

**WORLD RELIGIONS AS RESOURCE TO PEACE AND WELL-BEING:
JOHN HICK'S CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS AND ITS
RELEVANCE TO KWAZULU-NATAL (SOUTH AFRICA)**

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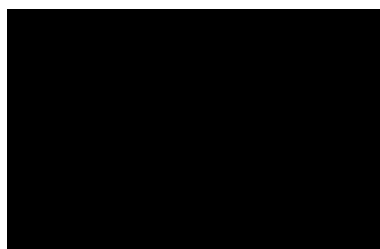
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DECLARATION

I, ALFRED CHIMA IGWEBUIKE, declare that this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated is my own work. Data and other information were generated by me unless specifically acknowledged and referenced in the dissertation as being sourced by other persons.

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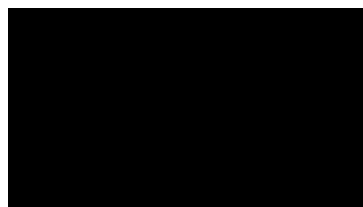
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As Supervisor, I approve this thesis for submission



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December, 2020

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mum, Ezinne Rita Nwoyibo Igwebuiké, and my late Dad, Pa. Charles Chukwukere Igwebuiké, who was the first to teach me the respect, the sacredness and the realities of what life is.

The work is also dedicated to lovers of Religion and Social Transformation of the Human Person and Society.

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ABSTRACT

South Africa, like other postcolonial nations, has undergone and continues to undergo series of religious, economic, social, and political transformations that continue to shape the country and the lives of its citizens. With the dawn of democracy in South Africa, the society not only faced socio-economic challenges related to racist segregationist policies of the Apartheid era, but also religio-culture challenges related to the recognition of religious rights and freedoms variously privileged and denied under Apartheid. Thus, with the advent of democracy, religious communities increasingly turned to the courts to adjudicate over interreligious tensions and conflicts, instead of fostering dialogue. To ascertain how ordinary South Africans, experience their day-to-day interreligious living and contact, the thesis focuses on one aspect of this social transformation and proposes to examine and hypothesise about world religions as a resource to peace and well-being.

Thus, this study tests John Hick's theology of world religions as a resource for well-being' against the lived experiences of South African faith communities. To achieve this, I engaged in extended fieldwork which included semi-structured individual interviews, and observation of the inter-religious contact and collaboration among the various South Africans – especially Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, African Indigenous, and Buddhist believers resident in KwaZulu-Natal. The study found out that, among South Africans, there are multifaceted understandings, dialogues, and forms of networking, as they face rapid social transformation in our pluralistic world.

The broad conclusions of the study were two-fold: Firstly, it provided some preliminary ideas about the need for a postcolonial theology of religions and what it would look like in the South African context by drawing in indigenous ideas about humanness (*ubuntu*) and well-being (*impilo*). Secondly, the analysis suggests that Southern or African ideas of well-being incorporates being in good relations with God, ancestors, neighbours and with nature. This not only reveals something about the limits of Hick's theology as Christian normative and Eurocentric but also how the postcolonial context opens new avenues for thinking about theology of religions.

Key Terms: *John Hick, World Religions, Interreligious Dialogue, Theology of Religions, Postcolonial.*

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

AAD – Annual African Day

AFFOR – All Faith for One Race

AICs - African Independent Churches

ATRs – African Traditional Religions

CDMM – Constitution and Directory of the Missionaries of Mariannhill

CMM – Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill

CRL – Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities

CRMSA – Consortium for Refugees and Migrations in South Africa

DCC – Diakonia Council of Churches

DEID – Department for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue

D.H – *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom on the Right of Person and Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious)

G.S – *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)

H.R – *Homo Religiosus* (Latin term for the Religious person or personality)

IFD – Inter-Faith Dialogue

ILO – International Labour Organisation

ISS – Institute for Security Studies

JPC – Justice and Peace Commission

KZN-IRC – KwaZulu-Natal Interreligious Council

MDM – Mass Democratic Movement

MHS – Midlands Hindu Society

MRM – Moral Regeneration Movement

N.A – *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions)

NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa's Development

NIC – Natal Indian Congress

NICSA – National Interfaith Council of South Africa

NILC – National Interfaith Leadership Council

NRLF – National Religious Leaders Forum

RARI, SA – Rock of Art Research Institute, South Africa

SACBC – Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference

SACC – South African Council of Churches

SAFEC – Southern African Faith for Environmental Change

SAFCEI – Southern Africa Faith Communities' Environment Institute

SAIC – South African Indian Council

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN DESA – United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNODCCP – United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

Vat II – Vatican II Council

WCC – World Council of Churches

WCRP – World Conference on Religions for Peace

WCRP SA – World Conference on Religion for Peace, South Africa

WC UNDW – World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women

WEF – World Economic Forum

WWRN – Worldwide Religious News

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The recent history of encounters among religions in different parts of the world has increasingly taken the form of conflict, war, ethnic tension, and suspicion. One of the causes is the claim of superiority of one group over the other or the conservative tendency of claiming to have the absolute truth (Hick and Knitter 1987: 16). The September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (the innocent victims of the attack are still fresh in our minds), the bombing of the American embassies in Africa in 1998, the west-gate shopping mall attack in Kenya on 21 September 2013, the three days (7-9 January 2015) terror attack on Charlie Hebdo's office in France, the continuing Muslim-Christians conflicts in Northern states of Nigeria, as well as the treatment of the Rohingya in Burma and the Uyghurs in China are all evidence of religious animosity, tension, and hatred.

Smock (2002), in his book *Interfaith Dialogue and Peace-building*, adds a multitude of national or regional controversies caused by a plurality of religions in the world, including, among others the fundamentalist opposing the secular military regime in Kosovo, Egypt, Darfur, Guinea, Ivory Coast; the unforgettable genocide among the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda; the conflict of Hindu's fundamentalist facing adherents of different religions in India, the oppression of religious minorities in many places. All these narrate the complexity of socio-political and religious tension that has crippled our world; and South Africa, comprising of diverse religious groups and believers are not immune to similar inter-religious tensions and animosities (Esack, 1988; Meiring, 2004).

South Africa comprises of diverse ethnic and religious communities (Manzo, 1996: 71) which include: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and African Traditional Religions. Under the Apartheid Christian nationalist government, many of the non-Christian religions suffered from the brutality, dehumanization, and displacement legislation of the apartheid regime (Maharaj, 1997; Christopher, 2001). The most significant legislation in this regard was the Group Area Act of 1950 (Maharaj, 1997), where settled multi-faith and multi-cultural communities were uprooted and relocated, having to abandon schools, churches, and temples, and were settled into racially, and religiously segregated communities (Meiring, 2004: 4). In all major cities, religious communities were forced to abandon their sacred sites; these include cities like Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port

Elizabeth, and Durban (Meiring, 2004: 4). This displacement of communities and abandonment of their sacred sites have evoked lots of tension among religions in South Africa (Christopher, 2001: 449ff). Pointing to the seriousness of the tension, Trikamjee (1997: 302) and Joshi (1997: 351) report that, “religious sites set apart by city planners in the new Indian areas were generally purchased by Christian churches that had access to the necessary funds.” Farid Esack, a leading Muslim leader and scholar, elaborated more on this religious tension when he explained to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that,

It was not only apartheid and security legislation that hurt the people. Christian ‘triumphalism’¹ was as big an issue (1999:1; 1997: 25ff). “Being a ‘non-Christian’ in a ‘Christian state’, Esack says, “created all sorts of misunderstanding and problems” (1999: 34; also 1988: 473).

What has become increasingly evident in the post-Apartheid South Africa is the fact that despite the constitutional provisions for the promotion of religious diversity and the protection from religious discrimination in South Africa, antagonism, misunderstanding, there continues to be significant ambivalence between religious communities (Chidester, 1992: 20). Further, while religious communities are actively engaged in social transformation and development in South Africa, researchers in the field suggest that there continue to be a high degree of religious illiteracy and suspicion (Chidester, et al. 1994: 25ff; Settler, 2014). These tensions and anxieties about non-Christian religious traditions continue to be played out in public debates, with such examples as the slaughtering of animals in African indigenous ritual for ancestral invocation as was the case of Clifton beach in 2018 or for restitution when, popular politician, Tony Yengeni, returned home after serving a prison sentence in 2008.² More recently, in 2020, a KwaZulu-Natal court ruled in favour of a claim by a local Christian that the Call to Prayer from a local mosque was offensive.³ By and large, it would appear that faith communities, on the whole, seek relief and intervention from the courts or

¹ Christian “**triumphalism**” is the egocentric behaviour of Christianity and its adherents than the history which was enshrined in their doctrine and dogmas that allow them presume that they are superior or better than other religions, and more so, that Christianity is a certificate to heaven. Thus if you are not a Christian, you are doomed to hell. In other words, other religions were regarded as inferior and devilish. These dogmas instigated the crusade, promulgations, infallibilities, anathemas and many excommunications (Esack, 1999; Leshota, 2019). **Hick refers to Christian or any religion “triumphalism” to as “Religious absolutism” that imposes their superiority thereby exclude others which results to religious antagonism (Hick & Knitter, 1987:16-36).

² <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2018-12-30-clifton-4th-beach-of-slaughtered-sheep-drowned-slaves-and-collective-rituals/> and <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/yengeni-ritual-spearheads-cultural-row-312064>

³ <https://www.iol.co.za/the-post/news/durban-man-wins-court-ruling-against-madressas-call-to-prayer-which-infringed-on-his-right-to-dignity-8a2d496b-1f54-43e3-bef1-f693793e6adc5>

Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission), instead of inter-faith platforms and associations. While in South Africa, religious tension and anxieties don't escalate to the level of public violence, conflict, or war, the insidious and pervasive treatment of religion outside the Christian norms is widespread and worthy of investigation. Notwithstanding these tensions, South Africans adhere to the widely held belief that interreligious dialogue, contact, and exchange reduces conflict, and fosters peace and social well-being.

Similarly, it seems that scholars share this belief in the positive contributions that religion and the interactions among religions (what we refer to today as *religious pluralism*) have made in human history. Notable religion scholars like Taylor (2007); Eliade (1957); Smith (2010) and Hennels (2005) acknowledged the following essential points concerning religious pluralism: Firstly, human beings by nature are religious beings; therefore, a person doesn't necessarily need to go to church, mosque, temple, or ashram to be religious. The personal experience of the person matters in his or her journey of self-discovery. Secondly, religion has been in existence since prehistoric times and that should be acknowledged. Thirdly, religion has played and continues to play an important role in human and world history. Fourthly, religion served as a source of inspiration for the creation of different cultures found. And finally, despite conflicts associated with religion in history, it is also a powerful resource for peace and well-being of communities and people through a fruitful and open dialogue among leaders and adherents of different religions.

One of the most ardent advocates of this idea of religious pluralism⁴ is the British philosopher of religion, John Hick, who developed a theology of religions, centered around the notion of World Religions as a resource for peace and well-being. It is in this regard that I hoped to test John Hick's Christian theology of religions with relevance to the South African interreligious context.

John Harwood Hick was one of the most significant and well-renowned philosophers and theologians of the twentieth century (Smid, 1999: 21). He was well-known for his advocacy of religious pluralism (Peters, 2005: 30). His many books have been translated into seventeen languages. Keith Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford, once described him as "the greatest living

4 Pluralism can be used in two different meanings: "Social Pluralism" in the sociological sense means a society which consists of a multi-faith or multi-cultural mosaic (Barker, 1997). "Religious Pluralism", in the theological sense means a concept in which all religions are considered to be equally true and valid. The thesis will focus on the later, which evaluating and testing Hick's theology against other competing religious responses to religious pluralism (Bender and Klassen, 2010; Banchoff, 2008).

Philosopher and Theologian of global religion”. As Christopher Sinkinson, in his book, *The Universe of Faiths: A Critical Study of John Hick’s Religious Pluralism*, noted that “John Hick has spanned much of the twentieth century and had to grapple first-hand with philosophical, theological and cultural developments in the contemporary age... His writing is crystal clear, sometimes polemic, and has been highly influential. No academic study of the Christian response to religious diversity is complete without interaction with his work” (2001: 2).

Hick wrote many books during his career which helped him reach his audience globally; these include: *Faith and Knowledge* (1957), *Philosophy of Religion* (1963), *Evil and the Love of God* (1966), *Arguments for the Existence of God* (1970), *God and the Universe of Faith* (1973), *Death and Eternal Life* (1976), *The Myth of God Incarnate*, (edited in 1977), *God Has Many Names* (1980), *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989), *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (1993), *The Rainbow of Faiths* (1995) and *John Hick: Autobiography* (2003). These books narrate the critical thought that developed and shaped his worldview. Hick’s idea of a pluralistic theology was shaped by experiences in Birmingham (England) where he met and became involved with numerous multi-faith groups from whom he learned about non-Christian faiths. All these were noted in his autobiography when he wrote: “although religious beliefs and styles of worship differed...at a deeper level it seemed evident to me that essentially the same thing was going on in all these different places of worship” and for Hick, it appears that all the traditions drew on some ancient, but complex traditions that compelled people to open their heart and minds to a higher divine reality (2002:15).

In his pluralistic approach, Hick developed what he called a “global theology” in which he tried to propose different methods of approaching theology which create a framework of making sense of different religions in the world and in so doing help people enter into positive interreligious dialogue (1997: 78). For him, global theology does not abolish the diversity of religions that exist; rather it recognises their presence and celebrates their differences. In that sense, adherents of different religions learn how to appreciate and respect each other (1980: 56). At this juncture, one may ask: to what extent it is possible to create a workable “global theology”? It is clear from the numerous works written by Hick that “global theology”, in the sense of his pluralistic approach, is a work in progress, born out of his experiences, encounters, and reflections. While John Hick’s theology of religions will make up a central part of this thesis, he will be read as a product of a particular historical moment, and that his work is best studied in terms of the geopolitical and related religious dynamics of his own time and context, especially in the 1970s and 1980s America and Britain in the aftermath of colonialism. It is in the context of the postcolonial movement of people and religious traditions from the colonial periphery to the European metropolitan centres that his theology of religions emerges.

To make his pluralistic ideas more concrete, Hick talks of religious experience. Articulating his opinion further, Hick asserts that “Our everyday experiences can be interpreted in more than one way: this can be in form of religious or non-religious exhibitions” (1989:57). In other words, one person’s religious experience might be understood and explained quite differently by another person. Thus, for Hick, “experiences can be interpreted through Christianity; they can also be interpreted through Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, atheism and African Traditional Religions, as the case may be” (2010:33). And that is where our study of Hick connects to the South African context of interreligious dialogue. Let us now delve into the background of the research problems.

1.3. BACKGROUND TO STUDY AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Hick in his theology of religions focused mainly on doctrinal issues in which he sees religions of the world, including the ‘institutionalized religions’, as representatives of what he calls the ‘Real’. It is under the above notion that Hick developed his pluralistic hypothesis by which he proposes that

“the World Religions are different human responses to the One Divine Reality, embodying different perceptions which have been formed in different historical, doctrinal and cultural circumstances” (1980:5).

For Hick (1989; 2004), religions are ways by which humanity can experience, peace, liberation, and ultimate fulfillment. He argues that within each of the world religions and its adherents, “a gradual transformation takes place, from self-centredness to reality-centredness”, which Hick refers to as salvation or liberation (Hick, Okholm, Philips, et al. 1996:51; D’Costa, 1991:3-16). When this transformation takes place, according to Hick, individuals and their religious communities experience a sense of inner peace and well-being that in turn transforms society (Hick, 2004: 376; 1973: 115).

Around the same time that Hick was refining his global theology of religions, the South African Chapter of the *World Conference on Religions for Peace* (WCRP-SA) was established in 1984. This signalled something of the transnational appetite for solidarity along, and across religious lines. The World Conference on Religions for Peace (WCRP) is an international organisation of representatives of the world’s major religious traditions who meet to study and act upon global problems affecting peace, justice, and human survival (Donohoe, 2020: 1; Karam, 2004: 1). The establishment of the South African chapter emerged at a time of increasing opposition to the apartheid regime. Many of the activist and religious figures involved in the anti-Apartheid movements experienced, not only grassroots solidarity with each other across religious lines, but also saw the need to overcome the

negative impact that Apartheid created on other faiths. For instance, after the imposition of the Group Areas Act which displaced many citizens, Hindus were seldom exposed to Christians as neighbours, Muslims to African Traditionalists, or white Christians to Hindus, or Muslims, and so on (Mabin, 1992: 405). Therefore, the formation of WCRP-SA in 1984, served as a forum that acts on problems affecting the people of South Africa, more especially the poorest of the poor in matters of peace, justice, well-being, and human survival. Kritzinger (1988: 1-2) noted that “WCRP-SA does not view itself as an exercise in abstract interfaith dialogue focusing merely on the analysis of religious concepts or customs [...] but proceeds from a joint commitment to the struggle for justice and peace in South Africa”. Likewise, Lubbe (1988: 16) elaborating on Kitzinger’s comment, writes “WCRP as organisation locates itself among those conducting dialogue around practical matters such as justice and peace, sharing the conviction that “doctrines divide but humanity unites”.

Almost two decades later, and several years after the demise of Apartheid segregation, The KwaZulu-Natal Interreligious Council (KZN-IRC) was launched in October 2007. The initiative began when the then Premier Sibusiso Ndebele invited the KZN province’s religious leaders to join a partnership to redress social ills such as poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, education, etc. The Council brought together religious leaders and representatives from the nine faith traditions in the province, namely, Christian, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Brahma Kumaris, Baha’i, African Traditional Religion, and Nazareth Baptists who played key roles in setting up ‘task forces’ that do the actual work for the Council.⁵ The Council’s task forces focussed on different projects including, “poverty and skills building; moral regeneration; environment; HIV and AIDS; education; youth; crime and violence; and advocacy and media”.⁶ What this brief introduction to WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC tells us is that despite Apartheid institutionalised social and religious segregation, and the interreligious anxieties that accompanied post-Apartheid integration, faith communities nevertheless sought to forge association and networks based on the idea that peace and wellbeing could be brought about through interreligious contact and collaboration.

However, while Hick’s theology of religion rests on doctrinal issues within institutional or mainstream religions to explain the relations between religions, David Chidester (1994) has suggested that learning about other religions is only possible through a thorough study of religious histories in South Africa. Both are motivated by a desire to overcome religious suspicion, illiteracy, and

⁵ Report at the 26 August 2015 KZN-IRC *Workshop Forum* in Durban.

⁶ Report from the KZN-IRC *Annual General Meeting* 2017 in Durban. Refer also, Report from Religions for Peace South Africa’s *Annual Desmond Tutu Peace Lecture*, 2015 in Durban.

antagonism, but their conception and engagement with religious pluralism are significantly informed by philosophical, and historical engagements with religion, and to a lesser degree on the empirical or lived experience of religious believers. WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC, on the other hand, are examples of more or less, formalised, local networks of religious actors through which to examine and test the relevance, prospect, and limits of John Hick's theology of religions.

It is my view that taking the people's lived experiences of inter-faith dialogue in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal as a starting point in my study, points to three main gaps that this thesis intends to fill. Firstly, to investigate and evaluate how the ordinary people in KwaZulu-Natal experience their day-to-day interreligious living and realities. Secondly, is to find out whether, and how, Hick's theology is relevant to the interreligious living and realities in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa). Thirdly, is to situate the African religious context as the bedrock to achieving wholistic and sustainable interreligious co-existence and projects for peace, and well-being, not only in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) but also in Africa at large.

Note therefore that my aim here is not to do a comparative study of Chidester and Hick. Rather my focus is to test Hick's theology, not only against other respected (especially, postcolonial) scholars of religion but also in the light of the fieldwork and interviews done on the lived experiences of religious communities and adherents in KwaZulu-Natal between April 2016 and August 2017. This leads me to ask the main research question and sub-questions:

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Is Hick's Christian Theology of Religions relevant for understanding and facilitating Interreligious Dialogue towards Peace and Well-being in KwaZulu-Natal?

The sub-questions for this study are as follows:

- i. What is the nature and history of interreligious dialogue and contact in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa?
- ii. What can Hick's theology of religion contribute to understanding interreligious dialogues for peace and well-being in Africa, with particular reference to KwaZulu-Natal?

- iii. What social and theological ideas related to interreligious dialogue emerged from the lived experiences of different faith communities in KwaZulu-Natal?

The objective of this study is purposely designed to respond to the above key research questions and their significance in the following ways:

- i. To explore and understand the nature and history of interreligious dialogue and contact in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- ii. To ascertain, if and to what extent, John Hick's theology of religions can assist in understanding interreligious dialogue for peace and well-being in the African context.
- iii. To excavate possible social and religious knowledge resources, related to interreligious dialogue, from the lived experiences of different faith communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to achieve this research ambition, I developed a three-fold research design that would allow me to engage in a study of religion as a social phenomenon through a critical treatment of the corpus of John Hick and bringing this into conversation with lived experiences of religious communities and adherents in KwaZulu-Natal. This three-fold research design combines analytic, interpretive, and phenomenological approaches to the study of religion.

ANALYTIC

First and foremost, this research is analytic in character. According to Valcarcel (2017) analytic research is "a specific type of research that involves critical thinking skills and evaluation of facts and information relative to the research being conducted". In the case of our study, I not only explored Hick's theology as a resource to peace and well-being but also immersed myself in different projects, seminars, and rallies organized by the WCRP and KZN-IRC. Through this, I was able to gather a holistic view of the field. Pattanaik (2017: 4) argues, "In analytic research, the researcher has to use facts or information already available and analyse these to make a critical evaluation of the material".

In this case, Hick's scholarly thoughts and writings, with the contributions of several key religion scholars, as well as the information from my fieldwork are among materials available that assisted me to critically examine and evaluated Hick's theology of religions, and more so, to find out if it is or not relevant to the South African interreligious context, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal.

The analytic approach is essential in this study because, according to Omair (2005: 153), "it introduces new ideas about what is happening in the data and helps or disprove hypothesis. This type of data collected is vital in establishing the relevance of a particular idea or validate a hypothesis". So, the information gathered in this study which includes people's lived experiences assisted me to ascertain whether Hick's theology and hypothesis are relevant to the South African interreligious context. As I was gathering this information, I also took cognisance of the difference between descriptive and analytic research, insofar as the former determine, describe or identify what is; analytic, on the other hand, attempts to establish why it is that way or how it came to be" (McLeod, et al. 2016: 429). This proved particularly useful for understanding participants' lived experiences of interreligious dialogue and contact as lived by South African citizens.

INTERPRETATIVE

Secondly, the study is positioned within the interpretative research paradigm. "Interpretative approaches", Putnam and Banghart (2017: 1) argued, "encompasses social theories and perspectives that embrace a view of reality as socially constructed or made meaningful through actor's understanding events". It is through this approach that I was able to navigate through the different perspectives and experiences of religion, across the various faith communities. Nonetheless, according to Willis (2007: 287), "one of the approaches of interpretative method is really on the reality that consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world; thus the approach(es) adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and ontological belief that reality is socially constructed". Meyers (1997: 239), concurring to this, argued that "the premise of interpretative researchers is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings". Applying the above helped me during the data collection and analysis to interpret the language, consciousness, and shared experiences of the participants.

Reeves and Hedberg (2003: 32) equally noted that the interpretative approach stresses "concern with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. More so, it uses meaning (versus measurement) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant's observation, that

rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects (2003: 33). This enabled me to pay attention to people's subjective experiences and interpretations. In this case, the day-to-day experiences of ordinary South Africans concerning interreligious dialogue and co-operations were central to the research and significantly shaped my methodology. Thus, I adopted an intersubjective or interactional stance towards the social context, and phenomenon that I was investigating.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL

Thirdly, related to the interpretive approach, a phenomenological research methodology was applied in this study. According to Bloor and Wood (2006: 129), the “phenomenological method aims to describe, understand and interpret the meanings of experiences of human life”. Thus, this study enabled me as a researcher to describe and interpret the “life-worlds” of human experiences, wherein meaning is derived from people who are involved in the social reality (John and Christensen, 2012: 48). According to Husserl (2001: 331), phenomenology is “the study of experience and how we experience realities around us... it studies structures of conscious experience as experienced from a subjective or first-person point of view”. Davidsen (2013: 225) pointed out that this experience is, “not only the relatively passive experiences of sensory perception but also imagination, thought, emotion, desire, volition, and action”. This approach helped me to have a stronger grasp of how Hick, the participants, and myself form part of a community of knowledge producers, imagining new ways for understanding social worlds and experiences. It also immersed me into evoking their perceptions, imaginations, thoughts, emotions, desires to understand the daily actions that they take, not only to engage in meaningful dialogue and contacts, but also imaginative work concerned with promoting peace and well-being in KwaZulu-Natal.

Besides the above, I equally utilised as a tool, the comparative phenomenological approach or orientation as propagated by Kristensen (1960) and other proponents of this method. For Kristensen (1960: xxi) phenomenological approach is “the systematically pursued comparative endeavour to interpret and understand (not explain) religious phenomena of the same category (such as prayer, sacrifice; or engaging in projects which uplift lives, peace and well-being of people, etc) appearing in different religions to get at their inner meaning”. In the case of our study, I sought to not just understand the distinctive “phenomena” of interreligious dialogue and contact, but also how the various faith communities - under the umbrella of WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC - facilitate interreligious cooperation towards peace and well-being. The themes that emerged from this design are systematically elaborated on in Chapter Six.

1.6. RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCESS

DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND PROCESS

As I have indicated above, the primary method of data collection method was individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a way to gather information on how participants lived and experienced interreligious dialogue and contacts, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. The reason for choosing semi-structured interviews was on the premise that they are more flexible and because it allowed me to “achieve a holistic understanding of the “interviewees” point of view” (Dawson, 2002: 27).

In addition to spending more than 15 months year in the field, attending WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC events and meetings, I was able to conduct ten (10) face-to-face interviews. All participants interviewed for this study are members of WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC. The ten interviewees represented the six religions of our study, namely: Protestant/Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and ATRs. In this regard, I chose the six religions that are most represented in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as because of their level of participation in interreligious networks.

I took as my starting point the local interfaith organizations, namely the World Conference on Religions for Peace (WCRP-SA) and the KwaZulu-Natal Inter-Religious Council (KZN-IRC). I wrote official letters to the coordinator of WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC explaining what I intended to do, and more so, requesting to meet her in person for further clarification (see Appendix 2 and 3).⁷ Despite some initial skepticism and delays, I was eventually met the coordinator in person. After meeting with her and explaining the detailed logistics of the study, an official permission letter was written by her, permitting me to conduct interviews with their members. She also gave me the names and contact details of their members which included religious leaders and lay leaders.

At the outset, I intended to interview eighteen people, three from each of the faith groups (one leader and two lay leaders), with 50/50 gender parity. Participants were contacted telephonically and by e-mail to schedule dates for the interviews. In-depth, semi-structured questions were forwarded to them to prepare them for the interview. It proved difficult for me to secure eighteen people as I had hoped because many, mostly women, declined. The reasons given ranged from, ‘they are not competent to answer the interview questions; tied to work or family-related commitments, the nervousness of being interviewed and recorded’.

⁷ At the time of the interviews both organizations had one coordinator. KZN-IRC coordinator had already retired.

Eventually, I succeeded in interviewing ten people: seven men and three women (four religious leaders and six lay leaders) between the age of 25 and 60. All ten participants met the essential criteria that were used in selecting interviewees, namely: that they represent one of the six faith traditions in KZN, have been involved with interreligious issues for two years or more. Although KwaZulu-Natal is large and religiously diverse, and to do justice to the study, I selected participants from metropolitan areas of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, as well as Ixopo, where the internationally known Buddhists centre is situated.

Besides purposive, snowball sampling was also applied insofar as the first set of participants were used as agents to access potential participants.⁸ The use of participants to identify further participants for the study helped, firstly, to limit anxiety and skepticism because of the sensitivity of the study, and secondly, to eliminate any hierarchical position that may interfere with the findings. Above all, snowball sampling helped me discover, not only the grassroots projects facilitated by WCRP-SA/KZN-IRC but also how ordinary people in KwaZulu-Natal live their day-to-day interreligious realities and cooperation among themselves.

Besides the interviews, I attended meetings, seminars, and campaigns facilitated by WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC in promoting dialogue, peace, and well-being. I also collected and critically read popular materials (newspapers and pamphlets) produced and distributed by the two organizations, to familiarise myself with their history, *modus operandi*, and methods of their interreligious cooperation and relations; not only in KwaZulu-Natal but also in South Africa as a whole.

METHODOLOGICAL & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The scope of the study is vast, and I was aware that I may not do justice to all the aspects of the different religions in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. For instance, the research does not provide a presentation of each religious tradition's teaching; and it does not present any doctrinal views of the various religious traditions with respect to their origins, historical development, and current positions. Rather, the research focused mainly on John Hick's theology of religions and its relevance to the South African Interreligious context, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Having said this, it is also pertinent to note that the fieldwork of this research, which includes the interviews, (as indicated above), was not selected at random; rather, it was focused and limited to the selected representatives of the six religions in our study. I was also aware that besides these six faith traditions, which I claimed

⁸ Note that the identification and selection of potential participants as mentioned above, were guarded through the list of members and their contact details provided by WCRP and KZN-IRC

are well represented in KwaZulu-Natal, there are also other religions in the province that require an in-depth study of their existence. All these narrowed the applications and scope of the study.

Concerning Interreligious Dialogue, the research concentrated mainly on the nature and history of interreligious dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as the link between interreligious dialogue and the people's lived experiences of it on the ground. To further narrow the scope, the study put Hick's theology of religions in conversation with people's lived experiences of interfaith dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal (and South Africa). While I am aware of other competing theologies of religion, it was Hick's focus on peace and well-being that resonates most suitably with religion and social transformation in South Africa. Finally, with regard to history, the study focused specifically on the History of Interreligious Contacts and Dialogue in South Africa, and in so doing, concentrated on four epochs, namely: contact before colonialism, colonialism, Apartheid, and post-Apartheid.

Consent for the study was obtained from the coordinator of WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC (see consent forms Appendix 2 and 3), and ethical approval for the fieldwork was obtained through the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (see Appendix 1). As part of my transparent research practice, every participant received a letter that outlined the purpose of the study, foreseeable risks, and providing confidentiality assurance (see Appendix 4). Signed informed consent was then obtained from each interviewee (see consent form 4), and participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any point during the research process. All participants are members of WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC.

1.7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & COMPANIONS

In an effort to interrogate the various ways the concept of religion was understood or applied in this context, as well as how relations and contact between different religion are imagined, I used the contributions of Appadurai (1996), Asad (1993), Casanova (1994), Berger and Luckmann (1995) and Ann-Marie Leatt (2017) as a series of conceptual companions with which to read Hick's theology of religions. These scholars of religion have variously sought to make sense of religious plurality, transnationally or from a postcolonial context, comparable to South Africa. The reason for using the contributions of these scholars is, not only that they provide a holistic approach and value to this thesis, but they also unpacked the critical and constructive understanding of pluralism, especially, from the sociological perspective.

For instance, there is no doubt, as I will elaborate in chapters two and three, Hick's approach to "pluralism" stemmed from his situatedness in a Christian normative belief system, and that his

encounter with other religions was shaped by his British protestant perspective. His work included wrestling with truth claims, religious supremacy, Christian claims of superiority over other religions, as well as dogmas that exclude others (1995: 41; 1985: 34). By bringing Hick into conversation with Appadurai, Asad et al, I hoped trouble not only Hick's conception of religion but also pluralism, the interreligious encounter, and its implications for social relations and identity.

For Appadurai pluralism denotes "a society, system of government, or organisation that has different groups that keep identities, more so, continuously evolve and revolve (i.e. develop and learning every day) while existing with other groups" (Appaduria, 1990: 295; Asad 1999: 178). Likewise, a sociological conception of pluralism defines it as, "a society where multiple people, groups or entities share many powers, be it political, economic, social, cultural and otherwise" (Yumatle 2015; Schlosberg 1999). Nevertheless, in Hick's Christian normative British context, pluralism denotes the inclusion and recognition of faith traditions that have migrated from Asia *after* colonialism, while within Asia and Africa religious diversity and contact occurred for centuries already -except that these histories of encounter and exchange have not been recorded or given the same recognition. Today pluralism incorporates the technological and religious exchange between an indigenous person on the outskirts of a township in KwaZulu-Natal, and an ancestor ritual in cosmopolitan Tokyo in Japan. It is within this postcolonial, sociological framework that I hope to utilise the contributions of these six scholars to critically read Hick's theology and honour the postcolonial context of my research participants in the context of this study.

ARJUN APPADURAI: Appadurai, in his book *Modernity at large: Cultural Dimension of Globalization* (1996) gave an account of how religion came into the public imagination, and in which he maintains that the transnational movement of people, practices, and beliefs are increasingly facilitated by electronic and social media, and those are among the vehicles that build a global pluralistic interaction. From this perspective, through social media, a Hindu taxi-driver in Durban can listen to a temple speech from India on an MP3 while driving; or a mine worker in Rustenburg can watch videos of religious movements in Chicago and vice versa (Appadurai 1990). Appadurai's approach to religious pluralism offers a broad analytical look at the genealogies of religion through essays on violence, human interactions, nationalism, terror, materiality, social media, and technology.

Appadurai (1996; 1990) examines their struggles for equality, recognition, and self-governance by theorizing plurality through five scapes: mediascapes, technoscapes, ethnoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes. He situates India, Africa, and other third world countries at the heart of his work, drawing on empirical research among urban slum dwellers in Mumbai, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa. In doing

so his work demands a critical reading of religious pluralism, not as a product of European imagination, but as something that emerged out of the lived experience of the people of the world.

TALAL ASAD: Resonating with the writing of Appadurai, Talal Asad ushers in what he calls the commodification of religion. In his book *Genealogies of Religion* 1993, Asad states that “for any religion to exist and be alive in this global society, it must continuously attract its members by selling products or “brands” that are meaningful in this modern/technological age”. He goes on to assert that for successful commodification to take place, “every religion must and should be part of social, political, economic, moral and structural transformation of the society” (2003: 192). Asad offers a useful shift in focus from the conventional preoccupation with religious dogma, to adherence, appeal, and utility in the life of the believer. Therefore, for Asad (1993: 54), ‘branding’ or ‘commodification’ of religion refers to a process of recontextualization of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to a culture concerned with affect, affinity, and consumption. Thus, as religion becomes commodities or objects of consumption readily available in the ‘supermarket of religion’ religious beliefs, practices and institutions are being reimagined to align with the felt needs of the individual adherent and the society within which the religion is being practiced. Asad’s approach to religion and religious pluralism demands that we view the faith communities as ‘competing’ in a market, where it needs to improve livelihoods, peace, and well-being in KwaZulu-Natal and by so doing keep their brand, symbols, language, and ideas in the hearts of the people.

JOSE CASANOVA: Writing at the same time Appadurai and Asad, Jose Casanova in his book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, is less concerned with the global shift in religion, but rather seeks to account for the place of religion in public life. He notes that while increasing secularization, religions became “privatized”⁹ but then draws our attention to the more recent “process of de-privatization” of religion (1994). Unlike Hick, Casanova suggests that modern religions never succumbed to the forces of secularism, rather, that they entered into different spheres of the civil society to take part in the ongoing contestation, negotiations, debates on nation-building, social cohesion, peace, politics, economy, social structures and redrawing of the boundaries (2001: 415-441). Casanova (1994) asserts that throughout the whole world,

“religions are entering these public spheres and the arena of political contestation, not

9 By “privatization” Casanova (1980) meant those religious traditions that are classified as instances of “private” or of what Thomas Luckmann (1967, 1990) called “invisible” religion. Casanova (2008) maintains further that they are precisely those religious traditions which both theories of secularization and modernity have marginalized and forced into playing private and insignificant roles in the society.

only to defend their traditional turf, as they had done in the past, but also to participate in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundaries between legality and morality, between individual and society, between family, civil society, and state; between nations, states, civilization, and the world system”.

Casanova’s work suggests that religion cannot be confined to ‘institutionalized structures’ of secularism, but that it emerges as a tool(s) that “give meaning and purpose to life, promote physical, spiritual and psychological well-being... motivate people to work for positive social change” (Casanova, 1994).

BERGER (& LUCKMANN): The famous sociologists, Berger and Luckmann (1995) contend that pluralism is stimulated by modern development: urbanization, population growth, mass migration, travel, literacy, and more importantly the rapid new technologies. They offer accounts about plurality that ought to be mediated through and by the State. Berger and Luckmann (1995), similar but different from Asad’s commodification of religion, assert that in modern pluralistic societies, “an individual can choose from multi-sources of knowledge and norms to construct an individuated identity”. In the light of such liberties and freedom to choose, a person is free to use religion in efforts to forge and assert who they are, but also what he or she wants to be (1966b). Thus, for Berger (2014), the capacity for identity construction is made possible by the “State” – a combination of institutions including families, communities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, industries, management of businesses, artisans, professionals, lawmakers, etc. In his book *To Empower People: from State to Civil Society* (1996), Berger reaffirms that the rule of law and democracy are at the heart of every civil society. Berger (2005) further highlights that democracy and the rule of law provide institutional guarantees for the peaceful co-existence of the people from different religious and ideological persuasions. For Berger and Luckmann, pluralism and the State should and must work hand-in-hand to protect and respect the dignity, freedom, and rights of all citizens. This sociological approach to religious pluralism, provides us with a recognition of religion’s continuing importance, while uncoupled from traditional religious authorities which so characterised much of Hick’s work and theorizing.

ANNE-MARIE LEATT: To further situate our examination of religious pluralism in South Africa, Anne Leatt offers a critical reflection on the potential and place of religion in the post-Apartheid context. In *The State of Secularism* (2017) she maps the ways that social and legal processes in aftermath of Apartheid shaped the way that religion and religious diversity are understood. Although previously a Christian national State, Leatt (2017) maintains that South Africa after 1994 has become more and

more a secularized society, thus with emphases is on freedom, the laws, rights, social cohesion, and nation-building, separated from religious authorities or beliefs. Leatt (2017) reminds us that South Africa forged a particular brand of public recognition of religion while imposing relatively clear restrictions related to religious discriminations. In practice, this means that faith communities have limited influences over the State, but also that they had been afforded a significant degree of autonomy and self-governance. She refers to this as a consensus of religious rights. While her work celebrates the incorporation of African indigenous and traditional religions, with equal rights and protections under the law, like Casanova, she harbours anxieties about the limits or privatization of religion. Leatt (2017) finally contends that the degree of religious freedoms afforded the respective faith communities may undermine religious tolerance and cooperation.

My choice of theoretical companions to read with provided me with a set of critical perspectives with which to trouble John Hick's work but also to generate a series of variables or concepts that would guide my methodological practices and analysis. While Appadurai (1996) and Asad (1993) offer accounts through which to read global interreligious changes, relations, and contact, Casanova (1994), Berger (1995/2005), and Leatt (2017) present novel ways through which to understand and analyse religious pluralism in the post-modern/ postcolonial public space. See below a short discussion of the variables around which much of this study is structured.

VARIABLES

Variables in sociological contexts are described as "properties or characteristics of some events, object, person or thing that are measured and can take on more than one value or vary" (Babbie 2009: 14). One of the motifs of this study is to test the relevance Hick's theology of religions in the context of postcolonial South Africa. I propose to do this by examining the contested understandings, interpretations, and applications of key concepts that appear both in Hick's theology of religions and in the South African interreligious context. The study acknowledges Hick's contributions to the scholarly field of interreligious dialogue and cooperation, but his theology of religions cannot be one universal answer to pluralism. It is against this background that I set out to hold four main variables in tension throughout this study. They are *religion*, *state*, *belief*, and *identity*.

Religion

It goes without saying that what constitutes religion continues to be contested. Hick's view on and interest in religion were largely limited to 'institutionalized' religions such as Christianity, Judaism,

Islam, and Hinduism. Other religions such as African Traditional Religions were regarded or termed by Hick (1995: 109; 2004: 12) as ‘primitive’ and ‘archaic’, and thus did not qualify on the list. The six companion scholars cited above offer perspectives on religion from a sociological and postcolonial perspective, in other words, as a ‘social construct of reality’ (Berger and Luckmann 1995: 3; 1966: 177; Asad 1993: 23; 1983: 237), and offer some resonances with the changing status of religions in South Africa. It is precisely this postcolonial and sociological perspective on religion that informs my research. Sociological perspective of religion, like Emerson, Monahan, and Mirola (2011) asserts: “aim to understand the function religion serves, the inequality and other problems it can enforce and perpetuate, and the role it plays in our daily lives”. As such religion is a variable that will be constantly reviewed and measured as I try to make sense of the contested understanding and uses of religion in the context of interreligious dialogues and among faith communities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Interreligious Dialogue

According to Forde (2013: 7), interreligious dialogue is said to be concerned with “people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences”. For Camps (1980: 24) it signals the “cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e. faiths) at both the individual and institutional level.” In the discussion of Berger and Luckmann (1995) the State as “a combination of institutions ranging from families, communities, governmental and non-governmental organisations” also emerge as role-players in determining what constitutes interreligious dialogue. As an expression of human interaction, ideas, and behaviour, interreligious dialogue is more than just words, and each person or faith community can entertain their own ideas about it. In postcolonial South Africa, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Christians, and the African Traditional Religionists live in the same neighbourhoods and are in close social interaction daily, producing new narratives and discourses about interreligious dialogue and contact. This dialogue is much more than academic or theological dogma but emerges from the interactions of people from all walks of life in their daily routines. As such interreligious dialogues, as a measure of respect towards the freedom and rights of all citizens and people (Casanova 2001; Appadurai 1996; Leatt 2017) and an indication of the social appetite for religious literacy and social cohesion (Chidester and Settler 2010), emerges as a key variable in this study.

