

## CHAPTER 3

### THE RESEARCHER, THE RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

It is important for the background to this study that the approach of the research should be explained and that I should be transparent about my epistemological and theological positions. This is important because this whole hermeneutical adventure includes the researcher. This insight is informed by the notions of the postfoundationalist and social constructionist way of thinking which will be discussed in the following section.

#### 3.2 Epistemological position

The epistemological position of this research was shaped by three intertwined approaches: social constructionism, the narrative approach and postfoundationalism. As I will be discussing the epistemological concerns it will hopefully become clear what the relationship between these three are. Here I would like to point out that although I made use of the ideas in these approaches I maintained a critical relationship with all three. What I mean by this will hopefully be clearer when I discuss my theological concerns.

Freedman and Combs (2009:353) states: *We find meaning in our lives through stories.* This research is based on this insight and for this reason one of the main characteristics of this research is that it can be described as narrative research. The narrative research approach is out of the same paradigm as qualitative research (Müller 2003:1). It is in other words not an approach which emphasises numbers and percentages. According to Freedman and Combs (2002:106) we are born into narratives. Our lives are constituted by stories (Morgan 2000:8). Rubin and Rubin (2005:1) argue that humans always try to understand their lives. This understanding is largely achieved through stories. The insight, that meaning is expressed in stories, has made narrativity a very important approach (Müller & Demasure 2006:410). This way of understanding truth and reality can be called social constructionism.

Social constructionism holds that stories maintain and organize our reality (Freedman and Combs 2002:141). To talk of social constructionism is also to talk about the post-modern paradigm. According to Freedman and Combs (in Müller 2004:298) it is different labels for the same thing, although this view is challenged by some (cf Stam 2001:294). One of the characteristics of the postmodern paradigm is that there is a tendency toward a position of relativism. In discussing the postfoundational approach it will be clear that this research does not maintain a position of relativism. Müller (2004:298) also points out that social constructionism is actually a protest against relativism.

Someone who also contributed to the prominence of the narrative way of thinking was Ricoeur. Ricoeur (in Müller & Demasure 2006:412) pointed out that the transformation of a person is best achieved through stories because when someone goes through the movements of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration, that person's concept of reality change and therefore also that person's actions. It is also the hope that in the research, the researcher and the co-researchers will move through these phases to a point where there will be a new disclosure (cf Müller & Demasure 2006:412). This will mostly be done through conversations with participants. By listening to their stories the hope is that through the conversation there will be a refiguration (Müller & Demasure 2006:413). So, although the research might in some ways be seen as to be descriptive, the fact is that to get involved with people's stories it is not only to describe it but to be part of the transformation of it and therefore also the transformation of a person. In this sense the research is an intervention, but in narrative research it is seen as a respectful and fragile one (Müller & Schoeman 2004:7). This research in its turn is a story in its own right which can lead to transformation through assisting a process that can lead to refiguration. This means that the aim is that this research story must not only lead to the transformation of the co-researchers, but also to those who might read this research story.

In social constructionism the concept of a discourse is very important. A discourse can be seen as social commentary that creates certain meanings (Dickerson &

Zimmerman 1996:13). Thayer (2001:62) states: "Discourse refers to systems of culture, social and institutional practices or frameworks that provide the words and ideas we use to make sense of our world." Explaining what a discourse is, Thayer (2001:62) quotes Foucault who said: "discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak." Discourse can also be described as referring, to an argumentative "exposition of a point of view or system of thought" (Deist 1990:72). This point of view or system of thought is referred to in a text and in one text there can be more than one discourse (Demasure & Müller 2006:414). According to Demasure and Müller (2006:414) a text is not just what is written down but also anything that is visual, oral or auditive that has some kind of meaning. It can refer to words, gestures, acts and historical and sociological phenomena (Heitink in Müller 1996:10). The scientific activity of interpreting texts is called hermeneutics (Müller 1996:10). It could be said that in this hermeneutical adventure the most important texts were my co-researchers who became "texts" through language.

In social constructionism there is a special interest in language and the way language functions (Demasure & Müller 2006:414). The way a person is defined, or anything else, is with language and that opens the possibility that there can be more than one construction (Demasure & Müller 2006:414). This insight can be very helpful for people who experience their problems as overwhelming and unchangeable. According to Gergen (in Demasure and Müller 2006:414) through dialogue (therefore with language and therefore in relation with others) transformation can take place and new meanings, new constructions can arise.

In social constructionism a person is not seen as an individual in isolation, but as a person whose identity is co-constructed in a cultural situation with many discourses available to choose from (Demasure & Müller 2006:415). Broadly speaking these discourses are part of stories and these stories are cultural constructs and determine who a person is and what a person's identity will be. In social constructionism there is a preference for stories rather than using an argument because it can more easily lead to acceptance than resistance (Demasure & Müller 2006:415) and therefore more easily to

transformation than stagnation. Stories have transformational potential for a person's identity because that is what has shaped the identity in the first place.

Social constructionism holds that language constructs reality and that in dialogue with people you can co-generate a new reality with new ideas and meanings (Demasure & Müller 2006:416). Meaning is socially constructed through language. Through language we construct the world or reality and we express what we believe in, in language (Gerkin 1986:4). Gerkin (1986:5) states that language is important because with language we connect things with each other, we make sense out of our experiences, through language we express our experiences, we give things significance and our world of meaning is disclosed in language.

In social constructionism a very important point of view is that language is seen as shaping our reality and not simply communicating it. Thayser (2001:62) states: "A view that language is formative is fundamental to social constructionism, because it is not just a vehicle for exchanging information or representing experience, but is rather a defining framework." Language is no longer seen as to have a one to one relationship with the external world. Gergen (2001:805) states: "To speak, then, of the material world and causal relations is not to describe accurately what is." Language is rather used to shape our reality and this is done through stories. Gerkin (1986:5) states that it is important to note that language is grounded in some sort of narrative. Without stories life would be fragmented and disconnected (Gerkin 1986:5). For this reason Barbara Hardy (in Gerkin 1986:5) remarks that we make up stories of our lives in order to live. Stories are an integral and essential part of being alive. Gerkin (1986:5) states that the human experience has at its core a narrative structure. Narratives are only possible because of language through which people in relationship with each other socially construct their realities. On the other hand language gets its significance based on the narratives it is part of.

According to Bidwell (2004:62) social constructionism is an approach which was developed in the discipline of social psychology. This approach emphasises that things

like the group to which you belong, the values to which you subscribe, your beliefs and your identity is socially shaped through some kind of communication (Bidwell 2004:62). These things could be seen as part of the ingredients of what constitutes the self and in social constructionism the key thing is that this is not situated in an individual but between people in relationship with each other (Bidwell 2004:62). Thayer (2001:65) refers to Hoffman who had pointed out that the self is no longer seen as being an internal construction+but rather as something being socially constructed and therefore a social artefact+. Gergen (1993:234) states: %a %to be+a self is already %to be with...+

This is similar to Müller (2004:299) stating: %a social constructionism there is a deep-rooted belief that we, with our rationality, are socially constructed.+ Bidwell (2004:62) states that: %a knowledge of self and world emerges as people construct, share and correlate experiences through participation in discourse.+ Therefore, as Gergen (in Bidwell 2004:62) asserts, knowledge lies not within a certain individual but rather in the %a collectivity+. Social constructionism does not deny that there are constructions within someone, but emphasises that before there are %a individual processes+, there are %a relational processes+(Bidwell 2004:62). Citing many other scholars Bidwell (2004:62) concludes that the self in the view of social constructionism can be seen as a process or even a verb.

Making use of Gergen and Cushman, Bidwell (2004:63) describes a few basic assumptions of social constructionism. According to social constructionism reality can be described as the agreement reached by a certain group of people in relationship with each other through the use of language. People give meaning to their reality within a specific context and do not somehow exist in an a-contextual manner. People are embedded within a certain context. Humans can be seen as %a hermeneutical beings+ because the perception of the reality they live in can be seen as socially constructed. People in a group tend to reach an agreement on what reality is through linguistic interaction. Further, in social constructionism the aim is not to understand reality as something either %a out there+or within an individual, but it rather focuses on how people's understanding of the reality %a out there+and the %a reality within+is developed through

social interaction.

While doing research it is important to emphasise that social constructionism holds that knowledge is not simply discovered as if it is an objective thing that exists. Thayer (2001:67) points out that Gergen asserted that knowledge arises through social cooperation. In this research it will also be the point of view that through the social involvement of different people new knowledge can potentially be constructed. New knowledge is possible because as Gergen (1985:266) states: "The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchange among people. From the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationships." These words are also applicable to this research because it can be seen as an enterprise where there has been active participation from people who were in relationship with each other and out of this process an understanding could arise.

Social constructionism does not deny the existence of an objective world. Gergen (2001:806) states: "Whatever exists simply exists, irrespective of linguistic practices. However, once one begins to describe or explain what exists, one inevitably proceeds from a foreground of shared intelligibility." With the results of science and therefore research the question for Gergen (2001:806) is not whether it is an accurate mirror of the objective world; rather the question is asked what the effect of the results will be. There is especially a concern for considering the division that this might cause between people as well as the people that might be silenced by this (Gergen 2001:806). It can be said that this research strives to give seafarers a voice and the hope is that the research narrative that is constructed, will aid in this purpose.

Gergen (2001:807) states that social constructionism does not imply that we do not take the world seriously. Gergen (2001:807) takes the game of baseball, a social construction, as an example: "To know that a home run is only part of a game does not lessen the thrill of hitting one when the bases are loaded." To take this metaphor further

one might say that the research can be compared to the construction of a game. When you are constructing it you need to be sensitive to the fact that this has to be to the benefit of others. Ideally you want to construct a game with your co-researchers where there are no losers. The point is that although social constructions are socially constructed and that they therefore can be deconstructed again, they do have a far reaching impact in people's lives. What Gergen (2001:808) wants to point out is that in modernism one is taught to take marching orders from reality. In the social constructionist way of thinking whatever is, is and how you and the groups you are part of view this is socially constructed. The marching orders are socially negotiated.

Very close to the postfoundationalist approach's notions Gergen (2001:807) states: When one understands one's own values as historically and culturally situated, one is more fully prepared to engage in the kinds of dialogue from which new and more viable constellations of meaning may emerge. Social constructionism has a lot in common with postfoundationalism which will be discussed in some detail under theological considerations later on in this chapter. According to Müller (2009:204) the postfoundationalist approach is about listening to other people's stories, but not in order to just describe it, but to be confronted with a concrete event. The confrontation with a concrete event happens within a social context and meaning of this event is socially shaped. According to Bidwell (2004:63), based on the ideas of Gergen and Cushman as I have just mentioned, humans can be called hermeneutical beings. It can perhaps be said that humans are wired to strive to understand and this understanding is reached by means of a social process.

Therefore, in this study it will be important to focus on understanding. The reason why understanding is so important comes from insights from those being involved with hermeneutics. The scientific activity of interpreting texts is called hermeneutics, as was stated before (Müller 1996:10). According to Firt (in Müller 1996:10) if there was in pastoral care not a hermeneutical dimension, then whatever happened was not pastoral at all. Part of the reason why the hermeneutical dimension is seen as important was due to some of the insights of Wilhelm Dilthey who said: We explain

nature; man we must understand+(in Müller 1996:11). This insight pointed the human sciences away from trying to explain to becoming a hermeneutical undertaking which strives to understand. This is also applicable to this study where the approach to seafarers will not be to explain them as if they are objects, but to understand something about them, and important: together with them. At the same time it should be noted that in this research it is not supposed that there is a dichotomy between understanding and explaining (cf Van Huyssteen 2008:514).

To say that this research is about understanding might sound like something superficial, but to come to a truly new understanding is not easy and is described by Müller (1996:12) as a hermeneutical adventure. To have a true encounter with someone by means of meaningful communication, it is necessary to become vulnerable and to move over boundaries (Müller 1996:12). Gerkin (in Müller 1996:12) says that you must actually allow the intrusion of someone else's world into your own. For this reason research with a narrative approach should also be seen as a hermeneutical adventure.

Müller (1996:V) states that in narrative pastoral care it is not just about a superficial storytelling session; but that the whole idea is that there must be ~~narrative~~ narrative involvement+. For Müller (1996:VI) the stories that people are telling are not just a means to help them understand their lives, but it is also something that can accomplish change. Narrative involvement leads to understanding and this kind of understanding Müller (1996:VI) is talking about is an understanding that can lead to transformation. In this research the aim is not just to listen to people's stories in a superficial way, but to get to a point of having narrative involvement from all who participate in the research and storytelling. Those who are interested in reading the results of this research are also invited to have some kind of narrative involvement in the research story.

Closely related to the whole question of coming to an understanding is the idea of making sense out of life. This is related because making sense of life is to come to a kind of coherent picture of things. This is what I hope to accomplish with this research together with my co-researchers: to come to a coherent picture through an



understanding that was co-constructed between me and those who became my partners on this hermeneutical adventure. This coherent picture does not mean that everything fits perfectly into place, but the end result is a climax or coherence that was not there before the research started.

According to Müller (1996:14) pastoral involvement should focus on helping people in the process of making sense of their lives. Narrative pastoral involvement can facilitate this because as Hiles and Ermak (2007:149) points out stories offer a sense-making process that is fundamental to understanding human reality. This is a hermeneutical process that every human being goes through. In a pastoral context the question of a person's relationship with God is a core part of the search for meaning (Müller 1996:27). Heitink (in Müller 1996:27) points out that in the interaction between people resources are created that has the potential of producing answers to existential questions. In social constructionism there is a special emphasis on the fact that humans construct meaning and significance through interaction with each other. When we come to a point of saying that life is making sense we refer to a coherence that gives meaning to the whole of our lives (Müller 1996:27).

Müller (1996:27) states that it is not the aim of pastoral involvement to give someone meaning in life, but rather to facilitate someone in this process. This is a continuing process as the coherence that was found has to be renegotiated again and again in new life contexts (Müller 1996:28).

This search for meaning is not limited to individuals, but as stated before it is especially the aim of social sciences to come to an understanding of whatever might be under investigation. In the past, to come to an understanding of things, the social sciences used the positivistic approach to science to provide them with maps upon which to base their efforts (Epston & White 1990:4). When the positivistic approach was no longer the automatic way of doing science those in social sciences started to realize that it is possible to use different analogies to assist in developing their theories (Epston & White 1990:4).

The choice for a specific analogy is determined by a lot of factors and one analogy cannot be seen as the ultimate correct one (Epston & White 1990:5). One way of choosing an analogy is to examine the history of different ones used in the past and to evaluate their effects (Epston & White 1990:5). The choice for a specific analogy has a far reaching effect as Zimmerman and Dickerson (1996:4) point out when they discuss the effect of a metaphor in someone's life. The metaphor that life is like a box of chocolates, made famous in the film *Forest Gump*, had a much different effect on Forest than the metaphor: "life is like a den of rattlesnakes", would have had (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1996:4). Zimmerman and Dickerson (1996:4) are making the point that the metaphors that you use determine the way in which you understand reality, in their case especially in connection with therapy, but in this study concerning research and the researcher's epistemology.

