lack of empirical data that has been discussed. When the correspondence and coherence tests are applied, the Qur’an and Hadith do not pass these tests for the reasons discussed in this chapter.

In its explanations of the worldview questions, i.e. origin, meaning, morality and destiny, the Islamic worldview of worship has been examined. As the three tests for truth (logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance) are applied to this worldview, we have observed that at various levels the Islamic worldview is found lacking. We proceed with a summary of these findings.

With regards to the question of *origin*, we have witnessed that Islam believes in a created universe through Allah (god). However, with regards to the essence of Allah, Islam claims a singular view of Allah (doctrine of Tawhid). The Biblical worldview teaches a trinitarian view (even though the word “trinity” does not occur). We have argued for a logical inconsistency in this Islamic, monadic description – especially in relation to the lover-loved one dualism for love to be encountered. This does not measure up to the tests for truth at various levels. For instance, when a monadic god is described as love, he is dependent on his creation to practice love. A dependent god contradicts the definition of God as a self-existing entity. However, the triune nature of God within the Biblical worldview of worship explains away this dilemma in a manner that is logically consistent,

empirically adequate and experientially relevant. Yet, it also retains the mystery of God in its trinitarian description. For, if God was to be easily explained by finite humans; then, he is not infinite. Our evaluation of the nature of the Islamic revelation and its description of God at a foundational level demonstrates false claims when filtered through the philosophical/theological grid.

We have also evidenced that the Biblical and Islamic worldviews differ in their soteriology. Whilst Islam is based on a works-righteousness; the Biblical worldview of worship espouses a “grace through faith” righteousness. We have seen how the Person and Work of Christ demonstrates that love, justice, evil and forgiveness – which are the four absolutes – converge through the cross and resurrection. This message of grace is consistent even with the Old Testament – where Abraham believed God and therefore was pronounced righteous by God.

With regards to the question of *meaning* in Islam, man’s purpose is centred not so much in worship; but in submission to the will of Allah. Meaning, therefore, primarily finds an “objective” point of reference in the “revelations” that Allah gave through Muhammad in the Qur’an, and secondarily, Muhammad’s sayings (ahadith) and example (sunnahs) which form the cultural rules of Islam. It is in keeping these rules that provide meaning. The commitment to Allah’s Qur’an and the confession that Muhammad is his final messenger, places Muhammad on par with the Qur’an. Therefore, the Qur’an and Muhammad’s example in living become extremely important for Muslims to emulate. This will also influence the Muslim directing his/her life to find meaning. We have already observed that these documents are insufficient for deriving the plans and purposes of God, and therefore, will deem them false. Those adhering to these supposed revelations

centre their lives on false claims. Whatever ultimate meaning is derived is misleading and false. Also, the fruitless exercise of trying to gain God's favour through good works is condemned in the Biblical worldview of worship. Meaning for the Christian comes through the worship of God because of His Person and redemptive work. For the Muslim, Allah is to be worshipped through confessions and rituals to earn his favour. In our evaluation of meaning in the Islam worldview, trying to earn God's favour through good works that are placed on the scales is a downright misunderstanding of the holiness of God. This can never correspond and cohere to the reality of a perfect God who demands perfection. It is also a misunderstanding of the justice of God. What is needed is atonement and redemption for humanity to stand in God's presence and worship Him. This is only available in Christ Jesus. Therefore, meaning in the Islamic tradition cannot offer true meaning.

Morality within the Islamic worldview of worship is summarized in adherence to Shari'a, where Muslims are required to cultivate social virtues and avoid social vices. The difference in Islam and the Biblical worldview of worship is that these vices and virtues are respectively denied and practiced in the former for salvation purposes – i.e. to earn Allah's favour by keeping his laws. For the Christian, good works are encouraged because of salvation; for the saved are prepared for good works and good works are prepared for the saved – which is all God's working. The denial of human depravity from birth has implications on salvation. So, sin is learned from external influences. Therefore, good works become a salvific remedy – which in any case is not a guarantee. Again, this picture is inconsistent with a holy God within the Biblical worldview of worship. Man cannot work his way to God for he is spiritually dead. Only an act of God can remove sin and guilt. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is that remedy which is be applied in living out a

morally pure life through the power of the Holy Spirit and the propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship to Muslims (Chapter 8).

Finally, with regards to the question of *destiny* for the Muslim, heaven is no better than this hedonistic world. As observed within the Islamic worldview of worship, when man becomes the means by which salvation is achieved; then he constructs what he should inherit. We have noted that Islam's perspective of eschatology is inconsistent with a holy God who has created us for Himself. Rather, in our evaluation, we have discovered that Muhammad's weaknesses with regards to sexual pleasure defines what heaven is for the Muslim man (whilst the role of women will be there as perpetual virgins for man's enjoyment). This is so, because Allah will forever remain aloof. Relationship with him is not an option. So, even in heaven, meaning is suggested through hedonistic sexual fulfilment. This is inconsistent with the Biblical worldview of worship and certainly cannot in any way replace Biblical revelation. In our evaluation, the Biblical doctrines of destiny are logically consistent with the nature of the God of the Bible.

In our application of these findings in Chapter 8, our goal is to demonstrate to the South African church the futility of Islamic theories, beliefs and practices. Every opportunity, on the part of Christian believers to reach out to Muslims must be used to propagate the truth as revealed within the Biblical worldview of worship. The equipping of the church to this task is extremely important within the South African church if we are to fulfil the mandate of living out and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We turn our attention next to the influence of the Hindu/Buddhist Pantheistic and Polytheistic worldview of worship from the East and will contrast it with the Biblical worldview of worship.

Chapter 6

The Biblical and Hindu/Buddhist pantheistic polytheism worldviews of worship compared

Hinduism, Buddhism and the worldview questions

Buddhism may be considered a sect of Hinduism – which split from Hinduism and became its own religious system (Caner 2008b:114). Due to many similarities between these two religious worldviews, they will be discussed as one – viz. under the Hindu/Buddhist worldview. However, wherever applicable, the differences in beliefs and practices in relation to the worldview questions, will be highlighted.

The Biblical worldview of worship stands in direct contrast with the Hindu/Buddhist worldview at a foundational level. Similarities between these worldviews exist superficially. The core beliefs, in relation to the worldview questions (i.e. origin, meaning, morality and destiny), of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview is to be filtered through the philosophical/theological grid. This is to ascertain the authenticity of these beliefs (and practices) of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship. We have seen that the Biblical worldview of worship's revelatory claims agree with the observed reality as defined philosophically. Our constructed philosophical/theological grid for the Biblical worldview of worship, will be applied to the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship. The aim in this chapter is to define their theories, beliefs and practices, in order to provide a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship.

6.1. Worldview formation

In discussing the formation of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, we will examine its cultural influences and worldview foundational theories, beliefs and practices that relate to

matters of truth claims and the worldview questions. It must be stated that, due to a lack of evidence of a “systematic theology” in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, our goal is to look at popular beliefs to formulate some system to filter through the philosophical/theological grid of the worldview questions.

6.1.1. Applying the synchronic approach to cultural influences

The synchronic approach to Hindu/Buddhist worldview is to be taken into account in order to examine its beginnings, processes of formation, and current forms. It becomes imperative at this stage to examine Hinduism and Buddhism separately in order to demonstrate their common roots. A brief diachronic treatment is warranted at this stage. This will demonstrate the reason for studying them as the Hindu/Buddhist worldview. We begin with Hinduism.

The Hindu worldview of worship is generally considered the oldest religion in the world. In our consideration of this claim, it can be understood from the Genesis account of the spread of humanity all over the globe (Gen 11). This period saw the creation of theories of gods, beliefs and worship practices – which suggest Hindu beginnings, and is later developed as a religious system. We look next to the term “Hindu worldview” to examine the word “Hindu.”

The term *Hindu* refers to the people who practice *Hinduism* (literally, *the belief of the people of India* (Nielsen Jr et al 1988:109)). Hiebert (2000:48-49) summarizes the term “Hindu” to have the following *five* definitions:

- a. **Geographic:** The invaders of India gave this name. “Hindu” was a Persian word for *Indian* and was originally used for peoples living beyond the Indus River. Before

becoming a term used to describe the religion, the word *Hindu* had geographical significance.

b. **Socio-religious:** This term also refers to Brahmanical Hinduism where the religious order was rooted in the caste system that emerged by tenth BC.

c. **Western invention:** Due to the colonial influence, Hinduism was invented as a coherent, unified religious tradition that stood as its ideological other in the Orient. It was used to justify Western imperialism which brought modernization and progress.

d. **Political:** The influence of the “British Raj” in maintaining temples and organizing and funding temple rituals, led to an official Hinduism codification. And so, *Hindu* became known a category of people who were not Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, or Buddhists.

e. **Religious:** Again, this is the creation of the British Raj – born out of an encounter of Indian religious philosophy with Enlightenment and Christian thought.

Hinduism arose and belongs primarily in India. In the middle of the second millennium BC the Aryan (literally ‘noble’) peoples invaded India, bringing their language and traditions and profoundly influencing, although in no way ousting, the other religions, ideas and practices (Hammer 1982b:173).

Looking at its early beliefs, Hinduism arose among a people who had no significant contact with the Biblical religions (Nielsen Jr et al 1988:109). The relaxed attitude to theology in Hindu teachings and the absence of questions asked by other faiths often baffles those attempting a study of Hinduism – especially those in the monotheistic

religions (*ibid.*). Nielsen Jr et al (*ibid.*) argue that there needs to be a realization that "... the beliefs on which Hindus insist relate to problems that are especially acute in the Indian environment and that the hopes of Hindus are shaped by what seems desirable and possible under the special conditions of Indian life." They, therefore, seek supernatural resources to help preserve life against the backdrop of the harsh Indian land and climate. Therefore, many gods and goddesses are worshipped that are mostly defined according to natural phenomena.

Buddhism finds its beginnings in Hinduism and parted ways approximately 2500 years ago. It originated with a Hindu named, Siddhartha Gautama, around the following suggested dates: BC 566-486 / BC 490-410 (Beverley 2009:52). Gautama is believed to have been born within a royal home. However, he renounced royal life and departed from the palace into an ascetic life (Beverley 2009:51). It is claimed that he became known as the Buddha upon receiving enlightenment. He is believed to have "... reviewed all his former lives and his experiences in them; he envisioned all the levels of cosmic and material existence; he grasped the cause of all rebirth and suffering; and thereby he reached Buddhahood" (Nielsen Jr, et al 1988:205). The Buddha's separation from Hinduism occurred when he rejected Hinduism's two fundamental practices: viz. the cast system and the authority of the Vedas, to ultimately form Buddhist beliefs and practices. However, Hinduism and Buddhism also agree on the following beliefs and practices: nirvana, karma, dharma, moksha and reincarnation (NB. These terms will be explained and discussed later).

For millennia, the Hindu/Buddhist worldview was contained in the East. However, in the last two centuries, it has made inroads to the West. The influence of the Hindu/Buddhist

worldview in the West can, firstly, be traced to colonial influences in India (Hiebert 2000:52). On western soil, it can partly be traced to the speech of Swami Vivekananda (Hiebert 2000:51). In his speech delivered at the Parliament of the World's Religion in Chicago on the 11th September 1893, Swami Vivekananda highlighted the diversity found entrenched in Hindu beliefs and practices when he made the following comments:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth ... I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: *'As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee'* (italics added for emphasis) (online).

After his now famous speech in Chicago, Hinduism spread in the West and Vivekananda stayed on to become its first missionary. Due to migration, the Hindu/Buddhist worldview has also reached many parts of the world – even South Africa.

The British influence within the South African context is well documented by historians. The Christian Gospel also entered South Africa under British influence. The African indigenous peoples had their own religious practices that have been defined in various ways: primitive religion, primal religion, animistic religion, tribal religion, nature religion, cosmic religion, traditional religion, etc. (Crafford 1996:1-2). However, this was soon to change as others entered African soil, bringing along their religious beliefs. Hinduism is one of them.

One of the reasons the writer of this thesis is a South African citizen with Asian Indian descent, is due to the colonial influence. With the British occupation of India and many

parts of Africa, our forebears were brought to South Africa as “indentured labourers” – which we believe is a glorified term for slaves. Indians are the only part of the population of Natal who came by special and urgent invitation (De Beer 2010:42). The express reason for their immigration to this country was directly related to its economy, particularly the agricultural sector and the need for suitable workers in the sugar cane industry (*ibid.*).

Also, Indian Hindu philosophies and spiritualities entered the African continent contributing to a South African pluralistic culture. Within democratic South Africa, many migrant Indians still arrive, seeking a better life and economic prosperity. About half of the current South African Indian population belong to the Hindu worldview.

6.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: Eastern philosophical/religious thought & practice

The Hindu worldview of worship can boast no founder, prophet, ecclesiastical or institutional structure, nor any set creeds for the emphasis is on the way of living rather than on a way of thought (Hammer 1982c:170). Hammer explains that even Radhakrishnan, a former president of India, agreed that Hinduism is more a culture than a creed (*ibid.*).

As stated in Chapter 3, within the Biblical worldview of worship, theological doctrines form the worldview foundations. These are clearly and systematically outlined as models of reality for Christians. Within Hinduism, there is a rich variety of religious ideas and practices. Hammer informs that each district in India has its own language, customs, religious ideas and practices (1982c:171). Many of these have been brought into the South African setting and practiced at various levels.

Our roots are South Indian, with a distinct flavour of spices and foods, special attire worn on special occasions, and language (primarily, Tamil – which has been lost in our generation in South Africa). Our paternal grandmother had her roots in the North, with Hindi as her dominant language. They were conversant in Tamil, Hindi, and Telegu. Our paternal grandparents were from a Hindu religious background and converted to the Christian faith around 1926, five years after my dad's birth. Our paternal great-grandparents came from the Nellore region of India. Within their Hindu worldview, our forebears were pantheists and polytheists. We are not able to provide details about their understanding of Hindu pantheism. However, their polytheistic practices can be easily vouched for, seeing that they also were people of the soil. It was normal for Hindu families to allocate an area within the home, which would house the idols being worshipped. However, once they came to faith in Jesus Christ, all these idols were destroyed to demonstrate their conversion to Christianity. This, however, would have been frowned upon by many Hindus.

Hinduism's supposed embrace of all beliefs mandates that "conversions" be ruled out. It is believed that whatever path one is on; is to be followed until the next cycle of reincarnation. Therefore, anti-conversion laws are practiced today in most states in India. Even in South Africa, subtle messages are propagated by Hindus, e.g. a sign on a bumper sticker that we recently observed with the message: "Be Alert! Don't Convert!" followed by the Hindu 'AUM' sign.

Next, we shall be unpacking some of these beliefs and practices within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, and the theories from which they stem.

6.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices

The Hindu/Buddhist worldview embraces a diversity of theories, beliefs and practices. It may be split into two major branches: i.e. philosophical and popular Hinduism, from which the former/latter stem. We will firstly explore the philosophical aspect.

The first branch is the philosophical component of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship is pantheistic – i.e. the notion that identifies the divine with the universe and the universe as a manifestation of the divine. It stems from a pantheistic understanding of reality. The Greek words *pan* “all” and *theos* “God” literally identifies all there is as God. In this case, God is absolute; but not a personal absolute – as is in the case of the Biblical worldview of worship (Frame 2015:37).

The pantheism of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview comes in many forms. The position of one of its famous proponents, Radhakrishnan, is a multilevel pantheism – where one absolute is revealed on different or descending levels of reality (Geisler 1976:184). While the Islamic worldview and the Deists view God as transcendent and, at many points, unrelated to His creation; the Hindu worldview sees God as immanent – where God is brought down to the earthly realm and is found in all. Mander (2017:1) suggests that pantheists commonly wish to hold three distinct theses: that God is identical with the universe as a whole, that God is to be found altogether in each part of the universe, and that some features of the universe are more divine than others.

Buddhism is strictly non-theistic and denies any dualism where there is a “I-Thou” duality. These teachings are distinct from the Biblical worldview of worship, which understands immanence to mean God’s presence and activity within nature, human nature, and history

(Erickson 2013:274). Revelation, within the Biblical worldview of worship, marries these two concepts together - where God is both transcendent in descriptions of the qualities of His greatness (i.e. infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, etc.); and immanent when viewed through His qualities of goodness (e.g. loving, gracious, merciful, etc.). In His transcendence, God is independent of and above all creation (Strand 2014:46). This is so in Christian theism because there is a clear division between God and His creation. A lack of emphasis on the transcendence of God courts the danger of a “privatized religiosity” (Strand 2014:47). These introduce subjective spiritualities, which Strand (*ibid.*) argues, is the dominant position of the Northern Hemisphere. He maintains that Christians in the Southern Hemisphere are now more concerned with Biblical doctrines when compared to their Northern Hemisphere counterparts. For those in the North Hemisphere, this has led to a dethronement of God to the immanent spheres which bears a resemblance to the immanentist religiosity of the East (*ibid.*). Within Christian theism, the doctrines surrounding the greatness and goodness of God are held in tension with each other. This tension is ultimately demonstrated in the person, teachings and work of Jesus Christ.

Within the Hindu worldview, God is ultimately an impersonal, eternal force, essence, or power of existence. God has none of the characteristics of persons (e.g. knowing, thinking, loving, etc.). This force, called Brahman, is present everywhere in everything in nature, especially in all living things (e.g. plants and animals). The Hindu Scriptures, the Upanishads, offer a summary of the pantheistic worldview in the following quote:

Thus Brahman is all in all. He is action, knowledge, goodness supreme. To him, hidden in the lotus of the heart, is to untie the knot of ignorance. Self-luminous is Brahman, ever present in the hearts of all. He is the refuge of all, he is the supreme goal. In him exists all that moves and breathes. In him exists all that is. He is both that which is gross and that which is subtle. Adorable is he. Beyond the ken of the senses is he. Attain thou him! (*quoted in Geisler & Watkins 1989:75*).