Belief

Another variable that emerged on this framework is ‘belief’, in other words, how Hick vis-a-vis

Appadurai and his counterparts understood ‘belief’ in their different contexts. Hick (1989; 1995; 2004) in all his writings including his *autobiography* 2002, speaks of ‘belief’ in terms of “faith in God, Jesus, dogma, and teachings of the church (Christianity) and other religions”. While Appadurai and his counterparts, in the sociological context, applied the meaning of ‘belief’, not only in the individual but also in a collective sense. For them, ‘belief’, in an individual sense is “a conviction or idea about the nature of reality that an individual or group accepts as true” (Appadurai 1996: 2; Asad 1993: 45; Leatt, 2011:10; Berger and Luckmann 1963: 61; cf. also: Borhek 1975). In the context of this study, for instance, Appadurai (1996: 5) believes and is convinced of the ‘positive effects of electronic and social media to build global/ pluralistic interaction’, so also Asad (1993: 47) and others, as stipulated on their various contributions above. ‘Belief’ can also be understood in a collective sense to mean “groups in a state having norms, values, ways of life, and codes of conduct that identify the group and define its boundaries” (McNamee 2013). As such, I will examine and measure belief as a variable through which to measure the interplay between collective dogma or belonging, and individual subjectivity in the context of this study.

Identity

‘Identity’ is another variable that emerges while evaluating Hick’s theology of religion, in that described identity as “the activity of the mind” (Hick 1989: 345). In his book *Faith and Knowledge* (1988: 200), Hick suggests that identity emerges through four interpretative levels, first is *Natural knowledge*, second: *Moral judgment*, third: *Aesthetic*, and fourth: *Religious* or *Total*. For Hick (1988: 209), religious knowledge and identity total is the highest. Kehily (2009: 2) and Bauman (1988: 63) remind us that identity is forged or developed in the social sphere and as a result of socialization processes. They suggest that “individuals are invited to set down identity markers located within the past and the present.” However, as Appadurai (1996) and Asad (1993) reminds us, our social and religious identities are also produced as a result of historical political forces such as colonialism (and our resistance thereto), while for Leatt (2017) socio-religious identities are contingent on what the political and legislative provisions allow. Nevertheless, questions about “Who am I?”, and “Who do I want to become?” complicated religious identity insofar as it variously entangles, and ruptures religious histories, with imaginative and aspirational projects concerned with fashioning a future. The inter-relationship between the past, present, and future is essential in studying people’s lived experiences of interreligious cooperation and dialogue in South Africa. Thus, *identity* features like a variable in my examination of Hick’s theology of religion because believers’ self-understanding is not contingent on dogmatic religious prescription, but the result of the interplay between collective histories and personally imagined futures.

What I have sought to outline above, is the set of methodological and theoretical practices that I deployed in my effort to ascertain the possible usefulness and major contributions of John Hick's theology of religions to interreligious dialogue and contact in the (postcolonial) South African context.

1.8. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Religion is one of the vehicles that help humankind in searching for meaning, identity, and the purpose of life. It is pertinent to mention that religion plays a key role in modern society, insofar as religious views can influence people in their choices of social activities, political affiliation, and family relationships. This is echoed by McDowell and Brown, in their conclusion that "from primal civilizations to our modern world, religions have followed humanity every step of the way" (2009:10).

We live in a society that is influenced by the influx and movement of many different belief systems, cultures, ethos's, traditions, values, customs, and so forth (Appadurai 1996). This movement has been so rapid that nation-states have found the mobility and increasing visibility of new religions both stimulating and destabilizing. While on the one hand, it has led to vibrant curiosity about other religions, in other contexts and situations religious diversity produces prejudice and bias against those who are different from the imagined norm. In the recent history of South Africa faith communities have experienced social and religious segregation under Apartheid (the 1950s-1990s), and more recently the society has enjoyed a multi-religious social milieu wherein all faiths celebrate and provided space to flourish. This is however recent, and society continues to wrestle with the extent of tolerance and accommodation, and how much contact and cooperation various faith communities are comfortable with.

The importance of this study is that Hick (like others), assumes an approach to the theologies of religions, that seek to harness the riches and values of the different religious traditions and faiths with the explicit aim of producing peace, and well-being in the world. He contends that the more we appreciate the riches and values of each religion, the less biased and prejudiced we become, which in turn promotes healthy dialogue among religions and individuals and thus lessens conflict. Hick acknowledges the negative impacts that religions have instigated throughout history, for instance, the crusades (Christianity), Jihad (Islam), the holocaust (Judaism), and the caste system (Hinduism) to name a few examples, but he insists that religion over the centuries has promoted far more good than

evil in the world (Hick, 1999: 13). This is echoed in Hick's journey of faith from orthodox-conservative Christianity to a revolutionary deep-nurtured pluralism.

Notwithstanding various criticisms of Hick's work, which I will explore later, it is also essential to mention three important reasons why it is useful to study Hick's theology of Religions. Firstly, his pluralistic approach has helped many scholars understand the meaning of doctrine of multiplicity, often used in opposition to monism and dualism (Lee, 2010: 246; Barnes, 1989: 13). Secondly, in epistemology, Hick has helped religion and theology scholars understand that there is no consistent means of approaching truth claims about the world, but rather many (Hosseini, 2010: 94; Davis, 2010: 189). Thirdly, in the area Christology, Hick's contributions have been significant, specially he has attempted to advance the limits of traditional boundaries of Christology beyond the understanding of Christ and Christianity (Verkamp, 1991: 103; Ruston, 2015: 4).

While numerous other, well-known, studies have been done on religious diversity in South Africa, they have largely focused on religion education, religious freedom, and socio-legal examinations of religion in public life, such as workplace discriminations, dress, ritual practices, and bodily practices (hair and scaring). This study forms part of a smaller body of scholarship that is concerned with interreligious dialogue and cooperation between, and among different faith communities (Freeman 2017, Lubbe 2015, Abdool et al 2007). While there is a great deal of goodwill regarding the necessity for interreligious tolerance and cooperation, there are markedly few academic studies on the phenomenon in South Africa. The study will also stimulate future researchers to grasp the meaning and values of the plural cultures of today's world, enabling them to deepen their knowledge of what is happening among ordinary believers to understand what Pannikar (1973: 115) refers to as "dialogical dialogue", meaning, the openness to learn between cultures and cultures, between religion and religions, which leads to a fruitful and healthy dialogue among individuals and communities.

In a world, where migration and technology have made religious diversity and contact an everyday occurrence, new social norms and practices are required to make sense of, and to manage tolerance, sensitivity, and mutual respect of different belief systems. In this regard, the study critically studies the idea of world religions in a global space. And this vision includes the ability of every person (whether affiliated to a religion or not) to inform themselves and carry out diligently the ethics of compassion, personal integrity, and social responsibility, and more so, find common ground in working together for the needs of the community. In all these, tolerance, cooperation, and mutual understanding are needed.

Coming to the South African context, the study helps different religions and their adherents in South Africa to learn more about each other; understand their histories pre-apartheid and post-apartheid eras. In particular, the recognition and incorporation of African traditional religions, as well as indigenous forms of Christianity (African Indigenous Churches) has enriched, troubled, and expanded our conception of world religion, and religious diversity. The incorporation of postcolonial religious ideas and practices also significantly challenges what we understand by religion and wellbeing. For example, the term *impilo*, in isiZulu means health, healthfulness, and wellbeing, but unlike the western conception of health and wellbeing as an individual biomedical issue, *Impilo* refers to an order of relations (related to *Ubuntu* or humanness), and regards wellbeing as being in a good relationship to one's own body, to one's family and neighbours or community, as well as being in good relations to nature and one's ancestors. In this sense, an incorporation of an African religious worldview expands and changes not only what we understand as the religious sphere, but also the use and reach of religion in society. So, in this context interreligious dialogue towards peace and wellbeing appears to be concerned with a relational order to the world. This suggests that although Hick's theology of religions may resonate with local ideas about interreligious dialogue and social transformation, the South African religious landscape demands or produces additional narratives or imaginaries about what a theology of religions for peace and well-being might look like. This is the broad field of interest in this study, and in the following chapters, I will elaborate on historical, methodological, and theoretical/ theological ramifications.

1.10. OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS:

The work is divided into seven chapters. Each chapter consists of an introduction and a conclusion, and more so, specific issues pertaining to the study can be contextualized, explored analyzed. Here is a summary of what will be discussed in each chapter.

Chapter ONE is an introduction to the study; it defined the reasons for choosing a study of Hick's thoughts and theology of religions. The chapter offered discussions on the background, the importance, and motivation for the study; and more so, dealt with the research methodology, designs, and conceptual framework. The definition of key concepts relating to our study was also investigated.

Chapter TWO is the literature review of the study, which was organized around the following themes: (1) Theology of religions, (2) John Hick and religious pluralism, (3) South African Religious

Diversity.

Chapter THREE analyzed the main themes of Hick's theology, the main influence on his theological thought, his views on pluralism, as well as, his notion of world religions as a resource for peace and well-being. The chapter also presented some biographical information about its influence on his works.

Chapter FOUR focused specifically on the history of interreligious contacts and dialogue in South Africa, according to four epochs, namely: pre-colonial, colonial, Apartheid, and post-Apartheid. I discussed *why* history here comprises both the history of contact as well as dialogue in the region.

Chapter FIVE maps the data gathered from my fieldwork and interviews with Christian (Protestant/Catholic) Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and African Traditional Religion in KwaZulu-Natal. This incorporates my examination of two local organizations, namely the World Conference on Religion for Peace - South Africa (WCRP-SA), and the KZN Interreligious Council (KZN-IRC).

Chapter SIX analyses (a) the relevance of Hick's theology of religions in view of the lived experiences of South African faith adherents, and (b) I explore the notion of a postcolonial theology of religions.

Chapter SEVEN brings together the overall findings and conclusions of the study. These include thematic findings related to interreligious diversity in postcolonial South Africa and methodological findings related to doing research in interreligious contexts.

1.11. CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter defined the reasons for the study of Hick's thought and theology of religions. It offered a concise background, contextual framework, the importance, and motivation for the study. It located the study in its particular context and spelled out the objectives and the research questions therein. The chapter also provided definitions of key concepts relating to the study, and finally, outlined the chapters of this thesis. Next is chapter two which discusses the various literature used in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The past two centuries have witnessed an increase in the study of religion (Graham, 2013: 19-28; Agbiji and Swart, 2015: 1-5). Much of it owes to the splendid works done by the Orientalists like Edward Said (1978: 43), Ronald Inden (1990: 37-38), Aijaz Ahmad (1991: 135-163), and others. Nonetheless, various approaches have been taken to the study of religion, of which theology of religion is essentially one of them. Based on the above study, our literature review is organised around the following themes: 1) theology of religions, 2) John Hick and religious pluralism, 3) South African Interreligious context, (i.e. interfaith relations in South Africa vis-a-vis the constitution) and 4) ATR as a bedrock to achieving sustainable peace and well-being in South Africa and beyond.

2.2. Theology of Religions

Acknowledging the complexity around the different theologies and concepts of religion, we will limit our scope of literature to the four subheadings: Western, Asian, and American concepts of pluralism and theologies of religions, and that will help us contextualize the South African situation of religions and interfaith dialogue and the role of African Traditional Religion in interreligious dialogue towards peace and well-being in South Africa. While this chapter offers a critical review of key theories and theorists in theology of religions, John Hick's work will only be covered to a limited degree because I dedicate an entire chapter (chapter 3) to the emergence and impact of his theology of religions.

Western (European) Concept: Truth outside of Christianity

This idea of modern theology has until recent decades been dominated by the West, which in turn has infiltrated in different theological debates. In this context theologians who work on questions of a theology of religions and religious pluralism begin their analysis of other religions from the vantage point of their system of belief, which in turn influenced their definitions of a theology of religions in

this context. According to Marbaniang (2007: 1), the field of theology of religions is best understood as growing out of Christian theology insofar as it sought to evaluate the phenomena of religion from a theologically and biblically informed position. For Fletcher-Louis (1997), Christian theology of religions explores the relationship between Christianity and other religions, through particular attention to soteriology or the study of salvation. Elaborating on soteriology, Frederics (1999) points out that, one of the main concerns of the Christian theology of religions, were primarily concerned with whether adherents of other religions can be saved, and if so, how? A typical example of such a question is: can a Hindu or a Jew who does not believe in Christ be saved? If so, what is the theological rationale behind this assessment? These debates motivated Alan Race in his book, *Christians, and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (1983), to propose the three-part typology for Christian approaches to other religions – namely, *exclusivism*, *inclusivism*, and *pluralism*.¹⁰ *Exclusivism* is the view that salvation is only through Christ, and only available to those who have both heard and had a faith response to the gospel (Sullivan, 1992). In a nutshell, according to Huang, the *exclusivist's* main claims are: (1) that “Christianity is the only path to salvation, (2) only those who are Christians can be saved and (3) Christianity is meant to replace all other religions (1997: 197).¹¹

For the exclusivists, the Bible tells the story of the journey of salvation which undoubtedly encouraged the old traditional Catholic axiom of the time “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*”: (Outside the church no salvation). Building on the same argument, Geivett and Phillips (1995: 214 - 245) shed light on the biblical perspective of *soteriology*, with the view that the Bible presents a pattern of ‘fewness’ in redemption and ‘wideness’ in judgement. Other scholars who have written extensively on Christianity as the “only” path to salvation include Hick, Okholm, and Philips, in their book *Four Views on Salvation* (1996: 51), Karl Barth, in *Church Dogmatics*, (1965), as well as Hendrik Kraemer in *Why Christianity of all Religions*, (1962). More recently some Catholic scholars like Arinze (1997), Bujo (1992), and Anyanwu (2019) - while acknowledging that exclusivism relates to the old traditional Catholic axiom “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*”: (Outside the church no salvation) - they draw on the Second Vatican Council’s invitation to the study of other religions and more so,

10 As regards the above approaches other typologies have been proposed. For instance: Paul Knitter proposed one such typology in his book *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (2002). Knitter (2002:256) distinguishes a “Replacement” model (*exclusivism*), a “Fulfillment” model (*inclusivism*), and a “Mutuality” and an “Acceptance” model (*pluralism*).

11 Nowadays, this is the position of Evangelical Christianity, especially those Christians who consider themselves fundamentalists. It is also the belief of Protestants. The Roman Catholic held to this “doctrine” before the advent of the 2nd Vatican Council. This was expressed in their axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church (or Christianity) no salvation). In other words, it was their ‘belief’ that God’s salvation existed only in the church and that outside of it, no one could be saved (Dupuis, 1997: 87).

encouraged Catholics and other Christians to embrace people of other faiths and traditions¹². Brecht (2014: 4) notes that “while exclusivist theologians may assiduously study other religious traditions and engage with other religious people, they also emphasize the uniqueness of the Christian message, particularity that of Jesus Christ, and the finality of God’s offer of salvation through Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible”.

Inclusivism gives equal attention to two essential Christian convictions: firstly, that God’s love is universal and therefore reaches other believers; secondly, that God’s love is particular and is made visible in Christ (Grzelak, 2010: 47). Advocates of this theological stand are Gavin D’Costa (1986), John Sander (1992), and Karl Rahner (1969). In *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, D’Costa proposes three approaches that Christians take towards religion, namely: *exclusivism*, *inclusivism*, and *pluralism*. According to his typology, John Hick would be regarded as *pluralist*, Karl Rahner as an *inclusivist*, and Hendrick Kraemer would be defined as an exclusivist. D’Costa supported *inclusivists*’ insofar as he held that all tradition possessed something of “the presence and universal love of God for all people, as well as the necessity of Christ’s grace for Salvation” (1986: 136). For Sander, *inclusivism* teaches that,

The *unevangelized* are saved on the basis of their commitment to the Divine, (who Christians refer to as God), who understands their situations and mediates through human history (1992: 215)¹³.

Joining his ideas with that of D’Costa and Sander, Rahner, in his book *Theological Investigation* vol. 14, expands the parameters of *inclusivism* with his idea of the “*anonymous Christian*” which is said to be best understood as someone who is an “adherent of a particular religion whom God saves through Christ, but who personally neither knows Christ of the Bible nor has converted to Biblical Christianity” (1976: 280). However, Rahner’s anonymous Christian thesis falls short when we consider how this position might be communicated meaningfully to a Muslim who sees Jesus as one

12 The documents of Vatican II which made great impacts as mentioned above are: Pope Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae* (*Declaration on Religious Freedom on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious*), Vatican, 7 December 1965; *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), Vatican, 7 December 1965; *Nostra Aetate* (*Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*), Vatican, 28 October 1965. Available at <http://www.vatican.va>, accessed 10 December 2009

13 In making their case, according to Sander ‘*inclusivists*’ typically cite not only those biblical texts dealing with the character and will of God and his dealings with the people. For example, 1 Timothy 4:10 (“because we trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of those who believe”) is interpreted as meaning that the living God saves all who believe in him and that the specific content of saving faith may vary so long as it is grounded in an essential trust in God. Other texts like 1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Peters 3:9; John 3:16-17; Luke 15:1-32; and Luke 23:34 are cited as evidence of God’s universal salvific will (1992: 30).

of the prophets and not saviour/son of God (Ridenour, 2001: 81), or to a Hindu who believes in the divine *Trimurti* (Michaels, 2004: 40), or to a Buddhist who believes in the circle of *samsara* that leads to the *nirvana*, (Ellinger, 1988: 37ff), or to the Africa Traditional Religionist who believes in the interconnectedness of all that “IS” (Mbiti, 1991: 20).

This opens door to the third approach which is *Pluralism*, advocated by scholars such as Heim (1995), Hick (1985), Panikkar (1993), and others¹⁴. For these scholars, *pluralism* is essentially the view that all ethical religions lead to the Divine (1993: v). Taking their argument further, in the words of Sherwin & Kasimow, “pluralists reject the following: first, they reject the *exclusivism* and *inclusivism* stand that Christ is the centre of all. On the contrary, they put God or the Divine at the Centre. For the *pluralists*- God in Christ is only one of many ways that God manifests him/herself in humanity” (1999: 2). As Panikkar explains “...we have seen *exclusivism* and *inclusivism* place Christ and Christianity at the centre of the religious universe. Other religions revolving around this centre find salvation and fulfilment only through Jesus Christ who is superior to any other religious figure. Pluralists, on the contrary, place God rather than Christ at the centre, and Christ is revered and valued as one of many saviour figures together with them, revolving around the one God” (1997: 105-111). This means, according to Knitter (1987a: 225), “there might be other saviours and revealers beside Jesus Christ, and Christianity is just one among many religions through which people can relate and communicate with the Divine”.

Further, pluralists object to the Christian (Catholic) *exclusivist* and *inclusivists*’ views that Christianity is the “only” true path to salvation. For them on the contrary, Christianity is one of the many different paths or religions that lead to the same God, the Divine, whose virtues are: Peace, Well-being, Salvation, Liberation or Enlightenment, etc., (Hick, 1980: 5ff) as the case may be. As Tilley elaborates in his book, *Post-modern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity*; Pluralism, he says,

Is a modern view of the world religions which claim that there are many paths leading to the same God who reveals God-self in many different ways? Each one should, therefore, walk

14 Other proponents of Pluralistic perspective are Paul Knitter, Raymond Panikkar, Roger Haight, Gordon Kaufman, Aloysius Pieris, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Stanley Samartha, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and others. Moreover, the pluralist model is complex and diverse, and includes various approaches to other religions and interreligious dialogue proposed by some scholars, these include: “the historical-philosophical approach of John Hick”, “the theological-mystical approach of Raimon Panikkar”, “the ethical-practical approach of Aloysius Pieris and “the acceptance approach of Mark Heim (cf. Knitter 2002).

one's own path as devotedly as possible in order to be saved (1995: 158).

Third, pluralist theologians such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1980: 66ff), Gordon Kaufman (1996: 31), Stanley Samartha (1991: 57) and others, insist that “salvation is possible in and through a variety of independent and more or less equally valid religious traditions”. Religious traditions, they claim, have the potential to enrich Christianity just as Christianity has the potential to enrich religious traditions. This enrichment facilitates a smooth and healthy interreligious dialogue not only in South Africa but also among other religions in the world. Elaborating on the importance of healthy dialogue that pluralists envisage among religions, Knitter writes:

...While the *inclusivist* model usually emphasizes Jesus' particularity, the *pluralist* model emphasizes God's universal love and presence in other religions. The main concern of the *pluralist* model is therefore how to create a genuine dialogue with other religions and remain faithful to the Gospel. Proponents of *pluralism* consider dialogue as an ethical imperative to love one's neighbour but also ready to listen to other believers, respect them and learn from them. Consequently, for pluralists, dialogue is viewed as a relationship of “mutuality”, a mutual conversation where partners to dialogue are open to learn from each other and possibly change to be better persons (2005: 28-50).

Focusing on the role and place of pluralism in our world today, Okholm and Phillips (1993: 3) note that the fundamental emphasis of the *Pluralists* is on a “common ground” that can be found in and outside every particular religion. The common ground, in Stuckelberger's (2016) view, can equally be described in terms of common aspiration, common ecumenical theology, common socio-economic responsibilities, common morality, and common eschatology, depending on each religion and their contexts. Common aspiration, Hollenbach (2002) asserts, is when religions, religious leaders, and their adherents unanimously identify and more so, pursue strong desires and agendas that promote healthy and constructive dialogue among them. Dhavamony (2003) talks of Common ecumenical theology which for him is motivated by intellectual discourse or deeper enquiry based on respect for one another's views, accurate knowledge of one's beliefs; acceptance of other people's religion and faith, and the honest listening of the other. Knitter (1995), in his book *One Earth, Many Religions* stressed the point of common socio-economic responsibilities. This for him is when religions come together to tackle common problems that face humankind, for instance, the fight against poverty, oppression, injustice, and socio-economic ills that have crippled our society, religions, and the world

at large. For May (2003), common morality emphasised the objective norm of morality in Ethics which all religions of the world should advocate and that is 'good must be done and evil avoided'. And finally, about common eschatology, Shahid (2005) in his book, *The Last Trumpet* focused on what lies beyond the ultimate goal of every religious strives and belief which concretely sums up in doing good, in promoting justice, peace, and well-being to all who live in the world.

According to Hick and Knitter (1987), "if the religions of the world can recognise poverty and oppression as a common problem; if they can share a common commitment" and thus collectively harness responsibility to remove such evils from the world. For the pluralists, the emphases are not on "who includes who or who excludes who", "who is superior or inferior", or "who will not be saved"; rather for them, religion should come from *within*, from the *concrete lived experience* of the people (Hick, 1989: 250). In summary, Pluralism is the belief that: first, there are many religions in the world and Christianity is one of them. Second, there are many parts to salvation and doctrinal beliefs of different religions, and following Jesus is one of them. Third, no single religion holds a monopoly on religious truth (Hick, 2005: 3-12).

Having seen the theology of religions and the concept of pluralism from the European scholarly and theological traditions, let us explore it from the Asian perspective.

Asian Concept of Asian Pluralism: Areas of Convergence and Divergence

The Asian continent is widely known for its pluralism, with the "vast Chinese civilisation one side and civilisation of the Indian sub-continent on the other; each embraces its own rich cultural, social and ethnic diversity around a dominant cultural stream" are one of the essential phenomena that the Asian pluralism promotes. Indonesia as a multicultural and multireligious society is built on the idea of "unity in diversity" - *bhinneka tunggalika*, while Malaysia on the other hand has been described as "an ethnically bifurcated state". Although Japan and Korea are generally regarded as nation-states with ethnic and social homogeneity, they nevertheless are home to a variety of religious and ethnic minorities. Thus, Drysdale (2015) concluded that Asia is synonymous with "heterogeneity- of cultures, ethnicity, religions, political systems, and economic circumstances".

Scholars from Asian backgrounds highlight the ethnic and cultural diversity of the region, as well as new strategies to protect her citizens. Following the same line of thought in her comparative research

project on Asian relations, Professor Hamayotsu writes:

It is an intuitive expectation that democracy will accompany- and reinforce- pluralistic attitudes and mutual respect for all members of society, regardless of their sub-national, ethnic, and religious identity and affiliation (2015: 1).

The political science scholar, Alfred Stepan (2007), advocated the idea of *twin toleration* – which for him is, “mutual respect between and within state and religious institutions- in fostering a modern liberal democracy”. In elaborating his thesis, Stepan (2007) makes it clear that “two specific conditions have to be met in order to guarantee open competition over values, views, and goals that citizens want to advance. One is toleration of religious citizens and communities towards the state, and the other is toleration of the state authorities towards religious citizens and communities” (2007: 56). However, he is skeptical about the possibility of such condition being fulfilled in societies that are deeply divided along religious or ethnic lines – and that this is so particularly in those South-East Asian regions, accepted as religious plural societies, but with simultaneously high degrees of ethnic and religious heterogeneity – where differences are contested. Levine (2009: 407) argued that “For various regimes and ruling elites in those nations, the accommodation of various collective identities to build a common national identity, modern nationhood, and citizenry has not always been easy or peaceful.” These tension and conflicts remain a contemporary challenge, and it is evident from the recurring communal violence and anti-minority movements in countries, such as Myanmar and Indonesia; and the burning of Christian churches in India, conflict of Hindu versus Buddhists fundamentalist in China, the political suppression of Muslim minorities in Myanmar, the banning of Christians in Malaysia not to use the Malay word for God, to mention but a few, (Banks, 1975: 17). Amidst the above challenges, Banks admits that more should be done (1975: 20).

Another aspect of the Asian concept of pluralism is its emphasis on interreligious dialogue in theory and practice, especially in areas of its convergence and divergence. Comparative scholars and those involved in the theory and/or practice of interreligious dialogue, including the Asian counterparts, put two religious traditions in conversation with one another. For instance, in their research, they would explore how Hinduism is in conversation with Christianity, Buddhism with Judaism, Islam with Africa Traditional Religions, and vice versa. This kind of theological approach is promoted by Asian

theologians like Thatamanil (2013)¹⁵, Pyun (1996: 180)¹⁶, Panikkar (1993: 109)¹⁷, and others. These scholars, taking cognisance of their people, and with their Hinduism and Buddhism knowledge and background, seek to enter into conversation with other religions of the world to understand; firstly their Asian religions and secondly how they (the Asian religions) fit into the global history (Seamon 2011: 13). Committing himself in the same work of dialogue and comparative theology, (theology that learns from and with a variety of traditions), Thatamanil re-emphasizes that our ideas about religions and interreligious dialogue, (which already have western influence), must be rethought from the bottom up if we are to move into a rich pluralistic future (2006: 23, also 2013: 9). Following the same line of thought, Pyun (1996) talks about the necessity of transformation from a “theology *and* other religions” to a “theology *of* other religions”. With the “theology *of* other religions”, Pyun affirmed the need for a paradigm shift in the realm of interreligious dialogue, suggesting that the “other religions” of Asia ought to be the final subject of theology itself (1996: 180). He acknowledges that we live in a religiously pluralized world. Thus, in such a world, he asserts, “we should totally abandon theological eagerness to convert people to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on, but rather, should undertake an impartial dialogue with other religions” (1996: 181). Panikkar (1993: 109) interprets ‘impartial dialogue’ as “...a process where each religion provides a “centre” for its believers, a centre which integrates each believer’s self-understanding of him/herself and the society at large. In that self-understanding, each person represents the community and each tradition and society reflects, corrects, complements and challenges the other....” Toeing this line of thought, therefore, dialogue becomes “a vehicle for uncovering common and uncommon ground, potential truth within and across religious traditions, and/or opportunities for cooperation on important social issues facing our communities today” (Cosijns, 2008: 51). For an effective interfaith or religious dialogue to take place in Asia, South Africa and beyond, Kim adds, “Religions should move out of the pulpits, mosques, ashrams, temples to the daily struggles and realities of the people and the society (2008: 197). This leads us to the American conception of the theology of religions in a supposedly secular context.

15 A native of South India, Thatamanil is considered a leader in building mutual respect among different faiths. His research specializes in theologies of religious pluralism with special emphasis on Hindu-Christian dialogue and Buddhist-Christian dialogue (confer. Thatamanil 2013).

16 Sun Hwan Pyun (1927-1995), a Korean theologian who contributed creatively to interreligious dialogue and pluralism with the Asian context. He was deeply engaged in the indigenous Asian theologies and religions.

17 Raimon Panikkar: His autobiography speaks for itself. Born of a Catalan Spanish mother and a high-caste Indian father, Panikkar was, consequently raised “in double tradition –Catholic and Hindu- and later was absorbed by Buddhism”. Panikkar describes his own spiritual journey in India, he says, “I ‘left’ as a Christian, I ‘found’ myself a Hindu and I ‘returned’ a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian” (Panikkar, 1978:2).

American Concept: The Place of Religion in a Secular Society

The secularization thesis holds that religion will retreat from the public arena and eventually disappear from society. The social scientists of the nineteenth century, including Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, all concluded that religion, as it was known, would eventually fade. They believed that the origins of its disappearance stemmed from the Reformation, the Peace of Westphalia, Enlightenment ideas, and Industrialization. In the 1960s, sociologists, including Thomas Luckman (1967) and Peter Berger (1967), developed systematic and comprehensive theories of secularization as we have seen in our contextual framework. However, it became apparent by the late twentieth century that religion had not disappeared from American society or the world. But the question is: where is the place of religion in today's pluralistic world? This is where religious pluralism and secularization theory entered into the debate (Norris & Inglehart, 2007; Casanova, 1994; Asad, 2003).

The relationship between religious pluralism and secularization in the United States has been and continues to be the point of debate. As sociologist Steve Bruce articulates, there are two competing views of the consequences of religious pluralism in the United States. One consequence is that religion will decline. The reason is that "Pluralism universalizes heresy" and through this heresy, religion loses its status in the consciousness of people, thus declines, or disappears in society, (Bruce 1979: 170). A second opposite consequence is that religious pluralism will enhance religion in the United States. This entails that, in an open marketplace, there will be a religious monopoly to stifle competition. Religious denominations will have to compete for religious consumers; they will strive to meet the needs of different types of people. Religious consumers will, therefore, have their needs met and thus, find a religion that suits them and holds their attention (Bruce, 1979: 171).

As the debate on the place of religion in the United States and the World unfold, numerous scholars

18 In support of the second consequence, sociologists like Diana L. Eck and others regard religious pluralism as essential to America's civil religion. She argues that, "right here in the United States, we have an opportunity to create a vibrant and hopeful pluralism, in a world of increasing fragmentation where there are a few models for a truly, multi-religious society (Eck, 2001:25). Religious Pluralism is "the energetic engagement with diversity...the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference ... the encounter of commitments" (Pluralism Project at Harvard University, "What is Pluralism?" <http://pluralism.org>.accessed28september2008). This active engagement with diversity is a source of strength for the American nation. In all the debate and arguments above, Hutchinson reiterates that religious pluralism has been "a *work in progress*" in the United States (Hutchinson, 2003:4).

have critiqued pluralism in general. Scholars like William Connolly, (Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University) writes extensively on religious pluralism and its relationship to power and violence which have crippled not only the United States but also the world at large. In his writing, he seeks to address the dynamics of power and the relationship of this power to civic discourse in a religiously plural democracy. For Connolly, religious pluralism (which inculcates the so-called “virtue of relational modesty between proponents of different faiths and creeds) tends to limit the power of those who would overthrow or challenge the diversity in the name of religious Unitarianism” (2005: 40-41). John Milbank, Professor of Religion, Politics and Ethics, insisted that religious pluralism is a mechanism of power in the West and can only imply a normative position. The phrases ‘religious pluralism’ and ‘dialogue’, according to Milbank, must be understood with the context of Westerners who presume global dominance (1990: 175). Stanley Hauerwas, theologian, and ethicist concur with Milbank. While the phenomenon of religious diversity is benevolent, religious pluralism is not. Hauerwas argues the following: “Pluralism is an ideology used by the western imperialists to give themselves the illusion that they are still in control of or at least have responsibility for the future of the third world countries including that of America (2007: 283). Religion is a designation created to privatize strong convictions to render them harmless so that alleged democracies can continue to have the illusion of differences” (2007: 284). Hauerwas positions religious pluralism as “imperial enforced uniformity”. Hauerwas argues that Christians and adherents of other religions in the West will be able to “have a better interfaith understanding” if they free themselves from any notion that they have a particular role or leadership position in negotiating those differences (2007: 290-292). Milbank and Hauerwas insist that theological and religious ideas are shunned in the public arena to maintain a liberal western hegemony in the United States (2007: 293). Having stated the above, it appears as if religious pluralism has helped as well as hindered religiosity; both consequences are evident in the United States, leading the sociologist of religion, Peter Berger to conclude that “American society has been the vanguard of both religious and secular pluralism” (2007: 23).

It is precisely because much of the scholarship on the theology of religions are imagined as shaped by the European or American academy, that much of the scholarship elsewhere often pay homage to scholars that tradition at the expense of non-western traditions. Above, I mapped and reviewed the Asian conception of pluralism, interreligious diversity, and dialogue to foreground my review of religious diversity and pluralism in South Africa, below.

2.4. South African Interreligious Context

The South African Interreligious context tends to be explained and accounted for through statistics as cited by different scholars. Most scholars regard post-Apartheid South Africa as a religiously diverse country (Chidester, 2006; Tayob and Weisse, 1999; Chipkin and Leatt, 2017). However, while most scholars regard South Africa as a religiously diverse country, there remains significant disagreement about the role and place of religion in building social relations. According to Roux (2000: 173-180), although the 1983 constitution declared South Africa a Christian country, during the 1980s, about 70 percent of the population claimed allegiance to some variety of Christianity; South Africa is not, in fact, a Christian country. Contrarily, according to Coertzen, (2008: 14), the 1994 constitution defines South Africa as “a Constitutional State, which means that the State makes use of a written Constitution and a Bill of Rights (chapter 2 of the constitution) to obtain unity among the diversity of legal groups and legal interest in the country.” As the supreme law in South Africa, the constitution of the country was promulgated in 1996 and consists of the principles and main elements of the new democratic constitutional order. All laws and behaviour that is not in accordance with the constitution are considered invalid (Endoh, 2015; Makgoro, 1998; Simmonds and Du Preez, 2017). One of the founding principles of the South African constitution is based on non-racism and non-sexism. Considering the history of apartheid, a key focus and objective in a democratic South Africa was the protection of human rights. This is another founding principle in the constitution, which explicitly states that its purpose is to eradicate inequality, discrimination, and injustices perpetrated in the past (Mubangizi, 2004; Liebenberg, 2002; Alston, 2002). This extends to religion as well as individuals not being discriminated against and persecuted on religious grounds. The constitution has also been designed to instil religious tolerance and plurality. The right to religious freedom and equality forms part of the idea of promoting tolerance and more so, supports religious activities and continuous processes of interfaith dialogue among religions in South Africa (Du Plessis, 2001, Leatt 2017). The same right to religious freedom was also extended to those who hold no religious beliefs (Rousseau 2012).¹⁹

Manzo, in his book, *Creating Boundaries: the Politics of Race and Nation*, (1996: 74) argues that Christianity itself is not single, uniform tradition, but “a diverse category, encompassing many different Christian affiliations, with varying doctrines, practices, and forms of organization.”

¹⁹ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2012-08-14-sa-religion-eyes-wide-shut/>

Christianity itself is plural, and therefore, cannot provide a single designation for the religious character of South Africa. Chidester, in his work *Religions in South Africa* (1992: 12) holds that, although South Africa is a country that contains nearly all the “world religions”, however, South Africa could never be regarded as an exclusively Christian country. Following the same line of thought, Du Plessis (2001: 439) states that another reason why South Africa cannot be regarded as an exclusively Christian country is most important for negotiations over its constitutional law in the new democracy. In Du Plessis’ view, (2001) South Africa cannot be declared a Christian country because doing so violates, firstly, the fundamental principles of the freedom of religion²⁰ enshrined in the “Bill of Rights”, and secondly, it goes against the promotion of the nation-building value of social cohesion and promoting democracy.

Sociologists Ivor Chipkin and Bongani Ngqulunga (2008: 61) have argued that social cohesion must be understood as those intangible relations, practices, and ideals that hold a nation together, and they express it as “a situation where citizens of a state share feelings of solidarity with their compatriots and act on the basis of such feelings”. The South African Constitution, as already stated, “acknowledges diversity (of race, culture, religion, sexual orientation), promotes tolerance and is against discrimination of all sorts.” As this is being digested, the South African “rainbow-nation” narrative, in the same vein, tends to “focus on tolerance and recognition of diversity as its strength” (Tutu, 1994). But the question that remains unanswered is: “is tolerance sufficient for social cohesion”? “Is the fact that people tolerate each other and each other’s beliefs enough for society to cohere”? Historian of religion, Chirevo Kwenda (2003) pushes the issue further by advocating for “cultural justice where members of each cultural group are not alienated from the nation-building project”. Cultural justice is the recognition that, “... there is a creative centre in every culture and only from within that centre can people be really influenced”. In other words, cultural justice ensures that “all citizens are able to draw on their cultural and religious resources without any fear of being discriminated against” (Idang, 2015). Cultural justice, according to Masondo (2014):

is not just about tolerance, but about treating other people’s culture and religious beliefs justly

²⁰ By definition, freedom of religion implies two guarantees of personal liberty namely: the freedom of religious thought and expression, and the freedom from religious discrimination. It also guarantees the freedom of religious belief, which must be unconditionally protected, and the freedom of religious practice and coercion, which must be protected as long as it does not violate civil or criminal laws protecting persons and properties (Khaitan and Norton, 2019: 1125-1145).

by accepting them, accepting the fact that these cultures and/or religions have meaning and values for their adherents. Moreover, in cultural justice applications, there has to be recognition of the potential of each of these cultures and religions. They need to be given social and intellectual space to grow, develop and thrive. Through some of their spiritual resources, citizens (including those of South Africa) would be able to preserve certain aspects of their (African) tradition, culture, and religion.

David Chidester (2000) suggests that South Africa is still suffering from a hangover, or residue of what might be called the colonial comparative religion, where: “European explorers, travellers, missionaries, settlers, and colonial administrators recorded their findings on indigenous religions all over the world. With remarkable consistency over a period of five hundred years, these European observers reported that they found people in the Americas, Africans, and Pacific Islands who lacked any trace of religion” (427). How African forms of religious thought and experience are treated, even in a democratic South Africa, reflects and embodies this lack of respect and appreciation for African religion in everyday practices and critiques.

Section 15 (1) of the Bill of Rights says, “Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion”. According to Ebrahim Moosa (2000), the South African Constitution reflects a dualistic view of religion. He argues that this is so because “firstly, religion is seen as an abstract and unarticulated dogma and secondly, as practice”. Bring the two arguments together according to Moosa (2000) presupposes that “the translation of belief into practice is severely limited by the Constitution”. Following this line of thought, in Van Der Westhuizen and Heyns’ (1993:93) views, it seems that is the Constitution’s bias towards the individualization of religion and the confining of it to the private spheres of life, means that “wherever, and whenever religion appears in public spaces, the State will be inclined to regulate its ways that allow the norms and values of the secular state to be unaffected. By this view, we can conclude that individual beliefs and practices are permitted, provided that they don’t break the laws of the country”. Chipkin and Ngqulunga (2008) concluded that “what holds South Africa together is not a single culture or religion, ethnicity or language but a shared commitment to principles of diversity, equality (equity) and justice as enshrined in the Constitution.” For Kwenda (2003: 78), the tension and ambivalences are not likely to undermine social cohesion, and instead he argues that “if approached with mutual respect and the spirit of reciprocity, it can yield profound social benefits. Indeed, it can be the basis of social

cohesion”.

Accounts of Religious Diversity

Approximately 80 percent of the population is Christian and is divided into various denominations (Kuperus, 2011; Nyamiti, 1984; Oladipo, 2006;). According to Godsell (2007), the white Afrikaner community, historically, belongs to the Dutch Reformed church and White English-speaking people belong to the Methodist, Roman Catholic, or Anglican churches (Goodsell, 2007). Almost 25 percent of people from mixed heritage belong to the Roman Catholic or Anglican churches (Oladipo, 2006). Nearly 10 percent of Asians are Christians (Van der Walt, 2010). Almost 25 percents are black separatists or indigenous Christian movements, frequently described as “syncretistic” churches, combining Christianity with African traditions such as worshipping spirits and revering ancestors (Goodsell, 2007; Van der Walt et al. 2010).