By using the narrative approach I am using the text analogy or metaphor (Epston & White 1990:9). The idea of using the text analogy was born due to the insight that specific behaviour might begin and stop, but the meaning attached to this behaviour continues over time (Epston & White 1990:9). The behaviour is no longer in the present, but the meanings associated with this extend into the future (Epston & White 1990:9). Epston and White (1990:9) say that the development of lives and relationships were now seen in terms of texts being written or read. This reminds of the well known phrase of Anton Boisen who talked about "the living human document" (Patton 1994:30).

Humans do not have direct access to life and therefore social scientists concluded that what we know, we know through "lived experience" (Epston & White 1990:9). This gave birth to a lot of other questions: How does someone organize all these experiences, how does someone use these experiences to make sense of life and how are these experiences expressed (Epston & White 1990:9)? The answer to these questions were that storying is the way in which these experiences are organized, made sense of and are expressed (Epston & White 1990:10).

Storying that is done in a fruitful manner gives a person the experience that their lives are coherent and that there is meaning in their lives (Epston & White 1990:10). A narrative can do this because, as Hiles and Ermak (2007:149) point out, while making use of the ideas of Polkinghorne, a story is "a fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into a contextualized and integrated whole." When events of the past, present and those predicted in the future form a linear account of these lived experiences, through storying, a self-narrative has emerged (Epston & White 1990:10).

A story or a narrative can be understood as something that organizes events into a whole (Elliot 2005:3). Each event's meaning is derived from its relation to that whole (Elliot 2005:3). Elliot (2005:4) refers to a definition of Hinchman and Hinchman on what a story is when pointing out that there are three characteristics that a narrative has. It is chronological, as events are arranged in a sequence, it is meaningful and it is social. It is social because there is always an audience for whom a story is produced. It also needs to be added that it is social as it also grows out of a specific social context.

Epston and White (1990:11) points out that storying comes at a price as there is always a selection of events and some events are left out. Polkinghorne (in Hiles & Ermak 2007:149) said: "several narratives can organize the same facts into stories and thereby give the facts different significance and meaning." Epston and White (1990:12) assert that what events are storied and performed determine our lives and relationships. With every performance of a story a person is reauthoring his/her life because stories are always full of gaps (Epston & White 1990:13). So every telling or retelling of a story is seen as something new (Epston & White 1990:13). When parts of a story or the events mentioned in it are put in a different order normally the meaning is changed as well (Franzosi in Elliot 2005:7). As Elliot (2005:9) puts it: "the very telling of a narrative represents an evaluative act." It is important to note that a selection of lived experiences are not just storied, but also performed. Stories need to be performed due to their social dimension pointed out by Elliot (2005:4).

Epston and White (1990:17) point out that while people perform their alternative stories they are invited to be the audience of that performance and also to find an external audience for this. Alternative stories refer to stories that are incorporating those lived experiences that have previously not been storied (Epston & White 1990:16). These lived experiences are called unique outcomes (Epston & White 1990:16).

The background for this search for unique outcomes and the construction of an alternative story is because of an assumption that Epston and White (1990:14) are making. They are assuming that problems occur in someone's life when their lived experiences are not adequately represented in their current life story (Epston & White 1990:15). Those lived experiences outside this story is seen by them as a valuable source with great potential to help a person to create an alternative story (Epston & White 1990:15).

To create and construct an alternative story they make use of the concept of externalisation (Epston & White 1990:16). With this they try to create a distance between a person and their story (Epston & White 1990:16). Their aim is to try to have an interruption of the habitual reading and performance of these stories+(Epston & White 1990:16). The stories that they are talking about are stories that are problem-saturated+as their focus is on a therapeutic situation (Epston & White 1990:16). It might not always be the case in this research that the people I am doing research with have problem ridden life stories, but it is still in a narrative approach good to have a strategy to try to facilitate externalisation.

To facilitate the externalisation of the problem-saturated story Epston and White (1990:16) propose that a person start by externalising the problem. Then when this is done a person can explore the influence they themselves, and their relationships with others, have on the problem (Epston & White 1990:16). Through this externalization unique outcomes are discovered to which meaning needs to be given (Epston & White 1990:16). In this process imagination plays a very important role (Turner in Epston & White 1990:16). For these unique outcomes to have significance it needs to become

part of the plot of an alternative story (Epston & White 1990:16).

We make sense of life through stories and stories are made up of what we see as truth. According to Foucault (in Epston & White 1990: 19) it is through the constitutive aspect of knowledge and power that ideas are constructed which is accepted as truth. Truth is for instance constructed as the %global+and %unitary+knowledge that modern science claim to produce (Foucault in Epston & White 1990:20). According to Foucault (in Epston & White 1990:21) knowledge and power have a very close relationship with each other. If truth is not produced then power is not produced either (Foucault in Epston & White 1990:22). At the same time power is used to produce truth (Foucault in Epston & White 1990:22). Normally people would subject themselves to the power of these truths and as an extreme example Epston & White (1990:24) points out that, that is what is happening in cases with people suffering from anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

Foucault (in Epston & White 1990:25) points out that power has certain techniques that it uses to create circumstances for knowledge or truth to be produced. This insight is very important when thinking about the epistemology of this research as any research project has something to do with a search for knowledge. When the epistemology of a research project is done with a narrative approach then it is important to be aware of the relationship between power and knowledge and to be sensitive to it. Foucault (in Epston & White 1990:25) points out that part of the techniques of power to produce knowledge is the way in which research is done. Where research is done without consideration of this it could be harmful to those who are participating as they are further subjected to the power of the status quo.

In finding a solution to the harm that power and knowledge can do, Foucault (in Epston & White 1990:25-27) points out that there are always %subjugated knowledges+. Knowledge can be divided into two groups. The one is %erudite+knowledge and the other is %local popular+ %indigenous+knowledge. This reminds one of the distinction that Lyotard (in Schrag 1992) has made when referring to scientific knowledge which is playing an exclusive %language game+and narrative knowledge which is playing a

manifold of language games+. When only one type of language game is allowed there is always knowledge that is being suppressed. The dominant knowledges can then be challenged if space is created for the previously subjugated knowledges to be performed. In a research project done with a narrative approach there must be a special interest in subjugated knowledges.

In order for the subjugated knowledges to be performed Epston and White (1990:29) challenges the separation of knowledges in professional disciplines+and knowledges that are discontinuous+and therefore to rethink the scientism of the human sciences. Epston and White (1990:29) are convinced that one should challenge the mechanisms used by the dominant knowledges to subject people rather than to construct an alternative ideology. Identifying these mechanisms or techniques makes space for unique events to be discovered (Epston & White 1990:21). In this way subjugated knowledges are coming to the surface.

In the narrative approach it is necessary to remember that an important epistemological assumption that is made is that in this type of research the meaning that you find out+ through this research is not seen as if it previously existed in an objective manner. Zimmerman and Dickerson (1996:3) note that in a therapeutic situation that they conduct with a narrative approach they ask questions and through this meaning are created. Meaning is not there before the question is asked in an objective sense. This applies also to research questions and is pointing to a new+kind of approach (compared to positivistic approaches) to research where meaning is not found, but created.

The narrative approach is an approach that is moving decisively away from what Pieterse (1991:39) calls a narrow perspective of rationality. What he is referring to is the more positivistic approach that natural sciences use and which the social sciences tried to follow. In this approach reality is seen as an objective thing with an unchanging structure (Pieterse 1991:39). According to Pieterse (1991:40) Gadamer pointed out that true knowledge is not just cognitive insight, but that it includes the normative and the

subjective. Gadamer (in Pieterse 1991:40) came to the conviction that the application of carefully formulated methodological rules and procedures is not the only way in which to gather true knowledge. He realised that another way to gather true knowledge is the symmetrical exchange between equal participants in communication. Habermas (in Pieterse 1991:41) added that it must be kept in mind that there are obstacles to this kind of communication. As this conversation should be characterised by the equality of all participants Habermas (in Pieterse 1991:41) suggested that there should be a special interest in getting rid of relations characterised by power and dependency. Habermas (in Pieterse 1991:43) is pointing towards a learning process which proceeds through inter-subjective scientific conversations where people can come to agreements about truth claims. This reminds one of the interdisciplinary conversations that Van Huyssteen is suggesting and which will be under discussion in the following section.

So the narrative approach moves away from a narrow definition of rationality and therefore Hiles and Ermak (2007:148) states that when we are talking about narratives it should not be seen as something that consists of facts and events in an objective sense, but rather as a means through which we construct meaning. Shafer (in Hiles and Ermak 2007:148) points out that: "a narrative is not an alternative to truth or reality, rather, it is the mode in which inevitably, truth and reality are presented." Things that happen are not in itself a story, but out of people's experiences of something that has happened, a story is constructed (Hiles & Ermak 2007:149).

This research can be seen as part of the approach which is called Narrative Oriented Inquiry or NOI (Hiles & Ermak 2007:151). Hiles and Ermak (2007:149) explain why this type of research is widely in use: "It is because narrative is fundamental to our understanding of the human mind, *and* because narrative dominate human discourse, *and* because narrative is foundational to the process that organize and structure human experience and action, that the application of narrative methods of research has the potential for such wide application."

These insights form the basis for this research inquiry into the lives and world of

seafarers. This is the reason why the research will follow the ABDCE formula and why the practical research will be done with a special interest in the stories that the seafarers or others involved in this field can tell. Most of the interviews with the co-researches will be done with unstructured or semi-structured interviews because as Hiles and Ermak (2007:149) states this type of research setting invites people to tell stories. Silverman (in Hiles and Ermak 2007:149) sees such interviews as a place where narratives can be co-constructed.

In the next section I will explore my theological position and will aim to integrate it with the epistemological concerns.

### **3.3 Theological Position**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

In this section I will give background to the theological position out of which the research will be approached as this will have a significant impact on the way in which the research will develop. To position myself concerning mission work I will mainly make use of the ideas of Bosch (1990) and Kverndal (2008). In this section I will also discuss some theological considerations related to the narrative research approach and to postfoundationalist theology.

I am convinced that Jesus Christ is actively involved with the social construction of our reality, because He is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). God is this because God is love (1 John 4:16). Mostly when the question of what truth is, is talked about in the narrative approach the answer would be that truth is what is socially constructed by a certain group of people and the assumption is that it is only people. In postfoundationalism, like in social constructionism, the emphasis is on the fact that we are relational beings (Demasure & Müller 2006:418). I agree with this, but my theological position is to add that Jesus Christ is part of this social reality not simply as a social construct but as a co-constructor.

God's involvement with people is the basis for the church's involvement with seafarers.



The church has a special obligation to reach out to those who are the outcasts of society and those who are socially out-constructed out of people's truths. In the way Jesus lived and died it is clear that this was a core issue to Him. According to Müller (2003:8) the narrative approach is an approach where the voices and stories of the out-constructed like old people, children, those who are ill and those in crisis should be heard. This is central to Jesus' gospel.

According to Müller (2005:73) practical theology is happening when there is a reflection on practice out of the perspective of the experience of the presence of God. The reason for this reflection, in this research, is to come to an understanding and this understanding can then lead to a different practice. Van der Westhuizen (2010) refers to this as a movement from a practical concrete situation to theory and then back to the practical situation and implies that this comes from the thoughts of Gadamer. The research's focus will be on understanding in the first place and not to implement a new practice, although my conviction is that true understanding can lead to true change (as opposed to the practice just staying the same or change that is only superficial).

Müller (1996:5) also describes practical theology as a continuing hermeneutical process that is systematic. This process's aim is to theologially renew and enlighten human practices, which has some kind of relation with the narratives of the Christian community. So the aim is to have a better understanding and practice. This research is grounded in empirical reality which leads to a hermeneutical process of understanding. The idea is not to start off with a preconceived theory but to be grounded in a particular context.

In this research a lot of the ideas are from the postfoundationalist approach as this approach makes use of the same kind of insights as the narrative way of thinking. According to Müller (2005:74), in postfoundationalist practical theology it is important that an understanding should not simply include a local context but should actually arise from it. Further, Müller (2005:74) states that postfoundationalist practical theology moves beyond hermeneutics as a metaphor for practical theology. Hermeneutics is

about understanding, but in the hermeneutical approach for practical theology there is a lack of emphasis on the fact that knowledge is socially constructed (Müller 2005:75). This creates research results where the local context is not really part of the hermeneutical process (Müller 2005:76), and therefore the researcher comes to an understanding, but this understanding grew more out of the researchers own mind than the actual concrete situation. A truly new understanding is therefore not reached (Müller 2005:76).

For Müller (2005:78) the essence of practical theology is that it must focus on a concrete situation because when you move away from this your research is moving towards systematic theology. To take the concrete situation seriously is to take into account that you are part of it. The reason for this is that you are part of the concrete situation and does not exist somehow outside of it. You influence the way in which the stories are told and what stories are told. What is socially created is undeniably co-determined by the researcher. Therefore, it will be important to be aware of my own presuppositions as they become the local context as soon as I step on a ship and start interacting with the seafarers or others involved in this field.

An important point of view expressed by Gerkin (in Van der Westhuizen 2010) is that practical theology is not only concerned about the ministry of the church to herself, but it also has to do with the church involvement with the world. In seafarers ministry this aspect of practical theology is especially important as the reflection on practice cannot only be on concerns of the functioning of a congregation but it should also be concerned about international community with whom the ministry is done. What Gerkin is saying is pointing towards an important overlap between practical theology and missiology which will be explored later on in this chapter.

Van der Westhuizen (2010) refers to the work of Alastair Campbell who said that because practical theology focuses on a concrete situation there will be a tendency that it will be fragmented and not very systemised. In addition to this, because of this focus, many times the findings in practical theology will be expressed in the form of practical

suggestions concerning the practice of the church. According to Van der Westhuizen (2010) one of the important contributions that can be made through practical theology is to listen to people's experiences of God in their concrete situation.

Practical theology then, is a discipline which takes the embedded nature of our existence seriously. It takes the local seriously, but it also moves beyond this. In the following section attention will be given to what postfoundationalism means, mainly as it is understood by Van Huyssteen.

### **3.3.2 Interdisciplinary concerns**

#### **- Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalist approach**

Interdisciplinary concerns are important in this research. Firstly because it has to be acknowledged that any discipline is influenced and shaped through other disciplines and does not exist in isolation (cf Van Huyssteen 2000:431). In this research it is evident as the narrative approach is not a theological approach and the research has both practical theological and missiological concerns. The second reason is because it is my conviction that the interdisciplinary approach, when guided by the notions of postfoundationalism with its transversal emphasis, is an approach which can enrich the research narrative in a significant way. In this section I will firstly describe the approach which is proposed by Van Huyssteen and then follow it up by an evaluation.

According to Van Huyssteen (1997:2) the question is if Christian theology can join the postmodern conversation and still maintain its identity. In other words, the question is whether there is a possibility that theology can interact and communicate with science without ceasing to be theology in the true sense of the word. Van Huyssteen argues that this is possible if both relativism, on the one hand and foundationalism, on the other, are avoided. Van Huyssteen (1997:3) says that nonfoundationalism, which is a position of total relativism that states that every mode of reflection has different internal rules, will lead to a situation where an interdisciplinary approach would not be possible or even seen as something to work towards. On the other hand it is also crucial for Van Huyssteen (1997:3) to move away in theology from fideism, which is

referring to a position where you do not in particular trust God so much as you trust your own beliefs in God. Fideism also means that you put too much emphasis on the role faith plays in having knowledge (Deist 1990:95). With fideism Van Huyssteen refers to a foundationalist approach to theology and faith. The two extremes, of nonfoundationalism or foundationalism can lead to an end to the interdisciplinary conversation. Stone (2000:415) describes the extremes to avoid as foundationalism on the one hand and postmodern relativism and deconstruction on the other hand.