This impersonal essence, pervading all things, is also found within humans. So, the claim is that the “spirit’ within humans is divine. It is part of God. The real inner ‘you’ is God. The inner essence is the essence of deity. Within Hinduism, the concept of the nature of man as divine at the core of his being is one of the beliefs. Modern guru, Chopra, merging Hindu philosophy and alternative medicine, believes that men and women are “divinity in disguise... gods and goddesses in embryo that are contained” (Zacharias 2012:91). So, man is one with God even though he is ignorant of this fact. He is deceived by his focus on this temporal and material world, and this ignorance gives rise to acts that result in bad karma and traps him in the cycle of reincarnation. Man’s realization of his deity happens when he focuses inwardly through meditation techniques like yoga. Strictly speaking, a Hindu does not pray; but meditates. Prayer requires communication between man and God. In Hinduism the focus is inward meditation. Man has to find the answers to life’s important questions within himself. This may lead to self-worship.

Again, the tolerance and influence of Hinduism in the West can be clearly understood. The foundational principles are similar for the eastern and western worldviews (as especially evidenced in western postmodernism). Due to the fact that the Christian message propagates absolute truths from God – who is in essence the only Absolute Being, the message is discarded. Doubts against Christian truth claims are propagated regarding the source, historicity, communication, etc. by Postmodernists/New Agers and Hindus (e.g. Oprah from the west and Chopra from the east. See (Zacharias, 2012) for his extensive response to these two influences.).

Secondly, there is popular branch of Hinduism, which includes polytheistic beliefs and practices. This aspect is a devotion to one or more of the 330 million gods and goddesses

(Jeyachandran 2007:82). Buddhism, through Gautama Buddha, divorced from Hinduism by rejecting the sacrificial cults and the caste system (Hammer 1982b:179).²² Buddha taught a new way to release and salvation, which he described in terms of quenching or nirvana (Hammer 1982b:179). The Buddha's teaching was set forth in *The Four Noble Truths* (i.e. the truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the path that leads to end of suffering), and *The Eightfold Path* to enlightenment (i.e. right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative absorption or union) (Horton 2006:381). There are two major schools in Buddhist beliefs: Mahayana (the greater vehicle) and Hinayana (the lesser vehicle), in which the former claims that light enlightenment is available to all, and the latter that it is available to only a few (Horton 2006:381).

The most influential form of Buddhism is Zen (or "meditation") Buddhism, which has pantheistic (and philosophical) underpinnings. Its pantheistic cause was set forth in the West by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, professor at Columbia University in the United States (Horton 2006:383). From these influences (both Eastern and Western), Horton lists the following beliefs that are part of Zen Buddhism (2006:383):

- It is opposed to any form of dualistic thinking so that there is no subject-object distinction. Within this framework of pantheistic thinking, man is god and god is man. Also, all is god and god is all.
- It has no set of doctrines as found in the monotheistic religions.
- There is no personal god in Zen. However, there is no denial or affirmation of the existence of some deity.

²² Even though these points will be discussed below as part of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship, it should be noted that Buddhism rejected polytheism; but held onto the pantheism – i.e. the philosophical component

- Zen becomes the personal experience of life without any purpose to it - i.e. “unencumbered by any abstractions or conceptualizations” (Horton 2006:384).

To summarize the beliefs that are inherent in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship, it is observed that both Hinduism and Buddhism share pantheistic beliefs. However, when it comes to polytheism, they part ways. Buddhism is non-theistic when it comes to the worship of personal gods – as in Hinduism. With these similarities and differences in mind, we may extract the following beliefs and filter them through the grid of the Biblical worldview of worship.

Firstly, there is a marketed belief in one infinite, impersonal reality called Brahman within Hinduism (Jeyachandran 2007:82). The ultimate may be expressed in personal or impersonal terms, and the Hindu sees no contradiction there (Hammer 1982c:172). Therefore, there is the practice of polytheism (Hinduism only). Polytheism is simply defined as the belief in more than one God. Practices are diverse within the Hindu worldview of worship. The individual may reverence one god, a few, or many, or none at all (Hammer 1982c:172). Some Hindus worship Shiva; others Vishnu or his incarnations (avatars). Others may worship Krishna or Rama; whilst others may worship the goddesses (*ibid.*). Yet, there is a commitment to polytheism – even if practices may differ. Hinduism may have many gods; yet, none of these is absolute (Frame 2015:37). These twin beliefs (i.e. pantheism and polytheism) in the Hindu worldview of worship seek to explain the multiple and diverse entities in light of the supposed one entity. For the Buddhist, there will be a struggle to explain these dual realities, and therefore, no way of marrying these concepts. They therefore move away by denying dualism – which is a fundamental belief in Buddhism.

For those in the Biblical worldview of worship, God is revealed as a personal entity. Also, the mystery of the trinity demonstrates how unity and diversity exists in the community of the Trinity. If this is so, then we can have unity in diversity in the effect (creation) because we locate unity in diversity in the First Cause (Creator).

Secondly, Hindu temples are the places where priestly performances are watched by devout Hindus. However, they do not constitute a congregation (as in the Christian and Islamic worldviews). They might more accurately be called an audience (Ross 1973:15). For Hindus, daily worship takes place in their homes. Devotional procedures are each person's personal responsibility and no priest can serve as another person's spiritual proxy (Ross 1973:15).

Thirdly, vegetarianism is practiced by many. However, some may sacrifice animals at the temple and joyfully share in a roast by the riverside (Hammer 1982c:172). The Biblical worldview of worship sees humanity as created in the image of God. Man has been tasked to rule over the earth and care for it. Ruling and caring ushers in a balance where the earth is not exploited. Neither must it be worshipped by humanity. Both, edible plants and animals were given to man by God to feed on within prescribed boundaries.

With regards to animal sacrifices, the Biblical worldview prescribed that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22; cf. Lev 17:11). The sacrificial system instituted in the Old Covenant pointed towards that which would ultimately be fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ. Through Christ atonement was made once and for all (1 Jn 2:2). This led to the sacrificial system becoming obsolete. Mankind can approach God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Through the sacrifice of Christ have we been enabled to truly worship God.

Fourthly, the caste system divided society into groups reflecting and defining the division of labour. Tilby and Yule (1982:397) explain that in India each caste is believed to emerge symbolically from the different parts of Brahma's body. There are four chief groups: Brahmins, priests, come from Brahma's mouth; Kshatriyas, warriors, come from Brahma's arms; Vaishyas, peasants, come from Brahma's thighs; Shudras, unskilled labourers come from Brahma's feet. Groups of no definite caste were regarded as UNTOUCHABLES and were banished from society. The Biblical worldview of worship teaches that both man and woman (by implication, *all men and women*) are ontologically equally created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). It is within this understanding that the entire human race is to be viewed and treated with dignity and value.

A fifth belief that is universally accepted in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview is the concept of reincarnation or transmigration – which views the flow of life through many existences. The notion of *samsara* which expresses this flow from birth to death and then on to rebirth, and so on. As a result, the span of history is believed to be billions upon billions of years. Linked with the notion of *samsara* is the concept of *karma*. Karma literally means 'work' or 'action', but also indicates the consequences of actions within one existence which flow into the next existence and influence its character – and so the chain goes on. Hope, within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, therefore, is for release (*moksha*) from this chain or cycle. The Biblical worldview of worship teaches the importance of decision making within one life and sees salvation in terms of the individual (though not neglecting the whole).

To conclude, these theories, beliefs, and practices function to create identity for the people, boundaries around the Hindu/Buddhist practices, and foundational metaphors that illumine their spirituality. The strict adherence to these for those within this worldview

is for “salvation” ends – which is ultimately release and reaching the state of nirvana (the final state in both Hinduism and Buddhism). We proceed next to explore and evaluate the foundational underpinnings of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship in relation to its truth claims.

6.2. Truth

The Hindu and Buddhist Scriptures are vague concerning truth as a concept and so it is difficult to ascertain any absolutes in these religions (Caner 2008c:264). For the Hindu, the sacred texts fit into one of two categories: *Shruti* “what is heard” or *Smriti* “what is remembered” (Paturi & Patterson 2015:71). Hindus believe in the divinity of their holy books, the *Vedas*, which are among the world’s most ancient “scripture”, and venerate the *Agamas* also as revealed (Paturi & Patterson 2015:62). The *Vedas*, meaning “revealed scriptures”, are considered *Shruti* or *heard*. It forms the body of very ancient and anonymous writings, which is the main spiritual source for Hindus (Ross 1973:17). Ross adds that these “... had their origin in even older hymns of worship sung for centuries by light-skinned Aryan nomads (common ancestors of Northern Europeans) who came into India through the Himalayan passes at about the time Moses was leading the people of Israel out of Egypt” (*ibid.*). Paturi & Patterson explain: “The Vedas were oral traditions eventually written in ancient Sanskrit language and viewed as the most authoritative sacred texts. They are believed to have been developed from 1200 B.C. on” (2015:71). The *Vedas* are divided into four parts: *Rig Veda*, *Sam Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*. The oldest known form of pantheism may be found in the last section of the Vedas (Geisler & Watkins 1989:79). Geisler & Watkins (*ibid.*) explain:

This final section is called the Upanishads. Because the Upanishads are at the end of each of the four Vedas, the Upanishads have come to be spoken of as the Vedanta, meaning “end” or “goal” of the Vedas ... No one really knows who wrote the Upanishads or where they were written. They consist of the recorded

experiences of Hindu sages. The Upanishads, along with the Bhagavad-Gita, lay the foundation for Vedanta pantheism.

All other scriptures are considered *smruti* or *remembered* (*ibid.*). The next body of literature are considered philosophical discussions and are called the *Upanishadas*. These are dated from about 600 B.C. and are also called *Vedanta* or *final knowledge* (Paturi & Patterson 2015:71).

Gautama Buddha rejected the Vedas as scriptures. He held onto the philosophical writings of Hinduism and thereafter developed Buddhist scriptures. However, Buddhist scriptures do not have a canon, which means that not all Buddhists embrace or read the same books (Caner 2008b:116). Zen Buddhism, in particular, does not adhere to any sacred texts as do other forms of Buddhism (Caner 2006g:500). In Zen, the teacher is considered eminent and the dispenser of knowledge (*ibid.*).

When comparing the Scriptures of the Hindu/Buddhist worldviews with the Christian Scriptures, Paturi & Patterson (2015:71) warn against the assumption that the Hindu scriptures are like the Christian Scriptures (the Bible). These cannot be characterized similarly, for the Bible claims to be inspired by God who created man in His own image. When reading the Bible, we are reading what God has revealed to man. Thus, the Bible comes with the authority of God. The Hindu/Buddhist scriptures are not like this, for they are merely the ancient writings of ancestors. Some are poems, prayers, and hymns; some contain history that reflect practices and beliefs; some have brilliant literary pieces, but not *inspired* or *inerrant* words by their god, Brahman (Paturi & Patterson 2015:71).

We proceed next to examine the truth claims as we examine the worldview questions within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship.

6.3. The worldview questions

Due to the fact that the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship do not boast uniform doctrines that are systematically set out, as we would find in the Biblical worldview of worship, we would need to piece together their answers to the worldview questions. The worldview questions on origin, meaning, morality and destiny will now be discussed within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship. We begin with its teachings on origins.

6.3.1. Origin

The question of how all things began is to be discussed in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship. Our discussion will focus on the origin of the universe, the origin of humanity, and the origin of evil and suffering. Once these beliefs are highlighted within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, we will filter them through the Philosophical/Theological grid to establish their veracity.

6.3.1.1. Origin of the universe

The Hindu/Buddhist worldview has many mythic traditions which explain the specifics of the question of the origin of the universe. Generally, proponents view the world as eternal and cyclic. This, however, goes against modern science which has shown that the world must have had a beginning. The Biblical worldview of worship teaches that the world had a beginning (Gen 1:1). Within the Biblical worldview of worship, history is linear – meaning that “... the actions of people – as confusing and chaotic as they appear – are part of a meaningful sequence that has a beginning, a middle and an end. History is not reversible,

not repeatable, not cyclic; history is not meaningless” (Sire 2009:43). The Hindu/Buddhist idea that the universe goes through a series of transmigrations (as humans do) is unfounded and based on its cyclical doctrine rather than on empirical evidence. The question “Who/what created the universe?” will be answered next.

The Hindu/Buddhist worldview teaches that God is ultimately an impersonal, eternal force, essence, or power of existence, having none of the attributes or characteristics of persons (such as knowing, thinking, loving, etc.). This force is called Brahman, and is considered the origin, cause and the basis of all existence (Hammer 1982a:185). Geisler explains that, as the absolute, Brahman is perfect and needs nothing. “It is free to move or not to move, to throw itself into forms or remain formless. If it still indulges its power of creativity, it is because of its free choice” (1976:182).

Brahman is, therefore, believed to be present everywhere in everything in nature, especially in all living things - every plant, every animal, and especially every man. It can be thought of as a sort of spirit force that has no personal qualities, but which pervades everything in the Universe. However, Brahman is really inexpressible and indefinable (Geisler & Watkins 1989:80). It represents “... the whole, of which we are individual parts, or Atman” (Erickson 2013:240). The attributes of personality are believed to exist only in physical, material beings. But God (Brahman), in pure form, is impersonal and has no personal characteristics. This impersonal essence, pervading all things, is also found within us. So, the "spirit" within us is Divine. It is part of God. The real “inner you” is believed to be God. The inner essence of man is the essence of Deity. The Bhagavad-Gita says our eternal souls are part and parcels of God - "The soul is a small God" (BG, page 6).

The Divine Essence or Brahman manifests or expresses itself in the physical world in the form of physical beings that possess personality. As such, Deity is manifested in many gods of many forms. "Hindus believe that divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments and personal devotionals create a communion with these ... Gods." (Hinduism Today). There are three Supreme gods: (1) Brahman, the creator, (2) Vishnu, the preserver, and (3) Siva, the destroyer. These are generally recognized as equal, though certain sects emphasize one or the other. They differ in realms of power and authority. Avatars are considered incarnations of these gods who have come to earth as men. For example, avatars of Vishnu include Rama and Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. Various lesser deities are considered to have various levels or realms of authority. These rule over certain aspects of nature, such as fire, sun, wealth, water, etc. Religious teachers and dead ancestors are also worshiped. The worship of various deities and images is popular among the people. This worship often involves the use of many images. The concept of the all-pervading Brahman is mainly theoretical among the religious leaders.

Hinduism is considered a philosophy of life with no founder nor a pointed beginning (Caner 2008c:262-263). It is seen more as a way of life and an ethic (*dharma*). Stemming from the philosophy is a religious undercurrent, where many gods are worshipped as representations of the philosophy of life (*ibid.*). Hinduism is in direct opposition to modern materialistic realism which assumes a real, material world outside of ourselves (Hiebert 2008:46). For Hindus, the world outside of self is *maya* or an illusion created in the mind (*ibid.*). Therefore, ultimate reality exists inside the person. Hiebert explains:

The external world is a sum of subjective inner experiences – a transitory, ever-changing creation of our minds. It has no ultimate reality. It is *maya*, or virtual. In such a chaotic, unpredictable world, meaning and truth can be found only in oneself, in the deep, innermost experiences of the self. Sensory experience and

rational analysis are illusory and cannot be trusted. Consequently, true reality cannot be discovered by empirical experiments and analysis, but must come as inner flashes of insight, which ultimately show us that even we do not truly exist as separate individuals but are parts of one ultimate cosmic energy field (2008:46).

Time, in Hinduism, is cyclical. It is believed that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation, and dissolution (Paturi & Patterson 2015:62). Within its polytheistic framework, in one of its sacred writings, the fifth *Purana*, is recorded a creation account (Hexham 2011:134). Hexham (*ibid.*) explains that the god, Vishnu (identified with Brahman), is the power and the force which encompasses the whole universe. His existence can take on the form of spirit (*Purusa*) or matter (*Prakriti*). He is also eternal time (*Kali*) whose actions separate spirit and matter. The creation of the universe is viewed as a cosmic egg into which Vishnu enters, from which “evolves the earth, the sky, and the heavens, all populated by gods and other sending beings” (Hexham 2011:135). Vishnu is viewed as the creator, sustainer and preserver of the world. Then taking on the form of *Rudra*, Vishnu becomes the god of destruction (*ibid.*). The pantheistic and polytheistic beliefs about the created order are brought together in cycles of creation and destruction – which are known as the *Maha Yugas* (*ibid.*).

The variety of explanations on the origin of the universe within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship reveals a desire to present answers within the worldview. These contradict the linear account of Biblical revelation – which describes creation as occurring once. There will come a time when there will be a new creation. Within this new creation, evil will be eradicated once and for all and God’s will dwell with His people forever.

6.3.1.2. The origin of man

Within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, man is brought into existence at *atman*, a spiritual emanation from Brahman (Paturi & Patterson 2016:65). The atman is the essence of the individual, yet is part of the Divine (*ibid.*). In other words, the universal self is both viewed in the individual and the Divine. Therefore, man is believed to be both material and immaterial. However, there is a denial of individuality in any ultimate sense (Horton 2006:386). In other words, people only appear to have individuality; but in reality, they are all one in the One (*ibid.*). Radhakrishnan believed that the individual soul is eternal and is an aspect of the transcendent in the universe (Geisler 1976:184). Therefore, the essence of the individual is divine. This divinity is fully realized after death – where the individual either transmigrates to a new life or attains release (moksha). Thus, the depth of a person’s soul is identical to the depth of the universe (Geisler & Watson 1989:81). Union with Brahman is believed to be a state of bliss or nirvana where “... the self attains its release from individual striving by achieving union with God” (Geisler 1976:184).

The Biblical worldview of worship articulates a marked difference between the Creator and created order. Fundamental to the nature of God are the truths that He is personal, spiritual, and holy (Horton 2006:89). In all of His attributes, God is infinite – whilst man is a finite being. Whilst, within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, man is one with the divine; in the Biblical understanding, God is separate from man. Man is a creation of God and of essence is separate from God. God spoke and willed things into being. From the matter of the ground, God formed man. Man is uniquely created in comparison to all other creation. For it is to man, that it is recorded: God created man in His image (Gen 1:27). Man, therefore, also has personality and individuality. He never loses this individuality in the afterlife. He will remain human – even though in a glorified body.