Hindus, Muslims, and Jews comprise the next three largest religious denominations. Although they are minority religious groups, (Hindus are 1.75 percent of the total population; Muslims consist of 1.09 percent of adherents, and Jews who are mainly orthodox constitute 0.41 percent of followers), they have established a lasting presence in South African history and society (Goodsell 2007: 116). Each of these three religions has had to endure discrimination legislation and anti-alien restrictions during British colonialism and thereafter apartheid. For example, from 1913, Hindu and Muslim marriages were not recognized and only received recognition in post-apartheid South Africa (Rautenbach, 2014; Amien, 2010). Other religious groups such as Rastafarians, Jainism, Buddhism, and Baha’i constitute a minute proportion of the population (Chawane, 2014; Clasquin, 1999; Wratten, 1995).

African Indigenous Religions (AIR) refers to the native religion of black Africans which has been orally transmitted across generations (Gathogo, 2008: 577), and for many people, their religious customs and practices are rooted in African traditional religion (Lubisi, 2001). About 15 percent of the South African population, that is black Africans, belong to the AIR and constitute the second-largest religious group (Mululeke, 2005), and as such requires that more academic and legislative attention be paid to this religious tradition.

Having seen the above statistics, Nhlapo and Garuba 2012 maintain that religion played and continues to play a pivotal role in the lives of the majority of South Africans. During the apartheid era, religious freedom and accommodation were restricted, and non-Christian religious practices and observances were not allowed (Chidester, 2003). With the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa witnessed an increased visibility of Muslims, Hindus, Jews, followers of the Africa indigenous religions (AIR), and other minority religious groups entering the workplace and other parts of the society and thus ushered in a new dawn in South Africa (Maharaj, 1997). Of these traditions, African Traditional Religion continues to struggle for recognition and inclusion in the public imagination.

Centring African Traditional Religion

Africa, Bujo (2001) argued, “was and still is, rich in cosmological ideas”. Though the diversity of Africa’s religious and cosmological heritage has been little known outside the continent, however, researchers in African studies have developed a serious interest in African religions (Madu, 1992; Magesa, 2008; Idowu, 2012, et al.). The term ‘African Traditional Religion’ is used herein two complementary senses. First, it encompassed all African beliefs and practices that are considered religious but neither Christian nor Islamic or any other religion(s) ascribed in this study (Kalu, 1979). Secondly, the expression is also used as a technical term for a particular interpretation of such beliefs and practices, one that purports to show that ATR constitutes a systemic whole, i.e., a religion, meaning, “peoples way of life which existed prior to the arrival of the colonial masters and missionaries in Africa” (Achebe, 1965) as explored in chapter four. Brought to prominent by Parrinder (1954), Idowu (1973), and John Mbiti (1991), the field of scholarship emerged as a protest against a long history of derogatory evaluations of Africans religions and beliefs as ‘heathen’, ‘pagan’, ‘fetishist’, and ‘uncivilized’²¹.

According to Moyo (2007), ATR also “forms part and parcel of African cosmology or world-view”. Nyang (1980) quoting Mbiti (1991) confirms that “Africa’s traditional cosmology is diverse but behind this diversity lies the core of shared beliefs which spread across the continent”. This ‘core of shared beliefs’ is captured in Opoku’s

21 For more detail consult: Tusso, H., 2014: 148-149. “The Role of Indigenous African Religion in Peace-making” in Matyok, T., Flaherty, M., Tusso, H., Senehi, J., & Byrne, S. *Peace on Earth: The Role in Peace and Conflict Studies*. Maryland: Lexington Books.

(1993: 67) description of African Traditional Religion as that: "...part of the religious heritage of humankind. Born out of the experience and deep reflection of our African forebears, it provides answers to the stirring of the human spirit and elaborated on the profundity of the experience of the divine-human encounter based on the resources of Africa's own cultural heritage and insight".

Looking at this definition, I distil three essential points that are relevant to research: First, is that ATR is part of the religious heritage of humankind. Second, it is an indigenous system of belief and practices that identify who people are, including the ancestors. Thirdly, for many Africans, religion permeates into all aspects of their life. In other words, religion cannot be separated from their daily living and experiences, which include "different passages of life, starting from birth and naming of a child, adolescence, puberty, diet, dress, arts, poetry, literature, economics," (Anyanwu, 1975; Ekwueme and Egwuda-Ugbada, 2016), to mention but a few. These are universal concepts that are part and parcel of global living and challenges that face humanity today.

In the South African context and with the advent of democracy, not only is African Traditional Religion brought into the public domain, such as with the presidential inauguration of Nelson Mandela (Chidester 2012, Jethro 2019) but also it receives increasing space in the academy (Masondo 2005, 20014), religious education (Kwenda 1997, Phiri 2008) and in socio-legal discourse (Settler 2011. Mndende 2013). With the widespread recognition of African traditional religion, South Africans saw an accompanying increase in public practice and contestations related to African Traditional religion (Denis 2006). Despite social anxieties regarding indigenous practices, ATR grew to prominence, supported by constitutional protection and disputes being mediated through the Commission for the protection of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Rights (Mndende 2013). This recognition of African traditional Religion in postcolonial South Africa is further upheld by scholarships in the field such as *Wild Religion* (Chidester 2012), *Traditional African Religions in South African Law* Bennet 2011), *Beyond Primitivism* (Olupona 2003), each starting with a recognition of ATR, not just as part of the religious history of Africa, but a central part of future scholarship in religion.

So, having reviewed these scholarly texts, there is little doubt that African understanding of religion has something to contribute to this thesis and future researches on this field. It is based on these arguments that I identified four major components of ATR, namely: the concept of God, ancestors, ubuntu (neighbour), and nature which will be brought into conversation with John Hick's theology of religions, in Chapters 6, and possibly lay some foundations for what a postcolonial theology of religions would for South Africa and Africa.

2.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we reviewed the relevant literature of the study which were organized around the following themes (1) Theology of religions, (2) John Hick and religious pluralism, (3) South African Interreligious dialogue, and (4) ATR. We also explored the different opinions of scholars on the themes, and thus, issues arising from the themes helped us contextualize the South African situations of religions and interfaith dialogue. With regard to the first theme, namely, Theology of Religions, I acknowledged the complexity around the different theologies and concepts of religion and thus narrowed the scope of literature to Western, Asian, and American concepts of pluralism and theologies of religions. While Asian scholars and works of literature took cognisance of the heterogeneity of their cultures, religions, political systems, and economic circumstances, most American writers conceptualized their society as primarily, or increasingly secular. With regards to the second theme, John Hick and Religious Pluralism, the different literature reviewed here encompasses his pluralistic hypothesis, where he suggests that religions should be viewed as “different human responses to the One Divine Reality; that Divine Reality consists of moral good which is the natural consciousness in every human being to sift between what is good and evil. Applying this in our daily living, every religion and its adherents can discern the utterly basic principle that “it is evil to cause suffering to others and good to live in mutual understanding which in turn promotes peace and well-being, starting from individuals themselves and the communities in South Africa and beyond. Concerning the South African Interreligious context, the literature reviewed, suggest that despite the religious diversity in the country, social and legal protections prevail for both world religion, as well as for African traditional religion(s).

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN HICK AND HIS THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Religious pluralism, which is among the major topics in the theology of religions, is among the most critical and demanding social, legal, and ethical issues facing traditional Christianity as well as other religions. The constructive works of John Hick, who is by many regards as a founding contributor of the modern field of religious pluralism and interfaith relations, proposed the possibility to Christian normative conceptions of religion, that contested their notion of salvation “only” in Jesus, and thus offers new and diverse approaches on religious plurality. This is born out of the idea that other religions of the world may as well be regarded as a resource to peace and well-being, and more so, offer are alternative ways of salvation. Connecting to the above points, this chapter analyses the main themes of Hick’s theology, the foundation of his theology of religions, and the main influence on his theological thought, these include his pluralism, Copernican Revolution, Christology, as well as his notion of world religions as a resource for peace and well-being. One will only understand Hick’s theology by tracing the history of life, in other words, his biography and journey of faith. All these shaped his theological thoughts and worldview as we will explore in this chapter.

3.2. HICK’S CHILDHOOD, EDUCATION, AND EARLY CAREER

John Harwood Hick, as stated in the literature review, was born on 20 January 1922 in Scarborough, Yorkshire, and as a child, he was taken to the local Anglican parish church. He did meet George Jeffreys, one of the founding figures of the Elim Pentecostal Church in 1930, when Jeffreys was visiting the home of Hick’s grandmother to conduct a prayer meeting. Hick felt, “a strong physical effect, like an electric shock except that it was not a sharp jolt but a pervasive sensation spreading through my body” (1999: 161). The experience left Hick with an intense feeling of emotional release. Although dissatisfied with what the church offered him in his spiritual quest, Hick always maintained the belief in a “rather strong sense of the reality of God as the personal and loving lord of the universe (Aslan, 2004: 2; also Hick, 1980: 14).

From his early youth, Hick began to realize the value of possessing “an independent, critical and questioning mind”. It was this ability that set him off on an intellectual journey to find a more satisfying and spiritually accommodating religious outlook in which he would feel at home (Aslan, 2004: 2). As D’Costa describes it, “Hick’s religious attitude was one of opening the diverse interpretations of the divine that were then available to him through spiritualists, Pentecostals, Theosophists, and other voices” (D’Costa, 1997: 268). All these quests and search for knowledge shaped Hick’s entry into university.

Hick began his university education as a law student at the University College, Hull, where his intellectual life was marked by a very important event, a deep religious conversion, at the time, making him a “Christian of a strongly evangelical and indeed fundamentalist kind” (Sinkinson, 2001: 3). Hick’s conversion experience emanated from reading the New Testament and was informed by the teachings, the life, and personality of Jesus. As his journey of faith continued, a critical thinking and questioning orientation emerged, thus he wrote:

... I believe that anyone who is either born or “born again” into conservative evangelical thought-world, and who has a questioning mind, will find that he has to face challenges to the belief system within which is Christian faith... [and] the body of theological theories associated with it in his mind will usually change, and surely ought to change, in the light of future living, learning and thinking (Hick, 1970: 43ff).

It was around 1940 when he began his studies in philosophy at Edinburgh University, that Hick’s interest in religion was properly awakened. At Edinburgh University, Hick was a staunch member of the Christian union “attending virtually all its Bible studies, prayer meetings and talks and engaging in such evangelical activities such as ward services in the Edinburgh infirmary” (Hick, 1980: 15). But unfortunately, his education was interrupted by the Second World War which forced him to leave Edinburgh, only to return to the city in 1945 to resume his studies. Although he was “as emphatically a Christian as before”, he did not, however, re-join the Christian Union as he began to believe that it was too rigid and narrow-minded in its outlook (Hick, 1980: 15). For example, he felt that some members of the Christian Union were intellectually dishonest in their attempts to reconcile the opening chapters of Genesis with contemporary scientific thought (Hick, 1980: 15).

In 1948, having graduated from Edinburgh University with first-class honours, Hick began a research programme at Oriel College, Oxford, with the aid of a Campell Fraser Scholarship under “the benign but penetrating critical supervision of H.H Price” (Sinkinson, 2001: 3), whose implicit influence on Hick can be discerned in his thoughts and writings (Aslan, 2004: 4). The area of his research lay in the philosophy of religion and, in particular, the nature of religious faith. His thesis eventually became the basis for his first book, *Faith and Knowledge*, first published in 1957 (Sinkinson, 2001: 3).

In 1950, Hick completed his Doctoral thesis (at Oriel College, Oxford), and then went on to Westminster Theological College, Cambridge., where he undertook his first formal study of theology. After three years of ministerial training, Hick moved to Belford Presbyterian Church to take up a parish ministry. This pastoral appointment lasted from 1953 to 1956, during which time he married his wife Joan Hazel Bowers with whom he had three children. At this stage, Hick was still on a journey of faith, asking questions, researching, and pondering on his faith journey, on human relationship and existence.

In 1956, moved to the United States to take up an appointment as Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Cornell University, before moving to Princeton Theological Seminary in the autumn of 1959. He was appointed as the Stuart Chair of Christian Philosophy and soon published *Faith and Knowledge* in 1957 with Cornell University Press. The book played an important role in Hick’s philosophy of religion and later in his theology (Hick, 2002: 14)²². In the early 1960s, he returned to England and was later appointed as Lecturer in the philosophy of religion in the Divinity School at Cambridge University until 1967. During this period, Hick published three important books, namely: *Philosophy of Religion* (1963), *Classic and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (1964), and *Evil and the God of Love* (1966). Commenting on how the book, “*Evil and the God of Love*” came about, Hick writes:

22 In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hick introduced his revolutionary theory of faith as: “a total interpretation of the universe which functions as the interpretative element within religious experience. This theory is revolutionary because it asserts that faith is not an affirmation of certain “revealed” prepositions, but a way of looking at or interpreting the things that we encounter (Aslan, 2004:5). So, when faith is defined as “total interpretation of the universe”, the emphasis upon believing the revealed prepositions of a particular religion is minimized. Hence, it opens the way by which one can acknowledge the value of other religions and this idea is what Hick tends to promote his pluralistic hypothesis (Hick, 2002: 14); (also, Sinkinson, 2001:4).

Indeed, my own experience, working in philosophical theology, has been one of the continually expanding horizons as the investigation of one problem has brought another, larger problem into view. When I wrote my first book, *Faith and Knowledge*, first published in 1957, I never expected to write another. I thought that I had said all that I had to say...[but] “*Evil and the God of Love*” [...] built upon the epistemology developed in *Faith and Knowledge*, particularly in the notion of “epistemic distance” and in the notion of faith as a fundamental expression of human freedom (Hick, 1980: 16).

It is this fundamental expression of human knowledge and freedom that Hick demonstrated in his writings. During the same period, Hick’s writings, books, and articles were still written as a defence of the orthodox Christian faith. It can of course be argued that Hick’s writing is also an account of his intellectual and spiritual encounters with other religions and his questioning of Christianity as the only true way to salvation. Hick went through his intellectual development without seemingly appreciating the magnitude and implications of religious pluralism. When he did begin to face these challenges would be a turning point in Hick’s life which led to his later ideas. Reviewing this period of his myopic view of reality, Hick writes:

During this period, I had virtually no contact with other religious traditions; neither Judaism or Islam nor the faiths of Indian and Chinese origin. In spite of having spent many months in Muslim Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, and a short time in Palestine (as it then was), I had no appreciation whatever of Islam or Judaism as religions. Nor, except for one short course, was I introduced during my theological training to the history or theology of religions; and during my subsequent pastorate in rural Northumberland, such matters were far beyond the horizon alike of my congregation and of myself.... Further, I long shared the common ecclesiastical assumption that the whole human race ought to be converted to Christianity. I remember being indignant at Reinhold Niebur’s statement that the mission to the Jews was a mistake- though I can now see that he was entirely right (Aslan, 2004: 8; Hick, 2002: 16).

3.4. DEVELOPMENT OF HICK’S PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

In 1963, Hick moved from Cambridge to Birmingham; there he took up the H.G Wood Professorship

in the Theology Department at Birmingham University, and thus began a phase that would lead to a revolution in his thinking. As he reiterated, his interaction with the multi-faith communities in Birmingham marked a turning point in his life as far as the issues of religious pluralism were a concern (Hick, 2002: 20). Stetson (1996: 9 -10) concluded that Birmingham:

was and is itself a hotbed of religious and cultural pluralism, claiming large populations of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs- among others- from all over the world. Despite this teeming diversity, Hick nonetheless, observed pervasive racism entrenched in the British mind, which he attributed to centuries of British imperialism and its attendant misimpression of socio-cultural superiority. Moreover, he noted that this bigotry was not lost on the local Christian churches- and particularly the Church of England- who manifested the same intolerance on a religious level.

For Hick, the contradictions and bigoted approaches to religious diversity became increasingly evident in his life situations. For example, at the University of Birmingham, one of the core requirements of the curriculum was that each student had to study the doctrines of the Church of England, regardless of their religious heritage, beliefs, or practices. To Hick, this demonstrated a clear disregard for any religious beliefs and practices other than the normal Christian tradition, embodied by Anglican Christianity. Frustrated and appalled by this dehumanizing, short-sighted parochialism, Hick, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Religious and Cultural Panel of the Community Relations Committee and of “All Faiths for One Race”, effect appropriate changes - as a way to introduce and pilot a number of religiously inclusive initiatives in the University’s curriculum and policies more generally. The point that is well noted here is that Hick opposed a policy requiring students to study the doctrines of the Church of England regardless of their respective religious traditions. “This motivated him”, according to Smid (2005), “to get involved in promoting ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue not only in the university but also in the larger communities of Birmingham”. However, the more significant challenge to Hick’s theology would not be from the academy but instead, this came from the civic administration of Birmingham itself. Birmingham City Council, which already back then, as it does now, embody a large multi-faith community including substantial numbers of religious minorities (Hick, 1980: 17).

Thus, in Birmingham, Hick became involved in the work of race and community relations. He made several friends and colleagues that were Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, and started to attend prayers and worship in their mosques, synagogues, temples, ashrams, and gurdwaras. When Hick observed

non-Christian believers when they were worshipping, he concluded that “essentially the same kind of divine interaction taking place in them is similar to that of a Christian church”. Thus, he concludes that:

In a non-Christian and Christian worship alike, human being opens their minds to a higher divine Reality, known as personal and good and as demanding righteousness and love between man and man, I could see that the Sikh faith, for instance, is to the devoted Sikh what the Christian faith is to the sincere Christian; but that faith is, naturally enough, perceived by its adherents as being unique and absolute (Hick, 1980: 18).

Hick became one of the founders and first chairman of a voluntary group known as AFFOR (All Faith for One Race), with the mission of promoting diversity and inclusion. He also served on other committees such as Birmingham Community Relations Committee, the Birmingham Inter-faiths Council, the Religious and Cultural Panel; and also he served as chair of the Coordinating Committee of the Statutory Conference purposed with developing a new agreed-upon syllabus for religious education in the city’s schools (Hick, 1995: 27). In this last position, he served for two years and oversaw the replacement of the previous exclusive Christian curriculum, with a more inclusive multi-faith curriculum for schools. Despite working with activists, multi-faith and humanist groups, who sought to combat racism perpetuated by the National Front and the British National Party (Aslan, 2004: 8; also Sinkinson, 2001: 9), Hick’s prominence was significantly due to his position as a white protestant clergy. His struggle against racism came out vividly in one of his writings when he asserts as follows:

... it is unfortunately timed that in Britain only a small minority of churchmen and theologians of any persuasion are actively expressing their faith politically, ...I have certainly found myself that in multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-faith Birmingham the acceptance of all human beings (and not only fellow Christians) as children of God, and acceptance of the other great religions (and not only Christianity) as having their own spiritual validity, involves activity of a broadly political kind, seeking through the work of religious organizations to implement these attitudes (Hick, 1980: 120).

As Hick was interacting and working with these multi-faith groups, he was also challenged by the quality of life and spirituality that they embodied. Hence, there was no doubt that Hick’s religious

experience in Birmingham marked a significant stage in the development of his philosophy of religion, thus he writes:

...It is not so much new thoughts as new experiences that drew me, as a philosopher, into the issues of religious pluralism, and as a Christian into inter-faith dialogue... Encounters with remarkable individuals of several faiths, people whom I cannot but deeply respect, and in some cases even regard as saints, have reinforced the realization that our very different religious traditions constitute alternative human contexts of response to the one ultimate transcendent divine reality (Hick, 1992: 141).

William James (2004: 5) argued that since religious beliefs are merely rules that inform conduct or actions; Hick's pursuit of a functionalist religious pluralism can also be viewed as his proposal for a set of beliefs, values, and virtues that could inform the global problem of religious intolerance and fear.²³ Indeed, Hick developed responses to what he perceived to be very concrete concerns, and as such he committed himself to develop a systematic set of theories related to religious pluralism, and these new experiences significantly shaped Hick's thinking. The development of Hick's theology which articulates his stand on religious pluralism can be summed up into the following themes: the influence by the Copernican revolution, Christology, and understanding of world religions as a resource for social transformation. However, Hick's theology of religions was also in part shaped by his visit to South Africa, where racism and religious discrimination coalesced. It cannot be argued that any single one of these events can be argued to have determined Hick's theology of religions, but they variously present as significant in the development of his theology of religions.

3.4.1 HICK'S INFLUENCE BY THE COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

Hick taught at Birmingham University from 1963 to 1982. During this period, he published three important books, namely: *God and the Universe of Faiths* (1973), *Death and Eternal Life* (1976), and *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977). *God and the Universe of Faiths* is a collection of several important articles, some of which Hick delivered as public lectures in Birmingham. The book emphatically covers the major themes of Hick's philosophy of religion including such subjects as theodicy, religious pluralism, and Christology (Aslan, 2004: 9). When one glances at Hick's overall writings,

²³ <https://quizlet.com/ca/284199439/william-jamess-will-to-believe-flash-cards/> (refer also: Krey, P 2004:1-4).

one might state that “*God and the Universe of Faith*” is a summary of his (Hick’s) entire philosophy. However, it was articles such as “*The Essence of Christianity*”, “*The Copernican Revolution in Theology*”, “*The New Map of the Universe of Faiths*”, “*Christ and Incarnation*”, together with “*Incarnation and Mythology*” that made an indelible impact, not only upon contemporary philosophy of religion but also upon modern Christian Theology (1995: 83). All these articles form a simple and yet powerful argument for what is now known as Hick’s pluralistic hypothesis which we will later discuss in the thesis.

In “*God and the Universe of Faiths*”, Hick wanted to establish a viable and profound theology of religions; this he did by suggesting a Copernican Revolution in theology (1988: 25ff). To expatiate more on this point, Hick uses an astronomical analogy: Ptolemaic astronomers saw the earth as the centre of the universe and explained the movements of the planet by suggesting epicycles. The Copernican revolution replaced Ptolemaic theory by offering a simple alternative explanation which states that the “Sun rather the earth, was at the centre of the universe (Hick, 1970: 339). Hick was attracted to the idea advocated by Ptolemaic theology, that Christ was located at the centre of a collection of universal faith; but he also held that this old system of theology does not promote fruitful and progressive theologies of religions (1972: 38). On the contrary, Hick is influenced by what he claimed to be “a Copernican Revolution in theology”²⁴.

A Copernican Revolution in theology, according to Hick, aims as a “shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre- to the realization that it is God (the Divine) who is at centre; and that all the religions of Humanity (Human Kind), including Christianity, serve and revolve around Him, namely, The Divine (Hick, 1980: 18ff).

Like Copernicus’ model of the universe, Hick’s view of the world and the religions within it involves a similarly altered conception of the universe of religions and where ones’ faith and worldview fits - “(it demands) a paradigm shift from a Christianity (or Jesus)-centred to God-centred model of the

²⁴ A Polish Astronomer, Nicholas Copernicus, proposed a far simpler and more fruitful model. According to Copernicus, the Sun was at rest in the centre of the celestial system and “epicycles” were no longer necessary to explain the movement of the planets. Thus, for him, it was the Sun that lay at the centre of the universe and not the earth. Like Copernicus, Hick says that, “May be all religions don’t revolve around Christianity but may be all religion revolves around the Divine” (Hick, 1980: 230).

universe faiths.” Accordingly, such a radically altered perspective on the world of religion means that we come to regard different world religions as different perceptions that have been produced out of particular histories and cultural circumstances (Hick, 1973: 131).

Christocentricism means everything is centred in Jesus and *Theocentricism* means everything is centred in God or the Divine. With his ‘Copernican Revolution’, Hick puts God or the Divine in the centre instead of Jesus and argues that religions, including Christianity, revolved around God or the Sacred, (i.e. the Ultimate Reality), (Hick, 1977: 176). Interestingly, as described above, whereas the “original Copernican revolution” in astronomy experiencing the subject is displaced from being the centre of the universe. Instead, Hick’s religious “Copernican revolution” places the *experiencing self* at the centre of the universe. Thus, as Hick understands it, “religion is no longer *christocentric* but has become *theocentric*: God is at the centre and all human religions, including Christianity, “serve and revolve around Him” (1972: 38). In other words, for Hick, every religious faith is a historical-cultural realization of our experience of divine reality which is the natural consciousness in every human person to do good and avoid evil (2002: 68).

More so, Hick’s justification of his claim of the ‘Copernican revolution’ is informed by his long-held belief in the universal salvific will of God, which he refers to as the Divine. “He has seen men and women who disbelieve the Christian claims about Jesus, but still lived moral lives and he could not accept that such people might be unacceptable to God” (Hick, 1977: 167). He regularly registered his objection through a refusal to uphold the dogma that human salvation is only possible through Christ. For John Hick, Jesus as the Christian ideal of salvation is only but one of many different possible ways for humans to experience salvation (1982: 703). He would later conclude that “Jesus was a human being who made God real to those who follow Him through His God-consciousness, His openness to God’s presence and divine inspiration” (1981: 20).

This concrete *theocentric* approach means that Christian claims on the status of the person of Jesus are regarded and viewed to be on the same level as similar claims by people of the other faith traditions about their religious figures from within their respective traditions. The emphasis here is that it places Christian beliefs about God’s activity in Jesus on a par with divine activity embodied, or carried out by other great human mediators believed to have special relations with the divine. Thus, it privileges a reality-centred understanding of religions - without giving up the central significance of Christ for Christians, Mohammad for Muslims, Buddha for Buddhism, Krishna for Hindu, etc. For

Hick, what is essential is for religions of the world to be a great resource for peace and well-being to their adherents and communities where they are established (1974: 17).

3.4.2. HICK'S CHRISTOLOGY

According to Chidester, in his reviewed article on the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (1987: 81-86), "the history of Christendom is widely stamped by the so-called 'dogma' of traditional orthodox that Jesus was God incarnate. It means that Jesus is the Son of God as well as the second person of the divine Trinity. Jesus thus became a man to die for the sins of the world. He as well found the church proclaim this to the ends of the earth". Hick, in his book, *God and the Universe of Faith* (1973), reflects on the implications of this "high" traditional Christology as he called it, which he claimed was established in the early Christian era. He argues that "the propositional truth-claims of this Christology, most significantly, the insistence on the uniqueness of the revelation of Jesus Christ, are indefensible"; in other words, such dogmatic views no longer has currency and appeal in the contemporary social contexts which are characterised by religious and ethnic diversity. Such shift to more inclusive and accommodating societies, Hick claims, "will facilitate not only a more authentic self-understanding of Christian experience but also a greater harmony among the world religions, most notably Judaism and Islam" (Hick, 1973: 52). According to Hick's theory of (religious) experience, religious persons within their respective traditions, and Christians for example will come to understand their claims regarding Jesus as signaling a particular interpretation of the supposedly historical events surrounding Jesus' life as being a particular religious significance to them, while the same events may be insignificant to another person (Hick, 1973: 55).

Wesley Wildman in his "*Fidelity with Plausibility*" reflects on Hick's theory and provides helpful insights. Wildman suggests that:

There are two complementary ways in which Hick approaches the religious significance of Jesus for Christianity. First, he questions whether Jesus, as a historical figure, is a "worthy referent" for religious experience. In other words, Jesus must have sufficient historical experience to merit being the subject of contemporary religious experience. Second, he determines to what degree a theological interpretation can be

applied to the historical reconstruction of Jesus in the first place. He insists that many of the meanings applied to Christology can remain meaningful, but that their metaphysical form is often less than adequate (1998: 200).

The two-fold discrimination, Wildman refers to as an inspirational Christology, insofar as the historical events believed to be related to the life of Jesus Christ, may inspire and motivate people into particular beliefs and actions- he holds that these should primarily be regarded as revelatory and inspirational, as opposed to actual (1998: 193-216).

Having noted the above statements, and although Hick was able to always appreciate the theological and philosophical origins of various Christian doctrines, and their accompanying religious significance – over several generations, he formulated three objections to the continued insistence on its literal religious interpretation (especially in Christianity). The first is the lack of what he called the “dominical authority” for the teaching (Hick, 1995: 95) – because according to Hick, Jesus did not declare himself Messiah or the Son of God, nor did he accept designation or claims about his divinity from others. This is a creation of the church, Hick says (1995: 98). Second, Hick argues that the church and theology failed to provide a coherent and compelling explanation about the content of the doctrine that continues to be understood in literal terms, despite evidence to the contrary (Hick, 1993: 99). In this regard, Hick draws the reader’s attention to what he calls “the problem of incompatible attributes ascribed to Jesus, divinity, and humanity” (1993:94). Third, is historical contestation and controversies born out of the Church’s insistence that Jesus is the Son of God in a peculiar and unique sense (Hick, 1995: 95).

As an alternative to the literal understanding of traditional doctrine, Hick contends that “the notion of Jesus being true God and Man incoherent. That Jesus was God the Son incarnate is not literally true, since it has no literal meaning, but it is an application to Jesus of a “mythical concept whose function is analogous to that of the notion of Divine Sonship ascribed in the ancient world to a king” (Hick, 1977: 178). Hick not only invites but demands reinterpretation of the Christian belief in the incarnation and divinity of Jesus because he argued that it is better understood as myth or metaphor (1977: 180; Knitter, 2000: 195). Adding more flesh to this, Monika Hellwing (1970) reflecting on Knitter and Hick’s approach, suggests that “a reinterpretation of traditional Christology might well begin with the recognition of the nature of the language used by early Christians to speak about the

divinity and uniqueness of Jesus.” This is evident and motivated by the religious language, mythic, poetic, used to express “the unknowns in the Christian experience of the divine intervention” – and as such “language will always remain mysterious and should not be pinned down to absolute, ontological statements” (1970:25). Hellwing (1970) suggests that when Christians interpret their experiences with the divine as a radical encounter with God, such language is best interpreted in strictly phenomenological terms (1970: 49).

Recognizing the above points, Hicks in his books, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977: 179) and *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (1993: 154), proposes a reinterpretation of the traditional Christology, particularly the doctrine of the Incarnation which teaches that Jesus is the Son of God as well as the second person of the divine trinity (Okholm, 1996: 51), as indicated above. On the contrary, Hick asserts that: “the historical Jesus of Nazareth did not teach or apparently believe that he was God, or God the Son, Second Person of a Holy Trinity, incarnate, or the son of God in a unique sense” (1987: 13). As part of him promoting his universal theology of religions and peace, Hick suggests Jesus (for example) cannot be literally understood as God in the flesh (incarnate), but that it would be best understood and interpreted metaphorically – thus advocating a metaphorical approach to incarnation. In other words, for Hick, “Jesus was so open to divine inspiration, so responsive to the divine spirit, so obedient to God’s will that God was to act on earth in and through him” (1995: 23). Jesus was all things to all people. His central message was ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 15: 12), and this love should prevail among different religions in South Africa and Africa as a whole. This I (Hick) believe, is the true Christian doctrine of the Incarnation (1995: 58).²⁵

Sinkinson, (2001: 21) suggests that when reconsidering the history of the idea of incarnation, as seen above, which seems largely to have its roots in the Jewish notion “Son of God”, - claimed by others as the “Messiah” - could be used to refer to a man with extraordinary uniqueness within any religious tradition. In the same sense of the pluralistic reality, we can talk of Dharma, Tao, Brahman, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammad, etc. In a nutshell, having engaged with Hick’s notion of Christology, one can distinguish that which he has proposed for Christianity is a shift from *christocentrism* to *theocentrism*. Hick insisted that “it is the experiential engagement with the transcendent God- rather than

25 Hick believes that a metaphorical view of the incarnation avoids the need for faulty Christian paradoxes such as the duality of Christ (fully God and fully man) and even the Trinity (God is simultaneously one and three). As he states in the *Myth of God Incarnate* Chapter three, “Neither the intense Christological debates of the centuries leading un to the Council of Chalcedon, nor the renewed Christological debates of the 19th and 20th centuries, have succeeded in squaring the circle by making intelligible the claim that one who was genuinely and unambiguously a man was also genuinely and unambiguously God” (Hick, 1977:179).

propositional truths regarding the metaphysical accomplishments of Jesus Christ- that inspires Christians to interpret the world religiously” (Hick, 1989: 14). This orientation, according to Hick, will allow Christians to hold to the authenticity of faith traditions without dismissing the faith of others, and it will enable a more meaningful engagement between modern Christians in their interactions with those of other faiths traditions (Hick, 1997: 79-84). For Hick, the advent of worldwide religious pluralism is premised on and holds harmony as a high virtue (1997: 80).

3.4.3. HICK’S NOTION OF WORLD RELIGIONS AS RESOURCE FOR PEACE AND WELL-BEING

Analysing Hick’s notions of religion, peace, and well-being, K E Johnson (1997), uses the story of three blind men touching an elephant to illustrate the diversity of religions of the world and different perceptions of the one reality. In the story, the first of the three blind men was holding the elephant’s leg, and said, “I think an elephant is like the trunk of a great tree.” The second blind man disagreed and said “I believe the elephant is like a large snake” although he was holding onto the elephant’s trunk. Believing both the other men to be wrong, the third blind man, touching the elephant’s side, asserted that “An elephant is like a great wall”. In this analogy, says Johnson, each blind man claimed a different truth, despite them all touching the same elephant (Johnson 1997: 1).

For Hick, every religion and adherents are just like the three blind men holding the elephant's leg, trunk, and side, thinking it is a “great tree”, “large snake”, and a “great wall”. Of his encounters with other religions, Hick wrote that:

...occasionally attending worship in mosque and synagogue, temple and gurdwara, it was evident that essentially the same kind of thing is taking place in them as in a Christian church- namely, human beings opening their minds to a higher Reality, known as personal and good and as demanding righteousness and love between man and man (1980: 5ff).

Already with the 1973 publication of '*God and the Universe of Faiths*', Hick called for a radical change in how we think about religion and religious pluralism. Calling for this paradigm, Hick suggests that: “the World Religions, i.e. each of them, should be viewed as different human responses

to the one Divine Reality” (Hick, 1980: 5ff). Besides, Hick proposes that each religion or faith should be ways or means by which men and women can honestly experience healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and well-being (Hick, 1980: 5). Whether religions of the world fulfil this, Hick’s proposal is an open question for further research. To appreciate the values of peace and well-being, every religion does not live in isolation. In other words, every religion exists in the evolution of history, cultural contexts, and people and therefore it is bound to discover and rediscover itself every day in a deeper way. Thus, for Hick, every religion is “an embodiment of different perceptions which have been formed in different historical and cultural circumstances” (Hick, 1981: 128ff).

In 1989, Hick published one of his most significant works, *An Interpretation of Religion*, wherein he elaborates his basic epistemology, that all knowledge, religious and otherwise, involves the interpretation of the complex reality around us so that we can make sense of it (Hick, 1989: 345). Hick also describes the activities of the human mind as more than simple seeing, but as “experience as” – the day-to-day personal experiences and encounters with our inner self and others (Hick, 1990: 34-48). As Barnes (1992: 395-402) rightly puts it:

We, human beings, and different religions, experience the world around us in a certain way as we interpret the sights, smells, tastes, sounds, and feelings of surfaces around us.

Our experience invariably leads us to interpret the world around us in the way we do; faith is this act of interpretation applied to the religious dimension of existence. It is not a response to verbal, doctrinal statements, but to the religious significance of the world which should encourage different religions of the world to be vehicles or media for peace and well-being.

As we saw in Hick’s first published work *Faith and Knowledge* (1988), there are four levels of this interpretative activity, the highest of which is the religious or total interpretation.²⁶ In the same work, Hick went further in emphasizing the organizing nature of the human mind and perceptions. Borrowing from the works of Immanuel Kant, Hick claimed that “there are both the world in itself

²⁶ First is *Natural knowledge*: (State of ambiguity or doubt of who or what we see, perceive or identify); Second: *Moral judgement*: (Situations that invite a moral response which offer degree of subjective freedom); Third: *Aesthetic taste*: (Our honest and sincere interpretation of the artistic value of something we see, hear, perceive or identify. In other words, the state to sift what is Right and stick to the Truth); and Fourth: *Religious or total*: (Our relationship with realities around us, i.e. the total interpretation of the universe) (Hick, 1988: 200-212).

(*noumenon*) and the world as we understand and perceive it (*phenomenon*)”, (1989: 240). We know this, according to Hick, because people see things in the world differently (2005: 3). Invariably, because of the people’s ability to shape their perception, they are quite capable to authentically interpret reality and religious diversity in their contexts. Thus, for Di Noia, (1992: 34) this accounts for the wide range of faith traditions (and opinions) in the world which must be respected in as much as it does not threaten fundamental human rights and dignity. More so, Religious diversity cannot be reduced to a set of seeming contradictions, but rather for Hick, it must be seen as “an expression of the varieties of human experience evoked from religious traditions” (Hick, 1989: 7) as stated above. In other words, just as there are appetites for arts, music, and literature, so too do people have different choices and preferences when it comes to faiths, beliefs, and religious practices. Thus,

People are different- they have been born in different places, have been born in different families, and have been raised in different ways- so we should not be surprised that just as they like and have developed different sorts of music and arts, so they are naturally going to like and develop different expression of religious faith, belief and practice too (Hick, 1989: 10).

This Kantian epistemology also allowed Hick to make a radical distinction between the descriptions of God offered by the world religions and the Ultimate Reality behind those descriptions. Religions are not offering complete descriptions of God, but only partial descriptions of their own experience of what lies beyond. Even the most different and apparently contradictory descriptions could ultimately be compatible given how unknowable the Real truly is. In keeping with this epistemology, it would not make sense to speak of “God” and the “universe of faiths”, as God is a word of description in the realm of a phenomenon. A better expression now would be “Ultimate Reality” and the “universe of faiths” (Hick, 1993: 121). In other words, when one speaks of “God” and the “universe of faiths”, one limits religion to Christianity, but on the contrary, when one talks of “Ultimate Reality” and the “Universe of Faiths”, one goes beyond Christianity and acknowledges the contributions of other faith traditions to the history of humanity; among these faith traditions are: Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and for the African location of this study, African Traditional Religions. All these expressions in effect open constructive dialogue among different religions, making them aware of their responsibilities in promoting peace and well-being, not only in South Africa but also in the world at large.

Supporting Hick's argument above, Knitter stresses further that, “every religion share in the very experience of the Real. The religious experience of the Real which all religions share is always expressed in symbols, myths, and metaphors. All religious symbols, stories or myths in which this experience is expressed, tell people something true about the Real, yet at the end, they tell them more about themselves than the Real” (Knitter, 2002: 114-115). For instance: within Christianity, the Real is conceptualized and experienced as the state of being one with Christ and doing what Christ did.²⁷ Hick contends that in Judaism the idea of the Real is understood and experienced as “the joy and responsibility of life lived in accordance with God’s *Torah*, while within Islam, the Real, is imagined and pursued as submission to Allah”. For Hick (1995), as for Knitter (2006), the indigenous religions are seemingly primitive and archaic and thus not qualified to be among the 'mainstream' religions. This is one of the main gaps in the literature on interreligious dialogues that this study proposes to address.

Hick encourages each of the world religions to undergo what he calls a “*metanoia*”: an inner change in promoting transformation from natural self-centredness to reality-centredness of each member of that religious tradition. “Religious traditions”, Hick claims, “and their various components- beliefs, modes of experiences, scriptures, rituals, disciplines, ethics, lifestyles, social rules and organizations, etc.- have opportunities to promote this *salvific* transformation and well-being of the people” (1989: 300). Fowler (1993: 163) notes that the *salvific* transformation and promotion of the well-being of the people are enshrined in the moral code of every religion. It is through the moral code that the ethical insights of the founders of each religion are passed on from generation to generation. As fowler, quoting Hick writes:

The ethical insights of the great teachers and gurus of different religions are visions of human life lived in peace and well-being in earthly alignment of the Real, insights either heard as divine commands or intuited as the truth of the eternal or *Tao* or *Logos*. Implicit within these we can discern the utterly basic principle that it is evil to cause suffering to others and good to benefit others and to alleviate or prevent their suffering (1999: 163).

27 What did Christ do? According to biblical narrative (Galatians 2: 20), Christ went about doing good, curing the sick, feeding the hungry, defending women, children, the poor, marginalized of his society

The basic ethical requirement found in each of the world's religions can be expressed as the Golden Rule, which the gurus of different religions have expressed in different forms pointing the one reality, namely: respect and love for one another which invariably, promotes peace and well-being of humanity. Reflecting on this expression, Arinze (1997: 2) writes: "The love of neighbour, which *Christianity* professes as the golden rule of moral conduct ...and always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets," and these ideals are generally regarded as part of the teaching and heritage of other religions in the world. For instance, in *Hindu*, it is the sum of duty: "Do not do to others what would cause you pain if done to you" (Mahabharata 5.15.17), and in *Buddhism*: "Hurt not others in ways that you would find hurtful" (Udanavarga 5, 23). *Confucianism*: it is the maximum of loving kindness (*jin*), "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you" (Analects-Rongo 15, 23). *Judaism*: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow human being". According to the Talmud, (Shabbat 31a), this is, in essence, the whole law and that everything else should be regarded as commentary. In *Islam*: "No one of you is a believer until he/she loves for his brother or sister that which he/she loves for him/herself". *African Traditional Religions*: "What you gave others; these will be given to you in return" (Rwanda Proverb).