Van der Westhuizen (2010) points out that foundationalism is something which has emerged during the time of the Enlightenment. Grenz and Franke (in Van der Westhuizen 2010) pointed out that with this approach first principles are established, in other words foundations, and based on these certain conclusions were made. This seems to be an approach where everything is logical and thinking proceeds in a deductive manner. In postmodernism there is a movement away from this type of approach in order to move beyond foundations (Van der Westhuizen 2010). However this movement proved to have problems of its own as Tarnas (1996:402) states: implicitly, the one postmodern absolute is critical consciousness, which, by deconstructing all, seems compelled by its own logic to do so to itself as well. This is the unstable paradox that permeates the postmodern mind. This is where Van Huyssteen's work fits in as he tries to provide an answer to the question as to how one can move away from foundationalism without maintaining the unstable paradox.

The approach that Van Huyssteen proposes in order to move beyond foundations is called the postfoundationalist approach. This means that the approach moves away from a stance where it is assumed that absolute knowledge can be obtained and it acknowledges the limitations of one's own discipline (Müller 2009:202). With a foundationalist point of view the truth of your own discipline's rationality is assumed and other disciplines' rationality is understood, and judged, in terms of your own (cf Müller 2009:202). When entering into an interdisciplinary discussion with other disciplines the aim would be to reach a unified perspective (Müller 2009:202). This approach strives to be beyond foundations but also beyond relativism. It aims to take the local situation

seriously through an emphasis on contextuality and embeddedness, but at the same time moves beyond this to interdisciplinary concerns (Van der Westhuizen 2010). In a sense this approach can either be called postfoundationalism or postrelativism.

Relativism or nonfoundationalism is a point of view which holds that there is no universal knowledge or understanding and therefore there is doubt as to what can be achieved through interdisciplinary interaction (Müller 2009:203). The postfoundationalist approach aims to avoid this extreme (Müller 2009:203).

For Van Huyssteen (1997:4) the aim with postfoundationalism is to identify the shared resources of human rationality. That can be done through a postfoundationalist position in dialogue with other disciplines. As the emphasis is that there should be communication between disciplines, there is an important link with social constructionism where it can be said that knowledge is being constructed through conversation (Müller in Van der Westhuizen 2010). In postfoundationalist Christian theology you have to become aware of hidden beliefs and assumptions that you take for granted and without questioning, in order to be in this cross-disciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1997:4). You do not have to change every belief and assumption, but you do have to be transparent with yourself and the people across the borders of your discipline in as far as it is relevant. With this attitude it is possible to listen to other disciplines and to find knowledge that might be in harmony with the Christian paradigm while you stay within a personal faith commitment (Van Huyssteen 1997:4).

Stone (2000:416) describes Van Huyssteen's approach as a flexible notion of rationality which avoids the errors of the two extremes just mentioned. The extreme of relativism is a core characteristic of postmodernism and Stone (2000:416) points out that Van Huyssteen sees this as a continuation of modernism's critical stance, but that this critical stance has now been turned against modernism's central suppositions. Stone (2000:417) says that for Van Huyssteen it is about constructing a notion of rationality that can take theology out of isolation into a sphere where theology and science are both equal partners. In order to do this you are committed to your own

beliefs, but at the same time open to criticism (Stone 2000:417). This interdisciplinary conversation can be productive because there is an overlap of reasoning strategies+ (Stone 2000:417). The subject matter of Van Huyssteen's thoughts overlaps greatly with what philosophy of science is all about namely the problem of rationality+(Stone 2000:418). In other words, what Van Huyssteen is doing can be seen as philosophy of science, but with a special interest on the nature of theological thought+(Stone 2000:418). The postfoundationalist rationality is emphasising contextuality, tradition and interpreted experience because to take this seriously and to be aware of this makes a cross-contextual and interdisciplinary conversation to become possible and productive (cf Stone 2000:418).

The type of rationality that Van Huyssteen is propagating can be called transversal rationality+, referring to the point where one line crosses other lines as a metaphor to describe how different discourses, modes of thought and action+intersects with each other (Stone 2000:418). So, it breaks away from the postmodern relativism that would rather say that these different modes do not intersect at all, or the modern type of rationality that would rather say that there is just one valid mode to which all other reasoning strategies should conform. The idea of talking about transversal rationality was used by Schrag, but taken over by Van Huyssteen (Stone 2000:418). Like Schrag, Van Huyssteen sees a person not as a pure epistemological point but as situated in a space of communicative praxis+(Stone 2000:419). This reminds strongly of Bidwell (2004:62) who points out that in social constructionism there is a conviction that knowledge of self and world emerges as people construct, share and correlate experiences through participation in discourse.+ For Van Huyssteen a person's experience is always interpreted experience, but it is about something and this something, although only provisionally conceptualised, actually exists (Stone 2000:421). This interpreted experience can be called tradition and we are part of it as well as able to be critical of it (Van Huyssteen in Stone 2000:422). The interdisciplinary conversation helps us to have perspective on our own discipline's tradition.

Van Huyssteen is critical of theologies that seem to isolate itself from other disciplines

and which basic assumptions leads to relativism such as narrative theologies as propagated by Hans Frei, George Lindbeck and Stanley Hauerwas (Stone 2000:422). The problem for Van Huyssteen is that this leads to theologies that have no impact outside the theological sphere and he believes that theology should have a constructive and critical engagement with other resources of rationality (Stone 2000:422). Van Huyssteen is convinced that there is an ~~interdisciplinary location~~ for theology where it can be an equal partner with other disciplines while having a democratic voice (Stone 2000:423). Stone (2000:423) interprets Van Huyssteen as saying that both theology and science should realise that the statements they are making are hypothetical, but at the same time serious.

In Stone's (2000:423) opinion Van Huyssteen has successfully created a space for communication as he is a religious naturalist who finds himself largely in agreement with Van Huyssteen who is a theist. Between Stone and Van Huyssteen an interdisciplinary discussion is actually taking place due to the postfoundational approach of Van Huyssteen.

Even though Van Huyssteen has a faith commitment of being a theist he believes that one should always maintain a self-critical attitude. For Van Huyssteen (1997:4) it is important that we are aware of the role that interpreted experience, tradition and our contextuality plays when we think about God. This agrees with social constructionism, because the concept of interpreted experiences means that our understanding is received and was not made up by ourselves (Müller 2005:80). It is through culture, cultural experiences and tradition that we interpret our reality, in other words also God.

Schrag (in Müller 2009:204) states that because of the limitedness of our understanding and the communication of meaning we do not have access to an ultimate correct interpretation. According to Demasure and Müller (2006:417) postfoundationalist theology is always local and contextual, but it also reaches further than this to interdisciplinary concerns. The keywords in this interdisciplinary conversation are ~~persuasive rhetoric~~ and ~~responsible judgments~~, with which it is possible to come to

intersubjective agreements (Van Huyssteen 2006b:24). These intersubjective agreements are the end results of a successful interdisciplinary conversation.

To come to intersubjective agreements it is important to acknowledge that our embeddedness in culture and tradition is unavoidable (Van Huyssteen 2006b:25). Van Huyssteen (2006b:25) sees this not as a prison in which you are a captive forever, but it is only a place from where you start.

Any tradition, although fluid, does have certain core concepts that stay the same over time (Van Huyssteen 2006b:25). According to Van Huyssteen (2006b:26) our belief in God should be seen as flexible because it is part of tradition and culture and it should be critically evaluated and be reconstructed in conversation with other disciplines. Even though the impression I get from Van Huyssteen is that he puts everything on the interdisciplinary table and in this sense even his faith depends on the outcome of this conversation, he does realise that there are limitations. Van Huyssteen (2008:520) believes that science should refrain from giving conclusive ultimate answers to questions such as whether God exists or not, if there is sense in religion or not and as to why people are religious or not, because scientific answers to this are normally based on reductionist arguments. So, even though Van Huyssteen argues for flexibility in our thoughts about God he does seem to realise that there are some things that are not on the interdisciplinary table and which cannot be established through interdisciplinary conversation. For the same reason that science cannot determine whether God exists or not, it cannot determine whether Jesus is Christ or not. Theology's basic assumption is that the unseen God does exist, but Van Huyssteen is convinced that theology is still able to enter into a conversation with empirical science which is based and limited to the visible.

When theology is entering in such conversations it is important that theology should not be seen as somehow less valid as the other reasoning strategies, but should also influence other disciplines to critical evaluation. For Van Huyssteen (in Müller 2009:206) it is through the postfoundational approach that we come to a democratic



presence+in an interdisciplinary conversation. Müller (2009:206) also states that the idea for theology, in this approach, is to act as an equal partner+in the interdisciplinary conversation in the post-modern context of today.

In this view, the view of the postfoundationalist position with its notion of transversal rationality, the answer to keep away from the problem of relativism on the one hand and of foundationalism on the other, is sought within the interdisciplinary conversation. The idea is that you are, through this, no longer totally caught up in your culture or your context (Müller 2009:206). Theology must share the standards of rationality that is socially and contextually shaped+(Müller 2009:206). In doing this, different disciplines can speak the same language and mutually enrich each other.

The postfoundationalist approach moves away from individual to social+and from subjective towards discourse+(Müller 2009:205). Postfoundationalism takes it seriously that meaning is socially constructed and this construction always takes place within a certain context which especially consists of the social and cultural traditions within which people are immersed (Müller 2009:205). Müller (2009:205) emphasises that experience is situated and is always interpreted+. According to Müller (2009:206) in the interdisciplinary conversation the hope is that we are no longer hopelessly culture and context bound+(Van Huyssteen in Müller 2009:206). We are freed from this because we can explore critically the theories, meanings, and beliefs through which we and others construct our world+(Müller 2009:206).

Stone (2000:424) says that Van Huyssteen pointed out that the difference between science and theology lies on the level of world view and not scientific theories. The challenge then is that the differing epistemic focus and explanatory status of science and theology need to be clarified so that they will fit together without contradiction+(Stone 2000:424). This is how Van Huyssteen aims to create a situation where theology and science works together in harmony as is implied by the title of his book *Duet or Duel?* (Van Huyssteen 1998).

Van Huyssteen entered into an interdisciplinary conversation with different scientific disciplines and so illustrated what his postfoundationalist theory entails. By doing this he showed that this type of conversation can be done and that it is productive and insightful. The focus was on the question of human uniqueness and he especially made use of the evolution theory. He points out that evolution can help to explain why we have reflexes to avoid falling rocks from injuring us, but not why humans have the ability to use mathematics in order to understand the laws that govern how these rocks fall (Stone 2000:424). In pointing this out he asserts that at this level theology has a non-competing relationship with science.

According to Van Huyssteen (2000:427) his work developed from the debate between science and theology into something much more, namely the nature and status of interdisciplinary reflection and how theology might or might not fit into this multi-disciplinary venture. Specifically, Van Huyssteen's (2000:428) research at the time he wrote the article focused on evolution, knowledge and faith. Van Huyssteen (2000:428) found that theological thought is conditioned by your social, cultural and historical context, but importantly adds that it is also determined by the biological roots of human rationality+(Van Huyssteen 2000:428). Van Huyssteen (2000:428) states that he had proposed in *Duet or Dual?* (1998) that the evolutionary epistemology can potentially open the possibility that a postfoundational concept of rationality can emerge that could assist in transcending the traditional boundaries of different disciplines. Thinking about what human rationality is, Van Huyssteen (2000:428, 429) points out a few things that are important from his perspective. Our reflections are rooted in human culture. The interdisciplinary notion of rationality takes seriously the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience or experiential understanding+(Van Huyssteen 2000:428). This kind of rationality allows that we can critically explore our faith commitments. Further, this notion of rationality sees rationality itself as a skill with which a human being can bind together the patterns of interpreted experience through rhetoric, articulation, and discernment+(Van Huyssteen 2000:429).

Van Huyssteen (2000:429) sees the concept of transversality as a replacement for the

concept of universality of the modernistic era. The human mind has the skill or remarkable ability to move between domains of intelligence with a high degree of cognitive fluidity+(Van Huyssteen 2000:429). This ability makes the postfoundationalist rationality a possibility. Different disciplines do not have to contradict each other on the one hand, or merge with each other on the other hand, when having interaction (Van Huyssteen 2000:429). Pointing out how the concept of transversality is used in different disciplines like mathematics, physiology, philosophy and pastoral care, Van Huyssteen (2000:429) concludes that this metaphor points to a sense of lying across, extending over, intersecting, meeting, and conveying without becoming identical.+ Transversality can be seen as a philosophical window+(Van Huyssteen 2000:429).

Transversality strives to integrate all our ways of knowing without totalizing them in any modernist sense+(Van Huyssteen 2000:430). In this notion of rationality there is a concern for different conversational partners to come together and thus a special interest arises for wholeness+(Van Huyssteen 2000:430). Transversality is sensitive to the fact that there are multiple patterns of interpretation+(Van Huyssteen 2000:430). Referring to theology, Van Huyssteen (2000:430) believes that the key to have a postfoundationalist rationality is to achieve intersubjective agreements+, via persuasive rhetoric and responsible judgements+.

As stated before, Van Huyssteen (2000:430) experimented with this type of multilayered conversations+between theology, philosophy and the sciences and found that there were actually strong links+between the diverse disciplines or as he also calls it different knowledge systems+or reasoning strategies+. These strong links can be called shared resources of human rationality+. We think through experiential understanding+and our thoughts are furthermore shaped by tradition, but at the same time humans are able to be critical of this (Van Huyssteen 2000:430).

Being inside a particular tradition it can be very difficult to look at it critically and therefore the answer as to how you can do this, is found in the interdisciplinary conversation. Van Huyssteen (2000:431) says that it is true that one tradition cannot be

judged to be better than another through using an objective standard by which they are all judged, however humans do have %ational judgements+. In order for the emergence of a postfoundationalist rationality there has to be an %ngoing process of collective assessment+(Van Huyssteen 2000:431) done by people who are capable of these %ational judgements+. In this dialogue with other disciplines we are both trying to be convincing and to be learning (Van Huyssteen 2000:431). The conversational space created via the postfoundationalist way of thinking is not to create a situation where everyone believes the same thing, but so that there will be communication across the boundaries of disciplines and so that there will be critical thoughts about your own discipline while standing in it (Van Huyssteen 2000:431). Van Huyssteen (2000:431) asserts that it is discovered in this type of conversations that one discipline or reasoning strategy cannot contain human rationality in its fullness.