In all His qualities of greatness, God is unique – and is therefore worthy of worship. Whilst the believer is imputed with the righteousness of Christ and is called to be conformed into His image, nowhere in the Christian Scriptures do we find the believer inherits a divine nature. Within this paradigm, God can, and is to be, worshipped.

6.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

Hinduism affirms that sin and evil is *maya* – i.e. an illusion. According to the pantheistic understanding, as man realizes his divinity, he will eliminate the ignorance of believing that suffering, pain, poverty, and even death are real (Hayes 2008b:388). The pantheistic worldview does not adequately deal with the problem of evil and suffering – since there is no doctrine of any “Fall” or “Sin” – as in Christianity. Carnell argues that if God is identified with the process of history, as in pantheism, then there is no hope for salvation (1948:181). Carnell (*ibid.*) explains that by definition, “... God’s history is eternal; therefore, there are no goals to which we can strive, for there is no *terminus ad quem* in an everlasting process of striving. Hence salvation can be no goal.” Also, if God is the process of history with all the evil and suffering in it, he should deserve our pity and not our worship (*ibid.*).

The philosophical denial of the reality of evil and suffering does not negate that pantheists experience evil and suffering on a daily basis. Therefore, the claim that evil and suffering are illusions do not correspond with reality. Hayes argues that pantheists must live life in such a way as to avoid evil and to promote what is good (2008b:388).

6.3.2. Meaning

The Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship grounds meaning for humanity in the processes of reincarnation and finally liberation. The purpose of man is centred not so much in worship; but in selfish pursuit of liberation from the cycle of life. What is the starting point of meaning in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview? What is the role of objective and subjective meaning for humanity? These are the questions that will now be discussed.

6.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning

Meaning and purpose within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview is centred in Brahman – which every person is a part of.

6.3.2.2. Objective meaning

Due to the fact that the Hindu/Buddhist worldview is not concerned with objective truth, trying to locate objective meaning becomes a difficult endeavour. However, the meaning of life is centred in ultimate reality – Brahman. Since Brahman is that which the individual consists of in the pantheistic worldview, there is no “I-Thee” relationship. This will mean that while living in a reality that has objective points of reference for all of life, there is a denial of this – due to its philosophical commitment to pantheism. Also, monistic beliefs that present all life to be one and equally divine, reduce humanity to the level of grass or bacteria (Jeyachandran 2007:99). Strict pantheists must affirm, “God is but I am not” (Geisler 1976:187). However, philosophically, this statement is self-defeating. For, no one can affirm their non-being without affirming it by making that statement. Geisler, thereafter adds, “Of course most pantheists are not absolute monists in that they allow for some reality to finite man whether it be modal, manifestational, emanational, or whatever” (*ibid.*). By adding this, they hope to escape the philosophical conundrum just mentioned.

6.3.2.3. Subjective meaning

Within Hinduism, there are four subjective goals in life that provide meaning: (1) pleasure (known as *kama*), (2) wealth (known as *artha*), (3) harmony (known as *dharma*), and (4) liberation (known as *moksha*) (Caner 2008c:263). These four goals are also at war with one another. Caner (*ibid.*) explains:

The search for wealth and pleasure consumes the individual. They work long hours, fight for power, obsess over greed, and become addicted to their diversions. Wealth and pleasure bring about evil and suffering because they are pursuits that consume the individual.

Harmony and liberation, however, are the two pursuits that fulfil the individual. Harmony is a method of living in peace with all living creatures instead of fighting over them for power, or abusing them in greed. True salvation is found in being released from the endless cycle of wanting, craving, and desiring. This release is called *moksha*, and is the Hindu concept of salvation. The moment you are liberated from all desire and craving, you are *moksha*. To achieve the last two goals, one must abandon the first two goals. This is central to Hinduism.

The philosophical dilemma that Hindus (and Buddhists) are presented with show the contradiction in their ultimate pursuit of salvation and meaning. If *moksha* is the ultimate liberation from desire and craving; then is not the pursuit itself a desire and a craving? In other words, the Hindu desires and craves salvation – which is defined as a release from the cycle of desire and craving. This becomes an absurd and unattainable goal of life.

The belief amongst Hindus is that once *moksha* is attained, they have reached *nirvana* – which is the state of nothingness, the goal for eternal existence. Upon ceasing to exist, the Hindu believes that the individual becomes part of the god-essence (Caner 2008c:264). Caner (*ibid.*) provides an analogy to understand that this is not complete annihilation; but,

(W)hen you take a cup of water and slowly pour it into a flowing river, does that cup of water disappear? In point of fact, that cup of water is diluted into the river and becomes part of the river. This is how Hinduism described nirvana. You are diluted back into the god-essence. You become part of the flowing river.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Biblical worldview of worship teaches that life must be directed by the concepts and precepts that are revealed by God's character and purpose. Trying to find meaning in and through the attainments of salvation through the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship may provide subjective and temporary meaning. However, the objective reality which positions meaning in the blending into "nothingness" does not correspond with this subjective understanding of meaning. There is no correlation between the objective and subjective forms of meaning. This is no different than the individual losing themselves ultimately through being annihilated.

6.3.3. Morality

For all within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, "salvation" involves following the moral duties that apply to all humans and to the particular responsibilities connected with individual stages in life (Beverley 2009:174). Therefore, morality and meaning are closely linked within this works-based religious system.

We proceed now to discuss Morality in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship. Consideration will also be given on its impact on the individual and society.

6.3.3.1. The starting point for morality: Brahman

Life, in the pantheistic worldview, is characterised by distinctions of value between good and evil. But if all is one within God, Mander (2017:6) observes that it hard to see how such divisions can be maintained at any deep metaphysical level. Mander (2017:6-7) argues that pantheists have a variety of ways of responding to this puzzle. Some, firstly, hold to the belief that the pantheistic whole is something which exists beyond good and evil. Differences are explained to be but local variations or appearances. In essence, this

position robs religious belief of value by which to measure good and evil. A second response to the problem of value would be to hold that since God is good, and God is identical with the world, it must in fact be the case that the world is wholly good, and evil merely an illusion or appearance (Mander 2017:6). However, this position denies the existence of evil which becomes meaningless in a moral universe where evil is a reality. A third response is to retain distinctions of value within the pantheistic scheme as a whole. While God is present in all things, divinity characterises some features of the universe more than others. Among the pantheistic systems, this third is probably the most common response.

6.3.3.2. Morality for the individual

Hindus believe that one's circumstances in life are completely determined by his previous conduct, either in this life or in previous lives. This is called "karma" (action). Everything good and everything bad that happens to us in this life comes as a payment for our own past conduct. Nothing is viewed as the fruit of others' actions. It is always the consequences of one's own conduct. In order to improve his circumstances in future reincarnations, a person must do good deeds in this life. The term "karma" is also becoming popular and is often evidenced in eastern philosophy that has been brought into the west (Geisler 2006b:383, 387). Geisler refers to how Suzuki has likened the doctrine of karma to the theory of evolution and heredity as working in the moral field (2006b:387).

Since pantheism views this world as illusory, the individual is required to transcend the world of illusion before he can discover his true Self (Geisler & Watson 1989:81). This

would mean that the individual transcends good and evil. Geisler & Watson (1989:81-82)

explain:

When a person unites himself with Brahman, he no longer will be plagued by such thoughts as “I have done an evil thing” or “I have done a good thing.” For a person to go beyond good and evil means that he is “troubled no more by what he may or may not have done. He becomes unattached to his – or anyone else’s – past, present, or even future actions. Indeed, even the results of any actions are viewed with indifference: “When your intellect has cleared itself of its delusions, you will become indifferent to the results of all action, present or future.”

The unavoidable question here must be: “How may good and evil be transcended?” In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna explains to Arjuna four paths on how good and evil may be transcended, and union with Brahman attained: “... *raga yoga* – the path of union through meditation and mind control; *karma yoga* – the path of union through work; *jnana yoga* – the path of union through knowledge; or *bhakti yoga* – the path of union through love and devotion” (*quoted in Geisler & Watson 1989:82*). However, whichever path a person may follow, must be accompanied by unattachment or indifference to any action (*ibid.*). Life, on the one hand, becomes unliveable for pantheists, for the Hindu/Buddhist worldview provides no justification for a moral lifestyle or no accountability for an immoral lifestyle. Yet, on the other hand, the individual is required to live a good life as he goes through the karmic cycle to ultimately achieve nirvana. How can an existence that is required to be with “unattachment and indifference” to any action contribute positively to the karmic cycle – which is all about payment for past choices in past lives? The contradiction becomes evident. If there is “... no ultimate standard of knowledge, no absolute standard by which we ground our beliefs, then there is no absolute standard for meaning, morals, truth, goals, or right and wrong” (Hayes 2008b:388). Life becomes unliveable in a strictly pantheistic society.

For the Buddhist, living morally centres around meditation (Hexham 2011:209). Hexham (*ibid.*) explains the three stages of meditation covered by Buddhism: the first stage is the idea of *mindfulness* in meditation, which is viewed as the quieting down of the mind – which leads to wisdom and ultimately, a trance. The second stage is *concentration* – which is a deeper level of the mind that goes beyond surface and ordinary consciousness. Thirdly, there is the stage of *wisdom* – i.e. “whatever penetrates into the Dharmas²³ destroying all the illusions of darkness which distort our understanding the Dharma” (Hexham 2011:209-210). Wisdom, in this sense, concerns “the meaning of life, our daily conduct, and the essence of reality” (Hexham 2011:210).

The response of the Biblical worldview of worship to the Buddhist reality is found outside the individual. Within a theistic framework, the point of reference for morality for the individual is God. The individual is described as totally depraved and need revelation knowledge from God (together with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) which forms the passive approach for piety. There is also the active approach where there is an outworking from the inside as the believer walks in obedience within this objective reality (Phil 2:12).

6.3.3.3. Morality for society

There are two major works within the Hindu worldview that provide society with instruction for government and legal issues which formed the Hindu civilization. These are the *Laws of Manu* (composed between end of 2nd century BC and end of 2nd century AD) which provide details on ritual and moral guidance; and the *Artha-Shastra* of Kautilya (composed around 2nd century BC) (Hexham 2011:134). The third major works are the

²³ Dharma here means the whole of reality as opposed to the world of illusion in which we all live.

Puranas (or *Ancient* writings). They are made up of eighteen major and eighteen minor puranas (Hexham 2011:134). These provided for popular expressions of Hindu piety, derived from the Vedas (Cole & Morgan 1984:61). As Hindu writings, they are devoted to the virtues of particular gods from which devotional songs have been composed. One of these was by George Harrison who wrote “My Sweet Lord” (Cole & Morgan 1984:63).

The next body of writings are known as the *Yoga Sutras*. These were written sometime between the 4th century BC and the 6th century AD (Hexham 2011:135). These writings provide a systematic interpretation of the practice of yoga – which define the mastery or suppression of the mind to enter a pure state of consciousness. This is aimed at impacting both the individual and society.

Within the Biblical worldview of worship, believers are referred to the Scriptures and the Person and Work of Christ as points of reference for morality in society. Within one such Scripture, believers are commanded to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God, holy and pleasing (Rom 12:1-2). This is viewed as a spiritual act of worship. In order for this to happen, there needs to be a transformation that takes place “by the renewing of the mind” (Rom 12:2). In this entire process, believers never lose their individuality or humanity – which comprises of both the material and the spiritual. It is within this renewal of the mind that inward humility for believers (Rom 12:3) and outward loving service (Rom 12:4-21) will cause an impact in society at large. All this is presented to God as the believers’ spiritual act of worship.

6.3.4. Destiny

Within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship, is the belief of the cyclical-ness of life. Reality, therefore, has no beginning and no end – since God is eternal. We will proceed to examine what the teachings are on physical death and eternal life, and what are the responses of the Hindu and the Buddhist to these realities?

6.3.4.1. Physical death

Hindu eschatology believes that, when a person dies, his spirit is given another earthly body, that of an animal, a person of another caste (social level), or a god, depending on how he lived during his life. This cycle of death and rebirth continue until one is finally released from that cycle. This will suggest a continued existence – but in different forms.

Within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, physical death is included in the process of the cycle of birth and rebirth, whose goal it is to ultimately be free from samsara – which is “the wheel of time and desire, or birth, death, and rebirth” (Geisler & Watson 1989:83). At death, the soul of the deceased is believed to be born into another form. This may include human, animal, vegetable, or mineral – depending on the works (karma) in the earlier birth (Jeyachandran 2007:84). Whilst Hinduism hold to the belief that the identity of the soul is preserved; Buddhists believe that “the soul at death disintegrates into its constitutive elements only to be reassembled at reincarnation” (*ibid.*).

Within the Biblical worldview of worship, each individual gets one life to live (*once to die*); thereafter comes the judgement (Heb 9:27). This view contradicts the Hindu/Buddhist teaching of reincarnation and successive lives. The rebirth that the Bible talks about (John 3:1-21) has to do with a spiritual rebirth that takes place supernaturally. In Psalm 23,

David speaks of death as a shadow; for it is not the end. Shadows are temporal. Death opens the door into eternal life for believers in Christ; and eternal separation from God for those outside of Christ – for whom the spiritual rebirth is not a reality.

6.3.4.2. Eternal life

Within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview, one cannot refer to reincarnation as a “hope” but it must be seen rather as “doom” (Pringle-Pattison 1968:526). The only hope within this worldview is the release from the cycle of births and deaths. In order to attain this release from *karma*, detachment from this world is necessary for liberation (Hexham 2011:155).

Hinduism explains that the soul reincarnates until all karmas are resolved and god-realization is attained. Though it may take many lives/lifetimes, all souls will attain this highest spiritual goal. As a mystical religious system, people will finally reach the pinnacle of God-consciousness where man and God are forever one. So, it follows that: "There is no eternal hell, no damnation, in Hinduism, and no intrinsic evil--no satanic force that opposes the will of God." (Hinduism Today, 9/2011). Also, a concrete eternal destination, such as a heaven (as in the Biblical worldview of worship), does not exist and is considered insignificant (Caner 2008c:263). So, the final goal of Hinduism is to escape or be released from the cycle of reincarnation. Those within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview seek to be set free from birth, death, and rebirth, so that they may exist in a state of pure impersonal being without a physical body. The exact nature of this final state is not clearly defined. Some view it as a ceasing of consciousness, others as a sense of bliss. But the end result is that man is somehow absorbed into the eternal Being (Brahman), becoming part of God. To the Hindu, therefore, punishment consists of continuing to exist on earth. "Eternal life" consists of ceasing to exist in a bodily form and becoming part of the

impersonal God. There is no concept of a bodily resurrection, and no ultimate punishment of the wicked – as within the Biblical worldview of worship. In essence, everyone will be ultimately “saved”. This view contradicts the Biblical worldview of worship – which reveals a different reality.

As already discussed in Chapter 3, eternal life with God is a gift that extends from God to humanity. It is made possible through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ – who claimed to be the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). The word “eternal” will signify both a *quality* and *quantity* or duration of life. The Biblical worldview of worship also defends a future era when believers will be liberated from the bondage of death and decay. All this will be finally realized in the new heavens and the new earth, explained in the Book of Revelation, when God’s dwelling will finally reside with humanity (Rev 21-22). Man will respond to God in worship that will be uninhibited, unbroken and pure.

6.4. Concluding remarks

Chapters 2-3 aimed at creating a philosophical/theological grid into which the various worldviews are to be filtered to compare their truth claims with the Biblical worldview of worship. Having established the grid, we set out in chapter 6 to explore the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship and filter it through the grid. When put through the test in providing answers for the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny, we have witnessed the suppression of Biblical truth in favour of Hindu/Buddhist claims to truth.

We have argued that Buddhism and Hinduism are closely linked and may be discussed as one – viz. under the Hindu/Buddhist worldview. It was also observed that this

worldview lacks evidence of a “systematic theology” in the Hindu/Buddhist worldview. Therefore, logical consistency, adequate empirical data and experiential relevance has become a difficult journey through this chapter. We had to focus on sources that portray theories, beliefs and practices that are held by the majority of believers within this worldview. At the same time, the application of the tests within this worldview’s claims to origin, meaning, morality and destiny become an easy exercise as will be observed and concluded. Hinduism, it was observed is claimed to be more of a culture than a creed. Contrasted is the Biblical worldview of worship, whose theological doctrines form the worldview foundations.

The Hindu/Buddhist worldview embraces a diversity of theories, beliefs and practices which may be split into two major branches: i.e. philosophical and popular Hinduism. The philosophical component of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship is pantheistic. Within the Hindu worldview, god is ultimately an impersonal, eternal force, essence, or power of existence. Contrary to the Biblical worldview of worship, god has none of the characteristics of persons (e.g. knowing, thinking, loving, etc.). God is an impersonal essence that pervades all things, is also found within humans. The Biblical worldview’s description of God with His people is described in a personal I-Thou relationship. God is distinct from man; and man from God. The Hindu/Buddhist belief is inconsistent with reality as is observed within special relationships within humanity and at the same time our distinctness from all other creation. In our evaluation, the uniqueness of man when compared to all other creation can only be explained within the Biblical worldview.

Polytheistic beliefs and practices also explain a large component of the Hindu/Buddhist worldview. We have observed that these twin beliefs (i.e. pantheism and polytheism) in

the Hindu worldview of worship, seeks to explain the multiple and diverse entities in light of the supposed one entity. For the Buddhist, there will be a struggle to explain these dual realities, and therefore, no way of marrying these concepts. They therefore move away by denying dualism – which is a fundamental belief in Buddhism. As evidenced for those in the Biblical worldview of worship, God is revealed as a personal entity. Also, the mystery of the trinity demonstrates how unity and diversity exists in the community of the Trinity. Our evaluation of these concepts of God by these competing worldviews suggest that we can have unity in diversity in the effect (creation) because we locate unity in diversity in the First Cause (Creator). This can uniquely be explained in the Biblical worldview of worship.