The above shows that for Hick, the cooperation and deliberations between all different religions, serve the single purpose of promoting love, peace, and well-being in the world. Assuming his particular view of the Golden Rule that emanates from the One Reality, any efforts to enact violence in the name of God or religion, "is contradictory to the God of love and peace, the God who has the well-being of everyone in mind" (Arinze 1997: 2).

3.5. HICK'S VISIT TO AND EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

As Hick's appreciation for religious diversity grew, he travelled to Asia, the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa. One of these included a short visit to Botswana and South Africa in the 1980s at the height of Apartheid repression. His position on the official position on the Apartheid State's discourse of religious diversity remains unclear, and from the account discussed below, his exchange was largely with protestant Christian networks. Hick, in his autobiography (2002: 238), described how he and his wife Hazel visited South Africa for three months before later proceeding to Botswana where Hazel had a family connection. Flying to Johannesburg, Hick described his experience in these words,

"We flew to Johannesburg and were there for a few days, being conscious immediately of the master race mentality of the white society, before flying on to Gaborone, the

capital of Botswana... In marked contrast to Johannesburg, Gaborone had a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Whereas in Johannesburg in the late afternoon the blacks were hurrying to buses to take them back to Soweto and other black townships...” (Hick, 2002: 238).

Returning to Johannesburg after he visited Gaborone, Hick described that the first thing he did was to meet with one of the most revered religious and political leaders in South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu. Tutu, the then general secretary of the South African Council of Churches. Hick described Tutu as “one of the most prominent public opponents of apartheid in the country who was not in prison, yet his life was in danger (Hick, 2002: 240). He further explained how Tutu was arrested along with several other church leaders and later released the next day (Hick, 2002: 241). With his experiences of the apartheid South Africa and visits to Desmond Tutu, they became good friends, and this is how he described Tutu – as “always lively, humorous, optimistic and with a much wider religious outlook” (2002: 241). Hick cherished his friendship with Tutu and this is how he described a series of correspondence that both of them had, and Hick appreciated the ongoing relationship that he enjoyed with Desmond Tutu over the years.

He visited the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, where they were hosted by Vic Bredenkamp and Martin Prozesky from the department of religion at the University. During his semester-long stay as a visiting professor (Hick, 2002: 242), he felt exposed to the several racial inequalities in the country. Hick even described the flat that his wife and he were living in:

“We were given a flat a large bungalow near the university – 165B King Edward Road – with a white family living in the other half. Separate from the house was a garage with two small rooms built onto the back in each of which there lived a middle-aged black maid, one working next door and the other elsewhere. Unlike our own flat, these two small rooms had no electricity and were lit by candles and oil lamps. They had no running water and used a tap in the yard. There was one outside pit toilet for the pair.” (Hick, 2002: 243).

While at the university, Hick noticed that the English, as well as the Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, appeared quite happy with the status quo of Apartheid and he appeared alert to the

deprivation of black people. Yet, while he seemed acutely aware of the racism that black people suffered, he appeared to have enjoyed limited access to the complex religious milieu among black South Africans.

At the same university, even during lectures, Hick noticed the majority among the white people regarded black people as a lower species and treated them as such, and he was extremely disappointed in a Professor Bredenkam whom he said, “was interested in research into forms of birth control that would reduce the overwhelming size of the black population” (Hick, 2002: 244). From the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, he went to visit the ecumenical Federal Theological Seminary (FEDSEM) at Edendale township, on the outskirts of the city. At FEDSEM, where progressive black clergy received theological training, Hick got the opportunity to make a speech to the student community. He also took the opportunity to visit the Catholic, St Joseph's Theological Institute where again, he received a warm reception. During this period, Hick reported that he and his wife visited KwaMashu (a vast urban township for black Africans), and Phoenix (a poor neighbourhood reserved for Indian people). This visit was influential because Phoenix was also where Gandhi lived, and edited his *Indian Opinion* and wrote much of his thoughts on Apartheid. At Durban Westville University, Hick observed: “were almost entirely Indian in origin, the largest number being Hindus and the next largest Muslims” (2002: 246).

Following his residency in KwaZulu-Natal, Hick reportedly visited Cape Town where he engaged anti-apartheid activists and clergy, and he would go on to summarize his visit to South Africa by compiling a published report called “*Apartheid Observed*” (1980). This report was written in a manner to, not only reflect and report on the brutal treatment of Blacks by the Apartheid South African government but also to illustrate his encounters with anti-apartheid activists, as well as to signal his own wider commitment to anti-racism in Birmingham, London and other places where he had worked. In his report, Hick viewed apartheid as “an evil act; wicked, sinful and dehumanizing, thus he said, “the white treatment of the blacks was wicked, sinful, inhumane, and their general blindness to this fact, even among very decent people, made it all the more so” (1980:11).

What is striking is that concerning his views on dialogue under the tyranny of apartheid, with the exception of his critique of the then government *Apartheid Observed*, Hick reported little to nothing about religious diversity and interreligious dialogue in South Africa. His report on “*Apartheid Observed*”, in my view, was not enough, and some of his accounts of this visit read as a liberal tourist

who came to see different parts of South Africa, and not as a critic of the regime. Notwithstanding his extensive contact with black Christian activists against Apartheid, Hick appeared uncritical of the official discourse of religious diversity in South Africa and appeared utterly oblivious about the prevalence of African Indigenous Religion. From the narrative of his visit and areas he visited, one could deduce that although Hick hypothesis views all religions in one umbrella, One reality, and as containing a dimension of the ultimate truth, indigenous or African Traditional Religion – despite his visit to South Africa - do not appear to be a feature in his theology of religions.

3.6. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This chapter sought to map and understand the development of John Hick's theology of religions. I propose that one can only understand Hick's theology by tracing his life history, education, and early career. What is evident from this survey of his life and education is that his early Christian conversion and training loomed large over his thinking and writing. Similarly, that his education and encounter with other religions occurred in a Christian normative England, meant that his approach to other religions tended to be with the view to incorporate other religion into the fold of the monotheistic religion of Europe.

In the second part of the chapter, I sought to show how his training as a theologian defined and shaped his views on pluralism. I sought to draw special attention to how the Copernican Revolution, revisionism of Christology, not only informed his theology of religion, but also the Christian theological foundations of his thinking. Finally, through examining his visit to South Africa in the early 1980s, I sought to illustrate how Hick's critique of Apartheid racism, does not extend to the State's institutional regulation or suppression of religion. In the end, this suggests some blind spots and limitations in Hick's political and philosophical thinking, and approach to pluralism insofar as he remains blind to the under-representation of African Indigenous Religions in public and scholarly discourse. This brings me to offer a necessary, critical examination of the history and extent of interreligious contact and dialogue in South Africa.

In the final analysis, there are three provisional conclusions that I draw about Hick. One, that his theological and philosophical work was emerged from and spoke to a Christian normative context. Despite his efforts to present his thinking, and writing as universal and inclusive, his work was significantly informed by the protestant Christian concerns of his time (e.g. soteriology). Two, Hick tended to conflate religion and race, without adequately theorizing the relation between the two.

While he condemned racism in Europe and South Africa, he did little to analyse the role of religion in reproducing racism (e.g Islamophobia). Thirdly, Hick worked within the world religions paradigm of his day, and in doing so, he was unable to afford indigenous religion the recognition of the recognition it deserved. For example, during his visit to South Africa, his accounts of religious diversity were limited to the world religion, and in so doing perpetuated the idea of indigenous religious ideas and practices as pre-modern.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY OF INTERRELIGIOUS CONTACT AND DIALOGUE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses specifically on the History of interreligious contact and dialogue in South Africa²⁸, and is organised according to four epochs namely: Contact before colonialism, colonialism, Apartheid, and post-Apartheid. The question is: Why the focus on the history of contact and dialogue concerning the four epochs as mentioned above? The reason is to highlight that interreligious contact did not start with the missionaries encountering the indigenous people, but that indigenous people exchanged religious ideas and practices before the missionary presence; this is exposed in the contact before colonialism as we will see below. With regard to colonialism and apartheid, both produced and permitted strict Christian normative which was purely monotheistic, but segregated ideas about religions: while colonialism understood religion within an imperial hierarchy, apartheid recognised other religions as articulations of racial and cultural inferiority to Afrikaners Christian religion. Finally, I included the post-apartheid epoch because it represents a period of legal and social recognition of all religious traditions, protected and enshrined in the South African Constitution. Now, let us briefly capture the history of interreligious contacts and dialogue that occurred in each of the epochs.

4.2. INTERRELIGIOUS CONTACT BEFORE TO COLONIALISM

According to the *Archive of Religions of South Africa online*, two main interreligious contacts occurred among the first indigenous people before colonialism. First, was the contact that occurred among the First Nations²⁹ themselves and second, was their contact with the Nguni people (1998).

²⁹ I will be using the word “Khoisan” and the “First Nations” interchangeably to describe the first indigenous people of South Africa. Together the Khoi and the San people are often called “Khoisan” a term that has been used to describe their broader similarity in cultural and biological origins. It is derived from the names “Khoi” and “San”. Both groups or people were resident in the land before its written history began with the arrival of the first European seafarers (Motshekg, 2014:38).

4.2.1. Inter-religious Contacts among the First Nations:

According to Kieran, in his article *“African Traditional Religions in South Africa”*, (1995), the first contact of people took place earlier than 2000 years ago and was linked to the presence of the Khoikhoi and the San peoples south of the Limpopo River. The religions of these two peoples were always regarded as the oldest in South Africa (Chidester, 1996: 18). The basic characteristic of the Khoi people was their “herding” and “hunter-gatherer” style of life with dependence on a supply of freshwater, fresh fruits, vegetables, and game. Socially, they lived in small groups with an emphasis on equality and sharing. The San, on the other hand, were basically “hunters”; they neither owned any farm animal nor engaged in husbandry, however, the Khoi did. Concerning the Khoi, the emphasis is more on “herding” while for the San, it is on “hunting”. The interreligious contacts and relations among these two groups occurred symbiotically in their daily living with one another, as well as with animals, trees, plants, and nature (Motshega, 2016: 1). These relations, Prozesky (1995: 1) reiterates, already existed thousands of years ago before the arrival of the Ngunis and the European settlers in South Africa (Prozesky, 1995: 1-14).

More so, both groups believe that their daily life, social routines, and elements of the environment are presided over by a supreme being. The San believed in Kaggan, a supernatural being, the creator of all things, who could assume a variety of forms, reside in the created world but also the Mantis, and could be identified with the forces of nature and unpredicted events. Meanwhile, the Khoi believed in a dual spirit: Tsui-Goab and Guanab. Tsui-Goab was responsible for bringing rain and fertility and was favoured with animal sacrifices. Guanab was identified with evil. This duality of spirit helped people to understand the existence of good and evil, as well as a good and bad fortune in the world and community (Kieran, 1995: 17-18). According to Lee and DeVore,

Both the Khoi and the San lived in groups based on an exogamous clan system. Exogamy entails choosing a marriage partner from a social group of which one is not a member, as such a marriage brings certain benefits by establishing an alliance of support and friendship between the groups. It can also be regarded as necessary for the groups’ survival (1976: 24).

The land, as we already mentioned, is a very important resource for the Khoi, and the various local clans move around to access or use pasture, wild fruit, vegetables as well as water resources within

the broad areas of migration. However, if an unrelated clan wished to access the resources within the local clan's terrain, they need to get permission from the local chief – normally granted. According to Barnard, (1992: 53) “the chief ‘owned’ neither land nor the resources on it, as land could not become the property of individuals. The rights granted to outsiders were temporary.” Water and livestock, particularly cattle, as well as hunting and gathering skills, played a central role in the culture of the Khoisan people. Similarly, “their religious, political, economic and social life was intricate; strict rules and social control governed every individual. Birth, puberty, adulthood, marriage, and death were accompanied by rituals and rites of passage” (Barnard 1992: 53). The rites of passage were essential to their identity, culture, and worldview and thus formed part of their interreligious contacts and relations (Mndende, 2006: 153).

These beliefs and practices are preserved and handed on from one generation to the next. Some are still observed today among their forebears who live in the natural reserves of Botswana, Namibia, and the greater part of the Kalahari Desert. Describing one of their beautiful ancient practices which leave an indelible mark on our society today, Ntshuca writes:

The First Nations usually hunted antelope using bows and arrows smeared with poison. Before a hunt, a shaman would conduct a religious ceremony. He would enter a trance and his vision was recorded on a rock by way of painting. This rock art is now a central feature of our heritage (1997: 12).

Talking of the rock art, a very important interreligious connection that the First Nations have with us today, are pieces of evidence of their religious artworks found in various caves (Soyinka, 1976: 30). These religious artworks are spiritual and rich in symbols; the history of South Africa's diverse cultures and religions cannot be traced without them. All these contacts as mentioned, with their visible (terrestrial) and invisible (celestial) worlds, Mbiti says, influenced the daily lives of the first indigenous people. (1994: 14). For the Khoisan, these two worlds are interconnected like a spider web, so much so that when one is touched; it vibrates others as well (Ngarndeye, 2009)



A San rock art panel in a cave in the central Drakensberg Mountains, South Africa

4.2.2. Khoisan Interreligious Contact with the Ngunis

The second contact began from around 2000 to 350 years ago. This was linked with the arrival of the Nguni people from East-Central Africa whose lives, just like the Khoisan, were characterized by farming and metal-working skills (Chidester, 1992: 24; Chigwedere, 1982: 11).³⁰ The Ngunis were mainly cattle-herders and produced iron tools not only for agricultural purposes but also for the protection of their lands and properties. As Mqeke reiterated, “They (the Ngunis) developed diverse ways of living according to which part of the country they settled in, be it in the eastern grasslands or the western area of the Drakensberg” (2001: 19). There is no doubt; many scholars agree that the Ngunis learned these skills in their daily contacts and interactions with the “First Nation” (Achebe, 1965: 11; Lubbe, 1986: 27). As the contacts progressed, it became evident that the lives of the ‘first indigenous people’ began to change drastically. In other words, their natural way of living was gradually affected: thus, they started losing grip of their culture and religion (Prozesky, 1995: 3). As

30 The four major ethnic divisions among Black South Africans are the Nguni, Sotho, Shangaan-Tsonga and Venda. The Nguni represent nearly two thirds of South Africa’s Black population and can be divided into four distinct groups: the Northern and Central Nguni (the Zulu-speaking peoples), the Southern Nguni (the Xhosa speaking peoples), the Swazi people from Swaziland and adjacent areas, and the Ndebele people of the Northern Province and Mpumalanga. Archaeological evidence shows that the Bantu-speaking groups, that were the ancestors of the Nguni, migrated down from East Africa as early as the eleventh century (see South Africa’s history timeline).

the above was taking place, it became evident as well, that the Ngunis assimilated some of the cultures of the indigenous people, for instance, the distinct clicks of the “First People’s” language which cannot be found elsewhere in Africa, can be noticed in both Zulu and Xhosa languages and more so, the Zulu and Xhosa concepts of *iSangoma* (diviner) and *iNyanga* (herbalist) can be equated with the Shaman and Shamanka of the “First Nation” (Ngubane, 1977: 11).

The Xhosa, more so, had several names for the Supreme Being. Some derived from the pre-Khoisan contact period, as both Xhosa’s and Zulu’s share them. According to Zulu (2002: 476) “these comprise distinct set references: one set perceives God as a craftsman- the Maker, the Moulder or, by extension, as “*uHlanga*”; referring in Xhosa, a mystical cave, and in Zulu, to a bed of reeds, from which all beings came forth by God’s command”. For the supernatural, another concept of God that is used is that of ‘Sky Father’, “*Umvelinqangi*” (meaning “He who was in the very beginning”), the god of thunder and earthquake: in Zulu- *iNkosi ye Zulu*, or *Nkulunkulu* (the greatest one) and in Xhosa- *uThixo* or *uQamata* 31 (Nongenile 1992; Hodges, 1982). Both terms, Hammond-Tooke claims, ‘are derived from Khoisan sources, possibly after Xhosa began to intermarry with the Khoi and the San’ (1974: 318). These explained, in a nutshell, the interreligious contact that existed between the first indigenous people and the Ngunis before colonialism and how both cultures enriched each other. When the colonial masters arrived on the soil of what is today called, South Africa, they had contact zones and that will be our next point.

4.3. RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE COLONIAL CONTACT ZONE

Chidester’s analyses of comparative practices that went on in the colonial and colonising contact zones in South and Southern Africa gives us a resume of what this section wants to explore. In his book *Savage Systems* (1996), Chidester argued that the very category “religion” has been one among many means by which colonial systems have classified and controlled indigenous populations. “In South Africa”, Chidester (1996: 219) writes, “comparative religion was conducted on frontier battlefields. Comparisons were not merely intellectual exercises. They were entangled with the European conquest and subjugation of Africans”. Deducting from this assertion presupposes that in

31 The term *uQamata* first appeared in the literature only in the 1870s, but Xhosa oral tradition holds that it is the most ancient of the two khoisan terms. Maingard 1934:117-143 speculated that uQamata was perhaps the name of a Khoi culture hero.

South and Southern Africa, comparative religion was used as a tool to colonize, contest, and conquer. Chidester supported his argument by drawing on examples dating from early colonial contact in Southern Africa with such groups as the Khoikhoi (chapter two), Xhosa (chapter three), and Zulus (chapter four), as well as examples derived from later era of solidified colonial rule. Summing up his argument, Chidester (1996: 315) concludes that “South Africa today is still recovering from a colonial hangover and more so, that the terms and conditions for comparisons that were established during the time still remain”. It is within this context that we would be able to understand the different contact zones that were explored in this section namely, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. We now turn to Christianity in South Africa.

CHRISTIANITY

'Nineteenth-century colonialism, conquest, and commerce', according to Chidester, 'were intertwined with an aggressive Christian mission to Southern Africa' (1992: xiii). Christian involvement in the region can be traced back to the visits of the Portuguese explorer, Bartholomew Dias in 1488 (Chidester, 1992 *ibid.* xiii).³² A more permanent Christian presence in South Africa started with Jan Van Riebeeck in 1652, when *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC, Dutch East Indian Company) – a company that tasked him with the responsibility to a post that could be used to replenish ships with food and fuel as they were travelling between the Netherlands and Southeast and Asia (Ngong, 2009: 528). When he arrived at the Cape, van Riebeeck was accompanied by three ships of settlers, who had decided to be part of the settlement colony and many religious people who saw their roles and providing religious services to the settlers, establish the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (or Dutch Reformed Church) to evangelize the indigenous people. In exchange, they were granted exclusive rights and protection by settlers (Fahlbusch, Lochman, Mbiti, et al. 2008: 131).

Mosimann-Barbier (2014), in his account of the early Christian settlements at the Cape wrote about the controversial and ambivalent fortunes of the early efforts to evangelise the region, thus he wrote:

In July 1737, Greg Schmidt arrived in South Africa as a Christian missionary and founded the first Protestant mission called the Moravian Brethren. He began working

32 Before the Dutch settlement, Bartholomew Dias landed at Kwaaihoek on the Southern Cape Coast in 1488. This is the first known Christian act in South Africa. In 1497, Vasco Da Gama gave a Christian name to the eastern coastal area discovered on Christmas Day (Tierra de Natal “Land of Nativity”). Later in 1560, Portuguese Jesuits began missions in Southern-western and South-eastern Africa (Luanda and Zambezi valley) (Ngong, 2009: 529).

with the Khoikhoi tribe. Schmidt established himself a *zoetemelksvlei* first, but months later moved to what is known as *Genadendal*. In 1742, he baptised five Khoikhoi slaves; this caused an uproar because the Dutch Reformed Church back then, held the view that baptised Christians must be free, not slaves. The controversy and hostility of Riebeeck and his company, forced Schmidt to leave South Africa two years later in 1744; bringing to a complete halt all Christian missionary activity for about 50 years (2014: 10).

It would not be until 1792, with three missionaries of the Moravian Brethren returned to South Africa (Brian and Denis, 1999: 151). This marked the start of increasing missionary activity in the region over the next 30 years, with more missionaries arriving from England, Scotland, France, United States, and Netherlands (Elphick and Davenport, 1997: 195). Their early efforts included translating the Bible into local languages; as well as the translation of hymn books to encourage communal singing³³. Translating the bible presupposed that they had to learn the local languages which facilitated the interreligious contacts that they had with the Nguni people and culture (Gwala, 2004: 127-129; Ownby, 1985: 102-106). Nonetheless, numerous scholars such as Eze (2016: 54) argued that for the missionaries “South Africa became the gateway for an army of Christian missionaries attempting to gain access to southern and sub-Saharan Africa. Their main goal was to evangelize, educate and civilize the heathen and barbarian native people of darkest Africa”. By the middle of the 19th to the early 20th centuries, many Christian denominations introduced by European missionaries opened missions and churches in Southern Africa, with the primary goal of converting the indigenous people to Christianity (Harrison, 2004: 11).

Having stated the above, it is pertinent to note that the Dutch expansion in South Africa never went on without conflicts and resistance from the indigenous people, the Khoikhoi, who lived in the land thousands of years before the arrival of the Dutch. According to Guelke and Shell, “The Khoikhoi lost their lands and cattle as the Dutch settlement grew. This brought the Dutch into conflict with the powerful Cochoqua chief, Gonnema, who refused to trade with the VOC; the company used rival Khoikhoi clans to raid the Cochoqua herds between 1673 and 1677. This is known as the Second

33 This attracted many local converts, including their *indunas* (chiefs) and traditional leaders, since the indigenous love spontaneous hymns and choruses.

Khoikhoi Dutch War” (1992: 803)³⁴. The Cochoqua were defeated and lost all their cattle and sheep to the Dutch and their Khoikhoi allies (Cock and Nathan 1989: 36). This leads us to the history of religious colonial contact with Judaism.

JUDAISM

The history of the Jewish settlement in South Africa is coupled with British Imperial domination of the region – initial Jewish settler formed part of the increased European settlement in the 19th century and that by 1820, a significant number of Jews started settling in the Cape (Hellig, 1986: 233). Meiring (1996) notes that “the first Jewish congregation in South Africa, known as the *Gar den Shul*, was founded in Cape Town in November 1841, and the initial service was held in the house of one Benjamin Norden³⁵, at the corner of *Weltevreden and Hof Street*.” They (the Jews) later built their first synagogue in Cape Town in 1862, known as the old synagogue which is now part of the South Africa Jewish Museum in Cape Town.

However, other scholars have suggested that the South African gold rush also saw an increase in Jewish immigrants after 1886. The greatest number of Jews from England and central Europe settled first in Kimberley in 1867, because of the discovery of diamonds and in Transvaal in 1873, because of gold (Newman, Evans, Smith, and Issroff, 2006: 23). As they settled in these places, they built synagogues and places of worship.

The next big migration of Jewish people in South Africa, which had grown to more than 40,000 by 1914, occurred in 1880: these were mainly the impoverished Jews from Lithuania (Hellig, 1995: 155-176).³⁶ However, as the number of Jews increased, different families moved and settled in

34 The Khoi-Dutch wars were series of conflicts that took place in the last half of the 17th Century in what was known then as the Cape of Good Hope. The first Khoi-Dutch war was as a result of rising tensions over loss of pasture between 1654 and 1659. This exploded into open conflict in the first Khoi-Dutch war from 1659-1660. After the war, Khoikhoi lost more land to Dutch settlers (Guelke and Shell, 1992: 803-824).

35 Benjamin Norden, Simeon Markus, together with a score of others arrived in the early 1830s, were commercial pioneers, who started a major wool industry. By their enterprise in going to Asia and returning with thirty Angora goats in 1856, and from 1849-1886, they were the largest ship-owners in Cape Town. Jews also played some part in early South Africa politics; for instance: Lieutenant Elias de Pass fought in the Xhosa War of 1849. Julius Mosenthal (1818-1880; was a member of the Cape Parliament in the 1850s. Simeon Jacobs, (1832-1883), was a judge in the supreme court of the Cape of Good Hope (to mention but a few) (Meiring, 1996: 25)

36 The Lithuania Jews in South Africa (unlike some of their local Anglo-Jewish co-religionists) enthusiastically supported Theodore Herzl's vision of a Jewish national renaissance and were instrumental in the creation of South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) in 1898. And, because of their traditional approach to religion and their idea of Zionism, they had a significant impact on the entire Jewish community in South Africa. Among these impacts are that the SAZF was responsible for coordinating all the Zionist activities throughout the country (Shain and Mendlesohn, 2008; Shimoni, 1980).

Johannesburg, Free State, and Natal.

Just like the Bantu and the Khoisan, the Jews also encountered hostility, segregation, and antisemitic attacks from the colonial masters during their early settlements in South Africa (Shimoni, 2003: 1-23; Adler, 2000: 23-36). For instance, in the Parliamentary debate on January 14, 1937, the Nationalist Party called for and enforced the following, namely: prohibition of Jewish immigration to South Africa, deletion of Yiddish as a recognized European language for immigration purposes, no further naturalization of Jewish immigrants, closing of certain professions to Jews and other “non-assimilable” races; and prohibition of changing of names, retrospective from May 1, 1930 (Feldman, 2007: 70). After 1940, and with the introduction of Apartheid laws and policies, many Jews who had lived in racially mixed areas such as District Six, were forced to move by the State as it implemented its policy of racial segregation and the formation of whites-only developments (Lea, 2007: 36). Nzimela, (1980: 20) remind us that the Jewish community was widely active in opposing Apartheid’s racist policies and at a significant cost:

More so, the 1956 Treason Trial saw Nelson Mandela along with a group of mostly Jewish men and women, arrested for treason. This resulted in accusations of a Jewish conspiracy to overthrow the white government and a plot involving communism. The group of Jews included Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Ben Turok, Leon Levy, Lionel Bernstein, and others.

ISLAM

Islam arrived in South Africa in the seventeenth century during the Dutch control of the East Indies and the Cape. The first contact of Muslims with the Dutch occurred in 1658, with the arrival of *Mardyckers*, who was employed by Dutch settlers as their slaves, and as mercenaries to protect them against the plundering indigenous groups (Loos, 2004: 31). From the very beginning of the Islamic presence in South Africa, the Muslim population, including the *Mardyckers*, were prohibited from practising Islam under threat of death. This prohibition had been applied for the first time in 1642 to Muslims in the East Indies, which was under Dutch occupation, and later in 1657 at the Cape³⁷. Tayob (1999: 21-32) reminds us that it was common during this period for Muslim leaders, who opposed

37 The prohibition states that: “No one shall trouble the Amboinese about their religion or annoy them; so long as they do not practice in public or venture to propagate it amongst Christians or heathens. Offenders to be punished with death but should there be amongst them those who had been drawn to God to become Christians, they were not to be prevented from joining Christian churches”. The same Placaat was reissued on 23 August 1657 by Governor John Maetsuycker probably in anticipation of the advent of Mardyckers to the Cape of Good Hope. The Placaat governed the Cape as part of the Dutch Colony (Mahida, 1993).

colonization in the Dutch East Indies, to be exiled to the Cape where they were deprived of rights and often imprisoned far away from home.

Mahida, (1993: 2) wrote that “1667 saw the arrival of the first Muslim political exiles banished by the Dutch to the Cape. These political exiles, or *Orang Cayen*, were Muslim men of wealth and influence, who were banished to the Cape from their homeland in the East because the Dutch feared them as a threat to their political and economic hegemony.” These men are Sheik Abdurahman Matebe Sha and Sheik Mahmood ³⁸; both used their exile to teach Islam among slaves, thereby consolidating religious bonds and support among each other.

After, Indonesian Prince Abdullah Kadi Abu Salaam was exiled too, and imprisoned in the Cape ³⁹ from 1767-1793, upon his release he founded the madrasah (Islamic school) for the slaves and free black communities (Mumisa, 2002: 275). It was the first madrasah in the country, and an important organizing institution for communities of colour, and the madrasah also became a site for the teaching of Arabic-Afrikaans. Salaam worked very hard as head of the madrasah and his efforts in leadership and growing the Muslim community gained him the name *Tuan Guru*, meaning ‘the teacher’ (Haron, 2002: 111-114; Chidester, Tayob and Weisse, 2004: 125). Later in 1793, the growing Muslim community in Cape Town, led by *Tuan Guru*, sought permission from the VOC to build the first Mosque in the colony but the application was bluntly rejected by the Dutch authorities (Mahida, 1993: 12).⁴⁰

Besides all this, the Muslims, especially their women, had a series of conflicts with the colonials and

38 Sha and Mahmood were the first Muslim political exiles, also the rulers of Sumatra in East Indies. Both were buried in Constantia. Their tombs have erected on “Islam Hill” in Constantia in the Cape (“Klein Constantia: Sheik Abdurahman Matebe Sha”, *ThinkQuest*. Retrieved 21 August 2007).

39 He wrote a copy of the Qu'ran from memory during his incarceration; and the volume still preserved in Cape Town (Mumisa, 2002).

40 Religious freedom was granted for the first time at the Cape on July 25, 1804, accompanied by the right to build a masjid, and eventually the first Mosque was built in Cape Town and Tuan Guru became the first Imam (Kathrada, I 2004:10. *Memories*. Johannesburg: Zebra Press). **Auwal Masjid** was the first mosque in South Africa. In September 1794, a *Vryezwart* (free Black Muslim), *Coridon of Ceylon* by name, purchased two properties in Dorp Street, Cape Town. *Coridon* was the first Muslim to own properties in Cape Town. On his death, his wife, *Trijn van de Kaap*, inherited the properties, as he had willed. Though it was very difficult for *Trijn* to process the papers since Muslim marriages were not recognized as legally valid, and thus not allowing Muslim women to inherit their deceased spouse's estates or properties. However, in 1809, *Trijn* sold the properties to her daughter *Saartjie van Kaap*. In this regard, *Saartjie* a remarkable woman, made the land available for building of a masjid which was first constructed in 1794 (when permission was not granted) with additions in 1807. According to *Achmat van Bengalen*, the construction of the Auwal Masjid was possible through General Craig, who, for the first time, permitted Muslims to pray in public in the Cape Colony. The Auwal Masjid, situated in Dorp Street, became the first to be established and is still functioning as the noble founders had intended. It became a center of Muslim communal activity, regulating and patterning the social and religious life (Jeppie, 1996: 139-162).

Dutch authorities, Chidester, Stonier, and Tobler, (1999: 103) reminded us that the colonial authorities refused to recognize Muslim marriages as legally valid because they believed that unless it conformed to the Calvinists Christian requisite of the husband-wife relationship, or domestic partnership; it could not be regarded as a marriage. The law was enshrined in the pronouncement of 1860 ⁴¹ and carried on throughout the Apartheid era (Amien, 2006: 733). This leads us to Hinduism.

HINDUISM

In August 1843, Natal became a British Crown Colony ruled from the Cape, and from 1846 onwards the preparations for the Natal Charter came underway (Swanson, 1983: 401ff). In 1856, the Natal Charter was proclaimed which sets motion to the promulgation of the “Coolie Law” (Hugh, 1993: 87) ⁴². Bhana and Brian (1990) remind us that the Natal Coolie Law, Law No. 14 of 1859 was the result of protracted negotiations as the local government and the colonial administration sought to exploit Indian labour, offer workers incentives but without the government intending to honour their obligations:

The Law made it possible for Natal Colony to introduce the immigration of Indians as indentured labour, with labourers having the option to return to India at the end of the five-year period, in which case a free passage was provided. The system also gave labourers a chance to re-indenture for a future five-year period, which would make them eligible to settle permanently in the Colony. Upon completion of their indenture, the indentured Indian labourers were entitled to a gift of crown land and full citizenship right. Unfortunately, the proviso was withdrawn with the proclamation of Act No.25 of 1891, in order to discourage the settlement of the Indians in Natal province (Bhana and Brian, 1990: 660).

41 Anything other than a strictly monogamous union was considered “anathema”. Thus, polygamous, or potential polygamous unions such as Muslim marriages were relegated to an uncivilized status and not legally recognized. For more details about the above law, see the following Judicial pronouncements by the Cape Supreme Court: Bronn V. Frits Broon’s Executors and others 1860, Seedat’s Executors V. The Master 1917; Ismail V. Ismail 1983

42 The British Empire invented and enforced an “indentured labour system”, which essentially retained all elements of slavery. The new system, also called the “coolie system”, was extensively used to bring Hindus to South Africa and other parts of British empires. The system enticed extremely poor people in India to sign a contract wherein they would be promised paid travel and a livelihood exchange for a binding promise to work for a fixed period of time (4-7 years was common). Any indentured labourer who left before the contract ended was considered criminal and subject to a prison term (Hugh, 1993:87).

However, the initial contacts between the British authorities and the indentured Indian labourers commenced with the implementation of the “Coolie Law” which attracted masses of disenfranchised Indian people to come to the South in search of greener pastures, not knowing the implications of the journey that they embarked on (Oosthuizen, 1975), (also: Diesel and Maxwell, 1998) 43. The first batch of them landed at Port Natal, (now called Durban), on November 16, 1860; these were mainly workers for sugar-cane plantations (Bhana, 1991: 20) who came from the Southern parts of India. Later, between 1862 through 1869, the second batch arrived; most were merchants, traders, artisans, teachers, shop assistants, etc. These independent migrants, also known as “passenger Indians”, came mainly from the Northern part of India (Mantzari, 1983: 115-125). While the first batch was subjected to hard labour in the plantations, the second was restricted by the “indentured labour” system (Cush, 2007: 9). Thus, they were not allowed to exercise their profession nor practice their religion. Concurrently, the first Hindu temple in South African was built in 1869 in Natal but rarely used because of the strict colonial laws (Kumar, 2012: 14).

Over time, the Colonial authorities came to recognise three classes of Hindus: the first was the *‘free’ merchant class* – those people who sponsored their journeys to South Africa⁴⁴; second, the *previously indentured*, - those were Hindus who had acquired relative freedom to trade and own shops and provide good or services to the wider community, and the third, the *none-free indentured* – those Hindus whose movements, labour and residence were controlled by companies to whom they were contracted property (Carter and Torabully, 2002: 32). While the later class remained relatively impoverished the first two groups became established, acquired wealth, and expanded their influence and thus found themselves increasingly viewed as a threat by European merchants. This led to clashes between the European merchants and the Indian businessmen like, *Aboobaker Amod* and *Aboobaker A. H Jihaveri* who owned stores in West Street and beyond (Younger, 2009: 125).

43 As Oosthuizen (1975), as well as Diesel and Maxwell (1998) described it: “The Indian Community in South Africa has experienced three main disposessions: The first was linked with their arrival in South Africa. The second was caused by their removal from plantation environments and settlement in cities which caused disorder in the Indian community (Oosthuizen, 1972:4). The third was seen in the uprooting caused by the socio-political apartheid law, when between 1961–1970, half of the Indian population of Durban was removed to other areas far from their working and worship place (Diesel and Maxwell, P 1998).

44 For instance, in 1877, recorded the first passenger Indians travelling to the diamond fields of Griqualand, near Kimberley in the Cape Colony. They arrived in Port Elizabeth from India, via Mauritius. The names of the three Indians, Tamarand, Tandryer and Venellas, appeared on the voters roll for the District of Kimberley in the Cape Colony (Guest and Sellers, 1994: 1-24). It is essential to mention this because the contact between the Indians and the District of Kimberley commenced from here, even though the laws were strict.

The first law that directly discriminated against Indians (Law No. 3 of 1885), was passed in 1885 in the province of the Transvaal as the government sought to limit Indian economic prosperity and political mobility. This was followed by other discriminatory laws such as *The Registration of Servants* (1888)⁴⁵, *The Statute Law of the Orange Free State* (1891)⁴⁶, *The Franchised Act, Act No. 8 of 1894*⁴⁷, etc. As these Laws were passed, over 300 indentured Indians left their employers because they recognised their freedoms were being restricted (Beall, J, and North-Coombes, 1983: 73). It was into this uncomfortable environment that Mahatma Gandhi arrived in South Africa as a lawyer, where he would begin to offer his services to the Indian population which was resident in South Africa. This, in response to these services, he, along with other Hindus in Pretoria and other parts of South Africa, began a series of publications which led to the founding of “the Natal Indian Congress (NIC)” – which became the first SA Indian organization, established in 1894. Dada Abdullah was appointed the chairperson of the organization while Mahatma Gandhi the secretary. The NIC-led protest against the Franchises Act and the other discriminatory laws, and thus, non-violently highlighted and sought human justice (Bhana, 1997: 49-54). We now turn to Buddhism in South Africa.

BUDDHISM

The real establishment of Buddhism in South Africa took place in the nineteenth century, i.e. from 1860 onwards (Wratten, 1995: 62).⁴⁸ These were mainly indentured labourers brought to Natal from India; some of them were Buddhist, others were Hindus that would after settlement in South Africa convert to Buddhism. They were subjected to hard labour in the plantations and were not allowed to practice their faith at all (Clasquin, 2000: 60). Since their number was small, they gradually faded

45 This, (Law No.2 of 1888), was in Natal. The Law classifies Indians as members of an “uncivilized race” and they are hence liable to register. Free Indians were also forced to carry passes or face court arrest (Younger, 2009: 126).

46 The Law prohibits an Arab, a Chinaman, an Indian or any other Asiatic or coloured person from conducting business or farming in the Orange Free State. All Indian businesses were forced to close by 11 September 1981 and the owners were deported from the State without compensation (Cush, 2007: 10).

47 This Act denied the Indians (in South Africa) the opportunity to study, get decent job and even the right to vote, since they were not allowed to get permanent resident permit (Kumar, 2012: 15).

48 According to Wratten (1995:62-72), the onset history of Buddhism in South Africa can be traced from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century onwards. Its history from the seventeenth century has it that some Buddhists from the South-east Asia arrived at the Cape during the Dutch settlement. These were the Thai monks who were on the Portuguese ships which came to the Cape in 1686. They were mostly a transient community, who came for “short visits”, but left no trace of their religious practices behind. However, the contacts between them and the Dutch were made and thus prepared the ground for the concrete establishment of Buddhism in South Africa in the nineteenth centuries as stated above

away and became inactive (Loon, 1979: 13; Bright, 2013: 52).

Another group that featured in the history of Buddhism in South Africa were the Chinese immigrants (Osler, 1999: 42; Accone, 2006: 257; Erasmus, 2007: 33; Huynh: 395). According to Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man, in their book “*Colour, Confusion, and Concessions: the History of Chinese in South Africa*”, there is a fair amount of evidence detailing Chinese contact with the early colonialists in South Africa in the early nineteenth century. According to Yap and Leong Man (1996), “the first Chinese group started arriving in the 1870s with the discovery of diamonds in the Kimberley area and later when gold deposits were discovered on the Witwatersrand”.

However, Clasquin and Kruger (2000) argue that “at the beginning of the twentieth century, large scale immigration from China was prohibited by legislation such as the Transvaal Immigration Restriction Act of 1902 and the Cape Chinese Exclusion Act of 1904. Other laws denied citizenship, prohibited land ownership, freedom of religion, and restricted trade for the Chinese” (1999: 165) ⁴⁹. Furthermore, after the success of the National Party in forming the South African government in 1948, as they inaugurated Apartheid, migration from China to South Africa was effectively shut down and resident Chinese of South Africans were then increasingly subjected to discrimination along with other non-European groups, who had other-than-Christian religious tradition and non-European ethnicities. The Group Areas Act not only threatened their (i.e. the Chinese South Africans’) economic viability but also uprooted and destroyed their religious sites (Erasmus and Park 2008; Clasquin, 2004; Kruger, 1995; Park, 2005; Huynh, 2010).⁵⁰

4.4. RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF APARTHEID

49 As the above restrictions were going on, it is pertinent to note, Kruger recalls, “that these Buddhists groups, (i.e. those brought to the Cape from Southeast Asia, the indentured labourers from India and China respectively), constituted only 3% of the entire religious population” but , in 1917, the newly emerged Overport Buddhists Society in Durban counted 26 families. In 1920s, the Buddhist community already numbered 12, 472 members” (Kruger, 1996:83).

50 Later on, in the 1970s and 1980s, South Africa established closer diplomatic and economic ties with China and other Asian countries like Taiwan, and many Buddhist groups started growing, not only from the unrecognized homelands, but also in the major cities of South Africa. The above contacts developed to the extent that in the mid-1980s upwards, there were already various Buddhists traditions that have grown in the major cities of South Africa. For instance: Sister Palmo (Freda Bedi) was instrumental in establishing the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism in South Africa when she visited in 1972. The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order has erected Nan Hua Temple, the largest Buddhist temple and monastery in Africa, in the town of Bronkhorstspuit near Pretoria. Another notable Buddhist centre in the country is the Buddhist Retreat centre in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal, established in 1980 (Clasquin, 2004:45-65; Kruger, 1995: 55).

South Africa is a home of several religions, as already stated above. However, the interactions or relations among various religious communities or the lack of it can be best understood within the context of the socio-political history of the country which spans back to the seventeenth century – and the collusion between colonist and the church on the one hand, and the differentiated treatment of people from other religious tradition, on the other hand. This leads Pillay to conclude that, “political developments in South Africa have indicated, to a large extent, the manner and the degree to which different religious communities interacted or did not interact with one another” (1995: 71). The same political development during the time influenced the attitude of the Calvinists Christians towards other religions and faith groups in the country, as we will see here. It is pertinent to note, therefore, that Christianity and Colonialism arrived in South Africa precisely at the same time in 1652. The Christian settlers that arrived with Jan Van Riebeeck became the embryonic Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which was also Calvinist oriented (Coertzen, 2001: 133). For the first 150 years, South Africa was controlled and dominated by the Calvinist Christian group, the DRC. When the Nationalist Party triumphed in the 1948 elections and apartheid South Africa was legally institutionalised, there was not much said about the colonialists and Christian domination. Christianity thus existed in mutually profitable symbiosis with political power. It is in the context of this political power that Calvinist Christians and the government implemented visible strategies to justify the apartheid system.