Furthermore, Van Huyssteen (2000:431) sees it as a fact that %human rationality itself only exists in being operative between our different modes of knowledge and in linking together the different domains of our lives as well as different disciplines and different reasoning strategies.+ Van Huyssteen (2000:431) points out that theological rationality often forgets that it is situated in and influenced by the scientific epistemologies with which it coexists. There are two important challenges for theology when engaging with other disciplines and that is to avoid sectarianism on the one hand as this will obviously mean the end of the conversation, but on the other hand the difficulty is to have interaction with scientific rationality which is many times seen as superior to theology (Van Huyssteen 2000:432). A great influence that has complicated as well as shaped the nature of the debate of how science and theology relate was the emergence of the postmodern culture which has affected theology, science and philosophy significantly (Van Huyssteen 2000:432). In this postmodern culture some philosophers of science have one-sidedly emphasised that there must be a %rust in local scientific practice+(Van Huyssteen 2000:432). This is in reaction to the positivistic way of thinking, but it also leads to an end to the possibility of a meaningful relationship between theology and science (Van Huyssteen 2000:432).

For Van Huyssteen (2000:433) a human's ability to be able to move between widely diverse intellectual domains holds the promise that interdisciplinary communication is possible. The ability of our minds lies on a biological level and the practice of interdisciplinary interaction lies on a cultural level (Van Huyssteen 2000:433). Therefore theological reflection is greatly influenced by the way in which our minds work as well as the broader social, historical and cultural context in which we do our thinking (Van Huyssteen 2000:433). To understand the phenomenon of knowledge, that is that we as humans have a certain kind of knowledge, it is important for Van Huyssteen (2000:434) to note that this is shaped by the structure of our minds which was produced (in his opinion) through biological evolution. He is convinced that Darwin and neo-Darwinism is correct in asserting that our religious beliefs are related to the process of evolution, but holds that this does not fully explain the theistic belief in God (Van Huyssteen 2000:434).

Van Huyssteen's (2000:434) hope is that through the interdisciplinary process a rationality will emerge which is guided by interdisciplinary standards which are shaped by its context, but which are not hopelessly culture and context bound. It seems that this interdisciplinary interaction should somehow set us free from, and give us perspective on our contexts and this helps to avoid the extremes of relativism and objectivism. Van Huyssteen seems to be saying that we are not hopelessly culture and context bound when different reasoning strategies from a variety of cultures and contexts engage with each other in a transversal way.

Christian theology can share in the same standards of rationality and in so doing it can have a democratic voice in the interdisciplinary dialogue (Van Huyssteen 2000:434). Different reasoning strategies and epistemologies can all be seen as theories about the world and ourselves and these theories are intersecting each other on numerous points (Van Huyssteen 2000:434). Out of these overlaps the possibility for the public voice of Christian theology arises (Van Huyssteen 2000:434).

In this interdisciplinary space Van Huyssteen (2000:434, 435) believes that we will find

Overlapping epistemological patterns and shared concerns. As people standing in the theological discipline, we have faith commitments, but at the same time we are hopeful to find patterns in other disciplines that are in line with our worldview or which is complimentary to it (Van Huyssteen 2000:435). If we do not open ourselves up to interdisciplinary interaction our experiences and explanations will never be challenged (Van Huyssteen 2000:435).

Van Huyssteen (2000:436) asserts that theology should be aware of its deeply interdisciplinary nature and status and of the epistemological obligations that should go with this status. Being in an interdisciplinary space can be seen as raising the standards with which we are doing theology. Instead of just doing theology in conversation with others, who already share our epistemological strategy, we are now challenged to be in conversation with scholars who have totally different perspectives which confronts us, but at the same time enriches us. To not be in this type of conversation can cut theology off from the shared resources of human rationality in other reasoning strategies.

As stated before, the postmodern era has raised some important challenges to both theology and science (Van Huyssteen 2000:436). Out of these challenges some epistemological issues came to the surface (Van Huyssteen 2000:436). Van Huyssteen (2000:436) believes that there should be a constructive appropriation of some of these issues. When this constructive appropriation takes place the sharp boundaries between different disciplines will be less rigid and the hope is that it will be discovered that both theology and the sciences are sharing in the rich resources of human rationality (Van Huyssteen 2000:436).

Out of this interaction an understanding arises, which is called by Van Huyssteen (2000:436) and other scholars, a wide reflective equilibrium or even optimal understanding. This wide reflective equilibrium is what is hoped to be achieved through interdisciplinary interaction and this is seen as a continuous process rather than a final conclusion that will be reached through our combined efforts (Van Huyssteen

2000:436). Within this wide reflective equilibrium a %fragile public space+is created within which there is a to and fro movement between our deep personal commitments and the values that are the result of our responsible interpersonal judgements (Van Huyssteen 2000:436). In the interdisciplinary dialogue the hope is to arrive at the most %coherent and most consistent sets of beliefs+between theology and the sciences (Van Huyssteen 2000:436).

Van Huyssteen (2000:437) points out that it should be avoided that %one tradition of responsible judgments, or practices, or principles+are seen as foundational in shaping this reflective equilibrium. In discussions everyone has strong personal convictions, but if the interdisciplinary conversation should lead to it, you have to be willing to make adjustments to it (Van Huyssteen 2000:437). Van Huyssteen (2000:437) asserts that there should be a %dissensus tolerance+as Nicholas Rescher called it, and that out of this pluralism between different disciplines there is a %creative enhancement rather than impoverishment of our intellectual culture+. Van Huyssteen (2000:437,438) states that the point is not to reach truth devoid of its culture and context:

%even if we lack universal rules for rationality and even if we can never judge the reasonableness of statements and beliefs in isolation from their cultural or disciplinary contexts, we can still meaningfully engage in cross-contextual evaluation and conversation and give the best available cognitive, evaluative, or pragmatic reasons for the responsible choices we hope to make.+

In this interdisciplinary space there is a continuous assessment that leads to insight into how we are rooted in our different contexts and cultures (Van Huyssteen 2000:438). Through interaction with other disciplines you can gain insight into your own disciplines roots, which would probably not be accessible without this interaction. Van Huyssteen (2000:438) argues for an interdisciplinary interaction which is constituted by a %fragile epistemic equilibrium+. This is possible where there is no longer the restricting view that rationality is defined by the natural sciences (Van Huyssteen: 2000:438). When rationality is shaped in this way Van Huyssteen (2000:438) uses descriptive words and phrases such as: %accountability+, %optimal understanding+, %responsible judgements+,

%discernment+and %progressive problem-solving process+

Van Huyssteen (2000:438) is aware of possible criticism to the inclusion of philosophy, religion and ethics into the sphere of science, but asserts that this should not be seen as the equivalent of accepting prejudice, superstition and irrationality. This is prevented from happening through responsible judgements in the interdisciplinary conversation and to suppress this would itself be irrational (Van Huyssteen 2000:438).

This whole interdisciplinary endeavour is a search for the values which constitutes a wider rationality that includes both theology and the sciences and which is based on cognitive, evaluative and pragmatic resources (Van Huyssteen 2000:438). Van Huyssteen (2000:439) observes that rationality is about having %good reasons+for what we are doing, thinking, decisions we are making and for the convictions that we are having. The search for intelligibility and meaning in theology and science is connected to and rooted in tradition and for this reason a strictly cognitive rationality is not sufficient (Van Huyssteen 2000:439). From the theological part of the dialogue this broader rationality means that our suppositions and faith commitments are relevant in communicating with the sciences (Van Huyssteen 2000:439).

At the heart of Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalist approach is that it focuses on the contextuality of knowledge, but also strives to move further to an interdisciplinary level. Stone (2000:418) points out that postfoundationalist rationality is emphasising contextuality, tradition and interpreted experience, but at the same time strives to have cross-contextual and interdisciplinary conversations. This corresponds with Demasure and Müller (2006:417) when stating that postfoundationalist theology is always local and contextual, but that it also reaches further than this to interdisciplinary concerns.

Different disciplines might come from radically different places, but that does not mean that there are not important and meaningful points of intersection between them. The transversal approach acknowledges this while at the same time emphasising that there should not be unrealistic integration of different reasoning strategies. Transversality



does not mean everyone agrees about everything, but rather that differences should be managed with care and that the focus in the conversation should mainly be on where worldviews overlap (cf Van Huyssteen 2000:436). The idea of transversality implies that there is a respect for disciplinary integrity (Van Huyssteen 2005:105).

The concept of transversality is based on the conviction that different reasoning strategies are related to each other, even if there are real differences. The point at which it is related and where there is transversal intersection can be described as shared resources, but also ~~shared~~ shared conceptual problems+ (Van Huyssteen 2005:105). Concerning different types of knowledge Schrag (1992:99) states: ~~The~~ The validity of the one cannot be judged by the criteria operative in the other.+ This is necessary to remember, but although two disciplines might be playing by a different set of rules, it can be discovered that when there is a shared conceptual problem, for instance the question concerning human uniqueness, this might point towards the possibility for transversal interdisciplinary interaction.

Wildman (2008:476) describes Van Huyssteen's transversal approach as a method to organize the interdisciplinary conversation which is maintaining the autonomy of the different disciplines, but which strives to cut across the boundaries with the result that new understandings arise. According to Wildman (2008:476), Van Huyssteen's optimism that different disciplines can intersect in meaningful ways is ~~because~~ because the basic resources for any rational activity derive from our character as human beings in the world+. According to Wildman (2008:476) one gets a view in Van Huyssteen's book of ~~a~~ gradual conversational construction of a sophisticated interpretation of human uniqueness.+ Even though there is not an interest into the question of human uniqueness in this research, what is of interest here is Wildman's description of the transversal interdisciplinary conversation: ~~a~~ gradual conversational construction+. In other words: a social construction.

As stated before the keywords in this interdisciplinary conversation are ~~persuasive~~ persuasive rhetoric+and ~~responsible~~ responsible judgments+, with which it is possible to come to intersubjective

agreements (Van Huyssteen 2006b:24). The kind of intersubjective agreements Van Huyssteen has in mind are agreements reached by means of different disciplines which communicate with each other while recognising one another as equal partners. Van Huyssteen (2005:108) emphasises the concept of a democratic presence further by saying that in the interdisciplinary conversation one discipline cannot set the agenda, provide the data, paradigm or worldview which theology simply must accept and respect. King (2008:452) pointed out that Van Huyssteen's aim is to have a non-competitive relationship with the sciences: a duet rather than a duel.

In order for the emergence of a postfoundationalist rationality there has to be an ongoing process of collective assessment+and although we do not have an objective way to assess, we do have rational judgements+(Van Huyssteen 2000:431). Van Huyssteen (2000:431) asserts that it is discovered in this type of conversations that one discipline or reasoning strategy cannot contain human rationality in its fullness. This corresponds with Philip Clayton (in Van Huyssteen 2006a:650) who pointed out that the interdisciplinary approach is very important and valuable as one perspective on its own, cannot adequately describe and understand specific phenomena, not even if it is only on the physical and biological level. This is similar to Stephen J Kline (in Van Huyssteen 2006a:650) who pointed out that the basic structure of the phenomenal world is multileveled+.

The end result of the conversational construction, namely a wide reflective equilibrium, seems to be something very preliminary. In discussions everyone has strong personal convictions, but if the interdisciplinary conversation should lead to it, you have to be willing to make adjustments to your beliefs (Van Huyssteen 2000:437). This is why your commitments are only a starting place and not the destination. The interdisciplinary conversation can be very challenging and this can cause many people to withdraw from it prematurely, or to avoid it altogether, but as was already mentioned, Kline (in Van Huyssteen 2006a:650) pointed out that the phenomenal world is multileveled with the result that one discipline on its own cannot adequately describe or understand it. There is a lot of potential in this type of interaction, but it is not easy because there is a

tendency to see your own discipline as the norm or it could happen that you unthinkingly integrate some insight from another reasoning strategy that does not actually fit with yours. Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalist approach is a careful approach which is striving to avoid both mistakes.

Van Huyssteen (2000:437) believes that the interdisciplinary interaction can lead to a creative enhancement rather than impoverishment of our intellectual culture. Van Huyssteen (2000:437) states that we do not seek truth devoid of culture, but we aim to meaningfully engage in cross-contextual evaluation and conversation and give the best available cognitive, evaluative, or pragmatic reasons for the responsible choices we hope to make. So, even if the reflective equilibrium is only pointing towards the best practical approach or understanding to a certain aspect of reality, the process is still worthwhile. In this interdisciplinary space there is a continuous assessment that leads to insight into how we are rooted in our different contexts and cultures (Van Huyssteen 2000:438). Through dialogue with other disciplines one can gain insight into one's own discipline's roots, which would normally not be accessible without this interaction.

Van Huyssteen (2008:513) points out that we need to accept that although there are possibilities within this strategy, there are also limitations. Part of accepting limitations is to refrain from making universal a-contextual truth claims. In the postfoundationalist approach, Van Huyssteen (in Howell 2008:494) believes that specific scientists should be engaged with specific theologians concerning a specific topic. Van Huyssteen (2008:522) believes that being specific, and therefore considering the context appropriately, can prevent the interdisciplinary dialogue from becoming too abstract and that it makes it more meaningful. Van Huyssteen (2008:523) states that he sees the interdisciplinary conversation as a way to become aware of uncritical assumptions. This type of interaction can expand and transform thoughts (King 2008:454).

The reason why interdisciplinary interaction is possible is due to humans' cognitive fluidity and this is seen by Van Huyssteen (2008:513) as a practical skill with which humans can engage with each other across the boundaries of disciplines where there is

transversal connections. Our embodied minds are able to move between different domains of knowledge.

An important aspect of the transversal approach is that it is not overly ambitious, in the sense that, although this approach is confident that the interdisciplinary process can be mutually enriching, it is also a cautious approach where there is an acceptance of the limitations of what can be accomplished. Van Huyssteen (2008:513) agrees that different disciplines have different strategies, questions and focuses and that there therefore are different possibilities and limitations. It is not possible to transfer certain core theological assumptions uncritically to the natural sciences for instance (Van Huyssteen 2008:513). In spite of the differences between them, they can have interaction and Van Huyssteen (2008:513) believes that it can be productive if it is guided by the notions of postfoundationalism where the integrity of each discipline is kept intact and where there is recognition of the limitations of what can be accomplished.

#### - **Evaluation of Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalist approach**

The transversal interdisciplinary approach proposed by Van Huyssteen is important, insightful and enriching to both science and theology. On many occasions neither theology nor science are eager to embrace this. Theology sometimes has an attitude of ~~theological imperialism~~ and science an attitude of ~~parochial arrogance~~ (cf Van Huyssteen 2008:516). Through the postfoundationalist interdisciplinary approach these mistakes can be corrected and both reasoning strategies can profit from this type of interaction.

One of the most important reasons to me, why Van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach is valuable is because it is true that one discipline cannot really fully contain reality. Van Huyssteen (2000:431) asserts that it is discovered in this type of conversation that one discipline or reasoning strategy cannot contain human rationality in its fullness. This corresponds with Clayton (in Van Huyssteen 2006a:650) who pointed out that one discipline on its own, cannot adequately describe and understand

specific phenomena, not even if it is only on the physical and biological level. In the same way Kline, in the words of Van Huyssteen (2006a:650) pointed out that the basic structure of the phenomenal world is multileveled.

Van Huyssteen's goal is to strive toward an interdisciplinary rationality based on a pragmatic transversal approach. Many times the interdisciplinary approach is an uneasy balancing act, but with Van Huyssteen's guidelines this can become an enriching process for all disciplines when guided by the notions of postfoundationalism.