With regards to the Hindu and Buddhist Scriptures, vague concepts of truth as a concept emerge. Therefore, it becomes difficult to ascertain any absolutes in these religions. Sacred texts fit into one of two categories: *Shruti* “what is heard” or *Smruti* “what is remembered”. When comparing the Scriptures of the Hindu/Buddhist worldviews with the Christian Scriptures, the Bible claims to be inspired by God who created man in His own image. When reading the Bible, we are reading what God has revealed to man. Thus, the Bible comes with the authority of God. The Hindu/Buddhist scriptures are not like this, for they are merely the ancient writings of ancestors and are irrelevant for life’s experiences under divine prescript.

With regards to the *origin* of the universe, the Hindu/Buddhist worldview employ mythic traditions which explain the specifics of the question of the origin of the universe. As observed, proponents view the world as eternal and cyclic. To evaluate these beliefs, we have demonstrated that modern science shows this belief as untenable; for the world

must have had a beginning. The Biblical worldview of worship teaches that the world had a beginning (Gen 1:1). The linear account of Biblical revelation describes creation as occurring once. There will come a time when there will be a new creation. Within this new creation, evil will be eradicated once and for all and God's will dwell with His people forever.

With regards to the creation of man, the Hindu/Buddhist worldview sees man as one with the divine. There is no empirical data to demonstrate this belief, for at a conscious level, each person is distinct from God and all else around him. The Biblical understanding presents God as separate from man. Man is a creation of God and of essence is separate from God. In all His qualities of greatness, God is unique – and is therefore worthy of worship.

We have also observed that the pantheistic worldview does not adequately deal with the problem of evil and suffering – since there is no doctrine of any “Fall” or “Sin” – as in Christianity. Therefore, they deny the reality of evil. We have stated that the philosophical denial of the reality of evil and suffering does not negate that pantheists experience evil and suffering on a daily basis. Therefore, the claim that evil and suffering are illusions do not correspond with reality and is a gross denial of empirical data that, for example, crime statistics in South Africa can show.

Next, with regards to *meaning*, we have observed that four subjective goals in life also provide meaning: (1) pleasure (known as *kama*), (2) wealth (known as *artha*), (3) harmony (known as *dharma*), and (4) liberation (known as *moksha*). Our evaluation of these

teachings has shown that these four goals are also at war with one another and therefore, do not cohere.

Next, *morality* and meaning are closely linked within this works-based religious system. Life, in the pantheistic worldview, is characterised by distinctions of value between good and evil. But if all is one within God, we have noted that it is hard to see how such divisions can be maintained at any deep metaphysical level. Hindus believe that one's circumstances in life are completely determined by his previous conduct, either in this life or in previous lives. This is called "karma" (action). The response of the Biblical worldview of worship to the Hindu/Buddhist reality is found outside the individual. Within a theistic framework, the point of reference for morality for the individual is God.

Destiny for those within the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship, is the belief of the cyclical-ness of life. The cycle of death and rebirth continues until one is finally released from that cycle. This will suggest a continued existence – but in different forms. Within the Biblical worldview of worship, each individual gets one life to live (*once to die*); thereafter comes the judgement (Heb 9:27). This view agrees with reality on the linear nature of time and events as opposed to a cyclical theory from the Hindu/Buddhist worldview of worship.

Those who are within the Biblical worldview of worship in South Africa have a calling to defend, practice and propagate our theories, beliefs and practices to Hindus and Buddhists. Whilst, we have defended the Biblical claims within the worldview questions, application will be made to suggest ways to practice and propagate this worldview of worship before Hindus and Buddhists in Chapter 8.

We turn our attention next to the influence of the Animistic worldview of worship from the South and will contrast it with the Biblical worldview of worship.

Chapter 7

The Biblical and Animistic worldviews of worship compared

Animism and the worldview questions

Animism includes a broad category of belief systems that embrace the worship of natural or visible representations of deities (Caner 2008a:21). These objects will include trees, rocks, totem poles, and certain animals (Sproul 1986:115). Animism does not necessitate a god or gods and can include sorcery, superstition, magic, and witchcraft (Caner 2008a:21).

Another major category among certain animists will include the “worship” of dead family members or forebears – which is termed “necromancy” (*ibid.*). However, the Animism practiced in the African Traditional Religions Africa resist this notion and claim it as a false western perception (Mbiti 1989:8). Also, the term “Animism” is claimed by Mbiti (1989:8) to not be “an adequate description of these religions and it is better for that term to be abandoned once and for all.” However, we will still use this term to describe African Traditional Religions due to the practices that are attached to them that will deem them “Animistic.” This is primarily due to the emphasis on spirit world and the structured belief to want peace with the spirits who may look after the living by warding off evil spirits. Here the dead, who are believed to have “divine” status, are consulted by the living for the purposes of gaining knowledge on decisions to make.

The traditional religious practices of Africa are considered *animistic* – as opposed to monotheistic or polytheistic. However, all three beliefs may be held within African Traditional Religions – i.e. beliefs in God, divinities and spirits (Mbiti 1990:7). The Biblical

worldview of worship stands in direct contrast with the Animistic worldview at various levels. These will be discussed as we proceed to defend for the Biblical worldview of worship. The core beliefs, in relation to the worldview questions (i.e. origin, meaning, morality and destiny), of the Animistic worldview is to be filtered through the philosophical/theological grid. Our intention is to research the beliefs and practices of this worldview of worship. We have demonstrated that the Biblical worldview of worship, with regards to its revelatory claims, agrees with the observed reality as the discipline of philosophy defines (Chapter 3). In filtering the Animistic worldview of worship through the philosophical grid, the aim in this chapter is to research cultural influences that have traditionally shaped it. We will, thereafter, define their theories, beliefs and practices. Finally, we will provide a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship within the worldview questions.

7.1. Worldview formation

Within this section, our aim is to discuss the formation of the Animistic worldview of worship, by examining its cultural influences; worldview foundation for theories; and certain theories, beliefs and practices that relate to matters of the truth claims and the worldview questions. However, African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices are considered Animistic and stem from oral cultures. For a long time, there has not been written material. The recent emergence of Western and African scholars has witnessed great work in presenting written records of beliefs and practices within the African Traditional Religions. We begin by researching cultural influences synchronically.

7.1.1. Applying the synchronic approaches to cultural influences

African traditional cultures have for generations influenced the indigenous peoples of South Africa. In attempting an understanding of the spiritual influences of African religions in the African setting, the term *Animism* has become the most popular designation, according to Mbiti (1989:7). He explains the term,

Animism is a word derived from the Latin *anima* which means breath, breath of life, and hence carries with it the idea of the soul or spirit.... It was invented by the English anthropologist, E.B. Tylor, who used it first in an article in 1866 and later in his book, *Primitive Culture* (1871). For Tylor the basic definition of religion was the 'belief in spirit beings'. He was the anima as a shadowy vaporous image animating the object it occupied. He thought that the so-called 'primitive people' imagined the anima to be capable of leaving the body and entering other men, animals or things; and continuing to live after death. Pursuing the theory further, Tylor went on to say that such 'primitive' men considered every object to have its own soul, thus giving rise to countless spirits in the universe (*ibid.*).

The belief in spirit beings will include three basic components: belief in the Supreme Being, the spirit world (spirits that are subordinate to the Supreme Being), and mystical powers (Gehman 1989:10).

Within daily life practices, the living is said to be riddled with fear for death and for their dead ancestors. For example, within the context of the Luo of Kenya, when a person dies, the soul is believed to live on and is transformed into an ancestral spirit – which is very much alive and active among members of the particular clan (Gehman 1989:17). So, the task of the living is to appease their ancestors by following traditional customary laws and beliefs. Any deviation from these would bring on the wrath of the ancestors. Not only is this belief unique to the Luo in Kenya; but, also, to many of the natives of Africa. To summarize then, animism "... embraces the intuition that there are unseen spiritual forces at work around us that somehow affect what happens in life by attributing supernatural forces to all aspects of the natural world" (Vowels 2016:224). For this reason, we will

continue to apply the description “Animism” or “Animistic” to the African Traditional Religions.

7.1.2. Worldview foundation for theories: Oral-symbolic

African Traditional Religions adopt animistic beliefs and practices within an oral-symbolic worldview. We will, firstly, focus on the “oral” component and thereafter proceed to examining the “symbolic” aspect in order to ascertain meaning and function within an Animistic society.

With regards to the concept, *oral*, the word “worldview” may be deceiving, as suggested by W J Ong (*cited in* Hiebert 2008:23-24). Ong argues that the word “worldview” is *itself* derived from a worldview. What he means is that the concept prioritizes sight “view” over sound “listening” – i.e. oral traditions. He notes that “... in most traditional societies sounds are regarded as more important than sight. Such societies lack writing and store their information orally in stories, proverbs, songs, and catechisms” (*ibid.*). The belief is that sounds precede sight for village people. For example, there is power in the spoken word for it reveals emotion, the beating on a drum and shouting act as protection against evil spirits, etc. As a result, sounds point to the invisible world of spirits, ancestors, gods, and other unseen beings (Hiebert 2008:24). Thus, the oral tradition is expressly rooted in animism. However, Ong fails to understand the concept “worldview” which is derived from the German *Weltanschauung*. *Welt* means *world* and *anschauung* means *view* or *outlook* – which means “a way of looking at the world” (Schultz & Swezey 2013:229). Therefore, the concept *worldview* does not detract from researching an oral culture.

The fact of African Traditional Religions taking on an oral culture does not in any way negate their importance when compared to western written cultures (Kunhiyop 2008:10). Kunhiyop explains that even the Biblical content started off as orally transmitted truths and were later cast in writing (e.g. 1 Jn 1:1) (*ibid.*). These oral cultures are to be carefully interpreted within their own context (Kunhiyop 2008:11). According to Ong (*cited in* Biakolo 1999:43-44), sound is limited to time. Once words pass from the mouth, it becomes a thing of the past and can be forgotten. However, the written tradition has transported words into space. However, even sounds/words can be communicated repeatedly just as written messages which make them equally valid (Biakolo 1999:44). This is the category into which the practice of the oral tradition fits.

With regards to the *symbolic* component of the animistic worldview and the communication of its theories, Biakolo argues that the claim, since oral cultures have no fixed texts, they organize and transmit knowledge and information in a unique way (1999:45). He thereafter quotes from Ong's argument who holds that oral thought proceeds,

... in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulaic expressions, in standard thematic settings (the assembly, the meal, the duel, the hero's 'helper,' and so on), in proverbs ... or other mnemonic form (*cited in* Biakolo 1999:45).

Mickelsen defines a symbol as a sign which suggests meaning rather than stating it (1963:265). Bevan sees symbols as things which represent or stand for some reality other than themselves (1938:244). Yet, they also participate in that to which they point (Tillich *quoted in* Frazier 1975:279). For example, the flag participates in that to which it points: the flag participates in the power and dignity of the nation for which it stands (*ibid.*). The symbol itself may be a literal object used to convey some lesson or truth. The task of the

interpreter is to make a connection between the literal object and the lesson or truth it teaches so that it becomes clearer.

Within the Biblical worldview of worship symbolic parables were also used, for the people, to a large extent, belonged also to an oral culture. For example, the Old Testament prophets served to shock the people of God out of their sinful condition using symbols. This is the primary reason that Jesus also used symbolic parables. He was getting His message across to His hearers to remind them that judgment had come upon the majority in Israel (cf. Matt. 13:9-18). In other words, Israel was going to be rejected as God's people. The purpose of Jesus' symbolic parables was to enlighten the believer through shock; but harden the unbeliever (Beale 2006:60). Beale argues that the reason that the Old Testament prophets, Jesus (in the Gospels) and John (in the Book of Revelation) used symbols was so that the people of God should perceive spiritual reality and not merely listen to abstractions about it (2006:61). This spiritual reality should lead God's people into a state of shock over those sins to which we have become anesthetized and lead to genuine repentance from them so that they will stay true and pure as the people of God.

So, within cultures, where there were seldom western educational influences, the oral/symbolic forms of educating people without written texts was a form of communicating truth claims concerning reality. Theories, beliefs and practices – to which we now proceed, relied on these forms of communication.

7.1.3. Theories, beliefs and practices

It is impossible to speak about “African religion” as a uniformed worldview, due to there being a variety of African religious theories, beliefs and practices (Hexham 2011:49). We will need to research some common features of many different African religions. Hexham (*ibid.*) notes that any shared theories, beliefs and practices, “... are often found in other traditional religions throughout the world and are not exclusively African, although they take on a particular form in Africa.”

African people view this universe as a religious universe where all of nature is filled with religious significance (Mbiti 1989:56). Therefore, both the physical and spiritual are viewed together. Mbiti explains that these two dimensions,

... dove-tail into each other to the extent that at times and in places one is apparently more real than, but not exclusive of, the other. To African people this religious universe is not an academic proposition: it is an empirical experience, which reaches its heights in acts of worship (1989:57).

Onongha (2014:206) believes that the reasons for animism’s appealing nature lie in fact of it:

- appealing to existential needs and offers a means to cope,
- holding promise of power,
- offering healing to the sick,
- offering protection from malevolent forces,
- enabling discharge of obligations to supernatural beings with whom one interacts in this world,
- giving meaning to life – especially within the issue of pain and suffering, and,
- explaining the source or origin of evil.

The close relationship between the animistic and Biblical worldviews is evidenced in their descriptions of supernatural powers and their involvement in this world (du Toit 1998:383). However, the difference lies in the aspect of Animistic leanings within the African Traditional beliefs. The Biblical worldview supports the idea of the existence of both animate and inanimate objects that God created. Humanity is revealed to be created in the image and likeness of God – i.e. the ability to reason, to act on will, to make moral decisions, etc. God has put a spirit in man – which, due to the Fall has become insensitive to God. The spirit/soul is considered the nonmaterial aspect of a human that imparts individuality (Moon 2010:386). At the point of conversion, which is the individual's response to God's offer of salvation, man is regenerated or transformed. Regeneration is considered the other side of conversion – i.e. the complete transformation of individual believers, by obtaining “a new spiritual vitality and direction...” (Erickson 2013:872). This new birth through the Spirit is emphasized to Nicodemus in Christ's encounter with him (John 3) (Erickson 2013:874-875). It is this regenerated spirit that departs from the body and is with the Lord upon physical death (2 Cor 5:8).

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, taught by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31, tells of a rich man who dies and goes to Hades, a place of torment. Lazarus, a beggar, dies and is taken into Paradise – a place of bliss (Erickson 2013:1085). This account by Jesus alludes to an intermediate state. As is in this example, the Biblical evidence never suggests the re-joining of disembodied individuals in cohabitation with living people within their communities. In the animistic worldview, the spirits rely on the living to keep their memory alive for existence in the spirit world; and the living rely on the spirits for advice, protection and to show them that they are not forgotten (Kalilombe 1994:126-127). The

Biblical worldview suggest an intermediate state of bliss for believers and suffering for unbelievers, while awaiting the final judgement (Erickson 2013:1085).

Within Animistic beliefs and practices, the spirits, made up of created spirits and dead ancestors, are considered the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities (Mbiti 1989:82). God is considered above worldly affairs and is, therefore, uninvolved.

Kalilombe (1994:121) explains:

In theological terms, an important assumption is being made – *the absence of a radical dualism*. Good and evil, life and death, love and hatred, justice and injustice, good luck and misfortune – all these are, indeed, the two opposing camps in the drama of the cosmos. But God is not involved on one of the two sides in such a “partisan” way that another agency (Satan or some such) would be on the side as an equal opponent. On the contrary, God is above this drama and is there to act as the ultimate arbiter.

This is where the spirit beings play a vital role in the day-to-day lives of the people.

In contrast, the Biblical Worldview of worship prohibits communication with spirits and the dead. The technical term for this phenomenon is *spiritism*. Bae & van der Merwe (2008:n.p.) explain,

Spiritism is founded on the idea that the living can communicate with the souls of the dead by means of mediums (individuals who act as intermediaries between the material and physical world). It is the contention of this study that such practices are neither "spiritual" nor approved of by God. The Bible has a negative view of necromancy or attempts to communicate with the dead. In fact, all contact with the spirit world is expressly forbidden irrespective of the nature of the spirits concerned (Lv 19:26-31; Dt 18:10-11; Job 7:7-10; Is 8:18-20; Lk 16:19-31).

The practice of seeking divine guidance through contact with spirits and dead souls is strongly condemned in Scripture. Saul's visit to the Witch of Endor to consult Samuel's dead spirit for guidance is an example of this (1 Sam 28) (Bae & van der Merwe 2008:n.p.). The reason that YHWH abhors such practices is due to the fact that it denies

Him as the sovereign, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God. He is always with His people to provide help (Psa 46:1), and to lead, guide, provide for, and protect them (Psa 23). The god described in the Animistic worldview, is not the God of the Bible. YHWH, in the Biblical worldview, is to be the centre of all truth claims that describe reality. Where is truth grounded in the Animistic worldview? What are these truth claims? We proceed to answer these questions within the Animistic worldview. We will also present a defence for the Biblical worldview as we examine these claims.

7.2. Truth

Animism has no central founder – as in the case of the monotheistic religions. As discussed earlier, animistic practices were orally passed down through the generations. Therefore, there are no sacred texts that are universally accepted by people within this worldview (Vowels 2016:229). However, as argued in Moreland and Craig (2017:121),

... an isolated culture in the mountains of Brazil may use a poetic form of oral tradition, their sentences may not follow an explicit, tidy subject-predicate form, and they may reach tribal conclusions in ways quite foreign to Western culture. But none of this has anything to do with the deep logical structure that underlies their claims or with the conformance of their individual assertions to the three laws of logic, and it is simply a mistake to think otherwise.

In this argument, Moreland and Craig are referring to the Aristotelian logic²⁴ – which they claim was not invented by Aristotle; but, was discovered by him (*ibid.*). Within the Biblical worldview, logic (as observed by Aristotle) is linked to the mind of God; rather than a western invention (Frame 2015:70).

Sources of authority within the animistic worldview make truth claims which are orally passed on. These are inherent in traditions passed down to each succeeding generation.