In the early years of the Nationalist Party's creation of the Apartheid State, numerous laws were passed as the foundation of its ideology – that sought to essentially limit contact and interaction between people of different ethnicities, races, and religions. Among these laws was the “Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act of 1949”, followed not long after by the “Immorality Act of 1950”, which outlawed sexual or other intimate relations between people from different racial groups (Khumalo, 2007: 176-181). Significant because of its efforts to organise people into clear religious, ethnic, and racial groups, the ‘Population Registration Act of 1950’ sought to classify all South Africans into four (supposedly neat) racial groups based on appearance, known ancestry, and religious background, as well as socio-economic status, and cultural lifestyles, and these were: “black”, “white”, “coloured”, “Indian” or “Asian” – and the last three of which included several sub-classifications (Ntshebeza, 2006: 68).

Further legal efforts were made to physically limit and restrict contact and exchange between people from different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Thus ‘the Group Areas Act of 1950’; -

enforced “physical separation between races, especially in urban areas. It called for the removal of some groups of people, (mostly non-white), into areas set aside for their racial groups.” During this period, and as part of enforcing the Apartheid ambition, whole communities were removed from their homes by force (the state used police and the military) and they were removed from sacred religious sites, namely: churches, temples, ashrams, and sacred burial grounds; thus, creating insurmountable brutality, division and gross inequality (Wotshela, 2005: 140-169). The fourth was the ‘Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957’; under this law, blacks were prohibited from attending white churches (Msimang, 1996: 41-46). Well-known removals were those in District Six, Sophia town, and Lady Selborne; they could not own property here, only rent it, as the land could only be ‘white-owned’. These populations were removed from all they held dear and forced into hardships and resentment in informal settlements on the outskirts of cities, or worse, dumped in the middle of desolate rural areas – designated as tribal areas, where black people were believed to belong for them to flourish in their religious, cultural and ethnic life (Wotshela, 2004: 317-337).

Backed by these laws, the Christian nationalist authorities invented and privileged what Chidester and Settler (2010: 213) referred to, as religious ethnicities. The production of these seeming equal religio-ethnic identities such as the “Cape Malay”, on the one hand, served to support the Apartheid fantasy of separate but equal, while on the other hand, it allowed the nationalist state to determine and legislate African indigenous religious practices as an essentialised tourist attraction in Apartheid South Africa. As an unintended consequence of Christian nationalist efforts, a strong interreligious coalition emerged among anti-Apartheid activists that disrupted Christian nationalist ideas of religious segregation and offered an alternative vision of a post-Apartheid South Africa, where all religions would receive equal recognition and protection.

4.4.1. The Making of a Frontier Faith Community

The first recorded local contact between the Malaysian Muslims and the Dutch occurred in 1652 when the loaded slave ship landed in the Cape. Du Plessis (1972: 6) noted that the “majority of them were political exiles or prisoners, who had opposed the colonization of their countries, and thus were captured and sent into exile from colonies such as Java, Ceylon, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka and the Dutch East Indies (known today as Indonesia)”. As the trade was booming, the Dutch required extra labourers and manpower, and thus utilised the opportunity to import more political exiles as slaves under their watch (Clohessy, 2006: 71). This mixed community of Muslim slaves and exiled

Muslim leaders from Asia came to be known as Malay.⁵¹ Slavery at the Cape was often met with resistance from the slaves themselves. However, those slaves who protested against the cruelty of the Dutch were executed at the same place, thus, by the end of 1659, hundreds of Malays had been executed (Worden, 1985: 31). Despite the slavery, execution, and marginalization the Cape Malays retained their Islamic heritage as their intra-religious base, identity, and support system.

A key element in the making of this supposed Malay Muslim identity was language. Mandivenga (2000: 347) reminds his readers that “the home languages of the slaves transported to South Africa were diverse and included: Buginese, Javanese, Malagasy, Tamil and importantly, two Indian Ocean *lingua franca*, Creole Portuguese and Malay.” Lubbe (1994: 42-66) drawing on a range of court records from the period suggest that these records prove that slaves had a working knowledge of Malay and Creole Portuguese since they were able to give evidence in these languages and also use it to converse with colonists. Stell (2007: 37) in an examination of linguistic diversity in the Cape colony asserted that “by the late 17th century, a local Dutch-based creole language had developed at the Cape, as a result of the interaction of people who spoke a variety of languages ... This became known as Afrikaans and it was eventually to become dominant in the homes and streets of the Cape”. This creole would later be used as a rationalization for imagining this ethnic-religious community as a distinct but incidental and exotic product of the colonial frontier, like the Afrikaner.

Another way that Malays identity became institutionalised at the Cape was that they were imagined as already skilled artisans when they arrived in South Africa and that a good number of them were silversmiths, masons, milliners, cobblers, tailors, and so on. This served as an erasure of the complex religious and social hierarchies that predate the political exile of many Muslim leaders. Their forced labour was used to build, not only their residential houses and offices for the colonisers, including the various historic buildings from the Dutch occupation of the Cape; for instance, The Colonial Bank and Trust; the Castle of Good Hope, The Old Fort, and the historic houses that were built on established Cape wine estates, such as *Groot Constantia*, *Vergelegen* and *Simonsig*, and a wide range of other trade and farm building in the greater Cape areas (Mnyaka, 2014; Kenny, 1980; Hunt and

51 Scholars, such as Gaulier & Martin (2017), S. Jeppe (2001), Robert C.H. Shell (1994), Muhammed Haron (2001) debate whether or not the term “Cape Malay” is fitting in the present day, as a reference to a particular group of people. Shell explained that Cape Muslims came to be known as “Cape Malay” because Malay was the *lingua franca* of the among Malaysian slaves and exiles at the Cape during the nineteenth century. The recent (Apartheid) use of the term was introduced by anthropologist, Izak David Du Plessis in his book *The Cape Malays* (1944).

Schwartz, 2010).



The overview picture of The Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, South Africa built by skilled slaves

Since the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) served as the official church of the late colonial and the early Apartheid eras, other churches and faith traditions, including the Malay Muslims, were forbidden to practice their faiths publicly or propagate their beliefs. For instance, the Khoi, Muslims (the Malay), and Hindus were forbidden from holding public services; and their marriages were not legally recognized. Noting the severe marginalization that the Cape Malays underwent during the colonial/apartheid period, Zegeye and Harris (2003:199) assert:

“A Muslim minority, the so-called Cape Malays, lived in separate communities and married among themselves for religious reasons. Just like other minority groups in South Africa, they were also affected by the colonial and apartheid laws which encouraged class oppression, exploitation, racial segregation, religious differentiation and ethnic chauvinism”

Above all, religion was an important part of life for Malay communities and families at the Cape, but they were forced to operate and function within a very Christian normative context. As that was important; intra-personal relations among them were essential. Thus, they had to build mosques and lobby for the recognition of sacred burial grounds, to ensure their religious heritage and to provide

contact meeting places to support each other in their harsh conditions.⁵² All these indicate how the colonialism and Apartheid State sought to determine and fix Muslims into a particular religio-ethnic identity, of the Malay Muslims, because this served the interest of the Christian nationalist at the time. Christianity was presented as at the religious apex, with Muslims as an exotic anomaly, like Judaism and Hinduism, while African indigenous religious present as a series of wild, unruly, and superstitious practices that cannot be known, but which threatens the official religious order and morality.

4.4.2. Domesticating Indigenous Religious Practices

One of the first perverse encounters between colonist and the indigenous during this period can be traced before the arrival of the Europeans (mainly the Dutch and British) in the mid-1650s. Before they arrived in the 1650s, the Xhosa had already settled in the South-eastern area of South Africa, which included the regions of the Great Fish River, while the Zulus were to the western areas of the Drakensberg.⁵³ As both kingdoms settled in these areas, they interacted with the hunter-gathers and locally-nomadic people, the Khoi and the San, who historically and archaeologically speaking, were the first indigenous people (nation) to live in South Africa (Mzondi, 2009: 23; Pieres, 1976: 35).

However, as the years passed by, the Dutch and the British sought to expand occupation and administration of the territory, but this expansion came at a tremendously great expense to the Khoi

52 So, the first mosque that was built in the Cape Colony was erected in 1846 in Uitenhage and is known as the *Masjid-Al-Qudama* mosque. It was followed by the *Majied-UI-Abkbar* in Grace Street, which was the first mosque to be built in Port Elizabeth. Built in 1855, the Grace Street mosque is more than 150 years old. It is interesting to note that the original members of the congregation ran out of funds halfway through and it was only the grace of Sultan of Turkey that the building was finished. The building of this mosque was seen as being of great importance since, prior to this; Cape Malays had been forced to leave on Thursday for Uitenhage in order to attend service on Friday (Omer-Cooper, 1988:33). This disrupted their intra-religious bonding. However, on a positive note, the funding opened the interreligious connections with the Sultan and the people of Turkey. More mosques were built after that, but unfortunately under the Group Area Act, many Muslims were forced to relocate, and their mosques demolished. Furthermore, the Malay people had to fight on several occasions not to have their sacred places of worship bulldozed. Most lost their lives and others imprisoned (Hiskett, 1994:174). All these indicate how much colonialism and apartheid policies influenced the church's attitude towards people who believed differently. It further elucidates the perverse interreligious relations therein.

53 As we discuss the Xhosa and the Zulu people in the context of the apartheid, it is essential to make this cut distinction between the two nations. The clear-cut distinction made today between the Xhosa and the Zulu has no basis in culture or history, but arises out of the colonial distinction between the Cape and Natal colonies. Both speak very similar languages and share similar customs, but the historical experiences at the northern end of the Nguni culture area differed considerably from the historical experiences at the southern end. The majority of northerners became part of the Zulu kingdom, which abolished circumcision. The majority of southerners never became part of any strongly centralized kingdom, but rather intermarried with the Khoisan and retained circumcision (Pieres, 1976: 36).

and San, but later have a similarly negative impact on the Xhosa and Zulu when they too were forcibly stripped of their traditional land. Thus, by the latter part of the 18th century, European colonists as well as *trekboers* (Afrikaners colonists), migrated eastward where they eventually encountered and displaced the Xhosa near the Great Fish River. These indigenous tribes had already settled before the *trekboer's* arrival; while the British, on the other hand, invaded the more established Zulu territory (Tshwane, 2009: 13). The encounter between the Xhosas and European settlers erupted to what we call today “The Nine Frontier Wars” (Sah, 2012)⁵⁴; (Milton, 1983: 31-44)⁵⁵, and for the Zulus, the Anglo-Zulu War (Guy, 1982: 180-183).

Concerning their encounter with early missionaries, the first Christian missionary that the Xhosa came in contact with was the London Missionary Society’s Dr Van Der Kemp in 1799 ⁵⁶. Such an encounter, during the said period, cannot exist without mentioning some of the challenges therein; for instance, during the Frontier Wars, Xhosa chiefs who opposed the early Christian missionaries forced the colonisers to abandon attempts to “evangelise” the indigenous people. It would only be until later when John Brownlee, after 1820 established a mission near Alice, and similarly, a series of Methodist missions were successfully established throughout the Transkei by William Shaw. As Mamphela, in her book, “*A Bed called Home: Life in the Migrant labour Hostel of Cape Town*” recalled when she said,

Christian missionaries established their first outposts among the Xhosa in the 1820s but met with little success. Only after the Xhosa population had been traumatized by European invasion, drought and disease did the Xhosa convert to Christianity in substantial numbers (1993: 35).⁵⁷

54 It is also known as the Xhosa Wars, Cape Frontier Wars, Kaffir Wars or ‘Africa’s 100 years Wars’. Today this area is still referred to by many as Frontier Country (Sah, 2012).

55 As Milton (1983) further described it: “The Nine Frontier Wars, also known as the Xhosa Wars, were series of nine wars or fire-ups from (1779-1879) between the Xhosa tribes and European settlers in what is now the Eastern Cape in South Africa. The reality of the conflicts between these two groups involve a balance of tension. At times between the various Europeans in the Cape region, tensions between Empire administration and colonial governments, and tensions and alliance of the Xhosa tribes”.

56 Others from the Wesleyan Methodists, the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), the Moravians, the Anglican, the Roman Catholic, and Dutch Reformed churches followed afterwards (Pauw, 1975:19).

57 On the positive note, Makhele-Mahlangu (1999:124-130) recalled that Education and medical work were among the major tools that missionaries used in their contact with the Xhosas. For instance, the first Western-style schools for Xhosa-speakers were begun by missionaries.

With the Zulu's it was more of a positive interreligious negotiation between Bishop Jolivet (the then Apostolic Prefecture of the Vicariate of Natal), and the Trappists, under the leadership of Father Francis Pfanner. In the negotiations, Father Pfanner had written to the Bishop, requesting his permission to allow the Trappists to work in his vicariate (Balling, 1980: 55-60)⁵⁸. The main core of their mission (as they proposed to the Bishop) was geared towards the social upliftment, education, and empowerment of, not only the Zulu's but also the entire Black people of South Africa who were disenfranchised by the brutal colonial and apartheid laws (Gamble, 1982: 168; Adelgisa, 1993: 128). With the aim of social upliftment, education, and empowerment of the Black people, Father Pfanner acquired a farm, an area that in the present day is known as Mariannhill, near Pinetown – also because it was close to the railway line that was being constructed between Durban and Pietermaritzburg (Herman, 1984: 32). Schimlek (1953: 113) in a history of catholic missions in the region noted that “the property selected for this new mission was divided into smaller units and Pfanner coaxed the local chief, Inkosi Manzini, to bring 300 families to live around the farm and form a congregation”. In the settlements, missionaries offered primary level education to local indigenous children in the mornings and alternatively used afternoons to instruct a range of practical courses in agriculture. The missionaries too had the opportunity to teach “skills such as farming, crafting, printing, carpentry, baking, welding, blacksmithing, tailoring” and while the plan was for the missions to become self-supporting, and at the same time offering avenues to economic independence from perverse conditions, these effects was often to limit people to low-skilled and low-reward forms of work (Brouckaert, 1985: 10).

Another important interreligious relation to exploring here is the mutual cooperation between the now Abbot Francis Pfanner, the Trappist Monks, and Inkosi Manzini, which led to the establishment of one of the historic colleges in South Africa, which has empowered so many Zulu's, South Africans and other African people as well (La Fontaine, 2006: 49). This briefly describes the commencement of what is known today as St Francis College.⁵⁹ Inkosi (chief) Manzini, with an appreciation for the value of education, instructed each homestead to volunteer two young boys to attend the mission school, and they attended the boarding school that was later built, and Fr Bryant being the first

58 Archives of Mariannhill Monastery in Pinetown, Durban was also consulted as I studied the history of interreligious contacts between Catholics and the Zulu people. The following were particularly helpful: “*The Southern Cross*”, 27 May 1925-18 August 1948; *Monastery Chronicles*, 1882-1895; *Annual* from Mission Stations 1887-1957).

59 People like the late Steven Bantu Biko, Mosiuoa Lekota (Former minister of defense), and Zweli Mkhize (the current ANC treasurer General are former students of St Francis College.

schoolmaster. The idea was that this would provide the boys with opportunities to lead their people and pursue careers in the colonial administration. Skhakhane (1974) says of Father Bryant that he was “a great linguist and scholar and was considered as one of the greatest motivators of the Zulu and Black people; and more so, renowned for his extensive publications including a *Dictionary of the Zulu language*” (1974: 39-44). After, a second school was established for the education of girls and growing educational institutions at Mariannhill which include its entire mission stations, Kandhlhela (1993: 111) noted that:

In 1909, it was decided to combine the two schools and hence the inception of St Francis’ College. From the beginning, St Francis’ was a boarding school and thus offered learners the chance, not only to focus completely on their studies and training but to enjoy the comaraderie and friendship of other boys and girls from all over South Africa and beyond.⁶⁰

However, these missionary interventions and interreligious negotiations did little to change the brutalities and repressions of Apartheid South Africa.⁶¹ The apartheid State was quite content with the expulsion and invisibility of black African’s social and religious lives. This repression was regularly met with resistance, led by a broad coalition of liberation movements that included the ANC, PAC, and AZAPO, all of whom had been exiled by the apartheid State. However, discontent within Apartheid South Africa saw the emergence in the 1980s of a board coalition of labour, student movements, and religious associations, known as the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF provided a platform for national collaboration across different racial, ethnic and religious divides, offering a radical counter to the apartheid discourse of separate but equal. In this movement, religious leaders provided moral sanction and political leadership.

60 By 1888, Abbot Francis Pfanner began to buy other farms, each a day’s ride from Mariannhill, and within a few years there were mission stations spread through Southern Natal. The Trappist Missions continued to grow in number and in activity during these years, spreading their work into Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe (Mukuka, 2010: 46-67).

61 Besides all the laws and negotiations mentioned above, situations of the Xhosas, the Zulus and other Black Africa race worsened when the first apartheid-era prime minister, Daniel Francois Malan was elected in 1948. Malan was elected to implement fully the apartheid philosophy and more so, silence the liberal opposition which commenced during the European (Dutch and British) invasion (O’Meara, 1996:35-44). From 1948 through 1992, different laws were enforced to disenfranchise the Black population. Over time, black people became more and more impoverished, and had no option but to become migrant labourers. Frye described it further when he said: “During apartheid, many Black People were forced to leave their homelands to find employment in the cities. Black men were mostly hired as miners and farm labourers. Until 1956, Black women were the most excluded from the *Pass* requirements, as attempts to introduce pass laws for women were met with fierce resistance (C f. Extracts from *Paper* prepared by “secretariat for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women”, Copenhagen, July 1980): “The anti-pass campaign”. Africa National Congress. (Archived from the Original on 22nd June 2008. Retrieved 14 July 2008).

4.4.3. Religious Coalitions Against Apartheid



UDM leaders Mosiuoa Lekota (*left*); Popo Molefe (*second from right*) and Mohammad Vali-Moosa (*extreme right*), Flank Winnie Mandela, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu is one of many marches in the 1980s to fight against the injustices and oppression of apartheid.

As seen from the picture above, these were groups of ordinary South Africans from different walks of life, race, culture, and creed, who called for a peaceful, “united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa”, and thus rejected “apartheid” totally, which enforced and maintained ‘white supremacy’ in the country. As the National Party leaders of the 1948 so-called “all-white elections” declared: “Our motto is to maintain white supremacy for all time to come...by force, if necessary” 62 (Barber and Barratti, 1990: 2). ‘So, the common enemy has been identified, namely

62 Since the Dutch began to colonize South Africa in the 17th Century; they pushed aside the native population to consolidate power in the hands of whites, whom they believed to be superior. But in 1948, the victory of the National Party in all-white elections opened even more oppressive chapter in the history of South Africa; thus legitimizing apartheid. Hence, the new apartheid (“apartness” in Afrikaans) laws would maintain in white supremacy by forcing all South Africans to identify as European, Indian, Coloured (mixed race), or Africa, and segregating these “races” from each other as much as possible (Barber and Barrat, 1995:25). Non-whites were forcibly relocated to isolated, poverty-stricken areas, made to obtain permission to travel, blocked from voting and participation in government, not allowed to marry whites, and were largely barred from owning land (Robinson, 2000:67-69). Non-whites in South Africa has resisted discrimination for decades, but they were unable to bring about real change, and in incidents such as the 1960 Sharpville

“the system of apartheid”, something needs to be done!’ And so, for Louw (2004: 16) “from the 1970s and into the early 1980s, people across South Africa began to organise community-based groups to oppose the many hardships that apartheid created in their lives.” Several political scientists (Motlhabi, 1987; Marx, 1993) noted that in the 1970s, older anti-apartheid and grass-root civic associations ⁶³ emerged in townships across the country as activists sought to apply new approaches to their activism insofar as it was less focussed on political action and more on community development. Popo Molefe famously asserted that “the movement needed to work on local issues to give people the confidence that through their united mass action, they can intervene and change their lives, no matter how small a scale” (Marx, 1993: 168; Ackerman and Duvaal, 2000: 345) ⁶⁴. However, Molefe and the movement leaders were aware that they needed to project a larger vision that would attract and motivate other groups to join the struggle; as they maintained in their manifesto quoted by Jeremy Seekings: “Our work must be geared to extinguishing the fire which causes the smoke- the system of apartheid” (2000: 67).

The anti-apartheid movement’s leaders took the view that local campaigns on civil issues should form the “base of first-level grass-roots organisations”, which regional and national organisers would use as a platform to “start to build progressively more political forms of organisation - a process which would eventually usher in the establishment of one of the major anti-apartheid organisations, known as the United Democratic Front” (Seekings, 2000: 33). Blair (2000) noted that “steps towards forming the UDF began in the early 1970s and moved forward when Rev. Allan Boesak, at a conference of the Transvaal Anti-South African Indian Council Committee (SAIC), on 23 January 1983, called for a ‘united front’ of churches, civil associations, trade unions, student organisations, and sports bodies” to fight the oppression perpetrated by the Apartheid regime. He also insisted that all black people should have ownership and be part of the government of the organization (Mnooking, 2010: 126).

Massacre and the 1976 Soweto Uprising, the State cracked down harshly on protesters, arresting leaders like Nelson Mandela and Killing others like Steven Bantu Biko (Lalu, 2004: 107; Ndlovu, 1998: 1).

63 By organizing themselves on grass-root level, the black communities and townships formed micro-governments and judicial institutions. They provided social and governmental services including policing, street cleaning, garbage removal and health care. The creation of these local-black government allowed black communities to take ownership of their government and in so doing, wrested power away from the local councils that were complicit in apartheid (Motlhabi, 1987).

64 Bearing Molefe's declaration in mind, activists began mobilizing local communities around issues like rent increases, fees for basic services like water, and forced relocation. By putting pressure on authorities through demonstrations, refusal to pay rent, picketing and boycotting, activists made small tangible impacts (Ackerman and Duvall, 2000:345-346).



Rev. Allan Boesak, speaking at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee, at which he mooted the formation of the United Front

The UDF was officially launched on 20 August 1983, in Mitchells Plain, near Cape Town. Sutter, (2004: 691-701) wrote about the organization that:

Membership spanned whites, blacks, and Indians; it included labour unions, students, civic associations, women's groups, and churches. Churches served as meeting places, clergymen such as Desmond Tutu (2007: 87) helped rally support through public speeches and motivations; and the South African Council of Churches defended political prisoners and supported their families. White groups such as the National Union of South African Students also joined in, along with Indian groups.

Farid Esack, Rashied Omar, and Ebrahim Rasool were at the forefront of leading the Muslim community (Esack, 1997: 6).⁶⁵ From the Confederation of the South African Trade Union, as well as the human rights and justice department, Mosiuoa Lekota, Dullah Omar, Albie Sachs, Mahammad Valli-Moosa, and others joined as well. All these in one UDF membership formed a powerful interreligious alliance against apartheid (Sparks, 1995: 52). Their aim and objective were

⁶⁵ In 1994, Farid joined with his friends, Rashied Omar, Ebrahim Rasool and others in forming a body named "The Call to Islam", which was associated with the UDF, MDM and other Black Muslim Youths in the struggle against apartheid. "This body", according to Esack, "soon became the most active Muslim movement, mobilizing nationally against apartheid, gender inequality, threats to the environment and to interfaith work" (Esack, 1997:6). In its anti-apartheid activities, the body found itself up against the Muslim traditionalists/authorities, as they, the traditionalists, thought that opposition to the apartheid government was un-Islamic. (Esack, 1997:7).

encapsulated in their declaration:

We, the free-loving people of South Africa, say with one voice to the whole world that we cherish the vision of a democratic South Africa based on the will of the people. We will strive for the unity of all people through united action against the evils of apartheid...⁶⁶ and in our march to a free and just South Africa, we are guided by these noble ideals, we stand for the creation of a true democracy in which all South Africans will participate in the government of our country, stand for a single, non-racial, un-fragmented South Africa, a South Africa free from Bantustans and Group Areas. We say that all forms of oppression and exploitation must end (Brooks-Spector, 2013).

As the walls of apartheid were falling (with series of events and boycotts mentioned above), there came a necessity for a new dawn, new conversations to emerge; and thus, ushered in the post-apartheid era which will be our next point.

4.5. RELIGION AND THE RAINBOW NATION

Ultimately, democracy became a reality in South Africa after pressure by local and international groups led to the realization that “the time for negotiation has arrived: a new dawn is near and there should be new conversations” as FW de Klerk noted in 1989 (Deegan, 2001: 194). The next year, in February 1990, Mandela’s release from prison, coincided with the repeals of racist and segregationist laws (Myre, 1991). In 1992 and 1993, Mandela repeatedly called for peace – brought into sharp focus after the assassination of the South African Communist Party (SACP) leader, Chris Hani in 1993 (Meer, 1988: 34). This demonstrated his strong commitment to peace and well-being in the country.

⁶⁶ In their fight against apartheid, they adapted what they called the “dialogue of non-violent tactics”. Firstly, the UDF members and leaders organized labour strikes to protest government oppression and mobilized popular support against apartheid. Secondly, UDF members, carried out economic boycotts, including rent boycotts, worker’s strikes and stay-aways (Parks, 1986:2); the movement also mobilized crowd to defy apartheid on beaches and in hospitals (Parks, 1988:5). Thirdly, as the anti-apartheid movement gained international support, it gained strength from the international anti-apartheid movement who launched and supported series of campaigns such as: an academic boycott of South African Universities and scholars; a sports boycott, (which John Hick was one of the members who motivated it in UK). Finally, the establishment of the South African chapter of the *World Conference on Religions for Peace* (WCRP-SA) in 1984 provided an interreligious sanctioning of the broad-based opposition to Apartheid.

After a series of negotiations facilitated by CODESA and others, in 1994, after democratic elections, Nelson Mandela was elected as the president of the new South Africa.

During his inauguration on May 10, 1994, President Mandela included leaders of different faith traditions in South Africa to be part of the ceremony- these included leaders of the six faith groups in this study (Mandela, 1994)⁶⁷. More so, during his five-year term as president, he maintained close contact and relations with clergy and other interfaith leaders and communities (Mandela, 1986; 1995).⁶⁸



President Nelson Mandela: An Icon of Peace, Reconciliation, and Well-being of his people.

Besides supporting the establishment of the Interfaith commissioning service for Truth and Reconciliation, Mandela, at the same time, believed strongly in interfaith collaborations. During an address of an interfaith meeting in 1996, Mandela said:

“All South Africans face the challenge of coming to terms with the past in ways which will enable us to face the future as a united nation at peace with itself. To you has been

⁶⁸ For instance, in 1993, Mandela attended Mass celebrated by Archbishop Lawrence Henry and parish Capuchin priest, Fr. Wildrid Aherne at St Mary of Angels in Cape Town. At the service, he singled out priests who had visited political prisoners on Robben Island, at the Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town, and in Pretoria. His friendship with Fr. Stephen Naidoo of Cape Town was reported in *The Southern Cross*, South Africa's Catholic weekly, and Mandela noted that he had been uplifted by the pastoral care provided by clergy on Robben Island, where he spent 18 of his 27 years of imprisonment (Mandela, 1986:12; 1995:379-447).

entrusted the particular task of dealing with gross violations of human rights in a manner that ensures that the painful truth is laid bare and that justice is done to victims within the capacity of our society and within the framework of the constitution and the law. By doing so, and by means of amnesty, your goal is to ensure lasting reconciliation” (Mandela 1996).⁶⁹

During the negotiations and his term of office as president, Mandela frequently called on South Africa’s church and religious leaders to help overcome social conflicts. Consequently, in 1997, he called on religious leaders from around the country to a summit to consider their collaboration with the government. He called on these religious leaders to establish structures that were rooted in uplifting the lives and well-being of people and communities, especially those disenfranchised by the apartheid system. Bernstein (1987: 672) reminds us that “this initiative led to the formation of the National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF). President Mandela and the NRFL convened the 1999 Moral Regeneration Summit that culminated in the formation of the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM).”⁷⁰

Even after his term as president, Mandela continued his vibrant relations with different groups who were engaged in interfaith dialogue.⁷¹ He recognized deeply the tremendous works done by the World Conference on Religions for Peace, South Africa, in their commitment to fighting against apartheid, which in turn ushered in the new democracy. He encouraged them to translate their commitments into joint inter-communal activities that will benefit the country, especially the poor South African. And today, the WCRP-SA collaborates effectively with Info4africa. This collaboration, Kritzinger (1991) reminds us has created “a longstanding forum partnership that turns its attention towards galvanizing faith-based sector responses to HIV/AIDS and other socially relevant issues, such as primary health care service, maternal and child health, early childhood development, education, and poverty-related

69 Excerpt from President Mandela’s address to the interfaith commissioning service for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Cape Town, 13 December 1996. At the end of his speech, he encouraged all citizens, to participate fully in reconciliation activities and nation-building so as to realize the shared vision of a united, peaceful and prosperous country.

70 Both the National Religious Leaders Forum (NRFL) and Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) made significant contributions. The NRFL developed a code for the persons in positions of authority which was endorsed by all political parties. It also developed the Bill of Responsibilities while the MRM developed the charter positive values (Bernstein, 1987: 672-677).

71 Addressing “the Parliament of the World Religions in Cape Town, on 5 December 1999, Mandela spoke about how interfaith cooperation was one of the effective peaceful means to end the surge of apartheid. He encouraged religious leaders and institution to work together to bring about social and economic transformation for the people.” (Excerpt from Nelson Mandela’s speech at the “Parliament of the World’s Religions, 5 December 1999. Cape Town).

issues” (: 151). The KwaZulu-Natal Interreligious Council, KZN-IRC, established after a series of religious and political conflicts in KwaZulu-Natal (1985-1994), drew favour and affirmation from between Mandela and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the opposition (IFP) leader because it participated in local dialogue and peace talks (Truluck, 1992: 99-100). This notwithstanding, Mandela remained clear on his intention to promote peace, rather than violence in the country.

The post-Apartheid government put a lot of emphasis on the protection and promotion of the cultural, religious, and linguistic rights of all diverse communities in South Africa, to ensure freedom of all religions (Coertzen, 2008: 1-11). This led to the establishment of The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) in 2002. The Commission was envisaged as an independent chapter nine institution based on the South African Constitution, and it was commissioned and empowered by the State:

to promote respect for and further the protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities; promote and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance, national unity among and within cultural, religious and linguistic communities on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and free association; to promote the right of communities to develop their historically diminished heritage and to recognise community councils.⁷²

This State regulation promoted the political shift away from alliance with mission/mainline churches such as Anglicanism, Catholicism, Methodism, and bodies like the South African council of churches, etc. And right now, at the heart of the post-Mandela era, the State puts more emphasis on Nation-building and social cohesion (Khoza, 1999: 54-60). It was with these clear mandates, in line with that of the CRL Rights Commissions, that President Mbeki, during his term in office, precisely in April 2002, called a meeting with leaders of 30 of South Africa’s religious communities; these include representatives of Christian denominations, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Baha’i, Buddhists, and African Traditional Religionists or leaders. In this regard, Khumalo (2002) recalls that “the President raised five central issues that focussed the discussion on the common quest of government and religion to transform South African society. These included: first, accelerating the process of building a non-

72 “Constitution of South Africa. Chapter 9. State Institutions Supporting Constitutional Democracy”. info.gov.za (retrieved 12 September 2019)

racial united nation; second, to enhance programmes to eradicate poverty; third, to develop the capacity of government; fourth, moral regeneration; and fifth, to participate in the renewal of the African Continent” (Khumalo, 2002: 1). Jacob Zuma, in 2009, succeeded Thabo Mbeki as president of South Africa and introduced a series of new political and social appointments, which caused tensions among citizens. These contestations extended to the various interfaith councils that now felt pitted against one another.⁷³ While these tensions and contestations, seemingly marked a move away from dialogue and contact between faith communities, towards religious representations in government structures, it nevertheless suggests widespread public recognition of, and reliance on faith communities in South Africa political and public life (Settler, 2013; Henrico, 2019).

4.6. GENERAL CONCLUSION

This chapter focused specifically on the History of interreligious contacts and dialogue in South Africa and was organised according to four epochs, namely, Contact before colonialism, Colonialism, Apartheid, and Post-apartheid. In the same vein, we answered the question “Why the focus on History of interreligious contact and dialogue in South Africa”, In answering the question, the researcher highlighted qualitative difference which was essential to note, namely that “interreligious” contact did not start with the missionaries encountering the indigenous people, but that indigenous people exchanged religious ideas and practices before the missionary presence. The history of South Africa's diverse cultures and religions, as stated, cannot be mapped without including the indigenous and first peoples. One can trace the indigenous people’s holistic relations with God, the Sacred, ancestors, neighbours, and nature, which include their identity, culture, and worldview. What is particular about the contribution of this chapter is that instead of starting the history of interreligious dialogue as originating with the arrival of Christian missionaries, it does two things. Firstly, I sought to map a history of both interreligious *contact* and *dialogue* which incorporates religious histories beyond institutional religion or by world religions. Secondly, it allowed me to map the history of interreligious dialogue and contact as a phenomenon that pre-dates colonialism.

⁷³ Shortly after taking office in 2009, Jacob Zuma founded the National Interfaith Council of South Africa (NICSA) and sidelined the National Religious Leaders’ Forum (NRFL) established by Mandela. This tensions among the interfaith council escalated to the extent that in 2018, Bishop Bheki Ngcobo of the National Interfaith Council of South (NICSA), accused the SA Council of Churches of being part of a conspiracy to destroy President Jacob Zuma.

With regard to Colonialism and Apartheid, the chapter indicates that both epochs, not only produced and permitted strict Christian normative which were monotheistic; but also encouraged and promoted segregated ideas about religions. The chapter explained further that, while colonialism understood religion as an imperial hierarchy, apartheid recognized other religions, as articulations of racial and cultural inferiority to Afrikaners Christian religion. The fourth epoch explored in this chapter was post-Apartheid. I found it essential to do so because it represents a period of legal and social recognition of all religious traditions, protected and enshrined in the South African Constitution. It is also important to note that the four epochs were periodically selected to capture the history of interreligious contacts and dialogue that occurred in each, which will, in turn, analyse the data gathered, to understand the South African interreligious context. This chapter answered our research sub-question (iii) which reads: What is the nature and history of interreligious contact and dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa? The objective is: To understand the nature and history of interreligious contact and dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This leads us to chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INTERRELIGIOUS CONTACT AND DIALOGUE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Overall, this chapter is an account of the fieldwork, that comprises of my findings from the interview conversations, as well as observations that I made while participating in various interreligious events or meetings. It is an account of the diversity of the participants interviewed and proceeds in providing anonymised profiles to humanize my participants. The first part of the chapter gives an account of how members of the various faith communities see themselves and understand their engagement with other faiths and how they resolve possible tensions. The second part of the chapter seek to construct a picture of the various activities and interventions that different faith communities are involved in. It is a series of reflections about interfaith deliberation and networking concerned with improving the daily lives of people in KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter is intended to present and sketch the view, perception experiences, and actions of KZN interfaith communities into a coherent narrative. In Chapter 6, I will offer a comprehensive discussion and analysis of the fieldwork data, but in this chapter, I present the data with limited discussion in an effort to allow the participants to “speak for themselves”.

5.2. ANONYMISED PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

Participant One: Ivanka, a 40-year old First Nation woman who lives alone, works as a teacher, and is an active member and coordinator of the Integral Peace Centre.

Participant Two: Miriam, a married 32-year-old Muslim woman. She is a social worker by profession and part-time coordinator of the Muslim outreach programme around one of the suburbs in town.

Participant Three: Stephen, a 51-year-old catholic man. He is an elder in his church, who is also in charge of a non-profitable organisation under their church, that cares for justice and peace and the underprivileged members of their community. He is also a board member of WCRP and KZN-IRC.

Participant Four: Warren, a 46-year-old Hindu man, and leader of their ashram on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg.

Participant Five: Joshua, a 25-year-old Jewish man, is a designer and part-time youth worker; and more so, a member of the Zionist youth empowerment programmes in the northern suburb of the city.

Participant Six: Faris, a 60-year-old Jewish man. A full-time Rabbi in one of the Jewish synagogues in the Durban CBD and is also one of the board members of WCRP and KZN-IRC.

Participant Seven: Von, 61-year-old Buddhist, and founder of one of the Buddhist centres in the outskirts of town. An architect by profession who not only built hospitals and clinics, but also numerous skill development centres around Pietermaritzburg and its environs.

Participant Eight: Zokhona, a 27-year-old Nazareth Baptist Church youth leader in Durban. He is a student and a part-time municipal worker. He is also a trained and qualified *Sangoma*

Participant Nine: Thembelane, a 30-year-old Anglican priest; a postgraduate student who lives and serves Anglican communities in one of the townships around KwaZulu-Natal.

Participant Ten: Shevarente, a 34-year-old Hindu woman. She is a nurse by profession, a single mum, and is active in the temple through work with the poor.

5.3. THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Several major themes emerged in the fieldwork, which I will discuss below. These are more or less related to the variable or codes introduced in chapter one (religion, belief, interreligious dialogue, and identity) but they are not yet brought into the conclusive analysis. One of the first set of themes that emerged from the fieldwork was a series of concerns related to *identity* and *belief*. As such this first part of the fieldwork, narratives deal significantly with ontological concerns. In my interviews with and observation of participants, the following three issues stood out most clearly. (1) how they understood the identity in and belonging to particular faith communities, (2) how participants understood their journeys into interreligious networks, (3) an exploration of some of the theological

questions that emerged from their personal contact with other faiths and interreligious networking.

5.3.1. Biography, Identity, And Belonging

Tracing the biography of each of the participants was an essential component of our fieldwork. It identified the participant's curriculum vitae, family, beliefs, motivation, race, creed, and culture. It also taps into a series of events making up their life and history. In introducing themselves during the interviews, participants were able to express who they are, which Faith tradition they belong to, who, and what motivated them as a member of their Faith community. Most of the participants described how their parents were instrumental in the understanding of what they know today as 'Faith and Religion', which in turn motivated their search for inner peace and well-being. As Ivanka puts it:

My mom used to actually go for meditation classes, and because she knew I was searching, constantly asking questions. She found the institution very informative and the experience she received from there was very fulfilling. So, my mom took me to the Centre (Interview date 03. 04. 2016).

Likewise, Joshua remarked:

I was born into a religious family. I followed the footsteps of my parents and grandparents (Interview date 24. 03. 2017).

Warren re-echoed the same sentiment but added that his parents, at his tender age, introduced him to a guru who mentored him. Thus, he expressed:

I was born in a very religious family and my parents were well-read and very staunch in their beliefs, so I was introduced to great teachers from the age of about eight and I sat at their feet and they taught me what we call under broader aspect, yoga Vedanta; Vedanta meaning the knowledge given in the Vedas. (Interview date 17.08.2016).

While some participants expressed how strict their parents were in bringing them up to Faith, others talked of the importance of growing up and making a personal decision at some stage, about one's

faith, which in turn is an inner expression of one's freed frame of mind that motivates peace and well-being. Concerning the former, Stephen asserts:

Well, I didn't really have a choice, my parents made that decision for me. So, I inherited this membership from them (Interview date 01.08. 2016).

Addressing the latter, Zokhona says,

However, according to our church, as you grow up you make a decision to follow in that church, it's not the matter of 'because your parents went there then you are bound', at a certain stage you need to make a decision... In making that decision, I felt drawn to our ancestors from an early age. Thus, I decided to be trained as a Sangoma. As a qualified iSangaoma, I am able to access advice and guidance from the ancestors and communicate that to the people (Interview date 21.07. 2017).

Then he went on to outline his motivation,

What motivated me are the teachings of our leader. In his teachings, he embraces our African culture and identity, in other words, what and who we are... I can relate to his teachings. More importantly, his advice on eating well and living a healthy lifestyle and also respecting our spirit of Ubuntu... (Interview date 21.07.2017).

Based on motivation, Joshua gave an account of how his Faith Community emphasized on the importance of education as a key to knowledge, development, and well-being. He said,

My Faith Community has always put a great deal of emphasis on education, so every child in our community would have at least a minimum of 10 years of education. As part of our educational system, I went to a Hebrew School as a child; later I joined the youth movement. You then went to university and joined the student association and then the student council and the rest of the communal organizations. You are born and brought up to be part of the community (Interview 24.03.2017).