Van Huyssteen (2000:431) points out that theological rationality often forgets that it is situated in and influenced by the scientific epistemologies with which it coexists. This is the reality within which theology exists and it is better to mindfully and carefully engage with other disciplines than it is to be unconsciously influenced by them. Van Huyssteen provides an important framework with which this can be accomplished. As Van Huyssteen (2000:437) asserts, in spite of real differences, through this approach there can be a creative enhancement rather than impoverishment of our intellectual culture. The aim is that it will be the case in this research. How this will be done will be discussed under methodological considerations later on in this chapter.

However there are some who have criticism on Van Huyssteen's implementation of his approach. Wildman (2008:478) for example sees transversality as a method which emphasises the independence of each discipline, which focuses on shared insights, but which neglect the challenge to consider the plausibility of a certain position. Wildman (2008:478) understands transversality further to mean that the conversational partners withdraw after the connection that was made is completed, which leads to a skewed situation where there is always a preference for confirming connections rather than disconfirming ones. Wildman (2008:487) says: Van Huyssteen's method allows him to cut the dialogue short when things get tough for theology, switching to defending possibility rather than arguing for plausibility.

For this reason Wildman (2008:489) calls the method %more artistic than philosophically rigorous+. The reality is that there are radical differences between disciplines, though, and that Van Huyssteen provides an important framework according to which disciplines that would normally exclude and ignore each other, can now mutually contribute to each other. The transversal approach is a pragmatic one (Van Huyssteen 2008:520). There is a tolerance for disagreement and a realisation of the limitations to the disciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 2008:520). To me it seems that the transversal approach is more likely to be productive than the almost confrontational style that Wildman would propose. Van Huyssteen is more realistic about the real differences between different reasoning strategies. Van Huyssteen (2008:436) proposes that their differences should rather be managed with care and that their focus should mainly be on where their worldviews overlap.

In the beginning it was said that Van Huyssteen (1997:2) asked the question whether Christian theology can join the post-modern conversation and still maintain its identity. His answer was that it can and with his transversal interdisciplinary approach he provided an important framework as a guideline as to how it can be done. His framework avoids both postmodern relativism and foundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1997:3).

### **3.3.3 Missiological considerations**

Mission is not an invention of Constantine or colonial imperialists. Mission is part of what makes church truly church. König (2006:376) asserts that the purpose of the church in this era before Jesus's second coming is to do mission. We will be able to do all other things better after this life, but mission is an activity which is only possible to participate in here on earth (König 2006:376). It is what church is because it is part of who God is. With the concept of *Missio Dei*, David Bosch (in Niemandt 2007:147) has emphasised that God is not only busy with and involved in mission, but that mission is part of the essence of who God is. Niemandt (2007:147) points out how mission is connected to the trinity: The Father sends the Son and the Son sends the Holy Spirit and links this with John 3:16, 17. Keifert (in Niemandt 2007:148) said: %The very life of

God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a process of mission: a Father sends a Son, a Son who sends a Spirit. In this very likeness of God, we are called, gathered, centered, and sent within the life of the triune God and God's mission, an infinite journey of being called and sent.+ Guder (in Niemandt 2007:147) says: "mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God.+"

God is love and therefore mission has to do with healing. Wood (in Niemandt 2007:147) said: "Mission is the result of God's initiative rooted in God's purpose to restore and heal his creation.+ The church is called as an instrument which participates in the *Missio Dei* (Niemandt 2007:148). Allen (in Niemandt 2007:155) says: "Missionary zeal does not grow out of intellectual beliefs, nor out of theological arguments, but out of love. If I do not love a person I am not moved to help him by proofs that he is in need; if I do love him, I wait for no proof of a special need to urge me to help him.+ Mission is not only done because of the love we have for others, but this love originates and is a reaction to the merciful love that God has shown to us (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:1). Due to the fact that mission is done in reaction to the grace that God has shown to us in Christ we do not do it with a condescending attitude. Haak (2009:292) states: "We are fellow sinners with the unbeliever, but we have also experienced God's grace.+"

This research is done on the mission field, so although it is done within the practical theological department, it is important to pay attention to a few missiological issues. There is an overlap, maybe even a transversal connection between these two disciplines because as Gerkin (in Van der Westhuizen 2010) states, practical theology is not only concerned about the ministry of the church to itself, but that it also has to do with the church's involvement with the world. This is exactly what mission is all about: the church's involvement with the world.

In spite of the perspective that mission is part of who God is and that it is participating in God's involvement with the world, there is a stigma to the word "mission"+mainly due to the way in which people in the past did it. In the name of doing mission many people

did a lot of wrong things for a lot of wrong reasons. This section of theological reflection will mainly be based on two books. Firstly the book of Kverndal, who is a specialist on seafarers' mission and secondly on the work of Bosch, whose book made a very important contribution to missiology. The aim is to come to a responsible understanding of what mission is and what it should entail.

Kverndal (2008:228) mentions three objections that some have made against mission work among seafarers. There are those who say it is impossible to do it because of the many different religions represented on the ships. In reaction to this Kverndal (2008:228) argues that the first Christians we read about in Acts were even more surrounded by other religions, but still persisted and succeeded. The second objection is that it is immoral to do mission work. Kverndal (2008:228) argues that it is important to remember that in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights it is stated that each person has the right to propagate and express his or her religious beliefs. The third objection is that mission work is immaterial, but Kverndal (2008:229) argues that Christ's gospel has a vertical and horizontal dimension and that it is wrong to overemphasise the one above the other. Both are necessary, because as we read in Matthew 25:31-46 the way we relate to humans is in fact the way we relate to God, and in Matthew 16:26 we read that the vertical dimension is also important as Jesus asserts that it does not help if you win the world, but you lose your soul (Kverndal 2008:228).

According to Kverndal (2008:230) there are three important questions to be considered concerning mission work and he answers it with reference to Matthew 28:18-20. The first question is: 'From whom does the missionary mandate originate?' (Kverndal 2008:230). In answering this question Kverndal (2008:230) refers to David Bosch who pointed out that it is not the church's mission but the Mission of God or *Missio Dei* and that mission originated in the heart of God. Spreading the love of God is what mission work is all about (Kverndal 2008:230).

The second question is: 'Whom does the missionary mandate address?' (Kverndal 2008:230). It is the disciples who are addressed and as Bosch (in Kverndal 2008:230)



points out they are prototypes for the church.+ Disciples are witnesses of Christ who recognise Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and who are empowered by the Holy Spirit (Kverndal 2008:230,231).

The third question is: What purpose does the missionary mandate seek?+ (Kverndal 2008:231). The answer in Matthew 28:18 is that it is to make disciples (Kverndal 2008:231). Kverndal (2008:231) says that it should not be in a coercive manner, but like Jesus says in John 12:32 it is about attracting people to Him.

Kverndal (2008:232) follows Bosch by calling the characteristics of mission dimensions+and not objectives+. The first dimension he points out is the Evangelistic Dimension+(Kverndal 2008:232). To illustrate how important it is Kverndal (2008:232) quotes Bosch: If you cut the heart out of a body, that body becomes a corpse. With evangelism cut out mission dies; it ceases to be mission.+ Evangelism comes from the Greek verb that means to announce good news and therefore mission is in the New Testament about the proclamation and the spreading of the gospel (Kverndal 2008:232). When the good news is proclaimed there is also the hope that that message will be accepted. Haak (2009:37) states that if mission is mission in the true sense of the word then the focus should be on the conversion of people. Even though this can mean different things depending on your theological perspective (Kritzinger et al 1994:26-30) here it simply refers to the acceptance of the good news that is proclaimed.

Evangelisation can be done through word and deed, but because of its nature it is not really possible to do it completely without words (Kverndal 2008:233). The content of the words is about the reality that Jesus gave his life for our sins (Kverndal 2008:233). Kverndal (2008:234) points out that the purpose of saying these words is in the first place to be a witness. It is important to verbalise your witness because like Bosch (in Kverndal 2008:234) points out: Our lives are not sufficiently transparent ò we must name the Name of him in whom we believe+.

When discussing this dimension of mission, namely evangelism, a very important issue to consider is the question of how one relates to and views other religions. This is especially important in the context of seafarers' mission where people of many different religions are ministered to. In the discipline of Theology of Religion there is normally three different positions on how to relate to different faiths (Kverndal 2008:234). The first is pluralism and this position states that no religion has a monopoly on divine revelation or absolute truth claims by any religion (Kverndal 2008:234). The second is the inclusivists position that argues that Christianity is the culmination of all religions, but that other religions also contain enough revelation for salvation (Kverndal 2008:234). The pluralists believe that mission work is immoral and the inclusivists believe mission work is unnecessary (Kverndal 2008:234). The third is the exclusivist position that excludes any source of salvation other than the gospel of Christ as uniquely revealed in the Holy Bible (Kverndal 2008:234). I subscribe to this third position.

Kverndal (2008:235) points out that there is another possibility and that is to hold an inclusive-exclusivist position. This position is one he approves of and it leads to an attitude of seeking out the common humanity that all people share while striving to witness about the gospel of Jesus (Kverndal 2008:235). People who hold this position believe that the love of God is unconditional, but that salvation is conditional (Kverndal 2008:235). Kverndal (2008:235) states that he believes that someone can be lost, but he points to a position where those who believe leave the ultimate judgement over others up to God. This position can be compared to that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:12 where he said that it is up to God to judge those outside the church and that it is not his duty to do that. Kverndal (2008:235) quotes Bill Down: "Be humble: It is arrogant and false to believe there is no truth and nothing of value in other faiths. And be loyal: Never think that you must water down your Christian commitment". This is in line with what Van Huyssteen (1997:4) is saying about staying true to your personal faith commitments while having an interdisciplinary dialogue where you really listen to other disciplines. Here it is only applied to different religions.

Broadly I agree with the inclusive-exclusivist position as it is humble in the sense that it does not look down on other faiths, but it also stays true to the message of Jesus as the only way to God (John 14:6). It honours the idea which is clear in many passages of the Bible that there is judgment over sin, but at the same time it is not judgmental towards sinners and other religions. This position is not really different than the simply exclusivist position, but as I understand Kverndal he is pointing out that he is not in agreement with a missionary approach where people are in a sense coerced into faith as some exclusivist are prone to do.

The more exclusivist perspective has also been expressed by Hendrik Kraemer (in De Beer 1996:55). According to him, following Barth's dialectical way of thinking, all religions are under the judgement of God's revelation in Christ. This includes the empirical Christendom. According to Arairajah (in De Beer 1996:56) this kind of thinking had a great impact on the way that especially Protestants viewed their relationship with other religions and therefore the way the evangelistic dimension of mission has been practiced.

The second dimension that Kverndal (2008:235) points out is the diaconal. Kalliala (in Kverndal 2008:237) states that diaconal work is more than the social work of the church as it is "a special way of being church". For Kverndal (2008:237) it is important that the Word must not only be heard, but also be seen. To illustrate his point he refers to John 1:46 where the disciple Philip tells Nathaniel to come and see Jesus for himself. To illustrate the good balance between evangelism and the diaconal dimension with the early pioneers of seafarers' mission Kverndal (2008:238) says: "They intended no narrow spiritualization of the faith, no downgrading of the life *before* death". He (Kverndal 2008:238) also quotes one of the converts of the Bethel era to show how the evangelism and the diaconal dimensions went hand in hand: "We sailors don't have soul-less bodies . but neither do we have body-less souls!"

The third dimension is the prophetic dimension and this dimension is about the church's action against the injustices committed against seafarers (Kverndal 2008:239).

According to Kverndal (2008:239) seafarers are exposed to difficulties that can be prevented if the system that produces them can be changed (Kverndal 2008:239). Humans are made in the image of God and therefore to treat seafarers only as a means to an end, as some owners do, is dishonouring God (Kverndal 2008:240). Therefore part of mission work is to be actively involved in eradicating injustices.

The fourth dimension is the cultural and that refers to contextualization which is the process by which the authentic message and ministry of the Christian faith can become relevant (inculturated) in the lives of people living in another culture (Kverndal 2008:244). Van Huyssteen (1997:4) pointed out that interpreted experience, tradition and our contextuality plays a crucial role when we think about God. When you want to communicate the gospel to people from a different culture you have to be aware of this. If we take the cultural dimension of mission work seriously it is important to take note of the whole seafarer-centred strategy of Paul Mooney, because as Kverndal (2008:244) argues, the best way to contextualize the gospel is if seafarers are seen as the primary agents of mission among seafarers.

The fifth dimension is the communal and this is referring to cooperation between Christians in the context of mission (Kverndal 2008:245). Jesus makes the link between ecumenism and evangelism in John 17:21 where the oneness of believers is linked to the conversion of the world (Kverndal 2008:245). The North American Maritime Ministry Association states in their 1990 Statement of Mission: Agreement in essentials, freedom in non-essentials, love in everything! (Kverndal 2008:245). In acting as one body of Christ the church has a powerful witness and this should be cultivated between different organizations and, as Kverndal (2008:248) observes, between Christian seafarers on board.

The sixth dimension of mission is the eschatological and refers to the time when this universe will come to an end and when Jesus will return and judge over everyone (Kverndal 2008:249). Kverndal (2008:250,251) describes the time we are living in as the in-between era where Christ has put mission in the centre of the agenda of the

church.

If it is at the centre of the church's agenda in this in-between time, it is important to go into even more detail about what mission is. Up till now Kverndal was mainly used to give a clearer picture of what mission work entails and with what attitude it should be done and now, for a large part of this chapter, I will lean mainly on the insights of what Bosch shared in his book.

According to Bosch (1991: XV) mission is ~~the~~ what dimension of our faith that refuses to accept reality as it is and aims at changing it+. That is also the reason for the name of his book: *Transforming Mission*. For him the core of Christian mission is to be into transformation (Bosch 1991: XV).

Bosch (1991:2-3) notes that the church and the mission of the church is in crisis, but argues that it should be if it is true to its nature, especially if it is kept in mind how much opposition Jesus had to face. As it was for Jesus, so will it be for the church. Therefore for the church and the mission of the church to be in crisis is normal (Bosch 1991:3).

One of the dilemmas that the church faces, especially Western Christians, is feelings of guilt, because of past wrong doings to people of other cultures (Bosch 1991:3). This leads to a situation where many Christians will not consider participating in mission work (Bosch 1991:3). In the past mission work had been done out of a lot of wrong motives and therefore Bosch (1991:5) argues that when doing mission you have to have a good foundation and the right objectives and motives. The implication of this is that we should not stop doing mission, but that we must start doing it for the right reasons in the right way. To have the right understanding and approach to mission, mission work has to be defined in terms of its nature and not in terms to those it is directed at, as it was normally done in the past (Bosch 1991:10).

Bosch's book answers a lot of important questions. For instance it could be asked what the story of the church and its mission is all about? It started with Jesus, but what

happened after Him? We know that a lot of things went wrong, but was there also anything that the church did right? Bosch tells the story of the church starting from the early times just after Jesus' resurrection up to today.

Bosch (1991:194,195) describes how different Christians believed differently at different times and compares the Semite thinking with Greek thinking which were clashing in the time of the early church. For Semites the auditive was more important, but for the Greeks the visual was the most important. When the Church went from the more Semite kind of thinking to the Greek way of thinking the events of God acting in history became less important than abstract systematic doctrines and knowledge about God. Bosch (1991:197) states that historical understanding was replaced with metaphysical thinking. Therefore their thoughts were directed on heaven and their expectation was no longer focused on God who acts in history (Bosch 1991:197). Bosch (1991:200) states that fortunately, in the end, the Church did resist extreme Hellenization and also extreme Semitization. If it did not, it would have become an esoteric movement on the one hand or on the other hand believing in a Jesus in the same way as the Ebionites did (Bosch 1991:200).