²⁴ The three laws are discussed in Chapter 2 (2.3.2.).

Vowels explains that the "... multitudes of taboos and customs, rituals and observances necessary to maintain balance with nature and the spirits inhabiting it are taught through stories and legends which become the core of that people's *worldview* or understanding of what is real" (2016:229). However, lack of written texts does not mean lack of coherence in truth statements (Krüger, Lubbe & Steyn 1996:36). African religions are well-structured, and their truth statements are orally communicated.

Religion permeates every aspect of the lives of those within an animistic worldview – which is evidenced in their "... riddles and proverbs, songs and dancing, rites and ceremonies, myths and folk-tales, shrines and sacred places, and in their artistic designs (du Toit 1998:380). Du Toit argues that African Hermeneutics is distinct in that it is hermeneutics without a book but not without a text – which he argues is the African way of reading life (*ibid.*). Therefore, we would need to piece together their descriptions of the worldview questions which will be extracted from mainly African historians and theologians who have studied the various cultures and interpreted their 'life-texts.' The problem lies in the various truth claims that are made by the different tribes/communities within the continent of Africa.²⁵ The advantage that the Biblical worldview has it within its revealed text that all evangelicals claim as inspired by God. It forms a stable point of reference for truth statements. So, even though culture may change; Biblical truth stands the test of time.

We proceed to examining the worldview questions: origin, meaning, morality and destiny within the Animistic worldview of worship. This is for the purpose of seeking out common

²⁵ Mbiti (1989), throughout his book, presents the diverse beliefs among the peoples of Africa that make up the Animistic worldview.

beliefs among the Animists with regards to the worldview questions. A defence for the Biblical worldview of worship with regards to the worldview questions will also be stated.

7.3. The worldview questions

The worldview questions on origin (where do we come from?), meaning (why are we here?), morality (how do we live?), and destiny (where are we going?) are to be applied to the Animistic worldview of worship in order to ascertain its theories, beliefs and practices that form the worldview. We begin with the question on Origin (Where do we come from?) and how it influences Animistic worship. We will focus on aspects of common ground beliefs and, also beliefs that diverge between the Biblical and Animistic worldviews of worship.

7.3.1. Origin

The existence of God in animistic religions is never debated. Also, knowledge of God is not sought out for intellectual reasons; but, for practical reasons. Mbiti (1989:29) cites a poll in which he conducted within 300 communities from all over Africa (outside the communities with an Islamic and Christian worldviews). He concludes that all these peoples have a notion of God – who is both transcendent and immanent (*ibid.*).

The objective, within the section that will follow, is to research animistic theories on the origin of the universe, the origin of man, and the origin of evil and suffering. We shall, thereafter, filter these claims through the philosophical/theological grid that favours the Biblical worldview of worship.

7.3.1.1. Origin of the universe: Theism

In describing the nature of God, Mbiti (1989:3-30) investigates the various African Traditional religious beliefs about the intrinsic attributes of God. He summarizes, using the following headings: the omniscience of God, the omnipresence of God, Omnipotence of God, the transcendence of God, the immanence of God, the self-existence of God, pre-eminence and greatness of God, God as the first and last cause, God as spirit, the invisibility of God, God as mysterious and incomprehensible, God as eternal, infinite and immutable, God as Oneness and the Plurality of God. He demonstrates how many of these Christian-defined attributes were already present in many of the African beliefs and practices that were spread over Africa. Even though a tribe or people did not believe all of these or have a systematised understanding of all these attributes, they certainly had some of these understandings through the terms and concepts used when describing God. For example, concepts of God as an uncaused and self-sustaining Being is clearly expressed among some of the African peoples. The Zulu people expressed this attribute in one of God's names – which means: “He who is of himself” or “He who came of himself into being” (Mbiti 1989:19). This begs the question: How did the African Traditional Religions develop such an understanding of God – which are easily identified in the Biblical worldview of worship?

There are two possibilities: the first owes an explanation to General or Natural Revelation (e.g. Psa 19:1; Rom 1:20). Erickson (2013:122) explains:

General revelation is God's communication of himself to all persons at all times and in all places ... A closer examination of the definition of general revelation discloses that it refers to God's self-manifestation through nature, history, and the inner being of the human person. It is general in two senses: its universal availability (it is accessible to all persons at all times) and the content of the message (it is less particularized and detailed than special revelation).

The second owes its explanation to the influence of early Christianity in Africa. For, as the Gospel started to spread all over the world, it also entered Africa in places like Alexandria, Egypt, Carthage, etc. (Gibellini 1994:1). Whatever method formed and shaped the theological theories of Africa; it is a well-developed orally and comes closest to the Judeo-Christian theology when compared to other Animistic religions in the world (e.g. Australia, South America, Canada, etc.). For example, Mbiti (*ibid.*) supplies a list of various translated terms that are used by different African tribes which give this understanding of God as the self-existing One:

- The Bacongo: God is made by no other, no one beyond him is.
- The Bambuti: God was the First, who had always been in existence, and would never die.
- The Banyarwanda: God existed from the beginning. They praise Him as “the Ancient of Days” and “the One from the first.”
- The Barundi: God needs nothing.
- The Bena: God is the One who speaks by Himself – which points to His self-sufficiency, self-communicating and self-supporting attributes.
- The Shona: God is the One who existed in the beginning.
- The Herero: God has no father. He is not a man. He lives in heaven.
- Gikuyu: God has no father nor mother, nor wife nor children; He is all alone. He is neither a child nor an old man; He is the same today as He was yesterday.

Mbiti summarizes these beliefs in the following paragraph: “These statements are clear and definite in emphasizing that in human terms, God is uncreated, without parents, without family, without any of the things that compose or sustain human life. He is truly ‘all alone’, ‘self-dependent, absolutely unchangeable, and unchanging” (1989:20). The

majority of peoples who hold to African Traditional religions visualize God as Father and have a strong patriarchal inclination (Mbiti 1989:48). There are also a few matriarchal societies, like the Ovambo and southern Nuba (Mbiti 1989:49). The vast majority do not attribute a body to God; but is perceived as a Spirit (Mbiti 1989:49). This fact gives credence to Animistic beliefs in the First Cause - God.

With regards to creation, Mbiti (1989:52) explains that it is generally assumed that God created the heaven as He created the earth. Heaven is considered a counterpart of the earth and the dwelling place of God. There are stories told all over Africa of how originally heaven and earth were either close together or joined by a rope or bridge and how God was close to men (*ibid.*). Other myths explain how the separation came about. Against this backdrop, African peoples view God as omnipotent from His exercise of power over his creation (Mbiti 1989:32). However, at a time in the past, something happened to offend God and cause him to depart from actively engaging with humanity (Vowels 2016:230). Vowels explains, "Though God exists, He no longer interacts directly with humans, but allows lesser deities, or spirits, to do so" (*ibid.*). Therefore, whilst some forms of Animism are considered theistic; other forms could generally be described as *deistic* (*ibid.*). Mhlophe (2015:188) argues that a *theology from beneath*, that is linked to changing cultures, is to be rejected; God's unchanging revelation in the Scriptures must be our point of reference.

The Animistic believe that God is sovereign over His creation. Yet, this belief is closer to Islamic theology which sees God as aloof; than in Christian theology. Within the Biblical worldview, God is portrayed as actively involved in His creation - even though, at times, He utilizes angels to do His bidding. The immanence of God is evidenced in the

incarnation narrative of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In fact, one of the names given to Christ at His birth is “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us” (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14). Mhlophe emphatically argues, “God is not an absentee God and He has not appointed ancestral spirits to mediate between Him and His people” (2015:190).

7.3.1.2. The origin of man

Within many of the African Animistic beliefs, God is considered to be the uncaused, first cause. This agrees with the Biblical understanding of God as the necessary Being, whose existence needs no external cause (Moreland & Craig 2017:479). Humanity is described as contingent beings – i.e. whose existence is accounted for by causal factors outside of ourselves (*ibid.*).

Various creation myths of the human race exist within the African religions with one example in the Zulu belief that God split a stone – out of which came men (Mbiti 1989:148). Almost all African ethnic groups have creation myths or myths of origin – including the origin of humanity (Healey & Sybertz 1996:62). Man is believed to be the centre of existence and was created towards the end of God’s original work of creation (Mbiti 1989:90-91). With regards to the actual formation of man, Mbiti explains,

As for the actual method of creating man, we can consider the myths under different categories. There are peoples who hold that God used clay to make man, the way that the potter does with pots ... There are myths from Akamba, Basuto, Herero, Shona, Nuer and others, which tell that God brought man out of a hole or marsh in the ground, or from a tree ... In a few cases it is said that God brought men out of a vessel (1989:91-92).

With regards to the original state of man within the Animistic worldview, Mbiti (1989:93) explains that according to many stories of creation, “man was originally put in a state of happiness, childlike ignorance, immortality or ability to rise again after dying.” God also

provided him with the necessities of life, either directly or through equipping him to develop them, and man lived more or less in a state of paradise. Again, there are many parallels that can be drawn between these beliefs and the Biblical worldview. The Bible also describes man as in a perfect state in communion with God before the Fall (Gen 2). However, even though the Fall of man introduced both physical and spiritual death; it did not discount the immortality of the soul in a state of death (e.g. Gen 3; Ezek 18:20; Matt 10:28; etc.). Animistic religions do not have a doctrine of the Fall (Kunhiyop 2008:56). According to the Biblical worldview, the Fall introduced evil and suffering. We will now examine the origin of evil and suffering in Animism.

7.3.1.3. The origin of evil and suffering

Whilst the Biblical worldview of worship describe *The Fall* as man sinning and, thereafter, driven out of Paradise; the African versions narrate a different story.

According to Healey & Sybertz (1996:63), some African versions believe that because human beings did something wrong, God withdrew into heaven away from his creation. However, for most Animists, concepts of evil are based upon what is harmful to the community. They do not feel guilty because they have transgressed against God; but will feel a sense of shame if their actions are seen as harmful to the community (Vowels 2016:232). Vowels continues to explain that “acting in ways that bring the wrath of the spirits, such as breaking taboo or failing to perform prescribed rituals, is considered evil, and the group may move to punish the offender. Shame and fear are employed to motivate individuals to comply with social expectations” (*ibid.*). This utilitarian philosophy of life, which suggests that the purpose of all actions within a community should bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is flawed (Mhlophe 2015:196). This

is so because it is linked to hedonism – which defines good and evil in terms of pleasure and pain (Mhlophe 2015:196; Sproul 1986:129). In essence, it shifts the standard for evil and suffering to the human level and limits it to human feelings. Human feelings change.

The Biblical worldview argues that we can only find an objective and absolute point of reference for evil and suffering within the nature of God. Evil and suffering are what they are because they are defined against the backdrop of the nature of God. Also, the Biblical narratives outline how evil and suffering materialized within a perfect existence (cf. Isa 14; Ezek 28; Gen 3).

Finding meaning or purpose in life is an important question that the Animistic worldview is to answer. This, therefore, is our next important task within this chapter.

7.3.2. Meaning

As previously mentioned, the lack of written texts poses a difficulty to establishing unifying beliefs. This also applies to the question of the meaning of life. Meaning is to be derived by connecting the beliefs held and their practices of Animists. What is the starting point of meaning in the Animistic worldview? What is the role of objective and subjective meaning for humanity? These are the questions that will now be discussed.

7.3.2.1. The starting point for meaning

Religious beliefs are important for the understanding of the source of life and meaning that is derived from the source - God. The Animistic worldview of worship derives meaning for humanity in God. However, the purpose of man is centred not so much in the worship of God (as is in the case of the Biblical worldview of worship); but in communal benefits

– which is understood to be God’s purpose. For those practicing African Traditional Religions, meaning is to be spiritually derived (Beyers 2010:7). All events in life are believed to have spiritual significance and therefore must be taken seriously, as they cater for the good of the individual and the community.

7.3.2.2. Objective and subjective meaning

God is viewed as the originator of man and therefore is to be the one that provides an objective point of reference for meaning. From the time of birth, Animists are guided and trained with the purpose of achieving a full and complete life, fully conscious, however, of the need of a unified community (Krúger, Lubbe & Steyn 1996:35). Krúger, Lubbe & Steyn (1996:35) explain:

Since life is communal, the individual almost automatically becomes integrated into a network of mutual relations with the community. The totality of life therefore boils down to the maintenance of a dynamic relationship with

- one’s extended family,
- one’s clan or tribe,
- one’s ancestors,
- nature, and
- God.

For Animists, there exists also the spiritual, invisible reality from which they derive meaning. Another goal in life is to appease the spirits. Krúger, Lubbe & Steyn (1996:35) explain:

Since the ancestors form an integral part of the community, they are involved in all actions where the well-being of the community is at stake. Sacrifices are therefore offered in their honour to avert disaster, to secure a blessing or as an act of thanksgiving.

The Biblical worldview of worship views ultimate meaning for humanity to be centred in the worship of the Creator God. This ultimate meaning is to be filtered into proximate meanings: i.e. in our bearing the image of the Creator to establish meaning in identity, in

our created function to serve God's purposes in our daily living, in our relational experiences of love, and in the eternal security made possible to believers by Christ.²⁶

7.3.3. Morality

Animistic morality rests in the spirit world. Even though the spirits are considered powerful, they are not omnipotent like God is, and are subordinate to Him (Kunhiyop 2008:18). The current task is to establish how this objective reality affects morality in this world. What are the processes that are involved in establishing an ethical norm and moral choices for the individual and the community?

We begin by considering the starting point for morality in the Animistic worldview of worship. Thereafter, we will progress to the processes involved in ascertaining morality for the individual and society. The findings will reveal theories and beliefs that underpin morality within this worldview which will prepare us for a defence of morality within the Biblical worldview of worship.

7.3.2.1. The starting point for morality: God, Spirits and Elders

As stated earlier, Animistic foundations rest largely in either theistic or deistic theories. However, for those leaning towards deism, even though God is considered absent from the direct activities in this world by most Africans; God is considered the foundation and explanation of all creation and existence – including morality (Kunhiyop 2008:16). Therefore, there is little information surrounding the moral attributes of God – even though He is regarded as faultless (Mbiti 1989:36-37; Kunhiyop 2008:17-18). Mbiti (1989:36) suggests that the majority of African people regard God as essentially good which is

²⁶ See Chapter 3 (3.7.2.) for the discussions on meaning within the Biblical worldview of worship.

evidenced in His averting calamities, supplying rain, providing fertility to people, cattle and fields. However, “(D)death, lightning strikes, sickness, miscarriages, suffering and all other human misery are the direct work of these malevolent spirits, with whom some human beings may be in league (Kunhiyop 2008:17-18).

Animists believe that there is “a projected god or gods within plants, animals, or inanimate objects” (Caner 2008a:22). Some animists are polytheists; whilst others tend to lean on the side of spirits – i.e. those who in general belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man (Caner 2008a:22; Mbiti 1989:74). African beliefs lean more towards the intermediary explanation as suggested by Mbiti. In other words, intermediaries – both spirits and humans, are assigned moral responsibilities by God. What is the role of the spirits in forming ethics and morality within the Animistic worldview?

Ethical norms are measured by what satisfies the spirits. One cannot be certain on the origin of these spirits – due to there being no binding text that gives a unifying explanation (Vowels 2016:226). What can be ascertained is that it is widely believed that,

... they are created beings that have varying degrees of power based on some kind of hierarchical relationship. In fact, this is similar to what the Bible teaches about evil spirits. Others believe that they are part of the earth itself and are manifestations of their view that nature is a living entity. The great majority of animists believe that at least some of the spirits are their deceased ancestors (Vowels 2016:226).

Mbiti (1989:74) also attests to these beliefs within the African context. These created and deceased beings are associated with God and may often stand for His activities or manifestations, either as personifications or as the spiritual beings, in charge of these major objects or phenomena of nature (Mbiti 1989:75). In other words, although God may

be viewed by some Animists as uninvolved in this world; he manifests himself through these intermediaries in this world.

Next, ethical norms within the animistic worldview is derived from traditions and customs which provide the moral code for its people (Kunhiyop 2008:9). Kunhiyop observes that traditions are passed on from generation to generation and become the “Scriptures” of the people – i.e. their source of knowledge about what God requires (*ibid.*). The elders and spiritual and traditional leaders are seen as custodians of rules and regulations that guide the community. Kunhiyop writes, “Thus Africans will often enquire what the elders (and the ancestors) have to say about something, and the tradition they transmit has the force of law” (*ibid.*). The processes of communication begin with God who operates through the divine intermediaries. These intermediaries communicate to the elders and spiritual and traditional leaders. Finally, the moral code is passed on to the individual and community in the Animistic worldview. Thus, its moral philosophy may be considered anthropocentric due to the focus being centred on relationships between human beings themselves; rather than the relationship between humans and God (Bujo 1992:31). For example, lying against a member of the clan is an abomination. However, when someone lies to protect the clan; it is considered a virtue (Bujo 1992:35). This utilitarian approach removes objectivity from God and places it on the community of people.

Within the Biblical worldview of worship, ethics and morality find an objective point of reference in God and His revelation in the Scriptures – known as the Moral Law (Hayes 2008a:353-357). The call for righteousness and holiness, as sinful humanity tries to approach God; is unattainable through any human effort. Essentially, humanity is spiritually dead due to sin which has offended the holiness of God (Rom 6:23). Many

Animistic followers believe that humans cannot offend God (Bujo 1992:30). However, the Biblical evidence gives a conflicting message. No one; but God is the sovereign point of reference. All wrongdoing is primarily against God. Therefore, this is where the Gospel comes in. It suggests a Gospel of grace, mercy and love that propels God to secure salvation in Himself and offer it to the world as a gracious gift (Jn 3:16). Those that come into Christ, are called to enter a new life of righteousness and holiness and live a life that emulates this reality attained at salvation (2 Cor 5:17).

We began by establishing a point (in this case: points) of reference for morality. Our research will now lead us to the application of those values within the individual and society – which brings us to the human level.

7.3.3.2. Morality for the individual and society

The question: *How do African Animists in the South navigate between the two aspects of individual morality and societal morality?* must be asked and answered next.