For Von, what motivated him was not his parents or faith community, (as others mentioned above),

but rather his search for knowledge and understanding. On this note, Von talked of how he met the Tibetan refugee-Buddhist monks in the North of India, who, having escaped from the Chinese communists had to settle in India with no food, shelter, and support system; nothing to survive on. He mentioned that he found the lives of those monks challenging, and at the same time captivating. Their resilience, willingness to embrace problems, and suffering without giving up in such conditions, said Von, were among factors that made him decide on digging into the philosophy of Buddhism without the knowledge of any religion at all. Describing his experience further, Von said,

In my journey in search of knowledge and self-understanding, I travelled to the East. There I met the Tibetan refugee Buddhist monks, who arrived in India, having escaped from the Chinese communist; they had to settle in the north of India. And they had no way of surviving except by their own bootstraps because they couldn't speak the language. There was no food in India, and they were refugees in the country of beggars, so extremely difficult conditions. When I first met them, they were indeed beggars; they had no other way. But within two years they pulled themselves up little by little... That taught me something about what Buddhism can do as a philosophy: very concrete practical ways of dealing with issues and situations— you don't wallow in them, you don't wait for hand-outs, you don't become a beggar; you pick yourself and do what you can with very little. So, instead of sitting back and waiting for hand-outs, I decided to dig into the monk's philosophy, that anything is possible, and then I decided to investigate Buddhism without knowing religion at all (Interview date 27.07.2017).

Besides being motivated by parents, leaders, groups, or faith communities as mentioned above, most participants remarked that being active members of their Faith group boosted their self-esteem, confidence, and awareness to be better people. In fact, they described active membership as a great resource for social and spiritual growth; interaction, support, recreation, and working together with other members. Furthermore, they reiterated that frequent gatherings with members of their faith communities, which sometimes were on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, as the case may be, boosted their sense of belonging in the group; thus energized them to take ownership of well-being and the well-being of their communities. The gatherings, as participants explained, were in the form of social, spiritual, and/or educational, depending on events and schedules. Describing these forms of gatherings Ivanka says,

As a group sometimes we will go out for picnics, we definitely have workshops. We go away on retreats. One retreat for all the members of the Southern African region brings us together

and nourishes our well-being (Interview date 03.04.2016).

Stephen went further to describe how the groups he belongs to, meet (weekly or monthly) on social, religious, and organizational purposes. On that effects he asserts,

I belong to a walking club, but it's not part of the church, it's just anybody who wants to join the group. And within the church, I am a member of the parish pastoral council. I meet also with the Denis Hurley Centre. The parish council meets every month, the Denis Hurley Centre meets every two months and the walking club is every week (Interview date 01.08.2016).

Warren described how his group has focussed more on a holistic approach; in other words, on the body, mind, and soul connections, which enhance good health, inner peace, and well-being. He said:

Well, I will say that we don't have a walking club, but we have what is called Hatha yoga, where we meet on a different level where we talk about caring for the body and what is good for our health, and also, I teach them how to connect their body, mind, and soul on the daily activities that we do every day. And of course, we have discussions; if people have a query on the significance of certain prayers, life issues and what we have learned, then they ask. I also do individual, couple, and family counselling sessions (Interview date 17.08.2016).

In all these descriptions we can see that first, the biographical background of the participants: their beliefs, family history, and upbringing, motivations in life, race, creed, and culture, helped to lay the foundation toward their better understanding of religion as a resource to peace and well-being. Second, most of the participants claimed that their parents, teachers, and religious leaders played significant roles in their lives, and more so, were instrumental to their understanding of religion, which in turn motivated their search for inner peace and well-being. Third, being active members of their faith group boosted their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging, which in turn energized them to take ownership of their well-being and that of their faith community. Finally, the participant's connection to the transcendent should and must be holistically implemented through the body, mind, and soul. In other words, dialogue should and must start with you.

5.3.2. Participants' Experiences of interreligious dialogue

Having mapped some of the participants' faith journeys and biographies, in the following section I give an account of their understanding of what interreligious dialogue is all about, and something of explorations in this field. Their accounts were more personal introspection than a generalised view. Most participants held that dialogue should be one of the tools that should sustain religion as a resource to peace and well-being, not only in KwaZulu-Natal but also in South Africa as a whole. For such dialogue to be fruitful, they said, it must start from a person, him, or herself; - dialogue from within. 'Dialogue from within' is when a person is in constant constructive dialogue with him or herself; in other words, when a person bases his/her actions on the objective norm of morality that "good must be done and evil avoided", which in turn rejuvenates his/her inner peace and well-being (Lehman and Valsiner, 2017: 1-5).

Sheverante refers to this type of dialogue as,

The knowledge and development of the Body, Soul, and Mind (Interview date 03.08.2016).

Warren goes further to describe 'dialogue within' as the mastery over oneself; the mastery of one's thoughts, desires, sentiments, feelings, emotions, and so forth, which one should grasp the knowledge of, through constant practice and the living of yoga. For Warren,

Dialogue is Mastery over yourself; yoga is where you learn the art of self-mastery. And what that means is, we have a mind and a whole lot of thoughts, desires, cravings, sentiments, emotions, and feelings that pull us down. Through yoga, we can detach ourselves from these bad inclinations; through certain practices restrain ourselves from acting in an unacceptable manner. And that is what makes us human (Interview date 17.08.2016).

Acknowledging yoga for what it is, Ivanka described "dialogue within" as something that should intrinsically flow from one's inner or spiritual self..., in other words, being in good relation with the Sacred (God), ancestors, neighbours, and nature. Human beings, by nature, are spiritual beings. Spirituality is different from religiosity. One may be spiritual but not religious. In other words, the person may not belong to any religion or group or go to any temple/church/mosque, but the person is intrinsically sustaining his/her spiritual life and well-being. Following this line of thought Ivanka asserts:

We are all the same spiritual beings and the parent of all of us is a spiritual being which makes us unified in one and helps us engage in constant dialogue within ourselves and with one another. And this takes away the whole idea of race, and gender, and nationality (Interview date 03.04.2016).

“Dialogue from within”, Ivanka claims,

Give people an opportunity to understand themselves and other faith groups better (Interview 03.04.2016).

This kind of dialogue, she reiterates, is promoted by her organization run under the umbrella of “Global Peace House”. “Global Peace House”, she says,

It is a home where people can come to learn about themselves, dialogue within themselves; understand their intrinsic goodness within themselves and how each one of us actually is intrinsically good and positive individuals. The totality of it all is: being in a good relationship with the Sacred (God), ancestors, neighbours, and nature ⁷⁴ (Interview date 03.04.2016).

From his personal experience of what hardship and suffering is, Von described how he met people from different walks of life who, having gone through the same kind of experiences, come to their centre to encourage each other; and in so doing discover the intrinsic goodness in themselves and others. This exercise, Von said is done through the program called “dialogue of self-discovery” which their Centre offers. Dialogue of self-discovery, Von asserts, should not focus on belief or dogma or which religion one belongs to; rather, it should be a way of life, a continuous search for purification of self which evokes and encourages the goodness in you and others. Describing this Centre Von said,

Our Centre is established not for the Buddhists only; people from all walks of life come, who are very interested in the Buddhist philosophy and the ‘dialogue of self-discovery’ because there is no praying or worshipping, there is no worshipping in Buddhism; it’s a philosophy or psychology more than a religion. It doesn’t follow belief or dogma. Thus, dialoguing in this setting brings out the goodness in you (Interview date 27.07.2017).

⁷⁴ The above points will be analysed in detail in chapter six

Moving a step further from personal experiences, most participants expressed the importance of dialogue, this time, among interfaith groups in South Africa. They spoke of how it is necessary to understand the dynamics of religions, faith, creed, culture, and people in South Africa and more so, how essential it is not to create untrue stories about the people and their faith traditions. The more you get to know about people, participants explained, the better you understand their religion and faith background. Explaining this notion Zokhona said,

Dialogue among religions in South Africa is very important; it does not matter which religious group you come from. The most essential thing is for people to learn how to tolerate one another. Being a Sangoma has taught me a lot. It has taught me the spirit of Ubuntu: being in a good relationship with Umveliqangi⁷⁵; the ancestors, the patients who come to me, and also to nature created by Umveliqangi... The patients who come to me are from different faith groups. The more I engage in fruitful conversation and dialogue with them, the more I understand the challenges that they face.... Of course, during consultations, my focus is on the holistic (i.e. physical and spiritual) healing of my patients (Interview date 21.07.2017).

Concurring with Zokhona, Faris asserts,

Dialogue in South Africa is so important if you don't dialogue with people, if you don't enter a dialogue with people, you don't know enough about them and if you don't know enough about them you start creating myths about them, which can be untrue; you are filling the void with false information or with what you heard from someone else, with rumours. The more you get to know about people, the more you get to know about their religions and the greater social harmony you have (Interview date 24.03.2017).

With his vast experience in community development and working with different facilitators of interfaith projects in KwaZulu-Natal and beyond, Thembelani lamented on how they, the facilitators, came to meetings without concrete and practical things to do to alleviate the sufferings of ordinary and consequently, how those projects failed. Lamenting on this, he said,

If we, the interfaith groups, and facilitators want these projects to work, we must actively get involved in the daily life and struggles of our people. We must start asking ourselves the following questions: what is it that we want to do, what is our target, our aim, goal, objectives

⁷⁵ The Zulus refer to God as *Umvelinqangi*: the one who was there in the very beginning.

and what is it that we want to achieve, individually and collectively, in promoting the development and well-being of our people? (Interview date 31.07.2017)

Nonetheless, moving deeper into realities, most participants hinted that dialogue is necessary for South Africa on different levels; be it social, political, economic, religious, cultural, and otherwise. Participants also expressed that little has been done to foster fruitful dialogue in South Africa, especially now that many heroes and heroines of the struggle have passed on. For some participants, fruitful dialogue should start from top to bottom; in other words, from religious leaders and politicians down to the ordinary people; and for some participants, religious leaders and politicians should and must constantly engage in dialogues that gear towards the progress of the country. Other participants expressed the importance of ‘respect of your fellow human being and tolerance’ in dialogue. Both, they said, are necessary for a fruitful dialogue. Hinting on this, Warren said:

There is a need for dialogue in South Africa. Right now, there is little dialogue going on, but that is not enough. We need interreligious dialogue from the top because that is where the problem lies; the problem is the top (religious leader), not the bottom (ordinary people), ordinary people are very accommodating. So, we need to have dialogue at the top so that we can improve the welfare of this country. That should be our main priority and objective (Interview date 17.08.2016).

Shaverante concurs with the above statement when she said,

I think our religious leaders can also help a lot in bringing about more dialogue because it's about the level that you are, you are a small person to engage in dialogue with higher leaders and I think dialogue should begin from leaders coming down. Indeed, dialogue among religions in South Africa is just little (Interview 03.08. 2017).

In addition to the above Miriam says,

I think there should be more dialogue in South Africa. We should be engaging each other more freely. Tolerance is the name of the “game”, I feel like we can exercise tolerance. We shouldn't wait for an invitation to attend interfaith gatherings and workshops. Those are occasions to

learn from each other. We should openly go, if I feel like going to church on Sunday, I must be able to go, I mustn't wait for an invitation, and I must also feel welcome there (interview date 26.05.2016).

Hinting on dialogue among religions in South Africa at the grassroots level, Stephen expressed that not much has been done on tackling different societal plagues facing ordinary people in the country. However, he acknowledged that there are different talks in international faith groups and associations. Expressing his view on that Stephen said,

There is not much dialogue. Except at the international level, you've got a committee of the Vatican meeting with the Methodists, and another one meeting with the Lutherans and another one meeting with the Anglicans, but at grassroots, different individuals should come and get involved practically in dealing with the realities facing the country (Interview date 01.08.2016).

Dwelling on the same view Joshua said,

Dialogue among different religions in South Africa so far is very superficial, and thus, honest debate and discussions are needed around it (Interview 24.03.2017).

Zokhona hinted at another aspect of dialogue. He talks of dialogue through education. He expressed that the system of education in South Africa is extremely poor. There have been marches upon marches, rebellions upon rebellion on, the 'fees must fall' saga, and other challenges facing education in the country, but nothing has changed. He went on to say that education is necessary for the good and progress of South Africa. When young people are educated, he said, they are empowered to dialogue with other countries and nations on important matters that will benefit the country as a whole. Expressing his notion on this, Zokhona said,

Education is the key to knowledge because when people are educated, they become empowered; they become independent thinkers who engage in constructive and fruitful dialogue (Interview date 21.07.2017).

Von concurred with this idea when he said,

The youth of South Africa need to have some level of education before they understand that there are other ways of doing things, if you haven't had much education you tend to think that 'mine is the only way because this is the only way I know, all other ways are wrong', that is why education is important. So, you begin to understand 'there may be other ways of looking at things and there may be other ways of doing things' (Interview date 27.07.2017).

In addendum, Faris described his tertiary education experience, how he, from a Jewish background, lacked knowledge of other religions, which consequently compelled him to study about them to engage in a fruitful dialogue with his friends. He also narrated how he, as a rabbi, was interested in studying the texts and sacred books of other religions which in turn open his eyes to understand the norm and procedures of different religions and their adherents. Explaining it in his words, Faris said,

Dialogue is very important. Absolutely important, (he says) I made sure when I was studying to be a rabbi that I also did courses in comparative religion and I learned about other faiths; I did the scriptures (the Bible), I read the Indian scriptures (the Vedas) and did their translations. I read the New Testament in Greek. But my own writings I can read in Hebrew, yet it is important to know about other religions, and it makes it easy for dialogue (Interview date 24.03.2017).

Zokhona, being a young South Africa struggling in the tertiary, summed up his idea on the importance of education which he vowed to complete when he said,

We, the young people in the country, need to be educated. We are the ones that should be bringing solutions to our country and the world when people are troubled and they are looking for solutions, not solutions in terms of prayer only, I'm talking about implementable solutions to the problems of the society. This is why we should study and become good ambassadors of the country (Interview 21.07. 2017).

Meanwhile, in her personal experience, Ivanka gave an account of how interfaith dialogue in South Africa should be linking to the pre- and post-apartheid histories. Both histories, though painful, she said, brought about freedom, peace, and well-being of the people of South Africa. However, she regrets that the present government is neglecting the painful dialogue and sacrifices made by so many heroes and heroines; including the personnel of different faith groups, to gain peace and freedom in

the country. Reflecting on it, Ivanka asserts,

Well you know, during that time of 1985/1986 within the country, when South Africa was at the peak of the apartheid regime and the whole fighting for freedom and wanting peace and equality were far-fetched, in fact, the word equality was the most important... What disturbed me during the time was that many people were brutally maltreated and discriminated against. Our land as First Nations were taken and today, we are still debating on 'who owns the land'? It was really a painful experience. However, through openness, healing, and dialogue among people and among different religions in the country, and through the sacrifices of many people, freedom was achieved. But it is unfortunate that the country is currently experiencing breakdowns of dialogue and trust which took a painfully long time to be built from 1994. (Interview date 03.04.2016).

Adding to the fragile dialogue that exists in South Africa, as of the moment, Von spoke of the importance of 'dialogue and listening more', in other words, listening to the voices of outstanding people and religious leaders who stood up for justice and rights and more importantly, promoted dialogue and reconciliation, not only in South Africa but also in Africa at large. He recalled that when he was working with different Non-Governmental Organizations, that that was one of the modus operandi: *'create room for fruitful dialogue with colleagues and listen to their concerns...'* Explaining it better, Von said,

I think if politicians in South Africa would have listened to people such as Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Oliver Tambo, Ahmad Kathrada, and others, we as a country could have done more (Interview date 27.07.2017).

In all these narratives, most participants pinpoint that dialogue in post-1994 South Africa has focussed mainly on the uniformity of religions, rather than expressions of the diversity of opinions, which also reflects the diversity of the country and its people. Participants advised that the expression of the diversity of opinions should be considered when viewing religion as a resource to peace and well-being in South Africa, more especially in the context of our study. Expressing her opinion on this, Miriam said,

I think, deep down in every faith, our response is that we want peace and harmony. We want people to engage and dialogue and we don't want to agree on everything all the time. You can

differ, you can have your own way of doing things but that doesn't mean that we can't address the challenges and problems that we face (Interview date 26.05.2016).

Participants also expressed that dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa is not about different faith traditions, races, creeds or cultures that constitute the country, rather, its main aim and focus should be on uplifting the lives and well-being of the people. Capturing this idea vividly, Stephen said,

Dialogue in South Africa isn't about faith; it's about how we're going to serve all these people: the logistics of serving and the best way of helping poor people so that they really would be able to take control of their lives. It isn't about the creeds, different creeds, No! It is dialogue in action; volunteering and starting to do things to help humanity (Interview date 01.08.2016).

Summarizing this section of the interviews, I discovered the following as a researcher, firstly, that dialogue starts from within; a constant check and balance of oneself to do good and avoid evil. When individuals are trying to live out the goodness in them, through dialogue, families become a better place to live which in turn transforms communities and society at large. Secondly, that dialogue is not a once-off thing, rather it involves individual and collective efforts: tolerance, education, respect for each other's faith or religions, recognising the diversity of opinions in the country, and so on, are processes of healthy dialogue and well-being of the South Africa people. Thirdly, more needs to be done to promote healthy dialogue and co-operations in South Africa. This leads us to the next theme that emerged in the interview, namely: social and theological tensions.

5.3.3. Social and theological tensions

Having outlined a series of socio-economic issues that require attention from religious leaders and faith communities, participants went on to map how a culture of intolerance, anxiety, and religious chauvinism frustrate efforts to foster interreligious cooperation and action. Most participants expressed that there have been tensions regarding interfaith dialogue in South Africa, taking cognisance of KwaZulu-Natal- the geographical area of our study. The tensions as expressed can be classified as both social and theological. Participants were particularly clear about how xenophobia, intolerance, and racism have threatened to undermine interfaith dialogue and relations in the country. Among these participants cited a lack of understanding of each other's faith and religion; abuse of

social media networks, dissemination of false information, and attacks on other faiths. They emphasized the danger that intolerance and racism have posed to the country. Commenting on these, Joshua said,

Xenophobia by its very nature is completely wrong and must be addressed, and to have as much support and policies; at the same time to recognize the economic and other pressures that cause all these tensions. Again, and again, intolerance and racism have caused lots of tension in the Country. These have to be addressed in a far longer, more detailed, and much more extensive way than it has been done, rather than parching them up after each crisis (Interview date 24.04.2017).

Miriam spoke against the constant attacks of their African brothers and sisters who live in KwaZulu-Natal and the rest of South Africa, which she said, caused lots of social, political, economic, as well as religious tension in the country. She also talked of a series of workshops that her organization had to promote the dignity and well-being of the human person. Narrating her story, she said,

We, the members of the WCRP and the KZN Interreligious Council, spoke strongly against the attack on our brothers and sisters. We conducted workshops in the different parts of KwaZulu-Natal and the country and spoke to people on the atrocities committed which must stop. We showed our people the different videos of what it looks like when people are forced to leave their countries because of situations beyond their control. We reminded them that that was how our conditions were during the apartheid days. I could remember, after watching the videos, people said, "Oh, we can now understand what these people are going through!" Our regional offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town supported us in the campaign (Interview date 26.05.2016).

Most participants agreed that religious extremism and fanaticism are among the theological crises and tensions which have hampered the process of dialogue and the development of people, not only in South Africa but also in Africa as a whole. Commenting on extremism in South Africa, Ivanka said,

There are elements of religious extremism in the country and that is why we should speak about it and warn ourselves so that it doesn't get out of hand. I believe in religious plurality, I believe all religions must be respected unless they are crazy religions, I don't believe in Caliphate, that is killing fellow Muslims, and so forth in Syria. I don't respect the religious extremists, and by the way, we have the Jewish religious extremists as well, don't think it's

only some religions, every religion has its extremists; people who will do terrible things in the name of their religion, I don't respect them (interview date 24.03.2017).

Commenting on fanaticism, Warren continues,

Religious fanaticism is killing us in South Africa. I would say, our religious leaders and our religions are fanatic. We think that we are the most righteous and holy people; we think that whatever doctrines that were handed on to us does not change. We do not open ourselves to learn from others and prefer to remain in ignorance! And all this creates lots of tension, violence, and antagonism among religions (Interview date 17.08.2016).

Speaking on lack of knowledge about other religions in South Africa, Stephen told the story of the experience he had going with his friend to a temple where they joined in the worship, he said,

We grow up with these stories that we hear about what people believe, but we never checked, we never asked to find out what do they actually believe in. There I have got this friend of mine whom I went with to a temple. There we were supposed to join in worship and my friend nastily said, 'these people are devil worshippers'. He is a very intelligent-educated man, in saying 'they are devil worshippers', I was very disappointed. All I would say is that there is a need for dialogue among us even if it's just kind of explaining what you believe and why you believe it, but it needs patience and humility to learn and respect (Interview date 01.08.2016).

Taking it further, Zokhona outlined some political issues in his church, the fights over power, and power of succession, as well as assassinations of members, which have seriously hindered dialogue, peace, and well-being of people in his church. Narrating the sad events, he said,

There are political issues in our church, fights over power. You are branded as campaigning for a position if you try to think out of the box. People within our church are killing each other and people within the church are gossiping about one another; the church leaders are insecure in terms of their position, they think that there are people among church members who want to remove them from their position. So, those are the hindrances that make the church non-progressive (Interview date 21.07.2017).

Another form of theological tension that exists among religions in South Africa as some participants pointed out, is the tension around their 'belief in one god or plurality of gods; or they don't believe in any God at all (that is where atheism comes in). Capturing this form of tension from a Hindu perspective, Warren said,

In the first place, people think that Hinduism has a whole lot of gods, which is not correct. We believe that there is only but one God, the Divine. Secondly, they believe that we have different idols of different gods. That too is incorrect because we don't see God, we don't worship God in the idol; the idol is not god. But however, we believe that the Divine manifests Himself in different forms; and that is what we teach and believe (Interview date 17.08.2016).

Discussing further the tensions, and how she and members of her organization have been discriminated against because they do not fit into the so-called 'mainstream', Ivanka said,

Our group is just an organization where people come to learn about themselves, understand the intrinsic goodness within them, and how each one of us actually is intrinsically good. I am not ordained to be anything; I am as ordinary as anybody else. Our group does not fit into the mainstream religions. We don't have rituals, dogma, or doctrines, we are open to the public; everyone is a member. You come and learn whatever we teach that empowers you to be a better person. Since we do not fit into the mainstream 'religions', we experience most of the time, what I would call 'discrimination'. For instance, there was a provincial function held recently and they were asking people who were priests and priestesses to come, and when we arrived, because we were somehow given an invitation; they realized that actually, I was neither priest nor a priestess; immediately I was side-lined. Very sad experiences though, but one has to learn to accept it (Interview date 03.04.2016).

Besides the above, another serious theological threat that exists among religions in South Africa, as mentioned by most participants, is the issue of superiority complex which religions exhibit against the other. Hinting on this, Shevarante gave an example of how women are treated in those faith groups and what happens during their funeral ceremonies, which, she said, upsets her. Narrating the sad stories, Shevarante said,

I want to be honest, and my view is that the religions "X" and "Y" have superior complex habits, in my personal view, and also their women have continuously been marginalized. Only

men go to their places of worship. So, it is not accessible to women. And if you attend their funerals, for example, you will not be allowed at the cemetery. If they are doing prayer at home, their men will take the first sitting and you are pushed out. The other challenge that we face is with some “Y” communities. Our “T” groups are free-minded people. We are free to go to the “Y” places of worship and I noticed that it is becoming more evident. Two weeks ago, we attended a funeral, and there were a lot of “Y” people at the funeral, and they were busy chatting while the service was going on. These things upset me when I see them (Interview date 03.08.2017).

Adding to the above point, Thembelani said,

We have good relationships with the “G” group when they invite us to go to join them for activities, we go, and we join. But when we invite the “G” group, their lay member comes but their priests do not. For me, I see that as two things; either it is a lack of knowledge or pride. What then is the need for ecumenism if one group thinks that they are superior to the other? That is what I see as a big problem that stiffens dialogue among us (Interview date 31.07.2017).⁷⁶

In the same vein, most participants expressed that “abuse and the misinterpretation” of what is called “freedom of religion” in South Africa have caused a series of theological conflicts and more so, issues around this subject need to be addressed as well. Describing some of the chaos, Zokhona said,

Freedom of religion in South Africa has not helped, looking at the issues that are happening; where people are eating snakes, where pastors are found doing things that you would never think a pastor would do. Pastors are going around the world trying to find the magic to make a miracle. The so-called freedom has opened up to people who are going to exploit that platform, just to enrich themselves and also to rob people, which is actually anti-religion (Interview date 21.07.2017).

Adding to the chaos described above, Joshua added that ‘freedom of religion’ is not working in South

⁷⁶ Because of the sensitivity of the interview and to avoid victimizing or labelling any religion or faith group in this context, and more so, sticking to the ethical laws that must be adhered to, Sheverante and Thembelani used the alphabets “X”, “Y”, “T” and “G” respectively to describe their encounters with members of the religions they mentioned. Each encounter was unique as they expressed it above.

Africa at the moment because it is all on paper and never practised. Describing it he said,

Freedom of religion, I think, is a core value of any civilized society, without that you don't have a free society. However, freedom of religion in terms of the constitutions of South Africa has got a pretty good record at the moment; and certainly, as you said from 1994, it was much more open. It is all on paper; everything in theory, but in practice, it becomes difficult (Interview date 24.03.2017).

Dwelling on the difficulty of people not understanding their organization and philosophy of life, Von described the tensions that he sees in the faces of so many people in the country when he tells them about his organization and what they believe in, which for him is freedom of what he called 'deep living'. Describing his experiences, Von said,

People are shocked when I tell them that Buddhism is not a religion; it is simply a philosophy of life. It is an adventure that reminds you that life is dukkah! In fact, the first noble truth in Buddhism is "there is suffering" everywhere.⁷⁷ It is a universal fact that everyone agrees on! So, we don't believe in god or goddesses, we don't believe in dogmas, heaven or hell, no prayer, worship, or holy book. Buddhism embraces people from all walks of life, ages, backgrounds: atheists, non-atheists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and so on; there is no membership register. Everybody is welcome to be part of this Ubuntu feeling, and that is what I call freedom of 'deep living' (Interview date 27.07.2017).

Acknowledging the social and theological tensions in the country, Warren speaks of openness to the understanding of what 'freedom of religion' entails. And when it is well applied and practiced, it should reduce the level of tensions hitherto. Describing this, Warren said,

Freedom of religion should be where we don't prescribe how a person should pray or what direction he or she should have with regard to his or her faith (Interview date 17.08.2016).

Dwelling on the above point, and at the same time explaining what 'freedom of religion' meant for her, Miriam said,

⁷⁷ Life is *Dukkah* (suffering) is the first Noble Truth in the teaching of the Buddha, Suddhartha Gautama. The first Noble Truth in Buddhism is, 'there is dukkah (suffering) and it is universal. The second Noble Truth is 'there is a cause for the suffering. The third Noble Truth is, 'identify the cause' (Abe, 1995: 21; Ellinger, 1988:12).

Religion, I think, is something personal, it's free for you to worship when you want to worship and live your life to the best of your ability. I need to cherish my religion; I need to live it. I need to do things that need to be done for the good of society and humanity. I would not like to stop anyone from doing their worship and I would not want anyone to stop me either. That is what freedom of religion means for me; cherishing and respecting each other's faith and belief as long as it is not a threat to human life (Interview date 26.05.2016).

Advising on how 'Freedom of religion' should be applied in South Africa to bring about peace and well-being among people, Thembelani said,

Freedom of religion is good, as long as it is protected or governed by a body that monitors the activities of the religions. Legislation and the Legislators, those who make law in the country must intervene because lots of abuses have really happened because of religion. Those who use the name of freedom and religion to abuse people or turn to hurt other human beings should be severely punished by the Law. So, freedom of religion should operate with responsibility (Interview date 31.07.2017).

Bringing these points to some kind of conclusion Ivanka said,

We will only achieve freedom when anger, greed, ego, discrimination, jealousy, everything is eradicated, then we will be free. We need to be free to the point where we uphold the goodness of everyone. If my actions through my religion are harming anyone by making them peaceless, then there is no freedom of religion. In the same way, every religious institution has a great responsibility because they are actually shaping the attitude and consciousness of our individuals, and if we believe in the top of our value that we want peace, then what we share should always be non-violent; we should always be supportive of the values of love, unity, peace, and well-being of all around us (Interview date 03.04.2016).

At this juncture, allow me to dissect some crucial social tensions expressed above by most participants, and briefly explore the context and relationship between them. Firstly, most participants expressed that xenophobic violence, attacks, intolerance, and racism have and still undermine interfaith dialogue and relations in South Africa. Listening to the participants as a researcher, their underlined emotions and concerns point to the peculiarity of those malicious attacks which appear to

have taken on a primarily racial form (Nyamnjio, 2006: 12; Moge kwu, 2005: 5). This is worsened by participants' feelings of a "deliberate silence" and "denialism" by the South African government and religious leaders as if they condone the xenophobic attacks.

Secondly, participants made striking remarks about social inequality, poverty, and unemployment, which in turn fuels xenophobia and suspicion among different ethnic and religious groups (Harris, 2001: 33; Neocosmos, 2006: 36). The myths which claim that foreigners, (that is black Africa immigrants), are taking jobs from local South Africans are, for the most part, not based on data" (Reddy, 2012; Grant, 2014). Rather, it is based on anecdotal evidence which borders on fantasy (Gumede, 2005). These conditions of severe social inequality make society vulnerable to suspicion, bias, and discrimination against those who we perceive to be different from ourselves.

In addition to highlighting the above social challenges, participants only identified several religious and theological tensions that threaten to frustrate or undo the benefits of interreligious dialogue. The first was religious extremism and fanaticism. Since the start of the year 2018, a number of violent incidents that suggest increasing religious extremism in South Africa (Simelane, 2007; Kalidheen, 2008). Among these incidents is the murder of Rodney and Rachel Saunders a South African/British botanist couple in northern KwaZulu-Natal, in February 2018; two murderous attacks on mosques in KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape; the planting of several cell phone incendiary devices in KwaZulu-Natal shopping malls (Fabricius, 2018). Accompanying conventional religious fanaticism, South Africa saw an increase of self-styled prophets, such as Lethebo Rabalago - widely known as the "Doom Pastor" who claimed the insect repellent he used in 2016 could heal cancer and HIV. These are kinds of extremism and fanaticism that provoked widespread debates about religious exploitation of the poor and desperate, which further limited belief in the ability of religion to promote peace, and well-being in South Africa.

However, most participants noted that despite tensions and anxieties about aspects of religions other than one's own, that working together as members of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) and KwaZulu-Natal Interreligious Council (KZN-IRC) helped them to understand each other, their religions, values, and beliefs. Through participating in these two interreligious organizations, interviewees engaged in different projects which are geared towards social upliftment and transformation. As Miriam puts it on behalf of the WCRP and KZN-IRC,

Religions for Peace is an organization made up of all the faith communities in Durban. We work together to uplift the lives of our people and communities through different projects,

social services, and development. We are people who help one another. We are servants of God almighty (Interview date 26.05.2016).

5.5. INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE TOWARDS WELL-BEING

In the previous section of this chapter, interviewees shared their various journeys to, and beliefs about interreligious dialogue and its benefits for society. In the end, there appeared to be general agreement among participants that through collective action, interreligious dialogue not only provides intrinsic value to those who partake but also serve as a platform for social networking and action. So, in this section of the chapter, I will map thematic concerns related to interreligious contact, deliberation, and collaborative actions. In particular, these themes echo the variables or themes introduced in chapter one, namely, *religion* and *interreligious dialogue*. As such this first part of the fieldwork, narratives deal significantly with empirical concerns. As a way to map these empirical interreligious concerns, the themes are organised as follows: (1) providing relief to those who are destitute, (2) assisting communities with development, and (3) drawing on the diversity of religions and interreligious associations to build sustainable systems of care within and between different communities.

In the interviews, the participants expressed how they engaged in different works and projects to address the issues of dialogue, (i.e. the dialogue of service: community serving humanity), peace, and well-being of people in KwaZulu-Natal. Expressing this collaboration among them, Miriam said,

We work together as World Council on Religions for Peace, KwaZulu-Natal, in providing services for our people. These services are provided not only to Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, African Traditional Religionists, or the like; rather it's provided for everyone. We provide services for poor people and the needy irrespective of culture, creed, race, or nationality (Interview date 26.05.2016).

To analyse and map these interreligious development practices, I made use of Korten's generation strategic NGO intervention approach, to identify specific strategies of development that the faith groups represented in this study. Korten (1990) outlined the four strategies as Relief and Welfare, Community Development, Sustainable Systems Development, and People's Movement, as indicated in the chart below:

	G E N E R A T I O N S			
	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Defining features	Relief and welfare	Community development	Sustainable systems development	People's movement
Year of reference	1940s	1960s	1970s	1980s
Problem definition	Shortage	Local inertia	Institutional and policy constraints	Inadequate mobilizing vision
Time frame	Immediate	Project life	Ten to twenty years	Indefinite future
Scope	Individual or family	Neighborhood or village	Region or nation	National or global
Chief actors	NGOs	NGO plus community	All relevant public and private institutions	Loosely defined networks of people and organisations
NGO role	Doer	Mobilizer	Catalyst	Activist/educator
Management orientation	Logistics manager	Project management	Strategic management	Coalescing and energizing self managing networks
Development education	Starving children	Community self-help	Constraining policies and institutions	Spaceship earth

Diagram 1: Korten's generation strategic NGO intervention approach

5.5.1. Together providing relief and welfare

Working together as WCRP and KwaZulu-Natal Interreligious Council, most participants expressed the short term and immediate strategies that they used to address issues of poverty facing the people at hand. As Stephen expressed,

We worked very closely with the Denis Hurley Centre to provide, food, shelter, and clothes to the needy and the underprivileged; and this includes migrants who came into our country who needed assistance (Interview date 01.08.2016).

In the same vein, Sheverante added,

In our Tamil group, we are actively engaged in poverty alleviation; we provide food parcels to identified persons. We collect unused clothing items and distribute that to the less fortunate and we also run a soup kitchen (Interview date 03.08.2017).

Thembelane narrated how his group embarked on social outreaches, where they frequently visited the sick, aged, the dying, the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and tried as much as they could to assist them. In his narration, he said,

We engaged in the project called “Stop Hunger”, under which our lay ministers do lots of social outreaches; visiting the sick, the dying, for example, those infected by HIV and Aids, Tuberculosis, and so on. We also visit the aged, street kids, and the AA’s where we give them food, treatment, and other assistance that they might need. We also do a soup kitchen (Interview date 31.07.2017).

Ivanka narrated the story of how their group members used special occasions like birthdays or anniversaries to do charity. She said,

If there is someone from our group who has a birthday or a special occasion, or somebody’s death anniversary and the family wants to cook a meal, instead of inviting rich people to come to eat the food, we cook the meal as a group and go to the needy; feed them and we serve them (Interview date 3.04.2016).

Speaking on behalf of the Muslim charity outreach, Miriam said,

The Muslim community is currently doing ‘Winter Warm’; it’s announced on the radio and we are told a blanket would cost R100. Deposit it into a certain account or give it to a certain organization. People respond positively to such charitable works; they would partner with social welfare outlets and they would do it (Interview date 26.05.2016).

The interreligious network practices were not limited to providing relief to people in crisis, such as during floods or outbreaks of xenophobic violence, but also to work with communities in establishing practices and facilities that might lead to the longer-term development of those communities. I have mapped some of these initiatives below.

5.5.2. Committed to community development

Under this strategy, most participants expressed how they helped assist different rural communities in and around the vicinities of KwaZulu-Natal, to develop and better their lives. Narrating his story, Von said,

Yes, we have an arm of our organization called Wozamoya – come spirit. That is our outreach programme to the local community, and it's doing marvellous work, absolutely wonderful work. We have started schools for the locals and the organization has also become involved in raising funds from overseas donors. So, we've put down boreholes, craft and beadwork centres for them. We have built welding shops and have 15 locals working in the centre, as well as in the workshops. Previously, people had to go to town to a garage and have their ploughs welded together. We had a building donated and we have a welding shop there, so anything metal that breaks and needs welding can be fixed there, including cars and bicycles and so on... The community had a lot of trouble collecting their pension because there is so much corruption going on amongst the people that administer the pensions; and so, our organization has stepped in to rectify the problem. People are now receiving their pensions and grants without hassles. We have organized electricity for the communities as well. I contacted Eskom and said, look we've got a lot of people here, ourselves included, we are in the dark and these people are cold; they need to cook food, for heaven's sake, and better their lives. So I wrote to Eskom and mentioned all that, and being an architect and a construction engineer, I said I will help in whatever way I can to make sure that these people have decent facilities available and would not have to use firewood any longer; since then this has become a lovely community (Interview date 27.07.2017).

In line with the same thought, Mariam said,

We have a hands-on project called Mavela Ekhaya, for rural community development. At the Mavela Ekhaya project, we have a "Care Centre" with about 26 patients there; they are all elderly and need assistance and we have 10 volunteers that provide services for them. The project also provides mobile clinics, volunteer doctors, nurses and other health assistants, who go into the rural areas to service that community who can't make their way to clinics or hospitals in the CBD. The project also builds crèches, nursery schools and more so, pays school fees and bursaries for people in rural areas who cannot afford it (Interview date 26.05.2016).

Joshua explained his experiences working with the women in their congregation, known as “Sisterhood”, to develop villages and communities in the southern part of KwaZulu-Natal. They, he said, in collaboration with WCRP, embarked on projects that uplift the lives of people. Speaking of the projects, he said,

We provided schools, crèches, hospices, and libraries in these villages; and we teach people how to grow vegetables, fruits, and other crops (Interview date 24.03.2017).

Adding to the above, Warren said,

We engage in different outreach programmes in different communities and townships; they are enormous. We build schools, we build crèches, provide bursaries, schoolbooks, tuitions, and other items they need for their studies; we also run food schemes, at least children have something to eat while in school. And those are among our social responsibilities (Interview date 17.08.2016).

More so, Sheverante talked of the disastrous impact of HIV and AIDS on so many families in South Africa, which also affected one of her nieces, leaving them to be a child-headed family. On that note, she mentioned one of the projects that her group has embarked on to alleviate the suffering of these young people. Outlining the details of the project, she said,

We have a child-headed household project where we train youngsters on different skills, such as sewing, crafting, beadwork, welding, plumbing, ploughing, gardening, carpentry, and so on. We also pay their school fees, uniforms, books and transport when they go to school. By so doing, we believe we are empowering them to be better people. Taking cognisance of the traumatic experiences that they are going through; counselling sessions are also offered to them. We don't have enough resources for the whole community, but we are providing to about 34 families (Interview date 03.08.2017).

Stephen narrated how he got engaged in the Nkosinathi project; how the experience, not only changed his life but also empowered him as a person. In his words he said,

At the Denis Hurley Centre, my colleague and I are involved in the daily running of the Nkosinathi project, which takes care of the refugees, the homeless, and the displaced. It has

employment programs and also teaches people about human dignity and livelihood; there is also a clinic attached to it for those who need it (Interview date 01.08.2016).

In line with the establishment of projects for community development, Faris said,

We are involved in a program called “Project Ten”. “Project Ten” means to “give back”. In the program, we have a series of volunteers who come for a period of seven months. They go out to the townships and villages to teach English, Maths, and science; they also teach other skills, such as computer skills, and whatever else is needed (Interview date 27.03.2016).

Sharing on empowering the young people in Durban townships, Thembelane asserts,

We have got a Centre for workshops and seminars called “Vuleka Centre”. Vuleka Centre does a lot of skill training for young people, what they call ‘vocational training’ so that they can learn different skills that will help them in life. The Centre also does a lot of seminars on human and community development. Some become good cricket players; others have become better people and have progressed tremendously in life (Interview date 31.07.2017).

On the contrary, Zokhona narrated how his faith group disengaged and still disengages themselves with others, how they created their own ‘world’ and remained in their comfort zones. In his comment he said,

We lack active engagement with other religious groups. We do not engage with other religious formations, it’s like we are creating our own world. To tell you the truth, we are not allowed to form partnerships with other churches (Interview date 21.07.2017).

Listening to Zokhona during the interviews, I recall his lament that people who follow African Traditional Religion feel oppressed and disenfranchised, even after 1994. Consequently, they feel justified in disengaging themselves from other religions, and more so, create boundaries, out of fear and hurtful experiences. This position of distrust extends across the South African society, characterised by decades of abuse and alienation, and as such the third thematic area that emerges out of the interreligious networks and practices, are the efforts to build sustainable systems of trust and care.

5.5.3. Building sustainable systems of care

Most participants expressed their enthusiasm for being involved in interreligious dialogues because through harnessing trust increases the possibility of sustainable development. Faris emphasised how his group, under the umbrella of WCRP-SA/ KZN-SA, is engaged with the South African Faith Communities Environmental Institute (SAFCEI), to promote a renewable source of energy that sustains the life and well-being of people and the environment. Narrating on this, Faris said,

We are involved with WCRP – The World Council of Religions for Peace, KwaZulu-Natal Interreligious Council, as well as the South African Faith Communities Environmental Institute (SAFCEI). SAFCEI is an important organization because it works for the environment. It also brings everybody from every religion in, to work together, because all religions are interested in preserving the planet; we all ought to care for this earth of ours. We try to encourage good things, for example, encouraging renewable sources of energy, and are very much against the building of nuclear power plants; we want coal to be phased out gradually because the use of fossil fuels is damaging to the environment. The government has done something, but we feel it could do much more to encourage wind power and solar power; this country has so much sunshine and there could be so much more solar power (Interview date 24.03.2017).