After the paradigm of the Biblical times the paradigm that followed had the same kind of characteristics that is still prevalent in the Eastern Orthodox Church today. In the Eastern Orthodox Church mission is about the love of God and the aim is life for the person who becomes part of God's kingdom (Bosch 1991:208, 209). For the Orthodox Church it is also very important to be involved in the transformation of society because Jesus was incarnated (Bosch 1991:210).

Augustine was part of the Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm and can even be seen as the inaugurator of this (Bosch 1991:215). He believed that the church was not there to get away from the world, to escape from it, but to be there for a broken world (Bosch 1991:218). The message that needed to be proclaimed according to Augustine was that humans are utterly lost and are sinners, but that through the death of Jesus there is salvation for the elect who believe (Bosch 1991:216). Against Pelagius his emphasis

was on the utter powerlessness of a human being to save him/her self (Bosch 1991:215).

In the *De Civitate Dei* Augustine tried to give an answer to the fact that Rome was invaded by the Goths and he also tried to answer accusations against the church that Rome's downfall was because they did not worship their original gods anymore, but Christ (Bosch 1991:220). In his work Augustine states that there are two societies of humans, those who will reign with God and those who will be punished with the Devil (Bosch 1991:220). Augustine did not identify the city of God with the church, but people afterwards did, and so as he declared that the city of God has supremacy over the state it had far reaching consequences for the understanding of what mission is and how it would be approached (Bosch 1991:221). The state and the church had the same enemies and therefore those who opposed the state were also opposing God (Bosch 1991:221).

Due to the close relationship between the church and the state the church received a lot of power. Therefore they had the option of forcing people to conversion by things like fines, taking away their property, sending them to exile, torture and jail (Bosch 1991:223). The argument was that it was to their benefit (Bosch 1991:223). When the state later conquered the Saxons for instance, they were forced to be baptized and if they then went back to their previous religions they were killed (Bosch 1991:224). This attitude to mission continued to the colonial times when colonialism and mission became partners as the rulers over the colonies saw it as their duty to Christianize their colonies (Bosch 1991:227). The word *mission* originated in this setting and the meaning specifically referred to the fact that a priest or a missionary who were sent were legally sent by the state (Bosch 1991:228). This is part of the reason why this word became so contaminated. This way of doing mission in Europe and by Europe went on for around one thousand years (Bosch 1991:230). Mission changed from what the Bible meant to become *Christian propaganda* (Bosch 1991:201).

A ray of light in this time was the monasteries, where they focused not on selfish

objectives, but on the love of God (Bosch 1991:230). They separated themselves from the world, but in all that they did there was a missionary dimension which gave birth to explicit missionary activities (Bosch 1991:233). For instance the Anglo-Saxon monks like Boniface were undertaking journeys far from home, not because of their own spiritual perfection like the Celtic monks (although they also did mission along the way), but mission was the reason for their journeys (Bosch 1991:235).

In the medieval missionary paradigm the text from which missionary activities drew their inspiration was from Luke 14:23 where it says that people should be compelled to enter into God's kingdom and to share in the banquet. Some did react in a Christ like manner to this text, like the monks, but others used it to force people to conversion.

In the missionary paradigm of the Protestant Reformation the most important text was the one that Martin Luther found in Romans 1:16, where the emphasis was that the just will live by faith (Bosch 1991:240). The last words that Luther wrote on his deathbed were: "We are only beggars, that is true" (Bosch 1991:240). So he realised that it is not by good deeds or by self punishment that you are saved from an angry God, but by grace that we are saved by a God who loves us (Bosch 1991:240). It was not totally new as the Roman Catholic Church also believed this, but what was new was that now it became the most important doctrine (Bosch 1991:241). Another difference was that they believed that God did everything and therefore humans are out of themselves totally lost and even their reason is affected with sin (Bosch 1991:241). Two other key issues of this paradigm was the priesthood of all believers and the centrality of the Scriptures (Bosch 1991:242).

Luther also broke away from thoughts of forcing people to come to faith (Bosch 1991:245). The protestant missionary paradigm was full of tension and developments where thoughts went in opposite directions. For instance Pietism emphasised the subjective aspect of faith, whereas the Protestant Orthodoxy emphasised the objective nature of faith (Bosch 1991:261). In some sense there was passivity among Protestants to get involved with mission, because they believed if God is sovereign then



there is no reason to try to lead others to conversion (Bosch 1991:261). On the other hand there were fortunately many who realized that it is both true that God is sovereign and that humans have responsibilities and so continued to do mission (Bosch 1991:261). On some occasions Protestants focused in a one-sided manner on the sin of people and that there is severe punishment for that, but on the other hand some emphasised the love of God (Bosch 1991:261). At times there was also a close relationship between the church and the state among Protestants, but on the other hand there were also exceptions like the Anabaptists, the Pietists, those from the Second Reformation and the Puritans (Bosch 1991:261). There were also some Protestants who did not focus so much on the church's role in society, especially because of Luther's influence, but then there were also those who were concerned about it, influenced by the thoughts of Calvin (Bosch 1991:261).

The protestant missionary paradigm's roots are from the time of the Reformation, but it also continues till this day, although between then and now the Enlightenment had an enormous influence on the way people think, especially in the Western world. With the Enlightenment humans discovered that they were free to ignore God and the church if they wanted to, without immediate consequences (Bosch 1991:263). In this time science was seen as opposing faith (Bosch 1991:264). People were also very optimistic about all the possibilities of the human being and were especially confident about the human mind and its abilities (Bosch 1991:264). All of this could be seen as being part of the modernistic worldview.

Looking back over the past it is clear how paradigms of the time had an influence on the way mission was seen and theology was done. This is no different for today. This realisation, of being part of a specific paradigm that has a great influence on the way you do mission and theology, urges you to be careful and conscious of the way in which you interpret the Bible and apply it. For me Bosch is pointing in the right direction when explaining what we should do with the Biblical insights that he has highlighted.

Bosch (1991:181) asserts that the implications of these Biblical perspectives are not to

be implemented and understood on a one-to-one basis for today. The Bible should not be mindlessly implemented and applied as if it was written by contemporary people for today's situation. Bosch (1991:181) states that the challenge is to prolong the logic of the ministry of Jesus and the early church + This logic should then be applied for today in a creative, but also in a responsible manner (Bosch 1991:181). Bosch (1991:181) points out that it is important to realize that we have a historical faith, which means that God does not communicate with humans through abstract dogmatic phrases but rather through events in history where God reveals Godself (Bosch 1991:181). God enters into history and therefore we have an incarnational+faith (Bosch 1991:181). The Bible is witnessing about God who entered into people's stories and not about abstract doctrines in the first place (although doctrines can grow out of this in an authentic way if this is taken seriously).

Another way that Bosch (1991:183) understands the way in which the Bible is relevant today is that the self-understanding of Christians then should challenge the self-understanding of Christians today. The logic of their self-understanding should be prolonged to become relevant in our current era.

In the Bible it is clear that the nature of mission was that it is all inclusive. Jesus included the rich and the poor, the oppressed and the oppressor, the sinner and the devoted (Bosch 1991:28). Lapidé (in Bosch 1991:28) states that Jesus invented the command that we must love our enemies. Bosch (1991:30) also points out that there is consensus that Jesus himself laid the foundation for the mission to non-Jew and that it was not just due to the influence of someone like Paul. The implication of Jesus' all-inclusive attitude was that the gospel could not be seen as exclusively for the Jews.

Jesus' mission was not just all-inclusive by including all people, but also all-inclusive by not just including the spiritual, but also other dimensions of life. Bosch (1991:34) states that the kingdom of God did include the political sphere and that the declaration that lepers, tax-collectors, sinners and the poor are part of the kingdom of God expressed a profound discontent with the way things are, a fervent desire to see them changed. +

This is also my position that the mission with and to seafarers should also be done with a discontent with the injustices that are still prevailing. According to Bosch (1991:34) the political dimension of Jesus' mission was so prominent that this was the reason that Jesus was crucified. Through mission work we must also aim to let the kingdom of God come, through actions and prayer, but at the same time, as Bosch (1991:35) states, there must be a humble attitude in the church. The reason for this is that mission work cannot bring about the reign of God, but it can only be a sign of it (Käsemann in Bosch 1991:35).

Bosch (1991:49) points to research done by Harnack who described the early Christians as people reaching out to the poor, widows, the sick, mine-workers, prisoners, slaves, and travellers. This was not done to help the church grow, but it was only done as an automatic expression of Christians' faith in Christ (Bosch 1991:49).

In doing mission work Bosch (1991:49, 50) points out that it is on many occasions done out of a position of weakness. According to Bosch (in Niemandt 2007:160): "True mission is the weakest and least impressive human activity imaginably, the very antithesis of a theology of glory." This is in line with the way that Jesus appeared to us as He ministered in weakness (Bosch 1991:49). Like Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 12:10 it is when you are weak that you are strong (Bosch 1991:49).

Although mission work is done with the knowledge of our weakness Bosch (1991:54) states that mission is rooted in the revelation of God in Christ, that it is determined by the realization that the eschatological moment has arrived in Christ and that in this moment the salvation has become obtainable for everyone and that through salvation the eschatological moment will come to completion. If mission is rooted in the revelation of God in Christ it is also with confidence that a person can partake in mission even if it is out of a position of weakness.

As mentioned before Kverndal (2008:228) states that there are some who object to mission work's evangelism dimension because in their opinion it is immoral. He refers

to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that each person has the right to propagate and express his or her religious beliefs. It is not just this argument that gives confidence to the church to proclaim Jesus Christ though. This confidence is primarily derived from what the Bible is saying about mission. Following Bosch, I would like to take a closer look at the perspectives found in certain passages in the Bible.

Bosch (1991:54, 55) takes the approach to look at Matthew, Luke-Acts and the letters of Paul for guidance in the Scriptures for the meaning of mission in those days in order to prolong the logic to today's situation. In establishing this it is possible to have a responsible answer to someone who might maintain that mission work is immoral, immaterial or impossible.

Bosch (1991:83) points out that the writer of Matthew shows that through Jesus' earthly ministry, his death on the cross and his resurrection Jesus paved the way to the gentiles. The limits of the previous era were gone (Bosch 1991:83). The disciples were called to proclaim Jesus' victory over evil, to witness to the reality that Jesus is still present and to lead the world to recognize the love of God (Bosch 1991:93). According to the gospel of Matthew believers can only find their identity in so far as they are involved with mission (Bosch 1991:83). Matthew also points to the fact that a missionary community is at the same time different than the world and committed to it (Bosch 1991:83). Mission is such an integral part of Matthew that it is actually his missionary vision which made him write his gospel (Bosch 1991:57).

According to Michel (in Bosch 1991:78) mission (in Matthew) is simply to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. We do not have to make Jesus the Lord we simply communicate it (Bosch 1991:78). Mission is the automatic consequence of the fact that Jesus is Lord of the universe and that there are no limits to His domain (Bosch 1991:78).

Mission in the gospel of Matthew is also about new believers immediately being aware of the needs of others (Bosch 1991:81). This is because to become a disciple means

not just turning to God but also to your neighbour (Bosch 1991:82). To be Jesus's disciple is to start on a journey, with Christ, which does not end in this life and which is a journey that will be costly to you because you are doing the will of God and no longer your own (Bosch 1991:82,83).

If the question of whether mission is moral is asked to the gospel according to Matthew the answer is a definite yes. Jesus is Lord and therefore there is no alternative to proclaiming that reality. Mission is also moral because, according to Matthew, it is important to help others in need. It is also moral because, although the church that is doing the mission, is not from the world it is still committed to it. Mission is therefore to the benefit of others and not a selfish enterprise to get more and more church members. That mission is God's will because it is rooted in love and care for others is also evident in Luke-Acts.

According to LaVerdiere and Thompson (in Bosch 1991:88) in Luke-Acts Jesus's mission is incomplete and the church is called to complete it. We are called to continue what Jesus did on earth. Therefore the book of Acts is not an afterthought to the gospel (Bosch 1991:88). If some Christians might argue that mission work is immoral then they have to say that Jesus's work was immoral because if the church is doing its work correctly it is Christ, through the Holy Spirit, continuing his work through the church.

In Luke-Acts, mission is the fulfilment of the Scripture, the content of the message is that people must repent, that God forgives sin and that this message is for everybody (Bosch 1991:91). This message is communicated by people who are called as witnesses and the Holy Spirit gives the power to them to complete their task (Bosch 1991:91). The immediate consequence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was that Jesus's followers started to witness and therefore to partake in mission (Bosch 1991:114). The Holy Spirit did not just initiate mission, but also guided and empowered those busy with mission (Bosch 1991:114). So, the possibility of communicating the gospel is through the work of the Holy Spirit.

According to Luke-Acts mission is simply witnessing about what you have experienced (Bosch 1991:116). They are not called to achieve anything much (Bosch 1991:116). At the same time the person who witnesses does not have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude, as Bosch (1991:117) puts it, and the reason for this is that so much is at stake. The people who hear this witness are called to repentance, because to repent is to change from darkness to light (Bosch 1991:117).

In Luke-Acts mission is not just about the spiritual, though, it is also very much about economic justice (Bosch 1991:117). In Luke 4:16-30 Jesus says that the year of the Lord's favour has dawned and with this He refers not only to spiritual restoration that has come, but also economic justice (Bosch 1991:117). This is why Schottroff and Stegeman (in Bosch 1991:103) state that Luke-Acts is not just a book for the poor, but that Luke was actually the evangelist for the rich. The year of the Lord's favour was the time for the rich to repent from economic injustices.

The church in mission is continuing the work of Christ and therefore is also sharing in his suffering. The church consists of those who follow Jesus and as Bosch (1991:121, 122) points out: to follow Jesus is to share in His suffering. Mission work is therefore about being willing to share in Jesus's suffering and not to let others suffer, which will be the end result if mission is immoral.

This then is the way in which mission work is seen in Luke-Acts. It is clear that in this book mission is God's work and not just ours. It is also clear that it is not about trying to achieve a selfish goal, but it is to honour God and it is to bless other human beings. As was seen in Matthew and now in Luke-Acts, it is also the case with Paul's letters that mission is aimed at being an enterprise that is God's work in the first place and not the own initiative of the church. Mission is moral and necessary.

In Paul's letters the perspective on mission is that mission is to lead people to salvation in Christ, as they are lost without Him (Bosch 1991:134,135). Seeing that God loves people, God is not satisfied with people being lost. In addition to this he understands

his mission also as preparation for God's coming glory and for the day when the whole universe will worship God (Bosch 1991:135).

Paul argues that he has an obligation to the gentiles to proclaim the gospel to them (Bosch 1991:135). This is not an obligation due to anything done by the gentiles but because of Christ's concern for them and because of what Christ has done for Paul (Bosch 1991:135). This is the same kind of obligation the church today has to those outside the church. Due to this obligation it is essential for those inside the church to be careful in the way they behave toward those outside the church (Bosch 1991:137). Paul does make a distinction between his missionary activities and the way those in the congregations live out their calling to be part of God's mission. The congregations play a supporting role and are there to welcome those who are still on the outside (Bosch 1991:138). In other words not everyone is called to live life and to participate in God's mission the way Paul did, but all are part of God's mission.