At this human level, animists hold to the belief that there are both good and bad spirits that influence the world. These can either bring good or bad to the individual and community – such as, a good harvest, wealth, fertility, or good health (Vowels 2016:227). There is also the belief that proper engagement with both, the good and spirits, can be beneficial for the individual and community (*ibid.*). Vowels (*ibid.*) explains one of the predominant theories that underpin animism:

Part of the worldview of all animists is that *everything* that happens is the result of interplay with the spirits. Nothing occurs without a spiritual cause. The key to successful living is to prevent the spirits from doing harm and cajole them to do good. If someone becomes ill, it is not because a virus has infected his body; it is because a spirit has afflicted him. If someone has a good crop, it is not because he planted well and carefully nurtured his plants; it is because he has found favour

with the appropriate spirit. Therefore, it is essential that an animist knows what a spirit like or do not like so that he or she can effectively satisfy them.

So, for the individual, all of life – including morality, has spiritual significance. The outcomes as evidenced in an individual's life testifies to the pleasure of the spirits – and thus moral approval. However, living a moral life is not primarily for the benefit of the individual – but the community.

Whilst western ethics may primarily describe that which is normative for an *individual*, and morality may describe the behavioural patterns for that person; African ethics and morality focuses primarily on *social* (or societal) ethics and morality (Kunhiyop 2008:4-5). Even though societal morals are the focus, individuals are not neglected – but are expected to fulfil their roles for the greater good of society (Kunhiyop 2008:5).

Within the Biblical worldview of worship, there are good spirits (angels) and evil spirits (demons) as well. The difference lies in the angels' concern with what concerns God. In other words, the reason for the angels' faithful service to mankind is due to their submission to God, and not their own love and relationship for humanity (Manikam 2011:362). Their activities are carried out due to their dedication to God.

God is sovereign over His people and morality is linked with His nature. Ethical boundaries are suggested in the Biblical worldview of worship because it agrees with the nature of God. When His people make virtuous, moral decisions; it brings glory to God. It has no function as with the Animistic worldview – where the spirits are appeased through moral living.

Also, Evil spirits have limited power over God's people according to the boundaries He sets (Job 1:12). The victory of Christ through His death and resurrection introduced triumph over the cosmic powers (Ladd 1993:476) Ladd (*ibid.*) explains: "People are in bondage ... to this evil spiritual world. One of the purposes of the mission of Christ is to destroy 'every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet' (1 Cor 15:24-25)." The Scriptures portray Satan as the source of all that is evil. He orchestrates his evil plans employing whatever means to seek man's total separation from his Creator. Satan and evil spirits have one goal: causing man's rebellion against God's holiness (Zacharias & Johnson 2000:103). However, their end is sure (cf. Rev 19-20).

This leads us to the final question of destiny and the Animistic theories surrounding eschatology within its worldview.

7.3.4. Destiny

Due to their focus on spirits, Animists believe in the afterlife – even though various beliefs exist. We proceed to examine beliefs around concepts of death and eternal life within this worldview of worship.

7.3.4.1. Physical death

The entrance of babies into the world, for Animists, creates a new generation. Therefore, rites of birth are performed to make the child a corporate and social being (Mbiti 1989:145). Initiation rites continue throughout a person's development to make him/her a mature, responsible and active member of society. Marriage makes the individual a creative and reproductive being, causing a link with both the departed and the generations

to come (*ibid.*). In this life, death is the final door between the world of humans and the world of the spirits – between the visible and the invisible (*ibid.*).

Death, therefore, for the Animist, is simply part of the continuous cycle of nature (Vowels 2016:232). Death brings to people a different existence as a spirit. However, eventually the spirit of the deceased will be forgotten by the tribe and will then be reincarnated as a new baby among the same people (Vowels 2016:232). Animist societies can be explained to consist of the spirits of the yet unborn, the living, and the dead – who may be viewed as equally alive and should continually interact with one another (*ibid.*).

Therefore, for Animists, death can never be considered as complete annihilation; but mere departure from the physical life. Even though the physical body sees decay, the spirit moves on to another state of existence. Mbiti explains some of the words that Animists use to describe the destination after death:

Some of the words describing death imply that a person goes 'home', which means that this life is like a pilgrimage: the real 'home' is in the hereafter, since one does not depart from there. There is a real cessation of part of the person at death, so he 'sleeps' but never to wake up again (1989:153).

The Biblical worldview teaches that death comes as a result of sin (Rom 6:23). Whilst death is considered a part of the cycle of life; the Biblical worldview demonstrates its presence is abnormal for it is against the nature of God. Life encapsulates the Being of God (Jn 1:4). Like the Animistic worldview, death does not introduce annihilation; but a movement into a spiritual realm of existence. However, the destinations for people that are explained in the Biblical worldview do not agree with the Animistic worldview. These destinations will be discussed next as we consider the issue of eternal life.

7.3.4.2. Eternal life

The belief among Animists is that death is simply the continuation of life in a different sphere (Vowels 2016:232). Individuals are said to continue as ancestral spirits until they are forgotten (*ibid.*). There is no messiah figure to rescue animists; as is found in the Biblical worldview. There is, therefore, little thought for salvation in the sense of eternal rescue as is found in the Biblical worldview (*ibid.*).

Within most African traditions, a geographical separation between the two worlds of the living and the dead cannot be envisioned, for as soon as a person dies, he arrives 'there' in a spirit form for a person is thought to be composed of physical and spiritual entities (Mbiti 1989:155). Some societies add to this composite: 'shadow', 'a breath' or 'a personality', which is not always easy to divide up (*ibid.*).

There is no concrete evidence among African traditionalists of an afterlife that includes punishment and reward (Mbiti 1989:157). However, people are described as ontologically destined to lose their humanness; but gain full spirit-ness (Mbiti 1989:158). This is the destiny of all. There is no concept of a resurrection as is in the Biblical worldview of worship.

The comprehensive revelation (even though there exists a great degree of mystery) that is described in the Biblical worldview of worship concerning the afterlife is impressive. Whilst spirits may be believed to fizzle out if not remembered among Animistic beliefs; the Biblical understanding is that we will forever be remembered by God (e.g. Isa 49:15-16; Heb 6:10). We will live forever live in His presence where He will be our God and we will be His people (Rev 21:3). The opposite is true for unbelievers. They will exist in a

conscious spiritual state and experience torment for eternity away from the presence of God.

7.4. Concluding remarks

Chapters 2-3 aimed at creating a philosophical/theological grid into which the various worldviews are to be filtered to compare their truth claims with the Biblical worldview of worship. Having established the grid, we set out in chapter 7 to explore the Animistic worldview of worship and filter it through the grid. When put through the test in providing answers for the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny, we have witnessed the suppression of Biblical truth in favour of Animistic claims to truth.

Within this chapter, we have established that the traditional religious practices of Africa are considered *animistic*. We have also argued that the Biblical worldview of worship stands in direct contrast with the Animistic worldview at various levels. It was evidenced that African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices are considered Animistic and characteristically stem from oral cultures.

African Traditional Religions adopt animistic beliefs and practices within an oral-symbolic worldview. The focus on the spirit world is key to animistic beliefs and practices. Within daily life practices, the living is said to be riddled with fear for death and for their dead ancestors. Therefore, their task is to appease their ancestors by following traditional customary laws and beliefs through symbolic representations at various levels in their practices. We have observed that African people view this universe as a religious universe where all of nature is filled with religious significance. Therefore, both the physical and spiritual are viewed together. We have argued for there being a close

relationship between the animistic and Biblical worldviews is evidenced in their descriptions of supernatural powers and their involvement in this world. However, we have also stated, that the difference lies in the aspect of Animistic leanings within the African Traditional beliefs. The Biblical worldview supports the idea of the existence of both animate and inanimate objects that God has created. Humanity is revealed to be created in the image and likeness of God. God has put a spirit in man. In our evaluation, we have argued that the Biblical Worldview of worship prohibits communication with spirits and the dead (*spiritism*). The practice of seeking divine guidance through contact with spirits and dead souls is strongly condemned in Scripture (cf. Dt 18:9-13).

The god described in the Animistic worldview, is not the God of the Bible. YHWH, in the Biblical worldview, is to be the centre of all truth claims that describe reality. The problem in the Animistic worldview lies in the various truth claims that are made by the different tribes/communities within the continent of Africa. Truth, as we have discovered, is absolute and centred in the person of the God revealed in the Bible. The advantage that the Biblical worldview has is within its revealed text which all evangelicals claim as inspired by God. It forms a stable point of reference for truth statements. So, even though culture may change; Biblical truth stands the test of time.

In researching the question of *origin* within the Animistic worldview, we, firstly, looked at the nature of God and have discovered that there are many similar doctrines that can be used as entry points when witnessing to those in the Animistic religions. For example, God is considered to be the uncaused, first cause. This agrees with the Biblical understanding of God as the necessary Being, whose existence needs no external cause.

Humanity is described as contingent beings who are totally dependent on god. However, the god presented in this religious worldview withdrew into heaven away from his creation.

We have discovered that *meaning* is to be derived not so much in the worship of God (as is in the case of the Biblical worldview of worship); but in communal benefits – which is understood to be god's purpose. For those practicing African Traditional Religions, meaning is to be spiritually derived for the good of the individual and the community, through the appeasing of the spirits. The Biblical worldview of worship views ultimate meaning for humanity to be centred in the worship of the Creator God. However, there is seldom logical consistency in deriving meaning from God; for animists, at many levels, blend the importance of spirits with that of God.

Animistic *morality*, also, rests in the spirit world. God is considered the foundation and explanation of all creation and existence – including morality. However, intermediaries – both spirits and humans, are assigned moral responsibilities by God. In our evaluation of this claim, we have discovered that within the Biblical worldview of worship, ethics and morality find an objective point of reference in God and His revelation in the Scriptures. This offers an absolute, stable point of reference for truth to be believed and practiced – which is lacking in Animistic religions. The various oral traditions, which at times contradict each other, are proof of this. There is no logical consistency in descriptions of attaining morality.

Finally, with regards to the question of *destiny*, Animists believe in the afterlife – even though various beliefs exist. Death is believed to be the final door between the world of humans and the world of the spirits. The destinations for people that are explained in the

Biblical worldview do not agree with the Animistic worldview. The belief among Animists is that death is simply the continuation of life in a different sphere. Individuals are said to continue as ancestral spirits until they are forgotten. The keeping of their memory alive is key to their existence in the life hereafter. Again, there is no logical consistency in understanding how a sovereign god is able to allow spirit beings to be annihilated due to the forgetfulness of the living. The Biblical worldview of worship describe believers as being by sustained by God alone in the afterlife.

Those who are within the Biblical worldview of worship in South Africa have a calling to defend, practice and propagate our theories, beliefs and practices to Animists. We have defended the Biblical claims within the worldview questions and will apply these findings in Chapter 8 when we suggest ways to practice and propagate this worldview of worship.

This ends our research on the various worldview influences that are part of the South African context. In Chapter 8, we will present our practical framework in order to answer the research question: *“How may we equip the South African Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship within a pluralistic culture?”*

Chapter 8

Equipping the Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a Biblical worldview of worship in South Africa

8.1. Introduction

Our study began with the purpose of creating a philosophical grid by which we would filter the Biblical worldview of worship (Chapters 2-3). We have succeeded in establishing that and witnessed how the Biblical worldview of worship passes every test which now included the theological aspects of the test, and together forms our theoretical framework. With these positive results, a Philosophical-Theological grid (theoretical framework) was created by which to filter the other competing worldviews in the South African context. These included: atheism/secularism (Chapter 4), Islam (Chapter 5), Hinduism/Buddhism (Chapter 6), and Animism (Chapter 7). We have defended the Biblical worldview of worship as we studied these various influences within South African context.

Stemming from our main research question, *how may we equip the South African Christian church to defend, practice and propagate a biblical worldview of worship within a pluralistic culture?* this chapter aims to conclude the study by condensing the content into a curriculum for the South African church. The curriculum includes three modules which will supply content for the aspects of our theoretical and practical framework:

- i. **Defending** the Biblical worldview of worship (apologetic). Much of the apologetic work covered in chaps 3-7 will be deemed necessary for the content of this section. The educator is to utilize these chapters to construct the theoretical content for its teaching, evaluation and student assessments.
- ii. The second and third modules, viz. **practicing** the Biblical worldview of worship (pastoral) and **propagating** the Biblical worldview of worship (missional) form the

application part of the curriculum. Here, the educator is to utilize the content outlined below, to construct the practical content for its teaching application and student practical assessments.

The curriculum for the defence, practice and propagation of the Biblical worldview of worship in the South African context will include: objectives, outcomes, structure/outline, and assessments parameters.

8.1.1. Objectives

After completing the course, we seek:

- To provide students with a greater understanding of the nature of truth.
- To equip students with knowledge on how to test truth claims using a Philosophical-Theological grid.
- To equip students with knowledge regarding the Biblical worldview of worship.
- To equip students with knowledge of the four (representative) competing worldviews (Western, Middle-Eastern, Eastern and Southern).
- To equip students with knowledge on how to defend, practice and propagate the Biblical worldview of worship in a pluralistic South African context.

8.1.2. Outcomes

On completion of the course, the student will be expected to:

- Understanding of the nature of truth.
- Possess knowledge on how to test truth claims using a Philosophical-Theological grid.
- Possess knowledge on the Biblical worldview of worship.
- Possess knowledge of the four (representative) competing worldviews (Western, Middle-Eastern, Eastern and Southern).
- Provide sufficient and meaningful interaction on how to defend, practice and propagate the Biblical worldview of worship in the South African pluralistic context.

8.1.3. Structure/outline

Though, we provide a time-frame, we recommend that comprehension development must determine the pace of each group.

- Week 1: Introducing the Course
- Week 2: **MODULE 1 - Defending the Biblical Worldview of Worship (Apologetic)**
 The Tests for Reason, using a Philosophical-Theological Approach
 The laws of logic
 Theory of knowledge
 Metaphysics and ontology
 The value theory
- Week 3: The Tests for Truth, using a Philosophical-Theological Approach
 Correspondence Test for Worship
 Coherence Test for Worship
- Week 4: Logical Consistency Test for Worship
 Empirical Adequacy Test for Worship
 Experiential Relevance Test for Worship
- Week 5: Unaffirmability Test for Worship
 Undeniability Test for Worship
- Week 6: Introduction to the Worldview Questions
 Origin
 Meaning
 Morality
 Destiny
- Week 7: Competing Worldviews Compared
 South African (SA) Pluralistic Context: Secularism (Western)
 SA Pluralistic Context: Islam (Middle-Eastern)
- Week 8: SA Pluralistic Context: Hinduism/Buddhism (Eastern)
 SA Pluralistic Context: Animism (Southern)
- Week 9: **MODULE 2 – Practicing a Biblical Worldview of Worship (Pastoral)**
 The Soteriological Doctrines Applied to Worship
 Sanctification, Truth and Worship
- Week 10: Spiritual Formation (Fruit of the Spirit), Truth and Worship
 Service (Spiritual Gifts), Truth and Worship
- Week 11: Glorification, Truth and Worship
- Week 12: **MODULE 3 - Propagating a Biblical Worldview of Worship (Missional)**
 The Church's Task
 Acts 1:8 Model Applied
- Week 13: The Message of Exclusive Worship for the South African Setting
 (Apologetics Applied)

8.1.4. Teaching

The educator will need to utilize the above weekly lesson plan and communicate effectively the content (chaps 3-8) to the learners. The theoretical teaching will essentially be the dissemination of knowledge gleaned from chapters 3-7. The practical teaching will involve practical demonstration, both as a teaching tool and as an assessment tool.

8.1.5. Content Evaluation

The content evaluation is aimed at the effectiveness of the content aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the content. This process is important for evaluating the completeness, effectiveness and assimilation of the content.

8.1.6. Student Assessments

Assessments will be done using group discussions, class presentations, tests, and practical work after each section that is completed. A big component of the assessment will include students applying the Philosophical-Theological Grid within Modules 2-3 in the practicing of the Biblical worldview of worship and propagating the Biblical worldview of worship sections. This will not be done here; but is left to the assessor who will be presenting this curriculum.

8.2. MODULE 1: Defending the Biblical worldview of worship (Apologetic)

Within the previous chapters (3-7), much research has been done as a defence for the Biblical worldview of worship. Our aim is not to repeat the content here; but to present a summary of the apologetic used in presenting a foundation for the Philosophical-Theological grid (see *online sermon*, Zacharias 2016). This exercise is foundational for examining truth claims.

Within this section, the task is to didactically apply the Philosophical-Theological Grid. This first module in Apologetics Studies seeks to, firstly, introduce the church to formulate a philosophical grid pertaining to matters of truth and reason. The discipline of philosophy presents tests for measuring theological truth claims and examine its reasonableness within the Biblical worldview of worship. The application of these tests is made within the

worldview questions, which every religious and non-religious worldview is to account for - thus forming a Philosophical-Theological grid. The grid may be thus explained:

8.2.1. Truth-testing for reason

The step suggests that while the testing of truth claims in propositions is important (see below 8.2.2.), a testing of the reasonableness of those propositions are to run parallel with the testing of truth-claims. This needs to be implemented through the following (as truth-testing of truth claims is carried out):

8.2.1.1. The laws of logic (law of non-contradiction, law of the excluded middle, and the principle of identity).

8.2.1.2. Theory of knowledge (epistemology – which deals with the nature, criteria, and sources of knowledge).

8.2.1.3. Metaphysics and ontology (the study of the nature of reality, and the appearances [or general features] of reality), and,

8.2.1.4. The value theory (which involves ethics and aesthetics).

8.2.2. Truth-testing of truth-claims

Together with the test for reason, *three* tests examine how to get to truth within statements or assertions:

8.2.2.1. The Correspondence Test

8.2.2.2. The Coherence Test

8.2.2.3. The Unaffirmability and Undeniability Tests

When an assertion is made as a truth statement, there is an assumption that the assertion, when stated as a fact, corresponds with reality. When many assertions are

combined, they must cohere as a test for truth. In other words, individual statements must meet the correspondence test; but the entire argument must meet the coherence test. Another test may be added to the three: i.e. the Unaffirmability and Undeniability tests. The Unaffirmability test is for the falsity of a worldview; whilst the Undeniability test is the test for truth. These are used to test for truth and falsity for at certain points, a worldview may meet the standards of logical consistency, for instance; but, may still be false.