Speaking on the importance of being more environmentally free, Ivanka spoke of how her organization worked together with SAFCEI on issues as well. Explaining briefly, she said,

We work together with WCRP. There is another interfaith organization called SFEC: Southern African Faith for Environmental Change; we collaborate with them on issues like saving water, recycling, becoming more environmentally friendly. Through our different faiths, we do that, and I am part of that organization and use my sort of 'connection' with the Brahma Kumaris, Global Peace House, to help spread the word around and within that organization as well (Interview date 03.04.2016).

Joshua narrated different events, where his organization worked with “Trees for Africa”, to create both national and international awareness on the disasters caused by the plight of deforestation. According to him, they work in collaboration with their offices in different parts of Africa. Explaining

it further, he said,

We work with 'Trees for Africa' in training programs to teach our people the danger of deforestation. People cut trees and burn forests without knowing the disaster that it causes. Therefore, we work with different NGOs in education, health, forestry, and agriculture; and many of the NGOs are obviously of different faiths. In Africa, we get our projects head-on in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Ghana, and we have now established one in Durban. We work with the Denis Hurley Centre and the Domino Foundation; working with Hindus, Muslims, and any others that would like to join us. The project has been in existence for 25 years (Interview date 24.03.2017).

Sheverante gave an account of how her engagement with KZN, which includes Pietermaritzburg and Durban, and The Association of Tamils, helped in establishing a sustainable system of education to guide so many young people in life. In her narrative, she said,

Besides poverty alleviation, we engage in sustainable health education programs. We teach and educate the youth on issues around hygiene, cleanliness, sexuality, and teenage pregnancy; how to dress and conduct themselves, and more so, how they should protect themselves against being victims of rape. We also educate them on family planning and contraception. For the adults, we teach them how to apply for a disability grant and get access to the hospital for medication; or if the elderly person is asthmatic, how to manage the situation in an emergency. For those who have retired, we teach them how to apply and collect their pension. All these services are offered to anyone, irrespective of their race, culture, or creed (Interview date 03.08.2017).

Thembelane outlined other sustainable programs that their faith group has embarked on, to empower women, men, and children in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. In his explanation, he said,

We get involved in the personal development of human beings. Our Centre also equips young women with professional skills. Some are overseas; there are young girls who actually were taken to France through the program to train with other NGOs, so as to gather experiences and bring those experiences back to their communities in South Africa. Also, we have gender-based projects that are answering to the question of violence towards women and children. You should have heard a lot of demonstrations from the church in Pietermaritzburg; our church group sent people to go and tell them we don't need any violence against women and

children, we have to speak about that. In the province, we have got a movement called the 'St Bernard Museki Movement' that encourages men to work actively in the church and society. In the fellowship, men come together as men, to discuss issues facing men within the church and society. Why men don't come to church? How do we encourage men to contribute to the life of the church and society and so on? There is also a women's movement called the St Agnes women movement, where they lay emphasis on the strength and goodness of women and also, prepare young women to live a good and decent life. We have the Mother's Union as well; the mother's union is a big body within our organization, founded with the intention to promote family life (Interview date 31.07.2017).

On the same sustainable programs that focus on the development and dignity/well-being of the human person, Warren gave an account of how he and his organization got involved in establishing a rehab centre for drug addicts around the northern part of Pietermaritzburg. He and other volunteers in the group, who are professionals, provide counselling sessions for these challenged members of the society and refer them to other medical experts when need be. Giving an account of his story, Warren said,

We established a rehab centre that takes care of people who struggle with substance abuse. With drug-related issues, we teach people life skills. The skill here is to study yourself, why am I driven by drugs? What is the cause, what is making me go into that and what must I do to come out of it? So, I interview the person, I look into the circumstances; you can call it a type of psychological examination. In doing so, you would find out that the person is emotionally disturbed, perhaps his parents are not stable at home; he's got no communication between the mother and the father, probably, his parents are going in different directions; he and the siblings are not on good terms. Because of the breakups, he or she has been ignored; there is no harmony at home and thus causes him/her to take drugs. Therefore, in our life skills, we teach them how to rise above these challenges (Interview date 17.08.2017).

Summarily, Von used his personal story to capture the practical meaning of 'sustainable systems of development' in a nutshell. In his narrative, he asked,

Did I tell you this? I have done a lot of work for the catholic churches; they come to me to build their churches, hospitals, hospices, schools, and mission stations. Being an architect, I have built hospitals and schools for them in Ixopo, UMzimkhulu area, as well as in

Mariannhill. For instance, I built Christ the King Hospital in Ixopo; and to think a Buddhist building of all these... There, for me, is a fellowship feeling, that Ubuntu feeling: a feeling of using the precious time, talent, and treasures we have, to build structures that will develop and sustain people's lives for generations to come. In this case, Christ the King hospital and the catholic missions around Ixopo and Mariannhill are still serving people to date; that's a great Ubuntu connection and feeling! (Interview date 27.07.2017).

5.5.4. A People's Movement Through Dialogue and Contact

Here, some participants mentioned how they got involved in different people's movements, which not only have an indefinite future, but also are of national and global importance to the development, peace, and well-being of all citizens, not only in South Africa but globally as well. Describing one of these movements, Stephen said,

I am a member of the Diakonia Council of Churches, which is a movement that embraces people of all faiths, religions, cultures, and creeds. I have been a member for 30 years, working with other Christian churches and with people of other faiths, and that was an enormously influential experience for me because I began to see the wonderful aspects of other churches. And in fact, it kind of made me feel that I wouldn't like to have just one church because there are some aspects that are being developed more here and there is a kind of richness when you see it all together. In Diakonia, we were also engaged in the Justice and Peace Commission working in serving and empowering people, especially the youth, to live a better life. Serving young people in the Justice and Peace commission challenged me deeper as a person; and always reminded me of the wonderful statement of the synod of 1972 which says, "Action on behalf of justice and working for human rights we see as an integral part of the growth and well-being of the people". (Interview date 01.08.2016).

I think as a researcher, that the course 'The Healing of Memories', will be of help where people are brought together from different parts of Africa to learn about each other's background, culture and stories. I think that is one of the ways to reduce racism and xenophobic attacks. More so, Thembelani gave an account of his experience with the Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue movement; how they tackle the issues of political and economic injustices, as well as violence against women and children. In his narration, he said,

I'm a member of the Ecumenical and interfaith dialogue movement for years. We also work together with the South Africa Council of Churches, World Religions for Peace, KZN Interreligious Council, Diakonia Council of Churches, and others. Our church personnel is always outspoken about political injustices, economical injustices, or violence against women and children. They have also spoken against corruption that has sunk the economy and caused many of our people to lose their jobs (Interview date 31.07.2017).

In the same vein, Faris revealed his experiences working with the NRLF; a group he said, was established by the then President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, to advise him and the government on the issue of religions, peace, and well-being of the country. Narrating his experience with the group, he said,

I was for years a member of an organization called The National Religious Leaders Forum-(NRLF). It was started on the initiative of President Nelson Mandela, back in the early 1990s, and I was one of the twenty-four founding members. We used to meet with him several times a year, and we used to be together and he often took advice from us; we did the same with his successor Mbeki, although Mbeki was a bit remote and he was a bit harder to get through, very different people; Mandela was a very warm outgoing person and Mbeki was intellectual and rather remote. And when it came to President Zuma, he closed down our organization (Interview date 24.03.2017).

Faris' underlined emotions expressed here; that of anger and disappointment that President Zuma neglected the NRLF, which could have helped the government facilitate processes of dialogue, peace, and well-being among religions and citizens alike. But its dismantlement causes some of the tensions as stipulated above where I discussed social and theological tensions. Nonetheless, Von narrated his story of being a member of CODESA, which was part of the body that wrote the South African Constitution and coded it into what it is today. Narrating his experience, Von said,

I was part of the CODESA debate, do you remember CODESA? When the Constitution was written, the first preamble of it was going to have something that refers to God, but the unresolved debate was "who is the child of God and what constitutes being the child of God; will that be belief, religion, or what...? And when the debate was put on the table I said 'I think you mustn't consider that because there are religions, powerful religions that have existed for longer than Christianity, ...So, my suggestion at CODESA was to consider and

respect different groups and beliefs in the country. That is why the Constitution doesn't have the 'idea of God' in it (Interview date 27.07.2017).

Nevertheless, having the idea of people's movement and development in mind, Miriam went on to describe how she and her group, in collaboration with the KZN Interreligious Council, organised the celebration of the Annual African Day in Durban. The celebration, she said, reminds all Africans of their heritage, their diversity in unity, their beauty and joy of working together to address the challenges facing our people; in so doing, we continuously promote peace and well-being in our provinces. Describing the events meticulously, Miriam said,

Like for instance, yesterday we celebrated Africa Day, 25 May. I am an African. My forefathers came from India, but we've never been to India like others that would go often. We just went there once for a holiday, like you would go for a holiday to America or you go to any African country etcetera. So, we are Africans, we have grown in this part of the country all our life. As we were celebrating together, we had people from all faiths in the programme, and you know I don't like to say all races because we all come from one human race; but because of unnecessary emphases on identity, people make differentiations with the colour of skin and texture of their hair. That is not what Africa Day is all about. (Interview date 26.05.2016).

Furthermore, Sheverante gave an account of how her group, which comprises of twenty-two Hindu Organizations, organise, and commemorate the Annual Gandhi Walk. There are hundreds of people, from different walks of life, that join them in the Walk. "This is a people's walk", she said, "this is people's remembrance of the sacrifices made by Gandhi and other heroes and heroines of the struggle to realise peace and stability, that they enjoy in the country today". She also said that the group organizes and participates in other interfaith gatherings, as well as, in International Yoga Day. Describing the events, Sheverante said,

We belong to the Midlands Hindu Society, which comprises twenty-two Hindu organizations, and we are one of them. As a society, we organized and participated in the Annual Gandhi walk, and also participate in the International Yoga day. The Gandhi walk is an annual event held in Pietermaritzburg, to commemorate the throwing of Mahatma Gandhi from the train at the Pietermaritzburg station. So, annually, in remembrance of that, we walk from the City Centre to the railway station. It is a nice walk, and there are hundreds of people that walk with us, from different walks of life. The event culminates with religious activities at the

station, with all other faith denominations and cultures. (Interview date 26.05.2016).

As we have seen above, the Annual Gandhi Walk, with the commemoration of his sacrifices to the South African Hindus during the apartheid days, are among the events that bring people together. Such events, in my opinion, should not be celebrated exclusively by the Midland Hindu Society but should be incorporated, if possible, into the events leading to the Annual African Day, as stated above, which will serve as platforms to celebrate the beauty of our diversity as Africans and to learn more about the history and background of each other. In so doing, we build trust which facilitates constructive dialogue, peace, and well-being that Hick advocates.

5.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter helped us to focus on two essential areas. The first variable or theme interest that emerged was *identity* and *belief*; through establish a narrative about the relationship and the nature of the interreligious contacts between faith communities. The second emerged thematic interest or variable was religion and interreligious dialogue, through a presentation of day-to-day lived experiences of interfaith dialogue, in their own voices.

Firstly, that ‘dialogue among religions in South Africa’ is essentially important. However, they expressed their disappointment that little has been done to promote its processes, which most participants agreed that they share the blame for not being actively involved in the very processes of dialogue. Secondly, they advised each religious leader to be custodians of interreligious dialogue in South Africa. Thirdly, participants acknowledged that dialogue among religions in South Africa, taking cognisance of the history of the struggle, was not and is still not rosy; they said “there are more rivers that must be crossed” to achieve comprehensive and fruitful dialogue in the country. Finally, participants made mention that dialogue on an intellectual, book, or doctrinal level is not enough. What is important is dialogue and contact at the grassroots level, in other words, in serving the “*have nots*”, the ordinary people. There are so many poor and marginalized people in South Africa and Africa that need our care, compassion, and love, most participants acknowledged this; that is what participants called ‘*dialogue in action*’, volunteer and start doing things to help humanity (interview date 01.08.2016). Since the above was not fulfilled, it creates the third emerged theme, Tensions; here we classified them into two, namely social and theological. Participants acknowledged that there are many socio-theological issues that have crippled the processes of interreligious dialogue, they also

noted the influence of religious extremism/ fanaticism, religious chauvinism, and bigotry between different faith communities.

Finally, the chapter mapped a series of interreligious activities and networks that informs their particular conceptions and practices. This chapter sought to answer the research questions: What are the lived experiences of interreligious contact and dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal? As well as “What has been the social and theological tension related to Interreligious Dialogue in KwaZulu-Natal?” I did this by letting the voices of the participants or interviewees present themselves – in naming excitement and anxieties about interreligious contact and dialogue.

For a full account of the nature of the different faith organizations and associations represented in this chapter, please see the table below. It provides a detailed account of the different faith activities, interfaith initiatives, and social development programmes they offer. Out of this, I mapped thematic areas that broadly correspond with the variables proposed in Chapter 1.

Faith (s)	Projects	Themes/Activities
Hindu (DBN/ PMB)	Child-headed homes, yoga Vedanta, yoga Hatha, AA & Rehab. center, Annual Gandhi walk, Yoga centers, International yoga day, building of temples and ashrams	Education, feeding scheme, (Soup Kitchen), homeless, school bursaries/tuitions, youth, skills development (e.g. sewing, crafting, beadwork, welding, plumbing, carpentry, etc.), life orientation, health education, sexuality, and family planning, individual, couple, and family counselling, yoga classes, sport, health, volunteerism, the study of Vedas and Sanskrit
Islam (KZN)	Winter warm, Mavela Ekhaya, agriculture, Building of health centers, old age homes, creches, nursery schools, Care Center, agriculture	Literacy, youth, after school programme, education, bursaries and paying school fee for people in rural areas, gardening, visiting to the sick and aged, volunteerism, studying of Qur'an
Multifaith (KZN)	Skills development; Moral regeneration; Environment; HIV/AIDS; Education; Youth; Crime & violence; Advocacy and Media; Housing and clean water, building/ managing of schools (creches, nursery), old age homes, hospice, health centers; workshops/ training; Other projects include: SFEC, SACEI, Tree for Africa, NRLF, AA & Rehab. Centers, Ecumenical movements, Durban Annual Africa Day, Local and overseas fundraising	Education, migration, homeless, youth, skills and rural development, individual, couple, and family counselling, environmental sustainability, life orientation, hygiene, sport and recreation, gardening, workshops, and training, visit the sick and aged
Catholic (DBN)	Denis Hurley, Nkosinathi, AA & Rehab. Center, Justice and Peace	Education, migration, homeless, feeding scheme (soup kitchen), literacy, youth, leadership programme,

	commission, sanitation and water, Maternal and child health, early childhood development, orphanage, Hospital ministry, recycling, Building and managing of schools (creches, nursery, primary/high schools), hospitals, hospices, orphanages, churches, local and overseas fundraising	individual/ couple counselling, HIV/AIDS, visit the sick and aged; skills, human, and community/ rural development, Marriage, and individual counselling, walking club, volunteerism, healing of memories sessions, faith formation, ecumenical gathering, the study of the bible, canon law, and CCC (Catechism of the Catholic Church)
Anglican (KZN)	Vuleka, St. Bernard, Museki movement (for men), St. Agnes (for women), Mother's Union, AA/ Rehab Centers, gender-based project, Hospital ministry, local and overseas fundraising.	Education, skills development, human (personal), family and community development, life orientation, counselling, visiting the sick and the aged, ecumenical gathering, workshops/seminars, vocational training, faith formation, bible study
Buddhism (IXOPO)	Wozamoya; Building of clinics, schools, skill training centers, (e.g. crafts, beadwork, welding shops, etc.), Agriculture, constructing boreholes, and electricity for local communities.	Education, self-discovery programmes, literacy, skills, and rural development, feeding scheme, afterschool programme, school bursaries/ tuitions, assisting the elderly in pension collection, seminars, and workshops on life issues in general and on the life of Buddha, practice of <i>Dukkah</i> the Buddha's teaching
Jewish (DBN)	Project Ten, Sisterhood, Agriculture, recycling, building/ managing of schools, creches, & nurseries, Hebrew, and Greek school; Other projects include: Zionist movement, KZN Jewry, Durban Jewish center	Education, student council, student association, skills development, early child development, counselling, youth, individual and community development, school bursaries/ tuitions, the study of Hebrew, Greek, and the Torah
First Nation (PMB)	Integral Peace Center, Brahman Kumaris Center for Peace, Environmental sustainability, SFEC, sanitation, and water	Education, Human, and Community development, feeding scheme, Integral yoga and meditation classes, Counselling, Healing of memories, skills training, workshops, retreats, picnics,
AIC/ ATR (KZN)	Agriculture and rural development, youth farmers, Nutrition Imbizo; sanitation and water to rural communities. Ubuntu Center for wholistic training, awareness, and appreciation of the Sacred <i>Umvelinqangi</i> (God), ancestors, neighbour, and nature, and appreciation of humanity (ubuntu bonding); Sangoma/ Inyanga training centers	Education, youth, skills development, life orientation, counselling, sport and recreation, individual, family, and community development, healing of memory, celebration of different rites and passages of life, e.g. uMemulo, reed dance, rituals to appease the ancestors, birth, marriage, funerals, family gatherings, etc. study of the interconnection between the spiritual and physical worlds

CHAPTER SIX

THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS & THE SOUTH AFRICAN INTERRELIGIOUS CONTEXT

6.1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this thesis, I presented the purpose of the study, as an effort to explore ' John Hick's Christian theology of religions and its relevance to the South African Interreligious context'. In doing so, I have outlined Hick's theology of religions with Appandurai (1996), Asad (1993), Casanova (1980), Berger and Luckman (1995), and Ann-Marie Leatt (2011) as my theoretical companions. Through this examination, it emerged that Hick offered but one understanding and approach to the problem of religions in our pluralistic world, although his work has been widely regarded as ground-breaking and universally applicable. As I prepared for this doctoral research, I was both attracted to the universalist appeal of Hick, especially insofar as his theology of religions regarded world religions as a resource for peace and well-being (Hick, 1980). In this regard, his work was universally appealing, especially in the Christian normative of European context where churches and governments were coming to terms with increasing religious diversity. Hick's theology offered an avenue through which the church could make sense of this 'new' religious diversity.

In South African, as elsewhere on the colonial periphery, religious diversity tended to pre-date the institutionalization of missionary Christianity or Christian nationalism (as was the case in South Africa). In the earlier chapters, I have sought to map this religious diversity in the colonial frontier, as a way to suggest interreligious diversity and contact was characteristic of in South African history. This history of interreligious contact and diversity shaped social interaction and history, even under Apartheid repression, and in post-apartheid South Africa, respect for religious diversity would be written in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Thus unlike, South Africa, where religious diversity was always viewed as intrinsically part of the social milieu, in Hick's England, religious diversity was viewed as a disruptive import, that accompanied postcolonial migration (Appadurai 1996). Nevertheless, the development of Hick's theology of religions, is simultaneously radical, and hegemonic, insofar as it was arrested in, and reproduced a particular protestant Christian view of religious diversity.

In the same vein, the study also recognised that the new dawn of post-Apartheid South Africa emerged

with its challenges, which include gross inequality, poverty, unemployment, corruption and poor service delivery, racism, and Christian religious chauvinism. The silence and *denialism* by the South African government and religious leaders were striking in the years immediately following the demise of Apartheid. Many have argued that although faith leaders were very involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, that with the advent of democracy religious leaders retreated to the business of tending to their flock (Maluleke 2005). Other concerns that emerged from religious leaders included concerns about 'freedom of religion', religion education and diversity in schools, and intolerance of each other's faith and belief system. By and large, these tensions and challenges resulted in the reliance of religious communities on courts to adjudicate over interreligious tensions and conflicts, instead of fostering dialogue (Settler 2013). Despite the social and legal acceptance of religious diversity in South Africa, little work has been done on the relevance of a theology of religions in this local context of alienation, suspicion, and human suffering. From my data, it is evident, that while there is a significant appetite for dialogue and collaboration, religions lack sustained theology of religions and robust mechanisms for making such dialogue possible in an ongoing way. Having examined Hick's theology of religions, mapped a history of interreligious histories in SA, and conducted fieldwork on contemporary attitudes towards interreligious contact and dialogue, the question that I ask myself is: what is the relevance of a theology of religions for the South African interreligious context? And more so, can this study rely only on "world religion theology" and "Hick's theology of religions"?

6.2. HICK'S THEOLOGY AND INTERFAITH EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH AFRICANS.

To answer the question, this chapter is subdivided into two sections. The first section discusses Hick's theology of religions in conversation with the lived experience of people in South Africa. In particular, I discuss, two of the themes and variables cited at the beginning of the study: *identity* and *belief*. Both themes feature in Hick's theology of religions, and it also featured significantly in the interviews that I conducted with my research participants in KwaZulu-Natal. Below, I will explore the continuities and divergent conceptions of both identity and belief from these two data sets.

In the second section, I will discuss the contextual nature of how Hick understood *religion*, and *interreligious dialogue*, before bringing it into conversation with South African articulation of these two further themes or variables. Through this interrogation, I will make some suggestions about the colonality of theology of religions, and how the South African context demands a decolonial theology

of religion. Finally, I will draw on indigenous notions of personhood (*ubuntu*) and well-being (*impilo*) to suggest possible ways that the local South Africa context, and participants can help us imagine a more expanded theology of religions in post-colonial South Africa.

6.2.1. Identity and self-definition

In their respective theories of world religion or religious diversity, Appadurai (1996) and Asad (1993) write about identity as in part emerging out of the colonial encounter. While ethnic and religious identities pre-date the colonial encounter, the modern notions of world religions as a form of identity, Masuzawa (2005), came to prominence out of a colonial typology that sought to organize the world according to a European conception of the world. Working within the same critical tradition of Masuzawa, Appadurai and Asad, argue that contemporary religious diversities are significantly shaped by the colonial encounter and the subsequent postcolonial movement of people. Chidester in his book *Savage Systems* shows clearly how South Africa is an example of this complex convergence of knowledge and power in the making of religious histories (Chidester 1996).

Asad, like Chidester, offers a helpful schema for tracing how ideas about religion and religious identities came into being as a product of imperial science, while Appadurai through his typology of *scapes* (mediascapes, ethnoscapas, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes) illustrate various contemporary forces that converge to shape religious and cultural identities – especially of people from former colonies. Hick (1989) makes a similar attempt to suggest that identity is an activity of the mind that comprises natural, moral, aesthetic, and religious knowledge. However, Hick's discussion of identity presents it in primarily philosophical terms, and outside of historico-political context. Hick's approach is aligned with the idea that identity comes into focus through socialization (Berger and Luckmann), while it recognises the role of social institutions, the context does appear to be a dehistoricized and universalist conception of society.

In my fieldwork, the biography of each participant was an essential component, including family background, belief, race, creed, and culture. These introductions allowed space for expressing who they are, what faith tradition they belonged to, who and what motivated them as a member of their faith community. In this regard, identity emerged as something they understood as emerging from personal action, socialization, and family as well as the socio-political context. Most participants noted that their parents were instrumental to their understanding of religion and interfaith relations in KwaZulu-Natal. With respect to religious identity, others noted that they had no option other than to

follow the dictates of their parent's religions, which was some kind of enforced assimilation of faith without questioning. Thus, the participant's identities being shaped by their parent's values or religion. As one of the participants, who was already an adult, put it,

Well, I didn't really have a choice, my parents made that decision for me. So, I inherited this membership from them (Interview date 01.08. 2016).

Later, other participants expressed the challenges of growing up and making tough personal decisions to search for knowledge and philosophy of life without their parent's interference. In line with this, one of the participants said,

In my journey in search of knowledge and self-understanding, I travelled to the East. There I met the Tibetan refugee Buddhist monks... They taught me something about what Buddhism can do as a philosophy: very concrete practical ways of dealing with issues and situations (Interview date 27.07.2017).

In my interactions with participants, I became acutely aware of the importance that they ascribed to identity – as a product of personal decisions and actions, coupled with a sense of belonging to a community. In discussions about identity, participants were less concerned with affiliation to a faith community through ascribing to religious dogma (as is the case in Hick's biography, 1989), and more with the ontological recognition that they got from being part of a community with a shared philosophy of life.

Since their belonging to a faith community was about more than an instrumentalist use of religion for peace and well-being, participants also wrestled with how to balance identity, with a tolerance of other's religious views and practices. For instance, during the interviews, members of the Christian faith presupposed that Christianity is the only true religion, and more so, that it is uniquely superior to all other faiths. They presumed that they are the "chosen", saved and righteous ones. Consequently, those labelled as '*unrighteous, pagan and fetishist*' (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and ATR), felt that their identity, tradition, and dignity have been dismissed and compromised, and thus have chosen to withdraw. This, they said, has caused some tensions among religions in South Africa and more so, has frustrated processes of dialogue in the region. As one participant commented during the interviews,

There is the discrimination of the so-called chosen group against the others, the display of superiority complex and bullying... (Interviewed date: 03.08.2016).

Another participant continued,

Religious fanaticism is killing us in South Africa. I would say, our religious leaders and our religions are fanatic. We think that we are the most righteous and holy people; we think that whatever doctrines were handed on to us do not change. We do not open ourselves to learn from others and prefer to remain in ignorance; all these create lots of tension, violence, and antagonism among religions (Interview date 17.08.2016).

And the other went on to say,

We grow up with these stories that we hear about what people believe, but we never checked, we never asked to find out what do they actually believe in. I have got this friend of mine whom I went with to a temple with, where we were supposed to join in worship, and my [other] friend nastily said, 'these people are devil worshippers', you know! He is a very intelligent and educated man, saying 'they are devil worshippers' was very disappointing. (Interview date 01.08.2016).

Despite the above challenges related to identity and belief, most participants were positive about the role of their parents, as well as their faith community in terms of how they feel about themselves and other faiths. Furthermore, most participants acknowledged that being members of their faith groups or organizations deepened their identity and sense of belonging. Although he enjoyed sustained exposure to protestant Christianity as a child, Hick was not impressed by his religion; the services, as he remembers, were “a matter of infinite boredom” (Hick, 1980 *ibid.* 14), and that was one of the challenges he faced trying to understand the “enforced religion”.

In the diary that he kept during his teens, he wrote: “I wonder whether thinking is necessary. I think it is for some people and not for others. It is for me” (2002: 15). He even wrote, “Real philosophers, in my opinion, are born, not made, and I think that I was born one” (2002: 17). Hick began to show his strong interest in philosophy from his early college years. “It was a revelation”, He said, “to read about Plato, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume” (2002: 15). All these portray Hick’s quest for

knowledge, his intellectual identity, and personal decision of who he is and who he wants to become. In his earlier personal journey of self-discovery, Hick concluded as he wrote: “The religious world in form of theosophy, was attractive, but not sufficiently so for me to enter in. The western religious world of Christianity was all around me but seemed utterly lifeless and uninteresting” (1980: 15).

This made Hick search for deeper knowledge beyond the Christian cloisters for a spiritually accommodating religious outlook in which he would feel at home (Aslan, 2004). According to Hick, “no religion can claim to be the one and only true religion and none can claim to be uniquely superior to the other. In other words, every religion represents the different human responses to the same ultimate divine reality, embodying different perceptions that have been formed in different historical, doctrinal, and cultural circumstances” (Hick, 1980: 5). In this regard, according to Eddy (1999: 56) observed that “Hick tried to show no significance to any theological or religious tradition that attempts to maintain the superiority or normativity of its belief system over against those of other religions” Thus Hick argued that one must be objective in considering religious truths - by placing one’s religious standpoint on the same level with other religions. Hick’s description of this revolution consists of “a shift from Christian (or church)-centeredness to God-centeredness in the universe of faiths” (1982: 18). It involves, in other words, “a radical transformation in our concept of the universe of faiths and the place of our own religion within it” (1973: 131). This realization and proposal by Hick mark a radical departure from the normative Christian tradition of his time and context.

Hick extended this argument further in his book *God Has Many Names*, to suggest that our (English) religion, is not the only one but only “One of several- Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism” (1982: 41). Thus he added, “we have been like a company of people marching down a long valley...unaware that over the hill there is another valley, with another great company of people marching in the same direction...; and over another hill yet another marching group- each ignorant of the existence of the others”(1982: 42). What Hick presents here are several ways that Christian normativity can be understood and explained. While his vision of religion is expanding and inclusive, it is evident from his writing that (a) he is writing to a Christian normative community asking for them to assume a posture of openness to other religions, (b) his writing is preoccupied with the changing nature of the Christian religious identity of the majority, and (c) he write about other religions, such as Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism as a previously unknown, phenomenon, out of sight. Thus, despite the radical departure that his theology of work represents, it is at risk of reinforcing the idea of Christianity as the centre from which all religions are view, and against which all religions are measured.

This kind of inclusivism does not appear in the narratives of the study participants, and they all rather

speak about religion and identity from the respective traditions. While Christianity remains the most widely practiced religious tradition in South Africa, it is no longer presented as a single homogenous tradition, and other faith traditions do not defer to Christianity for recognition and approval. Yet while there is general recognition of religious diversity, this has been largely due to recognition at a socio-legal level of rights and protections, and not as a theological phenomenon (Settler 2013).

To overcome anxieties about interreligious differences, Hick emphasized the importance of respect for the dignity of the human person, their culture, religion, and beliefs. This finds resonance in the views of the research participants. Concerning identity and belonging, the most significant difference between Hick and the study participants is the fact that for Hick identity is an imaginative activity of the mind (1989), through which people realize “the values of religious interactions that lead to salvation/ liberation in the here and now” (1995: 43). For most of the South African participants in this study, both the history of colonialism and Apartheid oppression looms large in their understanding of identity, and in this regard, religion offers believers an avenue to dignity and self-respect within their socio-historical context. Identity and belief converged to provide religious adherent with a sense of belonging to their distinct faith community, while also providing them with the religious distinctiveness to enter into dialogue and deliberation with other faith traditions, as equals. In this respect, equality and peace are not merely imaginative projects but also a condition of interreligious contact.

6.2.2. Understanding other religions and practicing tolerance

South Africa, as already stated, comprises of diverse ethnic and religious communities (Manzo, 1996) which include Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and African Traditional Religions, and others. While analysing the lived experiences of people as captured during the interviews and in his daily interactions, I observed some underlying tensions between people's understanding of the different religions in South Africa, over and above their tolerance of each other's faith or belief system. Unpacking responses from participants on this matter, it was evident that most South Africans lacked the knowledge and understanding of the importance of these faith groups and what they stand for in the South Africa inter-religious relations (Chidester and Settler 2010). However, in as much as all participants agreed that dialogue is very essential in South Africa, they also hinted that lack of understanding and tolerance of each other's faith and religion has hindered the progress in South

Africa. One way to understand the change of religious diversity can be taken from Casanova's theory about the privatization of religion, because while Apartheid afforded a very public status to Christianity, the constitutional recognition of religious diversity religions, marked the from public religion to privatised (domestic) religion, and the eventual return to a deprivatization of religion (Casanova 1994). With this deprivatization comes an expectation of tolerance and accommodation.

One participant further described 'dialogue from within' as mastery over oneself - our thoughts, desires, sentiments, emotions" (Interview date 17.08.2016). Like Hick's "*An Interpretation of Religion*" (1989:12) which addresses to underlying tensions between people's understanding of the different religions and tolerance of each other's faith or belief systems, and wherein he offered an interpretation of all the religious traditions in terms of certain unifying themes. All participants signalled an understanding that, each religion represents different human responses to the same ultimate divine reality, but which has different historical, doctrinal, and cultural contexts. This resonates with Hick's assertion that "the different religious traditions, with their complex internal differentiations, have developed to meet the needs of the range of mentalities expressed in the different human cultures" (1980:21). So, in the context of South Africa, that appeared to be a clear sentiment among study participants that no religion or culture should be looked down on as inferior or suppressed as it was during the apartheid era. Rather, every religion should be allowed to express its cultural beauty and diversity, as long as it does not endanger life; and when such is taken care of, it promotes the dignity, peace, and well-being of the people.

For Hick, religious *belief* is founded on personal faith rather than universally accepted evidence. Faith, for him, is based on personal religious experience, and these religious experiences are shaped by culture. That means that religious belief (i.e. belief system) involves an element of projection (1989: 135). For instance, what people believe about God/ gods/ goddesses / Buddha / Allah / spirits/ ancestors etc., is shaped by their cultural values and needs. While this may be promising philosophically, what we learn from the South African context is that cultivating tolerance is a practice. Increasingly, faith communities in South Africa deal with their discomfort with other religious tradition, by arguing that certain religious formations and practices are an offence to their religious sensibilities (Settler 2013). Hick argues that when all these are understood, it becomes easy to view religion as a resource for peace and well-being. In the final analysis, Asad (2009) reminds us religion does not remain static and is constantly being reimagined and recontextualized to adequately capture the relationship between personal identity, religious practice, or symbol and the context within which it assumes meaning.

During my fieldwork, I observed and heard members of different religious groups in South Africa lament the fact that, after more than two decades of democracy, “South Africa is still battling with issues of poverty, inequality, unemployment, and hunger”. One of the ways that apartheid entrenched racial segregation, was to reinforce spatial segregation with religious segregation that resulted in people not just harbouring suspicions about one another religions and practices, but also coupling socio-economic status to particular religious traditions (Ipsos, 2014). For example, African traditional religion is associated with the economic underclass and Christianity with economic mobility. Inequality and social status attached complicates the prospects for interreligious networking and deliberation, where all religions, religious practices, and leaders ought to be regarded as equal.

While poverty has many dimensions, its two fundamental aspects are the lack of economic power owing to low incomes and assets, and the lack of socio-political power, as reflected in the limited access to social services, opportunities, and information and often in the denial of human rights and the practice of discrimination (DESA. UN, 20015).⁷⁸

Religious communities have variously engaged in practices and projects to address poverty, which some view as a violation of human dignity (Kakwani, 2006: 20-21; Chambers, 2006: 3-4). Similarly, feelings of social and economic insecurity often lead to a sense of dissatisfaction, conflict, and a lack of cooperation between groups (Smith, 2005: 45-65). While Hick’s personal experience of alienation and poverty is limited, he has during his visit to South Africa, Hick was exposed to the excruciating effects of racial inequality (Hick 2002).

Despite his exposure to racial inequality in South Africa, and racism in Birmingham (England) Hick only offer very little analysis of the relationship between religion and racism. He urged the government and religious leaders to listen to the plights and concerns of the ordinary people and made calls for “the ethical insights” (1999: 163) – that everyone should constantly look into him or herself, to realise that ultimate basic principle of equality. He asserted that “it is lovely to change the lives of communities through our honest acts of empowering people” and contrarily, that “it is evil to inflict

⁷⁸ There is a clear link between ongoing poverty and unemployment in the Country. It is estimated that, on an international level, 197 million people in the world are unemployed (Confer: International Labour Organization, 2013). In South Africa, unemployment during the second quarter of 2017 was 27.7% (Confer: Statistics S.A, 2017), including a disturbing high unemployment rate among the country's youths. South Africa has the highest youth unemployment rate in the world, affecting approximately 50% of South Africa's youth (Confer: World Economic Forum, 2014).

or cause suffering to others”. His involvement in dialogue, peace, and well-being of the poorest of the poor, led him to oppose racist activities that characterized Birmingham and the London area in the 1970s and the 80s ⁷⁹. He published the journal article called *Apartheid Observed* (1980), which was not only Hick's reflections on the brutal treatment of Blacks by the White South African government but also an illustration of his wider commitment to anti-racism. In general, Hick offered some theological critique, as well as, practical dialogue and guidance on what could and should be done to promote peace and well-being, but his analysis of the relationship between race and religion didn't go beyond calls to alleviate the suffering of the poor masses (1981: 33), and as such his critical philosophical work left the relationship between whiteness, and Christian normativity firmly intact.

One final issue that is worthy of examination in the South African context, is the contestation between freedom to express one's religious beliefs and convictions while ensuring that in doing so, you do not limit another person's right to religious beliefs and practice. Explaining deeper what human rights are which go along with responsibilities, Gamede says that “human rights are the basic rights that everyone has, simply because they are human” (2005: 5-8). Mubangizi admonishes, “because everyone has human rights, we must make sure that we respect each person's right. If we want our rights to be respected, we must not do anything that violates another person's right” (2015: 496-519). Reiterating on this point, most participants expressed that neither freedom of religion, nor the understanding of human rights with responsibilities in South Africa is working. In the South African context, the limits and freedom of religion debate are constantly being tested as religious adherents, submit claims of exploitation by religious leaders, who claim to have the ability to heal, while others extort monies from the poor, and others yet insist on restricting the expression of non-Christian religion in the context of schools (Settler 2018, Leatt 2017). These tests of freedom of religion legislation have caused lots of social tension and thus have prevented fruitful dialogue/ promotion of peace and well-being of people in South Africa.

Hick, responding to this, states in the first place that “human beings by nature have, what Hick called,

⁷⁹ This was a turbulent time in British immigration politics, when new immigrants from Africa, West Indies, and the Indian subcontinent were arriving in the United Kingdom, raising questions of integration and community relations. Hick also drew attention to the reigning racial politics of the time. He had the courage to expose the criminal records of those who were whipping up racial hatred at that time. The two Hick's pamphlets which offered blunt critique of British racism were *The New Nazism of the National Front and National Party: A Warning to Christians* (1977) and *Christianity and Race in Britain today* (1978).

“considerable spiritual freedom”. Secondly, our spiritual freedom is attached to our basic human rights, freedom, and dignity” (1999: 38) 80. Therefore, no human being should be deprived of his or her basic rights, freedom, and dignity' (Hick, 1999: 39). For Hick, “human beings should be free to express their opinions, diversity, culture, faith, and traditions in schools and their communities, as long as the person is guided by the basic ethical requirement” (1974: 35),

In the context of South Africa, every citizen, including the government, pastors, community, and religious leaders / their adherents, appear to let themselves be guided by the basic ethical requirement and they should also know that it is evil to cause suffering to others. While Leatt (2017) argues that religious identities and rights in South Africa are shaped by the particular history of colonial and apartheid, and the subsequent resistance thereto, Berger and Luckmann held that “not only do we construct our society but we also accept its realities as they are and change them for a better (1995: 14). However, theistic interpretations of reality and socio-legal order predominated among study participants, suggesting an ambivalent relationship towards the state and its laws on the one hand, and an expression of religious freedoms, on the other hand.

In the above section, I have sought to elaborate some thoughts on belief – as articulated in practices of tolerance towards other religions, and anxieties about religious freedom granted to other religions, and the infringing of one’s own. What this discussion revealed is that in the South African context understanding and cultivating tolerance, has material and socio-legal consequences, while for Hick cognitive freedom is presented as both a practice and resource – divorced from people’s lived experiences. Notwithstanding these anxieties and ambivalences about religious chauvinism, the study participants present a remarkable appetite for interreligious dialogue, while remaining critically conscious of overcoming religious upbringing, dogmatic arrogance, isolation, and suspicion of other traditions. Similarly, there is a desire and ambition for actively learning from each other and seeking contacts, and more so, participants are willing to learn and exchange ideas with other traditions. This leads me to the next section of this chapter: How might Hick’s theology of religion be useful in the South African context? What indigenous, social, and religious resources can be harnessed to deepen local theologies of religion?

80 Our freedom as spiritual beings allow us to freely choose our own ways to be religiously or ethically engaged (Hick 1999:38).

6.3 DECOLONIZING HICK'S THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

What has become evident through reading Hick's theology of religion in the context of South African faith communities, is that more theological reflection of interreligious deliberations is required. Hick inaugurated a decisive theology of religions that not only calls for tolerance and recognition of other religions, but he developed a series of philosophical treatises related to interreligious cooperation. Finally, Hick proposed the notion that interreligious dialogue has the inherent potential of building peace and well-being in society. However, reading Hick in this context also exposed some of the limitations of his work, insofar as it primarily addresses the European religious context, and emerges out of a Christian normative context.

For a contemporary theology of religions to emerge, local histories of interreligious contact and dialogue have to be taken into account. Likewise, we have to take into account those established critiques of the world religions paradigm (Masuzawa 2005, Fitzgerald 2007) and allow on local religious and indigenous knowledge forms to shape the emergence of postcolonial religious histories such as Chidester's *Empire of Religion* (2014) and Thatamanil's *Circling the Elephant* (2020). The thesis, as we have already mapped South African religious histories through colonialism and Apartheid, to illustrate each period has shaped interreligious identities and relations in the postcolonial context. In the section that follows, I will explore a series of concerns and ambitions related to how Hick's theology requires decolonial content to make sense in the local context, and secondly to draw on indigenous religious epistemologies as the point of departure of postcolonial theologies of religion. In this context, I will briefly look at how ideas like *ubuntu* (humanness) and *impilo* (well-being) provide theological and ontological assets for shaping interreligious relations in post-apartheid South Africa.