For Paul, mission is not about being indebted to God, but about gratitude because of what God has done for him (Bosch 1991:138). Instead of a debt of sin he now has a debt of gratitude and this gratitude finds expression in mission (Bosch 1991:138). Mission for Paul is about witnessing about Jesus' Lordship, but not about trying to accomplish that, because Jesus is Lord, with or without any witness (Bosch 1991:145). For Paul mission is to communicate that Christ is Lord and to invite others to submit to Him and to confess: "Jesus is Lord!" (Bosch 1991:148). God's righteousness can only be received through faith and faith is only possible where someone proclaims the gospel (Bosch 1991:149). For Paul the gospel is that Jesus replaced the law on the one hand, but is also the reason for the Law from the beginning (Bosch 1991:158). Through Jesus' death we are at peace with God and not because of the Law (Bosch 1991:158). Based on this Paul comes to the far reaching conclusion that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile as we read in Galatians 3:27f (Bosch 1991:158). Therefore believers are part of a new community where all are part of one family and where love is the bond between them (Bosch 1991:168). The church is the forerunner of the new creation and it is that especially by showing that normal human distinctions

like race and culture no longer define who we are and therefore the normal borders between humans are no longer applicable (Bosch 1991:172). The church is missionary because it is a symbol of the new era that is coming and because it is open to anyone irrespective of their identity outside the church.

Mission work is not always easy or very successful and therefore, like Bosch (1991:175) points out, it is done with the eye on Christ's second coming when He will complete and fulfil our efforts. There are some successes and some failures, but irrespective of that, the church continues its labour with hope, because Christ will come again. Those who believe keep the end in mind but at the same time they do not forget the here and now. Bosch (1991:176) points out that Paul corrected those in his time who only focused on Christ's second coming on the one hand and on the other hand those who believed that Christ has already accomplished everything. Both groups, the extreme apocalypticists and the enthusiasts, forgot that believers are called to participate in God's mission in this world (Bosch 1991:176). Believers do this not because there will be a total transformation and a victory over evil in this world through their efforts, but because they are called to put up signs of the new world (Bosch 1991:176).

The old world, that is the world where God's total victory is not yet fulfilled, has not passed away yet. For this reason mission work is done in weakness and those who participate have to do it with the attitude of Paul who says in 2 Corinthians 12:15 that he will gladly give all that he has to those who he is ministering to (Bosch 1991:177). If mission is done with the perspective with which Paul saw it, and done with this kind of attitude, it can surely be said that mission work is moral.

For Paul the church is not the aim of mission, but the aim is rather to participate in God's plan of salvation for the whole world (Bosch 1991:178). Paul's starting point for mission is not the problem of those who are not Christians yet, but rather the solution that has found him in Jesus Christ (Bosch 1991:178). Therefore mission work should not be to proclaim sin, but to proclaim salvation in Christ. The message or the solution that is spread through mission is about love and grace that is unconditional (Bosch



1991:178). Paul talks about God's wrath, in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, but then out of the perspective that God saves through Jesus (Bosch 1991:178).

These were some perspectives from the Bible concerning the *Missio Dei* in which the church participates. Although mission originates in God's heart, as has been explained with the help of Bosch, it has to be done in the practical reality of the time in which you live. Niemandt (2010:156) gave some consideration to the way in which mission in the postmodern era is done in comparison to the modern era.

Today mission is viewed as a process which is relational. Mission, especially the dimension of evangelism, in the modern era was seen as an event to which people are invited. Evangelism had the tendency to neglect the need of people here and now and only emphasised the future salvation. In the postmodern era there is an emphasis that God's kingdom is not only coming one day, but that God is also the God of the present. In modern times mission was seen as something that was done by an evangelist, but now it is more often seen as an undertaking of all Jesus' disciples. In the past era mission was seen as a message to download on people, but in the current era it is seen as something to communicate in conversation with people. The gospel message was previously proved with arguments and evidence. Now the trend is to realise that the church itself should be a sign and a witness to the truth of the gospel message.

As an example of someone who came to this realisation, Rob Bell (in Niemandt 2007:154) said: "We reclaim the church as a blessing machine not only because that is what Jesus intended from the beginning but also because serving people is the only way their perceptions of church are ever going to change." In the modern era it might have been said by someone that the only way the perception of the church will change is if we can have better arguments.

In summary my theological position is that the core of my belief is the Story of Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection. This Story has been communicated through the text of the Bible, which I believe to be the inspired Word of God. Mission is an aspect of

the essence of God and is not an invention of the church to get more members. The work of Kverndal was consulted in order to gain a perspective on seafarers' mission specifically. The insights of Bosch were also used to get a clear understanding of what is meant by mission and to know what it should be as he went through three important sections in Scripture.

I would like to end with the words of Easum (in Niemandt 2007:158) as this expresses something of my missiological position:

One of the problems in the church today is an incredible lack of urgency. Church leaders just don't get it. The world is dying without Christ ....The newscasters make fun of the evangelicals and fundamentalists, but at least they understand the basic premise of Christianity. That without Christ nothing else matters. Somehow over the decades this urgency and passion has been lost among the vast majority of pastors.

### **3.4 Methodology**

#### **- The ABDCE formula and the different roles of the researcher and co-researchers**

I am interested in seafarers' stories in order to arrive at an understanding of their lives and circumstances and also to facilitate to others, who are interested in this research, to come to a better understanding of seafarers and the way they construct their reality. Through this research I would like to co-construct an understanding together with specific seafarers in a specific context. This understanding will be local, but the hope is that this understanding will have some implications beyond the local. Stories are the means through which understanding becomes possible. The assumption in this research is that the researcher is not an objective spectator but rather an active participant (cf Van Huyssteen 1997:267). My active participation will be guided by the ABDCE formula.

I have already explained the ABDCE formula, but as this forms the basis of my methodology and methods I will recap what it entails. The metaphor used for research is that it can be seen as story writing. I found that the metaphor is useful for this

research as it is not a rigid method, but only a broad guideline to give the research process direction. It is useful because it guides the researcher and co-researchers in a direction of developing an understanding by taking seriously the context in which actions take place. Further, the value of this formula is that it serves as a map to organize the research adventure. It also takes into consideration that research is a process where meanings and understandings unfold and develop. This is opposed to where research is seen as gathering information that already exists in an objective sense.

To repeat again, with the ABCDE formula, Müller, Van Deventer and Human have developed a methodological process by using Anne Lammott's formula for fiction writing (Müller 2003:9) which she had taken over from Alice Adams. In this process A stands for action. In the action part, the focus is on the problem, but it is also more than the problem (Müller 2003:10). In the research, I will not only focus on what is wrong and what is difficult for the seafarers, but also on what they enjoy about their lives and work and in what way seafarers' mission is effective in reaching them.

The action is simply referring to the question of what is happening and in what actions the researcher and co-researchers are involved in (Müller 2003:10). The researcher can never be a passive spectator in the process, but is an active participant in the action (Müller & Schoeman 2004:11), who is keeping the tension between belonging and distancing.

B is about the background and here the researcher tries to, as Browning (in Müller 2003:12) suggests, investigate the cultural and religious meanings that surround the actions that is being observed in order to arrive at a thick description. In this movement it is about trying to describe as comprehensive as you can the context in which the actions you observe are taking place (Müller 2003:12). Morgan (2000:12-13) points out how thin descriptions leads to a simplistic understanding of life and of people's identities and that when this happens this has serious negative consequences. The problem with thin descriptions is that it ignores the complex nature of our existence (Morgan

2000:12). Morgan (2000:15) says: "The opposite of a thin conclusion is understood by narrative therapists to be a rich description of lives and relationships." The hope is that in this research rich or thick description will be developed.

D stands for development and this is about the perspective in narrative research that you do not know the results of the project beforehand, but that you see it as an evolutionary process in which you are a participant as much as the co-researchers (Müller 2003:13). This research is not just about story telling but also about story development and therefore your role is not just to be an objective spectator but to reflect and facilitate while the process unfolds (Müller 2003:13).

C stands for climax and is referring to the commitment of the researcher to the process to develop without deciding beforehand what the outcome will be (Müller 2003:14). Not just what the outcome will be, but also when it will be and therefore it takes patience and commitment to do the research.

The E stands for ending, but is not pointing to the end of the stories of the people you are working with but only to the end of a specific research project, because in narrative research the ending is always pointing to new narratives and new beginnings (Müller 2003:15).

Following the ABDCE formula it is important to be aware of the role you and the other participants in the research will be playing. I stated that I see myself as an active participant, but what exactly this entails is an important methodological issue to consider because this will determine the way in which the research will develop. Dreyer (1998:14) draws attention to the either/or approach that is normally presented when this issue is under discussion. The relationship is either seen as one of a subject who is studying an object or a subject engaging with another subject. Dreyer (1998:20) argues for a more dialectical approach based on some of the ideas of Ricoeur. There is a tension between these two opposite approaches that should be kept in mind when doing research (Dreyer 1998:20).

Dreyer (1998:22) uses the hermeneutical concepts, and their dialectical relationship, of ~~%~~belonging+and ~~%~~distanciation+to propose a way of keeping both the insider and outsider role of the researcher. Belonging refers to the stance of a researcher inside the world of those being researched so that those being researched can be studied and represented as they interpret their reality (Dreyer 1998:22). The researcher is not critical and do not take a step back to evaluate those who are being researched. With distanciation is meant a position of stepping back and not just accepting the interpretations of those who are being researched without critical consideration (Dreyer 1998:22).

Dreyer (1998:22) concludes that the two approaches should both be maintained, as belonging insures that there is no alienation between the researcher and the researched and distanciation helps to be critical and prevent a situation of total relativism. Thus a researcher must be an ~~%~~engaged participant+and at the same time a ~~%~~detached observer+(Dreyer 1998:23).

To be able to be an ~~%~~engaged participant+it is necessary to really get to know the people you are doing research with by taking into consideration dimensions of their lives such as economics, culture, politics etc (Dreyer 1998:23). Interaction with participants is very important as they are not seen as ~~%~~objects of information+but rather as ~~%~~subjects of communication+(Dreyer 1998:23).

On the other hand the question is how it is possible for the researcher to be a detached observer. For Dreyer (1998:23) this means that as researcher you are not just satisfied with the descriptions and interpretations which the researched is presenting to you. Sayer (in Dreyer 1998:23-24) sees it as the task of science to move beyond a common sense view of the world. Key words here are to be ~~%~~critical+and ~~%~~reflexive+(Dreyer 1998:24). You have to be critical about your methods and your interpretations (Dreyer 1998:24).

In this research the intention is to maintain this type of tension in order to maintain distance between me and the co-researchers, but also to really come to an understanding that is not theoretical. The aim is to come to an understanding that truly arises out of particular concrete contexts.

Focusing on a concrete context is not in order to study some objective phenomena though, but rather, according to Müller (2003:1), the focus of research should be on people. The research will therefore focus on the seafarers as the context of mission and not the phenomenon of seafaring as such. In the narrative approach, great care is taken not to pathologize the people who are the subjects of the research, therefore, like Müller (2003:7), I choose to call them co-researchers. With the term co-researcher something is expressed of respect and that we are working together to a mutual beneficial goal: to arrive at a better understanding. Rubin and Rubin (2005: IX) call this relationship between a researcher and a participant a partnership.

This does not mean that the roles of the researcher and the co-researcher are the same. For instance the researcher will do most of the listening. The researcher is also the one who starts the process and facilitates it (Müller & Schoeman 2004:11). As researcher I will purposefully try to create what Elliot (2005:10) calls conversational space. This is referring to the observation by conversational analysts that it is customary in normal conversations for people to take turns. Referring to Coates as well as Sacks, Elliot (2005:10) points out that to tell a story is interrupting the flow in the conversation and the person telling the narrative is given privileged access to the floor. My aim is to give the co-researchers space and as much access to the floor as possible.

When I do this the reader of the research will get an idea of the particular context in which this research is done out of the perspective of the co-researcher. Practical theology gets its life from its particularity (Müller 2005:79). Through describing a particular context and situation not only in my own words but in partnership with the seafarers a conversational construction can result which can give the reader a feel of

the people and their lives with whom I am doing research with (cf Neuman 1997:328). Like in a pastoral situation, the researcher will try to maintain a not-knowing position, to see the co-researchers as the experts of their own lives and to facilitate conversations where stories can be retold and new realities will be possible to emerge (Demasure & Müller (2006:418). Like Müller and Schoeman (2004:8) state, the challenge is to create a situation where the co-researchers' stories can be listened to and heard in a respectful way. According to Müller and Schoeman (2004:11) this respect is not just a coincidental thing but is a research-methodology.

For the research it will also be important to remember that it is not the context in general in which I am interested, but in a person's interpretation of his/her experiences with this context and as researcher I get access to that through stories (Demasure & Müller 2006:418). I am interested in their understanding but will also aim to be involved with the development of new understandings.

Again the possible understanding of what practical theology is, is that it is something that is happening when there is a reflection on practice out of the perspective of the experience of the presence of God (Müller 2005:73). When doing practical theological research the experience of the presence of God should in some way be part of the inquiry. This will also be the intention in this research. The challenge will be to do it in such a way that it is kept in mind that this intervention is a respectful and fragile one.

In order to do this I am convinced that a metaphor Müller (1996:2) is using in his book, for pastoral care, will be helpful and relevant for this research as well. The metaphor is about a knot which consists of a number of strings of rope. The strings of rope are each referring to different stories that are part of a person's life. While telling one's story it is as if you follow one of these strings in order to unravel the knot. After the unravelling, a new knot can form and new relationships between the strings can develop. In this way it is possible that new realities might emerge.

Müller (1996:2) states further that in this knot one of the strings is God's Story. It is the

aim to unravel the knot till you get to this sting and to explore the relationship between this string and other stings. Through this a person in a pastoral situation hopefully comes to a new and better understanding. In this research the assumption is that the string of God's Story is there as part of someone's collection of stings. I have a special interest in this string and therefore this research is about finding out more about this string and its relationships to other strings. This string already existed before I joined people with their stories, but at the same time when it is performed it is changed and reinvented. Although there is a special interest in the stories the co-researchers have to share about God, my interest in them is also about every aspect of their lives.

When thinking about methodological issues, whilst having a holistic investigation of seafarers' lives, it could be said that this research is qualitative research. Qualitative research generally has another type of approach than social constructionism, although there are similarities. It could be said that narrative research is a specific kind of qualitative research but that because of its unique perspective it is in some ways different than other types of qualitative research. For instance Babbie (2007:10) takes the scientism of the human sciences for granted. For him it is important to note that research is part of what we call science. According to him science can be described as logical and empirical. In social science these two aspects also relate closely with the concepts of theory, data collection and data analysis. Science, and therefore also social science, can be seen as an undertaking with the aim in mind of *finding out* (Babbie 2007:87). How to proceed in finding out then, is to do it in a logical way (that is a way that one can describe as making sense) and in a way that corresponds with what has been observed (Babbie 2007:10). Theories are constructed in a logical way, data is collected through observation and the analysis of this data is again done in a logical manner. Having logical thoughts and to make accurate observations is also part of the social constructionist research, but the difference is that it is not so much about *finding out* than it is about co-constructing meaning.