8.2.3. Truth-testing of Worldviews

There are the *three* tests that are applied to truth propositions:

8.2.3.1. Logical Consistency.

8.2.3.2. Empirical Adequacy.

8.2.3.3. Experiential Relevance.

As we attempt to study a worldview, we look for logical consistency in the claims being made. Next, we look for empirical data by which to verify the truth claims. Next, we seek to establish if the claims have any bearing experientially.

8.2.4. Truth-testing in the worldview questions

Next, comes the *four* questions to life that every worldview must answer within which the previous tests are to be applied:

8.2.4.1. Origin – Where do we come from?

8.2.4.2. Meaning – Why are we here?

8.2.4.3. Morality – How do we live?

8.2.4.4. Destiny – Where are we going?

8.2.5. Disciplines involved

Finally, these will, thereafter, involve a wide variety of subjects and its meaning, viz.,

- 8.2.5.1. God (Theology).
- 8.2.5.2. Reality (Metaphysics).
- 8.2.5.3. Knowledge (Epistemology).
- 8.2.5.4. Morality (Ethics).
- 8.2.5.5. Humanity (Anthropology).
- 8.2.5.6. Salvation (Soteriology).
- 8.2.5.7. The Afterlife (Eschatology).

The above grid is to be applied to each of the pluralistic influences that populate the South African context: viz. Atheism/Secularism, Hinduism/Buddhism, Islam, and Animism.

The above Philosophical-Theological Grid must be used, through which Modules 2-3 is to be filtered for tests for truth and reason. However, this exercise is to be done by students as part of their assessments, and not our objective in this section. We will merely outline, briefly, certain aspects of practicing and propagating the Biblical worldview of worship.

8.3. MODULE 2: Practicing the Biblical worldview of worship (Pastoral)

A practical framework for pastoral practice which includes, equipping the South African church with a Biblical worldview of worship for practice, is the goal of this section. This is to be didactically applied in the church within the South African context.

The pastoral task is to equip those in the Biblical worldview of worship to practice truth in worship. Within this section, we will examine how these themes coalesce within pastoral ministry. However, before an individual is trained in the practices of the Biblical worldview

of worship, he needs to respond to the Gospel message. The Person and work of Christ is sufficient for the salvation of anyone who believes. Therefore, the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) will first be looked at.

8.3.1. Salvation, truth and worship

The Biblical worldview of worship has a well-constructed systematic theology when compared to other worldviews of worship. Even within its soteriology, the doctrinal truths are well-attested in Scripture. It is amazing to observe how God has covered all aspects of salvation as we view each part of this important doctrine. We will focus on the Gospel from a “reconciliation” perspective, which is related by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. This contributes to the teaching aspects of pastoral ministry.

The text reads:

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the **message of reconciliation**. ²⁰ We are therefore **Christ’s ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

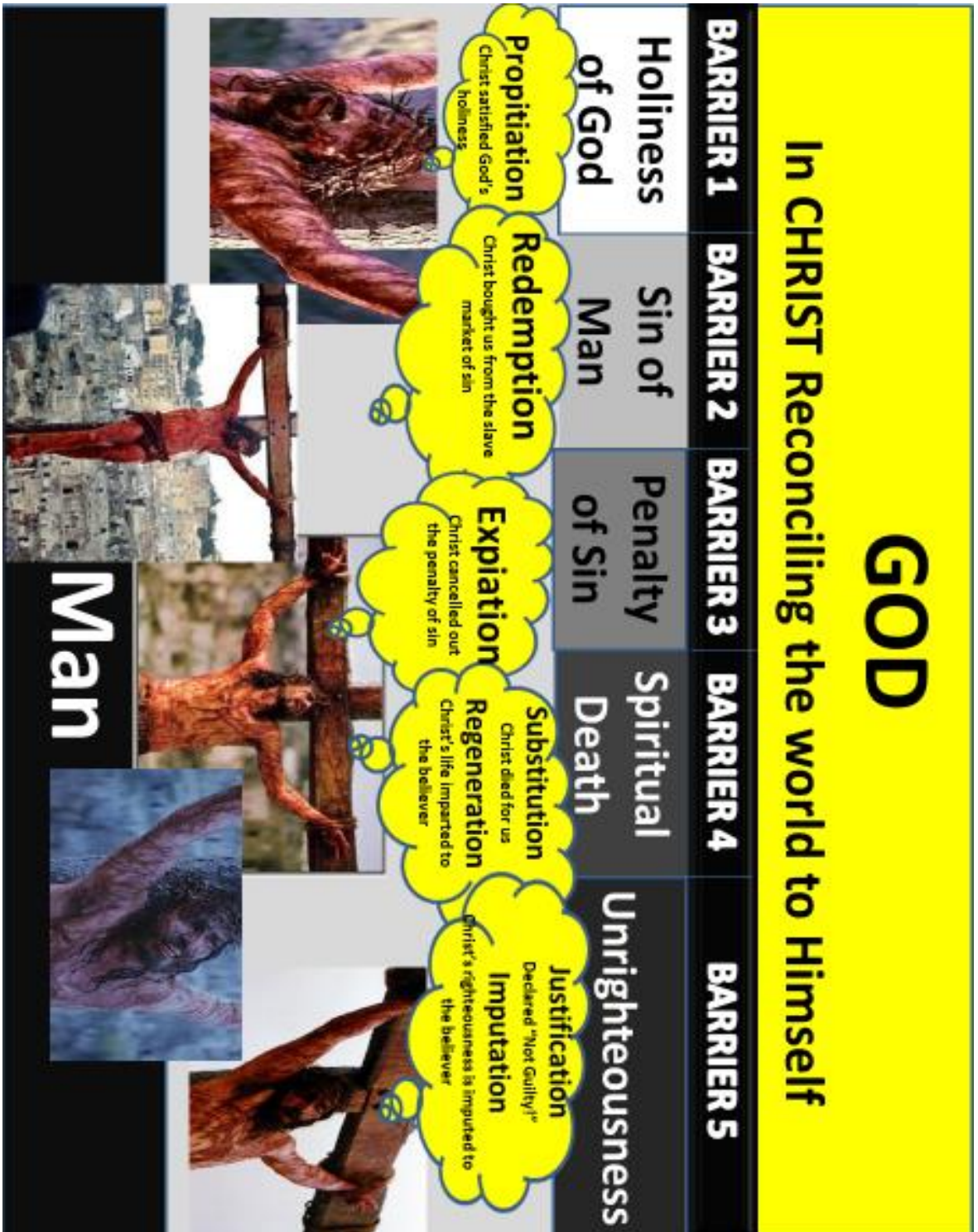
From within this passage, we can extract three truths,

1. The church has been given the *ministry of reconciliation*.
2. The church has been given the *message of reconciliation*.

3. The church is considered the *messenger of reconciliation*.

The following teaching was extracted from Keathley (2004:online), entitled, *Soteriology - The Doctrine of Salvation* and summarized in the following one-page diagram summary which may be used as an evangelistic tool for the church:

Figure 3



A brief overview and explanation of the diagram will suffice to give an understanding of the reconciliatory work that God accomplished “in Christ.”

According to Biblical revelation, the account of *The Fall* introduced sin into the world. Sin comes into a person's life in three ways (cf. Jn 9:1-12):

- i. *Imputed*. The sinful nature and sin is imputed from Adam. Due to the fact that Adam sinned; all have sinned and have missed the mark of God's glory (Rom 3:23; 5:12-18).
- ii. *Inherited*. The sinful nature and sin is inherited from our parents (Eph 2:1-3; Psa 51:5; 58:3).
- iii. *Individual*. The sinful nature inherent in us gives rise to sinful acts. We choose to sin. It is an individual choice (Rom 3:18, 23).

Sin must be understood within the context of a holy God (cf. Ex 3; Isa 6; Rev 4-5). God's justice demands that sin be punished. God's love for humanity requires that He does something to eradicate sin and death. God's mission required that He come down to our level to become human. We find in Jesus Christ a representation of twin-natures: fully God and fully man. God's plan required that Christ confront sin and death on a Roman cross. Zacharias, quoting James Steward, shows how Christ confronts sin in Paul's use of Psalm 68:18 "He led captivity captive":

It is a glorious phrase – "He led captivity captive." The very triumphs of His foes, it means, He used for their defeat. He compelled their dark achievements to subserve His ends, not theirs. They nailed Him to a tree, not knowing that by that very act they were bringing the world to His feet. They gave Him a cross, not guessing that He would make it a throne. They flung Him outside the gates to die, not knowing that in that very moment they were lifting up the gates of the universe, to let the King come in. They thought to root out His doctrines, not understanding that they were implanting imperishably in the hearts of men the very name they intended to destroy. They thought they had God with His back to the wall, pinned and helpless and defeated: they did not know that it was God Himself who had tracked them down. He did not conquer *in spite of* the dark mystery of evil. He conquered through it (Zacharias 1994:174).

This begs the question, “What exactly did Jesus accomplish at the cross?” Referring to *Figure 3*, it can be explained as follows:

The five barriers separated man from God. God, in the Biblical worldview of worship, is the sovereign Creator and the transcendent One. In all of His attributes, God is infinite. Due to man’s fallen nature, he has become separated from God with certain barriers that prevent him from having a relationship with God. These barriers include, the holiness of God, the sin of man, the penalty of sin, spiritual death, and unrighteousness. In His Person and work at the cross, God, in Christ, removed these barriers to reconcile man to Himself. We need to examine each of these barriers and demonstrate how they were broken down. Let us begin with the holiness of God.

The doctrine of *propitiation*, which means that Christ satisfied God’s holiness on man’s behalf, caters for the appeasement of God’s holiness (Isa 57:15; Hab 1:13; 1 Jn 2:1-2; Heb 2:17; 1 Pet 1:18). Secondly, the doctrine of *redemption* teaches that Christ’s shed blood was the payment needed to buy humanity back from the slave market of sin (Rom 3:23; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Gal 3:13). So, the sin of man is removed through Christ. Thirdly, the doctrine of *expiation* teaches that the penalty of sin has been cancelled out through Christ (Rom 3:19-20; Gal 3:19-22; Col 2:14). Fourthly, the doctrines of *substitution* and *regeneration* show how Christ died in man’s place and through His resurrection imparts life into the believer – thus removing the barrier of spiritual death (Rom 6:23; Jn 3:3-7; cf. Gen 2:17; 1 Cor 15:21, 56; Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13; Isa 53:4-11; Matt 19:28; Jn 3:3-6; Tit 3:5). Finally, the doctrines of *justification* and *imputation* teach that the unrighteousness of man was made righteousness before the holy God, through them being justified by

faith in the finished work of Christ and being imputed with Christ's righteousness (Isa 64:6; Psa 14:1-3; Rom 4:1-4; Heb 6:1; 9:14; Rom 3:21; Rom 4:3-8; 2 Cor 5:21).

With all the barriers removed, there is nothing that stands in the way of man from reaching out to God. All man must do to be reconciled with God, is to, in faith, respond to this gracious work of God in Christ.

The Biblical worldview of worship establishes the most comprehensive view on the issue of what is wrong with the world and with humanity. The Biblical worldview describes the condition of the human heart; it provides a solution for our crisis and demonstrates how the grave is conquered in order to offer eternal life. This is how it is made possible for humanity to share in the life of Christ.

Eternal life is a gift that extends from God to humanity (Rom 6:23). It is made possible through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ – who claimed to be the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). The word “eternal” will signify both a quality and quantity or duration of life. Whilst the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus' teachings on eternal life in the age to come; John presents its eschatological character and its present experience (Ladd 1993:292-293). John, the Apostle, records his purpose for writing the Gospel of John as, so that the readers may know the way to eternal life through faith in Jesus the Messiah (Jn 20:31).

Salvation, for Christians, finds its ultimate point of reference in Christ's victory over sin and death. Its processes continue in the present and culminates in the eschatological hope. Within this current existence, it is made possible by God, who is Lord over eternity

and time. For, God's eternal salvific work is made possible through the cross event and that provides the believer with assurance and a guarantee of salvation – even in our present existence (Manikam 2011: 371). The person and the work of Christ offers, for the believer in the present existence, assurance of coherence and consolation as He reveals to us, in the most verifiable terms of truth and experience, the nature of man, the nature of reality, the nature of history, the nature of our destiny, and the nature of suffering (Zacharias 1994:179). The believers' lives are already defined by God as He unfolds His cosmic, salvific plan in and through the believer, and He establishes a hope that is centred in the Person and Work of Christ.

Humanity comes into this world spiritually dead due to sin. However, by regeneration through the Holy Spirit's presence and work in the believer, he is made alive - i.e. spiritually resurrected. This will mean that spiritual life is given so that man can have fellowship with God and can function for God in newness of life (Rom. 6:5, 13; Eph. 2:5-10; John 5:21-23). The emphasis here is on a new kind and quality of life. According to John 10:10, the purpose of Jesus' mission was to bring people a present experience of the future and abundant life. We find this also in the Book of Revelation where its eschatology is in some real sense both present and future. The Synoptic Gospels present the basic structure of Jesus' teachings of the expectation of the eschatological act of God to bring history to its end and establish the Kingdom of God in the Age to Come (Ladd 1993:252). The dualism is a temporal-eschatological dualism of the two ages, with its constant contrast between the present and the future. Typical of Johannine dualism, as recorded in the Gospel of John, Revelation presents a dualism that, not so much explains the tension between the present and future; but, it highlights a vertical tension between

the world above and below, heaven and earth, the sphere of God and the world (Manikam 2011:17).

In Christ's Kingdom, hope for the believer goes beyond this current existence and the grave (cf. Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:24-27; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; 23:43; Jn. 14:2-3; cf. Rev. 7:9-17; 14:1-5; 19:6-9; 21-22). The attaining of eternal life is found in the Father drawing sinners to Himself (Jn. 6:44; cf. Rev. 5:9-10), and the 'belief in' (Jn. 6:47) and the 'acceptance of' Jesus as the bread of life (Jn. 6:48-51). In other words, salvation includes God's choice of the believer and the believer's choice of God. This salvation involves: eternal life (Jn. 3:16; cf. Rev. 5:9-10), a deliverance from mortality (Luke 20:36; cf. Rev. 20:6b; 21:6b), and a perfected fellowship with God (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-12; Luke 14:16-24; cf. Rev. 21:3) which are likened to a wedding feast and a banquet. Jesus' mission was to invite sinners to the Great Banquet of the Kingdom (cf. Rev. 19:9).

The New Testament looks forward to a future era which will be liberated from the bondage of death and decay. In 1 Cor. 15:24, Paul writes, "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power". All this is finally realized in the picture of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation when God's dwelling will finally result with humanity (Rev 21-22). Man will respond to God in worship that will be uninhibited and unbroken.

After salvation, man has a responsibility to live a holy life (1 Pet 1:15-17).

8.3.2. Sanctification, truth and worship

Redeemed man has a calling to live a consecrated life which is dedicated for worship. The word “sanctify” – is used of objects or people that are “set apart” from common secular use; and devoted to God (White 2001b:1051). People who are set apart for God will desire to please Him. To please God will mean, firstly, to embrace His truth. Jesus said to Pilate that people on the side of truth, will listen to Him (i.e. Christ) (Jn 18:37). Christ is the embodiment of God’s truth (Jn 14:6), who testifies to the truth (Jn 18:37), and always speaks the truth (Jn 8:45). Likewise, His followers are called to embody the truth through the Presence of the Holy Spirit – who is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 16:13). Sin, lies, illusions and deceptions ensnare and restrict us, finally holding us captive. Jesus said, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (Jn 8:36).

The people of God who are set apart for God are to be equipped with truth, not just intellectually; but to also practically live out truth in word, thought and deed. This will form them spiritually. Here we seek to develop a real sense of belonging to God, and to respond positively to that truth in every context.

8.3.3. Spiritual formation, truth and worship

Spiritual formation needs to be a reality for every Christian within the Biblical worldview of worship. It centres around the truth of God: i.e. the Scriptures which is God’s truth, the Person of Jesus who is the embodiment of truth, and the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth. At conversion, all believers are considered a new creation because they have been given the Spirit of God (2 Cor 5:17). Also, all persons are in the process of developing or being formed spiritually. Healthy spiritual formation is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life as He forms him into the image of Christ (Rom 8:28-29). With Christ, who

is the last Adam (or true humanity) (1 Cor 15:45), as the model; the task of the Holy Spirit is to bear fruit in the lives of believers (Gal 5:22-23). The believer's task is to stay connected to Christ for the purpose of bearing lasting fruit (Jn 15:1-5).

When the believer is conformed into the image of Christ, he once again regains the image of God (Gen 1:27) - for Christ is the very image of God (Col 1:15). This presents for the believer an ethical standard for moral choices and hence gives meaning for momentary choices in light of the macro-meaning of being conformed into the image of Christ.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul writes, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Paul links a transformed life as true and proper worship. Worship that is centred in truth comes from a transformed life that embraces God's truth. The offering of the body as a living sacrifice begins with a renewed mind. This is where truth is geared at.

The spiritual formation of an individual leads to serving God and His people. We proceed to discuss the dispensing and use of spiritual gifts.

8.3.4. Service, truth and worship

Pastoral ministry will also include the developing of believers in serving God and His people. The training is to be centred in the Scriptures – which is God's truth. The training

of members to *discover* and *deploy* their spiritual gifts with passion, both, within and outside the church, is one of the major responsibilities in pastoral ministry.

Various texts outline the various spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit dispenses to believers (cf. Rom 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesian 4:11 and 1 Pet 4:11). There are a few points that we can highlight from the text regarding service with spiritual gifts.