6.3.1. Towards a theological value of tolerance, diversity, and equality

For a long time, the theology of religions, which include those of Hick, consisted of 'Eurocentric imperialist attitude and narratives', based on the monotheistic ideas of the transcendent, salvation and *eschaton*, far-reaching from the concrete lived experiences of African people, as indicated in our fieldwork. Therefore, my argument in motivating for the African concept of well-being stems from the fact that the South African or Africa Interreligious contexts need not rely on Hick's or world religions, with its monotheistic ideas, as a resource for peace and well-being; rather, it is high time

for Africans (and its academic disciplines) to focus on African values and concrete particularities (Oduyoye, 1979: 109; Muzorewa, 1985: 18).⁸¹

From the summary of the empirical data drawn from the participants and Hick, one could categorically claim that interreligious contact did not start with the missionaries encountering the indigenous people, but that indigenous people lived and exchanged their religious values, ideas, and practices before the missionary presence. Some of these values include tolerating each other, respecting their diversity in unity, and more so, sharing what they have in common and that is one of the aspects of equality. Unfortunately, when Jan Van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape in 1658 with his fellow colonialists, this ontological harmonic living of the indigenous people was destroyed. Thus, Christianity came to be presented as the *only* religion in Southern Africa. The First Nations were forcibly stripped of their dignity, identity, culture, religion, and all that they had. Chidester (1996) wrote that the denial of indigenous religion had the effect of them being regarded as less than human. This concern is reiterated by Ivanka during my interview with her (date 03.04.2016). Evidence drawn from my fieldwork confirmed the perception that colonisers are believed to have considered non-Christians to be inferior. All these, in my view, destroyed the idea of local religions as equal to 'world religion'.

There is no longer any doubt that Khoisan, who lived at the Cape prior to the European settlement, had their religious ritual and beliefs (Barnard, 2004: 6). Therefore, for a post-colonial theology of religions to make sense, the religions of the first nations as well as the Nguni religious traditions ought to be recognised as part of the country's religious history, and contemporary diversity. Hick's theology of religion cannot be universally applied to this context, precisely because of the different history of religion being proposed here. A theology of religions crafted for the local context should, recognises all the religions of South Africa, including the indigenous religions. The effort to incorporate indigenous religions, not just disrupt the (imperial constructed) world religions paradigm, but also offers avenues through which the humanity and dignity of indigenous religions can be restored, as part of the interreligious effort to promote peace and well-being.

81 The Principle of Particularity emanates from the modern understanding of religions and traditions in the globalized world where it is no longer the norm for a non-Christian religion to meet Christian-like features to be considered a 'world religion'. Instead there is a universal principle of concrete particularizations, where no one religion can claim to serve as the clear and dominant standard for any other. On the contrary, this Principle recognizes the plurality and particularity; the equality and validity of all religious traditions; in their differences lie, not only their strength but also their uniqueness (Mafuta, 2019:8). Finally, in the South African context, radical openness will require Christians to be honest about their atrocities and immorality during the colonial period in South Africa (Hedges, 2010:2); (also confer the contextual framework of this thesis).

Below I motivate for a privileging of African Traditional Religion (ATR) as central to dialogue in the context of this thesis, which I believe, is not only relevant to South Africa and Africa but also enriches Hick's theology in a meaningful way. I hope to illustrate how ATR where *well-being* means being in good relations with God, ancestors, neighbours, and nature (Uzukwu, 1988: 12; Achebe, 1965: 21). As such I propose to outline four components (or ingredients) of African Traditional Religion, namely: the concept of God, ancestors, ubuntu (neighbour), and nature – to sets the agenda of what a theology of religions might look like in the South Africa and African context.

INDIGENOUS CONCEPTS OF GOD.

From the lived experience of the African people in KwaZulu-Natal/South Africa, it is understood that the idea of God is the important component in African Traditional Religion (ATR) and that most interviewees agreed that all indigenous believe in one God. Although African people believe in one God, however, various communities in Africa may have different names to attribute to the same God. For instance, as stated in chapter two, the San refers to God as *Kaggan*, the creator of all things who can assume a variety of forms, reside in the physical world. *Kagan* also assumes the form of a Mantis and could be identified with the forces of nature and unpredicted events; while the Khoi believed in a dual spirit, Tsui-Goab, and Guanab. Tsui-Goab was responsible for bringing rain and fertility and was favoured with animal sacrifices.

This duality of spirit, as I understand, helped people to deal with the existence of good and evil, as well as a good and bad fortune in the world and community (Kieran, 1995: 17-18). The same notions of God are depicted in different concepts or perceptions among the Zulus and Xhosas: Firstly, in the Zulu, as well as, Xhosa *Uhlangi*, meaning “a craftsman- the Maker or Moulder, and secondly, in Zulu *Umvelinqangi* and Xhosa *uThixo* or *uQamata*, meaning “the one who was there in the very beginning” (Zulu, 2002: 476). As Malcolm J. McVeigh asserts, “the God of ATR and Christianity, is, the same God who revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ, and is none other than the one who has continually made himself known to African religious experience” (1974: 81). This is one of those concepts where Christianity enters frequent tension with indigenous religions.

All the six religions reviewed in my research project, including John Hick's theology of religions, believe that the objective of morality is that “good must be done and evil avoided.” In other words, if you do good, good things follow you, and if you commit evil, nemesis follows you. But the constant

tension that challenges these faith traditions lie in the different concepts of what is moral and just. This concept of the knowledge of God is contained in African proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories, and religious ceremonies (Oborji, 2002: 97; Mbiti, 1970: 10). Let me single out here the concept of naming a child in Africa, using my local Igbo 82 name as an example. Generally, in Africa there is a meaning behind a name (Onwubiko, 1991: 17; Igwebuike, 2010: 1); my local name is *Chima*, which means “God Knows”. *Chima* is more symbolic to me than Alfred (a name that I received when I was baptised); ‘*Chima*’ links me to my tribal/ancestral lineage and identity. With these and other concepts that will be treated below, I dare testify that ATRs have a lot to offer to Hick's theology and the world at large. This leads us to the second concept and that is ancestry.

PRIVILEGING THE ANCESTORS (AMADLOZI)

African Theologians are keenly interested in the concept of ancestors, the second major ingredient in African traditional Religions and hence in African Theology. Among the South African First Nations, the Ngunis, ATRs, and the AIC's, ancestors are seen as the spiritual power and guardians of individuals, families, and communities. They are the mediators between God and the people, between the invisible and the visible worlds (Chidester 1996). Hence, ethical conduct is determined by reference to them (Mkwanazi, 1989: 263). As the vital role of ancestors in ATR is to hold the community together, continuous sacrifices and rituals are offered to them by sangomas, to appease and have a cordial bond with them to maintain good health, peace, and well-being of individuals, families, and communities as the case may be (Gumede, 1990: 29). However, the ATR's felt that their culture and identity, which include the concept of ancestry, are undermined by the monotheistic groups in our research, creating tensions between the ATR's and the other monotheistic faith groups in the country (Mndende 2016). The tensions were also expressed by Zokhona in the interview when he said:

We fall into African Traditional Religions ATR. We embrace who we are as Africans. ..because of our belief in ancestors, people regard us as uncivilized, unpolished, and primitive (Interview date 21.07.2017).

82 Igboland is the home of Igbo people and it covers most of South-East Nigeria. The word Igbo is used by many Igbo scholars (Ejizu, 1986; Ofoegbu, 1991; Igwebuike, 1993; Njoku, 2006; Anyanele, 2012 and others) to describe the Igbo territory, domestic speakers of the language and the language spoken by them

Of course, the importance of ancestry in any culture and tradition, be it European, African, Asian, etc., cannot be overemphasized, as they are seen, not only as the spiritual power and guardians, but also custodians of good health, peace and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and culture (Ngubane, 1977: 55). Hick evoked this in chapter one of his autobiography (2002: 1) when he writes:

Usually, it is only noble and notable families that have a family tree going back before the registration of births, deaths, and marriages in England in 1837. The Hicks' have never been either noble or notable but because they lived continuously in the same small town, Scarborough, we have a tree going back to a John Hick (1699 – 1780) who married Ann Thorton (1700 – 79) and which now (2002) covers nine generations.

Throughout this thesis, I have cited events and cases where public engagement with the ancestral assume an increasing significance in South Africa. Politician, Tony Yengeni, on his release from prison sought to make amends and appease the ancestors with ritual (2008), and likewise a group of social activist, in 2018, performed an ancestral ritual on a public beach as part of cleansing the beach of its racist past and inviting the ancestors to be at this place. These rituals provoked public controversy, but they clearly signal the increasing recognition for the social and legal incorporation of all aspects of African traditional religion. Therefore, the concept of ancestors is relevant, not only for this study but also for Africans, Asians, Europeans, and whole cultures in the world. This leads us to our next concept, that of neighbour (Ubuntu: Humanity).

UBUNTU (HUMANNESS)

One of the outstanding theological components that the South African ATR promotes is a healthy community. They believe that good neighbour, fellowship, and healthy communities give birth to healthy human beings, thus its support for the concept of humanity based on the African concept of *Ubuntu*.⁸³ Ubuntu, as Lefa says, “lies at the heart of the African way of life and impacts on every

83 Ubuntu in broader term is an ethic of interdependence: the ethic which recognizes that everything I do has an effect on you and your well-being and everything that you do has an effect on me and my well-being. Although we are different people (with different cultures and background), but we are essentially interconnected. That is the truth that is not limited to Africa or South Africa, it is the truth that is universal. We live in the world where people are bombed, butchered, and killed because of their faith or religion. In the spirit of Ubuntu their anguish is my anguish and their sorrow are also my sorrow (Excerpt from Mpho Tutu's interview: Chairperson Desmond and Lea Tutu Legacy Foundation). Also, Ubuntu is an African (Nguni Bantu) term meaning “humanity”. It is often translated as 'I am because we are' (*Umuntu ngumuntu*

aspect of people's well-being. *Ubuntu* is regarded as the force that derives almost every facet of societal life in African societies and creates the relationship (and good neighbourhood) between the African community and other communities” (2015: 4-7). *Ubuntu*, in the South Africa context or society, is seen as the act of being human; reminding citizens that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it united in their diversity”. In other words, all humanity in South Africa should learn to live together as one, irrespective of their race, culture, or creed.⁸⁴ Thus, its emphases are on principles such as respect for people and the diverse cultures and beliefs; recognition of people's rights and responsibilities; seeking individual and communal good to enhance peace, prosperity, and well-being of others, the self, and the community (Mbigi and Maree, 1995: 7). *Ubuntu* manifests itself through various human acts, clearly visible in social, political, and economic situations, as well as among families; more so, it is a belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity. As Motlatsi Khosi, a lecturer in African philosophy and ubuntu at the University of South Africa says:

Ubuntu's focus on relationships goes beyond those that are between humans. It also relates to the way people interact with both the natural and metaphysical worlds, the latter consisting of unseen elements such as ancestors and God. Present-day Ubuntu takes away metaphysical aspects. It should be about how to make sense of the connection with the universe, animals, nature, and humans (Khosi, 2013).

Unfortunately, this concept is in contrast to the individualistic lifestyle prevalent in South Africa, which has consistently deepened more divisions of all kinds in our society.⁸⁵ Hick's theology strongly condemns all forms of conflict and disharmony between ethnicities and religions. *Ubuntu*, for me, is a good neighbour; the ability to relate to each other and putting effort into building relationships. It is in fact, the essence of being human, meaning that a person could not exist in isolation. Most of the time, we think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected, and what you do affects the world - everything in this world is interlinked and interconnected. We should learn to live together as ‘one’ and appreciate the beauty of our diversity.

ngabantu), or 'humanity towards others'. But is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean 'the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Gade, 2012).

84 *Ubuntu* is a capacity in South African culture that expresses compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining a community with justice and mutual caring. The mutual or human caring is expressed through virtues such as: sympathy, empathy, forgiveness, or any values of humanness towards others (Maphisa, 1994); (Mbiti 1999). All these are expected to be life and lived in South Africa.

85 The African concept of *Ubuntu* is in contrast to the Western thought influenced by Descartes's idea “I think, therefore I am (*Cogito ergo sum*),” and Albert Camus's “I rebel therefore we exist” (Camus, 1956:22).

This leads us to the African concept of nature and well-being.

IMPILO (WELL-BEING) AND HARMONY

Impilo, denotes being in a good relationship with your neighbour, the ancestors and with nature and among South African First Nations, and other indigenous religions it is described or seen as “holistic well-being of all creatures, which include the environment, entire ecosystem and all it contains” (Agbiji, 2015). This involves constant healthy interactions and harmony between the visible (physical/terrestrial) and invisible (spiritual/celestial) worlds, where God, nature, persons, ancestors, as well as the seen and the unseen, are bound together in cosmic oneness. However, there can be no peace or well-being when these two worlds are in disharmony which, as I gathered from the fieldwork, could result in sickness, calamity, suffering, natural disasters, or even death of individuals or communities. Exploring further the concept of well-being in its full potential, African Traditional Religion describes life in its three equal categories; first, life is physical; second, life is social and political; thirdly, life is mystical (Newman and Graham, 2018).

Physical life means good health, sufficient food, adequate housing, fertility, and offspring. It also means taking care of the environment and nature which includes, trees, plants, minerals, and other natural resources that nature provides. ‘Life is social and political’, includes, “a good neighbourly relation, good name, social justice, sharing, and solidarity with all in building the earthly city: “I am because we are, since we are, I am.” ‘Life is mystical’, means a continuous “ontological balance” must be maintained between God and human beings, spirits, and human beings and the departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people experience misfortunes and suffering, but when it is in harmony, people experience joy, good health, and prosperity, which constitutes the basic elements of holistic salvation or well-being. For instance, today the world faces a series of disasters caused by global warming; this is due to the destruction of the ontological balance of Mother Nature, which all of us have caused. Faris reiterates the importance of preserving the planet and of being environmentally friendly, which invariably sustains life and people's well-being when he asserts during the interview:

We engage with the South African Faith Communities Environmental Institute (SAFCEI) to promote renewable sources of energy which sustain life and people's well-being.... We all ought to care for this earth of ours. We tried to encourage good things, for example, very much encouraging renewable source of energy; very much against the building of nuclear power plants, we want coal to be phased out gradually because the use of fossil fuels is damaging to the environment, the government has

done something but we feel it could do much more to encourage wind power and solar power; this country (South Africa) has so much sunshine and that could be of advantage to installing solar power for citizens (Interview date: 24.03.2017).

In support of the above Ivaka adds:

“We collaborate together with SAFCEI on issues such as saving water, recycling and becoming more environmentally friendly” (Interview date: 03.04.2016).

And more to this Joshua says:

We, under the umbrella of WCRP and KZN-IRC, work with 'Tree for Africa' in training programmes to teach our people the danger of deforestation. People cut trees and burn forests without knowing the disaster that it causes. So, we work with different NGOs in education, health, forestry, and agriculture (Interview date: 24.03.2017).

All these portrayed above, show in a very concrete way, how South Africa and Africans take seriously their interconnectedness with Mother Nature and what they do every day to be in harmony with HER, bearing in mind the link between the terrestrial and celestial worlds. Pertinent to note, that in my interviews, I observed underlying tensions between indigenous notions of well-being, over and against that of Hick's: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, which are mainly based on issues such as, the nature of the universe (whether it is temporal or eternal), life-after-death that goes along with condemnation, judgement, and the endless cycle of rebirths (Dhavamony, 2002: 168).

The ATR concept of harmony and well-being teaches us to see the world (the terrestrial and celestial) and all creatures, (which include the environment, the entire ecosystem, and all it contains) in a holistic way. Life is bigger than what we see; life is physical, it is social and political, and it is also mystical. The same concept of harmony and well-being teaches everyone, that issues of environmental, economic, and social justice, are central to African societies. Not only that, issues such as population growth, corruption, and poor governance (to mention but a few), add to the pressure on natural resources and contribute to environmental decline that we experience in Africa and the global society at large. The African concept of nature and well-being dictates that instead of focusing or *theologizing* on the concept of *eschaton* that does not improve well-being and people's lived experiences, it is better to empower people concretely, by teaching and educating them on the

importance of taking care to maintain good relations with the environment, one's community and with the transcendent, including God and the ancestors. By so doing, we are building a meaningful theology of religions that echo African indigenous ways of knowing and being.

6.4. CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the relevance of our study to the South African Interreligious context. In outlining this relevance, we divided the chapter into two sections. The first section brought Hick's theology in conversation with the day-to-day lived experiences of South African people. Following the theme that emerged, and linking them to the historical epochs that transpired in chapter four, it becomes obvious that the current situation in South Africa begs for a theology of religions in a context of exclusion, alienation, suspicion, and human suffering. This leads us to the second section of the chapter where we provided some clear ideas about what a theology of religions will look like for the South African / African context. At the end of the chapter, I motivated the African notion of Well-being- where it denotes being in a good relationship with God, ancestors, neighbour (*ubuntu*), and well-being (*impilo*). This notion and components serve as essential tools which, not only enrich Hick's theology but also sets the agenda to a lived postcolonial theology of religion for South Africa.

This chapter answered our main research question as well as the last sub-question: Is Hick's Christian Theology of Religions relevant to facilitate interreligious dialogue, peace and, well-being in KwaZulu-Natal? What theological or ontological assets can be harnessed for the development of a postcolonial theology of religions in South Africa? What I conclude from the above discussion is that Hick's theology of religions is relevant insofar as it calls for (1) an ontological and philosophical dialogue between religions, and (2) the recognition that interreligious dialogue has intrinsic value for producing good in the world. Thus, Hick's call us to more than just an instrumentalist, socio-legal contract between religions, but to an encounter with people. However, Hick, being situated as he was, a product of his time, writes within the world-religions paradigm of the 1980s and as such offers little recognition of indigenous religion, and as such his theology of religions has limited relevance in South Africa, unless it is decolonised. In the end, I argue that such decolonization of a theology of religions would require Hick's divine reality to incorporate African conceptions of God, privilege the ancestors as mediators and actors in interreligious dialogue, and that the indigenous ideas of both humanness (*ubuntu*) and well-being (*impilo*) are held as foundational in the development of a postcolonial theology of religions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION & OVERALL FINDING

7.1. INTRODUCTION

As I come to the end of this thesis, I would like to briefly outline my main findings with respect to the volume of work covered in this thesis. I have sought to bring two irregular data sets into conversation with one another, Hick's theology of world religions with the everyday interreligious dialogue practices of people in KwaZulu-Natal. Through offer an alternative religious history of religions, I have complicated this by suggesting that interreligious *contact* and *dialogue* in South Africa, pre-date the arrival of European Christianity, and locating the study squarely in the postcolonial context, where indigenous and migrant religions converged.

In the previous chapter, we presented one of the crucial areas of this work, namely: the relevance of our study to the South African interreligious context. The first section brought Hick's theology in conversation with day-to-day lived experiences of South African people, informed by a set of interviews and fieldwork among local interfaith workers and activists; in the second section, I provided some clear ideas about what a postcolonial or decolonial theology of religions might look like for the South African/African context. Having already outlined the key aspects of Hick's theology of religions in Chapter 3, I here elaborated key concepts from indigenous religions as they emerged in my interviews and fieldwork, to propose some rudiments of a postcolonial theology of religions. In this final chapter, I outline four overall findings for this thesis, and I divided this is into methodological and later, thematic findings. Let me briefly deal with them one after the other.

7.2. METHODOLOGICAL FINDINGS

My methodological findings from this study can be organised into research practice, and personal.

RESEARCH PRACTICE IN INTERFAITH CONTEXTS

Here I would like to answer two critical questions that are essential to know in this research. The first series of questions are: What challenges did I face as a researcher is collecting the data? and How did I overcome the challenges? What were the challenges and opportunities in incorporating interreligious contact as a category of analysis?

The first challenge I had as a researcher in collecting the data was the difficult and long period it took me to get hold of the coordinators of the WCRP and KZN-IRC. These two organisations, as I mentioned, serve as sponsors who would introduce me to their members to interview in KwaZulu-Natal. Since the coordinators could not be reached, all the interviews were kept on-hold. To me, these translated into challenges related to *visibility*, *access*, and *trust*.

After months of trying to reach the relevant person with a series of attempts in phoning, emailing, and dropping messages, I decided to drive to their office in Durban to their offices. I had become frustrated and disappointed, but I persisted. I persistent and with the assistance of the office cleaner, and security staff, I eventually found my way to the relevant person. Since I arrived up without an official appointment schedule, the secretary would not allow me to see the coordinators, and I was invited to a WCRP-SA/ KZN-IRC seminar to be held in a month. I attended the seminar. It was in there that I met the coordinators for the first time and the initial contact began, which led to the signing of the letter for permission to interview their members. It's sad to say that it took me six months to meet the coordinators. These various obstacles and reluctance made it clear to me that anyone working in this field, needed to be tenacious to demonstrate their commitment and understanding of interreligious relations. The nature of these networks is premised on hard-fought for networks of trust, and without someone to vouch for me, this researcher had to be patient with how my access to the organizations was managed.

Similarly, my access to participants was marred with complications – some agreed who agreed to be interviewed but for but never showed up on the dates scheduled. The vivid examples which come to my mind were booking separate dates of interviews with participants scheduled in Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and Ixopo respectively, and an area that spans 150 Km² which means at least an hour of driving between each site. Although I interacted with the participants till the very day of the interview, they nevertheless failed to be available for the interview. One of the participants asked me to email him a copy of the interview questions, which I did; he acknowledged the receipt of it but withdrew.

These anxieties that religious adherents had about speaking to a stranger threatened to undermine my research. I attended several more interreligious seminars and workshops, and slowly made friends, and allowed people to become familiar with me. It was eventually through these grass-root experiences and with the support of the regional coordinator for WCRP-SA/ KZN-IRC that I interviewed most of my study participants.

While those who are involved in interreligious dialogue are committed and enthusiastic about the field, they too tend to work within very fixed ideas about what religions should be involved with interfaith dialogue. Incorporating interreligious contact as a category of analysis, was ok for me, but immensely difficult to translate this into, or extrapolate it from my fieldwork? In the first place, I focused less on institutional religions and thus had more access to institutional religions, while indigenous religions appeared more troublesome insofar as they do not have physical archives and rely on oral histories. As such my research focused on 'interreligious contact' where people met, and through the various social development or welfare projects that the interfaith networks were involved with. This allowed me to engage with an idea of interreligious dialogue that was not simply premised on a series of faith practices or beliefs but relied on everyday points of contact and social transformation by religious communities.

POSITIONALITY AND PERSONAL AMBITIONS

Within my sixteen years as a Catholic priest, I have worked with different communities, people, and cultures in South Africa, where I am involved in interfaith relations, dialogue, and activities which include outreach programmes. Between 2010 and 2018, I was the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Good Health, Raisethorpe in Northdale, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. Northdale is one of the unique suburbs in South Africa where adherents of different faith traditions, which include the six in our study, live, work, worship and interact with one another. It impressed me to experience the daily life of the people in the suburb; how they live and respect each other's faith and religion. What impressed me most is how the government, religious leaders, organisations, civil groups and residence of the suburb, meet constantly to exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences; and in the same meetings, discuss several issues that gear towards the upliftment and well-being of the people. Each year, there are a series of interfaith activities and outreach programmes organised by religious leaders of Northdale, this includes: sports and recreation, development skills for the youth, visit hospitals, orphanages, old age homes, prisons, and more so, pastoral care of the men and women of uniform (the police), to mention but a few. In the area, irrespective of their culture, race, or creed, people come

together to celebrate the major feasts of different religions. For instance, during Christmas, adherents of different religions gather in one church, temple, ashram (as the case may be) to sing Christmas carols together; the same happens when Diwali (Hinduism), Ramadan (Islam), Shabbat (Judaism), Vesak (Buddha Day), Shaka's day (ATR) are celebrated respectively. What touched me and continues to be a point of reference in life, is seeing the number of people from all walks of life: faith, tradition, denomination, race, culture, and creed, who gathered to celebrate their unity in diversity, where the spiritual “paths of Action [living by example] (*Karmamaga*), Love and respect (*Bhakkimaga*), Knowledge and understanding” (*Jnanamaga*); (Panikkar, 2004: 136), are concretely manifested in the above community without violence or abuse, allowing each religion and persons to narrate their unique stories and experiences, thereby promoting harmony, peace and well-being which this thesis advocate.

During my years in Northdale, I have witnessed so many interreligious marriages; for instance, a Catholic man happily marrying a Hindu lady. Respecting their different cultures and beliefs, the couple with their children will happily decide to attend a Christian service in the morning and in the evening worship in a Hindu temple, which is the wife's religion. This for me demonstrates practical interreligious living, respect, and cooperation. I also made friends in the suburb who do not believe in any religion or higher being, but they are content to live in Northdale, where their presence and contributions are valued. What is fascinating in all this, is that people honestly want to live in peace as a human family. All these experiences have made me ask this question: why can't religions of the world, which include the ATRs, be a resource towards the peace and well-being of the people of the African context? To narrow the scope of the study, I applied it to South Africa's interreligious context, which in turn could be situated in the continent of Africa and the globe at large.

7.3. THEMATIC FINDINGS

Thematically, there are two key conclusions that I wish to make apart from the obvious issue related to the need to *decolonise Hick's theology of religions through incorporating the indigenous*, I found that there is an appetite for interreligious dialogue in South Africa, and a productive anxiety about interreligious dialogue demands a theology of religions for South Africa.

AN APPETITE FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

What I found out throughout this research, is that South Africans, in general, are proud of their

diversity and have an appetite for interreligious cooperation. Being a religiously diverse country, South African people have developed mechanisms of living and working together, not only for the well-being and upliftment of life but also for the common good. For instance, during my interviews with members of the WCRP-SA and KZN-IRC, representing the six Faith groups of our study, most participants expressed a great desire and a willingness to engage in meaningful but constructive dialogue and collaborations among their different faith groups. While there is an awareness of the fraught history of religion under colonialism, and the Christian religious chauvinism of Apartheid, most of my interviewees demonstrated a willingness to learn from each other, and about each other. Most were aware of local and national controversies and tensions within and between faith communities, but they did not regard these as overwhelming. Instead, they saw this as a challenge and expressed a clear desire to cultivate tolerance and harmony. However, from my fieldwork, it is evident that while there is a significant appetite for dialogue and collaboration between religions, this functions largely at the level of social cohesion, and thus a primarily instrumentalist approach to religion. What this suggests is that we still have some way to go towards the development of sustained theology of religions and/ or robust mechanism for making such dialogue possible as it relates to dogmatic or ontological issues.

As suggested above, much of how study participants relate to other religions are informed by the South Africa Constitutional provisions related to the freedom to practice one religion, while providing protection from religious discriminations. In this realisation, I discovered that people's appetite to promote interreligious practices is enshrined and protected by the constitution. These provisions and people's faith in these provisions not only to eradicate the injustices of the past, (Chidester 1996) but also provides the basis for postcolonial secularism (Leatt 2017) where indigenous religions and practices receive the same recognition and protections as the institutionalised world religion that are taken as a foundation of all religions in the work of John Hick.

ANXIETY ABOUT INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES (PRACTICES)

Besides the appetite to promote interreligious cooperation in South Africa, members of the different religions that I interviewed, expressed anxieties about the nature of their interactions with each other. One of the huge anxieties that they face every day is dealing with the scars that apartheid's Christian normativity, and how this impacted individuals, families, and the entire communities. Often poets and histories recall the rich social texture of communities like District 6 in Cape Town or Cato Manor in Durban, as sites of religious, racial, and ethnic diversity that was destroyed by apartheid (Bhana, 1991). Most study participants agree that these tensions or issues emanate from the apartheid past

experiences and fear of others, religious stigmatization, and especially how indigenous religions are regarded as superstitious and pre-modern. What emerged significantly from my fieldwork, is that while participants maintain vigilant respect for each other's religions, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of each other's faith and religion (Esack, 1997). In this regard, Hick's call for a theology of religions, present a particular challenge for a postcolonial context like South Africa. Hick demands that we engage with the differences of belief and that meaningful dialogues are necessary related to those aspects of our faith that are in tension. It is my view, that while these theological tensions may create anxiety, they can also be harnessed to motivate faith communities to develop postcolonial theologies of religion, that take account of our violent colonial and partied past, while also incorporating indigenous and world religion in the nature and character of such new theologies.

7.4. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS THESIS

There are three important new or original ideas that this thesis brings to the fore in the field of academics.

Firstly, to my knowledge, no similar work has been done in South Africa on John Hick's theology of religions and its relevance to the country's interreligious context. Hick, I concluded was a product of his time, insofar as his work and thinking are arrested in, and speak back to the Christian normative context in England. His work is thus at once a radical departure from Christian theology to include other religions, and yet hegemonic insofar as other religions are incorporated into a world-religions paradigm that keeps religious hegemony intact. Hick, in my opinion, despite his visit to South Africa and critique of racism in England, fails to offer a persistent critique of the relationship between religion and race, that has more recently produced Islamophobia and anti-Semitism – thus undermining peace, and well-being in the world.

Secondly, the study produces a degree of originality by bringing Hick into conversation not only with the fieldwork data generated from interviews in KwaZulu-Natal but also with theoretical companions such as Appadurai (1996), Asad (1993), Casanova (1980), Berger, and Luckmann (1995) and Ann-Marie Leatt (2011), who have all sought to theorise the place of religion from a postmodern or postcolonial perspective.

Thirdly, many researchers have done work on the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, but this research focussed specifically on the history of interreligious contacts and dialogues in South Africa and not just the history of dialogue between religions allowing for the incorporation of histories

not yet recorded in dominant paradigms. In this regard, this study is transgressive insofar as it takes as a starting point the idea that interreligious dialogue and contact pre-date the arrival of Christianity, and as such sought to privilege indigenous religion as central to the making of a postcolonial theology of religions. In this study, I proposed a postcolonial theology of religions that incorporate African indigenous ideas about the transcendent (incorporating the ancestral), as well as indigenous ideas about relations with other people and with nature in efforts to promote peace and well-being. This allowed for the elaboration of indigenous theological and ontological values and ideas as resources for a postcolonial theology of religion that rest of the local ideas of human relations (*ubuntu*) and well-being (*impilo*).

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that this thesis acknowledges, the enormous contributions made by Hick in the academic field, but argues that his theology cannot solve all the problems or be ‘answer’ to the entire present-day pluralistic and interreligious realities, especially in the context of Africa. Given all these, I contend that any attempt to develop a postcolonial theology of religions do not rely on John Hick's theology of religions, 'world religion' narratives, or Euro-centric interpretations to define the African theology and cultural values. But on the contrary, African theology, philosophy, and cultural values have a lot to contribute to the sustenance of dialogue, peace, and well-being of our global world (as stated in chapter six) and that is why in conclusion I motivate for a structure of well-being from an African perspective, where well-being denotes being in good relation with God, ancestors, neighbours, and nature. What makes these concepts unique and relevant, as discussed in chapter six, is that they are universal tools that can be used or applied in any part of the globe, culture, and society. And when the global society, which includes South Africans, Africans, and more so, Hick, understands the deep importance of (*ubuntu* and *impilo*) being in harmony with God, ancestors, neighbour, and nature, it will, not only change the terrible conditions of this world, but improve our relations between each other, which in turn sustains peace and well-being that all deserve.

As I was reflecting on this thesis on interreligious dialogue and contact the excerpt from one of the great speeches of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia to the United Nations in October 1963, later adapted by Bob Marley in his song “War”, kept on ringing in my mind. I close with it:

“Until the philosophies which hold one race [and religion] superior, and

another inferior, is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned -
Everywhere will be war!

Until there no longer first and second-class citizens of any nation, until the
colour of Man's skin is no more significant than the colour of his eyes -
Everywhere will be war!

Until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all, without regard to
race - There will be war!

Until that day, the dream of lasting Peace, (and I add *healing, forgiveness, reconciliation*), world citizenship and rule of international morality, will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained...- There continues to be war!"

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APPENDIX 1

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



12 April 2016

Mr Alfred Chima Igwebulike 214560062
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Igwebulike

Protocol reference number: HSS/1062/015M

Project Title: World Religions as resource for Peace and Well-being: John Hick's Christian Theology of Religions and its relevance to the South African Interreligious context

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 30 July 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



Dr Shenika Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Co-Supervisor/Project Leader: Professor Frederica Settler
Co-Academic Leader Research: Professor P Denis
Co-School Administrator: Ms Catherine Muvigan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

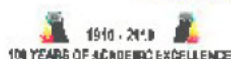
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Holding Colleges: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION SHEET

LETTER TO THE COORDINATOR OF WORLD CONFERENCE ON RELIGIONS FOR PEACE- SOUTH AFRICA (WCRP), KWAZULU-NATAL REGION

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classic

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3201

5th June 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH AT YOUR ORGANIZATION

My name is Alfred C. Igwebuike. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal at School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics in Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa, under the supervision of Dr. F.G Settler.

This letter serves as a request for your permission to undertake a research at your organization. The research focuses on “World Religions as Resource to Peace and Well-being: John Hick’s Christian Theology of Religions and its relevance to the South African Inter-religious Context’. The main objective of the study is to explore the nature and history of inter-religious dialogue in South Africa, using six faith traditions (Christianity, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist and African Traditional Religions) as case study under the umbrella of your organization in KwaZulu-Natal region. I intend to do semi-structured individual interviews with eighteen people: three from each faith (one religious leader and two lay leaders). The criteria for selection for the interview will be that religious and lay-leaders should have been involved with inter-religious issues for two years or more; the sample will be on 50/50 gender equity. I will also use audio recording to gather data during the interview, which of course, will be conducted with explicit permission and consent of the participants. The findings of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge about different religions in South Africa, their engagement in inter-religious issues that will in turn promote peace and well-being, not only in South Africa, but also outside South Africa.

The researcher assures management that ethical principles shall be considered throughout the research. Furthermore, the anonymity of the participant’s identity will be assured. Should your participant wish to withdraw from the study/research, he/she is free to do so.

If you need further information regarding the study/research, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my supervisor Dr F.G Settler. Herewith are our contact details: Mr Alfred Igwebuike 0721290453, email alfred.chima@ymail.com or Dr F.G Settler 0765719006, email

settler@ukzn.ac.za May you fill in and sign the attached declaration and consent to allow me to conduct interviews through your organization in KwaZulu-Natal region. I hope that my request shall meet your favourable consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Alfred C. Igwebuike

CONSENT FORM

DECLARATION BY COORDINATOR OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON RELIGIONS FOR PEACE-SOUTH AFRICA (WCRP), KWAZULU-NATAL REGION

I....., Coordinator of.....
.....confirm my willingness to allow members of my organization participate in this research. I understand that the research will not be harmful in anyway, that participants can withdraw from the study should any of them desire to do so, that their identities and that of my organization will remain anonymous and that the information that will be gathered from them (participants) will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Signature of the coordinator

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX 3:
INFORMATION SHEET

LETTER TO THE COORDINATOR KWAZULU-NATAL INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (KZN-IRC)

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classic

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3201

5th June 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH AT YOUR ORGANIZATION

My name is Alfred C. Igwebuikwe. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal at School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics in Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa, under the supervision of Dr. F.G Settler.

This letter serves as a request for your permission to undertake a research at your organization. The research focuses on “World Religions as Resource to Peace and Well-being: John Hick’s Christian Theology of Religions and its relevance to the South African Inter-religious Dialogue Context”. The main objective of the study is to explore the nature and history of inter-religious dialogue in South Africa, using six faith traditions (Christianity, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist and African Traditional Religions) as case study under the umbrella of your organization in KwaZulu-Natal region. I intend to do semi-structured individual interviews with eighteen people: three from each faith (one religious leader and two lay leaders). The criteria for selection for the interview will be that religious and lay-leaders should have been involved with inter-religious issues for two years or more; the sample will be on 50/50 gender equity. I will also use audio recording to gather data during the interview, which of course, will be conducted with explicit permission and consent of the participants. The findings of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge about different religions in South Africa, their engagement in inter-religious issues that will in turn promote peace and well-being, not only in South Africa, but also outside South Africa.

The researcher assures management that ethical principles shall be considered throughout the research. Furthermore, the anonymity of the participant’s identity will be assured. Should your participant wish to withdraw from the study/research, he/she is free to do so.

If you need further information regarding the study/research, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my supervisor Dr F.G Settler. Herewith are our contact details: Mr Alfred Igwebuikwe

0721290453, email alfred.chima@ymail.com or Dr F.G Settler 0765719006, email settler@ukzn.ac.za May you fill in and sign the attached declaration and consent to allow me to conduct interviews through your organization in KwaZulu-Natal region. I hope that my request shall meet your favourable consideration

Yours Sincerely,

Alfred C. Igwebuike

CONSENT FORM

DECLARATION BY COORDINATOR KWAZULU-NATAL INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (KZN-IRC)

I....., Coordinator of.....
.....confirm my willingness to allow members of my organization participate in this research. I understand that the research will not be harmful in anyway, that participants can withdraw from the study should any of them desire to do so, that their identities and that of my organization will remain anonymous and that the information that will be gathered from them (participants) will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Signature of the coordinator

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX 4
INFORMATION SHEET

LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classic

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3201

5th June 2015

Dear Participants,

My name is Alfred C. Igwebuike; my student number is 214580062. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal at the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics in Pietermaritzburg campus, South Africa. I am conducting a study under the supervision of Dr F.G Settler. You are being invited to consider participating in the study that aims to examine John Hick's theology of Religions and its relevance to the South African Inter-religious Dialogue Context.

The main objective of the study is to explore the nature and history of Inter-religious Dialogue in South Africa, using six faith traditions (Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist and Africa Traditional Religions) in KwaZulu-Natal as case study, and thus evaluate how these inter-relations can help facilitate peace and well-being in South Africa. Eighteen people will be interviewed, three from each faith traditions as mentioned above. If you choose to participate, interview will take 30 to 60 minutes of your time. The interview questions will be semi-structured with audio recording, which of course, will be conducted with explicit permission and consent of the participants. After the audio recording, each respondent will receive a confidential hard copy for review.

I would also like you to know that participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study anytime you wish. The study will also guarantee you full confidentiality during the interview and will not use your real names at any point. Although there is not any financial benefit, however, your ardent participation in the study will help contribute to a meaningful inter-religious dialogue and relations in South Africa.

If you need further information regarding the study/research, please do not hesitate to contact us, either myself or my supervisor, Dr F.G Settler. Herewith are our contact details Mr Alfred Igwebuike- 0721290453, email alfred.chima@ymail.com or Dr F.G Settler- 0765719006, email settler@ukzn.ac.za

Please fill in and sign the attached declaration letter indicating your willingness to participate in the research.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Alfred C. Igwebuike

CONSENT FORM

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

I (name)..... (surname).....
confirm my willingness to participate in this research. I understand the content of the document
and the nature, purpose and aim of the study.

I understand that the research will not be harmful in anyway, that I can withdraw from the study
should I desire. I am also aware that the research use audio recording to gather data during the
interview, but name/s, and the materials used in the study will be treated with confidentiality.

Signature of the participant

Date

.....

.....

Participant

I give permission to be auto recorded during the study

Signature of the participant

Date

.....

.....

I do not give permission to the researcher to use audio recording during study

Signature of the participant

Date

.....

.....

APPENDIX 5

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW FOR THE RESEARCH

1. What is your name?
2. (a) Which religion do you belong to?
(b) How did you come to know about your religion?
3. How long have you been a member of your religion?
4. What motivated you to become a member of your religion?
5. (a) How frequent do you gather as a faith community: daily, weekly, and monthly?
(b) How frequent do you meet in other social gatherings and discussions?
(c) Roughly, how many people attend the faith and social gatherings: daily, weekly, and monthly?
6. What are the activities that your religion is engaged with in terms of formation of its members?
7. Does your religion actively engage and work together with other religious groups and organization in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa?
8. Does your religion actively engage in social issues affecting the communities where they are issues like poverty, unemployment, suffering of the people, human rights, discrimination, etc.?
9. (a) What are the programmes that your religion has successfully implemented regarding social issues?
(b) What are the challenges that your region encountered in the implementations?
10. In your experience, what are the social issues that your religion helped to facilitate in communities around KwaZulu-Natal and beyond?
11. (a) What role does your religion play in nation-building, dialogue, reconciliation, Justice, peace-making, and well-being of the people?
(b) What projects does your religion have in place to promote these values?
12. What are your views / opinions about dialogue among religions in South Africa?
13. Do you think your faith and commitment has a role to play in improving dialogue among your fellow members and members of other religions?

14. What challenges do you face in relating with people of other faiths and religions?
15. In your opinion, what factors do you think will help facilitate peace, respect, tolerance, and reconciliation among religions in South Africa?
16. (a) What is your opinion and in-put as regards freedom of religion in South Africa?
(b) How can it be implemented and respected in the Constitution of South Africa?
17. (a) In your own opinion, can South Africa be regarded as (i) an exclusively Christian country or (ii) a religiously diverse country?
(b) Give reasons for supporting (i) and not (ii) and vice versa
18. How does your religion cope with the fast tracks of modern technology, media, and communications in the world?
19. What are the challenges that your religion face in the fast track of modern technology verses its traditional ways of operation?
20. Does your religion interact and engage with the government and citizens of South African and the rest of the world in particular reference to peace, dialogue and well-being?