Babbie (2007:87) makes the conclusion that in the end science is about observing and the interpretation of whatever was observed. Before you start your observation you



have to be clear on what you want to observe and second on how you are going to conduct this observation (Babbie 2007:87). Under methodology and methods these concerns will be discussed in more detail, although out of a narrative way of thinking.

The objectives for finding things out are to explore, to describe and to explain (Babbie 2007:87). In one research project it is normal to have more than one of these objectives in mind (2007:87). The reason for exploring can be curiousness or a desire to come to a better understanding, to find out if further study would be worthwhile or to design methods for research that might follow (Babbie 2007:88).

To start with a thorough theory is not necessary (Babbie 2007:88). Babbie (2007:88) describes one of the research projects he did with the objective of exploring and points out that he asked questions such as %why+, %what+, %when+and %how+. He would prepare questions in advance, but he allowed the interview to evolve on its own, based on the responses of the participants (Babbie 2007:88-89). While conducting this investigation he started to focus on certain topics based on his previous experiences, although he started off with a %reasonable blank slate+(Babbie 2007:89). The results of these kind of studies have limitations as this normally does not answer research questions in a very clear way, but it does point in the direction of some answers (Babbie 2007:89). My research will have important characteristics in common with this type of inquiry. I will also try to have a %reasonable blank slate+, in more narrative language to have a not-knowing position. I will also be asking why, what, when and how and hopefully the research will point in the direction of some answers.

A second approach is describing whatever is being researched (Babbie 2007:89). When doing this kind of research it is important to be aware that the descriptions should be more exact, specific and overall be done in a stricter manner than would be done in everyday life (Babbie 2007:89). It is common for qualitative research to be of a descriptive nature (Babbie 2007:89). This research will also be descriptive although not in the sense that what is described is objectively out there before the research, but more in the sense that the researcher and the co-researchers becomes co-describers and

that through the description a new understanding can emerge.

The third approach in social research is to aim at explaining things and therefore this type of study is mainly busy with the *why*+question (Babbie 2007:89). Earlier I have stated that Wilhelm Dilthey said: *We explain nature; man we must understand*+(Gerkin in Müller 1996:11). The first two approaches of exploring and describing seems to be more in line with what Dilthey said as well as what the narrative approach is all about. At the same time an element of explaining is part of coming to an understanding. It is not that explaining is not important to the narrative approach as if the *why*+question will never be relevant. The aim in the narrative approach is hermeneutical and therefore the reason for asking why is not explaining but understanding. The *why*+question is not ignored in the narrative approach, but it is asked with an awareness that the mechanisms of the dominant knowledges should not be served but that if this question is asked it should be asked to make space for subjugated knowledges (cf Epson & White 1990:29). This also applies to any other research question, whether it is asked while exploring or describing. So I would not like to position myself as being busy with just one of the three possibilities, but would rather say that all of these objectives will in some way be present in my approach, although guided by the ideas of the narrative approach.

### - **Three movements**

In this research I will be making three research movements. These movements refer to the different groups of researchers that I plan to invite to participate in the co-construction of an understanding. The first movement will be to get the seafarers to be involved, the second movement will be to make an attempt at finding a transversal connection with two non-theological disciplines and lastly I will share some of the things that the seafarers have said to chaplains who are experts on the life and circumstances in which seafarers are living.

The idea to call the involvement of the three different groups *movements* was taken from Müller (2009). He referred to movements as he approached different groups of co-

researchers to participate in his research. Each group represented a different stage of his research. In this research, however there was not a linear progress in the involvement of the different groups. For instance one of the interviews with a seafarer took place after I had made movements two and three.

In movement one, which forms the basis of the other two movements, there is a focus on the embeddedness and the contextuality of the situation in which the seafarers find themselves. Based on this emphasis on the local, in this first movement I will strive to stay grounded in seafarers' concrete situations and experiences. Then, I will try to proceed to move further to interdisciplinary concerns. This is similar to Müller's (2004:303) sixth movement in his adaptation of Van Huyssteen's approach in order to develop a postfoundationalist practical theology.

Van Huyssteen proposed transversal rationality as an approach to do interdisciplinary work. In his case the conversations took place by means of communicating his ideas in a book and in an academic journal. With this research however I will make use of a different method. Müller (2004:303) states that as far as interdisciplinary work is concerned "no one-size-fits-all methodology can be applied."

As Van Huyssteen states (in Müller 2009:207), with the interdisciplinary approach we are able to be critical of our own traditions and therefore the hope is that through interacting with other disciplines this research story will be thickened and enriched because it is no longer hopelessly determined by a specific culture, tradition or discipline. The question is how one can engage other disciplines. I will follow Müller (2009:227) who developed three questions, after going through the transversal process and reflecting on it, as a way of engaging another discipline. These questions will be the following:

1. When reading the story of [ ], what do you think will his/her concerns be?
2. How would you formulate your discipline's unique perspective on these concerns and why is it important that this perspective be heard at the

interdisciplinary table?

3. Why do you think your perspective will be understood and appreciated by researchers from other disciplines?

These questions are means through which a conversation with another disciplines can be initiated. When Müller (2009) developed these three questions he used a case study in the form of a narrative in order to get a response from other scholars. Through doing this he was able to ground the research in a local a concrete situation while at the same time moving to interdisciplinary concerns (Van der Westhuizen 2010). In the same way I will also make use of narratives and quotes from the seafarers when I invite people from another discipline to get involved and in this manner make sure that the research is grounded in a local and concrete situation.

This second movement is about: %A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation+(Müller 2004:300). The results of this movement will first be discussed separately and will then be integrated under the section where the alternative perspective is being discussed.

An important question to consider is which other disciplines should be approached. This will have to be disciplines which I suspect have some kind of transversal connection with the stories which the co-researchers shared. In a sense putting the questions to someone from another discipline is a test whether there is a helpful transversal intersection between this research and another, non-theological discipline. In the following section I will discuss the methods that will be used in this research.

The interdisciplinary movement will be accompanied by a third movement which will be to involve other chaplains. This movement is based on Müller's (2004:304) seventh movement. The emphasis here is on the development of %alternative interpretations+ which have a dimension of %deconstruction and emancipation+(Müller 2004:304). In this movement there is an attempt to move beyond the local. This is not about making universalistic claims but it is about maintaining a deconstructive stance towards

narratives that might be oppressive and harmful (cf Müller 2004:304).

### **3.5 Methods**

In the first movement that I will be making in this research I aim to get involved with the seafarers mainly by means of visiting seafarers on the ships. As I stated before this is my work, but for this project I started to visit ships not just with a mindset of a missionary and pastor, but also as a researcher. It was important for me to move from my world to theirs because as Müller and Schoeman (2004:8) state there should be a movement from the researcher to the co-researcher and not the other way round. In other words: If anyone moves out of their comfort zone it should be the researcher and not the co-researchers. It did happen that three of the interviews took place in the seafarerssqmission and not on the seafarersqships, but this was because the space there allowed privacy and it allowed an opportunity to be away from the situation on board.

It is important to note that in I am in a certain sense also a character in this research narrative. Müller (2003:13) states that the researcher is more than a scribe and can be seen as a facilitator. This means that although you are not a main character, your part in the stories, and especially in the development of the stories, needs to be taken seriously. For this reason it was important to discuss my epistemological and theological position. In many of the interviews I will include my part of the conversation so that it will be clear in which way I influenced what was said.

Before I start to conduct interviews I will simply visit ships and start to interact with the action. After I come from a ship, I will write down anything that seemed to be relevant to my research question as a way to begin the process. This part of the study can be seen as the A, B and start of the D stage. I will become part of the action, get more insight into the background through my participation in the action and this will be the start of the development of the project.

Making these field notes and to add to my identity the concept of %researcher+is my

starting point. The reason for being on the ships is mainly to do mission work, but I will also be observing and on the lookout for any action and background that is relevant to my study. The mission work and the research are easy to combine as the research is about the people with whom the mission work is done. The conversations I participate in at this stage can be seen as informal interviews.

After I did this for a few months I was prepared to conduct a number of interviews. The idea is not to interview hundreds of people but to get different points of view to obtain a clearer picture (cf Rubin & Rubin 2005:68). I will record the interviews and then try to type it out as soon as possible as it would otherwise be easy to forget (Rubin and Rubin 2005:112). Recordings or notes can be unclear afterwards, but if the transcribing is done quickly you should be able to report it accurately and understandably (Rubin and Rubin 2005:112).

These interviews are the same kind of conversations that Rubin and Rubin (2005:4) are referring to when they talk about qualitative interviews. They see this as an extended discussion in which the conversation is gently guided by the researcher. To be able to do this skilfully is something that takes time and practice because to do this type of interviewing takes more skill than a normal conversation (Rubin and Rubin 2005:12). One skill that is necessary is to not only ask questions about what was heard but also about what was not said (Rubin and Rubin 2005:13). That means being interested in the gaps in the story.

Another necessary skill is to be able to be self-aware (Rubin and Rubin 2005:31). That means to be aware of your own understanding and reactions, the extent in which you identify with the people you do research with and to remember to ask about the good and the bad of the people you are studying. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005:32) influence in the research situation is a two-way street and you have to be conscious of that. Part of the process of being self-aware was to write down explicitly my epistemological and theological positions and to think through my methodology and my methods.

For Rubin and Rubin (2005:71) it is very important to report your findings in an accurate way. That means to write down what the co-researcher really said and if it is possible to let the co-researcher check what you have written down and to be careful of not putting words in the other person's mouth (Rubin and Rubin 2005:71). The aim is to be so accurate that if the co-researcher reads the stories that is told about them and their world they should be able to recognize it as true (Rubin en Rubin 2005:71).

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005:85) it is also important to think of the role that the participants/co-researchers see you in. Roles like student, professor or author are generally acceptable, but not roles that seems threatening (Rubin and Rubin 2005:85). In this research project the role as missionary/chaplain who is doing some research will most probably go down well because in general the seafarers have a good association with somebody involved with seafarers' mission.

Another important aspect is that space should be created for the seafarers to tell their stories in. Elliot (2005:10) asserts that many authors who are interested in narrative have pointed out the importance of the context in which a story is told, including the part that the listener is playing. Elliot (2005:11) says that even the role of the potential audience in the future should be taken into consideration. Therefore I should also realise that those who I do research with are telling their stories in a different way because they know that the audience is not just me, but also those who will be interested in this research. They will also be aware that it is an academic undertaking and this might also have an impact on how they tell and perform their stories.

In the interview, one of the things that the researcher will look for is stories that the seafarers can tell because through them meaning is constructed. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005:109) stories are like a jack-in-the-box: it is just waiting to come out when someone asks: "What happened?" When the jack-in-the-box comes out the researcher should listen carefully in order to create space for the story to be retold and maybe even reinvented.

In this research my goal is to co-construct an understanding of the world and life of seafarers. This understanding needs to be grounded in the complexities and sometimes contradictions of their world (cf Morgan 2000:12) and as I indicated earlier, my main method to do this was through conducting interviews. Before I will conduct these interviews, I will prepare certain questions which I see as relevant to the main research question. In the interview I will try to be flexible and open to what the co-researchers are saying and at the same time I will try not to end up talking about things that are not related to the main research question.

After a few interviews, themes can start to emerge and this is part of the D of the research. At this stage of the research the study moves towards C, the climax, because it starts to evolve. Exactly how long this stage of the research is going to be is difficult to say, but in reality the D will start to take place as soon as the research starts. At this stage, I can begin to write the results down for the thesis. Writing the things down and especially moving towards the C stage is a very important part of the D. In other words, the development of the co-construction of meaning does not only take place in the interviews, but develops further as I try to bring the different researchers into conversation with each other. Here there is a great responsibility on me to stay grounded in the stories of the co-researchers and not to propagate my own agendas.

By not only going through one movement, but reaching beyond the local to interdisciplinary concerns as well as inviting chaplains to participate in the research it helped to prevent a situation where the researcher has the only say in the interpretations that is developed. I will enter into transversal interdisciplinary conversations with two other disciplines namely maritime law and systemic family therapy as a second movement. Through their involvement the two representatives of these disciplines can become co-researchers. It is true that there are other disciplines that might be invited as well, but it is believed that by involving these two, an important contribution will be made in thickening the research story.



Systemic family therapy can possibly make important contributions to the many family issues which were identified by my co-researchers. With maritime law I am convinced that the justice issues raised in this research will overlap with the concerns of this discipline. Maritime law is about the laws which govern the shipping industry and as I have discovered there are instances where these laws just do not help a seafarer. The hope is that a helpful perspective will be opened up in conversation with this discipline.

In order for these co-researchers to get involved, I will retell the stories of the seafarers where there might be a transversal connection. This will mean leaving out a lot of detail, but at the same time care will be taken to use as much of the co-researchers' own words and to give as much background to their stories as is necessary for them to understand. By using the stories and the actual words of the seafarers the aim is to stay true to the local and concrete situation while moving across the boundaries to interdisciplinary concerns (cf Van der Westhuizen 2010). While I will follow Müller's (2009) questions and generally speaking his approach there will be some differences. I have identified two possible interdisciplinary partners and will enter into a discussion with them concerning the transversal connection I suspect there will be between us. The discussions on this point will mainly be a dialogue. In Müller's (2009) article his approach was to use one story and a number of conversational partners from different disciplines. In my case I will engage one discipline at a time through a combination of more than one story. The reason for this is a practical one as my purpose with entering in an interdisciplinary conversation is not to evaluate the approach in the first place, but mainly to use this as a way to thicken the research narrative. As I indicated earlier, in order to start the conversation I will follow the three questions which was developed by Müller (2009:227).

Involving the chaplains was an attempt to move beyond the local (cf Müller 2004:300). Müller (2004:304) states that here the emphasis is on dissemination. In a sense this happens already when I enter into an interdisciplinary conversation, but it will also be done especially through involving chaplains. Müller (2004:304) states that the methods that might be employed to disseminate the research can be through groups, workshops,

seminars, involving certain communities for instance the scientific community, the policy-making community, the communities of faith, etc.

I decided to involve chaplains who are part of the seafarers' mission. They are experts because most of them are involved with this field, in one way or the other, on a daily basis and some of them for many years. My method to get them to participate was to ask them to respond to certain phrases that came out of the interviews with the seafarers. I took striking phrases (for me) which the seafarers shared with me, and then asked them to respond to it (see Addendum A). The reason was that through this the themes which grew out of the research were introduced to them through the words of the seafarers themselves, but at the same time this made it possible to reach further than just the local situation of one researcher and six seafarers.

The whole process will be guided by the ABDCE formula when the researcher and the co-researchers embark on this hermeneutical adventure. Rubin and Rubin (2005: IX) sums the whole research process up as the following: Find participants who are experts on the problem you are researching (seafarers, chaplains, systemic family therapy and maritime law). Then ask about the knowledge they have based on their experiences and listen to their answers (A and B). Lastly keep on doing this until you get a rich answer to your research question (D and C, E). This is broadly the agenda that I will follow, except that the idea with this research is not to find something that already exists but to co-construct an understanding that is new.