Firstly, it is the Holy Spirit's role to dispense spiritual gifts *in* believers (1 Cor 12:4-11). Natural talents, therefore, are not spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are graciously given by the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:6). The Holy Spirit dispenses these gifts to whomever He chooses (1 Cor 12:11) for He knows exactly what works are required from each believer (Eph 2:10). Pastoral ministry helps believers to discover their spiritual gifts. It also allows people to develop and faithfully serve our Lord and His church in their gifting.

Paul, in Rom 12:1-2, views the giving of the spiritual gifts within a backdrop of worship. This worship is a response to all that God has done in history through Israel which culminated in the Person and work of Christ (Rom 1-11). "All Israel" – both Jews and Gentiles now make up the church (Rom 11; cf. Eph 3:6). They are now "brothers" (Rom 12:1) and are required to present their bodies as living sacrifices – for this is their spiritual act of worship (Rom 12:1). This is the individual worship that God seeks. However, within this description of the presentation of worship to God, spiritual gifts are to be exercised to enable the whole Body to do the works of Christ in unity (Rom 12:3-8) and love (Rom 12:9-21).

Secondly, the believer exercising his/her gift through the power of the Holy Spirit, is a reminder of what God does *through* the believer to fulfil His plan in this world. God invites the church to participate in His plan for the world. Therefore, the Christian life is not to be lived in isolation. The believer is placed, theologically, “in Christ” (e.g. Rom 12:5; cf. 2 Cor 5:17). All those placed in Christ also find their belonging in the church – which is His Body (Rom 12:5). Their role in the Body is relational (Rom 12:9-21; 1 Cor 13:1ff.; Eph 4:1-3) and functional (1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 4:11-12). As the believer serves the purposes of God by the exercising of his/her spiritual gift in the Body of Christ, God works through His Body to accomplish His agenda both through the local church and the catholic church.

The 1 Cor 12 passage on spiritual gifts is set within the context of public worship within the Corinthian church. Whilst the Rom 12 passage provides evidence of individuals presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice in worship; the 1 Cor 12 passage speaks into the functioning of the entire Body of Christ in communal worship. However, the different “parts” of the Body must play their part in the whole (1 Cor 12:12-31) in love (1 Cor 13).

In Rev. 19:7-8, Christ, the Bridegroom will one day return for His Bride – the church. In Rev 7, the people of God have robes that were washed in the Blood of the Lamb. In Rev 19, the Bride has been given fine linen, bright and clean to wear. The fine linen “stands for the righteous acts of the saints” (19:8b). These good works that were used in service (cf. Eph 2:10) is a preparation for the Bride’s eternal fellowship with Christ in her glorified state – the final state of believers. We proceed to discuss this reach within the doctrine of “Glorification.”

8.3.5. Glorification, truth and worship

God's truth is eternal. Even though it may be questioned on earth; it remains eternal. This will mean that God's truth does not end when our current existence ends. God is eternal and therefore His truth is eternal.

Whilst the nature of death has been described as the cessation of physical life which came as a result of Eve and Adam's deception; spiritual death is regarded as a cutting off from God, who is the Source. Therefore, there is a cutting off from truth and worship for the unbeliever. The Biblical perspective is that God is sovereignly in control over life and death (Ps 36:9; 139:16; Job 14:5). Those living within the Biblical worldview of worship also die physically, but, their death is considered a "gain" (2 Col 5:6; Phil 1:20-21). The dead are still considered to be in Christ, for death cannot separate believers from God's love (Rom 8:38-39).

Paul, in 1 Thessalonians, highlights the believer's hope at the Parousia. Upon Christ's return, the dead in Christ will rise first (4:16). Thereafter, those believers still on the earth will be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (1 Cor 15:51-52) and will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17). The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, sets this glorious hope of eternity to those within the Biblical worldview of worship (Col 1:27). This results in the glorification of believers, with Jesus as our Shepherd (Rev 7:17). Therefore, truth never leaves us. This culminates in true worship for all eternity (Rev 21:1).

To conclude this section, we have endeavoured to present a practical framework for pastoral practice within the calling of equipping for practice. We have looked at

sanctification, truth and worship; spiritual formation, truth and worship, and glorification truth and Worship which focusses on pastoral ministry within the big picture. Our next task is to present a curriculum for the propagation and equipping in the South African church context.

8.4. MODULE 3: Propagating the Biblical worldview of worship (Missional)

Module 3 suggests a practical framework for missional practice of the Biblical worldview of worship which is to be didactically applied by the church within the South African context. The God revealed in the Biblical worldview of worship is zealous for the salvation of the lost (2 Pt 3:9). In Jn 3:16, Jesus states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” In the church’s missional endeavour, it is called to defend and propagate this unique and exclusive message in a secular pluralistic setting. We begin by examining the church’s task of propagating the Biblical worldview of worship.

8.4.1. The church’s task of propagating the Biblical worldview of worship

Before the church’s task of propagation is outlined, a brief outline of message of the Gospel is imperative. The following points are to be shared when confronted with unbelievers:

- All people are sinners. Romans 3:23 reads, “... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....”
- All people deserve death, for sin has consequences. Romans 6:23a reads, “For the wages of sin is death....” There is death in the world because of sin. The way to overcome death is to first deal with sin. The atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross demonstrates how sin was dealt with. Christ’s resurrection from the dead

demonstrates how both spiritual death and physical death has been dealt with. Through faith in Christ we are now made alive spiritually, and we shall be resurrected to life from physical death.

- God offers a gift. Romans 6:23b "... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The gift that God offers us is found in the Person and work of Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16). The receiving of this gift takes care of our sin and death problem. For, to be in Christ is to be born again (Jn 3:7) and to be made a new creation (2 Cor 3:17).
- How to receive this gift? Romans 10:9-10 reads, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."
- The blessings in receiving the gift, and the consequences of not accepting the gift are spelled out in 1 John 5:11-12, "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."
- Eternal consequences and rewards. Revelation 20:15; 21:3-4 reads, "Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire ... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Saved people, who have by faith accepted the Gospel message, are called to not keep it to themselves. Matthew 28:16-20 records the parting words of Jesus just prior to His ascension, commonly known as *The Great Commission*:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The evangelization of the world is, firstly, a command from Christ. It is in view of the salvation that He has made possible that He stands as the Person who has authority over sin, death and life. The church's mandate is from a Person of authority – Christ (*all authority* – the Ruler). It is in *that* derived authority that the church needs to "go." Secondly, the mandate is to "make disciples of all nations" Making disciples will mean Christ's commitment (Matt 18:20b), and the church's commitment (Matt 18:19) to walk a journey with people from salvation to glorification (*all time* – for eternity). Thirdly, discipleship will include teaching them to obey all of Christ's commands (*all truth* – describing origin, meaning, morality, and destiny). Fourthly, the scope of making disciples extends to everyone (*all worldviews* – atheism/secularism [North and West], Islam [Middle-East], Hinduism/Buddhism [East], and Animism [South]). Finally, believers are called to be immersed in the Tri-une God as a testimony of their allegiance to the Biblical worldview of worship (*all of God* – the Source). This apologetic approach, as applied to the Great Commission, is to be utilized in the church's task of propagating the Biblical worldview of worship.

The apologetic approach, firstly, will need to be applied in understanding the theories, beliefs and practices of the competing worldviews of worship. These, however need to

find points of reference, in order for truth statements to be assessed. We have compared the Biblical worldview of worship to the following: Atheistic/Secularistic, Islamic, Hindu/Buddhist and Animistic worldviews. We have found that Scientism, the Qur'an and Hadith, Eastern Philosophical/Religious Thoughts & Practices; and Oral Traditions form the foundations for these respective worldview theories respectively. These have been assessed as competing false claims to the truth of the Christian Scriptures, and they contradict the revelation found in the Scriptures at various levels. This is most importantly evidenced in the information that surface when they are tested by the worldview questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny.

Whilst a tolerant South African culture, and our Baptist Principle of the Freedom of Conscience and Belief, might require the church to allow all religions their existence and freedom, we cannot consider them as equally valid and equally true; as the Biblical worldview of worship alone surrenders to God and His revelation. The Christian Scriptures, we have seen, can be trusted because it can be proved valid using diverse disciplines: e.g. historical, textual, archaeological, philosophical, social, spiritual, etc. Referring occasionally to these external tests within the respective disciplines, and combining it with the internal textual evidence, we have discovered in Chapter 3 that the Biblical worldview of worship alone satisfies the tests for truth: logically consistent, empirically adequate and experientially relevant.

Secondly, the Biblical worldview of worship, with regards to the worldview questions, form an excellent framework for engaging people with differing worldviews. For, within these questions, we have found there to be many departure points as we interact with their worldviews (e.g. God, man, salvation, evil, purpose, heaven, hell, etc.). However, the four

basic worldview questions form a great tool for engaging with people systematically who belong to these worldviews.

The church has the task of propagating the Biblical worldview of worship in our South African setting and beyond. How can this be accomplished? What model can it adopt? We need not go outside the Bible to find one. We, therefore, now approach the Bible to focus on Luke's recording of Jesus' words to His disciples just prior to his ascension.

8.4.2. The Acts 1:8 model applied

In what is traditionally known as the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This commission is to be embraced by the South African church if we are to fulfil our calling and stay true to why we exist. This will require an every-Christian-participation. Gibbs (2013:239) writes, "... Paul the apostle is concerned for the spreading of the knowledge of Christ everywhere (see ... 2 Cor 2:14-17). The continuing advance of the gospel should be the concern of every Christ-follower, because the good news of Christ is too important and life changing to keep to ourselves."

The goal of the commission is to ultimately lead people into the worship of the living God. John Piper (1993:1) argues that missions is not the ultimate goal of the church, but worship is. The goal of missions, he says, is to bring people into worship. Evangelism and Missions are a temporary necessity; but worship endures for all eternity. When God ushers in the new heaven and new earth, missions will cease; but worship will abide

forever (Piper 1993:1). For many people in generations past (and maybe still today), the most important part of being a Christian was to witness to others about the Christian faith. We do understand that mission work is an important aspect of the church - just as are teaching, fellowship, etc. But, missions is fuelled by worship as we experience God's love and respond to Him. Jesus pointed out in Matthew 28 that the discipling of people is key to obeying the Great Commission. The process of discipling normally takes a lifetime of teaching to impact the mind and heart, because the practice of worship needs to last a lifetime. Even though discipling will cease upon physical death; worship will continue forever – but in a perfected state. The method to carry out the Great Commission is also given by Jesus to His disciples, just prior to His ascension.

This method is recorded in Acts 1:8. Jesus tells his disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The scope of the Gospel's reach is, firstly, mandated. The Gospel is to be spread locally and is expected to reach out globally. The Book of Acts demonstrates, secondly, this model as the Gospel's influence began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). As the Gospel continued to spread into Judea (Jews), persecution broke out causing the gospel to spread into Samaria (half-Jews). As time progressed, the Gospel is taken into the Gentile world (non-Jews). The Book of Acts is structured in a way explaining this progression - thus giving a Biblical mandate in Jesus' words (Acts 1:8) and also giving credence for the method (as the Holy Spirit applied the command of Jesus, thus, creating early church history). And so, the world became exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. History is the spatial context in which God's story of salvation is told. However, we must move beyond the history to God's eschatological purpose.

Eschatology may be divided into two concepts: i.e. realized eschatology and futurist eschatology. We turn our attention, firstly, to the former which is evidenced in three ways. With regards to *salvation*, the Scriptures teach that the new age of salvation is already present. For example, the doctrine of justification is a forensic term that deems the believer declared righteous and at peace with the righteous Judge (Rom 5:1). The Scriptures teach that the believer is already justified (cf. Rom 3:23-24; 4:16; 5:15-17) even though the judgement is to be a future event. Another example of realized eschatology is evidenced in the doctrine of *resurrection*. For, as much as believers await a future resurrection, it is already a part the believer's life whilst we are in the world; we have been raised up together with Christ (Col.3:1). The Jewish expectation of a future resurrection is encapsulated in the words of Martha at the death of her brother, Lazarus (Jn 11). However, Jesus says to her that He is the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). Jesus was intimating that with His presence on earth, the new age of resurrection has already dawned making it a realized reality. Finally, a realized eschatology is demonstrated in the gift of the Holy Spirit – promised through the prophet Joel (2:28). He foretold a time that will come when the Spirit will be poured out on God's people in the last days. This event occurred just after Jesus' ascension into heaven as recorded in Acts 2. Peter, in addressing the sceptics in the crowd on that day, pointed to Joel's "last days" prophecy as that which was being fulfilled before their eyes (cf. Acts 2:14-41).

Secondly, the Scriptures teach of a future eschatological hope, describing the final stage of salvation with the presence of the saints with their Lord. We have a picture presented to us of what reaching the world will ultimately look like (i.e. Rev 7:9, "... a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language..."). With this picture in mind, which stem from its historical beginnings to its consummate fulfilment,

local churches cannot afford to be inward focused if those within the various highlighted worldviews are to be reached with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The church in South Africa is also mandated to engage in Christ's commission so that this reality is realized as we are called to play our part.

We will need to apply the words of Christ by, firstly, focusing on our immediate context – i.e. our Jerusalem. We need to know the population dynamics in our communities in order to effectively reach the various peoples that He is sending to us. Secondly, we need to be cognizant of our greater surroundings that are adjacent to us – which will form our Judea. Thirdly, our Samaria will include neighbouring rural communities, towns and cities. Finally, it will include making an impact on the world. This is a movement from the local environment to the global setting.

Now that we formulated the model that is to be applied to take the Gospel out to the world by the South African church, we need to show how the Gospel must not only be propagated; but also lived out as a testimony to unbelievers. This begins, firstly, with the believer's salvation.

8.4.3 Entering the life of Christ (for worship)

In Module 2, we have outlined the soteriological doctrines that need to be applied to worship. Without repeating what already has been covered, we have observed how every barrier and dividing wall that stood between man and God has been broken down for the believer in Christ to enter into the life of Christ. Christ does the work of regeneration through His indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer. All of this is for the purpose of standing

in God's presence to worship. Worship, then, is not an event for the believer; it is a life-style.

8.4.4. Living the life of Christ (in present and future worship)

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul writes, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." The requirement in the Biblical worldview of worship is for the believer to present his body to the Lord in worship. The previous section has taught us that salvation, from the perspective of reconciliation, is all God's gracious doing for the believer. Regeneration speaks of the believer's born-again experience. He was previously dead; but is now made alive through the Spirit of Christ. Yet, there is a battle raging in the believer as long as he is still in the body (Rom 6-8; Gal 5). The believer is called to live by the Spirit so that he does not gratify the desires of the flesh. He does this by offering himself as a living sacrifice to God so that transformation can take place as the mind is being renewed.

Worship must take place on the inside before it is expressed. Archbishop William Temple, quoted by Zacharias, offers an excellent all-encompassing definition of what worship is, and what it constitutes for the believer, in the following quote:

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of *conscience* by His holiness, nourishment of *mind* by His truth, purifying of *imagination* by His beauty, opening of the *heart* to His love, and submission of *will* to His purpose. All this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of all expressions of which we are capable (Zacharias 1994:151) (*italics added*).

Jesus said that true worship is worship that is done in “spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). The constraints of truth can only be justified in the presence and character of God. Anything else will result in a descent into depths of superstition, in the name of religion. Only worship that is *spiritual* and *true* coalesces conscience, mind, imagination, heart, and will in one direction, thus creating a unity and leading to a life that is lived in harmony with ultimate good (Zacharias 1994:151).

This will require that the believer stays connected to Jesus, as a branch will stay connected to the vine in order to bear fruit (John 15). It will also mean that the believer participates in the divine nature of God in order to escape the corruption of the world (2 Pt 1). The believer is also called to: “... walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want” (Gal 5:16-17). The verb “walk” is a present, active, imperative. This is not a suggestion; but an on-going command for the believer. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth who leads the believer into all truth (Jn 16:13). Romans 13:14 commands, “... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.”

In 2 Cor 3:18, Paul writes, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” As the Spirit changes us from the inside out, He forms us into the image of Christ. Not only are we called to propagate the message of Christ; we are also called to live out the message through the choices that we make. All this is in line with the worship that God seeks from His chosen people.

Current worship will culminate when Christ returns to usher in the age to come. At His coming, the dead “in Christ” will rise first (1 Thess 4:16). “After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess 4:17). This will usher in eternal worship where God will make His dwelling with His people (cf. Rev 7; 14; 19-22).

In view of the Biblical commands and the eschatological picture given, the South African church is required to digest this reality and be engaged in practices that agree with God’s revelation. We proceed in discussing how this is to be carried out in the South African setting.

8.4.5. Message of exclusive worship for the South African setting

Within a pluralistic context, we have witnessed that the Biblical worldview of worship surrenders to the philosophical-theological grid in matters of truth, origin, meaning, morality, and destiny. With regards to truth, the Bible is the Word of God and is sufficient for humanity as God’s revelation. Every other claim to truth falls short of the standard of the Bible. Not only is truth presented propositionally in the Scriptures; but it is also lived out through Jesus who is the *logos* (Jn 1:1) and who claimed to be the embodiment of truth (Jn 14:6). These exclusive claims to truth agree with reality as the philosophical tests have warranted that they do (Chapter 2).

The Biblical worldview’s presentation of answers regarding origin, meaning, morality and destiny is the most comprehensive among the other worldviews of worship as we have defended in the previous chapters. It meets the tests of logical consistency, empirical

adequacy, and experiential relevance. Coupled to these tests are the correspondence and coherence tests – in which the Biblical worldview emerges as truth.

Therefore, the Christian can confidently enter into discussions with people of opposing worldviews and share their faith in Jesus Christ. The Biblical worldview of worship understands salvation to be found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). True worship can only be encountered in Christ.

Within this section, we have constructed a practical framework for missional practice for a defence and propagation within the South African setting by: examining the church's role in propagating the Biblical worldview of worship within an Acts 1:8 model; applying the soteriological doctrines to worship and tasked the South African church with a message of exclusive worship. Our task next, is to present a practical framework for pastoral practice in relation to equipping and practice for the South African church.

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